

MARCO FANTUZZI, *The Rhesus attributed to Euripides*, Cambridge classical texts and commentaries 63, Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020, 711 pp., \$170.00, ISBN 978-1-107-02602-5.

Recent times use to bring up studies in the Ancient Greek Literature lacking any philological content, inasmuch as no attention is paid to the problems of the transmission and edition of the extant texts. That is to say, it seems that many young scholars feel uncomfortable in front of the Greek text and as a constant strategy they avoid dealing with grammatical, critical and ecdotal problems¹. Therefore, it is not uncommon that many of the most recent editions are not such, but incomplete commentaries often addressed to a specific audience, whose interest points either to social, especially gender problems, or to literary matters raised in an apparently comparative way, for instance about the questions of orality *vs.* literacy, postcolonialist creation, and so on.

This review will present a counterexample that should become a model instead of an exception. The series Cambridge Classical Texts and Commentaries has been largely enriched with this edition, of course not by chance. Its author, Marco Fantuzzi, has devoted to this project part of his last thirty years of research, and the result corresponds to this major goal, given the exhaustive programme accomplished and the rigorous methodological patterns applied. His edition appears after five significant contributions by Diggle, Zanetto, Jouan, Kovacs and Fries², with their fresh views on the

¹ Just an example taken from the current trend of publishing monographic volumes on a genre, an author or even a play: *The Cambridge Companion to Homer* published under the supervision of Robert Fowler, Cambridge 2004, includes twenty-two contributions organized in five sections, “The poems and their narrator”, “The characters”, “The poet’s craft”, “Text and context”, and “The Homeric reception”. Only the third section has some relation with the Homeric language, but it concerns only three concrete aspects, viz. formulas, metre and type-scenes; similes; and speeches. The reference to a major problem, that of ‘dialect’, even if it is never really considered, can be found eight times. Inversely, just some years before, *A New Companion to Homer*, edited by Ian Morris and Barry B. Powell, Leiden & Boston 1997, includes two specific chapters on the Homeric dialect and the Homeric metre, besides many other chapters of high interest for the linguistic matter, since they are devoted to the problems of writing, the papyrological transmission, the scholia, the formulaic composition, the oral poetics... It will be not surprising that the term ‘dialect’ is used more than sixty times.

² G. Zanetto, *Euripidis Rhesus*, Stuttgart & Leipzig 1993; J. Diggle, *Euripides Fabulae III*, Oxford 1994, to which should be added J. Diggle, *Euripidea. Collected Essays*, Oxford 1994, 508-19; J. Jouan, *Euripide. Tragédies VIII-2 Rhésus*, Paris 2002 (see on this edition the review by Fantuzzi himself in <https://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2006/2006.02.18/>); D. Kovacs, *Euripides Bacchae, Iphigenia at Aulis, Rhesus*, Harvard 2002; A. Fries, *Pseudo-Euripides. Rhesus*, Berlin 2014. Actually Kovacs relies without exception on Diggle’s edition.

tragedy. As a probable important cause of this interest for the play among the modern scholars, our better knowledge of 4th-cent. drama explains the blossom of the *Rhesus*-editions. The book has three main sections, a) the Introduction (pp. 1-79), which is followed by two short sections on sigla and abbreviations (pp. 80 and 81, respectively), b) the critical edition of the play (pp. 82-131, of which the pages 82-5 contain the ancient hypotheses and reports on the tragedy), and c) the commentary (pp. 133-626), to which an extensive bibliography (pp. 627-87), a general index (pp. 690-707) and an index of the foremost discussed words (708-11) follow. The text uses to follow quite closely the solutions adopted by Diggle³ and therefore gives greater importance to the codex L and lesser to the codex P (pp. 78-9).

Fantuzzi stresses how much the tragedy tells a different story from that of the *Iliad*⁴, which is told in the tenth book, the *Δολώνεια*, usually alluded to by the English audience as 'Marauding through the night'. The changing perspectives of the poet can be shown with an only example if we take into account that the positive protagonist of the plot, not a negative one as *Persian's* Xerxes⁵, is not a Greek hero, but the Trojan Hector. Nor does the Thracian king Rhesus fit with the character of the negative hero, since it has been suggested that the poet even had in mind to present him as the receiver of a future cult.

Of course the quest for an author comes among the first objectives of a well-constructed and exhaustive introduction. The option for the attribution of the play to a fourth-century poet (p. 21) reckons on a sample of manifold arguments: language and style, metrics, dramatic technique. Yet the editor's doubting position (pp. 22-3) leads to a false solution, given that he chooses to leave the question open. This prudent reluctance seems to a certain extent excessive: the similarities of content and form between the second stasimon of the play (ll. 342-87) and the anonymous *ἐπιβατήριος ὕμνος* composed in 290/291 at the arrival to Athens of Demetrius Poliorcetes (pp. 27-32) suggests that the *Rhesus* could not have been written before a late fourth century; the same conclusion follows the discussion on some military terms (pp. 43-5), and

³ Emendations and conjectures by Diggle are adopted in ll. 11, 196, 219, 245, 285, 452, 466, 546-7, 678-9, 680-1, 738, 824 and 874.

⁴ *Contra*, A. Fries, *op. cit.*, 8: (...) *The poet essentially keeps to Iliad 10, developing hints from it in many of his more original scenes.*

⁵ H.D. Broadhead, *The Persae of Aeschylus*, Cambridge 1960, XXIII: *The final scene can be understood and appreciated only if we recognize that Xerxes, unsuitable as he was for the role of traditional tragic hero, is nevertheless the mainspring of the tragedy.* E.E. Clough, *In search of Xerxes: images of the Persian King*, doctoral thesis, Durham University, 2004, <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/802/> (consultation made on 16.8.2021), 52: *To an ancient Athenian audience he would clearly appear as no hero, but a coward, in contrast with the Greeks who fought to uphold their freedom and their honour.* Unfortunately we do not have a satisfactory knowledge about how the heroes were represented in Sophocles' *Cassandra* and *Priam*, for instance.

on the comic elements attested in fourth century tragedy as well (pp. 50-9, esp. p. 58)⁶. A major issue of this edition lies indeed in the relationship of the tragedy in the context of the Macedonian campaigns on Greece with their impact on war and military lexicon, material culture, and politics.

The extensive and detailed commentary deserves a positive appraisal and full attention. Fantuzzi never misses an opportunity to clarify linguistic problems that go beyond the strict limits of grammar and instead condition the interpretation of the text (pp. 145, 148, 332, 345, 567, 577, etc.)⁷. A special remark deals with his explanations on metrics, always addressed to furnish to the reader a clear understanding of what an emotion the chosen rhythm and structure transmit. All along his thoroughgoing commentary the Italian scholar gives complete explanations not only about hapaxes and poetic words, but also on every word worthy of appreciation, including its attestations in former literary authors, special semantic uses in tragedy, etc.⁸ Matters related to history, religion, material culture, dramatic technique, iconography, and so on, are given equal attention.

The play was written within the framework of a literary culture, much more in the way of the Hellenistic literature⁹. In this regard, it is to be retained the alternative suggestion that instead of a tragic poet the *Rhesus* could have been written by an actor or a choregus (p. 23). It is not without interest to notice how close this poet was to the fourth-century interest for Euripides because of the imitation of some sections of the *Iphigenia at Aulis* (pp. 142, 255) that should have been written by a later author. This fourth century tragedy is open to an intertextual play with the genre of comedy that includes lexical borrowings, shared themes, dramatic situations, and the imitation of metrical innovations (pp. 165, 172, 182, 212, 498-9, 506, 509). On the other side, two further aspects deserve the qualification of outstanding and brilliant: first, the careful comment when needed on the register attested at every passage by whatsoever speaker (pp. 456, 484, 538, 573), and the concepts shortly and clearly stated on the language of the Attic tragedy (p. 357). Fantuzzi is also particularly right when he underlines the

⁶ Maybe the chronology of Astydamas II was slightly high for the authorship of *Rhesus*. He was known for the reelaboration of Homeric themes.

⁷ It is because Fantuzzi masters the ancient Greek language from a diachronical perspective that he can rightly understand the text. *Sapienti pauca*, his observation on δαῖτα, 'distribution of the booty', a term that the most recent scholars misunderstood in rendering it as 'banquet', 'feast'.

⁸ Just for giving an example: the explanation on ἐξώστης (sc. ἄνεμος) elucidates the meaning of this noun (p. 319), since ἐξωθέω –the verb from which it derives– means 'to push –someone or something, especially a ship– out of the way'.

⁹ Take as an example the comment on l. 356 βαλῖαισι (p. 339) and the trend of the Hellenistic poetry towards semantic ambiguity and synesthesical effect, in this case the association of movement and colour.

parallelism of this tragedy with some lyric compositions of fourth-century and Hellenistic poetry (pp. 226, 448).

In addition to the generous information afforded by Fantuzzi, and maybe because of his aim for completeness, we would make some minor observations: the divinisation of prominent persons in the fifth century has an important example in Themistocles, not to leave Athens to the benefit of other cities (p. 33); the medical language that underlies the lines 636-41 (also attested later in l. 794, cf. p. 555) could maybe receive an explanation after the introduction of a character typical in comedy, that of the physician, by means of his representation by Athena (pp. 482-5); the past form ἔχρην on l. 643, rightly argued as the most tenable lesson by Fantuzzi, is also preferable because of its attached modal value (p. 487);

It is not easy to find interpretative discrepancies regarding the literal and exact translations made by Fantuzzi. A fragment of Hipponax (fr. 72 Degani) seems not as exact as needed, for the preposition κατεγγύς must be linked to Ἰλίου πύργων instead of Θρεϊκίων πώλων (p. 7). Also the cluster τάχ' ἄν seems convey the meaning 'probably', 'maybe' rather than 'quickly', 'readily' (p. 218). The aspectual value of the aorist is not always ingressive (pp. 165, 188), for there exists also the complexive aorist, which is not linked to the expression of any punctual notion. The Arcadian verbal form ἐπεξάρει probably was not understood as such (pp. 388-9), but just as an Epicism -maybe taken from a sample of κατὰ πόλεις γλωσσαι-, as Fantuzzi convincingly argues for old Attic ἀριστέας (p. 406). Other suggestions alluded to by Fantuzzi are not *stricto sensu* his, so that it should be unjust to address any criticism on them. However, besides a first methodological *caueat* about the identification of a cult to Rhesus with that of the so-called Thracian Horseman, the assumption of the anthroponym itself as the Thracian rendering of I.-E. *reH₁g- (p. 10) remains unclear, as well as the stimulating idea that the character became the founding hero of the oracle of Bacchus at the Pangaeum (pp. 11-12). In spite of the support of Liapis and Fries, the lack of tenable evidences must place these theories on the domain of mere hypothesis.

The useful and precise bibliography quoted by Fantuzzi would grow with profit by the addition of some major contributions: on χεῖρ in tragedy the chapter of Bers (pp. 165 and 200)¹⁰, on Ionicisms in general the article of López Eire¹¹, on μέλλω the monograph by Basset (pp. 180, 439, 497b)¹². Other bibliographic references could help to complete the viewpoint on some subjects: a paper by the reviewer on ξύν/ξυv- and its by-forms σύν/συv- (p.

¹⁰ V. Bers, *Greek Poetic Syntax in the Classical Age*, New Haven & London 1984, 59-61.

¹¹ A. López Eire, "Sobre los jonismos de la tragedia ática", *CFC(G)* 18, 2006, 7-53.

¹² L. Basset, *Les emplois périphrastiques du verbe grec μέλλειν. Étude de linguistique grecque et essai de linguistique générale*, Lyon 1979.

184)¹³; the unavoidable contributions of the ill-fated Vladimir Orel on the Phrygian language and its relationship with Thracian (pp. 298-9)¹⁴.

Needless to conclude with our congratulation, for this commentary benefits of a huge and deep knowledge of language, tragedy, Classical culture, textual criticism, metrics, and religion. The author devoted thirty years to the writing of the book, but scholarship will gain an invaluable instrument for much longer.

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¹³ J. Redondo, "Euripides' *Hippolytus* and the Athenian trend for linguistic introspection", in J. Redondo, A. Sánchez i Bernet, *Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic Greek Poetry. Contributions to the History of the Ancient Greek Language*, Amsterdam 2015, 211-17.

¹⁴ V. Orel, "The Vocabulary of Phrygian", *Orpheus* 7, 1997, 37-77, "Position of Phrygian", *LACUS* 17, 1990-1991, 418-26, and "The Position of Phrygian", *AAL* 14, 1993, 55-67; *The Language of the Phrygians*, Delmar 2004.

