

WILLIAM ALLAN (ed.), *Euripides. Helen*. Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics, Cambridge – New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. xiv + 371, ISBN 9780521545419.

William Allan (hereafter A.), well known to Euripideans for his fine book on *Andromache* and his Aris & Phillips edition of *Heracleidae* and to a wider range of Hellenists for his significant articles on the relation of intellectuals and religion to literary productions and representations, has now provided in the Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics series an excellent guide to the reading and study of *Helen*.

In an extensive and well-footnoted introduction, A. covers with authority a broad range of topics under the headings “Euripides and Athens,” “The figure of Helen in early Greek culture,” “Helen on stage,” “The ‘new’ Helen” (on Stesichorus, Herodotus, and Euripides), “The production,” “A tragedy of ideas,” “Genre,” “Helen transformed” (on reception of the figure and of Euripides’ conception of it in later literary traditions), and “The text and transmission.” The most distinctive aspect of the introduction (and of a number of notes in the commentary) involves A.’s effort to counter the strong tradition of reading the play as strongly iconoclastic in respect to genre and in respect to Athenian (and Greek) attitudes to war and other cherished notions. Especially in regard to genre, A. makes telling points in arguing for the variety of the genre of Attic tragedy and for the seriousness of the issues raised by the play and of the human anxieties and sufferings portrayed even within a drama that contains elements of humor, paradox, and whimsy. His arguments against the most ironic or subversive readings also carry some weight. For some examples, the reader may consult pp. 4–9 (note also p. 7 on *Orestes*), pp. 53–5 (on lack of challenge to gender hierarchies), p. 61 (on assumptions of ethnic superiority), p. 231 on 744–57, p. 259 on 1049, p. 279 on 1151–64, p. 336 on 1603–4. But at times I felt that A. strains too hard to deny the indirect connections that even some original viewers of the play may have drawn between the incidents of the play and contemporary events. A. tends to insist that the hegemonic Athenian male in the audience can maintain his strong belief in the rightness and success of Athenian culture and institutions because the failures seen on stage are those of non-Athenian aristocrats. Such distancing is certainly one effect of the use of heroic subject-matter in Attic tragedy, but I believe the negotiation of identification with and distancing from the heroic figures was very complex and variable (within one person’s response, and within the responses of different—even male citizen—members of an audience). Moreover, although there are some issues in tragedy to which the aristocratic and non-Athenians status of the protagonists is relevant, there are others to which, in my view, it is not. The “lessons” of tragedy about the problems and dangers of human deficiencies in knowledge in general and in individual self-knowledge

in particular are not to be understood as in any way limited to the aristocratic or non-Athenian heroic figures. The religious and psychological impact of tragic stories is broader and does touch the Athenians themselves, and it is not particularly affirmative of militaristic and imperial ambitions (whether or not the Athenians changed their behavior once they left the festival). But A. is a vigorous exponent of his view, and all students of Greek tragedy should look forward to his next book, which will present in more detail his views on how the themes and plots of tragedy do and do not challenge the Athenians' assumptions.

Another aspect of the commentary that is very welcome is the emphasis on mythic and ritual motifs related to the "parthenaic figure" (flower-picking, choral dancing, abduction, and resistance/regret about marriage). It is clear that in many aspects and many passages Helen, even though she is a middle-aged married woman, is assimilated to the condition of the parthenos on the brink of marriage. The ultimate payoff of recognizing this thematic comes in the "Great Mother Ode" (*Helen* 1301-68), as the story of the abduction of Persephone provides a ritual prototype of the parthenaic aspects of Helen's experience. A. argues ingeniously that on the figurative level this motif allows us to make sense of the chorus' apparent references to some offense that Helen has committed (pp. 293-5, 307): the accusation that she was too confident in her own beauty is to be linked to a typical aspect of parthenoi as imagined in myth and ritual. Although this is an interpretation I would like to believe in, I am not confident that we know the true text of the lines of this stasimon that refer to Helen, nor do I find it easy to imagine that an audience would be anything other than confused by the need to shift from a literal to a figurative interpretation of the character who has been so vividly created before their eyes in the play up to this moment (and who has repeatedly lamented the effects of her beauty and nowhere alluded to a different assessment of it earlier in her life).

A.'s text of *Helen* is more conservative than those of Diggle or Kovacs (he lists his differences from the OCT on p. 85), but it appears to me that he has weighed the possibilities and probabilities responsibly and usually offered, under the constraint of the brevity required in such a commentary, good justifications. In regard to allegations of interpolation, A. deletes only lines 5, 299-302, 324-6, 388b-9a, 416, 892-3, 905, retaining dozens of lines that are bracketed in Diggle and/or Kovacs. It would be surprising if a play with so little evidence of popularity on the postclassical stage contained as many extensive interpolations as Diggle identifies, and I am sympathetic to most of A.'s decisions. But if one is to retain 257-9 without emendation, then one needs a more detailed investigation of the instances in which two successive γάρ's are claimed to refer back to the same previous statement and an explicit answer to Kannicht's claim that τέρας is understood in two different ways in 257-9 and 260-1. A large number of the differences in A.'s edition derive from his decision (not unusual in a commentary for students) to use obeli as little as possible. Thus in most of the places where Diggle identified corruption and declined to endorse a particular restoration as probable enough to put in the text, A. has reasonably chosen from available emendations to produce an expected sense. In several other places, his text mat-

ches that of Kannicht in returning to the reading of the sole manuscript L, as A. declines to follow Diggle in the refining emendations of scholars like Nauck (112, 494), Elmsley (334), Bothe (355), Jackson (1033, 1074), Burges (1480), and Blomfield (1488), whose suggestions are often possible and elegant, but do not satisfy the conservative critic's question "Is this change really necessary here?" In one or two places, A.'s return to the manuscript reading seems to me more doubtful: Musgrave's δωμάτων from σωμαίων in 1104 is attractive to me (and one should consider how similar delta and sigma can be in some 13th- and 14th-century scholarly hands); Porson's ἤσκημένοι for ἤσθημένοι in 1539 is also more probable than many of the other changes rejected, since there is no other evidence for this perfect in classical Attic (Herodotus has forms of ἔσθημένος twice in Ionic prose, and it would not be unusual for an Ionic word to emerge in Koine and later Greek prose).

The annotation in general provides good support for students of various levels: for those with less experience, rare or possibly difficult verb forms are parsed, instances of crasis are explained, and erroneous definitions in LSJ are corrected (e.g., in the note on 50-1, on ἀναρπαγή meaning "seizure" and not "recapture"); for more advanced students, there are thorough presentations of the metrical schemes, good discussions of matters of staging and conventions, and guidance on many aspects of interpretation. All in all then this is an edition that will well serve many students as well as attract the interest of advanced scholars. Here I will comment specifically on a few places where I found the information incomplete or (very rarely) erroneous, or I felt some doubt.

p. 68: In defending against modern preoccupations with the definition of the tragic genre and its supposed core characteristics or rules, A. cites the lack of criticism on some of these issues in the ancient scholiasts. I find this argument odd, since the scholiastic tradition does include criticism of Euripides for aspects of *oikonomia*, for unworthy ("unheroic") characterization, for choral irrelevance, and there are comments about plays having endings more like comedy or satyr-play. Comments such as these show that some ancients already had limiting views of the tragic genre.

p. 74, "it is particularly surprising that no Attic vase should show" (scenes of this play): Perhaps if the adjective "Attic" were omitted, this claim would seem stronger to me. There are very few Attic representations of tragedies in any case (if we use criteria something like those of Oliver Taplin in *Pots and Plays. Interactions between Tragedy and Greek Vase-Painting of the Fourth Century B.C.*, Los Angeles 2007); moreover, the selection of scenes that met with favor in the visual tradition was governed by principles that do not allow us to have reasonable expectations of what plays should or should not have appeared.

p. 140, text of 1664: A. follows 20th-century editors in printing διπλῶ as dual nominative, but in *Phoen.* 1362 the same editors all inconsistently have διπλῶ, and it is the explicit doctrine of ancient grammarians that the dual in ω of contracted adjectives is, unlike the other forms, not perispomenon (K-B I.406). (This doctrine may or may not be correct, since the acute on this form may have been assigned in order to disambiguate the adjective from the verb in

-όω. Since we do not have a time machine, we cannot verify how the word was accented in Euripides' time. But in such a situation there is no reason to abandon the system adopted by the ancient grammarians.) According to a note in J. A. Hartung's edition of *Helen* (1851), the circumflex here originated with C. H. Schäfer (perhaps in a very rare edition of 1810). Kirchhoff and Nauck did not accept διπλῶ; but it is in Paley, and Wecklein adopted it in his *editio maior*, and Murray copied it from there, whence it came into the editions of Alt, Kannicht, Diggle, and Kovacs. Paley is the only editor I know of who went on to change the accent in *Phoen.* 1362 to a circumflex. (L. has διπλῶ, as the online image at teca.bmlonline.it shows)

p. 148, on 17-21: while it is good to refer here to the contemporary intellectual interest in "the nature and truth value of mythology," it would be helpful to make clear that the problem is already alluded to much earlier in Hesiod and was recognized in earlier generations in the fifth century (e.g., Pindar, Hecataeus).

p. 156, on 60-2: by an odd oversight A. claims that "to see the light" is used only positively and not in negative expressions. This is disproved by several Euripidean examples (*Alc.* 18 [actually quoted by A. himself in his note on 341-3], *Hcld.* 969, *Tro.* 641, *IT* 564, *Phoen.* 1547; compare Hom. *Il.* 5.119-20).

p. 158, on 71: in "makes full contact with the scene on stage" the use of "on stage" may be confusing to the alert student, since A. has indicated in the introduction (p. 31) that the tomb of Proteus may have been in the orchestra instead of in the ("stage") area just in front of the skene-background.

p. 180, on 257-9: I don't agree that the poetic periphrasis τεῦχος νεοσσῶν λευκόν "suggests H.'s horror at the freakishness of her birth"; why can it not be a dignifying periphrasis, as so often in tragic style?

p. 181, on 270-2: it might have been worthwhile to mention how the idea of being just but being believed by others to be unjust is part of the thought experiment in Plato's *Republic* (360d-2c).

p. 185, on 317: the audience has already heard earlier, in 153-4, that Theoclymenus is away hunting.

p. 192, on 362-85: A. favors a staging in which the chorus waits until the end of H.'s song before entering the skene, against the view of Dale and Taplin that they are entering during H.'s song. It would have been useful to mention the motivation for the latter belief: the assumed principle of the overall continuity of sound in Greek tragedy (the absence of long silences). There must of course have been some moments of silence in some transitional moments in tragic performance, but it should be recognized that this instance will be quite unusual (which is not the same as to say impossible) for the amount of time-consuming action not "covered" by speech or song.

p. 196, on 395-6: here I miss a comment on the stylistic feature of omission of a negative with the first of a pair of terms that are both to be negated (that is, in line 395, οὐ must be understood before τύραννος).

p. 199: here A. is good on the nature of the humor of the confrontation with the old woman and explains that it is not incompatible with the serious implications of Menelaus' situation. But on p. 203 he perhaps tries too hard to deny

some humor: to be sure, the notion of doubles is not inherently funny, but I judge that the accumulation of many assumed doubles in Menelaus' reasoning is amusing and subjects the validity of such reasoning to mild ridicule.

p. 215, on 601: the analysis of the syntax (ἔχον as accusative absolute participle) is taken over from Kannicht, but I do not think it is correct; ἔχον is nominative in agreement with θαῦμα, and the sense is "it is a wonder, even more amazing in reality than the word 'wonder' conveys" (lit. "having its name weaker than the thing"). Kannicht had cited *Hclid.* 745 as a parallel, but ἔχον is nominative there too ("there is in great prosperity this thing too that is not correct: the reputation for bravery"). A. is correct to adopt Scaliger's θαῦμ' ἔστ' for θαυμάστ' at the beginning of the line, since the latter positively requires the accusative absolute interpretation, which I consider unidiomatic (ἔλασσον ἔχον is not the kind of impersonal verb otherwise found in accusative absolute participles not accompanied by ὡς or ὥσπερ).

p. 215, on 623: it would probably have been worthwhile for students to mention that ποθεινός is used here as a two-ending adjective.

p. 224, on 666-8: νεανία is used as noun, Doric genitive (of possession with λέκτρα), not acc. pl. adj. modifying λέκτρα ("youthful"), and there is no hypallage.

p. 235, on 772: I do not think Nauck's conjecture is needed here; Helen is apologetically acknowledging that it was unkind of her to evoke Menelaus' sorrows: "you have answered with more propriety than I used in asking."

247, on 911: rather than just note that ἀπολάζυμαι is a hapax, it would be more instructive to comment on Euripides' extreme fondness for λάζυμαι and its compounds in ἀντι- (often), ἐπι-, προ-, προσ- (the latter three are also all hapax in classical Greek).

p. 248, on 934 τὴν ... ἀλητείαν πικράν: I miss a comment on the use of ἀλητεία here as a hyperbolic term for dependency as a guest in someone's house (since H. has not literally been begging); furthermore, A.'s paraphrase "this bitter life of begging" obscures the fact that the adjective is in predicate position, and so must mean rather "this beggar's life, which has been bitter to me."

p. 258, on 1038: I see no reason to judge νῶϊν to be genitive here rather than dative of interest/advantage with χρηστόν (and ἐς κοινόν also takes a dative: *IA* 408).

p. 271, on 1107-8: it would have been useful to students to mention why ἀναβοάσω is identified as aorist subjunctive rather than future indicative (which would make equally good, or even better, sense rhetorically, and indeed Kannicht's note treats it as future without hesitation): βοήσομαι seems to be the future in classical authors, while in later Greek βοήσω is also possible. One must say "seems to be" since it is impossible to exclude that a poet might have exceptionally used the active (this could apply to Aesch. *Pers.* 638 διαβοάσω as well as to this lyric passage; but it impossible for us to know whether Aesch. and/or Eur. intended this).

p. 280, on 1155-7: A. refers νιν (as sing.) to ἔρις, but I think those who have interpreted it as plural referring to πόνους must be correct. Although it is pos-

sible in English to use “it” in a preposed subordinate clause with its antecedent present in the immediately following main clause (thus A.’s translation “For if competition in bloodshed is to settle it, strife will never cease” is correct English usage), I do not believe that Greek *viv* can be used in the same way; it is always anaphoric, referring to something already mentioned or understood in the discourse. In almost 400 instances of *viv* in tragedy there is no instance that illustrates the forward-looking reference that A.’s interpretation requires.

p. 282, on 1165-92: for “he vows to kill the Greek who has recently arrived at the palace” one must rather say “...who has recently arrived on Egyptian soil,” since at 1171-6 Theoclymenus complained only that a Greek had slipped by his guards and was abroad in his land, and he does not know (though he fears) that the Greek has reached his palace.

p. 288, on 1232: I do not understand how it is appropriate to detect “a patronizing manner” in the use of *αἰνῶ* in this passage.

p. 328-9, on 1512: A. well explains why this line must be corrupt, but I miss some remark about the probable manner of Theoclymenus’ emergence from the palace to hear the news: was he called out (as in *IT* 1304-8) or did he come out opportunely at just the same time (as in *Hipp.* 1153-6)?

p. 329, on 1517-8: I would have preferred a different phrasing of A.’s note on the presence of *αὐτὸν* as subject of the indirect discourse infinitive even though it refers to the same person as the subject of the main verb. A. calls its presence “strictly unnecessary,” but the reflexive pronoun seems to me quite necessary here, as there is no idiomatic way to convey the needed meaning without it.

p. 337, on 1613-8: another parallel perhaps worth citing for the report of someone who escaped the violence that is described in the messenger-speech is the Phrygian in *Orestes*.

The accuracy of proofreading of this long and complex book is very good, but I noted a few slips:

p. 50 n. 217: succinct

p. 181 on 274: read “pres. part.” for “perf. part.”

p. 230 on 736-8: a space has incorrectly slipped in: read *εὐπραξίας* as one word

p. 245 on [892-3]: read *σημανεῖ* for *σηιανεῖ*.

p. 278 on 1144-8: read *χθών* (accent)

p. 284 on 1193: read “conventions”

p. 292 on 1288-9: read *ὄντ* (apostrophe)

DONALD J. MASTRONARDE
University of California, Berkeley
djmastronarde@berkeley.edu