The Interrelation between *Rhesus* and its Genuine Poet: A Problematic Case of Reception?

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Abstract: *Rhesus*, a tragedy mainly attributed to Euripides, had critics already in antiquity: as the second *Ὑπόθεσις* of the play makes evident, its alleged poor quality caused some ancient scholars to express doubts about its authenticity. The authorship of *Rhesus* is still under debate. For instance, Vayos Liapis often claims that the surviving *Rhesus* is a play written in the fourth century BCE by an actor named Neoptolemos (Liapis 2009; 2012). Unsurprisingly, these claims about inauthenticity are again interwoven with the alleged poor poetic value of the play. This connection generally established between Euripides and works of high aesthetic value raises some intriguing questions: is the reception of a text influenced by our convictions about what is classical? Is there an actual connection between an object and its meaning, or are we the ones that form the meaning based on our own beliefs?

The authorship of *Rhesus*: An enquiry that keeps resurfacing

Undeniably, there are plenty of reasons for a modern scholar to study in depth the Greek tragedy *Rhesus*. To begin with, this specific drama is the only surviving tragedy which refers to events that were first recounted in the *Iliad*.[1] More specifically, the dramatist of *Rhesus* discusses the reconnaissance mission carried out by the Achaeans Diomedes and Odysseus in the Trojan camp and their slaughter of the Trojan intruder Dolon during this nocturnal espionage, episodes that we encounter for the first time in the tenth rhapsody of the *Iliad*. Nevertheless, it is more than obvious to the modern reader that the playwright in question by no means imitates his epic model unconditionally.[2] Rather, he picks up these events and freshly re-tells them from the standpoint of the Trojans, instead of following his predecessor's choice and concentrating his attention on the Greek side.

However intriguing the aforementioned relationship between the *Rhesus* and *Iliad* may have been for classicists,[3] the actual

[1] See Allen – Munro 1920. Of course, there is the exception of the satyr-play *Cyclops*. Cf. Fries 2014, 8. For other, no longer extant tragedies which could be called 'Trojan' or 'Iliadic' due to their content, see Fantuzzi 2006, 135–148.

[2] This could not always be taken for granted, given that this drama has not enjoyed the undisputed favor of all its readers, a fact already stressed by Bates 1916, 11. Fantuzzi 2006, 135 correctly underlines that scholarly opinion has recently taken a remarkable turn: "The idea that the *Rh.* is 'nothing else than an *Iliadis carmen diductum in actus*', as the tragedy was authoritatively described one century ago, would no longer find many supporters among modern scholars".

[3] The intertextual play between *Rh.* and *Il.* has been thoroughly discussed by many scholars. For example, see Barrett 2002; Bond 1996; Fan-

identification of the dramatist used to hold much more scholarly interest. As a brief survey makes plain,[4] there are numerous examples of well-known classical scholars who lived in the first quarter of the twentieth century and wrote various studies trying to give an adequate answer to one question alone: who is the genuine author of this Greek drama? It is telling that the answer to this question has not always been the same, given that some asserted that *Rhesus* was a genuine play of Euripides,[5] one of the three tragedians unanimously recognized as classical,[6] while others made a case against that claim.[7] Undoubtedly, the main reason behind this controversy can be found in the first lines of the second ancient Ὑπόθεσις of the play:

> τοῦτο τὸ δρᾶμα ἔνιοι νόθον
> ὑπενόησαν, Εὐριπίδου δὲ μὴ
> εἶναι· τὸν γὰρ Σοφόκλειον
> μᾶλλον ὑποφαίνειν χαρακτῆρα.
> ἐν μέντοι ταῖς διδασκαλίαις ὡς
> γνήσιον ἀναγέγραπται, καὶ ἡ
> περὶ τὰ μετάρσια δὲ ἐν αὐτῷ
> πολυπραγμοσύνη τὸν Εὐριπίδην
> ὁμολογεῖ.[8]
>
> There are those who suggested
> that this drama is not a genuine
> play of Euripides because its char-
> acter is rather Sophoclean; this be-
> ing said, in the *didaskaliae* it is
> registered as authentic, and its
> complexity points to Euripides as
> its actual author.[9]

As the above lines show, the authorship of *Rhesus* was in dispute even in antiquity, despite the fact that the ancient writer of the Ὑπόθεσις clearly rejected all these accusations of inauthenticity. All the same, it is crucial to keep something particular in mind: those (ancient grammarians or classicists of the last century) who considered the play to be inauthentic, namely non-Euripidean, were led to this conclusion through convictions based either on its allegedly poor quality,[10] a characteristic certainly unworthy of the great Athenian tragedian, or on its problematically uncertain nature. Contrariwise, those who discerned the quality of *Rhesus* were somehow persuaded that Euripides was its 'real', one and only writer. For instance, in his article entitled "The Problem of Rhesus," published in 1916, Richards asserted that as regards its aesthetic quality *Rhesus* is even better than the undoubtedly Euripidean *Cyclops* and must, thus, be regarded as genuine.[11] According to his interpretation, therefore, the play's poetic value must be intrinsically interwoven with its originality.

Nonetheless, it is striking that the Euripidean (?) authorship of this tragedy did not trouble only a few meticulous individuals in the past; on the contrary, this issue is still heavily debated even today. One significant recent example is that of William Ritchie, who committed himself to proving the Euripidean character of *Rhesus* in a lengthy and informative monograph entitled *The Authenticity of the Rhesus of Euripides*.[12] However, Ritchie

tuzzi 2005; Fantuzzi 2011; Fenik 1964; Murray 1913; Strohm 1959.

4 See, for instance, Bates 1916, 11; Pearson 1921; Platt 1919, 154; Richards 1916, 196.

5 Bates 1916, 11; Richards 1916, 196.

6 Nowadays Euripides is considered to be a classical playwright, although this was not always the case. See below p. 6.

7 Pearson 1921, 60–61; Platt 1919, 154.

8 Diggle 1994. One of the most recent and illuminating comments on the four *Hypotheses* of *Rh.* is that of Liapis 2012, 55–69.

9 The translation of the Greek text is mine.

10 See Platt 1919, 153–154.

11 Richards 1916.

12 See Ritchie 1964. It is rather interesting that the publication of this book did not go unnoticed. One year later the devastating review of Fraenkel 1965 followed; since then only a few

is not an exception. Almost every modern critic of *Rhesus* takes advantage of the opportunity to express his or her own opinion as far as the genuineness of the play is concerned.[13]

Noteworthy is the case of Vayos Liapis, which we will discuss in detail. Liapis is a well-established scholar of Greek drama, who has written many articles about the tragedy in question.[14] What is the most impressive aspect of his scholarly work, though, is his persistence to prove, if possible, that *Rhesus* is a play that was actually written by a famous actor named Neoptolemos,[15] and was originally produced in the fourth century BCE,[16] most probably within the context of a Macedonian performance.[17] His views are respectable in their own right, for he strives to prove his case by pointing to the (more or less discernible) inclination of the playwright of *Rhesus* towards literary imitation. Indeed, in one of his most recent and extensive efforts, Liapis manages to highlight the large number of allusions of this 'overzealous imitator', who, he claims, both frequently and consciously alludes to many of the classical Attic dramas.[18]

Yet we should not overlook that Liapis is surprisingly in full agreement with his predecessors when he establishes an insoluble but inconspicuous bond between the identity of the playwright of *Rhesus* and his authorial incompetency. More specifically, the perceived lack of poetic originality in this play enables this particular scholar to suggest that its playwright is an actor/author who (unlike Euripides, it is implied) is characterized verbatim by 'sheer incompetence.'[19] Thus, it is evident that for Liapis intemperate literary imitation and unsuitable verbosity can never be consistent with the unanimously accepted Euripidean quality.[20]

To conclude, this short and rather summary introduction has shown that the ancient *Ὑπόθεσις* of this play has triggered an everlasting debate as far as its authorship is concerned. What is more, I have noted that there is a firm interrelation between the reception of *Rhesus* and the identity of its genuine poet. Interestingly enough, everyone who claims that *Rhesus* is not an excellent piece of tragedy is convinced of its non-Euripidean origins.[21] At the same time, those who advocate the Euripidean authorship of this drama are

scholars have dared to think of *Rh*. as a genuinely Euripidean play.

13 See Burnett 1985, 50–51; Fantuzzi 2006, 146; Fantuzzi 2011, 40; Fries 2010, 351; Steadman 1945, 7; Xantakis-Karamanos 1980, 18. 27. 268.

14 See, e.g., Liapis 2009; Liapis 2011; Liapis 2012; Liapis 2014.

15 Liapis 2012, lxxii–lxxv; Liapis 2014, 292.

16 Liapis 2009, 88; Liapis 2012, lxxi–lxxii; Liapis 2014. The idea that *Rh.* is a tragedy from the fourth century BCE is not a bold guess on the part of Liapis. To the contrary, there are many others who advocate the same. See Battezzato 2000, 367; Fantuzzi 2011, 40; Mattison 2015; Xantakis-Karamanos 1980.

17 Cf. Liapis 2009; Liapis 2012, lxxiv–lxxv; Liapis 2014, 290–292.

18 Liapis 2014, 275. 276–290. For a similar criticism of Liapis' insistence to prove that the writer of *Rh*. was untalented, see Mattison 2015, 486–488.

19 Liapis 2012, xlvi.

20 We should keep in mind that *Rh.* is not praised wholeheartedly as a tragedy of classical merit even by the advocators of its Euripidean authorship. A representative is Anne Pippin Burnett 1985, who believes that *Rh.* is a parody-play that has to be attributed to the young and playful Euripides. Cf. Ritchie 1964, 345–361.

21 See above n. 7 and 10. Yet there are some important exceptions to the rule. Firstly, Strohm 1959, 266, despite the fact that he does not support the Euripidean authorship of this drama, claims that this is a play of high dramaturgic quality: "Die Dramaturgie des 'Rhesus' muss ernst genommen werden". Similarly, Mattison 2015, 486–487 holds that "*Rhesus* was composed in the fourth century by an author who was undoubtedly influenced by fifth-century tragedy (…), but who was more than an unskilled mimic". I am greatly indebted to Professor Mattison for providing me a copy of her intriguing article.

eager to emphasise some of its literary merit that entitles it to be labeled as a classic.[22] It seems, then, that among classical scholars it is easily assumed that only good, so to say 'classic,' poets can compose commendable poetry, while plays by non-classical or unknown poets are irreversibly condemned to be mediocre or even bad.

In any case, this issue may perhaps acquire larger theoretical implications, if we take into consideration the similar fate of another tragedy of the classical era: *Prometheus Bound*. Unfortunately, the limits of this essay do not allow me to go into much detail concerning this drama. However, it can be stated that the authorship of *Prometheus Bound* has also excited the interest of researchers who, again, are willing to ascribe it immediately to Aeschylus if they acknowledge its literary merit,[23] or are ready to proclaim it non-Aeschylean if they detect any dramatic imperfections.[24] All of the above observations incontrovertibly raise some intriguing questions: what relationship does the identity of an author *really* have with the quality of his writings? Is the reception of a text influenced by our convictions about what is classical and what is not? Ultimately, is there an actual connection between an object and its meaning, or are we the ones that form the meaning based on our beliefs?

A brief survey of modern literary theory: Constructions of the 'classic' and the 'author'

The realization that an excessive number of classicists have persistently[25] tried to solve the riddle of the authorship of *Rhesus*[26] may well bring to our mind the brilliant question set by Michel Foucault in his illuminating article 'What is an author?': "What difference does it make who is speaking?"[27] This thought-provoking question may possibly have seemed rather irrelevant and aimless to an individual who lived a century ago; for until recently it was a given that a masterpiece of classical literature was unanimously regarded as such only on the grounds of its exceptional beauty and its unmatched literary value.[28] Although this might seem logical even to us today, it does not necessarily constitute an absolute truth. As James Porter has demonstrated in his pioneering introduction "What is 'Classical' about Classical Antiquity?", there are no ubiquitous and unchangeable properties that an object or a text can have and, thus, be designated as classical.[29] To the contrary, we ought to be aware of the fact that the meaning of the word 'classical' is, *in its very ideology*, mutable and fluctuat-

[22] See Bates 1916, 10–11; Murray 1913, v–xii; Ritchie 1964, 101–140.

[23] See Herington 1970, 118–121.

[24] See Griffith 1981.

[25] Almost the same was already stated by Murray 1913, v.

[26] It is worth noting that Liapis 2014, 276 chooses to quote in translation a few lines of Fraenkel's work on *Rh.* and, thus, to show his inherited frustration about the persistent anonymity of this ancient playwright: "it is no feather in the cap of classical scholars that the question of *Rh.*' authorship is still open to debate".

[27] Foucault 1998, 222. To my mind, Foucault here implies a negative answer.

[28] See Porter 2006, 1–4.

[29] This being said, we would be historically inaccurate if we did not situate this article in its historical context. So, it should be mentioned that the insightful observations of Porter come along with the conclusions of the reception theory (otherwise, reader-response theory), which has made the case that literary academics should focus their attention on the readership of literary texts instead of trying to find the supposedly true meaning that the author desperately sought to imply. Generally, for reception studies, see Holub 2004; Holub 2005; Iser 1980; Jauss 1995. More specifically, for the effect of reception studies on the field of classics, see Brockliss – Chaudhuri – Lushkov – Wasdin 2012; Hardwick – Stray 2008a; Kermode 1983; Martindale 1993; Martindale – Thomas 2006; Martindale 2006; Porter 2008; Wood 2012.

ing: "Despite the rhetoric of permanence, which is the rhetoric of classicism, the classical is necessarily a *moving* object because it is an object constituted by its *interpreters*, variously and over time" (the emphasis is mine).[30] Hence, we are justified in saying that everyone who deals with the allegedly classical texts of Greek and Latin literature regards them to be as such on the grounds of convention. Thus, the very construction of the idea of 'classic' is characterised by an indeterminacy which allows for differing interpretations at all times.[31]

The varying content of the term 'classical' is additionally confirmed by the case of Euripides and the erratic fate of his work. Again, it is James Porter who informs us that Euripides, a conspicuously classical playwright for us, did not always meet with wholehearted approval by all of his readers throughout the centuries, even though his huge production of theatrical plays had received unanimous acceptance by the fourth century BCE Greek audience.[32] While Sophocles was always thought to be *the* example of a classical playwright (we should not perhaps underestimate the crucial part played by Aristotle in this development due to the judgments he passed in his *Poetics*),[33] Euripides sometimes found it rather difficult to fit smoothly into the category of 'classical'.[34] His brutal violence, his intellectuality and his playful irony, among other things, have created at times a deep distrust on the part of many established scholars.[35] So, however implausible this may seem to us, at one time even the classicism of Euripides was seriously questioned.

Returning now to Foucault's question, we have to acknowledge that it *does* actually make an enormous difference who is speaking as far as the reception of any literary text is concerned.[36] Every time we approach a text we ought to take into consideration that our reading can never be objective.[37] Instead, the identity of a particular author and our fixed ideas about his or her literary greatness (or lack thereof) will inevitably play a pivotal role in our view of the text.[38] We must of course keep in mind that our judgments today will most likely be challenged by the next generation. Consequently, we are entitled to say that it is we, as readers, who form the meaning based on our own convictions

30 Porter 2006, 52.

31 For the relativity of the term 'classical' and its always changing character, see also Beard – Henderson 1995, 4. 29. 31; Greenhalgh 1990, 12; Kermode 1983, 130–141.

32 For an early reception of classical tragedy in the age of Macedon, see Hanink 2014, 221–240. Here I want to thank Professor Hanink for providing me with a copy of her illuminating book.

33 See *Poet.* 1453a29. 1453b29-30. 1456a27. 1462b2–3. Cf. Hanink 2014, 208.

34 See Porter 2006, 23.

35 Goldhill 1986, 244–264 has shown that Euripides deliberately manipulated the conventions of the genre of tragedy, a fact that has provoked some negative comments. For example, he mentions the case of a scene in *Ele.* which, because of its comic technique, was regarded by Eduard Fraenkel as spurious.

36 This is something that Foucault himself recognizes. See Foucault 1998, 213. Especially interesting is the early case of Pierre Louÿs, a French writer, who tried to challenge the conventions of authorship and its standardised reception by publishing a collection of his poems entitled *Les Chansons de Bilitis* (1895) and by attributing them to a supposedly ancient female writer named Bilitis. For this ingenious hoax and the destabilisation of the norms of scholarship, authorship and translation caused by it, see Venuti 1998.

37 Hans-Georg Gadamer 1989, 30 has correctly warned his readers that in every domain of human knowledge there are no conclusions completely free from presuppositions: "Even in the domain of the natural sciences, the grounding of scientific knowledge cannot avoid the hermeneutical consequences of the fact that the so-called 'given' cannot be separated from interpretation". Cf. Dibadj 1998; Venuti 1998, 46.

38 See Martindale 1993, 3–18. Cf. Martindale 2006.

and assumptions about who deserves to be labeled as a classical writer and who does not.[39]

This being said, there is a question that remains to be answered: how can all the above theoretical assessments help us look at *Rhesus* from a fresh angle? In the first place, I must emphasize that under no circumstances is it my intent to dismiss all of the aforementioned interpretations of *Rhesus* concerning the genuineness of the play. Rather, I want to stress that the 'author function' is still of great importance for many present-day classicists, almost fifty years after the first publication of the groundbreaking article 'The Death of the Author' by Roland Barthes.[40] Of course, I am not the first to admit that most classical scholars are characterised by an unwillingness to pave the way for less author-determined interpretations.[41] However, I hope to have adequately shown that this reluctance is much more discernible and tangible as far as the case of *Rhesus* is concerned.

Rhesus: Future Prospects[42]

As I have shown above, the charge of inauthenticity (regardless of the validity of this accusation) has clearly determined the destiny of the reception of *Rhesus* and at the same time has proved the significance of a given text's originality. Nevertheless, this long-established philological approach can be strongly challenged if the imaginative term 'expressive authenticity', first introduced by Denis Dutton, is taken seriously into account.[43] More specifically, Dutton, a well-known philosopher of art, sets forth the above term in order to distinguish between two separate meanings of genuineness in his influential discussion of artistic authenticity. The first one is called 'nominal authenticity' and refers to every work of art which is 'properly named', that is, a painting or a musical whose painter's or composer's identity is known to us with certainty.[44] For example, if someone asks me about the nominal authenticity of *The Brothers Karamazov*, I may easily respond by saying that "Regarding the nominal authenticity of this work, *The Brothers Karamazov* is a novel of the Russian writer Fyodor Dostoyevsky which was first published in 1880".

However, the second concept, that of 'expressive authenticity', refers to something entirely different. Dutton uses this specific phrase in order to discuss works of art that manage to express the true feelings and beliefs of their creator and his or her society.[45] In other words, a composer, a painter or a writer is expressively authentic only when he or she is explicably sincere, passionate, veritably creative and 'true […] to one's artistic self.'[46] Going back to the previous example, I can claim that the book *The Brothers Karamazov* is "expressively authentic" in the sense

[39] Certainly, I am not an exception to the rule. It goes without saying that my current analysis of *Rh.* is by no means objective nor does it try to have the last word on any literary controversy.

[40] See Barthes 2015. In this article the famous French thinker has undertaken the challenge of redirecting the interest of literary theorists from the side of the author to that of the reader. Intriguing is the last sentence of his text (Barthes 2015, 6): "the birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the Author". For an interesting, performance-oriented adaptation of Barthes' ideas, cf. Ioannidou 2010.

[41] See Hardwick – Stray 2008b, 2–5; Martindale 2006, *passim*; Porter 2008, 469.

[42] I borrow this title from Porter 2008, 469.

[43] Dutton 2003, 272 highlights that the idea of 'expressive authenticity' is neither entirely his nor an exclusive product of western civilization.

[44] See Dutton 2003, 259–266. Dutton 2003, 260 emphasizes that as far as the notion of 'nominal authenticity' is concerned a misidentification is possible, even when there is no traceable, intentional deceit on the part of the artist.

[45] See Dutton 2003, 259. 266–270. For an inspiring adaptation of Dutton's terminology, see Gamel 2010.

[46] Dutton 2003, 267.

that it passionately tells an exciting story that meaningfully expresses the writer and his contemporary society. At this point, however, it is crucial to underline that by no means does Dutton imply that one of these two notions is preferable to the other. According to him, both are equally important, but point to different aspects of artistic originality.[47]

So, if we take the notion of 'expressive authenticity' into account, we may well realize that the tragedy *Rhesus* can become the focal point of our scholarly interest for several reasons other than its genuineness or its notorious inauthenticity.[48] A closer look at *Rhesus* may reveal that this play (as all other extant Greek tragedies) deals creatively with manifold issues which were troubling the consciousness of every Greek citizen. For instance, one of the most important themes alluded to in this tragedy is the relationship of humankind with the divine.[49] More specifically, this ancient drama stresses both the importance of the supernatural intervention of the Olympian gods in the destruction of Troy and the weakness of human activity in opposition to godly power.[50] Moreover, an aspect of *Rhesus* that has yet to be adequately discussed is the significance of treachery in a military context and the serious consequences of a reckless attitude towards deception.[51] In *Rhesus* both Trojans and Achaeans resort to deceit and trickery in order to eliminate their opponents once and for all.[52] However, it is the decisive action of the devious Odysseus that will ultimately lead the Greeks to a luminous victory, because it is he who manages to deceive the naïve Trojan watchmen just in time.[53]

Last but not least, an integral element of *Rhesus* that remains to be examined in detail is its intensively original political tone. For until now no one has scrutinized the fact that *Rhesus* presents three different models of political leadership to its ancient and modern audience. The first is that of Hector, who is represented as a negligently impulsive but democratically inspired prince that changes his opinion when his subjects convince him to do it.[54] Rhesus, on the other hand, is sketched as a garrulous monarch whose notorious boastfulness proves futile,[55] given that he loses his life in an inglorious way.[56] In opposition to the previous two models, Odysseus is outlined in a radically different way. This Achaean leader is depicted as a person who

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[47] What exactly Dutton means by the term 'expressive authenticity' is not straight-forward at all. In other words, there are many challenging questions that someone could pose regarding his notion. A few of these are the following: are there texts, paintings or songs that can be labeled as expressively *in*authentic and who is in a position to decide this? Furthermore, if the originality of a creator/writer's creativity and passion constitutes the focus of our attention, will our evaluations not be author-centered again? Unfortunately, the limits of this essay do not allow us to go deeper into this issue.

[48] Of course, it is not my intention to imply that there are no articles that focus on aspects of *Rh.* other than its authorship. For example, see Barrett 2002; Battezzato 2000; Bond 1996; Burnett 1985; Elderkin 1935; Fantuzzi 2005; Fantuzzi 2006; Fantuzzi 2011; Fenik 1964; Liapis 2011; Mattison 2015; Parry 1964; Rosivach 1978; Steadman 1945; Strohm 1959; Thomson 1911.

[49] Liapis has made the interesting suggestion that there is enough evidence to identify the king Rhesus with *Heros Equitans*, a Thracian deity. See Liapis 2011.

[50] Significant is the episode of the deceit of Athena, who pretended to be the goddess Aphrodite in Paris' presence. See *Rh.* 646–674. Cf. Bond 1996, 268; Rosivash 1978, 73.

[51] For the prevailing character of trickery in *Rh*. see the insightful comments of Bond 1996, 268–269 and Rosivach 1978, 64–67.

[52] *Rh.* 150–253. 565–594.

[53] *Rh.* 683–691.

[54] *Rh.* 77–149. 340–341. Cf. Burnett 1985, 19; Liapis 2009, 79; Liapis 2012, xlvii–xlviii; Mattison 2015, 492–496; Parry 1964, 287–288.

[55] *Rh.* 447–449. 488. Cf. Burnett 1985, 30–31; Hall 1989, 125; Liapis 2012, xlviii; Parry 1964, 289; Rosivach 1978, 59–60.

[56] *Rh*. 780–795.

carefully examines all the clues provided, who obeys the commands of his protective deity and, thus, fools his enemies thanks to his eloquent treachery. For all of these reasons he surpasses his opponents.

In conclusion, if someone is interested in finding out the unique character of a tragedy by focusing on the text itself rather than searching for the true identity of the playwright (i.e., if someone is willing to pay closer attention to 'expressive authenticity' rather than to 'nominal authenticity'), he or she can always find new and fresh ways to look not only at *Rhesus*, but at any literary text. Of course, this does not mean that 'nominal authenticity' is insignificant or useless and, consequently, classical scholars should stop trying to answer the question of a text's authorship. Rather, my purpose here has been to underline that the authorship of a work is only one facet of the much more complicated concept of originality.

Conclusion

In this essay I have focused my attention on *Rhesus*, a tragedy that has been often neglected in research on the grounds of its disputed authorship. However, instead of taking sides concerning the play's originality, I decided to explore the reasons why an ancient, mostly unreliable, accusation of ingenuity has proven to be so enduring. My research led me to the important observation that all of the claims of ingenuity were always interwoven with the readers' convictions about the play's poor quality and *vice versa*. On the other hand, it has been shown that those who had asserted that *Rhesus* is Euripidean were able to highlight some of its literary merit. This allowed me to conclude that the identity of Euripides was believed to be linked to the unquestionable value of poetic work by most of *Rhesus*' readers. Nevertheless, a brief exploration of the notions of 'classical' and 'author' let me suggest that those two constructions do not provide a solid ground for interpretation, given that they are deliberately changeable and subjective. Hence, having realized that it is we as readers who form the meaning of every text we approach, influenced by what we believe about its writer and his or her merit, I hold that the notion of 'expressive authenticity' can contribute to the solution of *Rhesus*' notorious problem. Instead of focusing on its original authorship, we can analyse the play itself. However, it is more than certain that this attempt of mine cannot be infallible: an exhortation of the text alone, to the exclusion of its author, will always admit the danger of allowing for interpretations that are ahistorical and subjective.

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