

S. NIKOLAIDOU-ARABATZI, *Ευριπίδης. Βάκχαι*, Thessaloniki: Zetros, 2006, 686 pp., ISBN 960-8437-76-8.

For many readers and scholars Euripides' *Bacchae* deserves being appointed as the most famous tragedy –this reviewer prefers *Oedipus at Colonus*, so close in many aspects to the *Bacchae*–. Maybe for this reason, as a consequence of the impact of the play on the studies on theatre, anthropology, and religion after the rather schematic commentary published in 1960 by Dodds, further comprehensive approaches to the *Bacchae* have been not especially frequent. New critical editions –actually Dodds' was not such– are those published by Roux, Diggle and Kovacs¹. Commentaries are even less, for there is only that published by Seaford². It will be not surprising, therefore, that we pay here attention to an edition produced some time ago, the precious contribution by Prof. Smaro Nikolaidou-Arabatzi (Democritus University of Thrace) appeared in a high-valuable collection, *Αρχαίου Συγγραφεύς*, an ambitious and brilliant project of the Publishing House Zetros unfortunately not very present in our academic and personal libraries.

The architecture of the book gives some clues on the relevance of this edition. After an extensive Introduction (pp. 23-127) follow the text of the tragedy with a literal Modern Greek version (pp. 129-281), an accurate commentary (pp. 289-648), a metrical analysis (pp. 649-61) and a general bibliography (pp. 663-86). That is to say, although the text needs double space than usual because of the Modern Greek version, 60 % of the book is devoted to a detailed exegesis of the text.

The presentation of the play does not miss any aspect of interest: for example, Nikolaidou-Arabatzi discusses epigraphical records related to the Dionysiac cult (pp. 58-63), an aspect neglected by other scholars. It is also quite remarkable that she stresses how the theatrical performance lies on the double condition of its protagonist, born firstly a human being and born again now as a god (pp. 123-5).

Even if the work is not intended to be a critical edition, Nikolaidou-Arabatzi discusses many passages and makes choices of her own, always

¹ J. Roux: *Euripide, Les Bacchantes I: Introduction, texte et traduction. II: Commentaire*, Paris 1970-1972; J. Diggle, *Euripidis Fabulae III*, Oxford 1994; D. Kovacs, *Euripides Bacchae, Iphigenia at Aulis, Rhesus*, Cambridge & London 2002.

² R. Seaford, *Euripides VI. Bacchae*, Warminster 2001², 1996¹. A recent Spanish translation provided with an extensive commentary in S. Macías Otero, *Bacantes. Euripides*, Madrid 2020. A different scope in A. Rijksbaron, *Grammatical Observations on Euripides' Bacchae*, Amsterdam 1991. For a wide-ranging approach to the tragedy see the essays collected by D. Stuttard, ed., *Looking at Bacchae*, London & New York 2006.

supported by a perfect knowledge of the Euripidean language and style. Take as counterbalanced examples the preference on l. 115 for the conjecture εὐτ' ἄν (pp. 337-8), on l. 191 for the transmitted lesson of the manuscripts οὐκοῦν (p. 364), on ll. 466 and 1157 for the lessons given by the papyri (pp. 431, 594).

Next to the accurate and helpful metrical analysis of the lyric sections (pp. 649-61) we would ask for a specific commentary on metrics. In addition to the major contribution of Dale –not included in the final bibliography–³, two important metrical problems have been discussed some decades ago, namely the preference of the late Euripides for Ionic tetrametres –so, for instance, in the plays *Trojan Women* (415), *Ion* (413), and *Helen* (412)–⁴, as well as the mixing of choriambi and Ionics⁵. Metrics also explains the choice of some lessons, e.g. on l. 64 the emendation of Bothe γαῖας, formerly accepted by Diggle, instead of the form given by the manuscripts and edited by Murray and Dodds, the contracted γᾶς, for the dissyllabic variant helps to build an Ionic dimetre.

The author has been not free from the extraordinary authority conferred to Dodds' *Bacchae*. Her commentary focuses on the religious problems related to the Dionysiac cult and their reflex at every level of the play: its primary goals, its plot, characters and situations must be analyzed from the viewpoint of the Bacchic phenomenon. Dodds started a fruitful path which Seaford and Nikolaidou-Arabatzi follow with the same objective, the interpretation of the play within the anthropological, cultural and religious discourse. Matters of language, style and dramatic technique are not neglected in this edition, but they come only afterwards.

The first goal of Nikolaidou-Arabatzi is intended to provide a reliable reading guide. For this reason part of her commentary is addressed to a broad readership and gives precise explanations on questions of grammar and literature. Even then we are offered a wide-ranging repertoire of literary references, as well as useful historical and cultural statements, not to miss the referral to the available iconographic sources. Some of her observations are worthy of praise, like those on the recurring *ἄνα- in the language of the Bacchic cult (p. 327), on repetition in the last Euripidean plays (p. 333), on the smiling mask for characterizing Dionysos (p. 426), on the challenging aspect of his hair, in Pentheus' opinion (p. 429), on the Dionysiac dithyramb (p. 448), on the ambiguity of some terms (p. 500), on Pentheus' dress (p. 538), and so on.

Minor matters cover a wide sample of themes, so that eventual misunderstandings had to be unavoidable to the author. The fawn skin is not exclusive of the maenads (p. 305, following Jeanmarie), since it is also a basic

³ A.M. Dale, *The Lyric Metres of Greek Drama*, Cambridge 1948.

⁴ T. Drew-Bear, "The Trochaic Tetrameter in Greek Tragedy", *AJPh* 89, 1968, 385-405.

⁵ S.G. Brown, "Metrical Innovations in Euripides' Later Plays", *AJPh* 95, 1974, 207-34.

element in Artemis' clothing, as shown for example by X.E. I.2.6. Actually, the confusion of hunting and maenadism appears already in Dodds⁶. On l. 71β (p. 322) ὑμνήσω has a formular role at the prooimion of the choral song addressed to the god⁷. On l. 410 (p. 417) the allusion to Pieria should remind that there was an alternative location in Boeotian Cytheron, of course omitted by Euripides in the presence of a Macdonian audience. On l. 665 the adjective λευκόν (p. 479) probably must be understood as λευκαὶ φρένες in Pindar, *P.* 4.109⁸, following Hesychius, and E. *Or.* 140 λευκὸν ἵχνος should also be dealt with, in spite of being usually rejected by the editors, who prefer to print the more widely transmitted lesson λεπτόν, a clear *lectio facilior*.

Omissions are a matter of subjectivity and there is thereupon a risk to make an unfair judgment. Certainly, an introduction to the *Bacchae* is not the place to bring an exhaustive report on the presence of Dionysism in Greek religion and culture, but maybe the sole reference to Privitera⁹ should better have been renewed with more recent contributions¹⁰. On the political and historical background of the links of the play with the Macedonian court of Archelaus I and even of a first performance there, that is to say, in the city of Pella, in addition to the first remark by Ridgeway a recent reassessment by Revermann has fruitfully revisited the matter¹¹. The comment on the cult of Cybele (pp. 326-7) deserves some further attention, although the religious features and the geographical extent of the ritual are very old open questions¹².

⁶ E.R. Dodds, *Euripides' Bacchae*, Oxford 1960², 81, on l. 111.

⁷ See for instance *Hy. Hom.* 3.19, Pi. fr. 29, l. 7. Another instance, Pi. fr. 94b, l. 11, has a different sense because it is used for a person.

⁸ See M. Briand, "L'esprit blanc" de Pélías (Remarque sur Pindare, *Pythique* IV, v. 109", *Méris* 8, 1993, 103-28.

⁹ G.A. Privitera, *Dioniso in Omero nella poesia arcaica greca*, Rome 1970

¹⁰ T.G. Palaima, "Linear B and the Origins of Greek Religion: 'di-wo-nu-so'", in N. Dimoudis, A. Kyriatsoulis, eds., *The History of the Hellenic Language and Writing From the Second to the First Millennium BC: Break or Continuity?*, Altenburg 1998, 205-22. Noteworthy is also АС Руслева, "Орфизм и культ Диониса в Ольвии", ВДИ 1, 1978, 87-104 (= A. Rusaeva, "Orphism and Dionysos' Cult in Olbia", *Vestnik Drevnej Istorii* 143, 1978, 87-104). After the publication of the edition under review A. Bernabé, "Dionysos in Mycenaean Times", in A. Bernabé, M. Herrero, A.I. Jiménez, R. Martín, eds., *Redefining Dionysos*, Berlin 2013, 23-37; F. Graf, "Dionysiac Mystery Cults and the Gold Tablets", in F. Graf, S.I. Johnston, eds., *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife: Orpheus and the Bacchic Gold Tablets*, London 2007, 137-64.

¹¹ W. Ridgeway, "Euripides in Macedon", *CQ* 20, 1926, 1-19, p. 1: (...) There is no reason why the *Bacchae* may not have been previously performed in Macedon, as suggested by the famous passage in that play in praise of Pieria; M. Revermann, "Euripides, Tragedy, and Macedon: Some Conditions of Reception", in M. Cropp, K. Lee, D. Sansone, eds., *Euripides and Tragic Theatre in Late Fifth Century*, ICS 24-25, 1999-2000, 451-67. Two more papers have been published after the issue of Nikolaidou-Arabatzi, viz. A. Duncan, "Nothing to Do With Athens?", in D. Carter, ed., *Why Athens? A Reappraisal of Tragic Politics*, Oxford 2011, 69-84, pp. 80-2; E. Stewart, "Euripides, Archelaus of Macedon and Popular Patronage", *DHA* Supp. 21, 2021, 79-101.

¹² A.B. Cook, "Animal Worship in Mycenaean Greece", *JHS* 14, 1894, 81-169.

Sometimes after such interesting comments the reader would ask for more: maybe the suggested satyr drama (p. 344) was also performed in the same tetralogy that includes the *Bacchae*? Some poetic terms should have been highlighted, as the absolute or nearly absolute hapaxes εὔασμα (p. 352)¹³ and ὑπεξαικρίζω (p. 478). A few instances are really due to an omission, as the unindicated publication of Tammaro (pp. 371-2)¹⁴, the name of Teiresias on ll. 266-71 (p. 388). A few occasional typos should be emendated in further editions: p. 47 του Αισχύλο, p. 55 Φάδη, p. 97 Dettiene, p. 412 Romily, p. 569 ῥήματος repeated. Our remarks on this behalf must not hide our highly positive appraisal of this fair edition with its helpful, solid and talented commentary.

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¹³ This Euripidean coinage occurs later in two related texts, Strabo 10.3.13 which actually consists of a pastiche of different quotations from the *Bacchae*' parodos, and the *Orphic Hymn* 54, l. 8.

¹⁴ Probably V. Tammaro, "Note alle Baccanti di Euripide", *MCr* 18, 1983, 37-41.