

A NEW EDITION OF EURIPIDES' *HECUBA*

BATTEZZATO (L.) *Euripides: Hecuba*. Pp. x+287. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Paper, £23.99, US\$29.99 (Cased, £79.99, US\$99.99). ISBN: 978-0-521-13864-2 (978-0-521-19125-8 hbk). doi:10.1017/S0009840X18001841

This is a very welcome addition to the Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics series, focusing on one of the most popular Euripidean plays in antiquity and medieval times. The play's popularity is attested by the numerous copies and adaptations produced since it was first performed (see introduction, pp. 22–4), but it has been about a decade since J. Harrison published his translation and commentary (*Euripides: Hecuba* [2008]); it has been even longer since the last edition of the Greek text and commentary appeared in print (J. Gregory, *Euripides: Hecuba. Introduction, Text, and Commentary* [1999], and a few years before that, C. Collard, *Euripides: Hecuba, with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* [1991]). It is, therefore, fitting that this new commentary has been published, bringing together all the latest developments in the interpretation and analysis of this complex play as well as providing a most useful revised edition of the Greek text.

The introduction is divided into ten sections, addressing a number of issues such as dating, metre, casting, myth, reception as well as key Greek concepts such as *xenia*, *philia* and revenge. Section 1 is dedicated to an overview of the life of Euripides and the latest scholarly consensus on the dating of Euripidean plays, acknowledging the obvious limitations in deciding production dates with accuracy. In Section 2 a convincing argument is made for 424 BC as the date of *Hecuba*. B. draws on metrical evidence, in addition to evidence from Aristophanes' *Clouds* and Sophocles' *Polyxena*, to support the proposed date, but is careful to point out that, although plausible, it is still not certain. Section 3 is a most interesting discussion on casting and stage movements. The distribution of parts between the three actors is a fascinating exercise in staging, and B. meticulously offers both what he considers to be the most likely solution, but also various other options for the consideration of his readers. In the same section, he speaks of the importance of the first *eisodos* for the dynamics of the play: it symbolises the complete control of the Greeks over the characters and their circumstances. Section 4 covers the mythical origins of the story, where B. rightly aligns himself with the previous scholarship that the etymology of Polymestor's name and general lack of details on genealogy point to him being a non-traditional character. The meaning of fundamentally Greek notions of *xenia*, *philia* and *charis* is explained in Section 5, prior to demonstrating the constant projection of the Greeks' cultural superiority over the non-Greek characters. The very interesting discussion on Odysseus' and Hecuba's difference in value systems (civic and aristocratic vs solely aristocratic) highlights effectively the nexus of relationships of *xenia*, *charis* and *philia* between the characters, and the ensuing complexity in their obligations towards one another. This leads neatly to the ambiguous morality of Hecuba's revenge, a topic that is ever-present in all discussions of the play and yet needs to be addressed as it remains highly problematic given the brutality of the attack and its ramifications.

No commentary is complete without a reference to the play's impact on later literature, so B. offers a comprehensive overview of the play's reception from Roman times to Shakespeare and beyond in Section 7. Section 8 is dedicated to the manuscript tradition and discusses the colossal task of reconstructing the text through interpolations and variants. B. has made an effort to navigate through numerous copies, commentaries, scholia and scribal errors, but the sheer volume of manuscripts in combination with the play's 'open tradition' has led him to the sensible decision of focusing on a handful of pre-

thirteenth-century manuscripts with the occasional reference to further copies when needed, as explained in Section 9. The introduction ends with an analysis of the various metres used in the text (Section 10), followed by a list of symbols and abbreviations. The introduction does an excellent job in addressing a number of topics, bringing together previous scholarship as well as current opinions, thus creating an up-to-date analysis of most major issues arising from the interpretation of the play.

The Greek text is constructed meticulously and accompanied by a brief apparatus criticus, extremely useful for a play with such complex issues surrounding its manuscript tradition. A few editorial decisions and readings could potentially be debated, but B.'s choices are thoughtful and can certainly be defended on metrical and linguistic grounds.

B.'s expertise, deriving from his long engagement with Euripidean tragedy in general and *Hecuba* in particular, is especially evident in the commentary. The analysis, as one hopes when it comes to commentaries, touches upon points both of linguistic, grammatical, syntactical and metrical interest as well as of content and literary context. There are quite a few disputed lines (62–3, 73–4, 75–6, 77–8, 92–7 etc.), whose rejection is expertly justified. The metrical analysis of sung parts is helpfully offered in great detail, allowing the reader to fully grasp the complexity and variations of metre in the odes. In terms of content, B.'s commentary is a combination of well-known Euripidean features such as the opening monologue (undoubtedly of use to those less versed in the theatre of Euripides) as well as surprising innovations such as Hecuba's aside (lines 736–51, pp. 170–1 in the commentary), most rare in extant Greek theatre. Difficult passages are tackled thoughtfully and in detail, using a combination of parallel texts, contextualisation and linguistic analysis. For example, in the discussion of one of the most difficult passages, Hecuba's speech on *nomos* and justice, B. notes the linguistic possibility of interpreting the passage as atheistic, but swiftly, and rightly, rejects the notion as it is incompatible with the context (lines 787–854, pp. 175–6 in the commentary).

The volume is completed by a detailed bibliography. There are three separate lists of works cited: ancient texts; *Hecuba* editions and commentaries; and a very comprehensive list of secondary sources, including most noteworthy and relevant publications up to 2016.

It is evident that a tremendous amount of work has gone into the production of this edition of the play, which, in places, presents significant challenges in interpretation and textual transmission. B.'s editing decisions are carefully supported by literary and linguistic arguments, and his edition offers the latest developments in the analysis of the play in a meticulously researched and well-presented piece of work. The volume is of the usual high quality of the series, with virtually no typographical errors.

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