

Homer and Euripides: Remarks on Mythological Innovation in the Scholia

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This paper analyses two exegetical strategies adopted by ancient scholars to explain Euripides' mythological innovations and variations with respect to Homer through a selection of scholia. The first approach considers Euripides a (mis-) reader of Homer. The dramatist regards an epic passage as the reference text, but fails to understand its wording correctly: therefore, he uncritically reproduces the model, even though inspired by a genuine impulse to emulate; this circumstance de facto equates the tragedian with a sort of exegete and represents his deviation from the epic text as the locus of an implicit (erroneous) interpretation. The second approach evaluates the work of Euripides, comparing it with the Homeric poems, by means and in the light of concepts of literary criticism. The tragedian creates a good or bad product depending on whether his innovation achieves a certain poetic result: an implausible or unrealistic description of a character is contested, whereas a strategy to enhance the emotional impact of the dramatic moment is recognised and perceived as a careful and conscious artistic operation, hence possibly praised.

Keywords: ancient scholarship, exegetical activity, Greek scholia, literary comparison, literary criticism

Introduction

The poetic treatment of myth was a much debated topic in Hellenistic and Roman scholarship¹. In this discussion, Homer occupied a unique position: he was the authority maintaining the traditional version of a legend and the fundamental poetic model of the subsequent literature². Ancient critics paid specific attention to the divergence of a narrative from the common or widespread account, and their attitudes towards this issue were various, depending on both the characteristics of the texts analysed and the knowledge or interests of the commentators themselves.

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¹Nünlist (2009, pp. 257–264) provides an account of the major questions that ancient commentators addressed when dealing with mythological issues; see also Nünlist (2015, pp. 738–739, s.v. *Mythology*).

²In a survey on the citations from Homer, Hesiod, Pindar, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes in the scholia to these authors, in those to Theocritus and Apollonius Rhodius and in the *Etymologicum Magnum*, Montanari (1992, pp. 78–84) shows that the citations from Homer noticeably outnumber all the others; only in the scholiastic corpus to Aristophanes the citations from the comic poet prevail. The commented author is normally the most quoted after Homer. From a different and complementary perspective, Scattolin (2007) analyses some scholia to Sophocles and Euripides where ancient scholars cited together with or instead of Homer authors who appear to be a better comparison.

Ancient exegetes' assessments of Euripides' innovations³ provide a rich and varied sample of such phenomenon: different approaches reflect numerous critical trends, which produced multiple results. For the sake of clarity these can be arranged in two categories, bearing in mind that well-defined demarcations are not always possible due to the nature of the scholia, our main source on the subject. On the one hand, there are neutral annotations which, e.g., indicate the mythological variants between Homer and Euripides as a simple matter of fact⁴, or attribute to the dramatist the use of a model different from the Homeric poems⁵. On the other hand, there are more articulate comments expressing or implying value judgments, which often blame but at times, on the contrary, defend or even appreciate the mythological alteration and thus the poetic invention introduced by Euripides, whose origin and reason they attempt to recognise. To the latter class belong two interpretative methodologies distinguished in terms of theoretical assumptions and explanatory objectives: the first one considers the tragedian a (mis-) reader and exegete of Homer; the second one evaluates his work by means and in the light of concepts of literary criticism. This paper aims to examine these two exegetical strategies in order to shed light on a specific aspect of how poetic works were read and studied in Hellenistic and Roman epoch; the focus is on the reasons and the interpretative perspectives of the ancient commentators.

The practice of textual comparison should be considered the result of a complex operation, which provides a trace of the breadth and variety of the objectives of Hellenistic and Roman scholarship. Quotations from the works of different authors show that ancient scholars used to consult many sources while commenting on a text, thus broadening their cultural and exegetical horizons: comparing different literary products, indeed, contributes to understanding multiple features of a text and to revealing its relationship to tradition and/or the effects of its reception on subsequent literature. So, this article concentrates on textual comparison as a critical and interpretative tool adopted in ancient scholarship to comment on a text along with the search for poetic models⁶.

³For an overview of the characteristics and use of myth in Euripides see Wright (2017). On the relationship of Euripides with epic sources and models see in particular Davidson (2020).

⁴E.g., *Sch. Eur. Ph.* 12: καλοῦσι δ' Ἰοκάστην με: ἀσφαλίζεται τὴν ὀνομασίαν τῆς ἡρώϊνης, ἐπεὶ οἱ παλαιότεροι Ἐπικάστην <αὐτήν> καλοῦσι. καὶ Ὅμηρος “μητέρα τ' Οἰδιπόδαο ἴδον, καλὴν Ἐπικάστην” (*Od.* 11, 271). “They call me Jocasta: he (*sc.* Euripides) certifies the name of the heroine, because the more ancient (*sc.* authors) call her Epicasta. And Homer as well: ‘and I (*sc.* Odysseus) saw the mother of Oedipus, the beautiful Epicasta”.

⁵E.g., *Sch. Eur. Tr.* 822: Λαομέδοντι παῖ: τὸν Γανυμήδην καθ' Ὅμηρον (*Il.* 5, 265; 20, 231) Τρωὸς ὄντα παῖδα Λαομέδοντος νῦν εἶπεν ἀκολουθήσας τῷ τὴν μικρὰν Ἰλιάδα πεποιηκότι (...) φησὶ δὲ οὕτως (fr. 29 Bernabé = 6 Davies = 6 West) (...). “Son of Laomedon: he (*sc.* Euripides) called in this passage Ganymede son of Laomedon, although according to Homer he was son of Tros, following the one who composed the *Little Iliad* (...) He says so (...)”.

⁶The study of literary citations, textual comparison, and intertextuality in ancient scholarship has developed considerably in recent decades: see Calvani Mariotti (1987), Grisolia (1992), Montanari (1992), Montanari (1995), Turra (2006, pp. 151–152), Scattolin (2007), Perrone (2010), Braswell (2012), Phillips (2013), Montanari (2016), Phillips (2016, pp. 167–210), Vergados (2017), Cannatà Fera (2018, pp. 252–253), Gennari Santori (2018), Pagani (2018), Comunetti (2020), Montanari (2020), Vergados (2020, pp. 289–316), Gennari Santori (2021a, 2021b), Montanari (2021a, 2021b).

This investigation is conducted on four scholia from Euripides' corpus - the richest among the surviving scholiastic collections of the tragedians⁷ - which exemplify the critical approaches under examination: three of them are relative to the *Hecuba* and one to the *Rhesus*⁸; the inclusion of two scholia from the *Iliad* and one from the *Odyssey* to relevant passages cited as reference or comparison texts within the tragic annotations enriches and broadens the research. It is worth remembering that the scholia are the result of the compilation of material drawn from various sources, which preserve the work of Hellenistic and Roman scholars in a fragmentary and scattered condition. In these annotations, the expressions introducing citations and/or establishing comparison between authors are varied but often stereotyped, and their choice does not seem to comply with a codified scheme; moreover, they are concise and condensed even when inform on the purpose of the citations⁹. The scholia does not explicitly state the method and literary notions adopted by ancient scholars, because they collect material which ultimately goes back to commentaries on single texts and not to theoretical treatises: therefore, concepts and abstract principles must be deduced from their actual application¹⁰.

⁷An overview of the scholiastic corpus to Euripides, with indication of the main studies on it and its editions, is provided by Dickey (2007, pp. 31–44, 2015, pp. 505–508); for further bibliography and an accurate catalogue describing the witnesses that transmit the scholia and scholarly material to Euripides see also Mastrorade (2010-in progress).

⁸The *Rhesus* has been transmitted as part of the 'Euripidean Selection', a repertoire of ten plays also comprising *Hecuba*, *Orestes*, *Phoenissae*, *Hippolytus*, *Medea*, *Alcestis*, *Andromache*, *Troades* and *Bacchae*, all equipped with scholia except the last one, but it is generally assumed to be the work of a poet of the 4th c. BCE. *Rhesus' hyp. B* shows that the question of its attribution had already been raised in antiquity; this is, however, the only surviving evidence of a debate on the issue in ancient times. The scholia lean *e silentio* towards the attribution of the play to Euripides, revealing no doubts about its authenticity. They actually seem to indicate that scholars such as Crates of Mallus (*Sch. 5; 528a¹*), Dyonisodorus (*Sch. 508*), and Parmeniscus (*Sch. 528a¹*) read the same *Rhesus* that we have and knew it as Euripidean; see Merro (2008, p. 218). Besides, ancient scholarship on *Rhesus* shows a patent affinity in content and methodology with the scholarship on Euripides' other tragedies, following the same path during the Hellenistic and at least the beginning of the Imperial era; see Merro (2008, pp. 9–61, esp. 17 ff), Fries (2014, pp. 22–55). It should be noted, in any case, that for the purposes of this research it is not relevant whether the commentator of the scholion to the *Rhesus* here examined considered this tragedy to be Euripidean or not; this would have no effect on the reasoning in the investigation, which revolves around the ideas and methods of ancient exegetes.

⁹Tosi (1988, pp. 59–86) emphasises the importance of recognising the link between the cited and commented texts, in order to understand reason, meaning and purpose of the citations; Tosi (2013) analyses some examples where this operation is complicated by a possible corruption in the connection between the *interpretamentum* and the commented text, or by the ambiguous explanation provided by ancient scholars on controversial passages. For an analysis of the citations by Hellenistic and Roman scholars and an attempt to classify them see Montanari (2016, esp. pp. 73–74). In particular on poetic citations in tragic scholia, within contexts and for purposes of literary criticism, see Grisolia (1992).

¹⁰For an overview of the most important features of the scholia see Wilson (2007, esp. pp. 50–68). On the main stylistic and formal conventions and some recurrent topics in this kind of material see Nünlist (2009, pp. 8–14). For a definition of 'scholion' and 'scholiastic corpora', a history of the arrangement and development of such collections, as well as a critical discussion of the modern debate on this issue see Montana (2011), with bibliography.

The Murder of Agamemnon with an Axe

In the exodus of the *Hecuba*, Polymestor predicts that Clytemnestra will kill Agamemnon with an axe¹¹.

Eur. *Hec.* 1277, 1279 Battezzato

κτενεῖ νιν (sc. τὴν Κασσάνδραν) ἢ τοῦδ' ἄλοχος, οἰκουρὸς πικρά (sc. ἡ Κλυταιμνήστρα).

καυτόν γε τοῦτον (sc. τὸν Ἀγαμέμνονα), πέλεκυν ἐξάρασ' ἄνω.

The wife of this one, ferocious sentinel of the house (sc. Clytemnestra), will kill her (sc. Cassandra).

And this man himself (sc. Agamemnon), raising up an axe.

A scholion argues that the νεώτεροι (“the younger / post-Homeric authors”), among whom Euripides is obviously included, added the detail of the weapon because of a misreading of the verse in the *Odyssey* which states that Aegisthus ambushed Agamemnon at a banquet and slew him as an ox at a manger. According to the *interpretamentum*, the comparison means that the Atreides was murdered when he should have been resting after his labours, an implicit allusion to the exploits of the war and the return from Troy, but later authors did not understand the symbolic meaning of the image and represented it as real with the addition of the axe. Hence, from this perspective, the younger authors have uncritically reproduced the model, even though inspired by a genuine impulse to emulate, distancing themselves from it due to incorrect exegesis, which might be otherwise defined as the consequence of a too literal interpretation¹².

Sch. Eur. *Hec.* 1279 Schwartz¹³

οἱ νεώτεροι μὴ νοήσαντες τὸ παρ' Ὀμήρω “δειπνίσσας, ὡς τίς τε κατέκτανε βοῦν ἐπὶ φάτνῃ” (*Od.* 4, 535 = 11, 411) ἀντὶ τοῦ ὄν ἔδει μετὰ τοὺς πόνοὺς ἀπολαύσεως τυχεῖν, τοῦτον ὡς βοῦν ἀπέκτεινεν ἢ Κλυταιμνήστρα, προσέθηκαν ὅτι καὶ πελέκει

¹¹The detail of the axe recurs in both Eur. *El.* 160, 279, 1160 and *Tr.* 361–362.

¹²Aristarchus often regarded the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as a reservoir of information and a source of inspiration for later authors, who could also develop stories and details starting from the epic text (e.g., Sch. *Ariston. Il.* 9, 575a¹; Sch. *Ariston. Il.* 24, 527–528a; Sch. *Ariston. Il.* 24, 735a). The scholar of Samothrace also detected examples of wrong interpretations or pseudoliteral reworkings of Homer: e.g., Sch. *Il. Ariston.* 22, 351b: οὐδ' εἴ κέν σ' αὐτὸν <χρυσῶ ἐρύσασθαι ἀνάγοι>: ὅτι ὑπερβολικῶς λέγει. ὁ δὲ Αἰσχύλος ἐπ' ἀληθείας ἀντίσταθμον χρυσὸν πεποίηκε πρὸς τὸ Ἐκτορος σῶμα ἐν Φρυζίν (*TrGF* 3: 364–370); “Not even if [Priam, son of Dardanus] should command to pay your weight in gold: (sc. there is the critical sign) because he (sc. Homer) is using hyperbole. Aeschylus, on the other hand, actually represented a golden ransom in compensation for Hector's corpse in the *Phrygians*”; cf. Sch. *Ariston. Il.* 8, 70a; Sch. *Ariston. Il.* 22, 210a¹. On the relationship between Homer and the νεώτεροι in the use of myth according to the perspective of Aristarchus see Schironi (2018, pp. 661–686), with bibliography. The notion that a misinterpretation of the Homeric text resulted in a specific detail of a later work is widely attested in the exegetical scholia to the *Iliad*: e.g., Sch. *Il. ex.* 4, 59b: πρεσβυτάτην (sc. Ἥρην): τιμιωτάτην νῦν. πλανηθεῖς δὲ ἐντεῦθεν Ἡσίοδος νεώτερόν φησι τὸν Δία (cf. *Th.* 454–457); “The eldest/most honoured (sc. Hera): in this passage (it means) the most honoured. Hesiod, misled by this passage, says that Zeus is younger”; cf. Sch. *ex. Il.* 5, 880; Sch. *ex. Il.* 18, 38.

¹³On this scholion see Roemer (1906, pp. 32–34), Elspenger (1907–1910, pp. 125–126), Nünlist (2009, p. 259).

ἀνηρέθη. διὸ σημειωτέον ἐνταῦθα τὸ “καὐτὸν τοῦτον πέλεκυν ἐξάρασ’ ἄνω” (Eur. *Hec.* 1279) : - MAB

Not understanding that the verse in Homer: “after inviting him to a banquet, as one kills an ox at the manger” is instead of: “Clytemnestra slew as an ox this man who was to get pleasure after his labours”, the younger authors added that he was killed with an axe. Therefore, it is necessary here to mark with a critical sign the verse: “and this man himself, raising up an axe”.

The murder of Agamemnon is mentioned several times in the *Odyssey*, with a fluidity of conception and elaboration that is justified in the light of the different contexts and perspectives¹⁴. The relevant verse recurs two times within the poem: in the section dedicated to the account of Menelaus’ shipwreck in Egypt, when Proteus narrates Agamemnon’s return from Ilium, his emotion at the arrival in homeland and the execution of the ambush by Aegisthus and twenty henchmen (4, 512–537)¹⁵; and in the dialogue between Atreides’ ghost and Odysseus in the *Nekyia*, when the dead hero recounts the violent massacre carried out against him and his companions by Aegisthus with Clytemnestra’s complicity and support (11, 404–434)¹⁶. The woman, cunning and terrible, here meditates on the death of the husband and kills Cassandra with her own hand brandishing a sword (11, 424: φασγάνῳ).

The Homeric δειπνίσσας (“after inviting him to a banquet”) is referred to Aegisthus, whereas the scholion makes Clytemnestra the subject of the homicide; this discrepancy can be explained by taking into account various factors. First of all, the degree of participation of the woman in the murder is variable already in the epic poem: she is from time to time either absent, or an accomplice, or a conspirator and responsible for the crime; the idea that she was the architect of the deceit and actual perpetrator of the assassination was afterwards fortunate, as the paradigmatic example of Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* demonstrates¹⁷. Secondly, the expression σὺν οὐλομένῃ ἀλόχῳ (“with my accursed wife”) in *Od.* 11, 410 might have influenced the ancient commentator: Aegisthus is the nominative in the phrase, but Clytemnestra plays an active role in the action as well. Thirdly, Euripides ascribes the murder to the woman: it is, therefore, not illogical to suppose that the ancient exegete cited the Homeric verse making Clytemnestra its subject under the influence of the tragic text.

¹⁴ *Od.* 1, 28–43; 3, 193–198, 232–235, 253–312; 4, 90–92, 512–537; 11, 404–434, 439, 452–453; 24, 95–97, 191–202.

¹⁵ *Sch. Od.* 4, 535 e2 grasps Agamemnon’s desire for rest after his labours, and therefore states that the image of the ox at the manger must be read figuratively; see Pontani (2010, p. 330) *app. ad loc.* From another perspective, *Sch. Porph. Od.* 535e2 aims to justify the behaviour of the hero and to remove any doubt about his possible weakness for not realising the trap: the reference to the banquet does not mean that he was drunk, and the comparison with the ox does not designate him as an arrogant but a brave man. On the link between these annotations and the tragic scholion see Pontani (2005, p. 101).

¹⁶ On these two passages see respectively West (1981, pp. 359–361) and Heubeck (1983, pp. 291–293).

¹⁷ On the characterisation of Clytemnestra and the change of her role in the murder of Agamemnon from the *Odyssey* to Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* - also with a comparison with Pindar - see Montanari (2018).

Sch. Od. 11, 410 observes that Homer does not mention the use of specific items in the execution of the murder - which appear in subsequent literature - namely a clothing that serves to entrap the victim¹⁸ and precisely the axe: having the text of the *Odyssey* as its focus, it records the characteristics of the epic description by subtracting the innovations added by later poets. This neutral remark counters the reasoning of the tragic scholion, which considers the expansion of the traditional representation as the result of an erroneous exegesis¹⁹.

Sch. Od. 11, 410 Dindorf

σὺν οὐλομένη ἀλόχῳ] ὅτι τῇ ἐπιβουλῇ κάκεινη συνέγνω. τὸν γὰρ χιτῶνα καὶ τὸν πέλεκυν Ὅμηρος οὐκ οἶδεν. Q

With my accursed wife] because she too is complicit in the conspiracy. Homer does not know the clothing and the axe.

Hecuba Spares Odysseus' Life

In the first episode of the *Hecuba*, the protagonist begs Odysseus to spare the life of her daughter Polyxena, who has been chosen as a victim to be sacrificed on Achilles' tomb. The woman tries to persuade the Greek commander by recalling an episode of the final stages of the war when she saved him. Odysseus had entered Ilium in disguise as a beggar and disfigured by wounds that should have made him unidentifiable; nevertheless he was recognised by Helen, who denounced his identity to Hecuba: the queen accepted Odysseus' supplication and let him leave the city unharmed.

Eur. *Hec.* 239–241 Battezzato

οἶσθ' ἠνίκ' ἦλθες Ἰλίου κατάσκοπος
 δυσχλαινία τ' ἄμορφος ὀμμάτων τ' ἄπο
 φόνου σταλαγμοὶ σὴν κατέσταζον γένυν;

¹⁸See, e.g., Aeschylus: *Ag.* 1382–1383: ἄπειρον ἀμφίβληστρον, ὥσπερ ἰχθύων / (...), πλοῦτον εἶματος κακόν, *passim*; *Ch.* 997–1000: τί νιν προσεῖπω, κἂν τύχω μάλ' εὐστομῶν; / ἄγρευμα θηρός, ἢ νεκροῦ ποδένδυτον / δροίτης κατασκίγημα; δίκτυον μὲν οὖν, / ἄρκυν τ' ἂν εἴποις καὶ ποδιστήρας πέπλους, *passim*; and Euripides: *El.* 154–155: δολίσις βρόχων / ἔρκεσιν, *Or.* 25: ἀπείρω (...) ὑφάσματι.

¹⁹*Sch. Soph. El.* 442–446, commenting on the horrible mutilation which Clytemnestra carried out on Agamemnon's corpse, states that each author is free to shape the components of the myth as he wishes, provided that he preserves the essential core of the narrative and creates a text which is coherent from a literary point of view; the innovation from the Homeric model prompts here the critic to emphasise the concept of poetic licence: (...) οὐ δεῖ δὲ διαφωνίαν δοκεῖν εἶναι πρὸς τὸν Ὅμηρον ἐπεὶ φησιν ἐκεῖνος: “δειπνίσσας, ὡς τίς τε κατέκτανε βοῦν ἐπὶ φάτῃ” (*Od.* 4, 535 = 11, 411). ἦρκει γὰρ τὰ ὅλα συμφωνεῖν τῷ πράγματι· τὰ γὰρ κατὰ μέρος ἐξουσίαν ἔχει ἕκαστος ὡς βούλεται πραγματεύεσθαι, εἰ μὴ τὸ πᾶν βλάβη τῆς ὑποθέσεως. “(...) One should not think that there is divergence from Homer because he says: ‘after inviting him to a banquet, as one kills an ox at the manger’. For it was enough if the events in their entirety agree with the matter; as for the details, each (*sc.* poet) has the licence to treat them as he likes, provided he does not do damage to the story at large”. Cf. *Sch. Pind. O.* 4, 31b²: (...) δοκεῖ γὰρ παρ' ἱστορίαν λέγειν· (...) ἀλλ' ἔξεστι πλάττειν τοῖς ποιηταῖς ἃ βούλονται. “(...) he (*sc.* Pindar) seems to contradict traditional myth (...) But poets are allowed to invent whatever they like”.

Do you know when you came to spy on Ilium, disfigured in your appearance by rags, and from your eyes drops of blood dripped down your cheek?

Helen retrospectively narrates this exploit at the royal palace in Sparta in *Od.* 4, 240–264²⁰. In this account Odysseus also wears rags, pretends to be wounded and is recognised by the woman, but she does not betray him, hoping for the victory of the Achaeans: the hero easily carries out a massacre of Trojans and returns to the ships; Hecuba remains unaware of the raid and is not even mentioned²¹. The centrality of Helen in the story is supposed to be a creation of the poet of the *Odyssey*: this episode is useful both to celebrate Odysseus' typical abilities and, above all, to clarify from the point of view of the woman that she regretted the adultery before the sack of Ilium. Euripides introduced the novelty that Hecuba had once spared the enemy so that she can in turn ask the Greek commander to save Polyxena²².

A scholion criticises this invention as implausible, and not corresponding to the Homeric version or conceived in his manner. The dramatist reworks a traditional episode, of which Homer is implicitly identified as the authoritative guarantor, producing something unconvincing: Hecuba would have had no reason to remain silent if she had seen an enemy wandering in the Trojan camp, while Helen did so appropriately. The statement within the scholion “she regretted the folly sent by Aphrodites” indicates that Helen repented her behaviour and planned to return to the Greeks; this sentence echoes a line from the account of the heroine in the *Odyssey*, which further reveals the comparative nature of the commentary.

Sch. Eur. Hec. 241 Schwartz²³

ἀπίθανον τὸ πλάσμα καὶ οὐχ Ὀμηρικόν· οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἐσίγησεν Ἐκάβη πολέμιον θεασαμένη κατοπτεύοντα τὰ κατὰ τοὺς Τρῶας πράγματα. ἢ δὲ Ἑλένη εἰκότως ἄτην γὰρ μετέστενεν Ἀφροδίτης (cf. *Od.* 4, 261–262)²⁴: – M

This invention is unconvincing and not Homeric²⁵: for Hecuba would not have kept silent if she had seen an enemy spying upon Trojans' affairs. Helen, instead, (*sc.* did so) reasonably: for she regretted the folly sent by Aphrodites.

²⁰On this passage see West (1981, pp. 340–343).

²¹Odysseus' incursion into Ilium figured in the *Little Iliad*. Procl. *Chrest.* 206 (cf. Apollod. *Epit.* 5, 13) (= *Arg.* 1 Bernabé = Davies, pp. 52–53 = *Arg.* West) placed it between the construction of the wooden horse and the theft of the Palladion. In the *Little Iliad*, Odysseus disfigured himself (Procl. *l.c.*) or was wounded by Thoas at his own request (*Sch. Lycophr.* 780 = fr. 7 Bernabé = 8 Davies = 8 West); see also fr. 6 Bernabé = 7 Davies incert. loc. intra Ep. Cycl. = 9 West; fr. 10 West. The episode is evoked, as an anachronistic prolepsis, also in [Eur.] *Rh.* 498–507, 710–719. This version is similar to the Homeric one, from which it differs only on few points: it eliminates the egocentric perspective of Helen's account; it omits the meeting between Helen and Odysseus, probably as irrelevant; it does not refer to any wounding on the part of the hero, whereas elaborates on his disguise as a beggar; it insists on the idea that Odysseus presents himself to the enemies as a traitor who is at loggerheads with the Atreides; see Fries (2014, pp. 307–311, 385–389).

²²See Matthiessen (2008, pp. 286–287), Battezzato (2018, p. 109), who also notes that Eur. *Hec.* 240 is “an adaptation of *Od.* 4.245, where Odysseus ... wears σπεῖρα κάκ' (α)”.

²³On this scholion see Roemer (1906, p. 71), Elsperger (1907–1910, p. 48), Papadopoulou (1998, pp. 213–214, 1999, pp. 207–209), Nünlist (2009, p. 260, n. 11).

²⁴*Od.* 4, 261–262: (...) ἄτην δὲ μετέστενον, ἦν Ἀφροδίτη / δῶχ' (...).

The notion of verisimilitude is associated to a component in the construction of the plot and to a demand for consistency in the behaviour of the characters, with respect to the features with which they are portrayed: this is a matter of internal credibility, i.e., a request for textual coherence. This recalls Aristotle's notions of literary work: the poetic mimesis represents what could and would happen either probably or necessarily²⁶; as regards the characters in particular, these must be appropriate and consistent: in drawing them, as in the arrangement of the incidents, it should always be sought what is inevitable or probable, so as to make it inevitable or probable that such and such a person should say or do such and such a thing²⁷.

Dolon's Camouflage and Four-footed Walk

In *Il.* 10 Dolon, preparing to carry out a night raid on the Achaean camp, equips himself with a bow and a spear, and wears a grey wolf skin and a marten cap.

Il. 10, 333–336 West

αὐτίκα δ' ἄμφ' ὤμοισιν ἐβάλλετο καμπύλα τόξα,
ἔσσατο δ' ἔκτοσθεν ῥινὸν πολιοῖο λύκοιο,
κρατὶ δ' ἐπὶ κτιδέην κυνέην, ἔλε δ' ὄξυν ἄκοντα.
βῆ δ' ἰέναι προτὶ νῆας ἀπὸ στρατοῦ· (...) ²⁸.

He immediately threw a curved bow around his shoulders, and there over clothed himself in the skin of a grey wolf, and on his head he set a cap of marten skin, and grasped a sharp javelin. He set out to go toward the ships from the camp.

²⁵In the scholiastic corpus to Euripides the noun πλάσμα recurs in *Sch. Eur. An.* 734 to defend the tragedian against the charge of including in his work an anachronistic reference to a historical event of his own time: ἡ πρὸ τοῦ μὲν ἦν φίλη: ἐνιοὶ φασιν <τὸν ποιητὴν> παρὰ τοὺς χρόνους αἰνίττεσθαι τὰ Πελοποννησιακά. οὐκ ἀναγκαῖον δὲ κατασκευοφαντεῖν τὸν Εὐριπίδην, ἀλλὰ φάσκειν πλάσματι κεκρήσθαι. “[A city] which was previously friendly: some claim that the poet anachronistically alludes to the Peloponnesian war. However, it is unnecessary to criticise Euripides captiously, but rather to say that he has made use of a fiction”. On the meaning of πλάσμα in tragic scholia see Papadopoulou (1999).

²⁶Arist. *Poet.* 1451a 36–38 (cf. b 8–10) (with Gallavotti 1974, pp. 144–145): (...) οὐ τὸ τὰ γενόμενα λέγειν, τοῦτο ποιητοῦ ἔργον ἐστίν, ἀλλ' οἷα ἂν γένοιτο καὶ τὰ δυνατὰ κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον. Cf. Arist. *Poet.* 1460a 26–27, 1461b 11–12, which state that what is convincing though impossible should be preferred to what is possible and unconvincing. See Nünlist (2015, pp. 742–743 s.v. *Plausibility (or Probability)*).

²⁷Arist. *Poet.* 1454a 33–36: χρῆ δὲ καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἡθεσιν ὁμοίως, ὥσπερ καὶ ἐν τῇ τῶν πραγμάτων συστάσει, αἰεὶ ζητεῖν ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον ἢ τὸ εἰκὸς, ὥστε τὸν τοιοῦτον τὰ τοιαῦτα λέγειν ἢ πράττειν ἢ ἀναγκαῖον ἢ εἰκὸς, καὶ τοῦτο μετὰ τοῦτο γίνεσθαι ἢ ἀναγκαῖον ἢ εἰκὸς. Cf. Arist. *Poet.* 1454a 26–28 (with Gallavotti 1974, pp. 153–154). See Nünlist (2015, p. 712 s.v. *Appropriateness (or Propriety)*), pp. 716–717 s.v. *Characterisation*, pp. 721–722 s.v. *Consistency*.

²⁸See also *Il.* 10, 458–459. Hainsworth (1993, p. 188) defines this episode “a truncated arming and departure scene”. In the arming scenes of the *Iliad* the standard order of the weapons is: 1) greaves, 2) corslet, 3) sword, 4) shield, 5) helmet, 6) spear; see Kirk (1985, pp. 313–314). Dolon takes no greaves, neither corslet, nor sword or shield.

The author of the *Rhesus* describes Dolon wearing a wolf skin and a helmet made from its skull: going beyond the epic model, he images that the hero will move on all fours and imitate the gait of the animal²⁹.

[Eur.] *Rh.* 208-215 Fries
 λύκειον ἀμφὶ νῶτ' ἐνάψομαι δορᾶν
 καὶ χάσμα θηρὸς ἀμφ' ἐμῷ θήσω κάρρα,
 βάσιν τε χερσὶ προσθίαν καθαυρόσας
 καὶ κῶλα κώλοισι τετράπουσι μιμήσομαι
 λύκου κέλευθον πολεμίοισι δυσέυρετον,
 τάφροις πελάζων καὶ νεῶν προβλήμασιν.
 ὅταν δ' ἔρημον χώρον ἐμβαίνω ποδί,
 δίβαμος εἶμι· τῆδε σύγκειται δόλος.

I will fasten a wolf-skin on my back, and put the gaping jaws of the beast on my head, then fitting its anterior feet to my hands and its posterior feet to my legs I will go on all fours in imitation of a wolf's gait difficult for the enemies to find, as I approach the moat and the shelters of the ships. When I reach deserted place, I will walk on two legs: the deceit is established in this way.

A scholion finds it incredible that Dolon moves on his hands and feet like a wolf, and adds that Homer represents the hero clothed in the skin of the animal not because he walks on all fours or to suggest such a gesture - indeed crawling on all fours is not mentioned in the *Iliad*. The terms of the relationship between the epic and tragic texts are not made explicit, but this association implies either a generic comparison or a derivation of the latter from the former.

Sch. [Eur.] *Rh.* 210 Merro³⁰
 βάσιν τε χερσὶ: ἀπίθανον τετραποδίζειν αὐτὸν ὡς τοὺς λύκους· οὐδὲ γὰρ Ὅμηρος διὰ τοῦτο τὴν λυκίην αὐτῷ περιτίθησιν. V
 [Fitting its anterior] feet to my hands: it is incredible that he walks on all fours like the wolves; and Homer puts the wolf skin on him not for that reason.

The annotation disapproves the representation of the camouflage because crawling on all fours turns out not to be credible, absolutely or in the literary fic-

²⁹The scene adheres to the pattern of the Homeric description, but focuses on the wolf helmet and skin, suggesting the association between Dolon and the animal; the usual weapons would spoil his stratagem. The chorus provides a lyric repetition of the four-footed walk: τετράπουσι / μῦμον ἔχων ἐπιγασίου/θηρός; (255–257). There are attic vase-paintings of the early fifth century BCE which portray Dolon thus fully attired, and one even crawling on all fours (Paris, Louvre CA 1802 [circa 480-460 BCE], *LIMC* III.1 s.v. Dolon B 2 (p. 661), III.2 (p. 525)). Hence, this was not an invention on our poet's part. Dolon's mimicry might be a genuine early variant of the myth, whose relationship with *Il.* 10 is difficult to define; *Rhesus* happens to be the only extant poetic source of this version. It is uncertain whether Dolon acted out the movements while describing his disguise and walking; two surviving cases of dramatic entry on all fours are the terrified Pythia at Aesch. *Eum.* 34–38 and the blinded Polymestor at Eur. *Hec.* 1056–1059: with the latter the *Rhesus* shows verbal echos. See Bond (1996, pp. 259–260), Fries (2014, pp. 191–197, 200, 213).

³⁰On this scholion see Merro (2008, p. 175).

tion or, perhaps, as regards in particular the stage performance³¹. If the scholion considers the *Iliad* to be here the model of the *Rhesus*, then it criticises the tragedian for excessively expanding on the wolf skin detail of the epic narrative, producing something unconvincing as the crawling walk; besides, it should be taken into account that this innovation could have been seen as the consequence of an over-interpretation of the Iliadic passage on the part of the dramatist, whose reception was also contested as defective from a literary point of view. In summary, the ancient grammarian might have thought that the author of the *Rhesus* elaborated too much on a detail of the Homeric text or misunderstood it, to the point of creating a bad poetic product.

The Children of Hecuba

In *Il.* 24 Priam reaches Achilles' tent to ransom the corpse of Hector. He addresses a plea based on the association between himself and Peleus, two old fathers without the protection of any son. The comparison, however, does not produce an equation, but shows that Priam is more unfortunate: he has lost all his sons during the war and is now forced to beg the enemy who killed the best defender of Ilium; on the contrary, Peleus still rejoices knowing that his only heir is still alive, and hopes for his return. The king explains that of his fifty children nineteen were born from a single womb, i.e., Hecuba, and the rest from other women in the house.

Il. 24, 493–497 West

αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ πανάποτμος, ἐπεὶ τέκον υἱᾶς ἀρίστους
 Τροίῃ ἐν εὐρείῃ, τῶν δ' οὐ τίνα φημι λελεῖσθαι.
 πεντήκοντά μοι ἦσαν, ὅτ' ἤλυθον υἱῆς Ἀχαιῶν·
 ἐννεακαίδεκα μὲν μοι ἰῆς ἐκ νηδύος ἦσαν,
 τοὺς δ' ἄλλους μοι ἔτικτον ἐνὶ μεγάροισι γυναῖκες.

But I am totally unfortunate, since I begot excellent sons in the broad land of Troy, yet of them I avow that not one is left. Fifty I had, when the sons of the Achaeans came; nineteen were born to me from one and the same womb, and the rest from women in the palace.

In *Il.* 6, 243–250 Homer states that inside the Trojan palace there were fifty nuptial chambers of the sons of the king and, on the opposite side in a courtyard on the upper floor, twelve of his daughters³². A total of twenty-two children of Priam are mentioned within the poem: five are born from Hecuba, two from Laothoe and

³¹Cf. Arist. *Poet.* 1460a 11–18: the marvellous, which causes pleasure, should be portrayed in tragedy, but epic affords greater scope for the inexplicable, that is the chief element in what is marvellous, because we do not actually see the persons of the story. Beyond a certain point the marvellous becomes incredible and, therefore, loses its effect; in particular the inexplicable risks being ridiculous in drama.

³²See Kirk (1990, pp. 192–194).

one from Kastianeira, while the mother of the others remains unknown³³. The number and identity of the children of Priam and their mothers were variable in antiquity, which therefore became a matter of debate³⁴: e.g., Apollodorus (3, 12, 5) reported fifty children, and according to his catalogue Hecuba gave birth to fourteen, of whom ten sons and four daughters; Simonides (559 Campbell = 272 Poltera = 559 *PMG*) and Theocritus (15, 139) attributed specifically to the queen twenty children. The number fifty recurs in both Euripides' *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba*: in the first tragedy Priam is indicated as the father of the children³⁵; in the second *Hecuba*, while mourning the imminent sacrifice of Polyxena and her own fate, laments the loss in a way that makes her appear to be mother of them all, i.e., not specifying whether Priam fathered children with other women³⁶.

Eur. *Hec.* 419–421 Battezzato

Εκ.: οἴμοι· τί δράσω; ποῖ τελευτήσω βίον;

Πο.: δούλη θανούμαι, πατρὸς οὗσ' ἔλευθέρου.

Εκ.: ἡμεῖς δὲ πεντήκοντά γ' ἄμμοροι τέκνων.

He.: Alas, what shall I do? Where shall I end my life?

Po.: I will die as a slave, I who am daughter of a free-born father.

He.: I am bereft of fifty children.

Since this affirmation creates a supposed divergence from Homer, a scholion resorts to different solutions to solve the problem.

Sch. Eur. *Hec.* 421 Schwartz³⁷

αὔξουσα τὸ πάθος φησί· ἴθι γὰρ μόνους παῖδας ἐγέννησεν. Ὅμηρος· “ἐννεακαίδεκα μὲν μοι ἰῆς ἐκ νηδύος ἦσαν” (*Il.* 24, 496). ἢ ὅτι συμπεριλαμβάνει τοὺς νόθους διὰ τὴν διάθεσιν τοῦ ἀνδρός. σύλληψις δὲ λέγεται ὁ τρόπος· οὐδὲ γὰρ αὐτὴ ἐγέννησεν, ὁ δὲ Πρίαμος ἐξ ἄλλων γυναικῶν : – M

She says this to increase the suffering: for she gave birth to nineteen children only. Homer: “nineteen were born to me from one and the same womb”. Or because she includes the illegitimate ones due to her disposition towards her husband³⁸. The trope is called syllepsis: she did not beget them, but Priam from other women.

The scholion considers the Homeric version as the correct one. In the first section it reports, via a phraseology which assumes the point of view of the heroine,

³³Besides Hector and Paris, the other sons of Hecuba are Antiphos (*Il.* 11, 101–104), Deiphobos (*Il.* 22, 233–234), and Polites (*Il.* 13, 533–534). The sons of Laothoe are Lukaon and Poludoros (*Il.* 21, 84–96); the son of Kastianeira is Gorguthion (*Il.* 8, 302–305); cf. Richardson (1993, pp. 325–326).

³⁴On the number of Priam's children in ancient sources see Fowler (2013, pp. 527–528).

³⁵Eur. *Tr.* 135–136: τὸν πεντήκοντ' ἀροτῆρα τέκνων / Πρίαμον.

³⁶Cf. Eur. *Hec.* 361: τὴν Ἑκτορός τε χιτέρον πολλῶν κάσιν (*sc.* Πολυξένην); 620–621: ὃ πλεῖστ' ἔχων μάλιστα τ', εὐτεκνώτατε / Πρίαμε, γεραῖά θ' ἦδ' ἐγὼ μήτηρ τέκνων (*sc.* Ἑκάβη); 821: οἱ μὲν γὰρ ὄντες παῖδες οὐκέτ' εἰσὶ μοι (*sc.* Ἑκάβη); see Battezzato (2018, pp. 123, 129, 155, 182).

³⁷On this scholion see Roemer (1906, pp. 39–40), Elsperger (1907–1910, pp. 100–101), Grisolia (1992, p. 56), Papadopoulou (1998, pp. 206–207).

³⁸The expected construction of διάθεσις in the meaning of '(good) disposition toward someone' is with πρὸς and accusative - the only example in Euripides' scholiastic corpus is in *Sch. Hec.* 886; cf. for this translation Papadopoulou (1998, p. 207). In Eur. *An.* 222–227, Andromache states that she nursed the children that Hector fathered with other women, so as to show him no bitterness.

that Hecuba says to have fifty children to increase the suffering: the ancient commentator acknowledges the novelty introduced by Euripides but, instead of expressing a negative assessment, illustrates it as a strategy to enhance the emotional impact of the scene; this device is perceived as a careful and conscious artistic operation, which therefore deserves to be investigated³⁹. According to the explanation, Euripides represents Hecuba as claiming to have a greater number of children in the dramaturgical fiction: hence, the deviation from the model is only apparent, because it is the consequence of an artificial statement of a character on the stage; this seems to exclude that in the perspective of the ancient exegete the dramatist intended to take an objective position on the number of Hecuba's children. This scenario depicts a relationship between Homer and Euripides where the mythological alteration aims to a specific poetic effect. In the second section, the *interpretamentum* alternatively suggests that the queen includes among her children those born from other women. Finally, it refers to the syllepsis, a rhetorical figure whereby an expression/predicate semantically belonging to one subject is attributed to two or more: here Hecuba would equate herself with her husband in respect to the number of the children he overall generated; this number would thus appear exaggerated, but not invented. It should be taken into account that Euripides makes Hecuba express herself with the *pluralis maiestatis* ἡμεῖς (“we”): the ancient critic might have thought that it was indeed a plural, and for this reason talked about the syllepsis; Polyxena's reference to her father at the end of the preceding verse might have favoured this interpretation⁴⁰. Whereas the solution appealing to the amplification of the suffering concerns the emotional effect, the explanation by means of the syllepsis pertains to the rhetorical mechanism through which such an amplification takes place.

The scholia to *Il.* 24 relative to Priam's plea bring out concepts of literary criticism worthy of comparison. *Sch. ex. Il.* 24, 490 observes that the contrast between the condition of Priam and the one of Peleus increases the pity, because, while the first lost fifty sons, the second has only one but still alive. Similarly to the tragic scholion, an association is established between the detail of the deceased sons and the poetic capability to produce a more intense feeling on the part of or towards the person who suffered the loss: this effect is achieved in the *Hecuba* by the exceptionality of the number in absolute terms, and in the *Iliad* by both this feature and the contrast that it produces between the circumstances of the characters.

Sch. ex. Il. 24, 490 Erbse

³⁹The opposite of deliberate deviation is invention without reason or improvisation: cf. *Sch. Eur. Hec.* 3: (...) πολλάκις δὲ ὁ Εὐριπίδης αὐτοσχεδιάζει ἐν ταῖς γενεαλογίαις, ὡς καὶ ἑαυτῷ ἐνίοτε ἐναντία λέγειν. “(...) Euripides often extemporises in genealogies, so that occasionally he even says things at odds with himself”. Extemporaneous creation is perceived as an extreme and unsuccessful form of alteration of the standard narrative: from a literary point of view, it implies lack of reason, neglect in composition, in manipulation and in exposition of the material, hence risk of incoherence.

⁴⁰For the sake of completeness, it should be noted that Diggle (1982, pp. 315–318, 1984, p. 358), followed by Kovacs (1995, pp. 434–437), transposed verses 415–416 between 420 and 421. The sequence 420–421, transmitted by the manuscripts, has latterly been restored by Matthiessen (2008, pp. 140, 307–308) and Battezzato (2018, pp. 45, 129); cf. the review of Diggle (1984) by Mastro-narde (1988, p. 157).

σέθεν ζῶοντος: ἠύξησε τὸν ἔλεον, εἶγε ὁ μὲν τὸν ἕνα ἔχει, ὁ δὲ τῶν πενήκοντα ἀφήρηται. b(BCE³E⁴) T
 [While he hears of] you as yet alive: he (*sc.* the poet) increased the pity: if at least the one (i.e., Peleus) has one (*sc.* son), the other (i.e., Priam), on the contrary, has been deprived of fifty.

Sch. ex. Il. 24, 496b points out that it is credible that a woman gives birth to nineteen children⁴¹, whereas it would not be credible if she had fifty, as Bacchylides' Theanus. Homer's clarification on the number of Hecuba's children is thus conceived as a realistic feature of the description, because it could be plausible also outside the literary fiction.

Sch. ex. Il. 24, 496b Erbse
 ἐννεακαίδεκα: πιθανὸν μίαν τεκεῖν ἐννεακαίδεκα, οὐχ ὡς Βακχυλίδης (*sc. dith. 15*) πενήκοντα τῆς Θεανοῦς ὑπογράφει παῖδας. T
 Nineteen: it is credible that a single woman bore nineteen children, not as Bacchylides who indicates fifty children of Theanus⁴².

The ability to generate emotions is a topic in ancient reflections on literature⁴³. The scholia to Homer and Euripides appeal to different notions in relation to the variety of context and content of the passages analysed. In the *Iliad*, the number of children is a substantial component of Priam's plea: the antithesis between his unfortunate condition and the one of Peleus is perceived as a strategy to enhance the pity⁴⁴. Ancient scholars often praised Homer's capacity to portray intense emotions, inducing affection and sympathy towards the characters, and to create vivid and powerful scenes: the link between him and tragedy is particularly evident when feelings characteristic of this genre are evoked⁴⁵, according to Aristotle's definition of tragedy as a work which produces, through pity and fear, the catharsis of this kind of sufferings⁴⁶. In the *Hecuba*, the information on the number of children

⁴¹The scholia to the *Iliad* recognise πιθανότης as an aspect of Homer's style in general, which is especially shown in the way the poet gives realistic and circumstantial details of places or characters; see Richardson (1980, p. 278), cf. Nünlist (2015, pp. 735–736 *s.v. Mimêsis*, p. 741 *s.v. Persuasiveness (pithanotês)*, pp. 747–748 *s.v. Realism, Lifelike*).

⁴²The ode narrates the embassy of Menelaus and Odysseus to Troy to demand a diplomatic return of Helen and her possessions. In the chronology of the myth this episode belonged to the events of the *Cypria* (*Arg. Bernabé = Davies*, p. 32 = *Arg. West*); it was known to the poet of the *Iliad* (3, 203–224; 11, 138–142). Theanus, priestess of Athena and wife of Antenor, is mentioned at the beginning of the text, which is unfortunately mutilated by some verses: here it should have referred to the fifty sons of the woman. Dithyrambic chorus consisted of fifty singers, and it is possible that the children of Antenor and Theanus formed the chorus here; if this were the case, this fact would explain their number; cf. Maehler (2004, 157 ff).

⁴³Nünlist (2015, pp. 723–724 *s.v. Emotions*).

⁴⁴The scholia to the *Iliad* admire the grandeur and the elevation of certain Homeric passages: the notion of αὔξησις plays a relevant role here and can apply to a large variety of poetic devices; see Richardson (1980, pp. 275–276).

⁴⁵Richardson (1980, pp. 274–275; cf. pp. 270–271). The scholia to the *Iliad* make numerous and varied references to the tragic genre while analysing the Homeric poem: on this exegetical approach see Pagani (2018).

⁴⁶Arist. *Poet.* 1449b 24–28 (with Gallavotti 1974, pp. 136–139): ἔστιν οὖν τραγωδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας καὶ τελείας, μέγεθος ἐχούσης, ἡδυσμένῳ λόγῳ χωρὶς ἐκάστῳ τῶν εἰδῶν ἐν τοῖς

gains relevance in relation to the misfortune of the queen: the deviation from the model is conceived as a means of increasing her suffering, which has an impact on the dramatic moment; *πάθος* is one of the distinctive qualities of tragedy and the ability to arouse it was often highlighted by ancient critics⁴⁷. The recognition of this literary purpose may conceal an appreciation of the artistic device on the part of the ancient commentator, who does actually not find any risk of poetic failure or improbability in the use of a high number.

Conclusion

There follows a comprehensive and organic summary of the findings of this investigation.

Ancient scholars adopted different critical approaches to elucidate Euripides' mythological innovations and variations with respect to Homer. *Sch. Eur. Hec.* 1279 depicts Euripides as a reader of Homer: the dramatist regards the epic text as a model and aims to emulate it, but fails to understand its wording correctly and reproduces it uncritically. The ancient commentator de facto equates the tragedian with a sort of exegete⁴⁸, and ascribes to him a lack of understanding of which his own text is the result and testimony: Euripides' work is thus conceived as the locus of an implicit literary exegesis, where the deviation from the model is the consequence of an erroneous interpretation. The other examples bring out concepts of literary criticism and use them as criteria for evaluating the texts: mythological innovations cause poetic effects which make the literary product bad or good. *Sch.*

μορίοις, δρόντων καὶ οὐ δι' ἀπαγγελίας, δι' ἑλέου καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν.

⁴⁷Garzya (1989, pp. 3–4) and Grisolia (1992, pp. 55–56) comment on a selection of tragic scholia dealing with *πάθος*; for a collection of scholia on *πάθος* in tragedy see Trendelenburg (1867, pp. 123–128). The noun *πάθος* means first 'that which happens (to a person or thing)', then an unpleasant experience, viewed either subjectively as an emotion or objectively as a misfortune. Arist. *Poet.* 1452b 9–13 defines it as one of the three elements of a tragic plot: δύο μὲν οὖν τοῦ μύθου μέρη ταῦτ' ἐστὶ περιπέτεια καὶ ἀναγνώρισις, τρίτον δὲ πάθος. τούτων δὲ περιπέτεια μὲν καὶ ἀναγνώρισις εἴρηται, πάθος δὲ ἐστὶ πρᾶξις φθαρτικὴ ἢ ὀδυνηρά, οἷον οἱ τε ἐν τῷ φανεροῦ θάνατοι καὶ αἱ περιοδύνια καὶ τρώσεις καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα.

⁴⁸The tendency to equate the commented author with an exegete seems to openly occur when the scholia describe the reception of an earlier work by later authors with verbs like ἀκούω or ἐκδέχομαι, which refer to the activities of textual criticism and interpretation of the ancient scholars; this meaning on occasion applies also to ἀναγιγνώσκω, which otherwise refers to the generic act of reading. This phenomenon is clearly attested in the relationship between Homer and Hesiod: see Vergados (2017), Gennari Santori (2018), Schironi (2018, pp. 695–703), Vergados (2020, pp. 289–316), Gennari Santori (2021a, esp. pp. 19, 77–80, 109–110 nn. 384–385, 260–262, 487–489; 2021b, pp. 225–226 n. 39); e.g., *Sch. Ariston. Il.* 2, 527–531: τινὲς τῶν νεωτέρων (cf. Hes. fr. 235, 1) ἀνέγνωσαν (with scholarly meaning); *Sch. Ariston. Il.* 12, 22a: ἀνέγνω Ἡσίοδος (without scholarly meaning); *Sch. Ariston. Il.* 14, 119a: καὶ ὁ Ἡσίοδος (fr. 228 M.-W.) δὲ οὕτως ἀκήκοεν; *Sch. Hrd. Il.* 16, 548a: καὶ Ἡσίοδος (*Sc.* 7) οὕτως ἐξεδέξατο. In accordance with this perspective, ancient scholars sometimes explained a lesson of supposed Homeric derivation or imitation by arguing that the commented author came across a certain lesson of the epic text: this author would have had at his disposal a copy of the poems transmitting the variant he adopted or held as a reference: e.g., *Sch. Hrd. Od.* 4, 1 j (see Rengakos (1993, p. 29), Montanari (1995, pp. 53–57)); *Sch. Pind. O.* 7, 42b (see Phillips 2016, pp. 183–185).

Eur. *Hec.* 241 and *Sch.* [Eur.] *Rh.* 210 criticise the dramatist for creating something unconvincing or unbelievable: the notion of verisimilitude applies, in the first case, to a request of internal consistency in the behaviour of a character, who is supposed to be represented according to defined features; it corresponds, in the second case, to a demand for plausibility in the movements and gestures of a character, whose description is expected to be credible, that is, avoiding any excess of the inexplicable or the marvellous. *Sch.* [Eur.] *Rh.* 210 might imply that the literary failure also results from an over-elaboration and/or misinterpretation of a detail of the Homeric text: this calls for reflection on the fact that the two interpretative methodologies under investigation were not necessarily opposing but potentially coexisting, and their boundaries should not be regarded as always distinct but at times blurred. *Sch.* Eur. *Hec.* 421 recognises the novelty introduced by Euripides as a strategy to enhance the suffering of a character and the emotional impact of the scene; it also offers a possible explanation of the rhetorical mechanism used to achieve this effect. The ancient exegete is interested in the dramatic art of the author: he perceives the innovation as a deliberate and meditated operation and, therefore, possibly praises it. The adjective ἀπίθανος (“incredible”, “unconvincing”), the adverb εἰκότως (“appropriately”, “reasonably”), and the noun πάθος (“misfortune”, “suffering”), here associated with the concept of the αὔξησις (“amplification”), are recurring terms in ancient literary criticism. In particular, the urge to search for credibility and verisimilitude as essential components to the creation of the poetic work finally reflects an Aristotelian conception of literature, finding correspondence in the categories enucleated by the philosopher within his *Poetics*⁴⁹.

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⁴⁹The central role played by Peripatetic inspirations and methods in the birth and development of Hellenistic philology is now a well recognised feature, see e.g., Montana (2017) and Montana (2020, pp. 148–154), with bibliography and critical discussion of the topic. It is worth remembering that the very idea of a contiguity between Homer and the dramatic genres reached a detailed and systematic elaboration, and a concrete application in terms of analysis and research, with Aristotle. On the one hand, according to the philosopher epic and tragedy shared the same forms, as well as most of their constituent elements (*Poet.* 1459b 7–12), and Homer was the first to indicate the structures of both tragedy (*Iliad* and *Odyssey*) and comedy (*Margites*) (*Poet.* 1448b 34–1449a 2); on the other hand, the practice of comparing epic and tragedy underpins the *Poetics* itself, whose closure is dedicated precisely to a comparison between these two genres, to the advantage of the latter (*Poet.* 1461b 26–1462b 15); cf. Pagani (2018, pp. 67–69).

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