

## How to Divinize a Mortal and (Try) Not to Offend the Gods

**(Pseudo-Euripides, *Rhesus* 342–387)**

After a long wavering in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries between the Euripidean authenticity or spuriousness of *Rhesus*, intense research on this play during the past decade has led to the almost unanimous conclusion that *Rhesus* belongs in the fourth century.<sup>1</sup> Before the beginning of the philological work by the Alexandrian scholars on the corpus of Euripides, our text of *Rhesus* must have crept into it by replacing an original play by Euripides, which would have disappeared rather early. This replacement of our text for the original of Euripides may have been the initiative of an author who passed off the text of his own tragedy as Euripidean in the context of the fourth-century boom of Euripides' re-performances. Or it may have been the consequence of the theatrical fortunes of a radical reworking of the original text by one or more actor-interpolators. Professionally expert at mastering and imitating the style of their authors, these actors are suspected to have re-written entire sections of the *Iphigenia in Aulis* and added many lines in other tragedies, with the intention (it is commonly assumed) to make their scripts more appealing for the tastes of fourth-century theatergoers.<sup>2</sup>

W. Ritchie's book of 1964 remains an unsurpassed stylistic and metrical analysis of the tragedy, and he lists formidable evidence supporting the thesis that the *Rhesus* could be an early play by Euripides, composed between 455 and the 440s. However, the book did not meet with great favour: E. Fraenkel's review of 1966 reaffirmed the idea of the play's composition by a lesser, fourth-century author as most probable. This is not surprising, since slight differences or analogies between Euripides and the *Rhesus* in vocabulary, metrics, dramatic techniques (or

<sup>1</sup> See lastly Mattison (2015), with bibliography of the chronologic discussion.

<sup>2</sup> More on this conjecture of an actorial fourth-century rewriting of Euripides' *Rhesus* in Fantuzzi (2015) and below, §3.

refusal/subversion of the traditional dramatic techniques of the fifth century), and so on can hardly prove the *Rhesus'* authorship, as an author does not necessarily write in the same way for his whole life. And Euripides in particular certainly changed his stylistic and metrical preferences over time during his long career, down to the experimentalism of his last plays. While comparative stylistic analysis of the *Rhesus* and Euripidean or fifth-century tragedy proved substantially inconclusive, all the recent or forthcoming English commentaries of the play<sup>3</sup> contribute at different levels to highlight the “secondarity” of the intertextual practice and the dramatic technique of *Rhesus* in its re-use of fifth-century tragedy (and comedy as well)—in particular a mosaic technique, according to which the author combines in a single expression models from different passages and sometimes different authors of fifth-century drama. These studies also identify a series of relatively free re-uses of motifs or conventions of fifth-century drama, which would be surprising in an author still belonging in fifth-century theatrical practice.

Pinpointing the play on the map of cultural history has turned also out to be a very useful approach pursued in the past decade. This litmus test has highlighted a series of details in *Rhesus* which are not easily explicable, or at least are better explicable if they are located in the mid-fourth century, or in its second half. These details range from the attention to peculiarities of the military organization of the Macedonians that surfaces in the expression ὑπασπισταὶ βασιλέως already at *Rhesus* 2, probably hinting at the élite corps of the royal bodyguards instituted late in the reign of Philip II or in the first years of Alexander's reign,<sup>4</sup> to *Rhesus'* three mentions (at 371–373, 409–410 and 487<sup>5</sup>) of the πέλτη, the peculiar Thracian/Macedonian shield. They also include Hector's and Aeneas' fear of arousing panic among the

<sup>3</sup> Liapis (2012), Fries (2014), Fantuzzi (forthcoming 2017); cf. also, at least, Poe (2004).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Liapis (2009).

<sup>5</sup> Cf., again, Liapis (2009).

Trojans asleep at 16–89, reminiscent of the obsessive preoccupation of Aeneas Tacticus (mid-fourth century) with what he seems the first to have called “panic” (cf. *Rhesus* 36–38)<sup>6</sup> and the endless discussions of the reliability of Rhesus as an ally, that will have reminded at least the Athenians of their endless attempts at securing for themselves the help of unreliable Thracians.<sup>7</sup> They identify, too, the Muse’s emphasis at 941–9 on the role of Orpheus and Musaeus in Greek culture and her threat not to return to Athens in the future, despite her past visits, which are at the same time an aition of Athens’ cultural stature, and also perhaps evidence of the Macedonian ambitions to boast a sort of chronologic cultural priority of Northern Greece. Although some of these bits of information may also find a justification in the historical/cultural horizon of the last decades of the fifth century,<sup>8</sup> all of them create a specific, unidirectional background noise that focuses the attention of the audience towards Northern Greece. They concern topics that Athenians, and not only Athenians, may have been discussing very frequently at the *boule* and the *ekklesia* in the age of Macedon,<sup>9</sup> but less probably or less frequently in the fifth century.<sup>10</sup>

This paper will investigate a new motif of *peripeteia* in the second stasimon of the *Rhesus*. An anecdotal tradition concerning the actor Neoptolemus, of the second half of the fourth

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Fantuzzi (2011a).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Fantuzzi (2011b).

<sup>8</sup> ὑπασπιστής may mean just “squire,” occurring in this sense in Herodotus 5.111–112 and Euripides, *Phoenician Women* 1213; the unreliability of Thracians as allies had been mocked, after the notorious behaviour of king Sitalces in 431–429, by Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 141–172 and Thucydides 2.29, 2.95, 2.101; Orpheus and Museus had been always pivotal archetypes of Greek cultural identity, etc.

<sup>9</sup> This “political art of Greek tragedy” (to quote the title of a pioneering essay by C. Meier (1993)) made of tragedy a performance at which the spectators could continue to reflect on some of the issues they were debating or had been recently debating as citizens in the assembly, and had also a chance of considering them not from the everyday outlook of the practical decision-making, but from the distanced viewpoint of myth.

<sup>10</sup> Another case study is the public debates on the honours to be awarded to civic benefactors, which probably reflect on *Rhesus* 151–194 and were relatively rare in the fifth century but, as epigraphical texts and the orators demonstrate, became a hit topic from the mid-fourth century onwards. Cf. Fantuzzi (2016).

century, seems to prove that this stasimon had not yet been composed before the death of Philip II in 336. My paper will thus also provide one more piece of evidence that further confirms the present mainstream opinion about the fourth century chronology of the *Rhesus* and points specifically to the 30s of that century. It also perhaps reinforces the idea that actors-interpolators may have authored the play.<sup>11</sup>

## 1) How to Divinize a Mortal

The second stasimon of *Rhesus* immediately follows a long debate between Hector on the one hand and the shepherd-messenger and the watchmen on the other about the opportunity of accepting Rhesus as an ally of Troy. Hector is initially hostile to that idea and polemically critical about the long delay in Rhesus' arrival at the battlefield, but in the end he surrenders to the arguments of his interlocutors about the opportunity for a prompt conclusion of the war thanks to Rhesus and his army. At this point, the enthusiasm of the chorus for Rhesus can freely overflow in a song of joy and great expectations about the near future. The chorus' hyperbolic praise of, and prayer to, Rhesus is shaped as a cultic hymn (342–379),<sup>12</sup> followed by an anapestic introduction of the entry of Rhesus (380–387).

στρ. α

Ἄδραστεια μὲν ἀ Διὸς  
 παῖς εἴργοι στομάτων φθόνον·  
 φράσω γὰρ δὴ ὅσον μοι  
 ψυχᾶι προσφιλές ἔστιν εἰπεῖν. 345  
 ἥκεις, ὡ ποταμοῦ παῖ,

<sup>11</sup> See p. 1 above.

<sup>12</sup> Differently from the “Homeric” rhapsodic hymns, the cultic hymn addresses the god in the second person, is often concerned with a specific situation, and emphasizes a request: Race (1990) 102–106.

ηκεις ἐπλάθης Φιλίου πρὸς αὐλὰν

ἀσπαστός, ἐπεὶ σε χρόνωι

Πιερὶς μάτηρ ὅ τε καλλιγέφυ-

ρος ποταμὸς πορεύει 350

ἀντιστρ. α

Στρυμών, ὃς ποτε τᾶς μελωι-

δοῦ Μούσας δι' ἀκηράτων

δινηθεὶς ὑδροειδὴς

κόλπων σὰν ἐφύτευσεν ἥβαν.

σύ μοι Ζεὺς ὁ φαναῖος 355

ηκεις διφρεύων βαλιαῖσι πώλοις.

νῦν, ὡς πατρὶς ὡς Φρυγία,

ζὺν θεῶι νῦν σοι τὸν ἐλευθέριον

Ζῆνα πάρεστιν εἰπεῖν.

στρ. β

ἄρα ποτ' αὖθις ἢ παλαιὰ Τροΐα 360

τοὺς προπότας παναμερεύ-

σει θιάσους ἐρώτων

ψαλμοῖσι καὶ κυλίκων οἰνοπλανήτοις

ἐπιδεξίοις ἀμίλλαις

κατὰ πόντον Ἀτρειδᾶν 365

Σπάρταν οἰχομένων

’Ιλιάδος παρ’ ἀκτᾶς;  
 ω̄ φίλος, εἴθε μοι  
 σᾶι χερὶ καὶ σῶι δορὶ πρά-  
 ξας τάδ’ ἐς οἴκον ἔλθοις.

ἀντιστρ. β

ἔλθε φάνηθι, τὰν ζάχρυσον προβαλοῦ 370

Πηλεῖδα κατ’ ὅμμα πέλ-  
 ταν δοχμίαν πεδαίρων  
 σχιστὰν παρ’ ἄντυγα, πώλους ἐρεθίζων  
 δίβολόν τ’ ἄκοντα πάλλων.  
 σὲ γὰρ οὔτις ὑποστὰς 375

’Αργείας ποτ’ ἐν Ἡ-  
 ρας δαπέδοις χορεύσει·  
 ἀλλά νιν ἄδε γᾶ  
 καπφθίμενον Θρηικὶ μόρωι  
 φίλτατον ἄχθος οἴσει.

ἰὼ ἰώ, 380  
 μέγας ω̄ βασιλεῦ. καλόν, ω̄ Θρήικη,  
 σκύμνον ἔθρεψας πολίαρχον ἴδεῖν.  
 ἕδε χρυσόδετον σώματος ἀλκήν,  
 κλύε καὶ κόμπους κωδωνοκρότους  
 παρὰ πορπάκων κελαδοῦντας.

θεός, ὦ Τροία, θεός, αὐτὸς Ἀρης      385

ὁ Στρυμόνιος πᾶλος ἀοιδοῦ

Μούσης ἥκων καταπνεῖ σε.

May Adrasteia, daughter of Zeus, shield my words from divine hostility! I shall say all that my heart longs to utter. O son of the river god, you have come, you have come and approached the court of Zeus of the Kindred, and most welcome you are since it has taken long for your Pierian mother and the river of lovely bridges to send you here.

The Strymon it was who once eddied in watery wise through the virginal body of the Muse, the singer, and begot your fine manhood. To me you have come Zeus the Lightbearer, riding behind your dappled mares. Now at last, O Phrygia, my fatherland, god being your helper, you can call upon Zeus the Liberator.

Can it ever again be that ancient Troy will spend the whole day in revels pledging the health of our loves amid strains of music and cup-contests that make the wine pass quickly round from left to right, as over the sea the sons of Atreus make for Sparta, leaving Ilium's shore behind? O friend, how I wish that for me you might accomplish this with your arm and your spear before you go home again.

Come, show yourself, brandish your golden shield in the face of Peleus' son, lifting it aslant along the gap in the chariot rail, rousing your horses and shaking your two-pronged javelin! No one who stands against you shall ever dance again on the floors of Argive Hera: no, he shall die a Thracian death and this soil shall bear him as burden that gives delight.

Hail, O great King! Splendid, O Thrace, is the cub you have raised as the city's ruler to behold! See the gold armour about his body; hear the boast of his clanging bells as they ring on his shield rim! A god, O Troy, a god, Ares himself, this son of Strymon and the Muse has come to breathe upon you!<sup>13</sup>

In this hymn, and only in its context, Rhesus is repeatedly identified as a god (355 Ζεὺς ... ἥκεις, 358–359 νῦν σοι τὸν ἐλευθέριον Ζῆνα πάρεστιν εἰπεῖν, 385 θεός ... θεός, αὐτὸς Ἀρης). That may well seem an echo of the epic comparisons of a valiant warrior to a θεός or a δαίμων (e.g. θεὸς ὡς τίετο, Homer, *Iliad* 5.78, 10.33, 11.58, 13.218, 24.258; ἐπέσσυτο δαίμονι ἵσος 5.438, 459, 884, 16.705, 786, 20.447, 21.227) or to Ares (ἵσος Ἀρηὶ 11.295, 604, 13.802; ἀτάλαντος Ἀρηὶ 13.295, 16.784; οἷος ... Ἀρης 7.208, 13.298), but these similes point to similarity in appearance and not to real identification; alternately, they are in some cases “appropriate for marking the climactic moment of god-hero antagonism in epic narrative” and thus also in marking the hero for death.<sup>14</sup> Also, in the first stasimon the chorus had already compared Rhesus to a δαίμων (301–302), and the Muse will proclaim that, after death, he will be an ἀνθρωποδαίμων (971) and to live a limited immortality in his tomb, as most of the religious heroes did. But in the second stasimon the absence of ὡς/ὅστε plainly identifies Rhesus as god—he is not simply like a god, he *is* a god, according to a difference that Aristotle's distinction of metaphor and comparison makes sure was felt.<sup>15</sup>

Gods and cult heroes were regularly believed to provide help and invoked for it in every age of Greek religion.<sup>16</sup> But that a leading political/military figure could be divinized while still

<sup>13</sup> Trans. by D. Kovacs (Loeb Class. Library), with occasional modifications.

<sup>14</sup> Nagy (1999) 293; cf. also 143–144.

<sup>15</sup> While the simile distinctly expresses the two terms that are compared, the metaphor, namely a simile without ὡς, substitutes by transfer the one notion for the other of the two compared, identifying them in one image, and expressing both in a single word; cf. Arist. *Rhet.* 3.3.4 (1406b), 3.11.13 (1412b); Cope and Sandys (1877) 136–137.

<sup>16</sup> On the cult-heroes as saviours in archaic and classical religion, cf. most recently Nagy (2013) 255–283.

alive to secure his prospective help after his salvific arrival is never attested in fifth-century tragedy, and—it has been said—it would hardly have been thinkable in the fifth century.<sup>17</sup> This divinization for anticipated gratitude finds however a precise parallel in the honours (and song) attributed by the Athenians to Demetrios Poliorcetes. The ithyphallic poem sung by the Athenians in 291/290 to celebrate the arrival of Demetrios in Athens (*Athenaeus* 6.253d-f = *Collectanea Alexandrina* 173–174) is probably the oldest evidence of the Hellenistic divine cult of monarchs and also the first in a series of Hellenistic texts (above all Callimachus' *Hymns* to Apollo, to Athena, and to Demeter) which convey the mounting religious excitement of the celebrants who are awaiting a divine epiphany:<sup>18</sup>

‘Ως οἱ μέγιστοι τῶν θεῶν καὶ φίλτατοι  
 τῇ πόλει πάρεισιν·  
 ἐνταῦθα γὰρ Δήμητρα καὶ Δημήτριον  
 ἄμα παρῆχ’ ὁ καιρός.  
 χὴ μὲν τὰ σεμνὰ τῆς Κόρης μυστήρια  
 ἔρχεθ’ ἵνα ποιήσῃ,  
 δὸς ἰλαρός, ὥσπερ τὸν θεὸν δεῖ, καὶ καλὸς  
 καὶ γελῶν πάρεστι.  
 σεμνόν τι φαίνεθ’, οἱ φίλοι πάντες κύκλωι,  
 ἐν μέσοισι δ’ αὐτός,  
 ὅμοιον ὥσπερ οἱ φίλοι μὲν ἀστέρες,  
 ἥλιος δ’ ἐκεῖνος.  
 Ὡς τοῦ κρατίστου πᾶν Ποσειδῶνος θεοῦ,

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Wilamowitz (1931/1932) II.259–260; Hall (1989) 92; Lapis (2007) 381.

<sup>18</sup> Cf., e.g., Bulloch (1984) 220–230 for *HDem.* and *HPall.*; Platt (2011) 175–180 for *HPall.*; Fantuzzi (2011c) for *HAp.*

χαῖρε, κάφροδίτης.  
 ἄλλοι μὲν ἡ μακρὰν γὰρ ἀπέχουσιν θεοί,  
 ἡ οὐκ ἔχουσιν ὥτα,  
 ἡ οὐκ εῖσιν, ἡ οὐ προσέχουσιν ἡμῖν οὐδὲ ἔν,  
 σὲ δὲ παρόνθ' ὁρῶμεν,  
 οὐ ξύλινον οὐδὲ λίθινον, ἀλλ' ἀληθινόν.  
 εὐχόμεσθα δή σοι·  
 πρῶτον μὲν εἰρήνην ποίησον, φίλτατε,  
 κύριος γὰρ εἴσῃ σύ,  
 τὴν δ' οὐχὶ Θηβῶν, ἀλλ' ὅλης τῆς Ἑλλάδος  
 Σφίγγα περικρατοῦσαν  
 (Αἴτωλὸς ὅστις ἐπὶ πέτρας καθήμενος,  
 ὕσπερ δὲ παλαιά,  
 τὰ σώμαθ' ἡμῶν πάντ' ἀναρπάσας φέρει,  
 κούκλιον μάχεσθαι·  
 Αἴτωλικὸν γὰρ ἀρπάσαι τὰ τῶν πέλας,  
 νῦν δὲ καὶ τὰ πόρρω·)  
 μάλιστα μὲν δὴ κόλασον αὐτός· εἰ δὲ μή,  
 Οἰδίπουν τιν' εὔρε,  
 τὴν Σφίγγα ταύτην ὅστις ἡ κατακρημνιεῖ  
 ἡ σπίνον ποιήσει.

The greatest and most beloved gods are here in our city; for a timely  
 opportunity brought Demeter and Demetrius here simultaneously! She comes to  
 celebrate the sacred mysteries of Core, while he is here beautiful, laughing, and

full of mirth, as befits a god. This is an awesome sight: all his friends surround him, and he himself is in their midst; it is as if his friends were stars, while he was the sun. Hail, child of Poseidon, most powerful of gods, and of Aphrodite! The other gods<sup>19</sup> are either far away, or deaf, or do not exist, or they pay us no attention. But you we see here, not made of wood or stone, but real. To you, then, we pray: first, that you create peace, beloved one; for this is within your power. And as for the Sphinx who controls not just Thebes, but all of Greece—it is an Aetolian who sits on the cliff, like the Sphinx of old, and snatches up all our forces and carries them off, and I cannot resist her; for plundering one's neighbours is Aetolian behaviour, and now the plundering goes even further—punish her, please, yourself! Otherwise, find some Oedipus, who will hurl the Sphinx from a crag or transform her into a chaffinch.<sup>20</sup>

The initial aretalogy praises features of the divinity of Demetrius (comparable to Demeter,<sup>21</sup> smiling, cheerful, fair but awesome appearance, divine parents, 1-12) and concludes with a brief centrepiece (13–19) that links hymn and prayer.<sup>22</sup> This centrepiece also emphasizes that Demetrius is there, physically, in Athens—not made of wood or stone, like “the other gods,” but real; so it is sure that he can dispense his protection (“But you we see here, not made of

<sup>19</sup> “The other gods,” not “other gods,” namely other than those that are mentioned as existing/present and concerned with Athens (Demeter, Poseidon, Aphrodite); see lastly Platt (2011) 144. The Greek text appears to contrast Demetrius, an ex-mortal, visible king, and “all the other” gods, who are immortal but invisible; cf. Chaniotis (2011) 179.

<sup>20</sup> Trans. by D. Olson (Loeb Class. Library: Athenaeus III.162-166).

<sup>21</sup> As Platt (2011) observes (on the basis of Plut. *Dem.* 23.3) “all the evidence suggests that Demetrius’ cult at Athens supplemented traditional religious practice rather than supplanted it: he supposedly inhabited the Parthenon as a *synnaos theos* with Athena rather than as her successor, for example.”

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Henrichs (1999) 244 n. 68.

wood or stone, but real. To you, then, we pray,” 18–20). The last part of the poem (21–34) is a prayer exhorting Demetrius to help the Athenians to stop the raids of the Aetolians.

There are obvious similarities in structure and motifs between our *Rhesus stasimon* and the song for Demetrius. Both are structured in two parts. The first includes the hymnodic description of the divine parentage and the equating of the subject of the song with traditional gods (Demeter in the hymn to Demeter; Zeus Phanaios and Ares in *Rhesus*) and culminates with the παρουσία motif at lines 15–19 of the hymn to Demetrius and the thrice repeated ἥκεις at *Rhesus* 346–347 and 356 and ἐπλάθης at 347. Initial addresses to the god in cultic hymns—the genre to which the Hymn to Demetrius and the *Rhesus stasimon* are closest—often included imperatives like ἐλθέ, βαῖνε, βῆθι, ίκοῦ, μόλε, repeated or not, that invited the god to move to the place where the prayer was performed and there become ἐπιφανής (cf. e.g. the Elean prayer to Dionysus, *Poetae melici Graeci* 871, that begins ἐλθεῖν ἥρω Διόνυσε, and Sappho’s prayer to Aphrodite).<sup>23</sup> With different levels of emphasis—certainly stronger in the hymn to Demetrius—both the song for Demetrius Poliorcetes and the *Rhesus stasimon* are proud to announce that their god has already come, is a god physically present and thus ready to listen to their pleas,<sup>24</sup> which in fact promptly follow.<sup>25</sup> The second part consists in a prayer for military help, against the Aetolian aggressions in the hymn to Demetrius, against the Greeks in *Rhesus*.

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Weinreich (1912); Versnel (1981) 26–37; Pulleyen (1997) 134–144.

<sup>24</sup> To the *Rhesus stasimon*, as well, substantially applies the brilliant observation of Platt (2011) 145 about the hymn to Demetrius: “the epiphanic language of the opening lines works to bind the ruler into the reciprocal honours system of the city: the hymn itself functions as part of this *do ut des* exchange, for each performance of the text confirms the illustriousness of its addressee in a way that boosts the very claim made in its opening lines. Demetrius is *epiphanes* not just because of his godlike agency, but also because the Athenians make him so.”

<sup>25</sup> In fact antistr. β, requesting Rhesus to start his prodigious fighting against the Greeks, which he has not started yet (and will never start), begins with ἐλθὲ φάνηθι, that exhorts him to “come” and “appear” in the battlefield. Differently, str. α concentrates on the fact that he has come already (ἥκεις/ἐπλάθης), thus emphasizing that Rhesus is actually present where his help is actually needed.

These coincidences should not be considered the fruit of direct imitation. Both texts reflect more probably the occasion (and thus probably topoi and rhetoric) of an ἀπάντησις, the formalized protocol of reception with which Athens was used to celebrating the arrival to the city of most distinguished political figures like Alcibiades or Demosthenes or, in particular, Hellenistic kings and Roman envoys.<sup>26</sup> Both of them also seem to reflect the divine epiphanies which functioned as “crisis management tools,” where a deity appeared to release a community from a crisis such as a plague, a famine, or, most frequently, a siege (as in *Rhesus*), and was consequently honoured with epiphanic festivals.<sup>27</sup> Above all, the two texts share the same perspective of equivalence of human and divine subjects of praise, which finds only a few parallels and, at least in Plato, seems untraditional and relatively recent. In fact, *Respublica* 607a3-4 distinguishes between hymns for gods and *enkomia* for men, although we do not know how widespread this distinction was, and Plato himself is inconsistent (in *Respublica* 801e-802a both terms are used for gods and humans). At *Respublica* 700a-3, however, Plato insists it was preferable when people observed the distinction between prayers to gods and songs for mortals (implying perhaps that this distinction was fading away in his times).

In fact, it is probably only with Macedonians and Greek fourth-century audiences, accustomed to Macedonian and North-Greek tastes, that the laudatory blurring of the borders between humans and divinity may have started to be all too *déjà vu*. The divine cults that the Spartan admiral Lysander received in his lifetime at Samos and elsewhere after Aegospotami—altars erected in his name ώς θεῷ “as for a god,” a festival named after him, paeans (*Poetae melici Graeci* 867) sung in his honour—were the first case of divinization of a mortal still alive, according to Douris, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* 76F71<sup>28</sup>; in the first half of the fifth

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Currie (2005) 181–183; Chaniotis (2011) 166–169; Perrin-Saminadayar (2004/2005), 355–356.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Petridou (2015) 125–141, 314–317.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Mari (2004).

century, a Delphic oracle ordained a heroic cult for the boxer Euthymus, victorious at Olympia in 484, 476, and 472 (Callimachus, *Aetia* F 98–99 and *Diegesis* 4.6–17 Harder),<sup>29</sup> and heroic honours were already ascribed by the Amphipolitans to the re-founder Brasidas after 422 BC (Thucydides 5.11.1), and the same may have happened with the founder Hagnon after 437.<sup>30</sup> A statue of Dionysius I, tyrant of Syracuse, may have portrayed him with the features of the god Dionysus (Dio Chrysostomus [37].21).<sup>31</sup> After 363 Clearchus, tyrant of Heracleia, exacted divine honours from his subjects, and in 356 BC Dion the pupil of Plato and tyrant of Syracuse was voted τιμαὶ ἡρωικά in his lifetime (Diodorus Siculus 16.20.6). But these remained isolated and scattered cases for many decades,<sup>32</sup> and heroic rather than divine cults may have been involved in all of them,<sup>33</sup> with the exception of the specifically divine cults for Lysander.<sup>34</sup> In time, the unequivocally divine cults for Philip II, Alexander, and Demetrius Poliorcetes became the rule and not the exception. A shrine of Philip I, the Philippeion, was at Olympia with his statue and statues of members of his family fashioned by the famous Athenian sculptor

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Currie (2002). Another athlete, Theagenes of Thasus, was said by the Thasians to be the son of Heracles: Pausan. 6.11.2.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Malkin (1987) 228–232. For a thorough discussion of all these cases of fifth-century cults of military leaders or city-founders, cf. Currie (2005) 158–200.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Sanders (1991).

<sup>32</sup> On the other dubious cases of Pythagoras and Empedocles, cf. Fredricksmyer (1981) 149–151; Currie (2005) 167–168.

<sup>33</sup> Heroization involves most often a dead person who is worshipped locally at a more official level than the ordinary dead (his tomb is often the focus of a cult or periodic celebrations) but with less grand shrines than gods' temples, and a few peculiar types of sacrifices also usually distinguished from sacrifices to the gods (identikit of the nature and power of the heroes (minor gods) vs. the dead and (major) gods in Ekroth (2007); Parker (2011) 103–123), and Nagy (2013) 255–283). Currie (2005) 4–9 and 159–172 emphasizes that heroic cults could, sometimes, be “anticipated” to living characters before their death, so that the condition of death, though very frequent, does not characterize all the heroes.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. above all Currie (2005) 160–163.

Leochares (Pausanias 5.20).<sup>35</sup> The people of Eresos (Lesbos) erected altars to him as Zeus Philippios (*Greek Historical Inscriptions* 83.ii.4–5 Rhodes-Osborne, about 340 BC), and in 336–335, at the wedding of his daughter Cleopatra, he was divinized as the thirteenth Olympian god (Diodorus Siculus 16.92.5, 16.95.1). Alexander made clear to the Athenians that he would like to receive divine honours.<sup>36</sup> When the politician Demades moved a decree enacting divine honours to him (Athenaeus 6.251b), apparently even Demosthenes suggested leaving to Alexander the choice between being worshipped as the son of Zeus or the son of Poseidon (Hyperides 7.31)—though he may have been speaking tongue-in-cheek.<sup>37</sup> It is certain, however, that the cult of Alexander enjoyed a popularity and persistence superior to divinized earlier mortals or later kings.<sup>38</sup> The list of divine honours accorded by the Athenians to Demetrius Poliorcetes and his father Antigonus in 307/6 was impressively long,<sup>39</sup> and these honours came together with poetic contests of paeans in honour of both men (*Supplementum Hellenisticum* 492 = Philochorus, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* 328 F 165). Altars and heroic shrines were even extended to three of Antigonus' courtiers, Bourichus, Adeimantus, and Oxythemis (Demochares, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* 75 F 1). Hyperides 6.21–22 was not far from truth when he complained:

φανερὸν δ' ἐξ ὅν ἀναγκαζόμεθα καὶ νῦν ἔ[στ]ι· θυσίας μὲν ἀνθρώποις  
γ[ιγνο]μένας ἐφορᾶν, ἀγάλμ[ατα δὲ] καὶ βωμοὺς καὶ ναοὺς τοῖ[ς μὲν] θεοῖς  
ἀμελῶς, τοῖς δὲ ἀνθρῷ[ποις] ἐπιμελῶς συντελούμενα, καὶ [τ]οὺς <τού>των  
οἰκέτας ὕσπερ ἥρωας τιμᾶν ἡμᾶς ἀναγκαζομένους. ὅπου δὲ τὰ πρὸς <τοὺς>

<sup>35</sup> Although we cannot be sure that the building, which was probably finished only after the death of Philip, had been originally conceived by Philip as a shrine of himself; cf. Momigliano (1987) 176–177.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Badian (1981–2012) 262–267.

<sup>37</sup> Momigliano (1986) 185; Badian (1981–2012) 262 and 278 n43; Parker (1996) 256–258.

<sup>38</sup> Up-to-date review in Chaniotis (2003) 435.

<sup>39</sup> Diodorus Siculus 20.46.1–4; Habicht (1997) 67–97; Mikalson (1998) 75–103.

θεοὺς ὅσια διὰ τὴν Μακεδόνων τόλμαν ἀνήιρηται, τί τὰ πρὸς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους  
χρὴ νομίζειν;<sup>40</sup>

That is clear from what we are compelled to do and what exists even now: to look not only upon sacrifices performed for mortals, but also upon statues, altars, and temples hardly celebrated in the case of the gods while carefully so for men and at the same time we ourselves are compelled to honour their slaves as heroes. When the rites owed to the gods have been abrogated by the boldness of the Macedonians, what must we expect for the social customs of human society?

But maybe Hyperides was a bit optimistic in assuming that the Greeks (all of them) were “compelled” to confer divine honours on the Macedonian warlords. After all, at least at Athens these honours had to be approved by the *ekklesia*. Although the servile flattery they presupposed also met with some opposition beyond Hyperides,<sup>41</sup> divinization of helpful kings and/or military leaders must really have been a widespread and largely uncensored practice.

<sup>40</sup> Momigliano (1986) 184 agrees with the idea of Hyperides (who remains unquoted in his paper) that the cult of divinized mortals coincides, almost consequentially, with the decline of the faith in traditional gods: “people were finding it easy to call exceptionally powerful men gods because they were losing faith in the existence, or at least in the effectiveness, of their traditional gods.”

<sup>41</sup> See first of all Philippides, *Poetae comici Graeci* 25, and cf. Habicht (1970) 213–222; Parker (1996) 260–261. Hymns of tragedy are an approximation to real cultic hymns, introduced into the play in order to define the deities affecting the play’s action, and above all to show—through the activity of worship—the conception of deity held by actors and/or chorus. They also usually create an intense ritual atmosphere, only to later “play off” the expectations they have raised against the different dramatic situation that the plot is creating (Furley (1999/2000) 192, 196). The watchmen of *Rhesus* show themselves all but indignant about the perspective of the deification of a mortal. Rhesus will turn out to be not an immortal god at all, and his mother will only secure to him a heroic status of survival as an ἀνθρωποδάίμων (971). But the watchmen pave the way to this initiative by the Muse (Burnett (1985) 26–28).

## 2) How to Divinize a Mortal and (Try) Not to Offend the Gods

If the practice of divinization systematically pursued by Macedonian kings was something relatively new that could offend Hyperides and his (studied?) faith in traditional religiosity, divinizing Rhesus also drove the watchmen of *Rhesus* to feel or to pretend some awe-struck apprehension motivated by traditional religiosity. Their appeal for benevolence to Adrasteia that prefaces the hymn to Rhesus reveals a precise awareness of the novelty and the weightiness of the pursuit of divinization in this hymn.<sup>42</sup> This cautious rhetorical strategy both follows and expands upon the Pindaric adumbration of the super-humanity of the victor—thus proving that the watchmen (and their author of course) were proudly aware of the novelty of their poetics by highlighting the risks implicit in it. Their propitiatory invocation to Adrasteia at 342–345 is also repeated by Rhesus at 467–468, and variated by the chorus’ prayer to Zeus at 455–457 to “ward off” the φθόνος (again εἴργειν and φθόνος, as at 343) that Rhesus’ triumphal speech at 393–453 was liable to arouse. Adrasteia (= “The Inescapable,” at least in the ancients’ etymology) was a mountain goddess related to Cybele in Troad, and one of the nurses of baby Zeus in Crete. Perhaps because of this special connection with Zeus, and/or because of her name, she also became one of the personifications of divine justice, connected to Nemesis.<sup>43</sup> The spheres of action of Adrasteia and Nemesis were similar but differently specialized. At

<sup>42</sup> The sincere fondness of the chorus for Rhesus (ὅσον μοι ψυχᾶι προσφιλὲς ἔστιν εἰπείν, 344–345) is the reason (γάρ, 344) why they fear they may get carried away into excessive praise and why they ask for Adrasteia’s control over it.

<sup>43</sup> The main centers of her cult were a mountain near Cyzicus named after her (Strabo 12.8.11, 13.1.13), Mount Ida (Aeschylus, *Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta* 158), and Adrasteia, a sanctuary erected by a king Adrastus near the river Aesepus where, as early as the fourth century BC, she was identified with Nemesis; cf. Antimachus F 130 Matthews; Callisthenes, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* 124 F 28; Ammianus Marcellinus 14.11.25; Harpocration α 33 Keaney ~ *Synagoge lexeon chresimon* (cod. B) α 344 Cunningham; Photius, *Lexicon* α 385 Theodоридis. Adrasteia was however commonly distinguished from Nemesis; cf. Menander, *Poetae comici Graeci* 226; Nicostratus, *Poetae comici Graeci* 35; *Iscrizioni di Cos* ED 62 face A, front 16 (2nd cent. BC) and ED 144.9 (1st cent. BC) Segre.

least down to the classical age Nemesis appears to be the goddess who punishes the excess of overweening pride post eventum, whereas Adrasteia is the goddess addressed preliminarily with propitiatory phrases, in the hope that what is going to be said does not include the boastful or conceited tone that arouses her indignation.<sup>44</sup> See in particular Aeschylus, *Prometheus* 968 οἱ προσκυνοῦντες τὴν Ἀδράστειαν σοφοί; Plato, *Respublica* 451a προσκυνῶ δὲ Ἀδράστειαν ... χάριν οὗ μέλλω λέγειν; Demosthenes 25.37.4 Ἀδράστειαν μὲν ἄνθρωπος ὁν προσκυνῶ; Menander, *The Girl with shorn head* 304 τὴν δ' Ἀδράστειαν μάλιστα νῦν ἀρ[...προσκυν]ῷ; Athenagoras, *Embassy for the Christians* 1.1.4 ὁ μὲν Ἰλιεὺς ... τὴν Ἐλένην Ἀδράστειαν ἐπιστάμενος προσκυνεῖ; Libanius, *Epistles* 283.2.7 προσκυνῶ δὲ Ἀδράστειαν ~ *Orations* 1.158.7, *Declamations* 1.15.6, where the occurrence of the same verb προσκυνεῖν shows the ritualized character of the propitiation; also, e.g., Herondas 6.34 μέζον μὲν ἡ δίκη γρύζω, / λάθοιμι δ', Ἀδρήστεια; Lucian, *The Teacher of Public Speakers*. 24, *Symposion* 23. Offence to νέμεσις and its personification Νέμεσις or to Adrasteia, and the consequent φθόνος of theirs and/or of the gods appear in fact to stand all for the righteous indignation that is aroused at behaviours that run contrary to socially accepted norms (especially violations of the αἰδώς<sup>45</sup>). If someone attempts to exceed his station, or if someone extols, as it happens in *Rhesus*, someone else as exceeding his station and raises him to the level of his betters (or the gods), he disregards the risks following from Adrasteia's and the gods' indignation.

Phrygian/Idaean Adrasteia (see above n. 43) may also suitably be invoked in the *Rhesus* stasimon as a co-national and thus a loyal partisan of the chorus of Phrygians and their hope for Trojan victory. She was in fact a quite dependable supporter of the alliance with Thracian Rhesus, as a joined cult of Adrasteia and the Thracian goddess Bendis was established in a

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Posnansky (1890) 76–78.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Bonanno (2014).

sanctuary at Piraeus before 429 BC.<sup>46</sup> But, above all, her main role at the beginning of the chorus' song is to avert the risk that the coming identification of Rhesus as a god could attract the dangerous φθόνος of Adrasteia herself and other gods. This function of the chorus' address to Adrasteia as preamble to hyperbolic praise and the mention of gods' φθόνος have an evident Pindaric flavour, and reminder of the four epinician prayers where Pindar had requested the gods not to feel φθόνος for the greatness of his laudandus: *Pythians* 8.71–78 θεῶν δ' ὅπιν / ἄφθονον (v.l. ἄφθιτον) αἰτέω, Ξέναρκες, ύμετέραις τύχαις. / εἴ γάρ τις ἐσλὰ πέπαται μὴ σὺν μακρῷ πόνῳ, / πολλοῖς σοφὸς δοκεῖ πεδ' ἀφρόνων / βίον κορυσσέμεν ὁρθοβούλοισι μαχαναῖς· / τὰ δ' οὐκ ἐπ' ἀνδράσι κεῖται· δαίμων δὲ παρίσχει, / ἄλλοτ' ἄλλον ὑπερθε βάλλων, ἄλλον δ' ὑπὸ χειρῶν “and I request the gods' ungrudging favour, Xenarkes, towards your family's good fortune; for if someone has gained success without long labour, he seems to many to be a wise man among fools and to arm his life with effective good planning. But those things do not rest with men; a god grants them, exalting now one man, but throwing another beneath their hands”; *Pythians* 10.19–22 τῶν δ' ἐν Ἑλλάδι τερπνῶν / λαχόντες οὐκ ὀλίγαν δόσιν, μὴ φθονεραῖς ἐκ θεῶν / μετατροπίαις ἐπικύρσαιεν. Θεὸς εἴη / ἀπήμων κέαρ “and having been granted no small share of delightful success in Hellas, may they encounter from the gods no envious reversals”; *Olympians* 13.24–28 ὑπατ' εύρὺν ἀνάσσων / Ὄλυμπίας, ἄφθόνητος ἔπεσσιν / γένοιο χρόνον ἄπαντα, Ζεῦ πάτερ, / καὶ τόνδε λαὸν ἀβλαβῆ νέμων / Ξενοφῶντος εὔθυνε δαίμονος οὗρον “most exalted, wide-ruling lord of Olympia, may you not begrudge my words for all time to come, father Zeus, and, as you guide this people free from harm, direct the wind of Xenophon's fortune” (praise itself—ἔπεσσιν—as target of divine φθόνος); cf. *Rhesus* 343 στομάτων); and *Isthmians* 7.39–48 ὁ δ' ἀθανάτων μὴ θρασσέτω φθόνος, / ὅτι τερπνὸν ἐφάμερον

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<sup>46</sup> See *Inscriptiones Graecae* I<sup>3</sup> i-ii.136, 369.67–68, 383 face A col. ii fr. v.142-3; Montepaone (1990); Parker (1996) 170–175, 195–197; Archibald (1999) 456–459; Munn (2006) 333–334). Bendis' festival, the Bendideia, included a procession of Thracian knights (military?) that impressed Plato's Socrates at *Respublica* 327a, 328a.

διώκων / ἔκαλος ἔπειμι γῆρας ἐς τε τὸν μόρσιμον / αἰῶνα. Θνάσκομεν γὰρ ὁμῶς ἄπαντες· / δαίμων δ' ἄϊσος· τὰ μακρὰ δ' εἴ τις / παπταίνει, βραχὺς ἔξικέσθαι χαλκόπεδον θεῶν / ἔδραν· ὅ τοι πτερόεις ἔρριψε Πάγασος / δεσπόταν ἐθέλοντ' ἐς οὐρανοῦ σταθμούς / ἐλθεῖν μεθ' ὁμάγυριν Βελλεροφόνταν / Ζηνός. τὸ δὲ πὰρ δίκαν / γλυκὺ πικροτάτα μένει τελευτά “may the envy of the immortals cause no disruption. By pursuing the pleasure that comes day by day, I shall calmly approach old age and my fated lifetime. For we all alike die, but our fortune is unequal. If a man peers at distant things, he is too little to reach the god’s bronze-paved dwelling. Indeed, winged Pegasus threw his master, when Bellerophon desired to enter the habitations of heaven and the company of Zeus. A most bitter end awaits that sweetness which is unjust” (the poet of praise as possible target of divine φθόνος).<sup>47</sup>

All of these apotropaic prayers of Pindar that are intended to avert φθόνος focus on the issue of the limits set for humans by the gods. The danger lies in the fact that victory and its praise lift a man to a glory that is beyond the human sphere. Man should not believe and be believed to become god, as the story of Bellerophon proves, which is narrated at *Isthmians* 7.44–48, a paradigmatic case of ἀθανάτων φθόνος, or as the warning about human limits and dependence from gods reminds us at *Pythians* 8.76–77. But victory drives a man, momentarily, very close to a divine condition. Without losing contact with its ethical-religious origins in the idea of a neat separation between human and divine realms (e.g. Homer, *Iliad* 5.440–442 “the breed of immortal gods and of men who walk the ground is in no way alike”; Pindar, *Olympians* 5.24 “try not to become god”), divine envy comes to be in Pindar also the proof of the dangerous but appealing potential that praise has of temporarily almost-divinizing the laudandus.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Translations from Pindar in this paragraph are by W.H. Race (Loeb Classical Library).

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Kirkwood (1984) 175–176, with the specifications of Boeke (2007) 143 n. 123; on Pindar’s prayers about gods’ φθόνος, also Race (1990) 131–135; Bulman (1992) 31–34.

Read from this religious but also meta-literary perspective, the caution of *Rhesus* 342–345 appears to redeploy but also challenge Pindar’s point not only from within a different literary genre but also within a different (“Macedonized”) cultural-religious context. Popular morality about the risks, for humans, of exceeding human dimension is operative for Pindar as well as in *Rhesus*. But Pindar, writing epinicians for humans and substantially sticking to traditional religiosity, carries on this morality, although he is fascinated by the potency of victory and victory’s praise (and relevant poetic celebration) to drive the laudandus to the line between mortal and immortal. By contrast, the watchmen of the *Rhesus* chorus accomplish what Pindar decided not to accomplish but only to intimate. They do divinize Rhesus, in tune with what Greeks of the last three decades of the fourth century did again and again with Macedonian kings. If epinician heroes are recommended a long and moderate life by their genre (or by Pindar at least), our watchmen tragically experiment with the perils of transcending humanity, while still complying with epinician strategies of neutralization of divine φθόνος. But despite the chorus’ hope of moderation in Pindaric style, divinized Rhesus tragically dies a few hours after being sung as a god, and thus enacts a most extreme and amazing *peripeteia*, which tragedy seems to have never staged down to 336, according to the evidence of the extant texts, reinforced by the intriguing testimony of an anecdote concerning the actor Neoptolemus.

### **3) Divinization and/but Death: A Θαυμαστόν Still Missing from Tragedy by 336 BC**

The second *hypothesis* to Demosthenes 19 (335 Butcher), the oration that reviews the events leading to the Peace of Philocrates in 347/346, records the special admiration of Philip II for the actor Neoptolemus: when Neoptolemus and Aristodemus (also an actor) went to Macedonia in order to sound out the chances of a honourable peace between Athens and

Macedonia, Philip “received them so warmly (φιλοφρόνως) that he added gifts from his own possessions to their other remuneration.”<sup>49</sup> According to Diodorus Siculus 16.92 at the symposium at Aegae after the wedding of Cleopatra the daughter of Philip—and so the night before the dawn when he was assassinated—Philip commissioned Neoptolemus to perform “one of his most successful pieces” (τῶν ἐπιτετευγμένων ποιημάτων: impossible to understand whether these were pieces that Neoptolemus had authored or pieces from his repertory of performances), “in particular such pieces as bore on (ἀνηκόντων) the Persian expedition.” Neoptolemus chose a dactylo-choriambic piece on “sudden, unpredictable death” that “robs us of our distant hopes” and proves the vanity of elated “thoughts that reach higher than the air” (Diodorus reports ten lines of it: adespoton *Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta* 127).<sup>50</sup> He had the intention—so Diodorus comments—of suggesting to Philip the idea that also the great Persian Empire could be some day overturned by fortune. Philip was enchanted with the message (ἡσθεὶς ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀπηγγελμένοις) and motivated more than ever in his project to overthrow the Persian king. At this point Diodorus’ narrative definitely leaves Neoptolemus behind and—without mentioning Neoptolemus any more—moves to the following gory dawn, when Philip was assassinated in the theatre right after the parade of the statues of the twelve Olympic gods plus a thirteenth, himself: “Philip included in the procession statues of the twelve gods wrought with great artistry ... and along with these was conducted a thirteenth statue,

<sup>49</sup> As Moloney (2014) 242 correctly observes, if Archelaus’ reign was notable for the eminent playwrights whom he attracted to his court, then Philip’s reign was characterized by a high number of famous actors who visited his court. (Philip’s special attention for actors—more new actors than new authors—tells us something about the increasing trend towards reperformances of fifth-century plays: Lycurgus’ initiatives at Athens were not far in time at all).

<sup>50</sup> φρονεῖτε νῦν αἰθέρος ύψηλότερον / καὶ μεγάλων πεδίων ἀρούρας, / φρονεῖθ' ὑπερβαλλόμενοι / δόμων δόμους, ἀφροσύναι / πρόσω βιοτὰν τεκμαιρόμενοι. / ὁ δ' ἀμφιβάλλει ταχύπους / κέλευθον ἔρπων σκοτίαν, / ἄφνω δ' ἀφαντος προσέβα / μακρὰς ἀφαιρούμενος ἐλπίδας / θνατῶν πολύμοχθος “Αἰδας “you think thoughts higher than the air and think of wide fields’ cultivation. The homes you think of surpass the homes that men have known, but you do err, guiding our life afar. But one there is who will catch the swift, who goes away obscured in gloom, and sudden, unseen, overtakes and robs us of our distant hopes—Death, mortals’ source of many woes.”

becoming for a god (θεοπρεπές), so that the king was exhibiting himself<sup>51</sup> enthroned among the twelve gods.” But we are also briefed, by Stobaeus (4.34.70), on Neoptolemus’ reactions to that dawn—as Stobaeus focuses on the actor, his information is probably drawn from the same anecdotal source on which Diodorus relied about Neoptolemus at the wedding of Cleopatra:<sup>52</sup>

Νεοπτόλεμον τὸν τῆς τραγωιδίας ὑποκριτὴν ἥρετό τις, τί θαυμάζοι τῶν ὑπ’  
 Αἰσχύλου λεχθέντων ἢ Σοφοκλέους ἢ Εύριπίδου· ὁ δὲ “οὐδὲν μὲν τούτων” εἶπεν·  
 ὁ δ’ αὐτὸς ἐθεάσατο ἐπὶ μείζονος σκηνῆς,<sup>53</sup> Φίλιππον ἐν τοῖς τῆς θυγατρὸς  
 Κλεοπάτρας γάμοις πομπεύσαντα καὶ τρισκαιδέκατον θεὸν ἐπικληθέντα, τῇ  
 ἔξης ἐπισφαγέντα ἐν τῷ θεάτρῳ καὶ ἐρριμμένον.

<sup>51</sup> His cult image?, cf. Chaniotis (2013) 434.

<sup>52</sup> Suetonius, *Life of Caligula* 57.4 narrates, among the portents anticipating the death of Caligula, that “the pantomimic actor Mnester danced a tragedy which the tragic actor Neoptolemus had acted years before during the games at which Philip king of the Macedonians was assassinated.” So from Diodorus we do not know that Neoptolemus also performed at the dawn of Philip's assassination in the theatre, and Suetonius does not give the title of the “tragedy” (?) performed by Neoptolemus before the assassination and by Mnester (*Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta* 5) when Caligula was killed. But this title may be recorded in the version of the portents of Caligula's assassination by Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 19.94: “a mime was presented in the course of which a chieftain is caught and crucified; the play performed by the dancer was *Cyniras*, in which the hero and his daughter Myrrha are killed … it is also agreed that the day of the year was the same as that on which Philip, the son of Amyntas and king of the Macedonians, was slain.” Diodorus, Suetonius, and Josephus appear thus to rely, independently of each other and with different interests about the details, on a previous source (or previous sources), which because of the focus on Neoptolemus were probably anecdotal and seem consistent in the information (in fact a single common source is quite possible).

<sup>53</sup> The opposition between the σκηνή of the theatrical fiction and the μείζων σκηνή of real life/history only occurs, I believe, in Marc. Aur. 11.6.1, who according to modern commentators would have alluded precisely to Neoptolemus; see also Maximus of Tyre 13.9, opposing τραγωιδίαι and τὸ βίου δράμα. About both authors Easterling (2002) 340 comments: “the idea of a drama of life, staged by Tyche or Nature, in which the human being is as much at the mercy of the ‘plot’ as the actor is controlled by the director, could be used by moralists to promote a proper acceptance of human limitations.” For the more general opposition (or merging) of life and theatrical stage, cf. Chaniotis (1997) 219–220 (but the whole paper is fundamental to understanding the progressive establishment of a “culture of onlookers” in which both occasions of public life, such as *agora* assemblies, trials, etc., and theatrical events were seen more and more, from the fourth century into the Hellenistic age, as forms of performance and spectacle).

Someone asked the tragic actor Neoptolemus what amazed him most in the stories told by Aeschylus, Sophocles, or Euripides. He said “None of those,” but instead something he himself had seen take place on a greater stage: Philip, who had taken part in the procession at the wedding of his daughter Cleopatra and had been acclaimed the thirteenth god, murdered on the next day in the theatre and lying face down.

Several further connections between tragic *peripeteiai* and the reversal of fortune of Philip will have popped up in the minds of Neoptolemus and the readers of his anecdotes. In Neoptolemus’ reflections on the tragic θαυμαστόν of the last hours of Philip as they are narrated by Stobaeus, the actor does hint at his night-performance at the wedding. But in light of the assassination of Philip in the theatre the choice of the tragic piece, which Neoptolemus intended perhaps to be heard as a prediction of success for Philip against the Persians, “turns out to have another layer again, a true prediction, this time, of an event which the spectators watch instead of a dramatic show, the assassination of their king.”<sup>54</sup> Besides, this sudden death of Philip may have been seen by more than some of the spectators to those events, or read by readers of their historiographic and anecdotal records, as the punishment following the overweening presumption of accepting or demanding divinization. Life operating in the space of a theatre, and thus ready to be contemplated as theatrical, dispensed a reversal of fortune quite similar to the retributions of more or less immoderate pride that often drove the heroes of tragedy to the saddest *peripeteiai*. The slightly allegorical meaning that Neoptolemus had ascribed to his piece on the inevitability of death, the leveler of everything (and thus also of the Persian king), had thus probably to be re-interpreted: the lack of human self-awareness that death was meant to chastise and level was not the *hybris* of the Persian king, but the

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. Easterling (1997) 219.

overweening excess of King Philip's divinization.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, life had re-written the sense of tragedy underlying Neoptolemus' performance for the wedding of Cleopatra. As for Neoptolemus in particular, he will have been the first to include his own tragic piece for still-merry Philip in the οὐδὲν μὲν τούτων of his answer, and he may also have added a retrospective comment, now lost. Anyway, the readers of the story will have easily inferred that the effect of amazement produced by the old tragic cliché of unpredictable death as destabilizing human power and hopes, which Neoptolemus had sung at the wedding, was all too inferior to the amazing spectacle provided by the death of god Philip in the "greater stage" of real life.

Leaving aside speculations about the fuller set of reactions that Neoptolemus or the readers of his anecdotes may have had about the death of divinized Philip and the tragic element of life, the reaction of this actor as described by Stobaeus may include, I think, an intriguing fragment of his poetics of tragedy: life can be more tragic than tragedy. The death and humiliation (cf. Stobaeus' "face down" in the dust) of someone who had been newly divinized as the thirteenth Olympian god was an event that—Neoptolemus maintains—he had never seen in a tragedy of the established triad of the best fifth-century tragedians, and could only now contemplate in the "bigger stage" of real life—although it was an event that had taken place in a theater after all, and so in a way it was also a spectacle for him (ἐθεάσατο), and invited comparison with the *peripeteiai* of tragedy. We have no way to be sure whether Stobaeus' source recorded the real words of Neoptolemus or at least the real essence of his words, or rather embroidered the historical record about the familiarity of this actor with Philip and his presence at the wedding of Cleopatra or in the theatre where Philip was killed.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> As observed by A. Chaniotis *per litteras*, anticipating the analysis of the death of Philip from his forthcoming *From Alexander to Hadrian*.

<sup>56</sup> For considerations about the thriving anecdotal literature on actors, cf. Easterling (2002) 332–334.

But in order to accomplish this embroidery—if embroidery it was—the biographer used by Stobaeus will have unavoidably exploited his acquaintance with the orientations of taste of fourth-century tragedy, founded on a quantity of texts which are now totally lost but he could still read, at least in part. It is telling that the question addressed to him, τί θαυμάζοι, also uses a verb redolent of the terminology of literary theory which can date from the fourth century.<sup>57</sup>

Pandering to the expectations and comfortable easiness of the public is certifiably a task that often orients the actors' interventions on the original authorial texts. Neoptolemus' renown and the number of his victories in the Dionysia and the Lenaean<sup>58</sup> make sure that he was a good interpreter of the tastes of his age. It comes thus as no surprise that, probably a short time after Neoptolemus expressed his opinion on the tragic θαυμαστόν, or in years not far from him, the second stasimon of *Rhesus* enacted a case of amazing *peripeteia* that precisely reflected the amazing *peripeteia* that Neoptolemus had prioritized: for Rhesus, just divinized as a proper god by the chorus, to die immediately afterward was an amazingly extreme change of fortune, one that, since the death of Philip II, was not new in life for Neoptolemus but, if we can trust the actor's anecdote, was new to tragedy.

If Neoptolemus' poetics of tragic "amazement" is a fragment of the orientation of taste of theatergoers of the second half of the fourth century, and the second stasimon of *Rhesus* is, as I believe, a strikingly straightforward application of similar tastes, then this coincidence may

<sup>57</sup> Aristotle also uses this word in the *Rhetic* (1.1371b24–25), in a context where he is not speaking of tragedy but in general of the pleasures of art, precisely to describe the effect of the sudden changes of fortune: καὶ αἱ περιπέτειαι καὶ τὸ παρὰ μικρὸν σώζεσθαι ἐκ τῶν κινδύνων πάντα γὰρ θαυμαστὰ ταῦτα “and περιπέτειαι and narrow escapes from dangers [are pleasurable]; for all of these cause amazement.” But “amazement” is an ingredient that Aristotle considers essential in tragedy; cf. e.g. δεῖ μὲν οὖν ἐν ταῖς τραγῳδίαις ποιεῖν τὸ θαυμαστόν “[the achor] should put in tragedy what is amazing” (1460a11–12); ἐν δὲ ταῖς περιπέτειαις καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀπλοῖς πράγμασι στοχάζονται ὃν βούλονται θαυμαστῶς τραγικὸν γὰρ τοῦτο καὶ φιλάνθρωπον “in reversals and in simple incidents [the poets] aim to arouse the amazement which they desire; for this is tragic and morally satisfying” (1456a19–21); Gastaldi (1989) 93–97 (in particular on the co-ordination of the θαυμαστόν with the crucial pursuit of εἰκός).

<sup>58</sup> *Inscriptiones Graecae* II/III<sup>2</sup> II.2.2320 and 2325.

lead us to an important, though cautious chronological conclusion.<sup>59</sup> The death of Philip in 336 will never be a totally sure terminus post quem for the *Rhesus* or at least its second stasimon. In principle, Neoptolemus (or his biographer, if his words were fictionalized by his biographer<sup>60</sup>) may have forgotten the divinization of Rhesus and his almost immediate death in *Rhesus*, and thus, in reality, the play may have antedated the death of Philip. But 336 BC appears to be at least a plausible terminus post quem, and it is really appealing to suppose that this play will have filled what still was a desideratum in the theatrical tastes of Neoptolemus, the spectator of life at the death of king/god Philip II.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> I agree in fact with Ragone (1969) and Liapis (2009) and (2012) that *Rhesus* may have been composed by actors/interpreters or, (more probably, in my opinion) was an original Euripidean *Rhesus* heavily reworked by them. But I am not ready to accept Liapis' sheer speculation that the author of *Rhesus* was precisely Neoptolemus. Neoptolemus is just a possible candidate to this actorial re-working of the play. His poetological reactions to the θαυμαστόν of the death of Philip—which escaped Liapis' sharp attention—surely are a strong support to this candidature; but a keen attention for the effects of the tragic θαυμαστόν must have been widely shared by theatergoers of the second half of the fourth century, as Aristotle drives us to surmise (cf. n. 57 above). The actor Neoptolemus may simply have been the loudbailer of these tastes. He certainly was one of the (probably plural) actors of the fourth century who may be supposed to have re-worked the original *Rhesus*. and eventually replaced it. So, if we like to fancy, we can fancy that Neoptolemus authored the second stasimon or its re-casting (if, as most probable, the play already included an epainetic song for *Rhesus*), and, for instance, added or placed more emphasis on the deifying addresses to Rhesus as a god, in order to increase the effect of θαυμαστόν of his ensuing death. But rather than fantasizing about Neotolemus as a putative author, I believe that we should consider him as a most valuable witness of the theatrical tastes of his age.

<sup>60</sup> See above p. 25–26.

<sup>61</sup> This paper profited from suggestions by Angelos Chaniotis, James Diggle, Denis Feeney, Richard Hunter, Robin Osborne, and Peter Wilson, whom I thank wholeheartedly. The anonymous reviewers of *Classics* also helped me in several points to make clearer the logic of my argumentation.

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