

RECENSIONE

P.B. CIPOLLA, *AESCHYLUS' SATYRIC PROMETHEUS*, ROMA/BRISTOL, L'ERMA DI BRETSCHNEIDER, 2024, PP. 134. [ISBN: 978-88913-3435-0]

The present edition of the satyr drama *Prometheus* constitutes a preliminary result of the edition of the complete corpus of the Aeschylean theatre, as part of the project. The final edition will enrich the text with an extended apparatus criticus, a broader commentary and the complete collection of its attributed fragments to this satyr drama. This kind of preliminary edition has a longlasting tradition among Classicists, and helps both researchers and readers to become acquainted with texts submitted to a difficult and long-term study. As a recent example, Neri offered a preliminary edition of Sapphic poetry as a preview of his complete research¹. The edition is authored by a credited researcher in the field of satyr drama. Paolo B. Cipolla (Università di Catania) has had to combine a deep mastery in three different

disciplines: papyrology and textual criticism; language and style of satyr drama as a genre, which has its own characteristics compared to both tragedy and comedy; and the theatrical dimension of the play.

The main result of the research undertaken is clearly indicated by means of the title: the unsolved problem of the identification of the plays performed in different years having Prometheus as protagonist requires first, avoiding such a cul-de-sac, and second, analysing this 472 drama. As a result of this elucidation, the label 'satyric' is applied to a Prometheus that is no longer described with an adjective, *πυρφόρος* or *πυρκαεύς*, that ultimately could depend on a personal choice of each of our sources. This satyr drama, even in its fragmentary state, shifts attention away from the problems related to the *Prometheus Bound*. Ockham's razor may limit the possibilities for courageous researchers aiming for exciting academic adventures, but allows a solid progress in our knowledge.

The book is organised in four chapters: sources of the Promethean plays by Aeschylus (pp. 11-22); text and commentary

¹ C. Neri, *Saffo. Poesie, frammenti e testimonianze*, Ariccia, Rusconi, 2017. The final edition is C. Neri, *Saffo, testimonianze e frammenti. Introduzione*,

testo critico, traduzione e commento, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2021.

of this satyr drama (pp. 23-102); a report on vase representations of the myth, although some date from a later period (pp. 103-118); and a brief reconstruction of the plot (pp. 119-122). The core of the book consists of an exhaustive commentary of the scanty fragments of the play, always aiming at restoring the text. The closest research on the subject comes from the recent edition by Kyriakos Tsantsanoglou². It can be inferred that this preliminary edition offers an answer to this 2022 issue, given that the Thessalonician scholar brought up many interesting possibilities, both textual and interpretive.

Cipolla rejects with good reasons the theory suggested by Tsantsanoglou, according to whom the extant *Prometheus Bound* should be understood as a prosatyr drama, performed as a satyr drama in 472 BCE and later on as a tragedy (p. 23 n. 1). Actually, the category of 'prosatyr drama' seems destined to be confined to the list of academic ghosts³.

The arguments displayed by the author all along his accurate and cautious commentary are always supported by strong reasons in which a mix of philological knowledge and personal experience adds necessary input in order to develop a wholly satisfying explanatory discourse. Of course, a very specialised training in this kind of studies is needed, an aspect in which the good advice of

Giuseppina Basta Donzelli, with her experience of the problems raised by the textual transmission, gave the author both a considerable epistemological basis and an example of method. Yet it also required a background in continuous work with the fragments of the dramatic genres. Actually, the author exhibits a good command of all the poetic genres of the Archaic and Classical Ages.

As mentioned before, the author has provided his edition and commentary with the result of extensive knowledge in different fields. Linguistic and metrical analysis enables the author to recognise the satyric genre by means of firm evidence (p. 35, on an anapaestic resolution; pp. 51-52, on the omission of a comparative adverb; p. 87, on the use of the thematic form ὀμνύω) or to keep the transmitted text (p. 53, on γένειον ἄρᾱ;) or to suggest tenable restorations and emendations (p. 71 on [ἐ]ολπ[ἐγ]ώ). The linguistic comment covers phonetics, morphology, syntax and semantics, always with a perfect knowledge of the most particular aspects of Classical Attic. The keen eye of the author also helps to understand peculiar utterances of colloquial origin (p. 82, on the meaning of θέλουσα).

The textual reconstruction follows a consistent criterion of rigour and caution (see for example, on p. 83, the metrical reasons to reject Σελ[ήνης in fr. 5, l. 4),

² K. Tsantsanoglou, *Tragic Papyri. Aeschylus' Theoi, Hypsipyle, Laios, Prometheus Pyrkaeus and Sophocles' Inachos*, Berlin/Boston, De Gruyter, 2022.

³ General opinion tends to restrict the meaning of such an equivocal concept: cf. N.W. Slater, "Nothing to Do with Satyrs? *Alcestis* and the Concept of Prosatyr Drama", in G.W.M. Harrison (ed.), *Satyr Drama: Tragedy at Play*, Cardiff, University of

Wales Press, 2005, 83-101; for an even more restrictive way, cf. J. Redondo, "*Alcestis*: Pro-Satyr or Simply Romantic Tragedy?", in S. Bigliuzzi, F. Luppi, G. Ugolini (eds.), *Συναγωνίζεσθαι. Studies in Honour of Guido Avezzù*, I, Verona 2018, 385-401.

and the author is also careful and scrupulous regarding the interpretation of each passage and word (also on p. 83, when he rejects the relationship of the compound τῆλεγνωτον with a ritual nocturnal dance). The notion of a balanced and solid work applies to the entire work.

The evolution of satyr drama as a dramatic genre is perfectly taken into account when it provides useful, clear and in our opinion unavoidable criteria to decide on a difficult problem. For example, on the speaker of fr. 6 (p. 96), not to be identified with Silenus, as Tsantsanoglou suggested, or on the number and profile of the characters of the play (p. 121). The mixing of different analyses is also highly noticeable, in which the testimony provided by the plastic arts, mainly the vascular representations, plays a central role. The whole third chapter, significantly entitled "Vase paintings featuring Prometheus bringing fire among satyrs: an (indirect) testimony?" (pp. 103-118), exemplifies a methodological pattern that has been known for some time⁴, but is not always applied by the researchers.

The translations of this fragmentary corpus, despite its transmission, give the

reader a precise and thoroughgoing understanding of the Greek text⁵.

Among many other valuable conclusions attained by Cipolla, even at an intermediate state of his research, there is one that deserves special attention: the existence of a mythical tradition driven more by popular than authorial influence, originating in new forms of representation of the ancient subjects and characters; in his own words, Cipolla emphasizes "the contamination between Dionysiac and Promethean imagery" as well as mythical innovations "originated on the stage of the Athenian theatre in a satyr drama" (p. 113).

As an objection to some observations, if we can accept as such something that is not sure, in our view the weight accorded to the *Prometheus Bound* should be somewhat diminished (p. 122, for example, on the mortal characters in the Aeschylean theatre), inasmuch as a 4th century datation is not ruled out. Of course, in such a case there is no basis for referring to the poetics, art, and practice of a single tragedian, Aeschylus, even if the play is full of elements that characterise his dramatical production.

⁴ The usefulness of this kind of testimonia has a milestone in the publication of the monograph of Erika Simon, *Die griechischen Vasen*. Munich, Hirmer, 1976. Not as in the case of a former book on the subject (P.-E. Arias, M. Hirmer, *Tausend Jahre griechische Vaserkunst*, Munich, Hirmer, 1960), Simon paid attention to the social and cultural context in which every vase was used, and established some links between the dramatic genres and the pictorial themes.

⁵ On pp. 60-61, the adverbial accusative πολλά means, if we are correct, 'repeatedly', 'constantly', since it conveys the notion of temporal

plenty; therefore, instead of the author's translation "will be in great pursuit of me" we would suggest "will steadily be in pursuit of me". On p. 75, the phrase ὥριου χειμάτος, translated as "during the season of winter", maybe could have included more explicitly the adjective ὥριος, "that comes on due time", besides changing the durative meaning, which is not conveyed by the accusative, by an aspectually neutral temporal indication. Something like "in a prompt winter" would be in our opinion an alternative to think about it.

Typos and generally misprints are very few (p. 32, “receives” instead of “received”; p. 74, n. 98, two dots instead of a high dot; p. 115: “one” instead of “on”). The accuracy of the author has been paralleled by the same good work of the editorial team. The number of bibliographic sources is by itself a proof of a well-done work, in anticipation of the complete edition of the play⁶.

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⁶ Very recent research has been of course out of reach to the author, for example S. Nikolaidou-Arampatzi, “Aeschylus’ *Amymone* and the mythos of the Satyric Drama”, in A. Papachrysostomou, A.P. Antonopoulos, A.-F. Mitsis, F. Papadimitriou, P. Taktikou (eds.), *Γέρα: Studies in honor*

of Professor Menelaos Christopoulos”, Special Issue *Classics@* 25, 2003, <https://nrs.harvard.edu/URN-3:HLNC.ISSUE:103900165>.