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The Extant *Rhesus* and Its Two Supplementary Prologues: A Question of Affinity

Abstract

In this paper I will discuss the two supplementary iambic prologues to the pseudo-Euripidean *Rhesus*, both preserved in the so-called second Hypothesis or Hypothesis (b) to the drama – our only source concerning the authenticity question tied to this play in antiquity. The extant remnants of these prologues are a single line allegedly derived from the writings of the fourth century BCE scholar Dicaearchus of Messana, and eleven verses from an opening soliloquy by Hera, addressed to Athena. This prologue, engaging Zeus' wife and daughter, was considered in antiquity to be interpolated by actors. My main focus in this study will be on the various ways in which these sources can be associated with the extant drama. As far as the first prologue is concerned, I will attempt to show in some detail that its specific content does not necessarily constitute evidence for the existence of a genuine Euripidean *Rhesus*, as has been suggested. On the other hand, I will tentatively argue that its emergence in ancient scholarship can plausibly be linked to the origin of the authenticity issue. As regards the second iambic prologue to the disputed play, I will discuss its form and content, its Iliadic and extra-Iliadic framework, in an attempt to demonstrate, as thoroughly as possible, how dramatically suitable it can be for the extant composition.

KEYWORDS: Euripides; *Rhesus*; supplementary prologues; Hypothesis (b); Dicaearchus

Rhesus is quite a mystery. It is the only extant play dramatizing an actual Iliadic episode,¹ and a rather peculiar alloy of tragic and comic elements.² It is traditionally attributed to Euripides, but its authorship was already disputed in antiquity, and its non-Euripidean origin (at least in its present

¹ See Liapis 2012: xvii-xviii; Fries 2014: 8-11. The most celebrated dramatization of the *Iliad* in antiquity is the (lost) Achillean trilogy of Aeschylus (see Sommerstein 2010: 242-9). Plays centered around Achilles or Hector seem to have been again in vogue in the fourth century BCE (see Liapis, 2012: xlvi for the bibliography).

² See indicatively Burnett 1985.

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form) is nowadays rather widely accepted.³ The drama puts on stage the tenth rhapsody of the *Iliad*, focusing on the spy mission of Dolon to the Greek ships, and on the slaughter of king Rhesus, an illustrious Trojan ally. In this play Rhesus is a Thracian ruler who comes belatedly to the Trojan camp, in order to offer his services to Hector. Yet, Hector reproaches him for his late arrival, and barely allows him and his entourage to stay in Priam's city. At the climax of the play – the only surviving drama taking place almost solely during the night⁴ – Odysseus and Diomedes, who have previously managed to kill Hector's spy Dolon and sneak into the enemy camp, are advised and tangibly assisted by goddess Athena to slay Rhesus and steal his magnificent horses. King Rhesus' mother, a Muse, appears on stage for the final scene of the drama. She mourns her son and foretells his after-life destiny as a man-dæmon.

Four distinct Hypothesis-type texts⁵ tied to the controversial *Rhesus* have come down to us. One of them, Hypothesis (b), in contrast to all other extant counterpart texts, records no (conventional) information on the action of the play, its *dramatis personae*, other aspects of the myth, or its title. However, its unknown author casts some doubt on the authenticity of *Rhesus*.⁶

τοῦτο τὸ δράμα ἔνιοι νόθον ὑπενόησαν, Εὐριπίδου δὲ μὴ εἶναι· τὸν γὰρ Σοφοκλεῖον μᾶλλον ὑποφαίνειν χαρακτηῖρα. ἐν μέντοι ταῖς Διδασκαλίαις ὡς γνήσιον ἀναγέγραπται. καὶ ἡ περὶ τὰ μετάρσια δὲ ἐν αὐτῷ πολυπραγμοσύνη τὸν Εὐριπίδην ὁμολογεῖ. πρόλογοι δὲ διττοὶ φέρονται.

[Some have supposed that this play is spurious and not a work of Euripides since it shows more the stamp of Sophocles. But it is listed as a genuine work of his in the Didascaliai, and furthermore the preoccupation with celestial phenomena betrays his hand. Two prologues are current.]⁷

³ For the authorship question regarding *Rhesus* see Liapis 2012: lxvii-lxxv; Fries 2014: 22-8. For some new observations on the subject see Manousakis and Stamatatos 2017; see also Ludwig 1997.

⁴ See *ll.* 984-5 and 991-2.

⁵ There are three general types of dramatic hypotheses preserved in the surviving medieval manuscripts and ancient papyri. The first type is closely associated with the Alexandrian edition of the dramas by Aristophanes of Byzantium, the second, which is uniquely Euripidean, derives from the so called *Tales from Euripides*, a series of plot summaries to which I shall return below, and the third consists of the 'amplified' texts of Byzantine grammarians. For this categorization, see concisely Allan 2008: 142. For tragic and comic Hypotheses in papyri see in more detail the first chapter of van Rossum-Steenbeek 1998.

⁶ No other indication survives that the extant *Rhesus* was considered spurious by ancient or Byzantine scholars, see Fries 2014: 22-3.

⁷ The translation is by Kovacs 2002: 454-5. The rest of the Hypothesis is quoted where discussed below.

It seems that at some point in antiquity a group of scholars asserted that Euripides was not the author of this camp drama otherwise ascribed to him. According to them the play indicates the style of Sophocles,⁸ even though the author of the second Hypothesis clearly states that it is listed as Euripidean in the *Didascaliae*.⁹ This reference to the didascalical record in Hypothesis (b) and, of course, the traditional ascription of the extant drama, seem to be the only indications from antiquity that someone could use in order to argue that a *Rhesus* actually written by Euripides ever existed.¹⁰ All other external evidence alludes to the extant play.

In fact, it has been suggested that, when composing his text, the actual author of the second Hypothesis (or his source) still had before him (and refers to) an original Euripidean play on king Rhesus, and not the surviving drama.¹¹ In other words, this conjecture implies that a group of (Alexandrian?)¹² scholars expressed doubts about the authenticity of a genuine play, which was then lost and replaced by a spurious one. Even though this is by no means an impossible scenario, the argument supporting it is rather fallacious. More specifically, the main basis for the theory under discussion is that the (speculated) content of the first of the two iambic prologues recorded by the author of Hypothesis (b) is incompatible with the extant drama. Thus, this text must be seen as a vestige of an original Euripidean *Rhesus*. As I will attempt to show, this is not exactly the case.

⁸ Perhaps the most obscure ancient information about *Rhesus* is its alleged similarity to the Sophoclean style, see Ritchie 1964: 11-15. There is some resemblance between *Rhesus* and Sophocles' *Ajax*, but it hardly concerns their linguistic idiosyncrasy, as the author of the second Hypothesis, most probably, implies when using the word *χαρακτήρ*. The contiguous dramatic function of Athena in these plays, and some other minor similarities of this kind, indicate that there is a noteworthy possibility for the author of *Rhesus* to have relied on the structure of this particular Sophoclean play when sewing his drama. For this case in detail see Richards 1916: 195; Nock 1930; Strohm 1959: 261, and especially Fantuzzi 2006a: 159-60, 164-7; see also Fries 2014: 33ff.; Liapis 2014: 286-8.

⁹ For Aristotle as the main source of the didascalical records see Pickard-Cambridge 1968: 70-1. See also Hanink 2014: 191-2. From the Hypothesis-texts of some of the extant plays (see Ritchie 1964: 15n3) we get a scant (and often distorted) image of what sort of information this work must have included.

¹⁰ See Fries 2014: 23ff.

¹¹ Liapis 2004: 173-7. However, Liapis later (2012: 62) notes that "the Hyp. author knew about at least the first prologue . . . not through direct access to manuscripts, but through his reading of Dicaearchus' account".

¹² See Liapis 2012: 60.

The First Supplementary Prologue: A Tragedy in the Dark

What survives of the first supplementary prologue to *Rhesus* in Hypothesis (b),¹³ is an iambic trimeter line that is said to have been derived verbatim from the writings of Dicaearchus of Messana – a fourth century BCE scholar and pupil of Aristotle, who sets forth the plot of *Rhesus*: ὁ γοῦν Δικαίαρχος ἐκτιθεὶς τὴν ὑπόθεσιν τοῦ Ῥήσου γράφει κατὰ λέξιν οὕτως (81: Wehrli; 114: Mirhady).¹⁴ The line under discussion is now supplemented, *exempli gratia*, by Diggle at the beginning of his *apparatus criticus* for the play, and the supplement is adopted by Kovacs (2002: 455) in his translation of the text:¹⁵

Νῦν εὐσέληνον φέγγος ἢ διφρήλατος
 . . . <Ἐως διώκουσ>

[Now the chariot-driven <Dawn is about to banish / . . . > the moon's fair light.]

This ingenious suggestion is formed after Euripides' *Ion* 1157-8: there the φωσφόρος Ἐως is dissipating the stars.¹⁶ The image of dawn in the form of a goddess driving a chariot is known, although not common, in archaic and classical Greek literature.¹⁷ The very same imagery of a divine, fe-

¹³ The extant *Rhesus* opens with an anapaestic scene, during which a Chorus of Trojan soldiers informs Hector of some kind of suspicious activity taking place in the Greek camp. Similarly, in the opening of the lost *Myrmidons*, the first drama of Aeschylus' Iliadic trilogy, a Chorus of Greek soldiers approaches the tent of the hero, asking him – in chanted anapaests – with a sense of urgency to rejoin the battle. For *Myrmidons* see Sommerstein 2008: 134-49.

¹⁴ See Ritchie (1964: 29) for the restoration of the text by Nauck. See also Liapis 2001; Merro 2008: 129-30; Fries 2014: 25n18, 112.

¹⁵ See also Kovacs 2002: 455n25. Snell was the first to suggest this supplement – though in a slightly different form: <Ἐως διώκει>. See Liapis 2012: 63; Fries 2014: 64 (*app. crit.*).

¹⁶ ἢ τε φωσφόρος / Ἐως διώκουσ' ἄστρα.

¹⁷ *Od.* 23.243-6 is the only epic example of Dawn driving a chariot with two horses, and the imagery was most probably formed under the well-established representation of Helios' chariot, see the notes by Stanford (1958) and Russo, Fernández-Galiano, and Heubeck (1992) on the aforementioned lines. See also Nagy 1999: 198ff. Eur. *IA* 156-9 presents the two images together (the emergence of the light of dawn and the arrival of Helios' chariot) as complementary events of daybreak, cf. Eur. *Supp.* 99off. In *Tr.* 855-6 a ἀστέρων τέθριππος... χρύσεος ὄχος (with no driver actually mentioned) abducts Tithonos and carries him to the chamber of Dawn. For attestations of the imagery under discussion in Classical and subsequent art see *LIMC* s.v. *Eos*.

male chariot driver also applies to the Moon/Selene.¹⁸ Plausibly, the rationale behind the current choice of Dawn in our trimeter is that Σελήνη would have produced a highly tautological couplet with εὐσέληνον.¹⁹ If this supplement is right, we are forced to accept that the preserved iambic verse could not have belonged to the extant *Rhesus*. A tragedy taking place almost entirely in the night-time²⁰ cannot present the arrival of dawn in its opening lines. Thus, the content of our trimeter must point to some other drama – evidently the original by Euripides, as has been asserted on this very basis.²¹ However, there is also another way – that of the Night.²² Νύξ appears as a goddess driving a chariot twice in plays by Euripides:²³ *Ion* 1150-1²⁴ and *Andromeda* fr. 114.²⁵ In addition, there is a reference to the dark chariot of the Night in Aeschylus' *Ch.* 660-1: νυκτὸς ἄρμ' ἐπείγεται/ σκοτεινὸν, and in the lost *Daughters of the Sun*: μελανίππου.../ ἱερᾶς νυκτὸς ἀμολγόν (fr. 69).²⁶ The textual and contextual affinity of the *Andromeda* line to that of *Rhesus* seems to be rather instructive. Just like the alleged Dicaearchean line of *Rhesus*, the fragment of *Andromeda* also belongs to the very beginning of the play. The heroine is bound alone in the

¹⁸ See Pind. *Ol.* 3.19-20, Eur. *Suppl.* 990-2, *Hymn to Selene* (32) 5-14. For the depictions of the minor goddess Selene in art see *LIMC* s.v. *Selene*.

¹⁹ Cf. Mastronarde 2004: 17; Collard and Cropp 2008b: 119. Such a tautology would not be inconceivable even for an original Euripidean play, see e.g. *Ion* 117-20, 258-61, *HF* 538, cf. *Tr.* 712, *Andromeda* fr. 114 Kn. Also, as we read in *De Elocutione* 59-66, 103, it seems that, in some respect, tautology (διλογία) – wholly opposite to the current concept of good writing – was perceived at some point in antiquity to be source of grandeur in literary style (cf. Quint. *Inst. or.* 8.3.51). However, the propensity of the author of *Rhesus* for grandiose, bombastic diction is to be associated more with the high percentage of *hapax legomena* (and predilection for the *recherché*) in his drama, see Liapis 2012: liiiff.

²⁰ See Perris (2012) and Donelan (2014: 549-50) for the challenges of stagecraft in a play of this kind.

²¹ Liapis 2004: 174: "One of the many respects in which *Rhesus* is quite unlike any other surviving Greek tragedy is, notoriously, that its action unfolds entirely during the night . . . However, the first prologue clearly belongs to a play which, like many other Greek tragedies, began at dawn".

²² See Rusten 1982: 360n17; Fries 2013: 816.

²³ Cf. the image of the chariot driving Nyx preserved in an Attic black figure lekythos dating from 500-475 in Chase and Pease 1942: 93-4 (pl. 44.1a-d); for further examples from the visual arts see *LIMC* s.v. *Astra A, Nyx B*.

²⁴ μελάμπεπλος δὲ Νύξ ἀσειρώτων ζυγοῖς / ὄχημ' ἔπαλλεν, ἄστρα δ' ὠμάρτει θεᾶ. See the note by Owen 1939 on these lines concerning the horses of Nyx.

²⁵ Cf. Eur. *HF* 88off. for the chariot of Lyssa, daughter of the Night.

²⁶ [". . . night's dark chariot is already advancing rapidly"], [". . . the darkness of holy Night with her black horses"]. The translation is by Sommerstein (2008).

dark,²⁷ making an invocation in anapaests (probably recitative at first)²⁸ to the chariot-driven²⁹ Night:³⁰

Ἦ Νύξ ἱερά,
 ὡς μακρὸν ἵππευμα διώκεις
 ἄστεροειδέα νῶτα διφρευούσ'
 αἰθέρος ἱεράς
 τοῦ σεμνοτάτου δι' Ὀλύμπου.

[O sacred Night, how long is your chariot-drive across the sacred heaven's starry expanse, through holiest Olympus!]³¹

If we take into account the gender of the expected word, this is the closest parallel to the remainder of the first iambic prologue to *Rhesus*,³² and the διφρηλάτος/Νύξ solution, which clearly introduces here a rather different image from the one Σελήνη would introduce,³³ makes the relevance of the verse under discussion to the disputed drama quite evident.³⁴ In describing the fall of the night and not its withdrawal, the line is perfectly consistent with the outset of the pseudo-Euripidean *Rhesus*, taking place in the dark until the very end. In addition, the notable recurrence of νύξ (almost in the form of a motto-theme) and related words in the extant dra-

²⁷ For the Euripidean plays beginning in the dark see Clements 2014: 62n49.

²⁸ See further Collard, Cropp, and Gibert 2004: 156. For a tentative reconstruction of the play see *ibid.* 133-7; see also Bubel 1991 and Wright 2005.

²⁹ εὐσέληνος and διφρηλάτος are found only in this *Rhesus* prologue-line and nowhere else in Greek literature. διφρηλάτης is literally used by Pind. *Pyth.* 9. 143, Aesch. *Eum.* 156, Soph. *El.* 753, Eur. *IA* 216 (cf. Pind. *Ol.* 3.67). Cf. Soph. *Aj.* 845-6, 857, where διφρηλατῶν and διφρευτής are used for Helios (cf. Eur. *Pho.* 1-3), and Eur. *Andr.* 1011 where διφρευώ is used for Poseidon.

³⁰ Cf. Eur. *El.* 54.

³¹ The translation is by Collard and Cropp 2008a: 133.

³² Eur. *Andromeda* was staged along with *Hel.* in 412 BCE, and must have enjoyed great popularity in the following years. Aristophanes does parody the drama extensively in *Thesm.* 1010-35, and alludes to it several times, see in detail the note of Austin and Olson 2004 on the respective verses of the comedy, also *ibid.*: lxii-lxiii. The popularity of *Andromeda* is evident in the visual arts as well, see Collard, Cropp, and Gibert 2004: 139-40. The extant *Rhesus*, being a rather imitative play, is expected to be making use of such material.

³³ While in the prologue of *Andromeda* the bound princess obviously highlights the length of the night, it is impossible to determine if something similar is taking place in the first iambic prologue associated with *Rhesus*. I want to thank the anonymous referee for this observation.

³⁴ In addition, the νῦν-νύξ assonance in exactly the same metrical position must have sounded more than music to the ears of the author of our drama, cf. the assonance of κ at 383-4.

ma can be seen as a subordinate argument in support of this notion.³⁵ If we go on to tentatively assume that after the association of the alleged Dicaearchian line with the extant *Rhesus* the scholars studying the drama, the author of Hypothesis (b) (and his possible sources) among them, had also favored the Νύξ supplement over the now commonly accepted Ἔως, we can understand why they did not bat an eye at the quote's reliability on the basis of its specific content. This, of course, is the case if and only if these scholars had access only to the line under discussion and not to the whole prologue (or to the play) it belonged to (see below).

Contrariwise, if Ἔως, the current supplement, was in fact what was coming after the preserved verse, and Dicaearchus (or some other scholar – who was the actual source of the line associated with Aristotle's pupil) ascribed the prologue under discussion to the extant play, a possibility that cannot be excluded is that he did it by mistake. It is also possible that Dicaearchus (or another author) attached the controversial opening verse to a Euripidean drama other than a genuine *Rhesus*, and some later scholar (the source of Hypothesis (b)?) made the erroneous (memory?) connection with the extant play – and thus the attribution became traditional. In any case, it is rather evident that the specific content of the alleged Dicaearchian verse is not (necessarily) out of line with the extant composition, and thus it cannot be used as sound and tenable evidence that an original Euripidean *Rhesus* ever existed.

The author of the second Hypothesis (most probably along with other scholars of his time) seems to have no real doubts that the extant *Rhesus* is an original Euripidean play – the authenticity of which he feels he should defend against the ἔνιοι disputing it: ἐν μέντοι ταῖς Διδασκαλίαις ὡς γνήσιον ἀναγέγραπται. καὶ ἡ περὶ τὰ μετάρσια δὲ ἐν αὐτῷ πολυπραγμοσύνη τὸν Εὐριπίδην ὁμολογεῖ. In fact, for him (the now controversial) *Rhesus* is simply a Euripidean drama for which two iambic opening pieces are in circulation (πρόλογοι δὲ διττοὶ φέρονται): the lost authentic one³⁶ (of which only a single line supplied by the great Dicaearchus – and, evidently, supplemented with Νύξ and not Ἔως – is extant in his time) and a clearly spurious one (an actor's interpolation). Yet, it still remains a fact that there was some group of ancient scholars who considered the surviving *Rhesus* to be wholly spurious, and the alleged Dicaearchian line might help us understand why.

³⁵ Only νύξ is found 13 times in the play (5, 13, 17, 64, 95, 111, 146, 285, 289, 600, 615, 691, 727); exceptionally more frequently, and exceptionally more clustered, than in any other extant Greek drama. For other references to the night-time in *Rhesus* see Donegan 2014: 549n53.

³⁶ Euripides' clear propensity for explanatory iambic openings in his dramas must have been one of the main reasons for an ancient scholar to believe beyond reasonable doubt that a *Rhesus* by this poet could not have been different.

Even though the (suggested) content of the line ascribed to Dicaearchus does not constitute evidence for a lost Euripidean *Rhesus*, its emergence in ancient scholarship could have been a key factor as regards the authenticity issue, and it can be seen as an actually plausible indication that a Euripidean play about Rhesus might have existed. Dicaearchus has been, possibly falsely, associated with the Hypotheses to the dramas of Euripides through the *Tales from Euripides* (as Zuntz 1955: 135 christened this lost work). That is an alphabetically arranged (by the first letter of the title of each play) corpus of mythographic plot summaries of Euripidean dramas, which seems to have been composed in the first or second century CE for a popular audience, and was ascribed to Dicaearchus most probably in order “to gain scholarly respectability” (Allan 2008: 142).³⁷ Nevertheless, in the present case the authorship of the *Tales* is not a crucial matter. Even if this plot collection was indeed falsely attributed to Dicaearchus in antiquity (by the second century CE), as Rusten 1982 quite persuasively suggests, the authority of Aristotle’s pupil, which is most likely what triggered the ascription of the *Tales* to him in the first place, is what really matters.

Rusten (1982: 358) indicates that, even though “the narratives [in the *Tales*] were meant solely to summarize the plot, and contained no critical comments or didascalic information, . . . each play [in the collection was] being . . . identified by its first line”. Hence, there is a possibility that the author of Hypothesis (b) to our *Rhesus* (or his source) derived the alleged Dicaearchean line from a plot summary found in the *Tales* (ἐκτιθεὶς τὴν ὑπόθεσιν τοῦ Ῥήσου), evidently concerning some drama about the Thracian king with a storyline quite similar to that of the extant one. If this scenario holds, the fact that the line ascribed to Dicaearchus was different from the present opening of the extant play could have given rise to, or supported, the authenticity issue, which, in the first case, could be dated to the first or second century CE – after the circulation of the *Tales* (possibly under the ‘erudite’ name of Dicaearchus from the very beginning). The fact that, in its present form, our sole evidence about the ancient controversy over the authorship of the extant *Rhesus*, Hypothesis (b), most likely dates around the second century CE,³⁸ may be more than a mere coincidence. This line of argument, if sound, and not the specific content of the alleged Dicaearchean verse, can actually lead us to conclude that there could have been a Euripidean *Rhesus*, the opening line of which, possibly copied in

³⁷ For the use of the *Tales* in the reconstruction of the plots of Euripidean plays in the mythographic manuals from Roman times, the *Fabulae* of Hyginus and the *Bibliotheca* of Apollodoros, see Huys 1996, 1997a, 1997b.

³⁸ On the dating of Hypothesis (b) see Grégoire 1933: 97-8; Fries 2014: 111-2. Cf. Liapis 2012: 62.

succession from one scholarly work on tragedy to another, was its only remnant in the time of the *Tales*.

The Second Supplementary Prologue: Hera and Athena in Action

The second iambic prologue to *Rhesus* quoted in Hypothesis (b) is described as a quite prosy piece of writing (πεζὸς πάνυ),³⁹ unworthy of Euripides (οὐ πρέπων Εὐριπίδῃ), and is condemned as being an interpolation of which some actors should be held responsible (καὶ τάχα ἄν τινες τῶν ὑποκριτῶν διεσκευακότες εἶεν αὐτόν).⁴⁰ Eleven lines survive of this prologue, in which Hera shares with Athena her imminent concerns about their *protégés*, the Achaeans, being tamed by Hector's spear. She urges Zeus' daughter to cooperate with her in helping the Greeks and ravaging the Trojans:

ὦ τοῦ μεγίστου Ζηνὸς ἄλκιμον τέκος,
 Παλλὰς, τί δρῶμεν; οὐκ ἐχρῆν ἡμᾶς ἔτι
 μέλλειν Ἀχαιῶν ὠφελεῖν στρατεύματι.
 νῦν γὰρ κακῶς πράσσουσιν ἐν μάχῃ δορός.
 λόγῃ βιαίως Ἔκτορος στροβούμενοι.
 ἐμοὶ γὰρ οὐδέν ἐστιν ἄλγιον βάρος,
 ἐξ οὗ γ' ἔκρινε Κύπριν Ἀλέξανδρος θεῶν
 κάλλει προήκειν τῆς ἐμῆς εὐμορφίας
 καὶ σῆς, Ἀθάννα, φιλτάτης ἐμοὶ θεῶν,
 εἰ μὴ κατασκαφεῖσαν ὄψομαι πόλιν
 Πριάμου, βίᾳ πρόρριζον ἐκτετριμμένην.

[Pallas, mighty daughter of great Zeus, what are we / doing? We ought not to be slow any longer to help / the Achaean army. For they are now faring badly / in the battle, being violently distressed by Hector's / spear. There will be no heavier grief that has befallen me – ever since Alexandros judged that Aphrodite was superior in beauty to me and to you, dearest of gods to me – than if I fail to see Priam's city /smashed utterly to pieces by force and its foundations dug up.]⁴¹

If we set aside the scholarly objections concerning its quality, the diction of the preserved text speaks to the influence mainly of Aeschylus and Euripid-

³⁹ On this description see the discerning observations of Fantuzzi (2015: 228-9).

⁴⁰ According to Liapis 2012: 64 (see also 2001: 317-20, 2004: 174-5, 2009: 86): "if the first prologue is alien to the *Rh.* we have, then the second prologue . . . must probably be so too, since it seems to have been cited by Dicaearchus as alternative opening to the *same* play". This argument is rightly refuted by Fries (2014: 112).

⁴¹ The translation is by Kovacs (2002: 455).

es,⁴² and this can be seen as a point of strong affinity with the surviving *Rhesus* as a whole.⁴³ Furthermore, the piece under discussion seems to be dramatically quite fitting to the narrative plan of the extant play, as we will attempt to show here in detail. Yet, in order to do that, we must first indicate in what way(s) this prologue is convergent with, and also divergent from, the Iliadic and extra-Iliadic material of the myth about king Rhesus. The final remark preserved in Hypothesis (c) to the disputed *Rhesus*, attributed to Aristophanes of Byzantium,⁴⁴ is that the play ‘contains’ *Il.* 10 (περιέχει δὲ τὴν Νυκτεγεροσίῳν). Additionally, the ancient scholia often bring up the deviations of this drama from its indisputable Homeric model.⁴⁵ The direct dependence of *Rhesus* on this specific epic text has also been adduced by modern scholars such as Ritchie (1964: 12), who argues that the play “takes its plot directly from the *Il.* and keeps closely in many details to the original”.⁴⁶ On the other hand, it has also been rightly argued that the drama is a primary descendant of a non-Iliadic tradition, bringing together some versions of the myth most probably originating from the Epic Cycle. These lines of scholarship are in fact not hard to reconcile, *mutatis mutandis*, as the author of *Rhesus* seems to have made resourceful use of both the Iliadic and the extra-Iliadic material of the story.⁴⁷

Two different extra-Iliadic versions of the myth about Rhesus’ quite short visit to Ilium, the so-called *Pindaric* and *Oracular*,⁴⁸ are reported by

⁴² See Ritchie 1964: 111-12; Stephanopoulos 1988: 208-9. See also Liapis 2012: 66ff.

⁴³ For the borrowings of *Rhesus* from Euripides, Aeschylus, and Sophocles – in that order of frequency – see Liapis 2012: xxii-xxv, lxi-lxii; Fries 2014: 31ff. See also Manousakis and Stamatatos (2017).

⁴⁴ No evidence allows us to think that Aristophanes doubted the authenticity of the play in any way, see Ritchie 1964: 41-3.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 48.

⁴⁶ For the story of Rhesus in *Il.* 10 see Hainsworth 1993: 151ff. in detail.

⁴⁷ For the inter-textual nexus between the *Iliad* and *Rhesus* see Fenik 1964; Fantuzzi 2005a, 2006a, 2011. A main point of controversy is the extent to which the drama relied on its models (on this see Fantuzzi 2005b). Fantuzzi has shown that for the first 263 lines of the play the author of *Rhesus* makes special use of the Iliadic *Doloneia*, and later on of the *Aethiopsis*. The result “is no longer Homer’s mostly Hellenocentric perspective on the events, but a purely Trojan point of view, in accordance with the Cyclic focusing on the false hopes of the losers regarding the seemingly powerful and victorious Trojan allies” (2006a: 152).

⁴⁸ See in detail Fenik 1964; Liapis 2012: xviii-xxi. See also Barrett 2002: 172-4, 186. According to the *Pindaric* version of the myth, king Rhesus is an outstanding warrior. When he joins the Trojans he kills numerous Greeks, and Hera, much worried about her *protégés*, sends Athena to settle the matter; Pallas in turn directs Odysseus and Diomedes to slay the Thracian king while he sleeps. The *Oracular* version holds that there was some oracle saying that if Rhesus reaches Troy and drinks from the water there, and also his horses drink from the river Scamander and eat the local fodder, he would become invincible.

three Iliadic scholia to the tenth rhapsody.⁴⁹ The version of the myth documented in these scholia holds that Rhesus' killing was in fact caused by divine providence, namely Hera's and Athena's joint intervention.⁵⁰ One of the main aspects of the plot disassociating *Rhesus* from the Iliadic context of the myth, and bringing it closer to the extra-Iliadic versions, is the dominant role of Athena in the drama.⁵¹ The goddess practically dictates the action in the second part of the play, using mortal characters almost like puppets.⁵² Contrary to what happens in the *Iliad*, where Athena fleetingly appears on her own initiative to rush Diomedes and Odysseus back to the ships after their murderous deed,⁵³ in *Rhesus* she presents herself to set the forthcoming (final) events in motion, staying on stage for quite some time, and even interacting with one of the enemies. More specifically, in the disputed drama the two Greek spies must get involved in an exploit very different from the one they had in mind when they set off from the Greek ships. Their victim should be king Rhesus, the great Trojan ally, since they are not destined to kill Hector, or Alexandros, and this emerges not from the information they acquire from Dolon, as in the *Iliad*, but from Athena's clear and specific bidding.⁵⁴ The goddess even presents herself to Alexandros in the form of his divine protector Aphrodite, in order to detain him and provide Odysseus and Diomedes time to slay Rhesus and steal his horses. Nevertheless, in the controversial drama Pallas follows the Iliadic paradigm in acting autonomously, and not in collaboration with or under the

⁴⁹ Σ^{bT} *Il.* 10.435 (III 93.64–8 Erbse) ~ Eust. 817.29 with a variant, Σ^{AD} *Il.* 10.435 (pp. 355–6 van Thiel = I 364.3–11 Dindorf), and its direct continuation Σ^{AD} *Il.* 10.435 (p. 356 van Thiel = I 364.11–15 Dindorf) ~ Eust. 817.27–8.

⁵⁰ κατὰ δὲ πρόνοιαν Ἥρας καὶ Ἀθηνᾶς ἀναστάντες οἱ περὶ Διομήδεα ἀναιροῦσιν αὐτόν – κατὰ δὲ θεϊαν πρόνοιαν νυκτὸς αὐτὸν Διομήδης ἀναιρεῖ – Ῥήσος... διάφορος δὲ τῶν καθ' αὐτὸν γενόμενος ἐν πολεμικοῖς ἔργοις ἐπῆλθε τοῖς Ἕλλησιν, ὅπως Τρωσὶ συμμαχήσῃ, καὶ συμβαλὼν πολλοὺς τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἀπέκτεινεν. δέισασα δὲ Ἥρα περὶ τῶν Ἑλλήνων Ἀθηνᾶν ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦτου διαφθορὰν πέμπει. [“due to a plot of Hera and Athena, Diomedes' people got stirred up and killed him – due to a divine plot, Diomedes kills him during the night – Rhesus . . ., who was distinguished among the Thracians in exploits of war, attacked the Greeks, joining forces with his allies the Trojans, and killed many of the Greeks. Hera, anxious about the Greeks, sends Athena to arrange his killing”]. The translation is mine.

⁵¹ See Fantuzzi 2015: 230.

⁵² For the prevalent role of Athena in *Rhesus* see further Fantuzzi 2006a: 155, 157ff. See especially 160–1, concerning the derivation of this aspect from the *Pindaric* version of the myth.

⁵³ See *Il.* 10.503ff.

⁵⁴ At *Il.* 600–5 Athena partly introduces the *oracular* version of Rhesus' myth in the extant play, when she warns Diomedes and Odysseus that if the Thracian king survives the night, no warrior, not even the great Achilles, will be able to prevent him from destroying the ships of the Achaeans. See Liapis 2012: 239; Fries 2014: 352.

instructions of Hera, as in the extra-Iliadic version described in the Iliadic scholia. Yet, for *Rhesus* this possible thread of the plot is, strangely, introduced in the second prologue of Hypothesis (b), and it seems to have been quite appropriate and engaging material for dramatic exploitation either by some reviser or by the author of the play himself.⁵⁵

The strong connection of Zeus' wife and daughter in plotting the fall of Troy in the *Iliad* is conspicuous and even formulaic.⁵⁶ The balance of power favors Hera most of the time, since she is the one instructing Athena on how to act,⁵⁷ but the reverse also occurs. Three times in the *Iliad* we hear Hera directly urging Athena to be her accessory in protecting the interests of the Achaeans. Twice, at 2.156ff. and 5.711ff., Pallas obeys without speaking, and once, at 8.350ff., she does answer Hera's claims by presenting herself as being even more eager than Zeus' wife to hurt the Trojans. At 2.156ff. Hera commissions Athena to prevent the Achaeans from leaving Troy after Agamemnon's test exhortation. In their other two interventions the goddesses decide they will both offer their immediate help to the Greeks, having noticed so many of them suffering at the hands of Hector in particular. In the second iambic prologue to *Rhesus* we witness approximately the same situation as in all the aforementioned epic counterparts – and most of all as in 8.350ff. Even though the diction is somewhat different, the form and content of Hera's plea to Pallas is remarkably similar in these two passages: in both cases Hera's urgent address to Athena (τοῦ μεγίστου Ζητῶς [pr.] / αἰγιόχοιο Διὸς [*Il.* 8.352] τέκος) is followed by a question about their role in protecting the Greeks who are being destroyed by Hector. In the epic passage what follows almost immediately is Athena's response. She declares her wish for Priam's son to be slain in the hands of the Achaeans, accusing Zeus of obstructing her heart's desire. In the iambic prologue, on the other hand, almost taking the words out of Iliadic Athena's mouth, Hera brings to the fore the fatal choice of Alexandros, who dared to favor Aphrodite's beauty over theirs, unforgivably offending them both, and states that she will not relent until the city of Priam eventual-

⁵⁵ Naturally, the author of *Rhesus* could have deliberately diverged on this point from the extra-Iliadic material, as he did when, following the Iliadic plot line, he deprived Rhesus of the chance to show in the field the fighting skills he was blustering about when he first met with Hector (449ff.), since he was killed not long after his arrival in Troy.

⁵⁶ See *Il.* 4.20-1, 8.457-8. Cf. 5.418-19, 11.45-6 and 24.25-30. For the Euripidean view of this divine plotting pair see Fantuzzi 2015: 229n19.

⁵⁷ See *Il.* 1.194-5, 208, 2.155ff., 4.73-4 (although in the last case Athena answers indirectly to Hera's will through Zeus' command, see the respective note by Kirk 1985), 5.711ff.

ly falls to pieces.⁵⁸ It is noteworthy that in the extant *Rhesus* both Alexandros and Aphrodite (through Pallas' deceiving epiphany) appear as scenic characters.

It has been convincingly argued that the author of *Rhesus* uses the Iliadic text in general (and not only *Iliad* 10) to create a multilevel inter-textual game of anticipation and plot reversal. More specifically, Fantuzzi (2006a, 2006b: 152ff.) cites evidence in *Rhesus* for the use of a broad inter-textual dramatic technique, which misdirects the audience by presenting certain Trojans talking and acting like the Greeks or different Trojans of the *Iliad*, alluding to counterpart events that take place differently in the epos, and also using multilayered references to connect more than two passages. Consistent with this intertextual plan seems to be the allusive technique used in the prologue under discussion.⁵⁹ Hera's and Athena's preparations to fly together alongside the Achaean army at *Il.* 5.711ff. and 8.350ff. are both times preceded by some kind of praise for Hector's fighting skills.⁶⁰ Correspondingly in the second prologue to *Rhesus* Hera is mobilized to act in support of the Greeks when she witnesses Hector subduing them. Hence, it seems that the emphasis of the prologue on the divine wrath caused by the exploits of the Trojan prince, and the urgent need for action that would subdue him, alludes to the intensity of the analogous Iliadic situation the two goddesses attempt to reverse. In the same allusive vein, even though at 5.711ff. Zeus does allow Hera and Athena to stop the murderous work of Ares against the Greeks, he later prevents his wife and daughter from helping their *protégés* at *Il.* 8.350ff. Thus, although the fixed course of events leading inescapably to the death of Rhesus was, of course, familiar to the ancient audience, the allusion in the second prologue both to Zeus' sanction and his prohibition of intervention in the epic would introduce suspense right at the outset of the play. And since the closest parallel to the second prologue is *Il.* 8.350ff, we can imagine this audience, having in mind the inability of the two goddesses to act on that occasion, being misled from the very beginning as to what will come next.

Taking into account the joint action of Hera and Athena in the *Iliad*, and also the way divine prologues are shaped in extant, especially Euripidean, drama, we can, very tentatively of course, venture some guesses as to what followed the surviving part of the second prologue. On the basis of the presently considered Iliadic scenes, the piece of prologue under discussion might have proceeded in two different directions as far as dramatic action

⁵⁸ Cf. *Il.* 4.20ff., 24.25-30.

⁵⁹ Cf. Fantuzzi 2015: 228-31.

⁶⁰ Also, at *Il.* 10.47ff. Agamemnon, as he tries to devise and set in motion a plan to save his army and ships, offers similar praise for the Trojan leader.

is concerned. Hera could have gone on with her speech, describing to a silent Athena her plan to harm the Trojans during the night. Subsequently, Pallas could have obeyed Hera's instructions without saying a single word – exactly as she does in two of the three relevant Iliadic examples. This type of action would provide us with a typically Euripidean inaugural deity-monologue,⁶¹ pleasing those who argue that Athena could not have been a substantial part of the opening scene of the disputed play, since there is no example in Euripides, or in extant Greek drama in general, of the same divinity reappearing later in the play after reciting the prologue or having an essential role in it.⁶² Alternatively, the prologue could have taken the form of a dialogue between Hera and Athena, adumbrating future events. Dialogue-form prologues between gods or between a god and a supernatural being are not frequent in extant tragedy, but they are not unknown.⁶³ In Euripides' *Trojan Women*, for example, we witness a plot-scheming iambic prologue engaging two major deities, Athena (again)⁶⁴ and Poseidon, who decide to join forces against the Greek leaders this time. A full conversation between Athena and Hera⁶⁵ in the prologue of *Rhesus* would have been a far more natural choice than a loquacious Hera and a completely silent Athena. This turn would also be more consistent with *Il.* 8.35off., and with the play itself. The dynamic role of Pallas later in *Rhesus*, and her imminent and energetic reaction to Hera's call in the epic parallel, would suggest that she may have offered an analogous response in the opening scene of the drama. If the second prologue to *Rhesus* unfolded this way, the eleven iambic lines in Hypothesis (b) are most probably Hera's first complete speech, anticipating Athena's answer.⁶⁶

The need for an informative prologue to the extant *Rhesus*, most likely delivered by a deity, has long been emphasized, for reasons mainly concerning the noteworthy lack of any preliminary exposition in the play, and

⁶¹ See Eur. *Hipp.*, *Ion*, *Bacch.*, cf. *Hec.*

⁶² See Ritchie 1964: 111. Dionysus in *Bacch.* is a protagonist, and a quite special case in general. Only Apollo in Aesch. *Eum.* comes close to this description. Yet, technically, it is the prophetess of the god who speaks the (interrupted) iambic prologue; and the following scene, engaging Orestes, Apollo, Clytemnestra's ghost, and the Chorus is rather uncategorizable in terms of a conventional tragic prologue.

⁶³ See the prologues of Eur. *Alc.*, *Tro.*, and [Aesch.] *PV*.

⁶⁴ Cf. also the function of Athena in the prologue of Soph. *Aj.*

⁶⁵ Although disguised, Hera was also present on stage in the prologue of Aesch. *Se-mele*, see Hadjicosti 2006 in detail.

⁶⁶ In all other plays with similar prologues we have an extensive soliloquy preceding the appearance of the second deity and the beginning of the conversation. This is not the case with the second prologue of *Rhesus*, in which both interlocutors are present from the outset.

the consequent incoherence caused by this lack.⁶⁷ Almost the first third of the rather short drama bearing his name seems to be totally unrelated to Rhesus, since there is not a single reference to him until the moment the shepherd-messenger announces his arrival at 264ff. More specifically, the Dolon episode has nothing to do with the Thracian king, since, as already noted, it is Athena and not the Trojan spy, as is at *Iliad* 10, who informs Odysseus and Diomedes about his presence. Contrary to what we know about the structural patterns of Greek tragedy, in *Rhesus* we witness the climactic implementation of a divine deception plot against the main character, the concoction of which remains completely latent.⁶⁸ Up to the end of the first choral song,⁶⁹ there is not even the slightest hint of what is to come, leading to a sense that separate, detached events dominate the play. In addition, apart from the fact that the second iambic prologue closely matches the extant composition in diction, metrical style, and in dramatic technique, the current (anapaestic) opening piece could also be rather well-suited as the parodos of *Rhesus*.⁷⁰ Yet, notwithstanding the various ways in which the second iambic prologue can be, directly and indirectly, associated with the extant drama, and the possible repositioning of the current piece, we are, of course, in no position to say whether Hera's soliloquy was conceived and put together by the poet of *Rhesus* himself or by a different author. Nevertheless, it seems that we might at least entertain the former conjecture.

It is only reasonable that their relative self-sufficiency renders pro-

⁶⁷ See Ritchie 1964: 105-13. Contra Liapis 2012: 64. In practice, with the current choral (anapaestic) opening the author of *Rhesus*, intentionally or unintentionally, excessively blurs the focal point of the action. According to Fantuzzi (2015: 231), it is "probable that the play's original author wrote the play without a prologue, as this absence of superior preliminary information would have contributed to the atmosphere of uncertainty that the author evidently pursues". It should be noted here that Aristophanes of Byzantium apparently knew no additional prologues to *Rhesus* other than the surviving anapaestic one: ὁ χορὸς συνέστηκεν ἐκ φυλάκων Τρωικῶν (Hypothesis (c) 55-6).

⁶⁸ Cf. the course of action in the Euripidean plays with a prologue spoken by divinities (*Alc.*, *Hipp.*, *Ion*, *Tro.*), and also the opening of Soph. *Aj*. The unprepared entrance of Iris and Lyssa in *HF*, announcing and carrying out Hera's deception plan, is only superficially similar to the situation in *Rhesus*. In *HF* the indisputable focal point of the drama, right from the outset, is Heracles. His homecoming seems to be the only hope for the survival of his family, and the complete reversal of this fact is the main source of dramatic force in this play. As Bond (1981: n. 815ff.) puts it, "the contrast at *H.F.* 815 is clearly . . . fundamental . . . : the whole play changes course and the spectator with average memory may see the events of 1-814 in a different light".

⁶⁹ Stephanes' (2004: 142) suggestion that ll. 251-2 could refer to king Rhesus does not hold water. For this quite problematic passage see Liapis 2012: 133-4; Fries 2014: 212-3.

⁷⁰ See Ritchie 1964: 107-8.

logues, as well as closing scenes, more prone to actors' interpolations than any other major parts of a drama,⁷¹ and evidence from antiquity points to this direction.⁷² *Archelaos*, *Melanippe Sophe* and *Meleagros* are three of Euripides' dramas, though none of them extant, that seem to have undergone some modification in the hands of actors specifically in their prologues.⁷³ The case of *Archelaos* is rather indicative: in *Frogs* 1206-8 Aristophanes preserves three lines from a Euripidean prologue, without naming the play they come from. However, an ancient commentator of the comic poet argues that some scholars have wrongly attributed these lines to *Archelaos*.⁷⁴ He maintains that no such text tied to Euripides exists in his time (οὐ γὰρ φέρεται νῦν Εὐριπίδου λόγος οὐδεὶς), or, according to Aristarchos, ever existed in any of the poet's compositions. Aristarchos suggests that Aristophanes could have quoted an actual Euripidean version of the text of *Archelaos* only if Euripides himself changed the original prologue he composed – and the revision was then lost before reaching the Alexandrian Library.⁷⁵ Apparently, Aristarchos had in front of him a different prologue to *Archelaos* – most probably the one preserved by Diodorus, Plutarch, Tiberius, Strabo, and other later authors. If, however, the attribution of Aristophanes' lines to *Archelaos* is the correct one indeed, a possible scenario by all means, and Aristarchos' ingenious suggestion is unfounded, then the comic poet "is quoting the [only original] Euripidean text, and all the others are quoting a spurious text" (Page 1934: 93), probably composed for some restaging of the drama. In addition, it

⁷¹ An obvious reason for revising some drama years after its first performance is to bring its action in line with a turn of the myth that appeared later or was for some reason neglected in the original version. This seems to be the case with the closing scene of Aeschylus' *Seven*, see Hutchinson 1985: 209ff.

⁷² Fantuzzi (2015: 232) discusses the similarities between the controversial first scene of Euripides' *IA* and the second prologue attached to *Rhesus*. For the ongoing dispute over the prologue of *IA* see in detail Willink 1971; Knox 1972; Bain 1977; Philippides 1981: 101-2, Stockert 1992: 66-79; Michelakis 2006: 108-10; Kovacs 2008: 80-3; Pietruczuk 2012; Distilo 2013: 114ff.; Condello 2015: 189-91.

⁷³ See Page 1934: 92-5. On the prologue of *Meleagros* see Del Corno 1985 and Sommerstein 1996 on Arist. *Frogs* 1238-41. See also Collard and Cropp 2008b: 620, F516, n. 1. On *Melanippe* see Collard, Cropp, and Lee 1995: 266-7, F665a-c, n. 1, cf. Collard and Cropp 2008b: 577, F480, n. 1.

⁷⁴ It has been regarded as a possibility – though in a quite speculative basis – that the source behind the attribution of the Aristophanic lines to *Archelaos* could in fact have been Dicaearchus, see Scullion 2006: 189, 198, n. 9.

⁷⁵ If we are to put any faith in Plutarch's words (*Amatorius* 13, 756B-C) about such a matter, that was actually the case with *Melanippe Sophe*. According to Plutarch, Euripides changed the opening lines of the play himself owing to the unfavorable reaction of the audience in the first performance.

should be noted here that the piece Aristarchos and the later authors had in mind could have belonged to a play unknown in the Library in its complete form.⁷⁶

Regardless of who is right and who is wrong in this particular literary quarrel, the emerging conclusion is practically the same: confusion of this kind – even a slip on the part of the Alexandrian scholars that could sometimes be traced to Aristotle and his circle⁷⁷ – concerning the original text of a tragic prologue, seems to be anything but an inconceivable scenario for the Alexandrian Library. If there is even the slightest chance that we are touching on a similar complication in the case of the controversial *Rhesus*, we are forced to acknowledge that the second iambic prologue preserved in Hypothesis (b) could have been either part of the original text, or a revision made, perhaps, by none other than the author of the extant play.⁷⁸ If this is so, the question why the prologue was detached from the play and by whom emerges *ipso facto*; and the revisions and modifications in the

⁷⁶ Harder 1985: 179–82 considers several possible theories as regards which prologue could have been the original, concluding that it is the one found in the later scholars. She is followed by Collard, Cropp and Gibert 2004: 351; Kannicht 2004: 885; and Collard and Cropp 2008b: 237. Contra Scullion 2006: 185–91. Cf. the notes of Dover 1993 and Sommerstein 1996 on the respective lines of Aristophanes' *Frogs*. See also Xanthakis-Karamanos 1993: 517–9.

⁷⁷ In Aristotle's *Rh.* 3.9 a verse from the prologue of *Meleagros* is misattributed to Sophocles due to possible *lapsus memoriae* (so Cope 1877: 96) or because of someone else's erroneous addition (so Spengel 1867: 395); the anonymous commentator of the treatise (CAG XXI.2 pp. 195, 197) corrects the mistake, also providing us with four extra verses of the Euripidean prologue.

⁷⁸ It is quite interesting that in *P.Oxy.* 76, 5093 (first century CE), published by Daniela Colomo in 2011, an anonymous rhetorician argues that the extant *Medea* resulted from some authorial revision of a previous version of the play, in which the infanticide happened on stage. In the new version the plot is thoroughly modified, and the murder takes place indoors. However, from the papyrus, as it stands now, we are not able to know whether this first version of *Medea* was by Euripides or by another author, e.g. Neophron, see Colomo 2011b: 112. For *P.Oxy.* 76, 5093 in general see Luppe 2010, 2011; Colomo 2011a, 2011b; Scattolin 2013: 134–9; Magnani 2014. Yet, as Pontani (2016: 130) persuasively argues: “it is not easy to believe that these lines [, supplied by the anonymous rhetorician as what *Medea* told her children just before she murdered them,] should come from Neophron's (or from anybody else's) play, for the . . . papyrus . . . parallels Euripides' *diorthosis* with his similar . . . intervention on the earlier version of the *Hipp.*, and thus it would be strange to learn that in the case of *Med.* Euripides 'corrected' not his own play but someone else's . . . [T]he papyrus [also] seems to state that even so (i.e., after . . . producing what is our extant *Med.*) Euripides was nonetheless . . . defeated in the tragic contest . . . [, and] this way of expression . . . points to self-correction”. I want to thank the anonymous referee for bringing *P.Oxy.* 76, 5093 to my attention.

dramatic texts made by actors and authors for the needs of re-performances could be a rather plausible answer.⁷⁹

Conclusions

To sum up, as far as the first iambic prologue to *Rhesus* is concerned, it seems possible that it is a quotation from a Euripidean play (whether it is an original *Rhesus* or not) lost at the time Hypothesis (b) was composed. This opening line could have been found in the *Tales from Euripides* Hypotheses compilation, and it could have triggered or supported the question as regards the authenticity of the extant *Rhesus*. At all events though, the actual fact is that there is no hard (textual) evidence detaching the remnant of the first iambic prologue in Hypothesis (b) from the extant *Rhesus* and attaching it to any other composition. In practice, if Euripides did write a drama about king Rhesus, we seem to now know next to nothing about it, and, apart from detective speculation, we infer its existence based only on a piece of information provided by a Hypothesis-type text which, at all probability, dates from the first centuries CE: ἐν μέντοι ταῖς διδασκαλίαις ὡς γνήσιον ἀναγέγραπται. The validity of this statement is utterly crucial and impossible to confirm. As far as the second iambic prologue is concerned, a piece evidently tied to the extant *Rhesus*, we are only in a position to argue that whoever composed it, was clearly competent enough to make very good use of the same, quite resourceful, inter-textual dramatic technique structuring the rest of the play, and thus to achieve similarly suspenseful results.

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⁷⁹ On the 'authenticity' of dramatic texts in view of re-performances see indicatively Revermann 2006: 66ff. *Rhesus*, in all likelihood a fourth-century drama (see most recently Mattison 2015), seems to have been quite popular in antiquity. The author of the second Hypothesis speaks of multiple copies of the play being in circulation in his time (ἐν ἐνίοις δὲ τῶν ἀντιγράφων), and the second supplementary prologue, if rightly associated with a re-performance, seems to be further evidence for this popularity.

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