
Heikki Solin


The main part of this book consists of a catalogue of the divinities appearing in Homer, arranged alphabetically according to the name of the god (pp. 9–107); after that comes an index of epithets and nomenclae, as the author calls any "collocation of divine names, epithets, and epithet-like expressions in a common syntactical unit, usually a sentence of major clause" (p. XV). The catalogue is preceded by a long introduction where the plan and arrangement of the repertory is discussed, and a select bibliography and signs and symbols are illustrated. This volume can from now on be used with profit in addition to C.F.H. Bruchmann's Epitheta deorum quae apud poetas Graecos leguntur, which appeared as the first Supplement of Roscher's mythological lexicon in 1893. Let me add that this re-issue contains several improvements and emendations of the first edition (the author accounts for it on p. VII).

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This book (hereafter SSFP I), which is dedicated to the memory of Malcolm Willcock, is edited by A. H. Sommerstein (AHS), T. G. Fitzpatrick (TGF) and T. H. Talbey (THT). The plays included in SSFP I are Hermione or The women of Phthia (by AHS), Polyxene (by AHS), Syndeipnoi (The Diners) or Achaion Syllogos (The Gathering of the Achaeans) (by AHS), Tereus (by DGF and AHS), Troilus (by AHS) and Phaedra (by THT and AHS). All plays are presented with: 1. a bibliography (comprising texts and testimonia, myth, artistic evidence, and main discussions); 2. an introduction (dealing with the myth and the play); 3. the Greek text with a critical apparatus and a translation on facing pages; and 4. a commentary.

Preceding the plays, there is a general introduction (by AHS) in which Sophocles, as well as the study of fragmentary plays in general, are introduced briefly. I liked especially the paragraph beginning "Why study fragments?" As AHS points out (p. xxv), fragmentary dramas throw light upon, or have thrown upon them by, dramas by other authors based on the same stories. Three of the plays which are included in SSFP I run parallel to Euripides' extant plays, i.e., Hermione to Andromache, Polyxene to Hecuba and Phaedra to Hippolytus. These plays are also discussed in comparison with each other in SSFP I (and when Procne's filicide in Tereus is discussed, Medea's filicide in Euripides' play is also brought into discussion).

The fragments are arranged in the order in which the editors think they occurred in the plays and designated by letters of the alphabet. In addition, the fragments still bear the numbers of TrGF. Thus, for example, the fragments of Hermione are: A (202), B (694), C (696), D (695) and E (203). Fragments which are not included in TrGF are referred to by other collection numbers, for instance the third fragment of Phaedra is C (693a Lloyd-Jones). The order of the fragments is, of course, always explained in the introduction and commentary sections to the plays. This is a good solution. It is easy for the reader to follow the reconstructions of the plays.

In the introduction to Hermione, AHS first discusses the role of Neoptolemus (in all the plays of Sophocles in which he figured), then compares Sophocles' treatment of the myth with Euripides' Andromache. He concludes that Phthiotides was the same play as Hermione and states that Sophocles' Hermione was earlier than Euripides' Andromache. Pacuvius' Hermione is discussed in an appendix.

When discussing Polyxene, AHS suggests that there were two appearances by the ghost of Achilles in the play, one enacted (in the prologue) and one narrated (in a messenger's speech). AHS also proposes that Polyxene (not Cassandra or the ghost of Achilles) predicted the future death of Agamemnon and that Hermione was earlier than Eudipides' Hecuba, i.e., that it was produced no later than 425 B.C.

Syndeipnoi (The Diners) and Achaion Syllogos (The Gathering of the Achaeans) are thought by AHS "beyond reasonable doubt" to be the one and the same play and the conclusion is that it was "pro-satyric". Although the pro-satyric status of this play is far from certain, it is worth quoting AHS' vivid text here (p. 102):

"the heroes, except perhaps Nestor, are none of them admirable – Ajax with his gargantuan appetite, Achilles with his hair-trigger temper, Agamemnon with his tactlessness, Odysseus with his inferiority complex – and like a group of reckless children, they have to be rescued from themselves by one of their mothers, who is luckily a goddess. And this when all they were trying to do is feast!"

DGF and AHS are very cautious when reconstructing the action and the structure of Tereus. They especially warn of the risk of importing backwards into the lost tragedy something which does not belong there when using later literary versions to reconstruct the plot of the play (in this case, esp. Ov. Met. 6.424–674). DGF and AHS present only an outline of the play without breaking the action into episodes. DGF and AHS also discuss the