

## The Dual Nature of Night in the *Iliad* and the *Rhesus*

The *Rhesus* attributed to Euripides is unique among surviving Attic tragedies in taking place entirely at night; its nocturnal setting is constructed and maintained by the verbal repetition of references to night and darkness throughout the play (Liapis 2012: xxxiv-xxxv). Scholars have analyzed the significance of night as a metaphor for confusion and uncertainty in the tragedy (Parry 1964; Fantuzzi 2006). In fact, night in the *Rhesus* has more complex associations, drawn from its sources in *Iliad* 8 and 10: it can be characterized both as a kindly time of rest and as a time of confounding darkness that destabilizes identities and certainties. Thus the play dramatizes the duality of night that is made explicit at *Iliad* 8.487-88; night's dual character is a source of tragic irony and underlies the tragic structure of the *Rhesus*.

*Iliad* 10 provides an essential intertext for understanding how this theme is developed in the *Rhesus*. While Fenik 1964 (27-28) argues that the fundamental structure of the *Rhesus* is based on non-Iliadic versions of the Rhesus story, he admits that the Doloneia of *Iliad* 10 would have provided the "authoritative" version for both poet and audience. Bond 1996, followed with qualifications with Fries 2014 (10-11), argues that the *Rhesus* integrates material from the *Iliad* not only in plot but also in theme, tone, and structure, and that the play presumes an awareness of Homeric detail and narrative structures in its audience. Drawing on the observations of Austin 1975 (71-73) and Dué and Ebbott 2010 (254-56) that Homeric epithets for night can connote different qualities, I argue that the *Rhesus* poet replicates an Iliadic pattern in using two terms for night that can be shown to signal its contrasting values in different contexts. This alternation in vocabulary contributes to the development of the key theme of night's tragic dual nature.

## Bibliography

- Austin, Norman. 1975. *Archery at the Dark of the Moon*. Berkeley.
- Bond, Robin Sparks. 1996. "Homeric Echoes in *Rhesus*." *AJP* 117: 255-73.
- Du , Casey, and Mary Ebbott. 2010. *Iliad 10 and the Poetics of Ambush*. Hellenic Studies 39. Washington, DC.
- Fantuzzi, Marco. 2006. "La Dolonia del *Reso* come luogo dell'errore e dell'incertezza." In *I luoghi e la poesia nella Grecia antica. Atti del Convegno, Universit  'G. d'Annunzio' di Chieti-Pescara, 20-22 aprile 2004*, edited by Massimo Vetta and Carmine Catenacci, 241-62. Alessandria.
- Fenik, Bernard. 1964. "*Iliad X*" and the "*Rhesus*": the myth. Bruxelles-Berchem.
- Fries, Almut. 2014. *Pseudo-Euripides, Rhesus*. Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte 114. Berlin.
- Liapis, Vayos. 2012. *A Commentary on the Rhesus Attributed to Euripides*. Oxford.
- Parry, Hugh. 1964. "The Approach of Dawn in the 'Rhesus'." *Phoenix* 18: 283-93.