

INTRODUCTION

belong to tragedy; but they are near the outside limit of the tragic convention, and would perhaps be most at home in a pro-satyrical tragedy like the *Alkestis*.

In the upshot I see no adequate reason for rejecting the external evidence which makes this play a work of Euripides, if we suppose it to be an early pro-satyrical play which was produced again after the poet's death by Euripides the Younger or some contemporary. Most scholars, however, prefer to think it simply an archaistic work of the fourth century.

On this theory the Alexandrians when looking for the *Rhesus* of Euripides found an anonymous play called *Rhesus* and accepted it for what it was worth. The Prologues mentioned in the argument would perhaps belong to other plays of the same name; one, no doubt, to the real play of Euripides. The rich and severe style may, for all we know—for direct evidence fails us—be the natural work of some reactionary archaistic school about the time of Plato or Aristotle. The same date might well be indicated by the great interest our play takes in the *Iliad*, and by its almost "Alexandrian" use of the gods as ornamental machinery. I cannot call such a theory improbable; but it really amounts to rejecting the external evidence in order to place the *Rhesus* in a period of tragic style of which we happen to know nothing. It is certainly not confirmed by the scanty fragments we possess of Theodectes or Chairemon.

And, if one is to venture into more speculative and subjective arguments, I find it rather hard to think of any lyric poet except Euripides who could have written the *Adrasteia* chorus or the lines about