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RECEPTION AND GENRE CROSS-REFERENCE IN *ALCESTIS BARCINONENSIS*

The following argument discusses the reception and genre cross-reference in the anonymous poem conventionally called Alcestis Barcinonensis. *The purpose of this article is to demonstrate the procedure followed, the intertextuality with other literary products and the mixture of various literary genres in a poem that stands out as a projection of the old into the new.*

Key Words: *Alcestis Barcinonensis*; literary genres in Roman literature

"Alcestis Barcinonensis"[1] is the conventional name given to a recently discovered Egyptian papyrus[2] found at Barcelona (from which the adjec-

1 The most important editions of the text are: MARCOVICH, MIROSLAV. 1988. *Alcestis Barcinonensis. Text and Commentary*. Leiden: Brill (Mnemosyne, Suppl. 103), whose text and commentary (often repeated in his various articles) we follow here (see also NOSARTI, LORENZO [REV.]. 1989. "In margine all'ultima edizione dell'*Alcestis Barcinonensis*: text and commentary by MIROSLAV MARCOVICH, Leiden, 1988." *Vichiana*, 18, 354–370 and HORSFALL, NICHOLAS [REV.]. 1989. "Review OF M. MARCOVICH, *Alcestis Barcinonensis*." *Classical Review*, N. S. 39, 220–222. Further in the article *CR*) and NOSARTI, L. 1992. *Anonimo, L'Alcesti di Barcellona*. *Introduzione, testo, traduzione e commento*. Bologna: Pàtron (Edizioni e saggi universitari di filologia classica, No 51; see also HINE, HARRY M [REV.]. 1999. *CR*, 49, 269–270). Before them see LEBEK, WOLFGANG D. 1983. "Das neue Alcestis-Gedicht der Papyri Barcinonenes." *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 52, 1–29 (further in the article *ZPE*); PARSONS, PETER. J. – NISBET ROBIN, G. M. – HUTCHINSON, GREGORY O. "Alcestis in Barcelona." Ibid. 31–3; TANDOI, VINCENZO. 1984. *Anonymi Carmen de Alcestide nuper repertum*. Foggia: Atlantica = *Quaderni dell'Associazione Italiana Cultura Classica di Foggia*, 4, 3–12 (Further in the article *AICC*). The most recent attempt of reconstruction of the text belongs to MACEDO, GABRIEL N. 2010. *Alcestis Barcinonensis (P. Montserrat inv. 158–161 = MP³ 2998.1). Texte et traduction française*. Université de Liège (mémoire de maîtrise): CEDOPAL; cf. ID. 2011. *Alcestis Barcinonensis (P. Montserrat inv. 158–161 = MP³ 2998.1). Texto e tradução em lingua portuguesa (Brasil)*, Liège: CEDOPAL. An important manual is the early bibliography collected by ARENA, GIUSEPPE A. M.

tive *Barcinonensis* is derived) in 1979 and published in 1982.[3] This Latin poem[4] of 124 hexameters (122 existent and two *versi lacunosi*) deals with the heroic sacrifice of Alcestis, in order to save her husband, Admetus. It dates most probably to the second half of the 4th Century AD.[5] Despite various palaeographical problems[6] caused by the scribe's mistakes,[7] it

1990. "Rassegna di studi sull'Alcesti di Barcellona." *Sileno*, 16, 227–238. Here we are trying to do a bibliographic update, as fully as possible.

2 P. Barcinonensis Inv. Nos. 158 ab, 159 ab, 160 ab, and 161a, which consists of four leaves (125 x 3 mm) and contains other texts as well (a *Psalmus Responsorius*, Ciceron's *In Catilinam I* and *II* Christian Greek hymns and the canon of the mass: *theia leitourgia*). This *codex miscellaneus* is kept in a relatively good condition at the Foundation Sant Lluc Evangelista at Barcelona.

3 *Editio princeps* by the Catalan papyrologist Roca-Puig, Ramón. 1982. *Alcestis. Hexàmetres Llatins. Papyri Barcinonenses*, Inv. n. 158–161. Barcelona.

4 Gärtner, Hans Armin. 1988. In Albrecht, Michael Von [ed.]. 1988. *Die römische Literatur in Text und Darstellung*, Bd. 5: *Kaiserzeit II. Von Tertullian bis Boethius.* Stuttgart: Reclam, 170–178, which is a partial edition without apparatus, but with short introduction and German translation; Smolak, Kurt. 1989. "Alcestis." In Herzog, Reinhart & Schmidt, Peter L. [eds.] *Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur der Antike*. V. *Restauration und Erneuerung. Die lateinische Literatur von 284 bis 374 n. Chr*. München: Beck, sv. V, 253–255, note that in the papyrus it is written as if it were a *prosa*. We have used the French translation of the work, under the direction of Nauroy, Gérard. 1993. *Nouvelle histoire de la literature latine*. Turnhout: Brepols, sv. V, 290–291.

5 This hypothesis is a deduction based on the script of the papyrus and on the common themes and language (close to the vulgate, with the insertion of some *glossae* which have been inserted into the text by the copyist) found with many poets of that era.

6 Some works of textual criticism and metrical problems concerning the text are: Bartalucci, Aldo. 1984. "Alcune note critiche al Carmen di Alcestide." *AICC*, 4, 39–42; Traina, Alfonso. 1984. "Carmen di Alcestide." Ibid. p. 13–15; Cassata, L. 1984. "Note all' Alcesti di Barcellona." Ibid. 15–18; Flores, Enrico. 1984. "Sulla crux al v. 39 del Carmen di Alcestide." Ibid. 32–34; Gamberale, Leopoldo. 1984. "Tre note all' Alcesti di Barcellona." Ibid. 34–36; Diggle, James. 1984. "Alcestis Barcinonensis." *ZPE*, 54, 36; Watt, William. S. 1984. "Alcestis in Barcelona." Ibid. 37–38; Führer, Rudolph. 1984. "Zur "Alcestis in Barcelona"." Ibid. 39; Goodyear, Francis R. D. 1984. "Notes on the Alcestis of Barcelona." *Liverpool Classical Monthly*, 9, 28 = Id. & Coleman, Kathleen. M. 1992. *Papers on Latin Literature*. London: Duckworth & Company, 73; Jones, F. 1984. "A Note on the Alcestis of Barcelona." *Acta Classica*, 27, 138; Shackleton Bailey, D. R. 1984. "Textual Notes on Alcestis in Barcelona." Ibid. 55, 1–2; Brown, Gerald. M. 1989. "Notes on literary papyri." Ibid. 76, 239–240; Courtney, Edward 1989. "Lesefrüchte." *Emerita*, 57, 289–291; Horsfall, Nicholas. 1989. "*Alcestis Barcinonensis* 67: some metrical problems." Ibid. 77, 25–26; Musso, Olimpio. 1990. "Mnasea di Patara e un papiro figurato di età imperiale." Ibid. 80, 30–32; Arena, Giuseppe. A. M. 1990. "Sul v. 5 del'Alcesti di Barcellona." *Sileno*, 16, 239–240; Álvarez-Huerta, Olga. 1991. "La dieresis en dos papiros latinos." In Ferreres, Lambert [ed.]. *Treballs*

is possible to trace striking resemblances and resonances of previous texts.

The *Alcestis Barcinonensis* is actually a mixture of multiple literary genres, which appear and disappear and are transformed into each other, as the poet weaves together their techniques: it is mainly a combination of *ethopoeia*[8] and the mythological narrative[9] of a heroine (Alcestis), in

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en honor de Virgilio Bejarano, sv I, Barcelona: SEEC. Secció catalana & Publ. Universitat de Barcelona, 1991, 37–43 **(**actes del IXè Simposi de la secció catalana de la SEEC, St. Feliu de Guixols, 13–16 d'abril de 1988; collection Aurea Saecula, 1 & 2**)**; CALAMUS, ANTONIUS. 1994. "In *Alcestis Barcinonensis* 24 adnotatiuncula." *Maia*, 46, 11–12; CORSI, STEFANO. 1994. "*Alcestis Barcinonensis* 109: una lezione a recuperare?" *Athenaeum*, 82, 294–297; ID. 1996., "Nota ad *Alcestis Barcinonensis*, 83–85." Ibid. 84, 247–251; LA PENNA, ANTONIO. 1997 "Per la riconstruzione del testo di Alcestis di Barcellona." *Maia*, 49, 415–420; VITALE, MAURIZIO. T. 1997. "Ancora sull'*Alcestis Barcinonensis*." In BRETSCHNEIDER, GIORGIO [ED.]. *Serta Antica e Medievalia*. Roma: Bretschneider, 225–254; FALCETTO, RAFAELLA. 1998. "Nota al v. 24 dell' "Alcestide" di Barcellona." *Sileno*, 24, 161–163.

7 M. MARCOVICH (1988: 2) describes the situation like that: "It is a pity that the scribe of the poem, exceptionally illiterate and negligent, committed so many mistakes in both the phonology and morphology, as he knew the Vulgar Latin but not the Classical one, that the reconstruction of the original poem still remains problematic and tentative".

8 *Ethopoeia* (or *sermocinatio*) is an exercise in which students composed a speech for a literary or mythological character (MCGILL, SCOTT. 2005. *Virgil Recomposed. The Mythological and Secular Centos in Antiquity*. Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, xviii), which were very common in rhetorical schools of Egypt (p. xix); cf. CRIBIORE, RAFAELLA. 2001. *Gymnastics of the mind: Greek education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt*. Princeton-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 230, for school exercises, called *themata*, which were attended by students and by adults. It is often confused with *prosopopoeia*, a term limited to speeches given by impersonal agents and *eidolopoeia*, given by the dead (Quint., *Inst. Orat*., IX, 2, 31); cf. LAUSBERG, HEINRICH. 1998. *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric. A Foundation of Literary Study.* Leiden-Boston-Köln: Brill, who provides all the relative terms. Some similar examples are the Virgilian cento *Alcesta* (*Anth. Lat.*, I, 15 Riese = IV, 208 Baehrens· see below), Dracontius' *Hylas*; *Verba Herculis cum uideret Hydrae serpentis capita pullare post caedes* and *Orestes Tragoedia* and Coronatus' *Locus Vergilianus* (*Anth. Lat.*, 214 Shackleton-Bailey = I, 214 Riese = IV, 186 Baehrens) or even some works by Claudian and Reposian (f. ex. *De concubitu Martis et Veneris* etc.) often also characterized as *epyllia*; cf. P. G. PARSONS – R. G. M. NISBET & G. O. HUTCHINSON (1983: 31); GIANOTTI, GIANFRANCO. 1991. "Sulle trace della pantomima tragica: Alcesti tra i danzatori?" *Dioniso*, 61, 2, 121–149, p. 142. For the genre, the sources and the structure of the poem see also GARZYA, ANTONIO. 1985. "Ricognizioni sull'Alcesti di Barcellona (Pap. Barcin. Inv. No 158–161)." *Koinonia*, 9, 7–14.

9 This is the definition given by . P. G. PARSONS-R. G. M. NISBET & G. O. HUTCHINSON (1983: 31). G. GIANOTTI (1991: 142) sees in it an *epyllion*, sharing a German scholar's opinion (LEBEK, WOLFGANG D, 1989. "Postmortale Erotik und andere Probleme der *Alcestis Barcinonensis*." *ZPE*, 79, 19–26) or a small mythological poem.

a form of *epyllion*,[10] since it presents romantic and mythological themes that are linked with the generative principles of mythology, with many elements usually belonging to the late Latin exercises in verse composition, rhetoric,[11] and mythological erudition.[12] But this work is far from being a text composed of simple school exercises. Its poet proves to be not only learned (*poeta doctus*) but also very skilful: for the construction and creation of his poem he borrows ideas, words, phrases, even verses from various poets and transforms these receptions into a brand new fascinating poem in correct metrics.[13] His main source remains Euripides' *Alcestis*,[14]

10 We are expecting a new contribution by BRIGHT, DAVID. F., titled, "The *Alcestis Barcinonensis* as a Transitional Epyllion" not yet published.

11 TANDOI, VINCENZO. 1988 "La nuova Alcesti di Barcellona." In ID. [ED.] *Disiecti Membra Poetae. Studi di poesia Latina in frammenti* (= *DMP*), I, Foggia: Atlantica, 1988, 233–245; p. 242 considers the poet as a late representative of the Second Sophistic.

12 M. MARCOVICH (1988: 4).

13 There are only some minor metrical problems, found likewise in the majority of poets.

14 An old, but still useful essay is that of LUCAS, FRANK L. 1923. *Euripides and his Influence*. Boston: Marshall Jones (reprints New York: Longmans, Green 1928, 1963). On the influence of this play see: STEINWENDER HERBERT. 1951. *Alkestis – Vom Altertum bis zur Gegenwart*. Diss. University of Wien; FRITZ, KURT VON. 1956 "Euripides' Alkestis und ihre modernen Nachahmer und Kritiker." *Antike und Abendland*, 5, 27–70; HAMBURGER, KÄTE. 1962. "Alkestis" In EAD. *Von Sophokles zu Sartre. Griechische Dramenfiguren antic und modern*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1962, 135–152; DIETRICH, MARGARET. 1969. "Vorwort" in *Alkestis. Euripides, Gluck, Wieland, Richter, Hofmannsthal, Lernet-Holenia, Wilder*. München – Wien: Alber Langen-Georg Müller, 9–71; PARKER, L. P. E. 2003. "Alcestis: Euripides to Ted Hughes." *Greece and Rome*, 50, 1–30; LUSCHNIG, CELIA A.E. & ROISMAN, HANNA M. [EDS.]. 2003. *Euripides' Alcestis: With Notes and Commentary*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press (Oklahoma Series in Classical Culture 29); MOST, GLENN N. 2004. "Alcesti risorta tra Shakespeare ed Eliot." In PATTONI, MARIA P. & CARPONI, ROBERTA [EDS.]. *Sacrifici al femminile: Alcesti in scena da Euripide a Raboni*. Milano: Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, 2004, 360–368 (*Communicazioni Sociali.* Anno XXVI Nuova serie. Sezione Teatro. Nr. 3); PATTONI, MARIA P. 2006. "Introduzione" in *Euripide, Wieland, Rilke, Yourcenar, Raboni. Alcesti. Variazioni sul mito*. Venice: Marsilio Editore, 9–48; BORCHARD, BEATRIX & MAURER, ZENCK C. [EDS.]. 2007. Alkestis: *Opfertod und Wiederkehr. Interpretationen*. Hamburg: Peter Lang (Hamburger Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft); MÖLLENDORFF, PETER VON. 2008. "Alkestis und Admetos." In MOOG-GRÜNEWALD, MARIA [ED.]. *Der Neue Pauly.* Suppl. Bd. 5: *Mythenrezeption. Die antike Mythologie in Literatur, Music und Kunst von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 2008, 53–61 (with further bibliography) and 100, covering the myth's survival through the ages; MOST G. N. 2010. "Alcestis *Redux*." *New England Classical Journal*, 37.2, 99–112; PICE, NICOLA. 2011. *Alcesti e le Alcesti. Storia, forme, fortuna di un mito*. Foggia: Il Castello.

from whom he derives ideas, notions and (some of the) characters. Based firmly on earlier mythological and folkloric erudition, he innovates on a well-known myth, promoting the metaliterary aspect of his own composition, thanks to his vivid imagination and poetic skills, as Marcovich[15] has shown followed by many scholars since.[16]

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15 MARCOVICH, M. 1984. "El valor de la *Alcestis Barcinonensis*." *Estudios Clásicos*, 26, no 88, 283–295 (= FERNÁNDEZ-GALIANO, MANUEL [ED.]. *Apophoreta Philologica M. Fernández-Galiano Oblata*, sv. II); ID. 1984 (b). "Alcestis Barcinonensis." *Illinois Classical Studies*, 9, 111–134 (Further in the article *ICS*); ID. 1986. "The Alcestis Papyrus Revisited." *ZPE*, 65, 39–57; ID. 1987. "On Marcovich's *Alcestis*; A Reply." Ibid., 68, 29–32; ID. 1987. "The Alcestis Papyrus revisited. Addendum." Ibid. 69, 231–236; ID. 1997. "Alcestis Barcinonensis." *ANRW*, II, 34, 4, Berlin, 3197–3206.

16 Thanks to scholars' important works, *Alcestis Barcinonensis* has been thoroughly commented on and interpreted. Their contributions (in chronological order) are: SCHÄUBLIN, CHRISTOPH. 1984. "Zur Alcestis Barcinonensis." *MH*, 41,174–181; VAN LOOY, HERMAN. 1984. "Tragica, IV." *Antiquité Classique*, 53, 315–317; LEBEK, W. D. 1985. "Neue Texte im Bereich der lateinischen Literatur." In NEUKAM, PETER [ED.]. *Klassische Antike und Gegenwart*, München: Bayer, 1985, 50–67 (*Dialog Schule und Wissenschaft. Klassische Sprache und Literatur*, 19); CAVENAILLE, ROBERT. 1986. "Sur quelques vers de l'Alceste latine de Barcelone." In DECREUS, FREDDY & DEROUX, CARL [EDS.]. *Hommages à Josef Veremans*, Bruxelles, 1986, 39–47 (Collection Latomus, 193); WALDE, CHRISTINE 1986 (2007²). "Alcestis Barcinonensis." In JENS, WALTER [ED.]. *Kindlers Neues Literaturlexicon*. München: Kindler, sv. XVIII, 76–77; ID. 1987. "Die *Alcestis Barcinonensis*: Neue Konjekturen und Interpretationen." *ZPE*, 70, 39–48; BRIGHT, DAVID. F. 1987. *The Barcelona Alcestis and the Poetic Tradition*. Classical Association of the Middle West and South. Boulder CO (presented as a paper); ZURLI, LAURIANO. 1987. "Su alcuni passi controversi dell'Alcestis di Barcellona." *Giornale Italiano di Filologia*, 39, 73–103; GÄRTNER, HANS. A. 1988. *Die römische Literatur in Text und Darstellung*, 5. *Kaiserzeit II. Von Tertullianus bis Boethius*. Stuttgart: Reclam, 170–178; BROWNE, GERALD M. 1989 "Notes on Literary Papyri." *ZPE*, 76, 239–240; TRAINA, ALFONSO. 1989. "Interventi sulla nuova Alcesti." in ID. [ED.]. 1989. *Poeti latini (e neolatini)*. Bologna: Pàtron, 179–181 (Note e saggi filologici, 3 ser., No 4). LIEBERMANN, WOLF.-LUDER. 1993. "Euripides und die Folgen: Zur *Alcestis Barcinonensis*." *Wiener Studien*, 106, 173–195; SMOLAK, KURT. 1996. "Alcestis Barcinonensis." In CANCIK, HUBERT, SCHNEIDER, HELMUT & LANDFESTER, MANFRED [EDS.]. *Der Neue Pauly*. Stuttgart: Metzler, sv. I, 1996, 445; GIANOTTI, G. 1997. *Radici del presente. Voci antiche nella cultura moderna*. Torino: Paravia, 15–34; LIBERMAN, GAUTHIER. L. 1998. "L' "Alceste" de Barcelone." *Revue Philologique*, 72, 2, 219–231; PREMK, ANA. 2003. *Alcestis Barcinonensis*, University of Ljubljana (diplomatic research); MÜLLER-GOLDINGEN, CHRISTIAN. 2004. "Der Alkestis-Papyrus von Barcelona." In ID. *Das kleine und das Grosse. Essays zur antiken Kultur und Geistesgeschichte*. München – Leipzig: Saur, 2004, 135–145 (Beiträge zur Altertumskunde, 213); SCHÄUBLIN, CHR. 2005. *Aus Paganer und christilicher Antike. Ausgewählte Aufsätze zur klassischen Philologie (1970–1997)*. Basel: Schwabe; SALANITRO, GIOVANNI. 2007 (a). "L' "Alcesti latina"." In BLANCATO, MARIO. & NUZZO, GIANFRANCO [EDS.]. *La tragedia romana: modelli, forme, ideologia, fortuna*. Palermo: Istituto Nazionale

The poem has a structure consisting of twelve blocks (or passages), divided into five parts (2+2+3+3+2),[17] varying in size from seven to thirteen lines. There are also five character-roles,[18] as given in the *notae personarum* written *in margine* of the papyrus (APOLLO, ADMET[US], PAT[ER], MATER, ALCESTIS bis), along with that of the narrator (POET[A]).[19] The characters are Admetus, king of Pherae in Thessaly, his wife Alcestis, his father Pheres, his mother Clymene and his patron god Apollo.[20] For some scholars this is strong evidence that the poem had been composed for potential scenic purposes, which they define as a tragic pantomime,[21]

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del Dramma Antico, 71–76 (Giornate Siracusane sul teatro antico: Siracusa 26 maggio 2006); ROSSI, ELENA, 2011. "Una versione tardoantica del mito di Alcesti: l'Alcesti di Barcellona." *Dioniso*, n. s. 1, 185–295; MORENO SOLDEVILLA, ROSARIO. 2011. "El motivo del lecho conyugal en la Alcestis: dos notas de lectura. *Emerita* 79, 1, 177–188.

17 M. MARCOVICH (1988: 4–5): A. The prologue, in dialogic form, between Admetus and Apollo (1–20, 2 blocks), B. The dialogue (*diverbium*) between Admetus and Pheres (21–42, 2 blocks), C. Clymene's *rhesis* (42–70, 3 blocks), D. Alcestis' *antirhesis* (71–103, 3 blocks), and E. The last day and death of Alcestis (102–124, 2 blocks). Parts C and D together form the *Agon* between Clymene and Alcestis. For the structure of the poem, see also ZEHNACKER, HUBERT. 1998. "Philosophie, *pietas* et culture dans l'Alceste de Barcelone." In BUREAU, BRUNO & NICOLAS, CHRISTIAN [EDS.]. *Mélanges C. Moussy*. Louvain – Paris: Peeters, 1998, 361–369, p. 361; CHR. SCHÄUBLIN (1984 : 175).

18 W. D. LEBEK (1989: 20, n. 4); G. GIANOTTI (1991: 144): there is no actual mention of the parents' name, while also Alcestis herself is mentioned only once by her name (*Alc. Barc*., 106) and once with her patronymic (71 *Peleia*). As for Clymene, her name is often written as Periclymene. For more details concerning the presence of these heroes in mythology, see GRIMAL, PIERRE. 1951 (republished many times since). *Dictionnaire de la Mythologie Grecque et Romaine*. Paris: P.U.F., 10–11, s. v. "Admète"; 25, s. v. "Alceste"; 366, s. v. "Phérès."

19 K. SMOLAK (1993: 290) treats this as a mistaken addition in the narrative sections. On this subject, see GIANOTTI, G. 1995. "A proposito delle *notae personarum* dell'*Alcestis Barcinonensis*: il poeta tra gli attori." In CERASUOLO, SALVATORE [ED.]. *Studi in memoria di Marcello Gigante*. Napoli: Dipartimento di Filologia classica Francesco Arnaldi, 1995, sv. II, 271–283, who explains how this *siglum* was attributed by the first editor to the narrator, but later editors attribute the two texts containing "Poeta" to the argumentation of Clymene. We disagree, as it is quite obvious that there is a narrator, hidden beneath the narrative *persona* of *vates*, whose name is never revealed.

20 An important difference from the Euripidian play is that Apollo and Thanatos have a role in the plot, whereas Clymene is totally absent.

21 Juv., 6, 652, who mentions her presence in pantomimes; see also G. GIANOTTI (1991: 144), who imagines a dramatic action, accompanied with music and mimetic dances of ballet actors, maybe a scenic re-edition of Alcestis' life known to the Roman public by the homonymous tragedy written by Accius (57 R², one verse remains) *ap*. Priscian.

a performance genre. Even though we think that *Alcestis Barcinonensis*, as we intend to demonstrate from the analysis that follows, is far superior to a popular pantomime, a genre often looked down by ancient writers as inferior to the theatre, its dramaturgical conditions and theatrical elements (in conjunction with the religious aspect) are undeniable, bolstering the Italian hypothesis and making it difficult to reject.

The poem starts at the oracle of Delphi with the pattern of a Greek-Roman prayer (invocation, request, and "binding formula"). It is a typical *epiclesis*, but in exaggeration, opening with a *salvo* of five divine epithets of Apollo (and a sixth one, hidden in a *lacuna*), ranging from frequent to very rare ones.[22] This reflects the hymnodic idea of *theos polyônymos*, who is presented in a conventional way for the benefit of the audience of Greek tragedy or the audience/readers of Roman tragedy, and this is not the only characteristic of this genre, as we shall see below. In a pompous tone, arrogant and selfish Admetus has three unusual requests: he wants to know from Apollo the length of his life-span, the cause of his death and the future of himself (*ego/eidolon?*) after death.[23] The first one is consistent with the

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p. 165 Ribbeck, a pantomime by Batillus (*ap*. Juv., 6, 63–66) or an *erotopaegnion* of Laevius (7–9 Tr. *ap*. Aul.-Gell., XIX, 7–8); cf. Pastore Polzonetti, Giulia. "L' *Alcesti* di Levio" in V. Tandoi (1985: 59–77); Mantzilas, Dimitrios. "Intertextuality, Language Experimentation and *Ludus* in Laevius' *Erotopaegnia*" presented as a paper in "ΜΟΥΣΑ ΠΑΙΖΕΙ. Greek and Latin Technopaegnia, Acrostichs, Riddles, Metrical Curiosities, Poetic Puns etc.", Institute of Classical Studies, University of Warsaw, 4–7 May 2011. These texts, which were presented as *ακροάματα* during dinners and banquets (cf. Plut., *Quaest. Conv*., 7, 8, 711a–713; Gell., XIX, 7, 2 sq.) and to which the 5th century anonymous *Querolus* also belongs, are called *poetici apud mensam*. The Italian scholar mentioned above cites Lucian., *De salt*., 52, who informs us of mythical figures adopted in the art of *orchestés* in Thessaly. These spectacles survived in the Christian era, even though the authorities opposed them as a form of mass communication and popular schooling (p. 148). In general, Italian scholars share the same opinion, that *Alcestis Barcinonensis* and *Alcesta* (see below) were tragedies or pantomimes, written in order to be performed; cf. Burlando, Annalaura. 2000. "L' "Alcesti" di Barcellona a teatro." *Orpheus*, 21, 17–25, who describes a modern theatrical adaptation in Florence; Salanitro G. (2007a: 71–76), who cites and follows Gianotti's opinion; Lopez Silva, Xosé. A. *O teatro em Roma*. In Xeralidades [serial online], sede 13. Available from URL <www.slideshare.net/lsilva29/o-teatro--en-roma-presentation> [quoted 2011-01-27]. He shares the same opinion about it being a pantomime. The most recent work concerning the popular genre of pantomime in general is that of Hall, Edith. & Wyles, Rosy [eds.]. 2008. *New Directions in Ancient Pantomime*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

22 *Alc. Barc*., 1 *Pr<a>escie Lauripotens, Latonie, Deli<e> P<a>ean* and 3 *<Arcitenens>* (supplement by Marcovich). See also Ferraro, Vittorio. 1984. "Sulla nuova Alcesti, v. 3 e sui modi di invocare il dio nelle preghiere." *AICC*, 4, 36–39.

23 According to Arena, Giuseppe A. M. 1993. "La morte e il ritorno alla vita: la struttura

myth; the other two are pure innovations from the anonymous bard; especially for the third, there is not a single source providing such a motif in Greco-Roman folklore.

The poet continues using a number of poetic phrases of the underworld and after life,[24] mixed with connotations from pastoral poetry,[25] where Apollo is presented as Admetus' herdsman, a well-known *parallage* (variation) of the myth. The god responds to this *hubris* and reveals that the Fates have decided on his premature death, unless a member of his family offers himself as a substitute victim, this statement being the aetiology but also the proeconomy of the tragic outcome; in other words the poet in the constant dilemma whether the Gods or the Fates predominate human life, underscores the preponderance of the latter. The bard "is employing here the folkloric motif of transfer of one person's years of life to the account of another person",[26] an ancient perception which has its provenance in a lost version of the Alcestis' myth, as a Hypothesis to Euripides' *Alcestis* informs us.[27] However the motif of "tantamount life-span" comes directly from Properce,[28] where the dying Cornelia offers the rest of her years to her husband, Paullus.

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ed il Leitmotif dell'Alcesti di Barcellona." *Aufidus*, 7, No 21, 7–21, the Leitmotif of the play (presented in a new form) is life's continuation after death.

24 *Alc. Barc*., 5–8 *Quae finis vitae, qui<d> mi post fata relinquant, / Edoce, siderea<s> animus quando ivit in auras. / Quamvis scire homini, ni prospera vita futura <est>, / Tormentum (sit <ne. atra dies et pallida regna?)*. Maybe we should adopt here Tandoi's suggestion *ibit*; cf. Ovid. *Tr*., I 5, 11–12 *spiritus in vacuas… auras / ibit*.

25 *Alc. Barc*., 10–1 *Succepi pecudumque ducem post crimina divum / Accepi iussi <que> idem dare iubila silvis*.

26 M. MARCOVICH (1988: 46).

27 It is attributed to the Hellenistic scholar Aristophanes of Byzantium and precedes it in the mediaeval manuscripts.

28 Prop., IV, 11, 95. In general, see LECHI, FRANCESCA. 1984. "Alcesti dopo Properzio. Tragedia ed elegia nell'Alcesti di Barcellona." *AICC*, 4, 18–28, who explains the difference between Properce's aristocratic ethics and Euripides' erotic passion, and provides a more ample argumentation in *Alcestis Barcinonensis*, whose poet is in *aemulatio* with Properce; PADUANO, GUIDO. 1968. "Le reminischenze di Alcesti nell'Elegia IV, 11 di Properzio." *Maia*, 20, 21–28, and REITZENSTEIN, ERICH. 1969. "Die Cornelia-Elegie des Properz (IV, 11). Eine Formuntersuchung und ihr Ergebnisse für die Textkritik." *Rheinisches Museum*, 112, 126–145, on Euripides' influence on Properce, being in *aemulatio* with him. In other words we can observe an interesting double procedure of *aemulatio*, from the Greek play writer to the Roman elegist and then on to the anonymous bard, with additional influences of *laudatio* and *consolatio*. Moreover, the contrast between the human measure of Cornelia and the grandiosity of Alcestis is obvious. Unlike the Propertian heroine, a mere example of human beauty, Alcestis resembles more a goddess, demonstrating more qualities.

The poet then switches to *narratio* (v. 21), as the second "scene" of the play begins, the action being transferred to Admetus' royal palace, (at Pherae in Thessaly, named after Pheres), which could be a perfect setting for a tragedy.[29] His father comes to see his sorrowful (23 *tristem*) son (later on, we have a *variatio*, as it is Admetus who visits his mother) who used to be happy before the revelation, an antithesis derived from the proverbial truth that no wealth can buy happiness.[30]

In the episode that follows, it becomes clear that *Alcestis Barcinonensis* demonstrates, apart from literary echoes and poetological nuances, a strong influence from philosophy: On the one hand Pheres appears here as an Epicurian, a materialist and hedonist who loves life and refuses to surrender it, despite his advanced age. It is otherwise known that this philosophical system was generally opposed to the notions of marriage and family. Pheres, out of egoism and individualism, does not in theory actually refuse to help, but in practice he offers no assistance. He agrees to lend his years to Admetus or a part of his body (his eyes or one hand – a peculiar offer), but not his life.[31]

On the other hand, in the debate (*certamen*; *Agon* is the Greek technical term)[32] that follows between her and her daughter-in-law, the mother Clymene, "the famous", provides five arguments[33] or metanarrative ideas why no member of the family should sacrifice himself, two of them echoing fundamental Stoic notions, based on time, the end and the regeneration of the world,[34] influenced also by nihilistic, post-structuralistic scepticism and metaphysical *koinoi topoi* found in consolations: a) "Why are you afraid of

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29 The author's poetics *chronos* and *topos* is consistent with that of tragedy. Similarly, the time within which the action occurs is one day, proving a strong correlation between *Alcestis Barcinonensis* and tragedy.

30 M. MARCOVICH (1988: 47), underlines the difference between *eudaimon* and *eutychês* (Eur., *Med*., 1228–1230) or *olvios* and *eukleês* (Christ. Pat., 1016–1018).

31 For all these remarks, see H. ZEHNACKER (1998: 362), who exaggerates a little bit, overestimating the "philosophic knowledge" of our Anonymous, which seems to be limited to school doctrine (cf. the one provided by Aelius Donatus, St Jerome's tutor-mid 4th Century), exhibited here with rhetoric virtuosity (cf. the case of Menander Rhetor).

32 It is true that both the vocabulary and the structure of the *Agon* point in the direction of the theatre, a reminder of similar scenes from Seneca's tragedies, f. ex. Achilles and Pyrrhus in *Troades* (203–291) or Phaedra and Nutrix in *Phaedra* (85–293).

33 The two first arguments are religious/ethical (her son will become a criminal, if he destroys his mother's womb and breasts) and a pragmatic one (her death will only prolong his life, without providing immortality for him).

34 H. ZEHNACKER (1998: 363–365).

death, for which we are all born[35] and nothing is eternal?"[36] and b) "Fate is inevitable for everybody" (53–56). Here the bard combines two motifs: a) "wherever someone hides, to the extreme East, West, North or South, to the most remote and exotic regions, fate will find him", a common motif in Latin poetry,[37] influenced from Alexandrine poetry, and b) the rebirth of the mythical sacred firebird Phoenix[38] after the *Magnus annus*, i. e. a cycle of solar years, which varies in sources from 500 to 1461, an ancient legend which became a beloved resurrection theme for both Christians and Pagans, mostly during the Silver Age of Latin Literature and later on.

Even Simplicius' aphorism of *ta panta rhei* (adopted by Rheology and Stoicism and erroneously attributed to Heraclitus), is present in the poem, given with an impressive *climax – gradatio*,[39] together with the belief that the Earth is encompassed by ether and air. The fifth and last reasoning Clymene elaborates on consists of two groups of *exempla priorum*[40] (4 + 5),

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35 *Alc. Barc*., 53 *Cur metui<s> mortem, cui nascimur?*

36 Ibid. 57 *Perpetuum nihil est, nihil sine morte creatum*. There are echoes from Sen., *Marc*., 10, 5; *Polyb*., 1, 1; cf. M. MARCOVICH (1988: 8).

37 Catul., 11, 2–12; Hor., *Carm*., I, 22, 5–8; II, 6, 1–4; Lucan., I, 15–18 etc; cf. Sen., *Epist*., 107, 11, 5, for the philosophical background.

38 *Alc. Barc*., 54–55 … *barbarus ales / Nascitur*. Phoenix is mentioned for the first time in Hdt., II, 73. In Latin Literature, v. Plin., *N. H*., X, 5; Claudian., [*Phoenix*], passim; Sen., *Epist*., 42, 1; Tacit., *Ann*., VI, 28; Lactant., *De ave Phoen*., passim; Clem. Rom., *Epist. ad Cor*., 25 sq. This is proof that the poem was composed in the 4th Century AD. For the reception of this myth which appears in Pseudo-Apollodorus *Bibliotheca*, by Claudian and Lactantius (and also Ovid., *Met*., XV, 390–407), see SCHWARTZ, FRANK J. 1983. "Le papyrus latin d'Alceste et l'Œuvre de Claudien." *ZPE*, 52, 37–39, who also discusses further minor receptions by Claudian; CHR. SCHÄUBLIN (1984: 179–181) for the importance of this literary motif and relative bibliography; W.-L. LIEBERMANN (1993: 186 sq.); cf. also HUBAUX, JEAN – LEROY, MAXIME. 1939. *Le mythe du Phénix*. Paris: Droz, XI sq. (Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Liège, Fasc. LXXXII); P. GRIMAL (1951: 371–372), s. v. "Phoenix", for sources and details of its myth; WALLA-SCHUSTER, MARIALUISE. 1969. *Das Vogel Phoenix der antiken Literatur und der Dichtung des Laktanz*. Diss. University of Wien; SHARP, M. C. 1986. *A Historical and Literary Commentary on the Phoenix poem ascribed to Lactantius*. Diss. University of Oxford.

39 *Alc. Barc*. 69. *Cedunt labuntur moriuntur contumulantur*, where each verb has one syllable more that the preceding one. They refer to every single living being under the heavenly ether and the roaming air.

40 H. ZEHNACKER (1998: 365) explains that these *exempla* derive from the liberty of the Stoic wise man (*sophos*) which exists because he harmonises his own will perfectly with the will of God. They use ancestral tradition, drawn from legend or remote history, which values of the ruling class of the Roman Republic as a guide to moral behaviour during the Empire.

a known rhetorical device but also one of the cultural forces that shapes reception within antiquity. The first catalogue contains specific cases of major gods[41] who descended to Hades, and thus died, even temporarily, a euhemeristic[42] motif found elsewhere for dying heroes or gods in general.[43] The second catalogue refers to mothers,[44] some of them even goddesses, who have lost (or killed) their sons. Through this detailed account Clymene wants to prove (by using two vivid rhetorical questions)[45] that she could not be an exception to fate; she will lose her son, if the Fates have so decided. The difference or the contradiction between the parents' ideas, which are both based on two *adynata*, is that Pheres cares only about himself and his destiny, whereas Clymene opens her arguments to the whole world, to the Earth and the time circle, even though the poet describes her more as a caricature and not as a real philosopher.[46]

As an answer to Clymene's philosophical and mythological arguments, Alcestis demonstrates three moral counter-arguments, who balance between various philosophical theories, with which she explains her decision to sacrify herself: a) her self-denying death will secure for her everlasting glory,[47] a Stoic element found also in the traditional myth,[48] b) it is a way to avoid the widow's everlasting mourning and crying[49] for her husband (an innova-

41 See M. MARCOVICH (1988: 53) for details: the bard refers to Zeus' tomb in Crete, the *catabasis* of Demeter and Aphrodite and Dionysus dismemberment, the latter two being mythological rarities; see also HARRISON, GEOFFREY & OBBINK, DIRK. 1986. "Vergil, *Georgics*, I, 36–39 and the Barcelona Alcestis (P. Barc. Inv. No 158–161) 62–65: Demeter in the Underworld." *ZPE*, 63, 75–81, who explains how the anonymous poet adapted conventional consolatory *topoi* and obscure motifs. They believe that this part of the poem is derived from Greek mythography (even as early as Orphic poetry) probably via Christian apologetic catalogues written by Early Christian apologists (Aristides, Clement, Athenagoras, Tatian) of pagan gods who died, fornicated, suffered, were wounded and so on (p. 77).

42 Cf. Cic., *N. D.*, I, 42 and 119.

43 Cf. Hor., *Carm*., I, 28, 7–11 and Prop., III, 18, 27–28 for four and three heroes respectively; Eur., *Alc*., 989–990, who makes a general remark that even gods die.

44 She mentions Diomede, Agave, Althaea, Ino and Procne. Only the first one had lost her son, the other four had killed their own. All myths are well-known from mythography and poetry, f. ex. Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

45 Cf. Cic., *Cat*., 4, 2; *Pis*., 79; Ovid., *Frg*. 6; *Amor*., II, 11, 54; Pers., 5, 89; Stat., *Achill*., I, 949–950; Mart., III, 99, 3–4 and many others.

46 H. ZEHNACKER (1998: 364).

47 *Alc. Barc*., 76 *laus magna*. This is a free translation in Latin of the Greek term *hysterophemia*, known already from Homer.

48 Eur., *Alc*., 623–624; *Alcesta*, 154.

49 Tears and crying is a motif that appears often in the poem, as we observe: *Alc. Barc*.,

tion by our poet),[50] which echoes the Epicurian idea of pleasure (*hedone/ voluptas*) caused by the absence of pain, and c) it will be a solid proof of her *pietas*. Her religious philosophy (*sophrosyne*) as a pious wife[51] (78 *pia coniux*) determines all her actions in life and will make her an *exemplum pietatis*,[52] proving herself superior to her parents in law, who both lost their chance of a noble death, but not her. Besides, she was given as a wife to Admetus, so now she could not refuse her sacred marriage bed.[53] Of course sacrifice should be reciprocal,[54] even though this does not actually happen. The emblematic polyptoton (74 *pro coniuge coniux*)[55] is the poem's point of culmination.

The anti-rhesis continues with the motif of a second wife: Admetus, as a young widower, could and should enter into a remarriage[56] of convenience, as long as he continues to love only Alcestis. This comes into sharp antithesis with the traditional myth, where the idea of a step-mother is rejected,[57] even though the heroine does not exclude the possibil-

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23–24 *... alto / Pectore suspirans lacrimis* (Admetus); 44 *Inque sinus fundit lacrimas* (Admetus); 71 *fletus* (Admetus); *flebo* (Alcestis); 80–81 *lacrimosa…/ Vita* (life); 99 *flentes* (children); 107 *lacrimasq<ue> viri* (Admetus).

50 She prefers this death; see *Alc. Barc*. 81 *mors ista placet*.

51 According to W. D. LEBEK (1987: 45–46), *Alc. Barc*., 74–75 echo the "Leben- und Trosttopos" of *eukleia* (v. Thuc., II, 44, 4).

52 Her *pietas* had become proverbial (f. ex. Prop., II, 6, 23–24; Ovid., *Tr*., V, 14, 37). She was often associated with Penelope (f. ex. Ovid., *Pont*., III, 1, 105) as a role model, an example of a loyal, faithful wife, canonizing the ethical code of a Greco-Roman matron, an image broken in the caustic Juvenal's satires (6, 652–654); cf. DUNN, FRANCIS M. 1985. "The Lover Reflected in the Exemplum: A Study of Properce 1.3 and 2.6." *ICS*, 10, 2, 254; BLASONE, PINO. *On the Traces of Alcestis: Between Eros and Thanatos*. In Scribd. [Serial Online]. available from URL <www.scribd.com › Research › Literature> [quoted 2011-01-27], who additionally deals with the rich iconography of the heroine.

53 Cf. Eur., *Alc*., 180–182. For a detailed analysis of the motif, see R. MORENO SOLDEVILLA (2011: 177–188).

54 *Alc. Barc*., 74.

55 The phrase-slogan is taken from Ovid., *Met*., VII, 589.

56 See ST. CORSI (1996: 250, n. 18) on how Christian texts discouraged people from proceeding with a new marriage. This is a solid argument that the anonymous poet is inspired by pagan mythological themes and not by Christian ones, despite the gradual propagation and domination of Christianity that occurred in fourth-century Roman (and Byzantine) Empire; cf Alc. Barc. 60 *pater mundi* (for Jupiter), an idea in opposition to the Christian monotheism.

57 Eur., *Alc*., 305–310; 372–373; *Alcesta*, 125–128.

ity of a substitute wife, if Admetus wants it so, despite her objection.[58] The apparent source for this assignment is Properce's *regina elegiarum*, where Cornelia accepts that Paullus could have a second wife,[59] who will be a *nouerca* for her children. This touching motif is also consistent with Roman society's beliefs. The bard goes a step further by blending it with the popular folkloric motif of the dead mother avenging her mistreated orphans even from her grave, an element which is absent from both Euripides and Properce.[60] On the contrary, the next motif is supported by previous literature (especially Laodamia's myth):[61] the husband will place her effigy in their bedchamber (here her urn) that he will embrace it and caress it and even talk to.[62] By his side he will have her faithfull[63] (99 *pia… umbra*) as a shadow or ghost; in *Alcestis Barcinonensis* there is an alteration of the myth: Alcestis will simply appear in his dreams, an image that comes directly from Properce's Cynthia.[64] Moreover, the cult of the deceased wife with roses on her tombstone is a prevalent image in sepulchral poetry and a common practice in Roman religion.[65]

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58 Eur., *Alc*., 181. To some scholars the idea of an eventual second matrimony cannot be accepted, as Alcestis has already asked from Admetus that she would remain his one and only wife (84–86). But what if she had a change of heart? Can we exclude the possibility that she changed her mind, during her mental turbulence? We are unable to give a definite answer.

59 See a further analysis – ST. CORSI (1996: 247–248) –, on the similarities and differences between the two texts.

60 See M. MARCOVICH (1988: 69), for bibliographical support.

61 Euripides, *Protesilaus*; Hygin., *Fab*., 104; Apollod., *Epitom*., III, 30; Eustath., *ad Il*., II, 701; Ovid., *Her*., 13, 151–158; Prop., IV, 11, 83, which is perhaps his direct source.

62 Cf. Xen. Ephes., *Ephes*., V, 1, 11, who involves the similar story of Aigialeus and Thelxinoe and also *Allia Potestas*, 44. For this motif, see SUNČIČ, MAJA. 2003, "Simulacrum ljubezni." *Keria*, 5, 2, 85–96, in reference also to our text.

63 This is Marcovich's translation of *pia*.

64 Prop., IV, 7, 1–6. His mannerisms are obvious throughout this passage. For the classical version of the myth, v. Eur., *Alc*., 354–356 and cf. Prop., IV, 11, 82, where Cornelia will do the same with Paullus. We disagree with M. MARCOVICH (1998: 71), who thinks that the ashes stand here as a poetic metaphor for the effigy and that her urn will never really leave her tombstone in the cemetery: it is obvious to us that the Bard has slightly changed Laodamia's myth, introducing an urn in place of the effigy (*xoanon* or *agalma*); see also W. D. LEBEK's (1989: 22 sq.) objections.

65 *CLE* 1256, 4–6; 451, 3; 492, 20–21; 578, 2; 966, 3–4; 1036, 9–10. This particular flower was also used during the festival called *Rosalia* (23 May) in honour of dead people; see TSOCHOS, CHARALAMBOS. 2009. "Rosalia. Ein römisches Fest für die Toten in Makedonien." In *Von der archaischen bis zur früchristlichen Zeit in Makedonien*, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, München, 19 June 2009.

The last block of Alcestis' dramatic monologue presents four elements: a) as a *pia mater* she entrusts her one and only husband with their common sacred collateral (93 *pia pignora*),[66] their children, b) she shall not perish completely,[67] since her children resemble her, c) she threatens Admetus with revenge, if he forgets her, d) she delivers a moral injunction addressed to him. It is a *peroratio* that, in the event that he remarries, he should learn from her example of *pietas* the duty to die for his beloved wife (102 *pro coniuge cara*), which is also a stereotyped *clausula* of sepulchral poetry,[68] bringing to mind both the themes of reciprocal sacrifice and of piety. All these themes have resonances[69] mainly from Euripides and Properce, but also from Dracontius, Ovid, Statius, and Virgil's abandoned Dido.[70] The notion of the virgin *uniuira* fulfilling her maternal duty (94–95) towards her husband is essential for the Roman matron, as sepulchral poetry reveals.[71] It is noteworthy that both Clymene's and Alcestis' speeches have a form of Ring-Composition, since their key-ideas are repeated and recapitulated at the beginning and at the end of their monologues.

The poem's closing part presents Alcestis' slow death,[72] reinforcing the tragic character of the narrative. Here, instead of the last dramatic sticho-

66 The poet uses one more time the adjective *pius*, this time for the children.

67 *Alc. Barc*., 96 *non pereo, nec enim morior: me, crede, reservo*.

68 *CLE* 490, 3; 452, 1. The text is not sound (*venit e t* pap.; *veniet* edd.). Marcovich speaks of a lacuna after *venit*. Nosarti writes *ueni<t>…*, and explains (1992: 151) how this is a reticence of Alcestis, who – overwhelmed by her feelings – left her frase voluntarily incomplete, demanding thus a "collaborative interaction" from the listener. Further on, Nisbet is the one who proposed *pro coniuge cara*, changing *caro* (pap., Roca Puig, Lebek). Nosarti (1992: 152) also prefers *caro*, places it in verse 101, and suggests that it would be of bad taste if Alcestis who already acceped to die for Admetus, now forces him to die for her.

69 For more details, see M. MARCOVICH (1988: 80 sq).

70 For the similarities between the two heroines, who commit suicide for the man they love after a divine command, see S. MCGILL (2005: 89–91). It is true that the 4th book of *Aeneis* has an allusive bond with and a strong impact on *Alcestis Barcinonensis*, but even stronger on *Alcesta*, all three poems overflowing with *pathos*.

71 F. ex. *CLE* 492, 5–6; 1036, 4; 1038, 6; cf. Prop., IV, 11, 36 and 68; the so-called "Laudatio Turiae", passim. On this theme we presented a paper at the Fifth *Arachne* Conference: "Oikos-Familia. The Family in the Ancient Greco-Roman Society: Framing the Discipline in the 21st Century", University of Gothenburg, Department of Historical Studies, 5–7 November 2009 titled "*Laudationes mulierum* as a source for the Roman family or What makes a wife laudable and worthy."

72 As W.-L. LIEBERMANN (1993: 187–190) correctly observes, there are reminders of Socrates' death (Plat., *Phaedr*., 117c sq.). Here, the poet transforms the literalized mythos into a bourgeois-family environment (p. 189). On this subject, see also, SOMMARIVA, GRAZIA. 1984. "La morte di Alcesti." *AICC*, 4, 29–31, who highlights

mythia between her and Admetus found in Euripides,[73] she addresses her husband in their bedchamber for the last time. The scene opens with an image inspired by Virgil,[74] which belongs to a large class of descriptions of the calmness of night, often contrasted with the sleepless anxiety of a person (here Alcestis, 104–107) or a group of persons. When Dawn comes, after having mentioned her servants in her last will, Alcestis herself makes (another example of her *pietas*)[75] all the preparations for her funeral by collecting exotic funeral plants[76] and spices for the funeral pyre, towards which she goes happily (110 *Laeta* is the technical term),[77] as she has the ultimate opportunity to prove above all else her piety. She reminds us strongly of the Stoic sage (*sophos*), whose happiness (*eudaimonia*) is based entirely on virtue, invulnerability to harm and fearless death. In addition to that, she acts as the director of the ensuing action, preparing the setting for her impending exanimation. The reader is not offered an actual description of the funeral pyre; the poet, after giving a premonition of it, leaves the scene to the reader's imagination.

The final eight – intensively dramatic – verses present a significant number of echoes from texts referring to death,[78] mainly Virgil, Ovid, Statius and sepulchral poetry, reproducing images such as the coming of the inevitable, the hour of death that touches with its cold hand, *rigor* and *frigor*, blue fingernails, the loss of daylight, numbness, the comforting lap of the spouse who sees his beloved turning into a shadow, the last apostrophe to

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the realism of the passage, derived from philosophical descriptions of death, which had become a common motif in Latin Literature; f. ex. Tac., *Ann*., XV, 62–64.

73 Eur., *Alc*., 374–391.

74 Virg., *Aen*., IV, 522–523; 529–531, which is a resonance of Apollon. Rhod., III, 744–753. For more *similia*, see PEASE, ARTHUR S. 1935. *Publi Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Quartus*. Cambridge-Massachussets: Harvard University Press, 434–436.

75 M. MARCOVICH (1988: 90).

76 *Alc. Barc*., 111 *Barbaricas Frondes <et> odores*. The scene is inspired by a passage of Statius, *Silv*., II, 1–159–162. The same ingredients, which neutralize the smell of burning flesh, belong to the funeral ritual of anointing the body of the deceased, and have apotropaic virtues, occur elsewhere with the same poet; see M. MARCOVICH (1988: 89), who also traced echoes from Ovid., *Met*., X, 307–310 and Mart., XI, 54, 1–3 for the specific perfumes. They are (*Alc. Barc*., 111–116): frankincense (*tura*), saffron-essence (*crocum*), balsam-gum (*balsama virga*), amomum (*amomum*), and cinnamon-twigs (*cinnama ramis*).

77 This epithet comes in total antithesis with the *maestus* (*Alc. Barc*., 21) that characterizes Admetus. The two epithets appear, respectively, near the beginning and the end of the poem.

78 See the impressive list of *similia* at M. MARCOVICH (1988: 39).

the husband[79] (122 *Dulcissime coniux*), which is another *clausula* in epigraphic poetry[80] and finally the eternal sleep which covers her limbs.

An innovation lies in the reference to three chthonic deities,[81] who will deprive Alcestis of her daylight: Hora (117), Mors (123), copying Euripides' Thanatos[82] and an anonymous Infernus Deus (124), probably Dis. Alcestis herself was often identified with Persephone as a minor chthonic divinity (Admetus being a doublet of Hades/Dis).[83] The fact that she was

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79 See also F. LECHI (1984: 18–28), who thinks that the last two verses of the play are not a monologue but are addressed to Admetus, with, as a model, Virg., *Aen*., XI, 435 and Sil. Ital., 638–640.

80 *CLE* 542, 4; 1138, 1; 1339, 1 etc., a formula occurring also in Virgil and *Alcesta*; see M. MARCOVICH (1988: 94). Especially for the famous Mailänder epigram (*CLE* 1436, 3), which has many similarities with *Alcestis Barcinonensis*, see W. D. LEBEK's (1987: 43–4) analysis, with the essential difference that the epigram has a Christian content and *Alcestis Barcinonensis* a pagan one. H. ZEHNACKER (1998: 367), wonders, though, whether, in an officially Christian Empire and in a society undergoing Christianisation, Alcestis' sacrifice has a Christian inspiration: by using the pagan myth, the poet could praise Christ's sacrification; cf. the case of Lactantius' *De ave Phoenice*, or – on the contrary – whether the poem comes from an activist paganism, wanting to oppose Christ's figure with the heroes and saviours of the pagan tradition. He concludes that the poem is neutral: the only motif is *pietas*, and the absence of any religious sentimental or eschatology is obvious in her thoughts. Moreover (368), there is no conflict between Greek and Roman values, as this had already been forgotten in the 4th Century. *Eusebeia* /*pietas* is just the morality of the Empire's leader.

81 A fourth one, Porthmeus, a paronomasia for Portitor Charon, has been mentioned before, dressed in black (*Alc. Barc*., 82 *nigro velamine Po<r>t<h>meus*), as also has Somnus, the winged god of sleep who drops his slumber-bringing dew in everybody's eyes (104–105 … *ales / Rore soporifero conpleve<ra>t omnia Somnus*), a god related sometimes also to death, as Thanatos is his brother in the Greek Myhtology. The three Parcae are also present in the poem. They are the Fates (27 *Parc<a>e*; 5, 42, 56, 64, 83 *Fata)* who will break Admetus' life-thread (4 *rumpant… fatalia fila sorores*). The river Acheron which led to the underworld is also mentioned (13). This reflects the ancient beliefs on death, which have nothing to do with the Christian notions of Paradise and Hell.

82 Eur., *Alc*., 123, where he acts as a psychopomp.

83 See DALE, AMY. M. 1954. *Euripides Alcestis*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, xviii. This is a hypothesis made by MÜLLER, KARL. O. 1825, *Prolegomena an einer wissenschaftlichen Mythologie*. Göttingen, 300–306 (Reprint 2010; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). WILAMOWITZ, ULRICH VON. 1886. *Isyllos von Epidauro*. Berlin: Weidmann, 71–73 discusses the identification of Alcestis with Brimo, a Thessalian chthonian deity (moreover, the town of Pherae, where the action takes place, lies in this very region of Greece), herself assimilated to Hecate or Artemis; cf. Ps.-Apollod., *Bibl*., III, 1211; Lycophr., 1176; Hesych., p. 43 Latte. Their tale has a distant memory of a primeval myth of death and regeneration and of the clash of indigenous gods with a newcomer from Asia, Apollo; see PARKER, L. P. E.

praised with popular songs in Athens and Sparta, during the Carneia,[84] is not irrelevant to her religious *hypostasis*. This final scene is the culmination of the dramatic plot. It works as a *catharsis* and offers the perfect ending after a description full of theatricality, in an ambiance of languid tones and loquacious realism.

We would like to make one more observation: we notice a double transition from life to death and from light (represented by the Sun-God, Apollo) to darkness[85] (expressed by the anonymous Infernus Deus), although this death, ironically occurring at dawn, will prolong another life on earth. Moreover, the phoenix, of Ethiopian origin, was related to the cult of the Sun in Egypt. These symbolic elements and symmetrical patterns sustain a metapoetical subtext, having as a unifying theme the protagonists's death and resurrection.[86] In any way this specific myth is a treatise on existence and non existence.[87]

From the above analysis of the poem a quick look is enough to demonstrate that the leitmotif throughout the work is *pietas*,[88] an abstract idea which became an ideal for Romans, worshipped also as a goddess.[89] It is the sense of the sacred duty of a citizen towards his country, of a believer towards his religion and of a family member towards his family. Here, *pi-*

2007. *Euripides Alcestis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, xi. At the end, Admetus was considered the mythical founder of a temple in honor of Apollo at the Euboean town of Eretria.

84 Eur., *Alc*., 445 sq.

85 There is a series of characteristic phrases that describe light, darkness or the transition from the first to the second one: *Alc. Barc*., 8 *atra dies et pallida regna*; 14 *gratamque relinquere lucem*; 35 *sine lumine*; 42 *diem*; 50 *lucis*; 58 *lux rapitur et nox oritur*; 86 *sub nocte*; 104 *Iam vaga sideribus nox pingebatur*; 117 *lucem*.

86 In addition to our remarks, see ARENA, G. A. M. (1993: 7–21).

87 Cf. GIANOTTI, G. 1994. "Alcesti: essere e non essere." In CORSINI, EUGENIO & BARBERI SQUAROTTI, GIORGIO [EDS.]. *Miscellanea di studi offerti a Eugenio Corsini*. Torino: Zamorani, 1994, 57–68, who discusses Euripides, *Alc*., passim; *Alc. Barc.*, 68–69 and the parody of Aristophanes, *Ran*., 1077 sq.

88 The word appears at v. 45, 75 and 103. Alcestis alone possesses this virtue; cf. 75–78, 102; Eur. *Alc*., 180–182; Plat., *Symp*., 179 c. See the analysis by W.-L. LIEBERMANN (1993: 182–183). As a notion, piety has a dominant presence throughout the poem, being thus the dominant motif. Its recurrence strengthens the narrative continuity and progression of the poem. See also MARCOVICH, M 1983. "*Pietas* novootkrivene Alkeste." ("*Pietas* of the new Alcestis.") *Živa Antika*, 33, 119–128.

89 See MANTZILAS, D. 2000. *Les divinités romaines dans l'œuvre poétique d'Ovide*. Diss. University of Paris, 715–716 and 821 (bibliography); Lille: Septentrion/Atelier National de reproduction des thèses, 2002, 35–36 (in the shorter, published version). There is also information for all the Roman deities mentioned in the text and their cult in Rome.

etas is at stake; its lack is called *apsychia* in Euripides:[90] Both parents refuse, and only Alcestis accepts to be sacrificed.[91] She was the proof of the belief that the wife's marital love[92] was stronger than that of blood relatives (even though she and Admetus were in reality cousins).[93] This is in fact the second time she proves her devotion to her family: already in the mythographical tradition she is the only one of Pelias' (the king of Iolkos) daughters who refused to participate in their father's assassination,[94] an element not recalled here, even though it could reinforce the perception of *pietas*.

Following a semi-centonic pattern and procedure, the poet does not limit himself to a simple *mimesis*, just copying verses and pasting them invariably or adjusting them to a complete new context, as happens with centos.[95]

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90 Eur., *Alc*., 642–645, 696–697, 717 comes in contrast with Alcests' *eusebeia* (ibid. 75 et 1030).

91 In Euripides there occur three more heroines who are willing to be sacrificed for the common good: Iphigenia (*Iphigenia in Aulis*), Macaria (*Heracleidae*) and Evadne (*The Suppliants*).

92 G. N. Most (2010: 102–103) presents a new interpretation: according to Greek culture the perfect wife is defined by her willingness to sacrifice herself completely for the sake of her family: "Euripides exaggerates that cultural stereotype to the point of revealing its fragility and ultimate collapse. For it is only by accepting as her own a death which is not hers that Alcestis reveals herself to be the perfect wife, for if she had refused Admetus' request and chosen to survive, she would no longer be perfect. But precisely by sacrificing herself in order to save her husband, she casts him into a despairing sadness from which he sees no possible escape…"

93 See Kakridis, Ioannis-Theophanis. 1986. [ed.]. In Id. *Ελληνική Μυθολογία*. Athens: Εκδοτική Αθηνών, 1986, sv. III, 135–137. A similar case is that of Hector and Andromache, where the latter is willing to sacrifice herself for her husband – Hom. *Il*., 6, 237 sq.

94 Diod. Sic., IV, 52, 2. The episode is remarkably narrated by Ovid, *Met*., VII, 297–349, presenting *venefica* Medea deceiving Pelias' daughters who think that if they killed him, she would give him his youth back. On this subject we presented a paper called "Μαγγανείες και μετασχηματισμοί της Μήδειας (Ovid, *Met*., VI, 1–424)" (Magic acts and transformations of Medea) in the 1st Conference of Post-Graduate students of the Faculty of Letters, University of Ioannina, 15th–16th May, 2010.

95 A *cento* is an experimental genre of a mechanical type: it is actually a "patchwork text" or a "piece of needlework" (since *cento* comes from *kentrôn*, "needle"), which is comprised of unconnected verse units taken (mainly) from Virgil (but also from Homer, Ovid, Pindar, Anacreon and others, taught at school) and pieced together to create narratives that differ from the *protypon* text. These units, forming direct or indirect quotations, adapted in new contexts, serious or parodies (pastiches), even in epitaphs as *clausulae*, may consist of a segment of a hexameter line; an entire line; a line and some section of the following line; and, rarely, of two or three entire lines; see Bright, David. F. 1984. "Theory and Practice in the Vergilian Cento." *ICS*, 9, 79–90, XV and n. 1, who gives the definition, which we have slightly altered; see also ibid. 161, n. 111–122, for sources

Among these centos figures *Alcesta*,[96] fruit of an anonymous poet, a work that has no direct relation with *Alcestis Barcinonensis*; the poet of *Alcesta* simply copies Virgilian verses and echoes previous literature relative to Alcestis, the cento being closer to tradition, without major innovations.[97] Both

and bibliography. Sixteen centos survived (half of them being of unidentified poet), written between ca. 200 and ca. 534 AD. Seven of them have mythological subjects, five have secular and only four have Christian ones. The centonists' work, away from the aesthetic standards of great literature, is treated by some scholars (see p. 156, n. 23 for bibliography) as near to plagiarism, montage and parody, even though they do not commit a conventional imitation. That is the reason why *Alcestis Barcinonensis*, being near to cento, was at first considered as a fruit of marginal poetry.

96 See the new edition by SALANITRO, G. 2007 (b). *Anonimo, Alcesta. Cento Virgilianus*. Roma: Bonanno (cf. PRENNER, ANTONELLA. [REV.]. 2007. "La poesia centonaria. A proposito di una nuova edizione del centone virgiliano *Alcesta*." *Vichiana*, 9, 2, 4a ser., 314–317); cf. also LAMACCHIA, ROSA. 1984. "*Alcesta* (*Anth. Lat*. 15, 102) e *Iudicium Paridis* (*Anth. Lat*. 10, 36)." *Sileno*, 10. 1984. *Studi in onore di Adelmo Barigazzi.* Roma: Ateneo, sv. I, 314; SALANITRO, G. 1992, "Contributi critico-testuali ai centoni Virgiliani." In FLORES, ENRICO [ED.]. *Miscellanea di studi in onore di Armando Salvatore*. Napoli: Università degli studi di Napoli, 1992, 213–219 (Pubblicazioni del Dipartimento fi Filologia classica dell'Università degli studi Federico II, No 7); GIANOTTI, G. 1995. "Note critico-testuali all'Alcesta centonaria (*Anth. Lat*. 15 R²)." *Sileno*, 21, 167–175. For additional bibliography, see the recent contribution by FASSINA, ALESSIA. 2010. "Il ritorno alla "Fama Prior": Didone nel centone "Alcesta" (*Anth. Lat*. 15 R²)." In GIOSEFFI, MASSIMO [ED.], *Uso, riuso e abuso dei testi classici*. Edizioni Universitarie di Lettere Economia Diritto, 2010, 91–103, especially 91, n.1 (for the cento in general) and 92, n. 4 (for *Alcesta*). In LED [serial online]. Available from URL http://www.ledonline.it/ledonline/gioseffi/05-Fassina.pdf [quoted 2011-27-01]

97 S. MCGILL (2005: 88–89), where he compares *Alcesta* and *Alcestis Barcinonensis.* Their most striking similarity is the belief that the heroine will gain eternal life through heroic death and their major difference is the remarriage theme, which is absent in *Alcesta* (203, n. 73). *Alcesta* begins with a three-line *prooemium* delivered by the centonist *in propria persona* on his theme, also making an invocation to Apollo for help. Then, we learn about Admetus' relationship with Apollo, who assists him in yoking wild animals (*Alc*., 1–35) and with the discovery of his imminent death (36–44). A year later, Admetus asks the god if he can escape his fate and learns about the need for a substitute (45–68). He asks Pheres (69–84), when Alcestis hears about the death threat and offers herself (69–113). The text ends with an emotional speech by Alcestis (114–132), a diegetic passage describing her strength and her husband's sadness (133–139), his solemn speech to her (140–156), and Alcestis's death (156–162); for the cento's structure, see p. 88. From a comparison of the two poems, we have noticed common themes, the most important being the heroine's death, away from Euripides' version, but also the friendship between Apollo and Admetus, pastoral references, the presence of infernal gods, *loca communia* on death, afterlife and fate, the description of the symptoms as death approaches, the final cry (addressed here to "Deus"), the overall pompous style. Some of the differences are the absence of Clymene's role, the lack of philosophical arguments, the dramatic dialogue between husband and wife and the time gap in the cento, while action in *Alcestis Barcinonensis*

works have hermeneutic interest for their narrative scope, their secondary nature, their allusion to other texts and their degree of originality through recombinatory means. The parallels they share with Euripides' play invite the reader to view them as successive stages of a common narrative line or as an intervention in the narrative development of a globally known myth. That is why the semantic environment and the narrative overlap between the three texts prove that we are dealing with appropriative, affirmative and interrogative imitation, and not a pastiche.

The anonymous bard introduces some distance from various elements of the myth: according to a variation used by Euripides, Alcestis was saved by Hercules, Admetus' companion during the Argonautic expedition,[98] on his way to kill the mares of Geryon, when he has staying as a host in Admetus' palace.[99] As a *deus ex machina*[100] he entered Alcestis' tomb and wrestled with Thanatos[101] until the god agreed to release Alcestis, and then led her back into the mortal world. According to other sources, she was saved by Persephone,[102] her doublet, as we have already explained. Some more elements of the myth[103]

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lies within 24 hours, just like in tragedy, as we have already mentioned.

98 Euripides had been inspired twice by this mythological circle, in *Medea* and in the lost *Peliades*.

99 The thematic core of Euripides' *Alcestis* resides precisely in the tension between two fundamental spheres of Greek social life: marriage on the one hand and friendship, especially the friendship of a host or guest, on the other; see G. N. MOST (2010: 103–104), who analyses thoroughly the notion and the different levels of friendship (*filia*) towards a friend, a spouse or another member of the family throughout the play. The anonymous bard chooses to omit this element, giving emphasis to *pietas*.

100 This is SALANITRO's (2007a: 71–76) view of Hercules' presence in the play.

101 Phryn. *ap*. Hesych., I, p. 55 Latte. This was an invention by Phrynichus (as also rescue by Hercules), the first one who treated the myth in the theatre (TGF 3f1 c–3 /I, p. 731/, followed by Euripides); cf. a different scene in Virg., *Aen*., IV, 702–704, where Dido cuts a lock of her hair and dedicates it to Dis (a scene taken from Eur., *Alc*., 75–76); Serv., *ad Aen*., IV, 94.

102 Plat., *Banq*., 179c; Ps.-Apollod., *Bibl*., I, 106.

103 For the myth see LESKY, ALBIN. 1925. *Alkestis. Der Mythus und das Drama*. Wien: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 79 sq. (*Akad. Wiss. In Wien. Phil. Hist. Kl. Sitzber.*, 203); SEECK, GUSTAV A. 1985. *Unaristotelische Untersuchungen zu Euripides. Ein motivanalytischer Kommentar zur "Alkestis"*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter; RIEMER, PETER. 1989. *Die Alkestis des Euripides. Untersuchungen zur tragischen Form*. Frankfurt a.M.: Athenäum, 101. Three Greek scholars have written studies making comparisons of the Alcestis' history to ancient and modern Greek folk-tales. They are POLITIS, NICOLAOS. G. 1874 (repr. 1979). *Νεοελληνική Μυθολογία*. (New Greek Mythology) Athens, sv. II, 278–279; MEGAS, GEORGIOS. 1933, "Die Sage von Alkestis." *Archiv für Religionwissenschaft*, 30, 1–22, and IOANNOU, G. 1970. *Το Δημοτικό Τραγούδι. Παραλογές*. (The popular song. Paraloges) Athens: Ερμής,

of Alcestis known by other sources[104] are omitted from *Alcestis Barcinonensis*, starting with the "Märchen-motif" of the contest for the beautiful princess and the hero's victory thanks to divine intervention: having so many suitors that wanted Alcestis' hand Pelias ordered that he who could simultaneously yoke a boar and a lion to a chariot would be the winner.[105] Apollo, having been for nine years Admetus' herdsman during his punishment by the rest of the Gods for having killed Delphyne[106] or the Cyclops, helped him as a recompense for his good treatment or out of love as he had been his lover (*erastes*).[107] On his wedding day, he forgot to sacrifice to Artemis[108] (functioning here as a goddess of marriage), that is why she filled their chamber with snakes and it was only after Apollo's intervention that she was calmed. The god's second intervention occurred when he inebriated the Fates, so that they would accept the substitute human victim. We think that these omissions occur because the anonymous bard wanted to focus on her sacrifice

71–74. The fact that her story was popular and famous is also confirmed by Schol. Eur., *Alc*., 1; cf. HESSELING, DIRK. C. 1914. "Alcestis en de Volkpezie." *Verslagen en Mededeelingen der k. Akademie van Wetenschappen*, 12, 1–32; WEBER, LEO. 1933. "Die Alkestissage." *Rheinisches Museum*, 79, 117 sq. There are 25 versions of the tale found in Greece, South Slavic countries, Hungary, India and north-east Africa; see L. P. E. PARKER (2007: xii–xv), for these stories. See in addition two recent overall descriptions of the myth's progress in time: FERRARO, GIUSEPPE. 2003. *La figura di Alcesti tra antichi e moderni*. Napoli: Simone (Mythoi, 2) and PATTONI, PIA M [ED.]. 2006. *Alcesti. Variazioni sul mito*. Venezia: Marsilio.

104 The two main literary sources of her myth are Ps.-Apollod., *Bibl*., I, 9, 16 and Hyg., *Fab*., 50 and 51l. There are further references in Hom., *Il*., II, 7, 5; Esch., *Eum*., 723 sq.; *Suppl*., 214; Akousilaos, *FGH* 2f19; P. Oxy 2495, 16, col. ii; Apoll. Rhod., *Arg*., I, 49 sq.; Zenob., I, 18; Praxill., PMG 749 *ap*. Aristoph., *Vesp*., 1238 and other minor cases. After Euripides, who followed in 438 BC, she is mentioned in Plat., *Banq*., 179 b–d, where she is praised for her sacrifice as an example of love (cf. also Ovid., *Pont*., III, 1, 105 and maybe also *Tr*., V, 14, 37) and in comedies Antiphanes (*PGG* ii, Antiph. Testimonia 1), *Alcestis* (4 verses remain); Aristomenes (PGG ii, Arist., Testimonia I and *5), *Admetus*; Theopompus (*PGG* vii, p. 709), *Admetus*; cf. L. P. E. PARKER (2007: xv-xix) for all the references found in Greek Literature. Phormus had written a lost *Admetus* (cf. Suid., s. v. *Φόρμος*) as also Sophocles had done; cf. *TGF* IV, fr. 881; maybe also 770, 911, 953. In Rome we have references in Val.-Max., IV, 6, 1; Stat., *Silv*., III, 3, 192-4; V, 3, 272; *Theb*., V, 435; V, 389-549; Lact. Placid., *in Stat Theb. Commentum*, I, p. 413 Sweeney.

105 Cf. the similar cases of Jason and Medea, Melanion and Atalanta etc.

106 Delphyne was the snake guardian of the Castalia source in Delphi; cf. Anaxandridas, *FGrHist* 404, F 5.

107 Rhianos, *frg*. 10 Powell; Soph., *frg*. 851 Radt**;** cf. HORNBLOWER, SIMON – SPAWFORTH, ANTONY [EDS.]. 2003. *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 52, s. v. "Alcestis."

108 This part of the myth is clearly a later intervention; see I.-TH. KAKRIDIS (1986: 136).

in contrast to the parents' indifference, while in parallel glossing over less flattering details of the myth.

Until now there has been no explanation why the anonymous poet uses as a source for inspiration – on the one hand – only one Greek text[109] (with the exception of some inevitable *similia* which are explained by the use of *koinoi topoi*), and – on the other hand – a string of Latin texts. We believe that he follows a typical *imitatio* and *aemulatio* (imitation and aemulation) procedure:[110] not only does he want to imitate his literary model, which is Euripides but, mainly, he wants to surpass him, despite his allegiance to and acknowledgement of it. That is why for his literary associations he "recruits" the best of the best, the elite of Roman writers, by using quotes from them, in order to prove that, in confrontation, his *Alcestis* is better than that of Euripides', seeing the Greek play in a critical way and partially rejecting it. This critical commentary on his protypon, is a fruitful intertextual discourse and not a parody or a satire of it. Their inter-connectedness is obvious: being a kind of hypotext, *Alcestis Barcinonensis* changes and expands the content of Euripide's *Alcestis*, following the concept of hypertextuality.

It is worth recalling that *Alcestis* is not only the earliest play that has survived from the Greek dramaturgist, but it is considered as a peculiar one, having fourth place in the tetralogy (with plays totally irrelevant to one other), a place usually reserved for a satirical drama and not for a tragedy, making it unique among the extant works of any tragic poet. Its "happy end", though, is not unique: this also occurs in the case in *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Ion* and *Helen*, three tragedies for the character of which much ink has been spilled.

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109 See CHR. SCHÄUBLIN (1984: 176 sq.), G. N. MOST (2010: 99–112), CHR. MÜLLER – GOLDINGEN (2004; 135–145) and W.-L. LIEBERMANN (1993: 173–195), for a comparison between *Alcestis Barcinonensis* and the Euripidian play. See especially W.-L. LIEBERMANN (1993: 176–178, n. 12 and 16), for a report on scholarship concerning characters and interpretations; cf. also LÉVRIER, JEAN-LUC. 1991. "De la rhétorique de la situation au topique de la situation: L'exemple d'Alceste." *Pallas*, 37, 61–77, an analysis on Euripides' version, where the main notion is *dikaion*, "justice", "law" (and not *pietas* as in *Alcestis Barcinonensis*, we would like to add). Moreover, he explains how realism, lyric, rhetoric and psychological analysis have impregnated the play. We have omitted further bibliography on Euripides' *Alcestis*, which offers various theories concerning its interpretations, but should belong more to another, detailed comparative study of the two texts. Some common themes make up Admetus' and Pheres' *Agon* (with dicanic elements), Alcestis' oral will and effigy; the will of the gods which comes in contrast to the Fates (cf. the case of Aeneas).

110 See also SALANITRO's (2007a: 71–76) observations.

The anonymous bard then does not allow his miniature tragedy[111] to "slide" into being a dramedy (our term), a playing tragedy, an "almost" tragedy, a hilaro-tragedy, a tragic comedy, a pseudotragedy, or a pro-satirical play,[112] as Euripides' theatrical *Alcestis* is described as being, due to its generic heterogeneity.[113] Its ambiguous tragicomic tone, which could be "cheerfully

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111 SCHETTER, WILLY. 1986. "Zu den Spracherangaben in den Papyri Barcinonenses des Alkestis Gedicht." *Hermes*, 114, 127–128, p. 127 = ID. 1994. *Kaiserzeit und Spätantike, Kleine Schriften 1957–1992*. Stuttgart: Steiner, 182–183, uses a similar term to ours: "Rezitationsdrama en miniature" with "Theatralische Wirkung." CHR. SCHÄUBLIN (1984: 175) first observed that *Alcestis Barcinonensis* is near the limits of the dramatic genre, an opinion that H. ZEHNACKER (1998: 362), rejects completely, as he sees no dramatic destination in the poem, only a moral one. For *Alcestis Barcinonensis* as a "miniatura" of the Euripidian play, see also G. GIANOTTI (1991: 144-5), who also observes two similar cases, the centonic *Medea* attributed to Hosidius Geta (462 hexameters and half-hexameters), and an anonymous poem (*PSI* 1303-3rd Century AD, 23 verses in iambic trimeter), inspired by Euripides' *Phoenissae*. They both elaborate in a new, synoptic, way bigger theatrical plays. K. SMOLAK (1993: 290) speaks of a pseudo-dramatic treatment, similar to that of the Medieval "Elegiac comedies." W.-L. LIEBERMANN (1993: 173) underlines the dramatic-dialogic formation of the poem concerning Alcestis' death decision. We add that the emotions of pity, fear and *catharsis* that characterise tragedy are strongly present in *Alcestis Barcinonensis*. Another similar conception is that of miniature epic poetry, the most famous case being that of *Ilias Latina*; see various articles by POLYMERAKIS, FOTIOS (f. ex. *Dodone: Philologia*, 31, 2002, 137–163; 32, 2003, 221–248; 34, 2005, 113–156; *Hellenica*, 54, 2004, 179–210; 60, 2011, 325–341) and GASTI, HELEN (f. ex. *Hellenica*, 57, 2007, 165–168; 58, 2008, 7–29).

112 For this subject see A. M. DALE (1954: xviii); SUTTON, DANA. F. 1973. "Satyric Elements in the *Alcestis*." *Rivista di Studi Classici*, 21, 384–391; L. P. E. PARKER (2007: xix–xxiv), who summons up all the arguments *pro* and *contra* the satiric character of the play and xxvi sq. for modern critics and approaches on this subject. For more bibliography, see G. GIANOTTI (1991: 141, n. 49). It is true that only some scenes follow the tragic patterns. Most of them sound like parodies. But there is neither a pro-satiric genre in Antiquity nor are we sure that the presence of a satiric (or satyric, keeping the ancient Greek orthography, derived from "satyr") drama as a fourth play in the tetralogy was obligatory. Perhaps the early date of the play explains the fact that the tragedy genre was not yet completely formed, as we know, from the rest of the theatrical production. This explains also why the extant titles of satiric Euripidian dramas do not cover the whole range of his tetralogies; they are far fewer in number.

113 See G. N. MOST's (2010: 100–101) observations about "a drama *sui generis*, a generic hybrid into whose composition not only the satiric play enters but also various other literary genres: the folk tale, with the personified character of Death himself who arrives in person at the beginning, bearing his typical attributes, and who, it will turn out at the end, can be fought and even conquered in a wrestling match (at least by Heracles); and of course traditional Greek tragedy as well, with its familiar themes of struggle, self-sacrifice, and heroism, and its conventional structural elements such as divine prologue, dialogue, speech, messenger's speech, *agon*, and so on. Thus,

romantic" or "bitterly ironic", provoked negative comments,[114] even from the writer of the ancient hypothesis.[115] The anonymous bard, who follows the most pessimistic variation of the myth, just wants his oeuvre to be flawless, and not "problematic", as the Greek one was, ending it where the original myth marked its conclusion, i. e. with the protagonist's death, leaving out her resurrection and,[116] especially, the figure of Hercules who was often connected to satirical plays.[117] Thus, he moves towards the "catastrophic final",[118] explicitly avoiding the problematic (for a tragedy) theme of Alcestis' rebirth (which was nevertheless a favorite in iconography).[119]

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although there can be no doubt that in the final analysis *Alcestis* is indeed a tragedy, it is a uniquely multi-generic one among the surviving productions of Fifth Century Attic theatre". The same scholar points out that "*Alcestis* is characterized compositionally by a radically bipartite structure", and that "various kinds of bipartition are found in many of Euripides' tragedies, for example *Medea*, *Hecuba*, and *Orestes* (and *Andromache*, we would like to add), the plot can easily be divided into a first half in which the main characters suffer terrible misfortunes and provoke our outrage and sympathy for their plight, and then a second half in which they go on to avenge themselves upon their tormentors so cruelly that we end up feeling less compassion for them and more for their victims. After this point, the rest of the *Alcestis* is no longer a tragedy of loss but instead a comedy of restitution, which seems to celebrate the apparently full restoration of Alcestis' life."

114 See Beye, Charles. R. 1959. "Alcestis and her critics." *Greek Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 2, 109–127, on how the play mingles tragic and comic elements, making it difficult to be categorized.

115 He calls it "σατυρικώτερον".

116 He also omits some more people in the Euripidian play, such as the Chorus of old men, the Maidservant, the Manservant, and Eumelus, one of the couple's children (although he mentions them as potential victims; Eur., *Alc*., 19–20).

117 He is present in most of the satirical plays of Euripides, being the most popular character of this genre, getting always a "grotesque" description, which completely shatters the image of the hero and semi-god; cf. Galinsky, Karl. G. 1972. *The Heracles Theme: the Adaptations of a Hero in Literature from Homer to the Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Blackwell, Chapter III. *The Tragic Hero*; Chapter IV. *The Comic Hero*, for this contrast. We also know titles as *Hercules at Taenarum* by Sophocles, *Omphale* by Ion of Chios, *Busiris* by Epicharmus, and also titles from comedies (mainly from Aristophanes and Cratinus) and farces. In Euripides' *Alcestis* he is introduced because he belongs to both worlds, being a Märchen hero and an archetypal "man of nature", who reacts to over-civilization, but is at the same time relevant to real life. He is Admetus' foil and gives emphasis to his psychological and ethical conditions, the play being a transposition of a fairytale into reality, and its starting point being not Alcestis' action itself but its consequences for Admetus; see the scholar's thorough analysis, 66 sq.

118 See G. Gianotti'S (1991: 144) remarks.

119 Schmidt, Margot**.** 1981. *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*. Zürich – München: Artemis, sv. I, 1, 533–544, s. v. "Alkestis", with rich bibliography.

Due to his imagination and inventiveness he introduces for the reader new and surprisingly innovative elements and motifs, which never occurred before. Whilst adhering to the plot of the Alcestis' myth, which he enriches and modifies,[120] he uses striking "chips", absorbing cultural elements borrowed from other writers, even obscure, obsolete and less frequent myths and motifs.[121] His sources of inspiration are Virgil, Horace, Properce, Ovid, Silius Italicus, Lucan, Statius, Modestinus,[122] and many others.[123] But instead of doing a simple patchwork (as the centonist of *Alcesta* did), reducing his work to marginal poetry, the bard-reader achieves refiguration, appropriation and recontextualization of material from inside and outside the Hellenic and Roman world.[124] He adapts and translates the Alcestis' legend by the addition of new features so as to cohere with his own articulation of a new, rather alternative vision and account of the myth. In other words, we observe acquiescence and dissent, assimilation and independence in a new cultural environment, that of the anonymous bard.

120 H. ZEHNACKER (1998: 368–369).

121 See also M. MARCOVICH (1988: 10–11).

122 His case is a special one: M. MARCOVICH (1988: 99–100) analyses the five elements that *Alcestis Barcinonensis* shares with a Modestinus' epigram of eleven verses, dating either to the early fourth century, according to NORDEN, EDUARD. 1915. *Die antike Kunstprosa*. Leipzig – Berlin: Teubner, 840, n. 1; reprint Stuttgart – Leipzig: Teubner, 1995 or to the late third century AD, according to KROLL WILHELM. In TEUFFEL, WILHELM S. – KROLL, WILHELM – SKUTSCH, FRANZ. 1916-6th edition (1870). *Geschichte der römischen Literatur*. Leipzig: Teubner, sv. III, 207, about the sleeping Eros (*Anth. Lat*., I, 1 No 273 Riese = 267 Shackleton Bailey): a) a catalogue of tragic heroines (ten in Mod., 5–10, five in *Alc. Barc*., 66 sq.), b) a rhyme-chain (seven verses in the epigram, 5–11, four here, 60–63), c) the expression *ales somnus* (Mod., 304; *Alc. Barc*., 104–105), d) The motif according to which the ghosts of the heroines are allowed to leave the underworld (Mod., 3–4; *Alc*. *Barc*., 90), and e) the similar expressions *pallens ros* (Mod., 2) and *pallida balsama* (*Alc*. *Barc*., 113), for two liquid substances.

123 F. ex. Lucretius, Martianus Capella, Macrobius, Iuvenalis, Martialis, Catullus, Seneca (both philosophical essays and tragedies), Plinius, Lucilius Junior, Tibullus, *Culex*. Claudianus, Dracontius, Prudentius, Tacitus, Lactantius, Manilius, Cicero, Avienus, Tatianus, *Epicedion Drusi*, *Laus Pisonis*. Thus, the list of *similia* is extremely rich and coming from various literary genres. For exhaustive details on both the verses he borrowed (unchanged or slightly modified) and the themes he was inspired by, see M. MARCOVICH's rich commentary (1998: 40–101). He also demonstrates (1998: 103) that 43 out of 124 verse-end borrowings occur elsewhere.

124 See, *contra*, G. N. MOST (2010: 99), who thinks that all adapters of her myth moved away from the complexities and ironies of the Euripidian plot which transmitted her, and that they adduce her story within the context of their own compositions, rather simplistically, as a straightforward paradigm for noble self-sacrifice. In other words, he does not see in them any effort towards innovation.

He uses a *narratio* based on the change of interlocutors (4/5 of the poem is in direct speech),[125] with his discrete intervention (21–25, 43–45, 103–119) in order to connect or even cement[126] the other parts. Using a mélange of grace and awkwardness, gravity and fine irony, the poets opposes the parent's egoism with the wife's conjugal devotion.[127] If we recall Diomedes' theory on the *tria genera*,[128] *Alcestis Barcinonensis* clearly belongs to the mixed poetic genre, where both the poet and interlocutors speak.

What we have is a perfect example of creative and productive multifaceted reception,[129] material transmission, intertextual circularity[130] and cross-reference, reflexivity and genre mixture, which was more or less a characteristic of the era's syncretism: Greek and Roman tragedy, Virgilian *cento*, Propertian elegy, Alexandrine *epyllion*, rhetorical argumentative speeches, religious invocations, folk tales, sepulchral poetry and epigrams, philosophical *topoi*, key vocabulary and linguistic tropes of consolation, Stoic and Epicurian doctrines, maybe even pantomime. The poet also incorporates formulas, themes, ideas, diction, motives and verses from various poets, transforming the original semantics of works which influenced him into new textual alterations and transplanting them into a new literary form (*ethopoeia*), an ancestor to the medieval and post-Latin romances, because between his intentions surely reside admiration and reconciliation but also rupture and condemnation of previous literature. The bard both replicates

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125 See G. GIANOTTI (1991: 144), who makes various remarks on this subject.

126 G. LIEBERMANN (1998: 219).

127 It is the same scholar's remark (1998: 219). A moral question that arises from the Euripidian play is whether an otherwise venerable (29 *sancte*) parent should sacrifice himself for the benefit of his child, a remark kindly made to us by professor Dagmar Bartoňková during the Conference called "Literary Crossroads", International Conference on Classical and Byzantine Literature. Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Centre for Interdisciplinary Research into Ancient Languages and Early Stages of Modern Languages-Department of Classical Studies, Brno, 19–22 September 2010, where a part of this article was presented as a paper. This delicate theme is also dealt here, but we have the impression that in *Alcestis Barcinonensis* the focus is on the wife and her behaviour. It is more about the wife's position and pious attitude towards her husband and less about parental love.

128 Diomedes grammaticus, *GL* I 482–1483 Keil, who refers to Plat., *Resp*., 392c–394c. According to him there are three poetic genres: a) *dramaticon est uel actitae interlocutione, ut se habent tragicae et comicae fabulae*; b) *exegeticon est uel enarratiuum, in quo poeta ipse loquitur sine ullius personae interlocutione*…; c) *κοινόν uel commune, in quo poeta ipse loquitur et personae loquentes introducuntur*; see also W. SCHETTER's (1986: 128) analysis.

129 Cf. W.-L. LIEBERMANN (1993: 190).

130 G. GIANOTTI (1991: 143).

and distances himself from the recollections of his counterparts. The textual proximity of some units contrasts with the radical restructuring of other units.

Following all the aesthetic standards and canons of earlier Latin literature, the osmosis and the mélange of the poem are completed with a series of semiotics, such as allegories, metaphors, alliterations and other stylistic devices (which stress the *ethos* and *pathos* of Alcestis),[131] rhymes in the middle of verses, macrotextual and microtextual allusions (cumulative and isolating depending on the context) and themes such as *pietas*, life and death, female beauty, self-sacrifice, substitute fertile wife, the survival of a dead person by his relatives. The Phoenix regeneration myth, especially, and the mention of funeral spices and perfumes can be considered as a manifestation of reflections of contemporary literary themes based on exotic erudition, reinforcing the theory that the poem was probably written in Egypt.[132] This theory cannot easily be proved, due to Rome's cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism.[133]

Drawing his inspiration from various similar heroines,[134] he attributes to a Greek woman the ultimate virtue of the Roman matrons, as shown in

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131 M. MARCOVICH (1988: 13-4).

132 See ibid. (1988: 101), who supports the view that the poet wanted to bring his heroine as close to his own audience as possible by using elements familiar to them. H. ZEHNACKER (1998: 368) rejects this opinion, as perfumes came from different regions. He thinks that the poem was written in a large city located in the East, where knowledge of Greek was more widespread than in the West. See now MULLIGAN, BRET. 2007. "The poet from Egypt? Reconsidering Claudian's Eastern Origin." *Philologus*, 151, 2 285–310, who concludes (n. 63) that versi 112–116 of the poem suggest an Eastern origin, but not necessarily an Egyptian one; cf. MICHALOPOULOS, HARILAOS, "*Orbis in Urbe*: τα εμπορικά προϊόντα στη ρωμαϊκή ελεγεία ως ένδειξη της πολυπολιτισμικής πραγματικότητας της αυγούστειας Ρώμης. Η περίπτωση των αρωμάτων της Ανατολής στον Τίβουλλο." ("*Orbis in Urbe*: commercial products in Roman elegy as indication of Rome's multicultural reality under Augustus. The case of perfumes from the East in Tibullus.") *Proceedings of the VIII Panhellenic Conference of Latin Studies, Komotini,* 2–5 May, 2007 (forthcoming), who has shown how merchants had brought products to Rome from exotic places such as Persia, Assyria, Armenia, Arabia, and – of course – Egypt. Thus, it is not easy to clarify the specific origin of each and every perfume.

133 See EDWARDS, CATHARINE & WOOLF, GREG [EDS.]. 2003. *Rome the Cosmopolis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, especially Chapter 9 by VOUT, CAROLINE "Embracing Egypt", 177–202 (see also PAPAIOANNOU, SOPHIA [REV.] 2004. *Classical Bulletin*, 80, 117–122).

134 Properce's Cornelia (IV, 11) and Cynthia (IV, 7), Virgil's Dido (*Aen*., IV, passim), Ovid's Laodamia (*Her*., 13, 157 sq), "Laudatio Turiae" (passim), Silius Italicus' Tarpeia (*Pun*., V, 636–639), a series of defunct women from sepulchral poetry (*CLE*,

many literary and epigraphic texts,[135] mainly the *Laudationes mulierum*, to which attention has never been drawn until now. There are important similarities mainly with the so-called "Laudatio Turiae": this anonymous lady, conventionally called "Turia", courageously helped her husband when he faced many difficulties during the proscriptions, being willing to sacrifice herself to save him. She also gave *philosophica praescripta* of consolation and specific instructions for after her death to both her husband and her slaves, including the allocation of her property and fortune in her will and her wish for her husband to find a new wife,[136] as long as he continued to protect her memory and good reputation. All these actions gave her *hysterophemia*.

In both texts we find an inversion of the traditional gender roles: here Admetus, "The Invincible", "The Insuperable", becomes a scared little human being in the face of death, while Alcestis, "The Strong", "The Brave", in this role shifting or blurring the identities of the characters, proves to be the real dauntless character, in the same way that "Turia" escaped from being a simple housewife and became a heroine. Both ladies (as also Murdia, Matidia and Aconia Fabia Paulina from the other *Laudationes*, Allia Potestas from a parody of the gender and many women whose names appear on funerary inscriptions)[137] possess a number of common stereotypical virtues (honesty of character, modesty, loyalty and obedience to the husband, love

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passim) and Euripides' Alcestis (Eur., *Alc*., passim) as well. There are also similarities with virtuous ladies from Roman history, such as Tanaquil or Theano; v. W.-L. LIEBERMANN (1993: 189–190).

135 An exceptional case is that of Atilia Pomptilla, spouse of C. Cassius Philippus, whose funeral monument was found in Cagliari in the "Grotta delle vipere". Fourteen epigraphs were also found *in loco* (*CLE* 1551 A-G), which compare the deceased lady with Alcestis; cf. TAMBRONI, F. 1935. "Un Alcesti romana." *Romana Gens*, 2–3, and also a recent study by CUGUSI, PAOLO. 2002. "*Carmina Latina Epigraphica* e letteratura: l' *heroon* di Atilia Pomtilla tra l' *Alcesti* di Euripide e l'Alcesti Barcinonense." In HOYO GALLEJA, JAVIER. DEL – GÓMEZ PALLARÈS, JOAN. *"Asta ac pellege." 50 años de la publicación de "Inscripciones hispanas en verso de S.* Mariner**"**, Madrid: Signifer Libros, 2002, 125–142, who tries to find the relationship between the two texts and these inscriptions, concluding that there was a scholar-rhetoric vulgate around Alcestis' myth that gives a taste of the continuity between literature and para-literature.

136 Probably the anonymous writer of the laudation had in mind Properce's *regina elegiarum* (IV, 11) as well.

137 We have already mentioned our paper titled "The *Laudationes Mulierum* as a Source for the Roman Family" where we tried to analyze all these texts revealing how extraordinary ladies managed at the same time to be good in all five traditional roles (wives, mothers, daughters, sisters and friends).

and devotion to family and relatives, generosity, ingenuity, courage, kindness, sobriety of attire and others).[138]

Above all virtues in the system of Roman axiology, which differs from the Greek one, stands the *pietas* of Alcestis, which is expressed not only towards her family, as modern commentators have noted but also to her country, since Admetus is the king of Pherae; therefore her death ensures that he will continue his reign. It is also piety towards the gods, since the prolongation of Admetus' life is their will. Therefore, she has fulfilled her duty as a matron (*matrona*),[139] as a believer (*fidelis*) and as a wife (*sponsa*) and mother (*mater*). It is noteworthy that the first three lines of the poem form an *acrostichis*, which is no other than the adjective *PIA* (= pious),[140] showing from the very beginning her moral eminence. As for the anonymous poet, we think that he managed to transform a Greek mythical woman into a true Roman matron, using a Romanisation procedure, who conforms to Roman mentality and the *mos maiorum*. By combining and homogenising fairytale and realistic/physical elements, the poet manages to stylize, valorise, and idealise his drama figures.[141]

A simple school exercise?[142] Certainly not. No matter how gifted a schoolboy could be it is impossible for him to compose such a masterpiece, drifting apart from strict mimetic strategies, offering improvisations, reinvention and new mythic variations on a well known legend, goals that would have been difficult for a common student to achieve.[143] This poem

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138 On the theme of female beauty in late Latin poems (*Alcestis Barcinonensis* also figuring among them), which is always related to this group of virtues, see MALICK-PRUNIER, SOPHIE 2008. *Le corps feminine et ses representations poétiques dans la latinité tardive*. Diss. University of Paris, 5 sq. For earlier texts, see NICOLAIDES, TASOS. 1994. *Puella Formosa*. Athens: Stigmi. We have to note though that there is no reference to the heroine's beauty in the *Alcestis Barcinonensis*, being thus an exception.

139 Cf. H. ZEHNACKER (1998: 367), who points out that Alcestis moved away from Pheres' *genus tenue* and that Clymene's *genus grande*, practices the *genus medium*, which expresses to perfection the greatness of consensual sacrifice and self-control, worthy of a matron.

140 An observation made by W. D. LEBEK (1989: 19–26).

141 See W.-L. LIEBERMANN (1993: 193).

142 It is K. SMOLAK's (1993: 290) opinion. He thinks that the anonymous poet even used a dictionary of synonyms, in order to use four verbs meaning "die" (*Alc. Barc*., 60–63 *abisse*, *obisse*, *perisse*, *subisse*, placed in a *homoioteleuton*). H. ZEHNACKER (1998: 369), rejecting him, proposed that it is a way of ridiculing Clymene. Smolak nevertheless recognizes that, thanks to his personal *exornatio*, the poet manages to express a clear idea that *pietas* can lead to posthumous glory.

143 We would like to point out that a similar procedure, but to a lesser scale, appears

presents a blend of intertwined themes from various literary genres, an approach to elements and an interconnection so complex, that it reveals a careful reader who is very familiar with both major and minor literature, older and contemporary, who manages to present something classical and fresh at the same time. Later on, the myth reappears in a string of texts written in Latin,[144] proving its constant popularity. We do not know whether they have resonances from *Alcestis Barcinonensis*. This issue needs further research.

in the *Carmina Burana*, where the anonymous Goliardi created poems based on earlier Greek and Latin poetry, whose semantics reflect both classical tradition and various socio-political and cultural aspects of Medieval life, combining a series of pagan elements, despite the fact that they were living in a strict Christian society; see MANTZILAS, D. 2007–2008. "*Σχόλια στο Carmen Buranum* 75. *Επιρροές, Μοτίβα, Λέξεις και Εικόνες*." (Commentary on Carmen Buranum 75. Influences, Motifs, Words and Images) *Dodone: Philologia*, 36, 97–132.

144 Fulgentius, Mythographus Vaticanus, Anonymous, *De nummo*, Baldericus Burgulianus, Marbodus Redonensis, and Boccaccius. For later reception, see L. P. E. PARKER (2007: xxv–xxxvi), who seems to ignore both *Alcestis Barcinonensis* and *Alcesta* (p. xxiv. "From Roman poetry, no version of the story of Alcestis survives"!).