BENAISSA (A.) **Dionysius. The Epic Fragments**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Pp. xiii + 352. £90. 9781107178977.

Amin Benaissa has produced a superb critical edition with translation and commentary of the fragments of Dionysius, an epic poet of uncertain date (post AD 79 is tentatively suggested), author of the *Bassarica* (the Bassarids were a group of Bacchae who sided with Dionysus in the war against Deriades), and a *Gigantias*, concerning a gigantomachy and its prehistory, apparently centring on Heracles’ role in the war between the Dorian king Aigimios and the Lapiths.

The book contains a rich and informative introduction, where Benaissa examines with painstaking detail the ancient reception of Dionysius (1-13), the relationship of the *Bassarica* with Nonnus’ *Dionysiaca* (13-31), the literary background of the legend of Dionysus in India (31-50), Dionysius’ language and characteristics of its epic style (50-58), metrics (58-75), and manuscripts (75-80). The fragments of the *Bassarica* come with a full-scale commentary (147-224), whereas those of the *Gigantias* – which are preserved in a much more mutilated state – appear with shorter explanatory notes in a long appendix (225-89).

A new edition of the fragments of Dionysius was made necessary by the publication in 2011 by Benaissa himself of a novel fragment of Dionysius, *P.Oxy.* 5103, which was reunited with a previously unattributed fragment written in the same hand from the Oxyrhynchus collection, *P.Oxy.* 2818. The discovery gave us thirty more lines of Dionysius, which are absent from the previous editions by Livrea (Rome 1973) and Heitsch (Göttingen 19632). The new Oxyrhynchus fragments are now added to a corpus already featuring two papyri, one from the British Library (*P.Lond. Lit.* 40) and one from the Oxford collection (*P.Oxy.* 2815). These are republished here in a much-ameliorated form.

Benaissa’s re-edition of the papyrus fragments (no. 33-41) contains both a papyrological and a critical apparatus, including suggestions by authorities in the field such as W.B. Henry and G.B. D’Alessio. Benaissa gives a greatly improved text, based on a fresh examination of the papyri, particularly *P.Lond. Lit.* 40. He deserves praise for deciphering segments of papyrus text which must have seemed unintelligible to previous editors (and indeed appeared as such to me on the online image of the British Library website). Preparatory work on *P.Lond. Lit.* 40, including numerous notable new readings, were already published by Benaissa in a 2013 article (‘P.Lond. Lit. 40 Revisited: New Readings in Dionysius’ *Bassarica*’, *APF* 59.2, 280-97). But there are further important improvements here, most of which are decisive and some of which remarkable, see, for example, 33v.45-46, where a syntactically difficult passage is normalized thanks to a minor correction by Henry.

Of the *Bassarica*, nearly all of the non-papyrus fragments (1-32) come from Stephanus of Byzantium and feature verses or contextual information from books III, IV, and XIV. Most come in fact from Book III, which contained catalogues of the allies of Dionysus from the Sicilian, Cyprian, Lydian, Phrygian, Macedonian, and Thracian contingents (fr. 1-10), and of Deriades (12-28\*). Several of these are marked as doubtful and are notably absent from previous editions (fragments 4, 8, 21, 24, 32). Criteria for their inclusion seem sensible, for example: ‘toponyms or ethnics associated with Dionysus’ Indian campaign in Stephanus […] or shared exclusively between Stephanus and Nonnus […] should be assumed to derive from Dionysius’ (160). Benaissa’s novel correction of the transmitted text in fr. 18.1 ἠδ’ οἳ is worth noting.

Editorial choices are sound and consistent, and I have very little to offer other than the following points of detail. In fr. 11, a line on the Thracian Odones, part of the Dionysian contingent, Benaissa is rightly suspicious of the transmitted ἐγχεϲίπεπλοι (‘covered in spears’); could ἐρνεϲίπεπλοι (‘clad in foliage’), mentioned in the discussion on page 155, be considered here, given it is said of Dionysus himself in Orph. *H.* 30.5? At 34v.5 ] α̣ὐτὰρ ἔπειτα̣ ̣[ ̣ ̣ ̣] ̣αϲ εἴρ̣υον, I believe we can read and supply θ̣[υη]λ̣ὰϲ (‘but then they were tearing apart the sacrificial victims’, i.e. their meat), *cf.* Orph. *L.* 743 ἔνθαδ’ ἔπειτα θυηλὰϲ, in the same *sedes.* Finally, I wonder whether fr. 41v, where a humble host seems to have entertained Dionysus, bears any relation to the theoxeny scene in the *adespoton* *P.Oxy.* 1794 (both are strongly indebted to the *Hecale* and both contain speeches delivered in the first person).

In general, I would have personally opted for a more conservative approach to supplements of uncertain or missing words, as, for instance, at fr. 41v.1, where West’s κύαμοι ζ[οφοειδέεϲ (in A.S. Hollis, *Ovid. Metamorphoses. Book VIII*, Oxford 1970, 151), however brilliant, does not seem inevitable. At 33v.45 αἰ γὰρ δὴ, a grave accent on αἰ is required. For the problematic accentuation of 33v.41 κακοδήνει and κακομηδήϲ, the latter variously accented in the commentary, see H.W. Chandler, *Practical Introduction to Greek Accentuation* (Oxford 18812) 199-200.

These quibbles aside, this edition is an excellent piece of scholarship, which will instantly become a point of reference for scholars investigating the still much understudied (and undervalued) world of Imperial Greek poetry. I would like to commend, in particular, the incredibly detailed metrical profile of Dionysius offered in the introduction, which will no doubt serve both students and scholars of hexameter poetry for many years to come.

Marco Perale

*University of Liverpool*

perale@liverpool.ac.uk