

FOR GERALD ELSE

Hippolytus and the Dating of *Oedipus Tyrannus*

Rick M. Newton

IN 1896 Tadeusz Zieliński in his essay on the *Trachiniae* suggested that Euripides' *Hippolytus* of 428 B.C. provides a *terminus ante quem* for Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*.¹ He supported this claim by citing four parallel passages from each play and stating (but without showing how he reached his conclusion) that Euripides is the imitator. Despite the potential significance of Zieliński's suggestion, no subsequent attempt to date the Sophoclean masterpiece has investigated this idea. Although critics have dated the play as early as 456/5 (Bruhn) and as late as 411 (Perotta), the growing tendency in this century has been to place the *Tyrannus* in the first half of the 420's. The most frequently suggested *terminus post quem* is 430, the date of the outbreak of the Athenian plague, taken by many, though not all, as Sophocles' source for the Theban plague described in the opening scene. For the lower *terminus* many have cited line 27 of Aristophanes' *Acharnians* (425 B.C.), where Dicaeopolis' cry ὦ πόλις πόλις is interpreted as an echo of Oedipus' identical cry in line 629 of his play. Since Zieliński's claim would advance the lower *terminus* by three years, it is worthwhile to examine his evidence and determine whether he is correct. For if it can be demonstrated that Euripides is indeed alluding to Sophocles, and if it is agreed that the literary Theban plague is modeled after the historical Athenian one, then we can state with a certain degree of security that Sophocles' tragedy was first produced in 429.²

¹ "Excursus zu den *Trachinierinnen*," *Philologus* 55 (1896) 523 (= Th. Zieliński, *Iresione I* [Lvov 1931] 307). I am indebted to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs of Kent State University for a grant awarded me in the summer of 1977 which enabled me to begin research for this project. I would also like to acknowledge the American School of Classical Studies in Athens for my appointment as a Research Fellow during the fall semester of the same year. My special thanks go to Professors Gerald F. Else and Theodore V. Buttrey of the University of Michigan, Professor Kent Rigsby of Duke University, and the anonymous referee for reading preliminary versions of this paper and offering invaluable criticism.

² This study offers no new arguments on the plague question. But if *Hippolytus* does allude to the *Tyrannus*, the allusions would be most effective if Sophocles' play had been

An investigation of the theory that *Hippolytus* contains allusions to the *Tyrannus* must examine three separate issues.

1. The first problem arises from the fact that *Hippolytus* is a revision. Since the extant play is a reworking of an earlier version, the so-called *Hippolytus Kalyptomenos*, we must allow the possibility that some passages and scenes in the extant play are holdovers from the first. In the case of Zieliński's Euripidean parallels, which are taken from the *agon* between Theseus and Hippolytus in the third episode, it is possible that the *Kalyptomenos* contained a similar or identical scene in which the son unsuccessfully pleaded his innocence before his outraged father. If this was the case, Sophocles' 'parallel' *agon* between Creon and Oedipus may have been modeled after the *agon* in the *Kalyptomenos*.³ In the *Stephanephoros*, consequently, Euripides may be echoing only himself. It is necessary therefore to examine the fragments from and ancient *testimonia* to the lost Euripidean play and establish whether the *agon* in the *Stephanephoros* is an innovation in the revision or a holdover.

produced the year before. On the need to establish the relative chronology of the plays, see W. M. Calder III, *Gnomon* 48 (1976) 603–04. Zieliński's suggestion, which has found both ready acceptance and ready rejection, has never received a full study: cf. Schmid/Stählin, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur* I.2 (Munich 1933) 361 n.3; T. B. L. Webster, *An Introduction to Sophocles*² (London 1969) 4–5; David Grene, "The Interpretation of the *Hippolytus* of Euripides," *CP* 34 (1939) 53 (but contrast his view in *Reality and the Heroic Pattern* [Chicago 1967] 111); John H. Finley, Jr., "The Origins of Thucydides' Style," *Three Essays on Thucydides* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1967) 74 (= *HSCP* 50 [1939] 50); George Kennedy, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece* (Princeton 1969) 30–31; Cedric Whitman, *Sophocles: A Study of Heroic Humanism* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1951) 50, 258. The fuller discussions of the date of the *Tyrannus* do not consider the significance of *Hippolytus*: cf. William Bates, "The Dating of the *Oedipus Tyrannus*," *AJP* 54 (1933) 166–68; Bernard M. W. Knox, "The Date of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles," *AJP* 77 (1956) 133–47; Friedrich Marx, "De Aetate Oedipi Tyranni Fabulae Sophocleae," *Festschrift Theodor Gomperz* (Wien 1902) 129–40; Georges Daux, "Oedipe et le Fléau," *REG* 53 (1940) 97–122; Max Pohlenz, *Die griechische Tragödie*² I (Göttingen 1954) 220; Albin Lesky, *Die tragische Dichtung der Hellenen*³ (Göttingen 1972) 217–19; Wolfgang Schadewaldt, "Sophokles und Athen," *Hellas und Hesperien* I (Zurich und Stuttgart 1970) 382. The brief abstract of Jethro Robinson, "The *Oedipus Tyrannus*: Meaning and Date," *PAPA* 74 (1943) xxiii, mentions four sets of parallel passages (Zieliński's?) with the *Hippolytus*, but a complete study was never published.

³ For the dating of the *Kalyptomenos* between 438 and 431, cf. T. B. L. Webster, *The Tragedies of Euripides* (London 1967) 76, and "Chronological Notes on Euripides," *WS* 79 (1966) 112–20; Louis Méridier, *Hippolyte d'Euripide, étude et analyse* (Paris n.d.) 72; Lesky (*supra* n.2) 313–14. W. Friedrich, *Euripides und Diphilos* (Zetemata 5, Munich 1953) 148–49, dates the *Kalyptomenos* to 434, on the basis of a reference to a lunar eclipse in Seneca's *Phaedra*, but this is doubtful.

2. The second problem is that of the relative chronology. For if genuine verbal echoes do exist between the two scenes, we must allow the possibility that Sophocles' undated play was presented after *Hippolytus* and that the Euripidean *agon* inspired Sophocles to include a similar match in his tragedy. The answer to this problem lies in an examination of the parallel passages within their individual contexts. If the lines in question fit well in the one play and are awkward or problematic in the other, it is reasonable to deduce that the latter is the imitation.

3. Finally, no investigation of this theory would be complete without a consideration of the dramatic purpose which the allusions serve in their own play. Are we dealing with parody, criticism, invective, or the mere acknowledgement of a literary debt? It is in the examination of this issue that the study must expand its initial goal of providing a lower *terminus* for the *Tyrannus* and include an interpretation of the final scenes of Euripides' drama as well.⁴

I. The *Kalyptomenos*

It is generally agreed that in Euripides' first dramatization of the Hippolytus legend Phaedra boldly declared her passion to her stepson on stage.⁵ It was this polluting act which drove the chaste youth to

⁴ The fact that Sophocles wrote a *Phaedra* presents another problem. The theory has been proposed that Sophocles produced his *Phaedra* in response to the *Kalyptomenos* and that Euripides answered his rival, in turn, with the *Stephanephoros*: cf. Akiko Kiso, "Sophocles' *Phaedra* and the Phaedra of the First *Hippolytus*," *BICS* 20 (1973) 22–36. The fragmentary condition of two of the three plays and the absence of any indication of a relative chronology, however, make it impossible to reach any sound conclusions from this attractive hypothesis. The aim of this study is not to disprove this hypothesis but rather to refocus our attention on the possible relationship between two dramas which we possess *in toto*.

⁵ For reconstructions of the *Kalyptomenos* and discussions of the fragments and ancient *testimonia*, cf. Bruno Snell's reprint of A. Nauck, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*² (Hildesheim 1964) 491–96; the appendix in W. S. Barrett's edition and commentary, *Euripides' Hippolytos* (Oxford 1964) 18–29; Friedrich (*supra* n.3) 110–49; Clemens Zintzen, *Analytisches Hypomnema zu Senecas Phaedra* (Meisenheim/Glan 1960); Joachim Dingel, "Ἰππόλυτος ξιφουλκός: Zu Senecas Phaedra und dem ersten *Hippolytos* des Euripides," *Hermes* 98 (1970) 44–56; F. Scheidweiler, "Zu den beiden Hippolytosdramen des Euripides," *WürzJbb* 3 (1948) 232–40; Hans Herter, "Theseus und Hippolytos," *RhM* 89 (1940) 273–92, and "Phaedra in griechischer und römischer Gestalt," *RhM* 114 (1971) 44–77; Bruno Snell, *Scenes from Greek Drama* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1964) 23–46; Konrad Heldmann, "Senecas Phaedra und ihre griechischen Vorbilder," *Hermes* 96 (1968) 88–117;

veil his head in horror (whence the subtitle of the play) and flee. We may also assume that, just as Phaedra approached Hippolytus with her proposition, she boldly approached Theseus with the false charge that Hippolytus had attempted to rape her. If we can rely on the account of pseudo-Apollodorus in *Epitome* 1.18–19, Phaedra substantiated her accusation with feigned evidence of violence, breaking open her bedroom doors and tearing her clothes. Theseus believed his wife and in a fit of rage cursed his absent son to death with one of the three wishes granted him by Poseidon. A messenger-report doubtless followed, relating the gory details of the boy's violent death, in reaction to which Phaedra, overcome by remorse, confessed the truth to her husband and ran off to hang herself.⁶

This outline, while sketchy, does provide a basic core of action which few critics would dispute. A major difference between the two versions is that the extant play effects a reversal in the order of the deaths of Hippolytus and Phaedra.⁷ We may reasonably surmise, therefore, that the death of Phaedra only halfway through the *Stephanephoros* came as a surprise to the audience of 428. For the remarks of Aphrodite in the prologue of the revision lead us to expect the original sequence of events: only after explaining that Theseus will kill his son (τὸν μὲν . . . , 43–46) with Poseidon's curses does the goddess say, "As for Phaedra (ἡ δέ . . . , 47–48), she dies too, despite her nobility."

But if one of Euripides' aims in the new play is to postpone the death of Hippolytus, then the *agon* with Theseus in the third episode (902–1101) must be an innovation. W. S. Barrett contends that such a confrontation must have occurred also in the original version, on the grounds that, "If a play is to be the tragedy of Hippolytus he

U. Moricca, "Le Fonti della Fedra di Seneca," *StItal* (1915) 158–224; Ettore Paratore, "Sulla Phaedra di Seneca," *Dioniso* 15 (1952) 199–234, and "Lo Hippolytos Kalyptomenos di Euripide e la Phaedra di Seneca: Discorso ai Sordi," *Romanae Litterae* (Rome 1976) 515–46.

⁶ The ancient references to the *Kalyptomenos* all mention Phaedra's direct proposition and Hippolytus' refusal, her accusation to Theseus, Theseus' curse, Hippolytus' death and Phaedra's subsequent suicide (in that order). For Hippolytus' immediate death in the chariot accident, cf. Asclepiades of Tragilus, *FGrHist* 12 F 28 (ἐλκόμενον ἀποθανεῖν); Ps.-Apollodorus, *Epit.* 1.18–19 (κυρόμενος ἀπέθανε); Servius, *Comm. in Verg. Aen.* 6.445 (*quo facto territis equis et Hippolyto interempto Phaedra amoris impatientia laqueo vitam finivit*). We find no mention of a confrontation between father and son, except at Diod.Sic. 4.62, an unreliable conflation of various accounts.

⁷ It is interesting in this context to note the reversal of the deaths of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra in Soph. *El.* 1398–1507 from Aesch. *Cho.* 838–930.

cannot vanish thus early from the action.”⁸ Barrett supports this hypothesis by assigning a number of fragments from the *Kalyptomenos* to a scene in which Hippolytus, pleading his innocence, offers arguments which Theseus dismisses as arrogant and dishonest. These fragments, however, which refer to wealth, *hybris*, and immoral rhetoric, are better assigned to a scene in which Phaedra shamelessly rationalizes her passion before her Nurse or declares her love to the shocked youth. Indeed, the two fragments which cite wealth (πλοῦτος, εὐπραξία) as the begetter of *hybris* (437 N², 438 N²) closely resemble the passage in Seneca’s *Phaedra* (202–14) where the Nurse attributes Phaedra’s *libido* and desire for *insolita* to her wealth (*luxu, secundis rebus, magnae fortunae*). It is not unreasonable, given Seneca’s known reliance on Greek models, to read his passage as a reflection of these fragments from the *Kalyptomenos*.⁹ As for the theme of dishonest rhetoric, furthermore, Plutarch (*Mor.* 27F–28A) reports that Euripides’ Phaedra, like Helen in the *Troades*, camouflaged reprehensible behavior with a display of specious rhetoric (εὐρησιλογίαις), justifying her illicit passion by citing Theseus’ own *paranomia*.¹⁰ Therefore the objection voiced in fr.439 N² of the *Kalyptomenos* against “clever speakers” (οἱ δεινοὶ λέγειν) who “conceal the truth with eloquence (εὐρόοις στόμασι) and confound right and wrong” is aimed most probably at the sophistic Phaedra and not at the wronged youth. In fact this fragment is not unlike the Coryphaeus’ response to Helen’s shocking claim of innocence (*i.e.*, that Hecuba caused the Trojan War by giving birth to Paris), *Troades* 967–68: λέγει καλῶς κακοῦργος οὐσα δεινὸν οὖν τόδε.

In addition to the *argumentum ex silentio* that no single fragment of the lost play can be securely assigned to an *agon* and that no such encounter is mentioned by the ancient *testimonia*, there is the consideration that, if Hippolytus did defend himself to Theseus, he must

⁸ Barrett (*supra* n.5) 40–42.

⁹ This is not to imply that Seneca’s play is a consistently reliable source for the reconstruction of the *Kalyptomenos*. In cases of correspondence between the Greek fragments and the Latin text, however, we are justified in seeing the dependence of the Roman poet: cf. Pierre Grimal, “L’Originalité de Sénèque dans la tragédie de *Phèdre*,” *REL* 41 (1963) 297–314.

¹⁰ Although Plutarch does not specify that he is referring to the first Phaedra, we may assume as much. For the Phaedra of the revision does not employ sophistic arguments to justify her passion. To the contrary, the Nurse does, and Phaedra does her utmost to resist such “fair-seeming words” (οἱ καλοὶ λίαν λόγοι, 487).

have done so while Phaedra was still alive. But it is difficult to imagine that, if Hippolytus had been allowed to plead his innocence, Theseus would have neglected to summon Phaedra for cross-examination. Such a confrontation, in turn, could lead only to the acquittal of Hippolytus, a clearly impossible verdict. Indeed, after the youth argues his case in the extant play, he admits that the only sure proof of his innocence could come from an interrogation of his accuser: "If I were pleading my case while Phaedra was still alive" (τῆςδ' ὀρώσης φέγγος, 1023), he tells Theseus, "you could have determined the guilty ones with a cross-examination" (τοὺς κακοὺς διεξιῶν, 1024). As it is, however, the very suicide of Phaedra is the most persuasive bit of evidence against him: "In this especially is your guilt established," says Theseus (959–61). "For what oaths, what arguments can outweigh this [pointing to the corpse] and absolve you of the charge?"

It is reasonable to conclude that Hippolytus' death in the *Kalyptomenos* provided the motivation for that play's final and climactic event, the suicide of the guilty and remorseful Phaedra. The climax of the revision, however, lies in the death of the innocent youth. In postponing the death of Hippolytus in the new play, Euripides adds the heated *agon* between father and son. The entire second half of the *Stephanephoros*, consequently, with its focus on Hippolytus and his reaction to the accusation, is an innovation.

II. Parallels and Echoes

Having established that the *Kalyptomenos* did not include an *agon* which Sophocles could have imitated, we must consider the nature and extent of the echoes between the *Stephanephoros* and the *Tyrannus*, not only Zieliński's passages but also other textual similarities which have hitherto gone unobserved. We must also look for indications of a relative chronology.

Similarities exist on two levels. First, parallel situations are depicted: both are scenes of false accusation in which an innocent man must speak against a charge made in his absence. The accusers, in turn, are quick to condemn their opponents after either a credulous acceptance of false evidence (Phaedra's suicide note) or a hasty misinterpretation of the facts (Tiresias' accusation of Oedipus). The accusations themselves, it is true, are of different natures: Oedipus

charges Creon with political treachery, whereas Theseus condemns his son for a sexual offense. This difference is minimized, however, when Hippolytus himself introduces the charge of conspiracy and argues that he would never have assaulted Phaedra out of ulterior political motives.

Underlining the general parallel between the situations are a number of close verbal correspondences. These echoes begin on a relatively subdued level and increase in both density and precision as the two scenes progress. When Hippolytus and Creon enter, they see no reason for the charges directed against them, and they wonder if their accusers are sane. Hippolytus says that his father's words are "unseated from his mind" (*ἔξεδροι φρενῶν*, 935), just as Creon wonders if Oedipus delivered his charge "from a right mind" (*ἐξ ὀρθῆς φρενός*, 528). Ironically, however, Theseus and Oedipus are both certain that they are right, and in their accusation speeches they employ arguments which include similar subject matter and vocabulary. Theseus, in the second line of his speech, asks the rhetorical question, "What will be the limit of your boldness and daring?" Oedipus, also indignant, asks Creon a similar question in the second line of his speech: "Do you have so bold a face that you come to my house?" Strengthening the echo between these passages is the alliteration of *tau* and *sigma* as Oedipus and Theseus sputter in anger. Theseus says (937):¹¹

τί τέρμα τόλμης καὶ θράσους γενήσεται;

Compare the words of Oedipus at 532–34:

*ἦ τοσόδ' ἔχεις
τόλμης πρόσωπον ὥστε τὰς ἐμὰς στέγας
ἴκου . . .;*

We hear more echoes as the speeches continue. Theseus accuses Hippolytus of being "obviously" guilty of the charge of rape (*ἐμφανῶς κάκιςτος ὢν*, 945), and Oedipus claims that Creon is "obviously" the murderer of Laius (*φονεὺς ὢν . . . ἐμφανῶς*, 534). In each case the adverb is far from negligible since it is 'obvious' to the

¹¹ All quotations of the Greek text are from A. C. Pearson's 1928 *OCT* of Sophocles and Gilbert Murray's 1913 *OCT*³ of Euripides. We may also have an echo of *OT* 533 in *Hipp.* 947 (*πρόσωπον*) and of *OT* 532 in *Hipp.* 948 (the abrupt address of *οὗτος κύ* and *κύ δή*).

audience that Creon and Hippolytus are innocent. But Oedipus and Theseus revel in having caught the culprits and add the criticism that their opponents are guilty of foolishness. Oedipus asks Creon, “Tell me, was it cowardice or foolishness (*μωρίαν*, 536) you saw in me that drove you to engage in this plot? Is not your attempt foolish (*μῶρον*, 540), to hunt power without numbers and friends?” Theseus introduces the same issue: “You will say that foolishness (*τὸ μῶρον*, 966) does not exist in men but that it is natural in women.” As in the case with *ἐμφανῶς*, these comments of Theseus and Oedipus stand out precisely because it is they who are acting without caution.

The echoes continue as Hippolytus and Creon proceed to make their defenses. Both find themselves without witnesses and resort to arguments from probability. Hippolytus argues that no one with a virgin soul (*παρθένον ψυχήν*, 1006) would have attempted to violate any woman. Creon argues that, since his carefree position as “third in power” (*ἰσοῦμαι σφῶν ἐγὼ δυοῖν τρίτος*, 581) to the king and queen is more profitable than the possession of the actual office, it is unlikely that he would conspire to usurp Oedipus’ position. There are no echoes between these two arguments, to be sure, but Hippolytus adopts a second line of defense which is identical to Creon’s: it is improbable that he would have assaulted his stepmother in order to take his father’s throne since, as son of the king and “second in the city,” he is able to do whatever he wants without the dangers that a monarch must fear. Since our reaction to the subsequent echoes between these scenes will depend in large part on our interpretation of these arguments, first cited by Zieliński as parallel, we must examine the pair closely.

The text of Creon’s speech is as follows (587–95):

*ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν οὐτ’ αὐτὸς ἰμείρων ἔφην
τύραννος εἶναι μᾶλλον ἢ τύραννα δρᾶν,
οὐτ’ ἄλλος ὅστις σωφρονεῖν ἐπίσταται.
νῦν μὲν γὰρ ἐκ σοῦ πάντ’ ἄνευ φόβου φέρω,
εἰ δ’ αὐτὸς ἦρχον, πολλὰ κἂν ἄκων ἔδρων.
πῶς δῆτ’ ἐμοὶ τυραννὶς ἠδίων ἔχειν
ἀρχῆς ἀλύπου καὶ δυναστείας ἔφν;
οὐπω τοσοῦτον ἠπατημένος κυρῶ
ὥστ’ ἄλλα χρήζειν ἢ τὰ σὺν κέρδει καλά.*

Hippolytus' argument is (1012–20):

μάταιος ἄρ' ἦν, οὐδαμοῦ μὲν οὖν φρενῶν.
 ἀλλ' ὡς τυραννεῖν ἡδύ; τοῖσι σώφροσι
 ἦκιστά γ', εἰ μὴ τὰς φρένας διέφθορεν
 θνητῶν ὅσοισιν ἀνδάνει μοναρχία.
 ἐγὼ δ' ἀγῶνας μὲν κρατεῖν Ἑλληνικοῦς
 πρῶτος θέλοισι' ἄν, ἐν πόλει δὲ δεύτερος
 σὺν τοῖς ἀρίστοις εὐτυχεῖν ἀεὶ φίλοις.
 πράσσειν τε γὰρ πάρεστι, κίνδυνός τ' ἀπῶν
 κρείσσω δίδωσι τῆς τυραννίδος χάριν.

In specific verbal similarities, both Creon and Hippolytus refer to the false “pleasure” (ἡδύ, *Hipp.* 1013; ἡδίων, *OT* 592) of royalty, emphasizing that genuine pleasure comes from the possession of authority without the responsibilities of office (*Hipp.* 1019–20; *OT* 596–99). Each would be “out of his mind” (οὐδαμοῦ φρενῶν, *Hipp.* 1012; τὰς φρένας διέφθορεν, *Hipp.* 1014; ἡπατημένος, *OT* 594) to relinquish his present status. Indeed, it is a sign of sensibility (τοῖσι σώφροσι, *Hipp.* 1013; ὅστις σωφρονεῖν ἐπίσταται, *OT* 589) for them to maintain their position as second or third in power.

Despite the echoes between these passages, we must address one question before we can securely cite them as evidence of a direct relationship between the plays. Cedric Whitman, seeing Hippolytus' speech as a “ready-made sophistic argument in defense of a charge of conspiracy . . . [which] occurs again and again in Euripides,” dismisses the similarities to Creon's speech as commonplaces.¹² Whitman is certainly right in detecting a commonplace tone in these passages: one immediately thinks of Ion's comments on the disadvantages of kingship (Eur. *Ion* 621–32) or of Antiphon's argument in *Περὶ τῆς μεταστάσεως*.¹³ But we need not conclude that the similarities between Creon's and Hippolytus' speeches are accidental or that Euripides found a speech ‘ready-made’ and assigned it to Hippolytus without regard for its context. Ion's speech, for example, includes a *topos* on the advantages which the carefree “happy

¹² Whitman (*supra* n.2) 50.

¹³ For the text of the Antiphon passage, see fr. III coll. 2–3 in the Budé edition of Louis Gernet, *Antiphon* (Paris 1923) 165–66, and Jules Nicole, *L'Apologie d'Antiphon* (Geneva/Basel 1907) 16–20. B. M. W. Knox, *Oedipus at Thebes* (New Haven 1957) 87–89, also notes the similarity between Creon's and Antiphon's speeches.

commoner” (*δημότης . . . εὐτυχής*, 625) enjoys over the problem-laden king, who must constantly suspect and fear those around him. But these commonplace remarks are appropriate both to the dramatic setting and to the character of the speaker: it is to be expected that a young devotee of Apollo who lives a life of religious isolation decline Xuthus’ invitation to royal power with just such comments.¹⁴

We do not find such consistency in the case of Hippolytus, however. For it is impossible to reconcile the practical, political speaker of this passage with the virgin athlete of the prologue, whose sole pleasure lay not in being the privileged son of the king but in consorting with Artemis in the inviolable meadows. Indeed it must strike us as strange that Hippolytus sounds more like the political Creon here than like Ion. For Ion and Hippolytus have much in common: both are young and exhibit the naiveté of youth, both feel a close attachment to a single deity, and both live in seclusion from public life. Hippolytus and Ion are alike, in short, in that they are not political characters. But in the *agon* Hippolytus unexpectedly expresses a preference not for carefree leisure but rather for carefree power. If Euripides were interested in giving us a purely commonplace argument, he surely would have chosen to have Hippolytus deliver a speech like Ion’s, celebrating the joys of a life free from ambition of all sorts.

The second objection to the dismissal of Hippolytus’ speech as commonplace is that the conspiracy-motif itself is inappropriate to the dramatic situation. Theseus does not accuse his son of political treachery, nor is such an accusation warranted by the circumstances. What Hippolytus introduces here, as Barrett has demonstrated (p. 351), is a motive for seduction, not rape. Phaedra’s note, however, clearly accuses Hippolytus of violence in his approach: *ἔτλη θινεῖν | βία* (885–86) with *βία* occupying the emphatic position in the line. The inappropriateness of the motif here is especially noticeable when we consider that Theseus, in his accusation speech, tries to anticipate his son’s arguments: “You will say that Phaedra accused you

¹⁴ It should be noted that the underlying antithesis in Ion’s speech (*i.e.*, king *vs.* commoner) is applicable, as a *topos*, to more situations than is the underlying antithesis in Creon’s and Hippolytus’ speeches (*i.e.*, king *vs.* king’s relative): *cf.* Eur. *IA* 445–50, where Agamemnon’s sentiments are harmonious with Ion’s. In *Phoen.* 528–67 a speech like Creon’s on the advantages of being second in power would be appropriate, but Jocasta argues along other lines, speaking idealistically of the virtues of equality.

because stepmothers naturally hate their stepchildren. If that is so, why did she hang herself? Or you will argue that she acted out of female folly, as if young men were any more sensible.” Euripides could easily have had the angry Theseus suggest a third motive: “You approached her out of a greater lust for my throne, but you will say that you do not yearn for such power.” If the politically-minded Theseus does not suggest conspiracy, it surely strikes us as odd that the ascetic Hippolytus does.¹⁵

The inconsistencies in this passage extend to the level of a single word, *κῶφρων*. Both in this particular speech and elsewhere, Hippolytus clearly uses the word and its cognates to refer to sexual purity. In the prologue, for example, he boasts of his virginity, *τὸ κωφρονεῖν* (80). In his tirade against women in the second episode he uses the verb *κωφρονεῖν* (667) when he prays that women might learn to be chaste. Within his defense-speech he uses the adjectival form to refer to his own chastity (*κωφρονέστερος*, 995; *τὸ κῶφρον*, 1007). When the same word appears only six lines later in the sentence, “Do you think that kingship is desired by those who are *κῶφρονες*?” we are jolted. For he cannot mean that the sexually pure do not desire power. He is arguing rather that a sensible person would not want his father’s position. But since Theseus has not even accused him of subversion, we react to this sudden shift in the meaning of the word as we react to the entire argument, with utter confusion.¹⁶

The inconsistencies present in Hippolytus’ speech argue against the idea that Euripides is giving us a collection of commonplaces. The suggestion is strong, rather, that the poet has deliberately created these problems and amassed them on three levels in order to

¹⁵ The abruptness with which the conspiracy motif enters the play is the more pronounced in that Euripides forfeits an obvious opportunity to introduce it earlier: when the practical, clever Nurse approaches Hippolytus in the second episode, she does not entice him with promises of royal power, although such a suggestion would be appropriate to her devious character. It is probable that Phaedra or the Nurse offered Hippolytus the throne in the *Kalyptomenos*: cf. fr.434 N² and Sen. *Phaedr.* 617–23. For this reason some see the awkward motif in the *Stephanephoros* as an inadvertent holdover from the original: cf. U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Euripides Hippolytos griechisch und deutsch* (Berlin 1891) 224–25; Zintzen (*supra* n.5) 73; Webster, *Tragedies* (*supra* n.3) 67; Barrett (*supra* n.5) 351. If Euripides was careful enough to excise the motif from the Nurse scene, however, it is unlikely that he would have failed to omit it from the *agon* as well.

¹⁶ Barrett (*supra* n.5), objecting to the shift in the meaning of *κῶφρων*, resists a strong temptation to delete 1012–15: cf. his commentary and apparatus *ad loc.* Excision of these four lines, however, will not remove the other problems of inconsistency and awkwardness.

achieve special effects of some sort. For Euripides has written the speech and constructed the scene in such a way that the passage cannot be adequately explained in terms of its immediate context. Rather he leaves several loose ends, so to speak, and forces the audience to tie these ends together. And since the Creon-Oedipus *agon* provides the largest number of specific verbal echoes within a clearly recognizable context, we are justified in reading the Euripidean scene as an echo of the Sophoclean original.¹⁷

For Euripides—not Sophocles—is the imitator. In every instance where the Euripidean passage is problematic, the Sophoclean parallel presents no such inconsistencies. Creon's sophistic remarks on the undesirability of royal power are appropriate, in the first place, to his character. For Creon is presented consistently as a cautious, political person. Upon returning from Delphi, for example, he suggests that Oedipus may want to hear his report inside the palace, away from the citizens (91–92). On two occasions he says that where he does not know, he prefers to keep silent (569, 1520). And in the exodus he wants to verify the oracle before banishing the blinded king (1438–39). This cautious and calculating attitude stands in sharp contrast to Oedipus' rash quickness. It is in keeping with the dramatic situation, furthermore, that Creon argue against the probability of a conspiracy since Oedipus has accused him of political subversion. Nor do we find inconsistencies on the textual level: there is nothing unusual in Creon's use of *σωφρονεῖν* in line 589. Since the Sophoclean passage is easily comprehensible within its own context, therefore, it is difficult to imagine that Sophocles is imitating Euripides.

Once Euripides introduces the conspiracy-motif and develops it in a passage resounding with Sophoclean echoes, the probability increases that other similarities will be detected by the audience. After the innocent men plead their cases, we find that the allusions do indeed continue. For Oedipus and Theseus are unconvinced by their opponents' protestations of innocence. The topic of conversation in the subsequent dialogue of each scene is the same: punishment

¹⁷ For other Euripidean passages which assume the audience's awareness of an earlier play, compare the recognition scene between Electra and Orestes in his *El.* 486–584 with Aesch. *Cho.* 164–305; specifically, *El.* 520 = *Cho.* 229, *El.* 530 = *Cho.* 174. Compare also Eur. *Phoen.* 737–38 with Aesch. *Sept.* 375ff: in the Euripidean play Eteocles interrupts Creon, who is about to recite an Aeschylean catalogue of the Seven.

by execution. Oedipus reacts to Creon's plea with disbelief and threatens to kill his brother-in-law (622–23):

CR. τί δῆτα χρήζεις; ἦ με γῆς ἕξω βαλεῖν;
 OE. ἤκιστα θνήσκειν, οὐ φυγεῖν σε βούλομαι.

We hear an echo of this passage in Hippolytus' strange comment at the same point in Euripides' dialogue, 1042–43:

εἰ γὰρ σὺ μὲν παῖς ἦσθ', ἐγὼ δὲ σὸς πατήρ,
 ἔκτεινά τοί σ' ἂν κοῦ φυγαῖς ἐζημίουν.

Particularly striking in this pair of passages is the fact that οὐ φυγεῖν and κοῦ φυγαῖς occupy identical metrical positions.

In view of this complex of verbal echoes, which are too precise and too numerous to be dismissed as accidental, two other pairs of passages isolated by Zieliński may be seen, despite their commonplace nature, as contributing to this network of correspondences. At the end of Hippolytus' speech the Coryphaeus pleads with Theseus to respect the youth's exculpatory oath (1036–37), a request which is similar to Jocasta's plea that Oedipus respect Creon's sworn oath (646–48). But Theseus and Oedipus will not heed oaths of any sort, nor will they wait for the 'testimony of time' to prove their opponents' innocence (*Hipp.* 1051–52; *OT* 613–15).¹⁸ These particular passages, *in vacuo*, could not fairly be cited as evidence of a direct relationship between the plays. They certainly do not give any indication of a relative chronology. But set as they are among other similarities, both situational and verbal, they are harmonious with the evidence already examined that the dramatic impact of Euripides' scene lies, in part at least, in the audience's awareness of its Sophoclean counterpart.¹⁹ And the particular consequence is that the *Tyrannus* was staged before 428 B.C.

¹⁸ For other oaths in tragedy, *cf.* Aesch. *Ag.* 1284; Eur. *Med.* 746–54, *Hipp.* 713–14, *IT* 790, *Suppl.* 1194. For statements about time as the revealer of truth, *cf.* Soph. *OT* 1213; Eur. *Bacch.* 882–96, *Hipp.* 428–30, *Kalyptomenos* fr.441 N², *Antiope* fr.222 N², and Barrett (*supra* n.5) 359. For a full discussion of the topic see Jacqueline de Romilly, *Time in Greek Tragedy* (Ithaca 1968) 36–41, 50–58. On the important role of time in *Hippolytus* see Harry C. Avery, "My Tongue Swore but my Mind is Unsworn," *TAPA* 99 (1968) 19–35, esp. 31.

¹⁹ Less convincing is Zieliński's equation of *Hipp.* 1058–59 with *OT* 964–66 (Theseus' and Oedipus' dismissal of prophetic birds). For in addition to the commonplace nature of these statements (*cf.* Hom. *Il.* 1.106–08, 12.237–40, *Od.* 19.560–69; Aesch. *Ag.* 1132–35; Soph. *Ant.* 922; Eur. *Hel.* 744–57, *IT* 570–75, *IA* 520, 956–58, *Ion* 685, 1537–38), there

III. Acquittal *versus* Conviction

If the impact of the Euripidean scene lies in its references to the *Tyrannus*, what contribution do these allusions make to the scene as a whole? Euripides' motives become clear only toward the end of the *agon*, when Hippolytus is convicted in spite of, indeed because of, his innocence. This outcome stands in sharp contrast to the Sophoclean version, which ends in the acquittal of the innocent Creon. Our reaction to the conviction of Hippolytus, consequently, is surprise. For the Sophoclean echoes in the quarrel between father and son lead us to expect a continuation of the same pattern. But Euripides suddenly departs from his model and, in doing so, takes away whatever hope we may have entertained for the exoneration of Hippolytus.

Until the end of Creon's speech and the ensuing two-line tag by the Coryphaeus (616–17), Sophocles has constructed the scene as a standard *agon*, and we expect Oedipus to answer Creon with a balancing speech of more or less equal length (*i.e.*, about 33 lines).²⁰ But we are disappointed of our expectation, for Oedipus, far from delivering a set speech, speaks only four lines of rebuttal before he comes to a sudden halt. Where we normally expect a formal *rhesis*, we find four lines of heated *stichomythia* (622–25) in which Oedipus threatens to have Creon's head. But this short-lived exchange soon yields to four lines of *antilabe* (626–29), culminating in Oedipus' famous cry, ὦ πόλις πόλις. At this point the Coryphaeus announces

is the objection that Theseus' and Oedipus' remarks do not appear in parallel dramatic situations: Oedipus delivers his lines in the scene with the Corinthian messenger. Theseus' words directly echo rather the blasphemous outburst of his son in the prologue: τὴν γὰρ δὲ Κύπριον πόλλ' ἐγὼ χαίρειν λέγω, 113. Theseus is skeptical of the validity of Poseidon's wishes, to be sure, but he does not exhibit Oedipus' profound skepticism of the validity of oracles in general and of the ability of the gods to control human lives. Nor can we rightly speak of Theseus' sudden revelation that Poseidon is his true father as parallel to Oedipus' powerful conversion at the end of his play.

²⁰ Sophocles presented a regular *agon* in the Tiresias-scene: Oedipus and Tiresias deliver symmetrical speeches which are separated by a choral tag and followed by *stichomythia*. For examples of this pattern in Sophocles, *cf. Ant.* 249–314, 450–96, 639–723; *Aj.* 430–524, 1052–1117, 1226–1315; *El.* 947–1014; *OC* 897–959; *Phil.* 1004–62; *Trach.* 436–89. Jacqueline Duchemin, *L'ἀγὼν dans la tragédie grecque*² (Paris 1968) 60, observing that Creon's speech is never answered, takes this scene as "nettement différent de l'ἀγὼν." For the dissolution of dramatic form here (and criticism of Sophocles), see Louis Roussel, "L'épisode de Créon dans Sophocle," *Mélanges offerts à A. M. Desrousseau* (Paris 1937) 423–27.

the timely arrival of Jocasta “from the house” (ἐκ δόμων, 632), and what ensues is something new in Sophoclean drama: a three-way dialogue in which Jocasta pleads with the two men to stop quarreling (634–48).²¹ But not even Jocasta can calm Oedipus and the dramatic structure is ruptured yet again as the Chorus finally intervene and begin a lyrical *kommos* (649–96). After the failure of every possible attempt at rational speech in iambic trimeter—*rhesis*, *stichomythia*, *antilabe*, three-way dialogue—only the emotional power of music and song can convince Oedipus to release his innocent brother-in-law. All these marked changes in the dramatic form occur rapidly and unexpectedly. Indeed, until the intervention of the Chorus, it appears that the play is actually disintegrating. Perhaps it is no accident, furthermore, that between the end of Creon’s speech and the beginning of the *kommos* there are 33 lines, the exact length we expected Oedipus’ *rhesis* to be.²²

If we are meant to recall the Oedipus-Creon *agon* as we witness the quarrel between Theseus and Hippolytus, it is not unlikely that we also anticipate some deviation from the dramatic form which will result in Hippolytus’ acquittal. Contrary to our expectation, however, the *agon* is quite regular and, far from coming to a halt through the intervention of any character, plunges on relentlessly to its unjust end. After Theseus’ accusation of 45 lines, the Coryphaeus intervenes

²¹ In *Aj.* 1317 Odysseus intervenes between the quarreling Teucer and Agamemnon, but a two-way dialogue ensues: Odysseus merely supersedes Teucer. For Sophocles’ first *Dreigespräch* in *OT*, cf. Karl Reinhardt, *Sophokles*⁴ (Frankfurt am Main 1976) 123.

²² The dissolution of dramatic form at this point in Sophocles’ play has a significance which applies to the drama as a whole. For Oedipus’ inability to answer Creon’s argument from probability marks the failure of his own elaborate theory of conspiracy, a theory based on nothing more than conjecture and unsubstantiated suspicion (*γνώμη ἀδύλω*, 608). Up to this point Oedipus has attempted to solve the mystery of Laius’ murder just as he had solved the riddle of the Sphinx, solely on the basis of his superior and unaided intelligence. Only after the failure of this method does he summon the sole eyewitness and approach the mystery in a manner which does lead to the truth, *i.e.*, by a careful examination of the facts themselves. It is clear that Sophocles has organized his plot around this change in Oedipus’ methodology. For it is in the exact middle of the play, line 765, that Oedipus first asks if the witness can come before him to testify. The dissolution of dramatic form in the second episode and the resulting acquittal of Creon are essential in that they mark the end of the first half of the drama. As the next episode begins, with Jocasta’s supplication of Apollo with garlands and incense, we sense that the play is beginning anew. For her physical appearance here is visually reminiscent of the suppliant embassy in the prologue, and the structure and language of her prayer echo the opening speech of Oedipus himself in lines 1–13.

with a distich, which is followed by Hippolytus' unsuccessful defense of 54 lines. In the heated dialogue that follows, Hippolytus, like Creon, swears his innocence, but to no avail: Theseus insists on his banishment. Refusing to break his oath of silence to the Nurse, Hippolytus cries out in words which echo the parallel point in the Sophoclean scene:²³ "O house (*ὦ δώματ'*, 1074), if only you could take voice and bear witness to my innocence!" For at this point in Sophocles the house actually does take voice through the appearance of Jocasta. In Hippolytus' case, however, the house remains silent, and Phaedra, far from rescuing the youth, lies there dead for all to see, in irrefutable testimony to his guilt. Theseus sarcastically comments on the silence which follows his son's plea: "How clever of you to appeal to voiceless witnesses." As the scene continues it becomes painfully apparent that no one will speak on behalf of Hippolytus, least of all the Chorus, who stand dumbly by in the preservation of their oath to the queen.

We may reasonably conclude that one of Euripides' aims in filling his scene with Sophoclean echoes is to suggest to the audience that, despite Aphrodite's threat, the *agon* may end in Hippolytus' acquittal. But the poet builds our expectations only to frustrate them in the end. As a result, we react to the conviction of the youth not only with a degree of surprise but, more importantly, with a heightened awareness of the significance of his death. For if it has been implied that Hippolytus may be released, our grief is all the more poignant when we see him go to his death.²⁴ It is this very poignancy which the poet proceeds to develop in the exodus of the play. For in addition to a conventional messenger-scene which describes Hippolytus' chariot accident, Euripides presents us with the dying youth himself.²⁵ Only now, as we witness the boy's final

²³ That Euripides is at least suggesting the possibility that the youth will be exonerated we may infer from Hippolytus' deliberation on whether to break his oath, 1060–63. When we hear these lines we cannot help but think of his clever statement to the Nurse that his tongue swore but his heart remained unsworn (612). It occurs to us in the *agon*, therefore, that he may save himself by breaking the oath. But Hippolytus reveals no such sophistry at this crucial moment.

²⁴ Euripides employs a similar tactic in *Med.* 1040–48, where Medea, bent on killing her children, momentarily abandons her intentions. It is all the more disturbing when she subsequently (1049ff) decides to proceed with her original plans and bids her children a final farewell.

²⁵ Euripides gives us one last ray of hope for the survival of Hippolytus in the opening remarks of the messenger. After announcing the death of Hippolytus (*οὐκέτ' ἔστιν*, 1162)

moments, do we come to understand and admire the noble aspects of innocence and purity which he arrogantly flaunted in the early scenes.²⁶ So noble is he that, even in the agony of his pain, he forgives the father who, moments ago, was so hasty to condemn him. In his absolution of Theseus, Hippolytus reveals a greatness of soul which neither his royal father nor his patron goddess possesses. For Artemis, appearing *ex machina*, announces that she will not forgive her rival deity. She promises rather only to continue the destructive vendetta which Aphrodite has begun. When Hippolytus finally does die, therefore, we mourn the death of one who seems nobler than the gods themselves. Theseus' final words (1459–60) surely echo our own sentiments: "O famous city of Athens [not: O citizens of Troezen], what a man you have lost!"²⁷

The poet drives home the significance of Hippolytus' death by ending the play with a gesture which recalls the most famous scene of the *Kalyptomenos*. In the original version the final glimpse we had of Hippolytus was that of the youth veiling himself and leaving the stage in horror. There he covered his head to protect himself from the polluting proposition of adultery made by Phaedra. Likewise, in the *Stephanephoros*, Hippolytus' final request is that his head be covered: κρύψον δέ μου πρόσωπον ὡς τάχος πέπλοις, he tells Theseus (1458). This time, however, his concern is not to protect himself but rather to spare his father, the Chorus, and all of us in the theatre from the polluting sight of his dying.²⁸ When he dies immediately after this noble request, we cannot help but feel a sharp sense of

the messenger changes his report considerably: Hippolytus' life is not over, but is on the scale's balance (ἐπὶ σμικρᾶς ῥοπής, 1163). It is possible that this couplet is meant to echo *OT* 955–56 (οὐκέτ' ὄντα Πόλυβον) and 961 (σμικρὰ . . . ῥοπή), where the Corinthian messenger's report brings some surprising information to Oedipus and Jocasta.

²⁶ The reversal of our sympathies toward Hippolytus is of course quite typical of Euripides. As a tragedian writing in the midst of the sophistic movement, he reveals a superb ability to "disputare in utramque partem." Cf. T. V. Buttrey, "Accident and Design in Euripides' *Medea*," *AJP* 79 (1958) 1–17; his "Tragedy as Form in Euripides," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 15 (1976) 155–72; and A. R. Bellinger, "The *Bacchae* and *Hippolytus*," *YCS* 6 (1939) 17–27.

²⁷ For a penetrating interpretation of the final scene of the play, see B. M. W. Knox, "The *Hippolytus* of Euripides," *YCS* 13 (1952) 3–31.

²⁸ That the sight of Hippolytus' mangled body is a source of pollution we may infer from Creon's order in *OT* 1424–31 that the blinded Oedipus respect the generation of mortal men and the light of the sun by going indoors and not revealing such an "unveiled pollution (ἄγος ἀκάλυπτον) which neither the earth nor the sacred rain nor the light can allow."

personal loss. For Hippolytus was the only character in the play to show a concern for our own purity. Euripides draws out his demise in such a way that we first expect and finally hope that “the brightest star of Athens” (1122) will be saved. Unfortunately, however, the *Stephanephoros* leads to exactly the same end as the *Kalyptomenos*: the deaths of Phaedra and Hippolytus. But the new play, by closing with the death of the innocent youth, leaves us mourning the loss of the nobility, purity, and beauty which Hippolytus upheld throughout his short life. For his death comes despite our hopes, and it affects all of us. Such, at any rate, is the verdict of the departing Chorus:

κοινὸν τόδ’ ἄχος πᾶσι πολίταις ἦλθεν ἀέλλπτως.

KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

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