

The Date of Euripides' *Erechtheus*

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THE RECENT and exemplary publication by Colin Austin¹ of the third-century B.C. Sorbonne papyrus (*PSorb. Inv. 2328*) has roughly doubled the extant remains of Euripides' *Erechtheus*.² The briefest glance at the plates of the new papyrus reveals the debt owed by scholars to the keen eye and patient expertise of Austin, who only modestly alludes to the difficulties of decipherment.³ Austin immediately followed his *editio princeps* with a second publication of the papyrus, together with the fragments preserved in the indirect tradition.⁴ In the *editio princeps* Austin⁵ dates the production of *Erechtheus* to "421 avant J.C. ou peu avant," citing Plutarch, *Nicias* 9.5 and drawing attention to the youthful but persistent view of Wilamowitz⁶ that *Erechtheus* was part of the *Supplices* tetralogy of 421 B.C. Austin argues, as others had before him, a *terminus ante quem* of 411 from datable Aristophanic parodies. In his second edition, Austin⁷ twice gives the date as 423 B.C. No mention is there made of his earlier dating to *ca.* 421 B.C. His second proposal has been independently advanced by H. J. Mette.⁸ Austin is contradictory and inaccurate; Mette uncritical. Further, there are reasons to believe that neither 421 nor 423 is correct. Clearly the evidence requires fresh examination.

At *Nicias* 9.5 Plutarch cites without author's name or title the first

¹ Colin Austin, "De nouveau fragments de l'*Erechthée* d'Euripide," in *Recherches de Papyrologie* IV (*PublFacLett Paris-Sorbonne*, "Recherches" 36, *TravInstPap* 5, Paris 1967) 11-67 with plates I and II; henceforth: AUSTIN, *Recherches*.

² For the correct Latin spelling see W. Schulze, "Orthographica et Graeca Latina," *Sussidi eruditi* 14 (Rome 1958) 78 with n.1.

³ See Austin, *Recherches* 13 with n.1.

⁴ C. Austin, *Nova fragmenta Euripidica in papyris reperta* (*Kleine Texte* 187, Berlin 1968) 22-40.

⁵ Austin, *Recherches* 17 with n.1.

⁶ See *infra* p.153.

⁷ Austin, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.4) 22, 31 *ad* fr.60 A. (369 N.²).

⁸ See H. J. Mette, *Lustrum* 12 (1967) 112: "Aufführung etwa März 423." Mette cites Plut. *Nic.* 9.7 (correct to 9.5), which, however, he has not correctly understood.

verse of Euripides, fr.369 N.² (60 A.). The same verse with six (?) following verses is quoted at Stobaeus, *Eclogae* 4.14.4 (vol. 4.372.10ff Hense), who attributes the lines to Euripides, *Erectheus*. Plutarch is discussing Nicias' strenuous efforts in the cause of lasting peace. Amphipolis (*Nicias* 9.2–3) claimed the lives of Kleon and Brasidas. Thucydides writes (5.12.1) that the battle was fought toward the end of summer 422 B.C., possibly as late as the second half of October.⁹ Plutarch next (*Nicias* 9.3–4) describes Nicias' diplomatic activity among Spartans and the Athenian factions in an effort to find some agreement for peace negotiations. At *Nicias* 9.5 the author suddenly intrudes the pluperfect tense to describe an earlier event outside of chronological sequence. I should translate the passage thus:

Earlier they had made a year-long armistice with one another during which, while they met together and *tasted the sweets of* [after Holden *ad loc.*] security, leisure, and visitors at home and abroad, they fervently desired a normal life without war, gladly listening to choruses when they sang such words as “*κείσθω . . .*” and gladly recalling the one who said that in peace not trumpets but roosters awaken sleepers.

The subject of the finite verbs is ‘the Spartans and the Athenians’. This implies that *Erectheus* was produced at the City Dionysia rather than at the Lenaia, which (perforce) only Athenians attended (Ar. *Ach.* 502ff with scholia). The Dionysia in spring attracted a large international crowd.¹⁰ Which Dionysia does Plutarch mean? “They had made a year’s armistice.” The words recall Thucydides 4.118.12 (*τὴν ἐκεχειρίαν εἶναι ἐνιαυτόν*). Thucydides dates the armistice to 14 Elaphebolion 423 B.C., presumably, as Gomme has eloquently argued,¹¹ the day following the Dionysia of that year. The armistice,

⁹ Thus G. Busolt, *Griechische Geschichte* III.2 (Gotha 1904) 1174 n.5; cf. Schmid-Stählin, *Geschichte der griech. Literatur* I.4 (Munich 1946) 280 n.7 (henceforth: SCHMID-STÄHLIN): “etwa Mitte Oktober 422.” Eratosthenes’ alleged assertion (*FGrHist* 241 F 39) that the battle occurred eight months before the production of Ar. *Pax* at the Dionysia of 421 must be discounted. He presumably was misquoted: see A. W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides* III (Oxford 1956) 656.

¹⁰ See Sir Arthur W. Pickard-Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*, ed.² rev. by John Gould and D. M. Lewis (Oxford 1968) 58–59 and esp. 58 n.6, where Pickard-Cambridge stresses just this contrast between the two festivals.

¹¹ See Gomme, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.9) III.603, 678–79, but note the *caveat* of Pickard-Cambridge, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.10) 64. Pickard-Cambridge might more accurately have reported that Thuc. 5.23.4 says that the Lacedaemonians will renew the treaty “when they go to Athens for the Dionysia.” Thucydides does *not* say that business was conducted during the festival. I am inclined, therefore, to agree with Gomme.

then, would have been in effect until 14 Elaphebolion 422 B.C. Plutarch's text, therefore, is consistent only with a performance of *Erectheus* at the Dionysia of 422 B.C.¹² "Plutarch ist ein stilistisch hervorragender, historisch urteilsloser, chronologisch unbekümmerter mann," warned Wilamowitz¹³ long ago. We cannot control whether Plutarch here is vague or inaccurate. We can say that any modern scholar who places *Erectheus* elsewhere than in 422 B.C. contradicts what the text of Plutarch, *Nicias* 9.5 says.

The last part of Plutarch's sentence (*Nicias* 9.5) has been uniformly ignored by scholars. The identity of τοῦ εἰπόντος is intriguing. A dramatic poet is required (χορῶν). Plutarch has quoted a nameless tragedian. One expects a nameless comedian. The barnyard confirms the suspicion. ἀλεκτρυῶν, 'rooster', is the comic word.¹⁴ ἀλέκτωρ, 'chanticler', became the *vox tragica*¹⁵ and is even used metaphorically in poetry (Ion, fr.39 N.²) and by Demades (*apud* Athen. 99D), "who was a précieux" (see Starkie on Ar. *Nubes* 663), in prose. The noun is rare and normally paratragic in comedy (e.g., Ar. *Vesp.* 1490 with Starkie). The rare verb ἀφυπνίζουσι too suggests old comedy (Cratinus, fr.306 K; Pherekrates, fr.191 K.), although once found in tragedy at Euripides, *Rhesus* 25.¹⁶ There is an obvious parallel to the sentiment in the historiographical tradition. Polybius (12.26.1) attacks Timaios (FGrHist 566 F 22.31ff) because he set into a speech of Hermokrates a trite remark: κοινωμένους τὸν ὄρθρον ἐν μὲν τῷ πολέμῳ διεγείρουσι σάλπιγγες, κατὰ δὲ τὴν εἰρήνην οἱ ὄρουιθες.¹⁷ It is a coincidence that Timaios continued to cite a fragment of Euripides (453 N.²) in praise of peace. In short the suspicion exists that τοῦ εἰπόντος refers to a comic poet. Plutarch further provides a chronological hint. ἡδέως δὲ μεμνημένοι is a conscious antithesis to ἡδέως μὲν . . . ἀκούοντες. They heard a contemporary tragedy and recalled an earlier comedy. Of Aristophanes only *Daitales* (427 B.C.) or *Babylonici* (426 B.C.) would be possible. More

¹² This date was reached by Paul Geissler, *Chronologie der altattischen Komödie* (Philologische Untersuchungen 30, Berlin 1925) 49 and is adopted by T. B. L. Webster, *WS* 79 (1966) 116, and *The Tragedies of Euripides* (London 1967) 116, who in neither place cites Geissler.

¹³ See U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Aristoteles und Athen* II (Berlin 1893) 290; cf. R. C. Flickinger, *Plutarch as a Source of Information on the Greek Theater* (Chicago 1904) 61.

¹⁴ See the numerous examples listed by O. J. Todd, *Index Aristophaneus* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1932) 12 [A] s.v., and H. Iacobi, *Comicae Dictionis Index* I (Berlin 1857) 156 s.v.

¹⁵ E.g., Aesch. *Ag.* 1671: see D. W. Thompson, *A Glossary of Greek Birds*² (Oxford 1936; repr. Olms 1966) 33, and W. Richter, *Der Kleine Pauly* II (1967) 1239.

¹⁶ See W. Ritchie, *The Authenticity of the Rhesus of Euripides* (Cambridge 1964) 153.

¹⁷ For simple ὄρουθες as 'fowl' see Thompson, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.15) 33; and for roosters as ancient alarm-clocks see *ibid.* 38-39 and Headlam on Herondas 4.12.

likely the source was another comedian, not impossibly Cratinus. Let us next examine whatever other evidence exists for the date of *Erectheus* to see if it allows production in 422 B.C.

In support of Plutarch's 422 I submit two passages in Aristophanes' *Pax* that may reveal the influence of Euripides, fr.369 N.² (60 A.).¹⁸ The Euripidean chorus wish to lean their spears against the wall and never use them again. Thus Trygaios prays never to use his shield again (*Pax* 437–38). While the Euripidean chorus, free of spear, yearn to devote their old age to private reading, the lusty farmers' chorus of *Pax* 1127ff, free of helmet,¹⁹ long for an old age roasting chestnuts by the fire with wine and friends, occasionally flirting with the maid when the wife is away. *Pax* was produced the very next year at the Dionysia of 421 B.C.;²⁰ and Aristophanes has created his comic version of Euripides' popular chorus.

The next evidence for the date of *Erectheus* are three known Aristophanic parodies, all specifically attested in antiquity and regularly cited by scholars.²¹

1. Fr.363 N.² (54 A.), εἰς μὲν λόγος μοι δεῦρ' ἀεὶ περαίνεται equals Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* 1135. A second citation of the fragment (*Anec. Bachm.* I.191.29) proves that the scholiast on *Lysistrata* 1131 refers in fact to *Lysistrata* 1135.²² The parody, which made an otherwise innocuous line memorable, apparently concerned the Euripidean penchant for δεῦρ' ἀεὶ, *huc usque*.²³ Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* is dated by its hypothesis to 411 B.C., presumably the Lenaia.²⁴

2. *Etymologicum Magnum* 153.32–34 (Gaisford) reveals that Aristoph-

¹⁸ Naturally the passages may have been quite independent of each other and simply reflect a conventional trope: cf. Ar. *Ach.* 279. Euripides' source was Bacchyl. fr.4.69–72 (Snell): cf. H. W. Smyth, *Greek Melic Poets* (London 1906) 446–47, who held (445) that Eur. fr.453 N.² derived from Bacchylides. The tragedian thus would know the paian.

¹⁹ Whether spear, shield or helmet is specified, arms in general are meant: see van Leeuwen on Ar. *Pax* 1127–29.

²⁰ The hypothesis dates the play: see further Schmid-Stählin I.4.280–81.

²¹ See e.g., Schmid-Stählin I.3.428 n.8; P. Geissler, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.12) 49; A. Lesky, *Die tragische Dichtung der Hellenen* (Göttingen 1956) 177–78; Austin, *Recherches* 17 n.1. P. Rau, *Paratragodia, Untersuchung einer komischen Form des Aristophanes* (*Zetemata* 45, Munich 1967) 215 omits fr.370 N.² and *Thesm.* 120.

²² See Nauck on fr.363 N.², rightly approved by J. van Leeuwen on Ar. *Lys.* 1131–35. F. Dübner, *Scholia graeca in Aristophanem* (Paris 1842) 506 must be corrected.

²³ For Euripidean examples see A. S. Owen on Eur. *Ion* 56; A. C. Pearson on Eur. *Hel.* 761; and P. Groeneboom, *Aeschylus' Eumeniden* (Groningen 1952) 182 n.1.

²⁴ Thus e.g., J. van Leeuwen, *Aristophanis Lysistrata* (Leiden 1903) 4 n.7: "initio anni 411." M. Lang, *AJP* 88 (1967) 181, sums up the convincing case: "Apparently in February the forces of reaction were still a joking matter; by March politics were (had to be?) studiously avoided in favor of literary escapism."

anes parodies *ἀσιάδος κρούματα* (fr.370 N.², 64 A.).²⁵ The phrase would have occurred in a lyric celebrating victory. Aristophanes puts it into a lyric at *Thesmophoriazusae* 120,²⁶ a play securely dated to Dionysia 411.²⁷ In 412 Aristophanes had apparently been reading *Erectheus*.

3. Fr.357 N.² (47 A.) reads *ζεύγος τριπάρθενον*. The expression is logically inaccurate because it refers to a yoke of more than two, *sc.* 'a pair of three maidens' (see *LSJ s.v. ζεύγος* III). Hesychius (ζ 125 Latte) cites the Aristophanic parody (fr.576 K.) *ζεύγος τριδουλον* from *Horae*.²⁸ *Horae* is dated²⁹ between 420–411 B.C. by the parody of *Erectheus*, whose production provides the *terminus post quem*, and the deaths of Chaerephon (Pl. *Apol.* 21A) and Androkles (*Prosop.Att.* 870; d. 411 B.C., see Thuc. 8.65.2), who were alive at the time of production. A tradition exists that *Erectheus* was an alternative title for *Horae*, and ingenious speculation has tried to surmise his rôle in the play.³⁰ Presumably a character in the play was erroneously cited as the title. There are Sophoclean parallels for this kind of mistake.³¹ In any case the parody in *Horae* provides no clue for the date of *Erectheus*. The Aristophanic parallels in conclusion yield only the meager information that *Erectheus* was certainly produced before 411 B.C.

In 1925 Thaddaeus Zieliński, following an earlier suggestion of Gottfried Hermann, proved that Euripides' iambic trimeters grew progressively more tolerant of resolutions.³² His brilliant and carefully argued discovery, with the refinements of E. B. Ceadel, T. B. L. Webster and A. M. Dale,³³ has become the most reliable criterion for

²⁵ "The notes of Asia" mean the primitive Lesbian kithara: see U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Timotheos, die Perser* (Leipzig 1903) 77 n.2, who cites Plut. *Mor.* 1133c (cf. *Eur. Cyc.* 443, *Hyps.* fr.64.101 [Bond]; *FGrHist* 76 F 81), and Abert, *RE* 1 A (1920) 1762.35ff. The reference here may have been a compliment to Timotheus: see T. B. L. Webster, *The Tragedies of Euripides* (London 1967) 18 with n.25.

²⁶ See F. G. Welcker, *Die griechischen Tragödien* II (Bonn 1839) 725. Welcker (*ibid.* 439) dates the play no more precisely than "Vor Ol. 92, 2" (411).

²⁷ See Wilamowitz, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.13) II. 343ff, and recently C. Austin, *Gnomon* 37 (1965) 619 with n.4.

²⁸ For Aristophanic parody of such numerical circumlocutions see P. Rau, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.21) 135.

²⁹ See Geissler, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.12) 49, followed by Schmid-Stählin I.4.195 with n.17. R. Goossens, *Euripide et Athènes* (*MémAcadBelg* 55.4, Brussels 1962) 476 n.2, suggests "Lénéennes de 421?" This is pure fancy.

³⁰ See Kock on Ar. fr.564–65 K.

³¹ For examples see *GRBS* 7 (1966) 50 n.103.

³² See Thaddaeus Zieliński, *Tragodoumenon Libri Tres* (Kraków 1925) 133–240.

³³ See E. B. Ceadel, "Resolved Feet in the Trimeters of Euripides and the Chronology of the Plays," *CQ* 35 (1941) 66–89; T. B. L. Webster, "Chronological Notes on Euripides," *WS* 79 (1966) 112–20 (really a supplement to Zieliński); and, for informed approval of Zieliński's method, A. M. Dale, *Euripides, Helen* (Oxford 1967) xxiv–xxviii.

the relative dating of Euripidean tragedies not fixed by external evidence. In spite of the obvious statistical risks³⁴ involved in applying his scale to the highly select remains of lost tragedies, Zieliński analyzed the fragments. In the case of *Erechtheus* he reported:³⁵ “‘Erechtheus’ (*sic*) externis testimoniis anno 421 vindicatur. Neque obstant quae in 114 ejus trimetris 19 occurrunt solutiones, quae 16.6 % efficiunt modulum semisevere stile aptissimum.” T. B. L. Webster³⁶ reports the first count that includes the Louvre papyrus: “the new fragment may raise the percentage of resolutions to about 20 %.” In short the metrical evidence with a count of *ca.* twenty per cent of resolved syllables puts *Erechtheus* into Zieliński’s Group II, “the semi-severe style” of 427–416 B.C. and is consistent with Plutarch’s 422 B.C.

Further evidence exists that has never been brought forward in this context, and provides the first identifiable external *terminus post quem*. In two passages the author of *Erechtheus* refers to ‘golden Gorgo’.³⁷ Fr.351 N.² (41 A.) is Praxithea’s (?) invocation to Athena:

Cry aloud in prayer, women, that the goddess may
come with the golden Gorgo, a helper for the city.

At fr.360.46–49 N.² (50.46–49 A.) Praxithea remarks:

Nor in place of the olive and the golden Gorgo shall
Eumolpos and his Thracian host crown with wreaths
a trident set up straight in the bowels of the city
where Pallas shall nowhere be honored.

Gorgo was never golden but, as the Furies with which she is compared, black.³⁸ Rather we have to do with a typical Euripidean anachronism.³⁹ For an Athenian audience of 422 B.C. Euripides clearly referred to the

³⁴ G. Zuntz, *The Political Plays of Euripides* (Manchester 1955) 93, astutely drew attention to the difference in percentage of resolutions between the two great speeches from *Erechtheus* preserved in the indirect tradition. Fr.360 N.² (50 A.) yields 30.9 %; fr.362 N.² (53 A.) 11.8 %. Zuntz here and at p.89 with n.2 misunderstands Plutarch and dates the play to 421 B.C. He cites as his source, but without a reference, Meineke. Presumably he took this reference from Nauck, *TGF*² p.465, who cites “Meineke, *Zeitschr. f. d. Alterthumsw.* 1843 p. 185.” This last paper I have not seen, but it presumably was a beginning of error.

³⁵ Zieliński, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.32) 223.

³⁶ Webster, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.25) 130.

³⁷ In a chauvinistic play where Athene herself played a major rôle, Euripides surely followed the Attic version of Athene *γοργοφόνος* (Eur. *Ion* 1478): see Wilamowitz on Eur. *Herc.* 883 and *Ion* 989 and Roscher, *Lex.* I.2 (1886–90) 1696.37ff. This would be no place for Argive Perseus.

³⁸ See Aesch. *Eum.* 52, *Cho.* 1049, and Eur. *Herc.* 882 (*Νυκτὸς Γοργῶν*).

³⁹ See Schmid-Stählin I.3. 763 with n.12 (they were “an der Tagesordnung”), and more generally E. Mulder, *De tragicorum anachronismis* (Amsterdam 1880).

shield of Pheidias' Athene Parthenos. E. B. Harrison in her recent study of this shield observes,⁴⁰ "we know from the inventories that the gorgoneion of the shield was made of gilded silver." The evidence is IG II² 1388.52–53. Philochoros (*FGrHist* 328 F 121) refers to the dedication of the completed cult image in 438/7 B.C.,⁴¹ which becomes thereby the *terminus post quem* for *Erectheus*.

Misdating of the play has derived from two sources: misinterpretation of Plutarch, *Nicias* 9.5, and the persistent assumption that *Erectheus* was part of the *Supplices* tetralogy. This view sprang from a fancy of the young Wilamowitz. In 1875⁴² he dated without argument *Erectheus* to "ca. 421" and cited Plutarch, *Nicias* 9. Later in the same book⁴³ he assigned *Erectheus* with *Supplices* to 421.⁴⁴ His candor is disarming. He admits⁴⁵ that he seems to have done this "sine causa" and as an explanation adds "nam non potest certis rationibus probari." Nonetheless, he tries.⁴⁶ He argues from the demonstrable similarity of theme shared by the two tragedies. In both plays foreigners invade Attica. Both plays, Wilamowitz thought,⁴⁷ had a *Nebenchor*, *Supplices* of boys, *Erectheus* of women. *Erectheus* and Theseus quarrel with a foreign captain. Both plays are concerned with contemporary politics. Wilamowitz sees a connected trilogy in the manner of *Troades* (415 B.C.) but is unable to come up with the third play. *Ion* tempts him but he resists to support *Hippolytus*. In 1895 he repeated his conviction⁴⁸ and dallied with the idea that *Herakles* was the second play of the trilogy. He repeated his view again in 1904 but without further argument.⁴⁹ There was, however, a difference. Wilamowitz now

⁴⁰ *Hesperia* 35 (1966) 111.

⁴¹ See Jacoby *ad loc.* and G. Lippold, *RE* 19 (1938) 1926.8ff.

⁴² See U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Analecta Euripidea* (Berlin 1875) 151 (henceforth: WILAMOWITZ, *AnEur*). The date had earlier been argued by A. Meineke (see n.34 *supra*).

⁴³ Wilamowitz, *AnEur* 173–74.

⁴⁴ For the contested date of *Eur. Supp.* see especially: G. Busolt, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.9) III.2.1196 n.2 (422 B.C.); G. H. Macurdy, *The Chronology of the Extant Plays of Euripides* (Diss. Columbia 1905) 46–56 (420 B.C. after Böckh and Hermann); Schmid-Stählin I.3.454–55 (417/16 B.C.); A. Lesky, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.21) 176 (424 B.C.? after Zuntz); and Zuntz, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.34) 88ff (424 B.C.).

⁴⁵ Wilamowitz, *AnEur* 173.

⁴⁶ Wilamowitz, *AnEur* 174.

⁴⁷ For the female *Nebenchor* in *Erectheus* Wilamowitz (*AnEur* 174 n.1) rightly cites fr.351 N.² (41 A.), and such a *Nebenchor* strikes me as easier than B. Snell's suggestion that the fragment is taken from a narrative (see Austin *ad* fr.41 A.). For Euripides' use of a *Nebenchor* see Wilamowitz, *Herakles* I² (Berlin 1895) 116 n.13 where, however, he wrongly makes the soldiers in *Erectheus* the *Nebenchor*. The view is refuted by fr.65.7–10 A. (*cf.* fr.369 N.², 60 A.).

⁴⁸ Wilamowitz, *Herakles* I².134 n.27.

⁴⁹ See U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Griechische Tragödien* I⁴ (Berlin 1904) 208 (henceforth: WILAMOWITZ, *GrTr* I⁴).

dated *Supplices* and *Erectheus* to 422.⁵⁰ "In den Hiketiden habe ich die Sünden meiner Ausgabe von 1875 gut zu machen."⁵¹

Not until 1921 was Wilamowitz' suggestion cleverly refuted. Johanna Schmitt⁵² argued that the best reasons why the plays were not in the same trilogy were precisely the similarities which Wilamowitz had detected and to which Frl. Schmitt adds.⁵³ The audience would feel as put upon as though they had seen *Helena* and *Iphigenia among the Taurians* in the same program. She more reasonably suggests that the two plays were performed in successive years.⁵⁴ Schmitt's refutation unaccountably has been ignored by scholars and Wilamowitz' fancy uncritically perpetuated by the most influential authorities, A. Dieterich,⁵⁵ M. Pohlenz,⁵⁶ A. Lesky,⁵⁷ R. Goossens,⁵⁸ and finally C. Austin.⁵⁹ One ought rather to conclude that only assertion can support Wilamowitz' suggestion that *Erectheus* and *Supplices* were part of the same trilogy. J. Schmitt has shown that contrarily the balance of probability is against the hypothesis.

To sum up what can be known: *Erectheus* was surely performed between 438/7 and 411 B.C., and if Plutarch, *Nicias* 9.5 is precise, at the Dionysia of 422. Is there some contemporary historical event which suggested the subject matter of the tragedy to Euripides?

The date of the beginning of the construction of the Erechtheion is a vexed problem in the history of fifth-century Athenian architecture. J. M. Paton, to whom I am indebted for much of what follows, in his

⁵⁰ Wilamowitz, *GrTr* I⁴.216.; cf. *Kleine Schriften* III.381.

⁵¹ Wilamowitz, *GrTr* I⁴.282.

⁵² See Johanna Schmitt, *Freiwilliger Opfertod bei Euripides (Religions-geschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten* 17.2, Giessen 1921) 64.

⁵³ See Schmitt, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.52) 64 n.5.

⁵⁴ See Schmitt, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.52) 64, who suggests the years 422 and 421 but is not clear which play goes in which year.

⁵⁵ See A. Dieterich, *RE* 6 (1907) 1259.11ff.

⁵⁶ See M. Pohlenz, *Griechische Tragödie I*² (Göttingen 1954) 359; cf. II².148.

⁵⁷ See A. Lesky, *Die griechische Tragödie*³ (Stuttgart 1964) 181, 203. Earlier he was more cautious: see *op.cit.* (*supra* n.21) 177-78, where he has been influenced by a recent reading of G. Zuntz. At his *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur*² (Bern, München 1963) 416, Lesky is non-committal: "... der *Erechtheus* (sic), den man vermutungsweise derselben Triologie (sic) zuweisen wollte wie die Hiketiden."

⁵⁸ See Goossens, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.29) 476 n.2 (tentatively).

⁵⁹ See Austin, *Recherches* 17 n.1, who cites without criticism the hypothesis of Wilamowitz, and compare D. F. W. van Lennep, *Euripides ΠΟΙΗΤΗΣ ΣΟΦΟΣ* (Amsterdam 1935) 66 n.1. For the date 421, although with no mention of *Supplices*, see further M. A. Schwartz, *Erechtheus et Theseus apud Euripidem et Athidographos* (Leiden 1907) 18, and J. Geffcken, *Griechische Literaturgeschichte, I: von den Anfängen bis auf die Sophistenzzeit* (Heidelberg 1926) 190.

magisterial history of the building⁶⁰ sets forth the unsatisfactory evidence. Epigenes in 410/9 appointed a committee of five to examine the condition of the unfinished building on the acropolis that is now called⁶¹ the 'Erechtheion' (IG I² 372). Study of the inscription shows that work is already advanced.⁶² The problem of dating the commencement of work becomes the insoluble one of how much time was required to construct what was there in 410/9.⁶³ But first what halted construction? Paton⁶⁴ suggests three reasonable possibilities: (1) Funds were required for the Sicilian Expedition of 415⁶⁵ and the building program naturally suffered; (2) the occupation of Decelea by the Spartans in spring of 413 B.C.; (3) the disaster at Syracuse in autumn 413 B.C. If 415 or 413 was the date of breaking off work, Paton concludes "the latest date at which the temple could have been begun, in view of its advanced condition in 409 B.C., would seem to fall in the brief interval of Athenian prosperity which followed the Peace of Nicias (421 B.C.), and since a certain interval must be allowed for the accumulation of funds after the heavy expenses of the ten preceding years of war, the commencement of the work may be conjecturally placed as not later than 419 or 418 B.C." Paton, with admirable candor, adds, "There is, however, absolutely no direct evidence on this point."⁶⁶

Paton continues to present the alternative and earlier dating propounded by Dörpfeld "before the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War in 432 B.C."⁶⁷ The Erechtheion then becomes a part of the general

⁶⁰ See J. M. Paton, *apud* J. M. Paton, ed. *The Erechtheum: measured, drawn, and restored* by G. P. Stevens, text by L. D. Caskey, H. N. Fowler, J. M. Paton, G. P. Stevens, I: *Text* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1927) 452ff (henceforth: PATON, *Erechtheum*).

⁶¹ The modern name was not general in antiquity: see Paton, *Erechtheum* 452 n.6. Austin, *Recherches* 58, does not know Ps.-Plut. *X orat.* 843E.

⁶² See Paton, *Erechtheum* 453. Once work was started up again, although few laborers were employed, the building was complete by 406 B.C.

⁶³ With a few exceptions (e.g., Temple G at Selinus) one ought not to be misled by the analogy of mediaeval cathedrals. Ancient building was more rapid. The Parthenon took less than fifteen years: see J. Wiesner, *RE* 18 (1949) 1915.54ff. The rapidity was noteworthy (Plut. *Per.* 13.1). The Propylaea required only five years: see Plut. *Per.* 13.7, and for Plutarch's sources H. N. Fowler, *HSCP* 12 (1901) 211–20. The Pyramid of Cestius, we know from its inscription (Dessau, *ILS* 917), was completed in 330 days. Hagia Sophia needed only five years (532–537): see A. A. Vassiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire 324–1453* (Madison 1952) 187–89. Archaeologists could provide far more examples.

⁶⁴ See Paton, *Erechtheum* 453.

⁶⁵ For the cost of the Sicilian Expedition, the largest extraordinary expense of the Empire, see the calculations of B. D. Meritt, H. T. Wade-Gery and M. F. McGregor, *The Athenian Tribute Lists* III (Princeton 1950) 356–57 and my remarks at *GRBM* 4 (1963) 60ff.

⁶⁶ See Paton, *Erechtheum* 453, and further L. Caskey, *ibid.* 298: "No definite information exists as to the length of the period of inactivity, nor as to the date when the temple was begun."

⁶⁷ See Paton, *Erechtheum* 454: for detailed references consult the notes of Paton.

Periclean building program. Paton shows that architectural considerations are not conclusive: ". . . there is no more positive testimony for this date than for the later one." He concludes by stating the insoluble problem: "there seems no decisive reason for insisting on one hypothesis to the exclusion of the other. The unsatisfactory conclusion is thus inevitable that in the light of our present knowledge the year in which the Erechtheum was begun cannot be definitely determined."⁶⁸

PSorb. Inv. 2328 contains the magnificent speech of Athene, delivered from the *θεολογείον*, that ended *Erechtheus*. The goddess (fr.65.90–91 A.) informs the widowed Praxithea that she is ordering the construction of a sanctuary⁶⁹ with stone (marble? see *LSJ s.v. λάϊνος* and Jebb on Soph. OC 1596) enclosing walls for the slain Erechtheus.

πόσει δὲ τῷ σῶ σηκὸν ἐμ μέσῃ πόλει
τεῦξαι κελεύω περιβόλοισι λαίνοις.

And for your husband I order a shrine to be constructed in the middle of the city with enclosing walls of stone.

The goddess continues to discuss the cult to be offered him. It would be false precision to specify whether Athene refers to the earlier shrine of Erechtheus (Hdt. 8.55) or to the building yet to be erected.⁷⁰ In either case the reference becomes peculiarly *à propos* if in the very year that the poet wrote his verses, the *ἐκκλησία* had decided to begin the new Erechtheion. It is not impossible that the grand plan for reconstruction was indeed ultimately Periclean but that work was postponed until completion of the Parthenon and Propylaea. The coincidence of the date of production for Euripides' play with one of the alternative dates for the beginning of construction on the Erechtheion reinforces the assumptions both that Plutarch's date for the performance of Euripides' play is correct and that Paton's rather than Dörpfeld's date for the beginning of construction on the Erechtheion is preferable.⁷¹

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⁶⁸ See Paton, *Erechtheum* 456.

⁶⁹ The word *σηκός* is ambiguous, 'temple' or 'precinct': see Stephanus-Dindorf, *TGL* 8.171D ff, and Austin, *Recherches* 58; and compare, e.g., Eur. *Ion* 300, of the shrine of Trophonios at Lebadeia.

⁷⁰ I find Austin's confidence (*Recherches* 59) premature.

⁷¹ I should like at the end to express my gratitude to Professor John Vaio for valuable and learned criticism.