FOR GERALD ELSE

Hippolytus and the Dating of Oedipus Tyrannus

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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 Ἰώ Ἰώ 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 "Excurse 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
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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 Zielinski’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. 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.


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

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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.

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_ l.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 Hippolytos he

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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, _FGHist_ 12 f 28 (ἐλκόμενον ἀπόθανεῖν); Ps.-Apollodorus, _Epit._ 1.18–19 (συρόμενος ἀπέθανε); Servius, _Comm. in Verg. Aen._ 6.445 (quo facto territis equis et Hippolyto interempto Phaedra amoris impatienlia 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 N 2, 438 N 2) 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. 27ε–28α) reports that Euripides’ Phaedra, like Helen in the *Troades*, camouflaged reprehensible behavior with a display of specious rhetoric (εὑρησιλογίας), justifying her illicit passion by citing Theseus’ own παρανομίας. 10 Therefore the objection voiced in fr.439 N 2 of the *Kalyptomenos* against “clever speakers” (οἱ δεινοὶ λέγειν) who “conceal the truth with eloquence (εὐρόοις εὑρομαι) 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 οὕτως 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

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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 λόγου, 487).
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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” (πῆχ’ ὄρωτες φέγγος, 1023), he tells Theseus, “you could have determined the guilty ones with a cross-examination” (τοὺς κακοὺς διεξίων, 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 Zielinski’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” (ἐξεδροὶ 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 ταῦ and σίμα as Oedipus and Theseus sputter in anger. Theseus says (937):

τί τέρμα τόλμης καὶ θράσους γενήσεται;

Compare the words of Oedipus at 532–34:

η τοκώνθε ἐχεις
τόλμης πρόσωπον ῥετε τάς ἐμὰς στέγας

We hear more echoes as the speeches continue. Theseus accuses Hippolytus of being “obviously” guilty of the charge of rape (ἐμφανῶς κάκιστος ἄν, 945), and Oedipus claims that Creon is “obviously” the murderer of Laius (φονεύς ἄν ... 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 OCT3 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 εὖ and εὖ 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” (ισούμαι εφῶν ἐγὼ δυὸν 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 improbably 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 οὔτ’ αὐτὸς ἱμείρων ἔφυν
τύραννος εἶναι μᾶλλον ἦ τύραννα δρᾶν,
οὔτ’ ἄλλος ὅστις αἰσθοῦν ἑπίσταται.

νῦν μὲν γὰρ ἐκ σοῦ πάντ’ ἀνευ φόβου φέρω,
εἰ δ’ αὐτὸς ἤρχον, πολλὰ καὶ ἄκοι ἔδρων.

πῶς δὴ ἐμοὶ τυραννὶς ἤδιων ἔχειν
ἀρχῆς ἀλύποι καὶ δυναστεῖας ἐφ’;
οὔπω τοσοῦτον ἠπατημένος κυρὸ
ἄστ’ ἄλλα χρῆζειν ἦ τὰ εὖν κέρδει καλά.
Hippolytus’ argument is (1012–20):

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\begin{align*}
\text{μάταιος ἄρ’ ἄν, οὐδαμοῦ μὲν ὁπ' φρενῶν.} \\
\text{ἀλλ' ὡς τυραννεῖν ἄνδ' τοῖς σώφροσιν} \\
\text{ἡκιστά γ', εἰ μὴ τὰς φρένας διέφθορεν} \\
\text{θυμητῶν ὠς εἰς ἀνδάνει μοναρχία.} \\
\text{ἔγιν δ' ἁγιών μὲν κρατεῖν Ἑλληνικοῦς} \\
\text{πρῶτος θέλομ' ἄν, ἐν πόλει δὲ δεύτερος} \\
\text{εὖν τοῖς ἀρίστοις εὐτυχεῖν ἀεὶ φίλοις.} \\
\text{πράσσεις τε γὰρ πάρεστι, κύδωνός τ' ἀπών} \\
\text{κρείσσω δὲ δοκεῖ τῆς τυραννίδος χάριν.}
\end{align*}
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In specific verbal similarities, both Creon and Hippolytus refer to the false “pleasure” (ἡδύ, Hipp. 1013; ἡδων, 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; ἡπαθημένος, OT 594) to relinquish his present status. Indeed, it is a sign of sensibility (τοῖς σώφροσιν, Hipp. 1013; ἄστει σωφρονεῖν ἐπίστασαι, 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. 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 μετατάσεως. 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.
commoner” (δημότης . . . εὐτυχῆς, 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: ἔτηληθὶ γειέν | 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.\textsuperscript{15}

The inconsistencies in this passage extend to the level of a single word, \textit{cwphrov}. 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, \textit{to cwphrov} (80). In his tirade against women in the second episode he uses the verb \textit{cwphrov} (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 (\textit{cwphrov}estepos, 995; \textit{to cwphrov}, 1007). When the same word appears only six lines later in the sentence, “Do you think that kingship is desired by those who are \textit{cwphrov}?” 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.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{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 \textit{Kalyptomenos}: cf. fr.434 N\textsuperscript{2} and Sen. \textit{Phaedr.} 617–23. For this reason some see the awkward motif in the \textit{Stephanephoros} as an inadvertent holdover from the original: cf. U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, \textit{Euripides Hippolytos griechisch und deutsch} (Berlin 1891) 224–25; Zintzen (\textit{supra} n.5) 73; Webster, \textit{Tragedies} (\textit{supra} n.3) 67; Barrett (\textit{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 \textit{agon} as well.

\textsuperscript{16} Barrett (\textit{supra} n.5), objecting to the shift in the meaning of \textit{cwphrov}, resists a strong temptation to delete 1012–15: cf. his commentary and apparatus \textit{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 συνάφρουεῖν 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. τέ δὴνα χρήζεις; ἥ με γῆς ἔξω βαλεῖν;
Oe. ἣκισταθήσκειν, οὐ φυγεῖν σε βουλομαι.

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

εἰ γὰρ εὖ μὲν παίεις ἡθῷ, ἔγω δὲ εὖς πατήρ,
ἐκτενὰ τοίς οἱ καὶ κοῦ φυγαῖς ἐξημίων.

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 Zielinski 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.


\(^{19}\) Less convincing is Zielinski’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). 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 *rēthesis*, 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, *ὅπλε ἴπλε*. At this point the Coryphaeus announces

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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 εἰρήν δὲ Κύπριν πόλιν 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.

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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). 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—rheis, 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’ rheis to be. 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 (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 ἀδήλως, 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 (ὥστε τη', 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’ ἔτρω, 1162)
moments, do we come to understand and admire the noble aspects of innocence and purity which he arrogantly flaunted in the early scenes. 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!”

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: κρύψων δὲ μου πρόχωρον ὡς τέχος πέπλως, 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. When he dies immediately after this noble request, we cannot help but feel a sharp sense of

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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 (ἀνος 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 τὸ δ’ ἄχος πάσι πολίταις ἠλθεν ἀέλπτως.