

Euripides *Phoenissae* 1–3 and Aelius Nico of Pergamum

Christian Habicht

IN 1975, M. W. HASLAM set off a lively discussion when he argued that Euripides *Phoenissae* 1f and Sophocles *Electra* 1 are spurious.¹ The following pages deal only with the *Phoenissae*, and introduce a testimony that has so far not been taken into account. It will be argued that it strengthens Haslam's case, strong as it is already.

Three Oxyrhynchus papyri provided Haslam with his strongest arguments. They are all of imperial date and all testify to *Phoenissae* 3 as the first verse of the play: "Ἡλιε, θεοῶς ἵπποισιν εἰλίσσων φλόγα. They are *P.Oxy.* XXVII 2455, one of the "Hypotheses from Euripides," and *P.Oxy.* XLVII 3321–22.² Haslam furthermore showed that both Theodectas, not later than 334 B.C., and Accius, in the later second century B.C., imitated *Phoenissae* 3. Two verses by Theodectas, obviously from the beginning of one of his tragedies, leave no doubt "that the reminiscence is deliberate."³ Haslam added: "It makes more sense if Theodectas knew the Euripidean line as the first verse of the play than if he knew it as the third." As for Accius, the first two lines of his *Phoenissae* are "an expanded version solely of Eur. *Phoen.* 3."⁴

Haslam then proceeded to discuss another group of testimonies for Euripides *Phoenissae* 3: "Later antiquity is peppered with direct but isolated quotations of the verse, which, though less decisive than its mutations in Theodectas and Accius, point in the same direction and have a certain negative value as

¹ M. W. HASLAM, "The Authenticity of Euripides, *Phoenissae* 1–2 and Sophocles, *Electra* 1," *GRBS* 16 (1975) 149–79 (hereafter 'Haslam').

² Haslam 150–56. He also argued that the *hypothesis* was part of the work of Dicaearchus.

³ Haslam 157; Theodectas F 10.1f (*TrGF* I, ed. B. Snell [Göttingen 1971] 235).

⁴ Haslam 157; Accius 581–84 (Ribbeck, *TRF*³ [Leipzig 1897] 244).

regards lines 1–2.”⁵ Among them is an ostrakon of the later Ptolemaic period, second or first century B.C.,⁶ and also a passage from the first of the *Sacred Tales* of Aelius Aristides: the writer dreams he is in the market place of Smyrna, in the middle of a crowd greeting the rising sun, “and they recited this verse of Euripides: ‘O Sun, on swift horses turning thy flame.’”⁷ Five other instances come from later authors.

Haslam continued with a discussion of Julian *Or.* 2.50D, where one might be tempted to see an allusion to *Phoenissae* 1f because of the use of the adjective χρυσοκόλλητος as in *Phoen.* 2. Haslam (161f), however, concludes that this is only a coincidence. He finally discusses a scholion to *Phoen.* 1f that reads as follows:

παλαιά τις φέρεται δόξα ὡς Σοφοκλῆς μὲν ἐπιτιμήσειεν Εὐριπίδη ὅτι [μὴ] προέταξε τούτους τοὺς δύο στίχους, ὁ δὲ Εὐριπίδης ὅτι [μὴ] προέταξεν ἐν Ἡλέκτρᾳ ὁ Σοφοκλῆς τὸ ὦ τοῦ στρατηγήσαντος ἐν Τροίᾳ ποτε’.

An ancient tradition is reported that Sophocles reproached Euripides for failing to prefix these two verses, and that Euripides in turn reproached Sophocles for failing to prefix, in the *Electra*, ὦ τοῦ στρατηγήσαντος ἐν Τροίᾳ ποτε (Soph. *EL* 1).⁸

The two μή’s were deleted by Valckenaer, and by others ever since, but Haslam tries to make a case for retaining them. Whatever position one takes with respect to this, the scholion in any event attests that the authenticity of *Phoen.* 1f was a matter of doubt in antiquity.⁹ Having discussed what he calls “internal evidence”—which turns out to be a stylistic evaluation

⁵ Haslam 158. The seven testimonies of this kind are discussed on 158–61.

⁶ This is now fr.989 of *Supplementum Hellenisticum*, edd. H. Lloyd-Jones and P. Parsons (Berlin 1983) 506. Lines 5f twice exhibit *Phoen.* 3.

⁷ Aristides *Or.* 47.22 (p.382 Keil). The translation is that of C. A. Behr, *P. Aelius Aristides. The Complete Works* III (Leiden 1981) 282.

⁸ Haslam 162f. The scholion is published in vol. I of E. Schwartz’ edition (Berlin 1887) 245 no. 1, and now in S. Radt, ed., *TrGF* IV (Göttingen 1977) 54 T 56.

⁹ The scholion, in any event, reflects an ancient discussion about the genuineness or spuriousness of these verses, as C. Mueller-Goldingen has observed: *Untersuchungen zu den Phönissen des Euripides* (Stuttgart 1985) 37ff with n.1. While he argues in favor of Valckenaer’s deletion of both μή’s, they are retained by H. Lloyd-Jones and N. Wilson, *Sophoclea* (Oxford 1990) 42.

of the two verses in question, and, for that reason, more subjective than other parts of his demonstration—Haslam (169) concludes: “Eur. *Phoen.* 1–2 and Soph. *El.* 1 must go. The authors by whom they purport to be written did not write them; their place is in the apparatus, not in the text.”

Haslam’s verdict has been accepted by several scholars: S. Radt, M. L. West, H. Lloyd-Jones and P. Parsons.¹⁰ C. Mueller-Goldingen seems strongly inclined to agree with Haslam, and D. J. Mastronarde, in his recent Teubner edition of the play, has deleted *Phoen.* 1f.¹¹ Others, however, were not convinced. M. van der Valk contested Haslam’s interpretation of the passage in Julian, maintaining that “Julian was inspired by the famous opening of *Phoenissae* 1–3.”¹² He agreed with Haslam’s contention that Accius had imitated line 3 but disputed with good reason that line 3, therefore, had to be the first of the play. He also attempted (238) to prove that Aristophanes *Ecc.* 1–6, was a parody of Euripides *Phoen.* 1ff. Likewise, H. Erbse remained unconvinced.¹³ He labelled Haslam’s argumentation “ingenious” (bestechend) but not entirely cogent. Just as van der Valk had pointed out for Accius, Erbse insisted that several of Haslam’s authors (such as Aristides) had no need to quote lines 1f, since they were not relevant for their purpose, with Helios invoked only in line 3. While he was prepared to concede that the *Vulgata* of the play may have begun with line 3, he insisted that this was not a sufficient reason to condemn lines 1f. He concluded that the omission of verses “in a papyrus” was not in itself sufficient for such a verdict.

An important new element was introduced into the debate by Jeffrey Rusten. In his paper “Dicaearchus and the *Tales from Euripides*” he argued that the *hypotheses* that Haslam had

¹⁰ Radt (*supra* n.8): “utique versus *Phoen.* 1 sq. ... spurios esse argumentis haud spernendis contendit Haslam”; West, *ZPE* 32 (1978) 1 n.2; Lloyd-Jones and Parsons (*supra* n.6) 507: “Eur. *Phoen.* 3 primus apud antiquos tragoediae versus, quod ingeniosissime demonstravit Haslam.”

¹¹ Mueller-Goldingen (*supra* n.9) 38f: particularly strong arguments against the quality of vv. 1f; Mastronarde, *Euripides, Phoenissae* (Leipzig 1988) 16: striking in view of his “decidedly conservative” attitude to alleged interpolations (J. Diggle, *CR* 104 [1990] 9).

¹² “Euripides, *Phoenissae* 1–2 and Sophocles, *Electra* 1,” *GRBS* 23 (1982) 236f; Mueller-Goldingen (*supra* n.9: 39) makes the same point.

¹³ *Studien zum Prolog der euripideischen Tragödie* (Berlin 1984) 224–27.

ascribed to Dicaearchus were, in fact, attributed to him in antiquity, but that Dicaearchus was not their author. He characterized them as “an anonymous set of Euripidean plot summaries ... falsely attributed to this famous scholar,” while being in fact “a work of mythography masquerading as scholarship ... composed in the first or second century after Christ.”¹⁴ Erbse (*supra* n.13: 297), who at first had accepted Dicaearchus’ authorship, took note of this in a postscript to his book: he regards Rusten’s doubts “justified” and argues that this made the deletion of *Phoen.* 1f even more arbitrary. This, however, does not necessarily follow if one agrees with Rusten’s demonstration, but only that Dicaearchus could then no longer be quoted in support of the view that *Phoen.* 1f were not known in the early Hellenistic period.¹⁵ The evidence from Theodectas, however, suggests that by the middle of the fourth century B.C. *Phoen.* 3 was regarded as the first verse of the play.¹⁶ Theodectas was a contemporary of the Athenian statesman Lycurgus (d. 324 B.C.), the man responsible for having official copies made of the works of the three great tragic poets and for requiring the actors to use these canonical texts.¹⁷ This copy eventually ended up in Ptolemaic Alexandria.¹⁸

Haslam (160 n.1) admitted the possibility that he might have missed other attestations of *Phoen.* 3. One such is provided by an inscription of the second century, found in 1904 in Pergamum and published in 1907 by Hugo Hepding.¹⁹ A slab of

¹⁴ *GRBS* 23 (1982) 357–66 at 366.

¹⁵ Erbse (*supra* n.13: 224) had originally accepted Haslam’s identification: “Haslam hat m. E. überzeugend nachgewiesen, daß es also schon im 4. Jahrhundert vor Chr. Ausgeben ohne die Verse 1–2 gegeben haben muß.” This, of course, was written before Erbse had seen Rusten’s paper. Mastronarde (*supra* n.11: 1) tends to agree with Rusten, while W. Luppe defends the authorship of Dicaearchus: “Dikaiarchos’ ὑποθέσεις τῶν Εὐριπίδου μύθων,” in *Aristoteles. Werk und Wirkung, P. Moraux gewidmet* (Berlin 1985) I 610–15.

¹⁶ Otto Zwierlein advises me that, because of the separation of the words in the invocation of the sun (ὦ ... Ἥλιε), Theodectas too may have known lines 1f but has extracted from them only what suited his purpose.

¹⁷ [Plut] *Mor.* 841F; F. W. Mitchel, *Lycourgan Athens: 338–322 (=Lectures in Memory of Louise Taft Semple SER. 2 [Cincinnati 1970])* 47.

¹⁸ Galen, *CMG* V 79 (10.2.1); R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship from the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age* (Oxford 1968) 82, 192.

¹⁹ *AM* 32 (1907) 356–60 no. 115 and fig. 19.

white marble contains thirteen lines of text, of which the first six are as follows:

Αἰλίου Νείκωνος. ἌΨΚΚ' . ἀρχιτέκτονος.
 Ἦλιε, θααῖς ἵπποισιν εἰλίσσων φλόγα,
 ὡς παντελῆ θνητοῖσι τῇ τότε γ' ἡμέρα
 ἀκτεῖνας ἐφῆκας θέμενος ἡλίου δρόμους
 καὶ τὴν ἄπειρον γαῖαν ἠδε ὑγροῦ χύσεις
 ἀέρα τε καὶ πῦρ ἐν τάξει φορούμενα.

This is one of the *isopsephoi* of that time, several of which have been found at Pergamum. The first line has twice the value 1,726, as indicated: for the name of the author and for the word ἀρχιτέκτονος, when the sum of all the letters is added. Lines 2 to 6 together have, as indicated in line 7, the value of 15,000. The author, Aelius Nico, was an architect and geometer and, in all likelihood, none other than the father of Galen.²⁰ He was not only a contemporary, but must have been an acquaintance of Aelius Aristides who as we have seen also quotes *Phoen.* 3. It is obvious, as Hepding saw, that lines 2ff of Nico's poem imitate Euripides *Phoen.* 3ff. Line 2 is a verbatim quotation of *Phoen.* 3, while lines 3f poorly (and under the strain of the rules of the genre) transform Euripides' verses 4f.²¹

Again, as Haslam has pointed out for Theodectas, Accius, and the other testimonies, the natural and obvious conclusion is that these verses were chosen because they were the best known of the play. One is inclined to think that they were the best known verses because they happened to be the first ones. It does not matter much whether people remembered them from the play itself or from a compilation, such as the *Hypotheses from Euripides*, in which a quotation of its first line is followed by a plot-summary. There also existed anthologies, collections of the most famous and most popular lines by a poet, or by various poets. One such anthology was even inscribed on stone: an inscription found in Armenia and dated to *ca* 200 B.C. contained

²⁰ H. Diller, "Nikon 18," *RE* 17.1 (1936) 507f; *PIR*² A 226.

²¹ Hepding (*supra* n.19) 358; see also E. Ohlemutz, *Die Kulte und Heiligtümer der Götter in Pergamon* (Würzburg 1940) 85.

a collection of verses from Euripides, as I was able to show in 1953.²²

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²² "Über eine armenische Inschrift mit Versen des Euripides," *Hermes* 81 (1953) 251-56; *SEG* XII 547; W. Peek, *Philologus* 121 (1978) 307 n.3; *TrGF* II, edd. R. Kannicht and B. Snell (Göttingen 1981) 87f, fr.279g. For constructive criticism and valuable suggestions I am most grateful to Otto Zwierlein and the anonymous referee for this journal.