

PHAETHON, HIPPOLYTUS, AND APHRODITE

KENNETH J. RECKFORD

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

It is generally agreed that in his *Phaethon*¹ Euripides interwove complex domestic motifs, including a marriage plan, into the familiar tragedy of the charioteer, the rash youth who yokes the Sun's horses, loses control of them, and crashes, struck down by Zeus' thunderbolt. Such, more or less, was Aeschylus' version. He made Phaethon simply the child of Helios and his wife (Clymene or Rhode) and, in action played out before the Sun's palace, stressed the complicity of Phaethon's sisters, the Heliades, in yoking the horses for him, and their subsequent remorse and grief. Such, too, is Ovid's version, which has dominated all later mythological and artistic treatments of the myth.² Euripides' play, however, takes place before the palace of Merops, the Ethiopian king, husband of Clymene and assumed father of Phaethon; the shift of scene corresponds to a more fundamental change of conception which puts special dramatic and symbolic emphasis on Merops' plan to marry off Phaethon to some highborn bride. The identity of the bride has vexed scholars and was the starting-point of the present paper.

In his important 1883 article, Wilamowitz proposed Aphrodite: a

¹ A full bibliography of work done on *Phaethon* is provided in *Euripides Phaethon*, ed. with *prolegomena and commentary* by James Diggle (Cambridge 1970). The most important discussions previous to Diggle's own are: U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, "Phaethon," *Hermes* 18 (1883) 396-434; H. Weil, "Observations sur les Fragments d'Euripide," *REG* 2 (1889) 322-27; A. Lesky, "Zum Phaethon des Euripides," *WS* 50 (1932) 1-25; and T. B. L. Webster, *The Tragedies of Euripides* (London 1967) 220-32. I use Diggle's text and numeration throughout; it will be evident how much, despite disagreements, I have relied on his judgment.

² Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.750-2.400; see Diggle 180-200 (Appendix A: Ovid and Nonnus). It is interesting how much in Ovid lies outside the scope of Euripides' play: probably, most of the Sun god's attempt to dissuade Phaethon (perhaps indicated in our messenger's speech), and the brilliant description of the ride itself. Ovid knows Euripides' play but omits the domestic complications, and in so doing, Diggle argues, he involves himself in occasional difficulties and self-contradictions.

view which, accepted with various reservations by many subsequent scholars, and most recently by T. B. L. Webster, has been decisively rejected by James Diggle in his 1970 commentary. My own investigation began with an uneasy sense that the rejection of Aphrodite was somehow hybriatic; that, while perhaps necessary on a literal level, it gravely impairs our understanding of the play. Even apart from tone and feeling (which are largely conveyed through imagery), Diggle's plot outline, which includes the substitution, following Henri Weil's tentative suggestion, of one of the Heliades for Aphrodite, leaves gaps in motivation and dramatic structure which are extremely difficult to explain. Any attempt to interpret the *Phaethon* must take into account the large dark areas of this play. In what follows, I shall argue from certain strong resemblances between Euripides' *Hippolytus* and what we have of *Phaethon* that Wilamowitz was at least partly right: that the play involved a "marriage with Aphrodite," but only in a symbolic sense; and that Euripides has indeed, in a characteristic way, fused two stories, illuminating the prevalent tale of the charioteer who crashes to his death by reference to the older myth, related by Hesiod, of the beautiful youth who is loved by Aphrodite and carried off by her to be her special attendant.

It is not by coincidence that my argument takes its inspiration twice from suggestions of Wilamowitz, on *Hippolytus* as well as *Phaethon*. Wilamowitz' intuitions, as he himself realized, sometimes went astray: but they are often helpful and even profound, being based on a synoptic vision of Greek literature informed by a breadth of historical and cultural knowledge which few if any living scholars possess. I am not suggesting that we should swear perpetual obedience to the words of any one master—let alone one who himself combined the proposition "Du sollst Ehrfurcht haben vor den Wissenden," with that other "amicus Plato, magis amicus veritas."³ But the unhappy fashion of sneering at Wilamowitz or other great scholars of the past, especially if they did not write English, is not only ungrateful (the sin, says Xenophon which men most abhor, yet least bring into court)⁴—it is extremely shortsighted.

³ *Erinnerungen* (2 ed., Leipzig 1928) 103. See also 86: "Vorwärts kam man nur, wenn man auf die Meister zurückgriff."

⁴ Xenophon, *Cyr.* 1.2.6.

For purposes of discussion, and to show how much is missing from *Phaethon* today, I wish to divide the play into five acts of approximately 270–300 verses each. The bracketed portions provide the minimum of action which seems indispensable to make sense of the existing fragments.

- 1a. In the prologue, Clymene apparently [gives the audience some background, tells Phaethon of his parentage and] urges him to visit his true father, Helios, whose promise, when fulfilled, will confirm what she has said. Phaethon agrees; he plans to go 'after my father speaks to me about marriage' (45–62).
- 1b. The chorus of serving-women enter. In a lovely song, they celebrate the beauty and hopefulness of dawn, when men stir to their various activities; more specifically, they look forward to a glorious marriage for their prince (63–108).
- 2a. Merops enters with pomp and ceremony (109–18) to reveal his marriage plans for Phaethon before a public assembly. But Phaethon demurs; we have bits and snatches from a discussion between him and Merops (which may have become a heated argument, 125–26, 158–67).

* * * * *

- 4b. [Phaethon has gone to Helios' palace. A messenger reports how he arrived there, talked with Helios, claimed the promise, and came to ride the Sun's chariot, and]: how his father advised and accompanied him, riding behind (168–77) and [how he lost control, was struck by Zeus' thunderbolt, and plummeted to earth; the smouldering corpse was recovered and will be conveyed home as soon as feasible.]
- 4c. The corpse is brought in, amid great lamentations by Clymene and the chorus. It is hidden in Merops' treasure chamber (214–26).
- 4d. Merops enters, rejoicing, with a subsidiary chorus of maidens who praise Hymen and Aphrodite and the marriage which she is bringing about (227–44). He proclaims general celebration (245–51); but
- 5a. a servant rushes out, to report that smoke is seeping out of the treasure chamber (252–69). Merops rushes in anxiously, while the chorus wait outside in unhappy anticipation; Clymene is endangered, her secret is out (270–83). Merops cries out (284–88). He re-emerges [and compels some person to tell him the truth (289 ff., only fragmentary).]
- 5e. [epilogue]

From the outline given here we must draw several implications. First, a great deal is missing: for the existing fragments, with all their color and beauty and dramatic excitement, only add up to approximately one-seventh of the original play. Second, we cannot make sense of what we have without supplying further dramatic connections and psychological motivation: for example, to explain the argument between Merops and Phaethon in (2a). But third: even that is not enough; for unless we fill the gaps in the action, and especially the Great Lacuna, which both Webster and Diggle have rather played down, between (2a) and (4b), we shall not have anything like a play of Euripides. Not that speculation should be mistaken for fact: the past failures of scholars to reconstruct, for example, the plays of Menander, remind us that the most obvious-seeming plot reconstructions can go far astray. Even so, we are called to imagine an interesting, coherent, dramatically viable, and *Euripidean* action; and for so doing, our knowledge of existing whole plays of Euripides must be the surest, if still deceptive guide.

Let us begin with problems of motivation. We do not know why Clymene (who seems to have spoken the prologue, perhaps first alone, then in dialogue with her son) chose this occasion to reveal to Phaethon the story of his birth. In Ovid's version, Phaethon is troubled by a taunt of bastardy, much like the young Oedipus; an affectionate mother, seeing him deeply disturbed, might well have decided the time had come to reveal the truth.⁵ Or perhaps she chose this moment because he was about to marry, to give him confidence. In any case, Phaethon seems fairly calm and acquiescent in the surviving fragments of their conversation. How much he believes his mother, remains uncertain; but he will take her advice and seek confirmation of what she has told him from Helios himself after his father Merops gets through discussing marriage plans. But why—this is the most obvious ques-

⁵ Borrowed from Sophocles, the charge of bastardy is brilliantly used by Ovid to link the Phaethon story with the preceding myth, of Io (and Epaphus). There is no indication in our present fragments that Phaethon has been disturbed by anything comparable. Why then Clymene's revelation at this time? Not, so far as we know, to dispel Phaethon's general intention not to marry (Wilamowitz) or to encourage him not to feel inferior to a specific high-born bride (Weil, Lesky, Webster): her identity is probably unknown to Clymene or Phaethon as the play begins (see below). But Clymene may wish to encourage her son generally, as well as unburden herself of a long-hidden secret.

tion—the argument with Merops? Has Phaethon a general aversion to marriage, or does he reject a particular bride—Aphrodite perhaps, or a daughter of Helios? Under close consideration, each of these possibilities produces serious problems which cannot be solved adequately in the light of our present knowledge.

(1) Has Phaethon a general objection to marrying? Psychologically, this explanation makes some sense. Phaethon is young, more boy, perhaps, than man; he is athletically-minded, like Hippolytus, liking to ride, shoot, and exercise; and perhaps, also like Hippolytus, he is chaste. We might imagine an ingenuous youth of fourteen. All the same, Phaethon's remarks to his mother and the happy anticipations of the chorus in their parodos lead us to believe that Phaethon neither expected in advance nor was expected to reject his father's proposal for his marriage. Yet he does reject it, and I think, violently. Merops at least is driven to cry out that "only fools allow witless children to inherit their power!"—that is, he reacts to Phaethon's demurral with the threat, appropriate to an aging, rich king accustomed to get his own way, that he will change his plan of abdicating in favor of Phaethon—in fact, his son will get nothing! It seems in keeping with Euripides' predilection for violent family quarrels that Phaethon should not wait until his father's exit to retaliate in kind: "Rich men are, for some reason, appallingly blind!" It is likely that Merops and Phaethon parted in anger, the former prepared to disinherit his son, the latter to go into exile (and indeed, he expresses the consoling thought, with its overtones of modern fifth-century cosmopolitanism, that "the nurturing earth is everywhere one's fatherland").

(2) We must conclude, then, that Phaethon was thrown into panic at the moment when Merops revealed—after a suspense which at once has dramatic value and illustrates the pompous vanity of Merops' character—the name of the *particular bride* whom he wishes Phaethon to marry. But who is she? Certainly, she must have been rich and highborn, for Merops is excited by "greedy hopes," the chorus anticipate a splendid marriage, and Phaethon in his demurral employs the argument that "a free man becomes slave of the marriage-bed who sells his person for a dowry." (The topos, of not marrying beyond one's station, is of course conventional wisdom; but in the way it is expressed, it may well imply, not just Phaethon's aversion to a particular bride, but a more

deep-seated dislike of sex and unwillingness to surrender his youthful freedom of movement; compare the metaphor, to be discussed in more detail, of "being yoked.") What bride would be beyond Phaethon's station? Aphrodite, for one. The thought of marrying Aphrodite would be enough to throw any sensible youth into utter panic. It would also, as Wilamowitz suggested, nicely connect the charioteer with the beautiful youth who was loved by Aphrodite and carried off to attend her in her inmost shrine. The trouble is that a literal marriage with Aphrodite seems somehow unimaginable. I may be wrong; the point is hard to defend *a priori*, and male and female divinities are often physically involved in Euripidean plays; but it seems rather much. Moreover, the view that Aphrodite "is marrying" Phaethon cannot be supported, let alone necessitated by the wording of the marriage-song with which Wilamowitz began: his own subsequent wavering between different readings shows his continuing uneasiness; and what was meant to be his clinching argument, the discussion of Phaethon as the Morning Star, remains highly uncertain in the absence of further evidence within and outside the play.

(3) What about the daughter of Helios tentatively proposed by Weil⁶ and accepted with a high degree of certainty by Diggle? She is certainly easier to imagine in the role of bride than Aphrodite. She is in addition one of the Heliades who made up the chorus, and presumably the emotional center, of Aeschylus' play, bringing about Phaethon's downfall by yoking the Sun's horses for him contrary to Helios' express refusal (hence, in secret), and afterwards mourning for their lost brother—and, as the beautiful story goes, to be transformed later into poplar trees weeping tears of amber into the river Eridanus. But again, why should Phaethon be so shocked by this proposal? Not, surely, by the idea of marrying a half-sister on the father's side: that might be unusual to an Athenian audience, but definitely not incestuous. The threat of incest could only exist if Phaethon had, and knew he had, a twin sister in the Sun's palace, and while the possibility is not un-Euripidean, nothing in or outside of the play points that way. We shall therefore have to assume that Phaethon reacts in shock to the proposal of a daughter of Helios *because it comes too near to home*. The secret, that Phaethon is

⁶ It should be remembered that, after proposing a daughter of Helios, Weil concludes by saying (327), "mais soyons sages, et pratiquons l'art d'ignorer."

Clymene's child by Helios—whether by premarital (or postmarital) rape or an adulterous liaison with which she willingly complied⁷—is, or might seem to the startled Phaethon, in danger of coming out. We are not in a position to understand the situation. Perhaps Helios had formed a complex plan, like Apollo (the two are very close) in *Ion*. In the latter play, Apollo intends Creusa to bring Ion to Athens and recognize him as her long-lost son by the god, while Xuthus will remain in the dark, believing Ion to be his son. (The plan works out, but not quite as expected; and many readers feel that Apollo loses control of things, somewhat to his embarrassment, so that even at the end, when mother and son are preserved and happily reunited, he does not show his face, but sends Athena instead.) In a similar way, Helios may have conceived the bright notion of securing the company of a "son-in-law" who will really be his son. Only Merops would have to be kept in the dark. The marriage which he is proposing so happily would, ironically, lead to his own deception, taking away the son in whom precisely he is placing such very high hopes. Is it possible that Phaethon quarrels with Merops in part because he loves and respects him and is unwilling to find another father—or to lend himself to what, he already senses, will be a lasting deception? Concealment and revelation of truth was evidently an important motif in *Phaethon*; the drama of cross-purposes, with its ironies in word and action, would be very Euripidean—just the kind of invention for which Menander owed him such an enormous debt.

Enough has been said, I think, to show the twin difficulties of supplying psychological motivation for Phaethon's argument with Merops and of fixing the identity of the proposed bride. There is also the further and related difficulty of filling in the great lacuna between the Phaethon-Merops scene and the messenger's report. By what means might father and son be reconciled, or apparently reconciled, after their

⁷ The background is unclear. To judge from the (very fragmentary) hypothesis, Clymene bore several children, including Phaethon, and told Merops he was father to all of them. Was she raped by Helios prior to her marriage, or had she an affair with him afterwards? This would make a difference to our understanding of her conduct and of the guilty secret she carries, which must ultimately come out, after Phaethon's death. Perhaps Helios raped her before her marriage, swore her to secrecy until her son came of age, and planned for Phaethon to be Merops' son and heir: Helios' tragic error would be to have included the pledge, to fulfill any one wish of his son, as a recognition-sign.

perhaps vicious quarrel? Under what circumstances does Phaethon proceed to the Sun's palace? Here Clymene's part must have been significant. She is, after all, the main female character in the play and a center of emotional suffering. I suggest that she tried to convince Phaethon to accept the situation, not go into exile and lose his inheritance as ruler of Ethiopia. She may have argued, in one of Euripides' famous *adikoi logoi*, that "the case is not so strange," and that (if she had committed adultery with Helios) the world is full of cuckolded husbands, and painful truths are better kept hidden: in any case, Merops will be so happy to see his marriage plans succeed that it would be unkind to disillusion him and spoil his happiness . . . but of course, if Phaethon feels strongly, there is always his real father's promised wish, which could be used to cancel the proposed marriage in a new way. However Phaethon may have been advised by Clymene and reacted to her advice, it seems likely that he was convinced to become reconciled with Merops and that he did so by means of a "pretended acquiescence" scene of the type familiar in tragedy. He could tell Merops that he has had "second thoughts" and was ready to defer to his father's wisdom. Thus (notice the ironies) he could proceed to the Sun's palace rather as Diggle has suggested: in Merops' view, to claim his bride, the daughter of Helios; but in fact, to claim the Sun's promise and confirm what Clymene has told him of his birth; perhaps, too, to escape the marriage with all its complications and perils.⁸ That way, Merops at least will be happy and confident, as he is when he re-enters after (as we know but he does not) all hope is lost.

When the time comes, of course, Phaethon asks to ride the Sun's chariot, and Helios feels bound by his promise and must accede—surely with fear and trembling, and many protestations, much as Ovid tells the story. Was Phaethon carried away by youthful impetuosity and desire and the enchantment of the golden chariot? Very likely he was: but his choice may also have psychological significance. According to Jung and his followers, the adolescent ego frequently wishes to avoid the complexities of psychosexual maturing, from which it takes refuge in dreams of fantastic achievement, of high "flights" which may prove disastrous.⁸ I would suggest, in line with these Jungian

⁸ See *Man and His Symbols*, ed. C. G. Jung and M. L. von Franz (Ljubljana, Yugoslavia 1964) 121–22, on Icarus ("All the same, the youthful ego must always run this risk . . .").

researches into the psychological meanings of common dreams and myths, that Phaethon chooses the golden chariot in an attempt to flee somehow from the sexual and emotional complications of ordinary human life, and that (as so often in Euripides' plays) the way out of troubles, the only true escape, is the way to death. I shall return to this point in discussing Euripides' use, in *Hippolytus* and *Phaethon*, of the key image, the "yoke of marriage and destruction." More immediately, however, my reconstruction of the missing scenes has a needed dramatic value. The audience must clearly have recalled the usual story of the chariot crash, which Aeschylus at least had told. What they fear, therefore, is precisely that Phaethon *will* go to the Sun's palace. Yet he might have gone elsewhere, into exile; the suspense is not resolved until Phaethon decides, probably at Clymene's instigation, to go to the Sun's palace after all . . . and so meets his "appointment in Samarra." This also places an intolerable burden of guilt on Clymene's shoulders. Like Deianeira in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, she will first have forebodings, then know for certain that she has caused the death of the person she most loves. What happens to her afterwards—whether she commits suicide, as seems very likely, or is reconciled to Merops by a divinity who absolves her of blame in the epilogue—we cannot say.

Much of the above discussion is based on the likelihood that Merops proposed a daughter of Helios as Phaethon's bride. Very likely that is correct. Yet, I am convinced, we ought not to forget about Aphrodite. Not only does her absence create, as we have seen, a considerable gap of motivation and dramatic action (consider how much Webster, with his fine dramatic instinct, comes to rely on it), but the marriage song at least suggests her importance to the play. That is, after all, where Wilamowitz began. I wish to re-interpret that song, in support of a symbolic, if not literal, marriage with Aphrodite; but to do so I must first look back at certain themes and images as they are developed in

Differently, J. Campbell, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (Meridian Books, Cleveland 1956) 133–36, sees Phaethon's death as signifying "the need for great care on the part of the father, admitting to his house only those who have been thoroughly tested." Euripides apparently treated the fall of Icarus in his *Cretans*; he wrote two plays about Bellerophon, of which the one by that title, describing Bellerophon's rash flight and fall, must be imagined from the parody in Aristophanes' *Peace*. Both probably preceded the *Phaethon*.

Hippolytus.⁹ The digression will take time; but often, as Plato reminds us, the longest way around is the shortest journey home.

Critics have noted that the lovely escape ode (732–75) following Phaedra's last words in *Hippolytus* looks forward doubly to her death, not only with a prophetic foreboding that she will hang herself (the ship-cable turning to a rope for hanging), but by more subtle hints that Phaedra's aspiration for freedom, integrity, and purity of life can only be achieved in death.¹⁰ Yet the fates of Phaedra and Hippolytus are constantly interwoven, not least in their shared idealism; so that the lovely picture at the end of the first strophe of the escape ode,

where the unhappy maidens, in pity for Phaethon,
weep tears of radiantly gleaming amber into the
dark purple swell,

reflects also the fate of Hippolytus, through allusion to a parallel myth (a common Euripidean device), and evokes a feeling and mood specially pertinent to his tragedy.

Wilamowitz pointed out in the introduction to his 1891 translation of *Hippolytus* how much Euripides was apparently inspired by the cult ceremony, surviving at Troezen, in which maidens cut their hair before marriage and sang a cult song in honor of Hippolytus.¹¹ Their feeling,

⁹ The bibliography on *Hippolytus* is extensive. I would single out, as especially helpful to my own understanding, the following: *Euripides Hippolytus* (griech. und deutsch) von U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf (Berlin 1891) esp. 23–58; B. M. W. Knox, "The Hippolytus of Euripides," *YCS* 13 (1952) 3–31; R. Y. Hathorn, "Rationalism and Irrationalism in Euripides' *Hippolytus*," *CJ* 52 (1956–57) 211–18; R. P. Winnington-Ingram, "Hippolytus: A Study in Causation," *Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique* VI: *Euripide* (Geneva 1958) 171–91 (and discussion, 192–97); C. P. Segal, "The Tragedy of the Hippolytus: The Waters of Ocean and the Untouched Meadow," *HSCP* 70 (1965) 117–69 (with supplementary observations in later articles elsewhere); and D. J. Conacher, *Euripidean Drama. Myth, Theme, and Structure* (Toronto and London 1967) 27–53. Like everyone else, I rely increasingly on *Euripides' Hippolytus*, ed. with introd. and comm. by W. S. Barrett (Oxford 1964); in what follows, text and line references follow Barrett.

¹⁰ See H. F. Graham, "The 'Escape' Ode in Hippolytus, 732–75," *CJ* 42 (1946–47) 275–76; Segal 133–35; and esp. H. Parry, "The Second Stasimon of Euripides' Hippolytus (732–75)," *TAPA* 97 (1966) 317–26.

¹¹ Wilamowitz argues that the marriage ceremonies at Troezen involving Hippolytus are pre-Dorian; Euripides has first-hand experience of the temple at Troezen and its cult. This may later have been imported to Athens, Hippolytus rather oddly displacing an older companion of Aphrodite. Euripides' first play would then have been suggested by their connection at Athens as well as by the "novella" or temptation story; but for the second, he took his inspiration from Troezen (p. 42): "und erst als er die Umarbeitung

said Wilamowitz, is all-important here: for marriage involves loss as well as gain; the bride is separated from her parents and erstwhile companions; she must give up, often in special symbolic ceremonies, the things of childhood; and in losing her virginity she undergoes a kind of death, to emerge in the new married state as a grown woman. We might develop the point further. For the Greek maiden, lacking the possibility offered today by "adolescence" of a gradual (if not always smooth) transition from childhood to adulthood, the abrupt initiation into the new life of marriage must often have been traumatic. So Euripides has Medea indicate in her penetrating comments on the unhappy condition of Greek wives.¹² All the more must the religious ceremonies preceding Greek marriages be taken seriously as initiation rituals, rites of passage necessary to the continuing psychic integrity of the new bride. This is not to say that Greek marriages were always unhappy experiences: far from it. Many weddings were ultimately joyful; all were meant to be joyful. But to support the transition through the death of childhood to the re-emergence of personality in the new married life, the experience of loss and suffering had somehow to be expressed, as indeed it was at Troezen in the cutting of a lock of hair, the song, and the tears for Hippolytus.

In standing for the loss of maiden innocence, Hippolytus corresponds closely to Hymenaios, who obviously personifies the maidenhood which must "disappear" at the time of marriage. Like Hymenaios

vornahm, auf die Trozenischen Lieder zurückgegriffen hat: jedenfalls verdankt nur ihnen das Drama seine besondere Schönheit." Wilamowitz's view is developed somewhat by H. Herter, "Theseus und Hippolytus," *RhM* 89 (1940) 273-92. Barrett's view (6-10) that the common folktale theme of temptation was developed as an aetiological myth, to explain the existing cult practice, omits the other important possibility acknowledged by Wilamowitz and Herter, that Hippolytus may have existed independently as an early *daimon* in some relation to Aphrodite—a suitable figure for the "novella" to attach itself to. See the remarks of D. J. Conacher, in his review of Barrett (*Phoenix* 19 [1965] 329): "it is hard to believe, in view of the cult associations of Hippolytus with Aphrodite and Artemis, that neither goddess played an important part in any of the pre-Euripidean versions of the myth. Nevertheless, Barrett continues to pay no heed to such possibilities, and his purely secular treatment of the myth's development has repercussions in his treatment of the extant *Hippolytus*, for he omits, whether consciously or otherwise, any suggestions as to Euripides' probable adaptation to his own purposes of the divine element in this myth." The same criticism of undue secularizing, or demythologizing, of the drama applies (*mutatis mutandis*) to Diggle's treatment of *Phaethon*.

¹² See K. J. Reckford, "Medea's First Exit," *TAPA* 99 (1968) 337-38.

too, Hippolytus seems at an earlier stage of myth to have been an attendant spirit of Aphrodite. Still earlier, he may have been the Dying God who was loved by the Mother and was mourned by her after his passion and death. What matters for our purposes is that in *Hippolytus*, as elsewhere, Euripides related a recent legend, well known at Athens, to an older and deeper myth. The young man who resists temptation in the familiar "Potiphar's wife" story now takes on larger overtones, of a universal "loss of innocence" by which we all—women and men alike—must be deeply affected: hence, I think, the unusual success of this tragedy in achieving a "catharsis of pity and terror."

Artemis' prophecy, therefore (1423–29), that "unyoked maidens before marriage will cut their hair for you," that Hippolytus will reap the fruit of their tears through ages to come and receive their loving concern through song, is more than a requisite piece of learned aetiology dragged in toward the play's end or an earnest but rather lame attempt to console a dying man. Rather, it gives express form to something intimated throughout the play, returning us at last to the point of inspiration from which the second *Hippolytus* seems to have germinated.

In retrospect, we might notice how often the diction and imagery of *Hippolytus* reflect the mood and feeling of the Troezenian cult ceremony. The cutting of hair,¹³ for example, is anticipated in the "virgin meadow" to which "iron never came" (76–77), where the landscape suggests both Hippolytus' virginal nature and striving after purity and the perils to which these are exposed. It may give added point to the Nurse's curious and impractical suggestion (514) of obtaining a lock of hair from Hippolytus for her "magic charm." Again, the wedding ceremony in the background sheds light on the troubling lines (428–30)

¹³ On the hair-cutting ceremony, see Barrett 2–3 ("a fusion of marriage-custom with mourning-custom"—the point is highly relevant to our interpretation of the play). This ceremony seems anticipated in the language of vv. 82–84:

ἀλλ', ὦ φίλη δέσποινα, χρυσέας κόμης
ἀνάδημα δέξαι χειρὸς εὐσεβοῦς ἀπο.
μόνῳ γάρ ἐστι τοῦτ' ἐμοὶ γέρας βροτῶν.

Also, the "untouched meadow" of Hippolytus' spiritual landscape (for whose sexual connotations and other ambiguities, see Knox and Segal) is recalled in Phaedra's desire to recline in the *κομήτῃ λειμῶνι* (210–11). The image of the uncut meadow thus not only symbolizes virginity and its eventual loss but also looks forward to the cult ceremonies at Troezen that will guide this young bride through precisely that event.

in which time is said to reveal bad people, holding up a mirror "as to a young maiden." Time not only reveals wrongdoers, as Phaedra here indicates. It also brings what the mirror discovers: a loss of maiden innocence—whose metaphysical significance Euripides is extending to Phaedra, much as to Hippolytus, indeed to all mankind. And again: Hippolytus' farewell to Artemis (1440–41),

Farewell too and be happy, blessed maiden;
lightly you leave a long companionship.

seems unmistakably in its note of resignation yet gentle complaint to echo a familiar topos of wedding-songs. The bride is "deserting" the companions of her youth. Once more, the stress is on loss and separation, an aspect of marriage to which Euripides, like Catullus after him, was deeply sympathetic, and which must have had an ancient place in the marriage-song tradition previous to its literary developments.

Above all, I would suggest that the great ode of lamentation (1102–50) sung after Hippolytus goes forth to apparent exile and actual death must carry similar overtones. Just how it was sung, we cannot say for certain; but the masculine and feminine inflections evidently given in the manuscripts point towards an alternation of "male" and "female" voices—a subsidiary chorus of Hippolytus' hunting companions singing along with the main chorus of Troezenian women.¹⁴ In that case,

¹⁴ Barrett 365–69 argues against the use of two choruses here, but his arguments are not conclusive: see the reviews by D. J. Conacher (above, note 11) 342–43, and H. Lloyd-Jones *JHS* 85 (1965) 170–71 (the latter ultimately agreeing with Barrett). Despite Barrett's patient restatement of his arguments in conversation with me, I would argue: (a) While a fully satisfying parallel is lacking, the burden of proof still falls on those who deny two choruses, since the masculine and feminine endings are there, not to be emended away, and require explanation: (b) Such a group of males is available and quite specifically called for. Perhaps they enter with Hippolytus at 899, stand silent and troubled during the Theseus-Hippolytus scene; certainly he requests at 1098–99 that they "speak to" him and "send him forth from the land", which suggests a *propemptikos* combining the two:

ἴτ' ὦ νέοι μοι τῆσδε γῆς ὁμήλικες,
προσείπαθ' ἡμᾶς καὶ προπέμψατε χθονός.

But precisely such a song follows (cf. also 1150, *πέμπετε τῶνδ' ἀπ' οἴκων*). We may imagine that while some stayed to sing, others accompanied Hippolytus out and formed (part of) the multitude of friends and comrades who are described (1179–80) as accompanying him to the shore. Of course, the subsidiary chorus was used earlier for the servants who (also) "followed behind" Hippolytus (54–56; cf. 1179) singing hymns to Artemis. (c) Barrett saw "no dramatic purpose in an alternation"; here we strongly

Euripides is presenting us with something very like a literary wedding song, comparable to Catullus 62. The latter, as Fraenkel masterfully demonstrated, blends elements of Greek and Roman life, and so cannot be regarded as a direct translation of one of Sappho's epithalamia;¹⁵ yet it may be that Catullus is here drawing on various forms of poetic composition from Sappho to Theocritus—and including Euripides!—which themselves used not only the *topoi* of marriage-songs but an ancient custom of competition between youths and maidens in improvised *amoebae*an verses. The absence of a clear tradition prevents us from saying more; yet Euripides' great ode seems unmistakably to reflect the mood and feeling of such wedding songs, and to receive enhanced meaning from such a context. Thus the women plead in the first antistrophe for a "virgin spirit," which Hippolytus earlier claimed for himself in his self-defense before Theseus; and the second antistrophe (which would also be sung by the women) ends with the hauntingly beautiful lines (1138–41),

ἀστέφανοι δὲ κόρας ἀνάπαντα
 Λατοῦς βαθεῖαν ἀνὰ χλόαν·
 νυμφιδία δ' ἀπόλωλε φυγᾶ σᾶ
 λέκτρων ἄμιλλα κούραις.

What is meant here? That with Hippolytus gone, maidens will be unable to compete for his hand in marriage? That would make sense,

disagree. (i) The song is highly responsive; this in itself need not imply *amoebae*an song, but together with the masculine and feminine ends, and a meter which in the first strophe and antistrophe borders on hexameter, we might well be reminded of wedding songs; (ii) there is a contrast, first of male and female attitudes (thus Segal, 138–41, feels that the men turn from hope to a starker reality, the women, still hopeful, feel less threatened), and then of male and female interests (going hunting, marrying off maidens); (iii) the epode, whose structural relation to the rest of the ode has troubled most commentators, is nicely explained if the two choruses unite to sing it—"yoked together" finally (as Euripides emphasises) after all the sexual tension of the play, in a single mood and attitude—of grief for Hippolytus. (Similarly, the bride and bridegroom are united in the marriage ceremony and songs, and Phaedra and Hippolytus were symbolically united beneath the yoke of fate.) (iv) How much the ideas of marriage and loss of virginity are interwoven with this Hippolytus story, I have argued in the text.

¹⁵ E. Fraenkel, "*Vesper Adest* (Catullus LXII)," *JRS* 45 (1955) 1–8. Also, H. A. Khan, "On the Art of Catullus *CARM.* 62 38–58," *Athenaeum* 45 (1967) 160–76, makes comparisons between Catullus and Euripides as well as Catullus and Sappho, but concludes that Catullus uses a conventional sexual symbolism that requires the use neither of Sappho nor of Euripides.

though usually men compete for women, and the idea suits the women's point of view. But there is, I think, a further dimension of meaning. Through Hippolytus' exile and, as we must realize instinctively, his death, the "contest of marriage" is also lost for the maidens on a symbolic level. For they lose because (as Fraenkel points out in discussing Catullus 62) they have to lose: the marriage song has no other possible ending than the loss of maidenhood and the celebration of marriage. Lines 1138-39 are also ambiguous. The deep meadow from which garlands will no longer be plaited for Artemis is also a "resting-place of the maiden" from which the bride must now depart. May we go further and suggest that in the epode, with its appeal to the "Graces yoking together" (1148-50),

συζύγιοι Χάριτες, τί τὸν τάλαν' ἐκ πατρίας γὰς
οὐδὲν ἄτας αἴτιον
πέμπετε τῶνδ' ἀπ' οἴκων;

the two choirs are at last united, suggesting the unity of marriage and the resolution of the male-female tension which up to now has marked this play—but tragically, united only in their negative agreement on the sadness of Hippolytus' loss?

Running through the play, but most fully developed here and in Artemis' later prophecy, the metaphor of the "yoke of marriage and destruction" is closely connected with the central theme of "loss of innocence." Critics have generally discussed the horses more than the yoke, showing for example how these symbolize Hippolytus' striving for purity and freedom—a striving which Phaedra significantly shares—but also, like the bull, come to embody the manner in which repressed emotions veer out of control and bring destruction.¹⁶ (Freud would emphasize the element of repression, Jung the peculiarly adolescent *hybris* whose psychic dangers are reflected in the myths of a hero's fall: the point will apply still better to the Phaethon story.) The image is obviously important. Already present in Hippolytus' name, "rent

¹⁶ See Segal, 146 (the horses are ambiguously connected both with Hippolytus' virgin pursuits and with sexual desire) and esp. 147: "Through the horses, nevertheless, he is destroyed by a part of his own life, by something he has reared himself and always believed he could control, yet perhaps did not fully understand." See also Segal, "Euripides, Hippolytus 108-112: Tragic Irony and Tragic Justice," *Hermes* 97 (1969) 297-305.

by horses," it consistently foreshadows his physical suffering and his death. In addition, however, Euripides' development of the yoke symbolism relates the story of the chariot crash in a new, intimate manner to his central theme and mood, of the loss of innocence.

In his recent article, Bushala argued that *syzygiai Charites* in *Hippolytus* 1148 had primarily an active meaning, of "yoking together."¹⁷ He justified this interpretation by showing that the Graces frequently have erotic connotations in Greek cult and literature and are often associated with weddings; but he failed to point out how Euripides here fuses the "yoke of marriage," that outworn metaphor, with the "yoke of destruction." Already, in their hymn to Eros (525–64, following the Nurse's ominous exit), the chorus illustrated the power of Eros and Aphrodite by the examples of Iole (545 f.),

τὰν μὲν Οἰχαλία
πῶλον ἄζυγον λέκτρων
ζεύξασ'

whose "bloody marriage" was to bring death to Heracles; and also of Semele, whom Kypris "married and bedded down to a murderous fate:" her destruction by lightning (561–62):

νυμφευσαμένα πότμῳ
φονίῳ κατηύνασεν.

As so often, the chorus convey more than they intend: not just love's might, but Aphrodite's power to destroy.

To return one last time to the great lamentation ode: the appeal of the united choruses to the *syzygiai Charites* (cf. 1131, *ouketi syzygian pôlôn* . . .) yokes together several disparate ideas, to great dramatic effect. The singers are complaining of the horses, who should not be bearing their master into exile. In fact, they are (in the space of time covered by the ode) carrying him to his death, an unkindness of which he himself will be heard to complain, and a dramatic embodiment of the loss of control and reversal of high aspirations that he must suffer. It all comes out in the messenger speech. Hippolytus fails to master his crazed horses, he crashes against a rock, the chariot is wrecked, he himself is caught in the reins and dragged, terribly broken, by the

¹⁷ E. W. Bushala, "Συζύγαιαι Χάριτες, *Hippolytus* 1147," *TAPA* 100 (1969) 23–29.

careening horses—until at last he is “loosed.” When Artemis sees him, her first words state that he was “yoked to disaster” (1389 *symphorai synezygês*). But the *syzygiai Charites* who draw Hippolytus to his fate are also marriage deities. The yoke of marriage is also a yoke of destruction, as it was for Iole and Semele: and if, in time to come, “unyoked maidens” will cut their hair and weep for Hippolytus, it is because the fate awaiting them, the loss of innocence and forced submission to marriage and maturity, was symbolically pre-suffered by Hippolytus. Thus the “yoke of marriage and destruction” helps reunite different levels of meaning in Euripides’ play, fusing the traditional story of the hero “rent by horses” (the tempted youth, who may be derived however from the Dying God, companion of Aphrodite and loved by her) with the deep and universal experience of “loss of innocence” which finds religious expression in the ceremonies at Troezen. This is why we are so deeply moved by the *Second Hippolytus*, not the simple story of the idealistic youth (his name is legion) whom an older woman attempts to seduce and, that failing, slanders to her husband. This is not to ignore Euripides’ other accomplishments in the second version: for example, his subtle and ennobling, though realistic, treatment of Phaedra, and his complex interweaving of the actions, thoughts, and feelings of his principal characters.¹⁸ Indeed, one of the deep-laid secrets of the play is that Phaedra suffers a “loss of innocence” such as Hippolytus embodies.¹⁹ It is “the fate man was born for,” and (to paraphrase Hopkins) it is ourselves that we, like the maidens of Troezen, mourn for.

The relevance of the above digression becomes apparent when, returning to *Phaethon*, we realize the importance here too of the imagery of horses, yoking, and the wrecked chariot, and again too, the “yoke of marriage and destruction”—this despite the fact that we possess only one-seventh of Euripides’ play. Already in the parodos, the Chorus’

¹⁸ See the incisive study by Knox (above, note 9).

¹⁹ On Phaedra’s desire for purity and integrity, and its close similarity to Hippolytus’ ideal, see L. E. Matthaci, *Studies in Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge 1918) 87; Segal 124 and 159, and also “Shame and Purity in Euripides’ Hippolytus,” *Hermes* 98 (1970) 280. Euripides calls attention to Phaedra’s loss of integrity by his frequent use of the term *diaphtheirein* (478–79, 509, 516, 682; cf. 992, 1008, 1014). In the end, the great difference between Phaedra and Hippolytus is that her integrity perishes from within but his (dramatically and symbolically at least) from without; the relation between Hecuba and Polyxena in *Hecuba* is remarkably similar and gives a strong unity to that play.

hope-filled evocation of early morning activity begins with "Dawn riding" (we should recall that Phaethon was, in Hesiod's version, the son of Dawn), and includes the pasturing of teams of horses (73-74):

ἔγρονται δ' εἰς βοτάναν
ξανθᾶν πῶλων συζυγίαι·

Very soon, however, a counter-movement sets in. Preparations for Phaethon's wedding, ostensibly the climax of the day's joys, in fact set in motion a train of events leading to the catastrophe, Phaethon's chariot ride and crash. This counter-movement is prepared by the Chorus' ceremonial verses announcing the arrival of the king, who "will reveal his mind concerning great matters" (106-8):

περὶ γὰρ μεγάλων γνώμας δείξει
παῖδ' ὕμεναίοις ὅσίοισι θέλων
ζεῦξαι νύμφης τε λεπάδνοις.

The metaphor, as Diggle remarks, is "a strong one." The "straps" make a trite expression vivid. The bride will be yoked too: there is no question here of her superiority to the prospective bridegroom; but Euripides here stresses the loss of freedom that the *bridegroom* must undergo—a reversal, surely, of the previous mood of happy anticipation. Of course, men ordinarily complained of the marriage-yoke. Medea sarcastically refers to the one-sided efforts a wife must make so that her husband will "bear the yoke" patiently. In *Phaethon*, however, the familiar metaphor takes on objective reality, as if to reveal an underlying connection between marriage and destruction. And this would hardly escape Euripides' audience, for in Aeschylus' play, *Helides*, the actual yoking of the Sun's horses to his chariot must have been a dramatic high point: the god forbade it, but his daughters accomplished it for their brother . . . and were to mourn the result. If, as Diggle argues, Euripides' major innovation was his emphasis on Phaethon's marriage (which the later dominant version of Ovid omits), and marriage with a daughter of Helios at that, then the metaphor of the "yoke of marriage and destruction" takes on a burden of unusual dramatic relevance in *Phaethon*, while maintaining the same underlying meaning of "loss of innocence" which, as we saw, it carried in *Hippolytus*.

It may be that the missing scenes of Acts 2 and 3 brought out many

similarities to Hippolytus, in Phaethon's youthful pride; his aspiration for freedom and achievement reflected in athleticism and especially the riding of horses; his instinctive rejection (I am guessing here) of sexuality; and the failure of a philistine father to comprehend his refined nature and feelings. Yet the difference in their family position is also instructive. Hippolytus was son of the Amazon Hippolyte, from whom, it is suggested, he inherited a certain wildness and rejection of marriage; but he is also the son of the coarse and violent Theseus who seems, on the surface, so alien to him. He is therefore not only alienated from ordinary life by his bastardy but torn between two conflicting sides of his own inner personality. It is different with Phaethon. From his mother, Clymene, although she was an Oceanid, he inherited the mortal lot of pain and suffering; but he is not at all the son of the "mortal" king Merops; he has nothing in common with that pompous and silly monarch. He travels to the Sun's palace, ostensibly to join his bride, but actually motivated by the desire to confirm his true parentage and, I think, to find the freedom his heart desires. It is sad, but in retrospect inevitable, that his attempt to find true freedom ends in death.

In the last third of the play, which we largely possess, the parallels I have been suggesting between Phaethon's fate and that of Hippolytus become evident in language as well as action. In the former play, after Hippolytus went out to his death, the chorus (or, as I argued earlier, the united choruses) sang a lament for lost innocence with striking resemblances to a marriage song. After that, a messenger appeared to describe the fatal chariot ride. In *Phaethon*, the sequence of events is different. We have already heard the messenger's speech, and the corpse has been conveyed home, from the scene of its fall, and hidden within the house, in Merops' very treasure chamber, when the king re-enters joyfully with a subsidiary chorus of maidens who sing a marriage song in honor of Aphrodite. Because the details matter greatly—it was here, after all, that Wilamowitz began his reconstruction—I give it in full (227-44).

‘Υμῶν ‘Υμῶν.
τὰν Διὸς οὐρανίαν αἰείδομεν,
τὰν ἐρώτων πότνιαν, τὰν παρθένους
γαμήλιον Ἀφροδίταν.

πότνια, σοὶ τὰδ' ἐγὼ νυμφεῖ' αἶδω,
 Κύπρι θεῶν καλλίστα,
 τῷ τε νεόζυγι σῶ
 πῶλῳ τὸν ἐν αἰθέρι κρύπτεις,
 σῶν γάμων γένναν.

ἂ τὸν μέγαν
 τᾶσδε πόλεως βασιλῇ νυμφεύει
 ἄστερωποῖσιν δόμοισι χρυσέοις
 ἀρχὸν φίλον Ἀφροδίτα·
 ὦ μάκαρ, ὦ βασιλεὺς μείζων ἔτ' ὄλβον,
 ὃς θεὰν κηδεύσεις
 καὶ μόνος ἀθανάτων
 γαμβρὸς δι' ἀπείρονα γαῖαν
 θνατὸς ὑμνήσῃ.

Who, we must ask first, is the "new-yoked colt"? Evidently, the reference is to Hymen, who was a child of Aphrodite and who disappeared on his wedding-night; the significance, as Diggle says, is transparent. We might add, that precisely that same experience of loss of virginity formed a leitmotif of mood and feeling in *Hippolytus*, where the hero becomes closely equated with Hymenaios. But so, surely, does Phaethon in the present ode. In the dramatic context, the "hiding away" of the new-yoked colt makes it impossible not to think of Phaethon, whose corpse is, as we know, hidden away in the treasure chamber. More important, Phaethon has been described, perhaps more than once, as himself a new-yoked colt; and it was precisely Merops' attempt to yoke him in marriage that led to his yoking of the Sun's chariot and the tragic reversal (as in *Hippolytus*) by which the able rider loses control of his horses and crashes. Here, then, as in *Hippolytus*, the yoke of marriage coincides with a yoke of destruction by which the "loss of innocence" is realized in objective fact.

As for Aphrodite, in the present play a symbolic role befits her more than a literal one. While it remains unlikely that Merops planned a marriage with her for Phaethon, and that this is what the chorus is celebrating, still she might easily be seen as "marrying him off"—not however, as the chorus joyfully proclaim, to wealth and happiness in a golden palace, but to an ill fate, exactly as (notice the close correspondence of language) she was described in *Hippolytus* as yoking the

"unyoked filly," Iole, to a destructive marriage, and "wedding" Semele to a murderous fate.²⁰ At the same time, the ambiguous wording of the *Phaethon* ode surely reflects that other story in which Phaethon, the beautiful son of Dawn (and related, too, to the "king of the Aethiopians") is loved by Aphrodite and carried off to guard forever the recesses of her holy temple, as a divine spirit. It seems likely that the "hiding in the ether" of the new-yoked colt echoes Hesiod's version (in *Theogony* 986-91). The juncture is crucial for Euripides. At this point, where the charioteer's fate is fused, in a complex yet familiar metaphorical cluster, with that of the son of Dawn beloved by Aphrodite, Euripides characteristically penetrates through one familiar myth to a second myth, older and deeper, which illuminates the first with a sudden light of new meaning.²¹ I would go further and suggest that in Hesiod's verses Euripides found the same kind of central inspiration that the Troezenian cult ceremonies provided for his second *Hippolytus*. The rape of Phaethon—which is akin to the very central Greek myth of the rape of Persephone—pictures the same "loss of innocence" which so powerfully dominates Euripides' imagination in *Hippolytus* and *Hecuba* and probably in many other plays of his middle period. The innovative feature of *Phaethon*, the emphasis on Merops' plans for the youth's marriage and Phaethon's reaction to these, links the charioteer story very closely with the older myth of Aphrodite's rape of Phaethon; and the fusion of the two, much as in *Hippolytus*, is realized most fully in a marriage-song and by means of the image of the "yoke of marriage and destruction." Although the dramatic ironies differ, the central core of feeling remains much the same. Both plays dramatize the loss of innocence. We noted earlier that the verses on Phaethon in *Hippolytus* foreshadowed Hippolytus' fate as well as Phaedra's. We now realize how much Hippolytus and Phaethon were equated on a deeper imaginative level, with each other and with Hymenaios,

²⁰ Compare *νυμφεύει* in *Phaethon* 237 to *νυμφευσάμενα* in *Hippolytus* 561 (directly after the yoking of the "unyoked filly" in 545-54).

²¹ See M. Kubo, "The Norm of Myth: Euripides' *Electra*," *HSCP* 71 (1967) 15-31; and esp. 21: "When Euripides seeks truth or meaning as a dramatist in a given myth, for example the myth of *Electra*, his search leads him to uncover another myth hidden underneath. His approach may be termed analytical so far as he tries to penetrate the given surface of concrete details of the traditional myth and seeks a truth which appeals to his imagination; yet his mind seems to traverse a metaphorical path, for what he uncovers in depth is still a myth complete within its own sphere of concrete situations."

as personifying the lost innocence which maidens suffer and for which we all must mourn.

If we had *Phaethon* entire, we should probably find pervasive echoes of themes and images from *Hippolytus*, reinforcing the two plays' basic similarity of meaning. Yet the differences are also significant, not least in the part played by Aphrodite. In Wilamowitz' view, and in Webster's, her role was active. Not only was she the intended bride of Phaethon, but he somehow became her victim. Perhaps (Wilamowitz argues) this happened because he rejected her love, choosing instead the journey that brought about his death. Webster suggests that Aphrodite may have wished to destroy Phaethon because of his aversion to sexuality and because he was the child of the Sun god who had revealed her adultery with Ares (a point that may have been brought out by Phaedra in the first *Hippolytus* to explain the sexual troubles of her family). Yet the remains of *Phaethon* nowhere indicate that the youth was the victim of an angry and revengeful goddess. It is hard, too, to imagine Euripides presenting such an obvious re-play of his *Hippolytus* story. The tragedy of *Phaethon* requires no vengeful god: it rests on the unguided errors of well-meaning humans, with no hint of divine prompting (although Helios' folly in fulfilling his promise is required to bring the tragedy to completion, much like Poseidon's fulfillment of Theseus' wish in *Hippolytus*). Yet we have a curious sense of *déjà vu*; and what Friedrich says of *Hippolytus*' aim, "dass er sich aus der fremden and feindlichen Sphäre Aphrodites in die ihm gemasse Welt rettet, wenn er von Athen nach Troizen zurückkehrt",²² bears curiously on Phaethon's actions. For in rejecting marriage, he may be cast at least symbolically in the role of one who rejects Aphrodite; who takes flight from the complexities of human life, represented by Merops' marriage plans for him, into the upper air—and to his death; and who, as we saw, finally becomes (but again, only in a symbolic sense) the victim of Aphrodite.

Yet it seems likely that in the end, Aphrodite made an appearance. Someone must speak the epilogue, and Aphrodite is a much more suitable candidate for that role than Artemis, or Oceanus, or the intended bride, or Helios himself (who has acted foolishly and will hardly want to show his face). The goddess who was invoked earlier with such

²² W. H. Friedrich, *Euripides und Diphilos* (Munich 1953) 131.

joy is the most appropriate person to explain the tragedy, console Merops, reconcile him with Clymene (or her memory), and ordain or prophesy the burial of Phaethon's body by the Eridanus, the cult honors to be paid to him—and perhaps the transformation of his spirit into a shining star in the heavens.²³ But if this is so, and if in addition Aphrodite foretells the mourning of the Heliades and their transformation into poplars that will shed tears of amber into the stream of Eridanus, she will be cast, ironically, in very much the role of Artemis at the end of *Hippolytus*, suffering now the sorrow which there she caused. That is, after all, what Artemis foretold—although Artemis does not bring about Phaethon's tragedy in a simple re-play and reversal of the Hippolytus story.²⁴ But again, if Aphrodite speaks the epilogue, Phaethon may be identified more explicitly than ever before in the play with Hesiod's innocent youth beloved by Aphrodite. He is the son of Dawn who cannot endure the strong noonday sun, the innocence that cannot endure through marriage into maturity. As the Mother goddess weeps for the dead hero and claims him for her own, the tragedy of the charioteer is taken up into the older and deeper myth, the cosmic drama of love and death, and the universal psychological drama of the loss of innocence. Not obviously, but on the deepest level, the tragedy of Phaethon re-enacts the tragedy of Hippolytus.

So far we have discussed *Phaethon* as it looks backward, to *Hippolytus*. I wish now to hazard a further guess, that it looks forward also, to *Ion*, and is in many respects a transitional play for Euripides.

Numerous resemblances can be found between *Ion* and what we have

²³ There is no clear evidence to show that Phaethon's katasterism was prophesied in the epilogue or that Euripides drew elsewhere on such a transformation. But there may be hints. Phaethon is, after all, the "shining one"; he seems to have ridden in the chariot with Helios riding just behind him; and as a star he may in a special way be "hidden in the aither" (234). See Webster 226: "One other fragment may belong to this play and place: 971, 'and he lately young and healthy was quenched like a shooting star, releasing his spirit into the upper air.'" It is tempting to see Phaethon, as Wilamowitz did, as the Morning Star beloved by Aphrodite, especially in view of Hesperus' connections (as evening star also) with weddings and wedding-songs; but we must wait for further indications to appear.

²⁴ In *Hippolytus* 1420–22, Euripides seems to be thinking of the death of Adonis, wounded by a boar in a hunt: as Barrett points out, in one version of the legend the boar is sent by Artemis. The audience would get the point; they would not expect another revenge-play by Euripides; yet if Aphrodite spoke the epilogue in *Phaethon*, we might be reminded ironically of Artemis' words in *Hippolytus* as well as Aphrodite's unlovely part in that play.

of *Phaethon*. In both plays we find a triangle consisting of a mortal woman (Clymene, Creusa), her son by a god (Phaethon by Helios, Ion by Apollo), and her mortal husband (Merops, Xuthus). Each play has near its beginning an "Oh what a beautiful morning" song: the lyrics of the serving-women in *Phaethon* become Ion's monody, but the chorus in *Ion* consists also of cheerful serving-women, here enjoying the pleasures of sight-seeing.²⁵ Both plays revolve around the concealment and discovery of the hero's parentage; Misapprehension governs both actions, with the usual verbal and dramatic ironies attendant on that goddess, the patroness in later time of the New Comedy plots that were to owe so much to Euripides. Most important, it seems likely that certain comic elements prominent in *Ion* and other late tragedies can be found, in tentative form, in *Phaethon*. Merops especially seems to have been a comic figure. Like Xuthus, he is very much the "outsider," naive and credulous, with the pretentious shallowness of so many Euripidean males who are taken in by clever women; he is a black, Ethiopian king (again, looking forward to the deceived monarchs of *Iphigenia among the Taurians* and *Helen*); and we can see even from our fragments that he has a predilection for pomp and circumstance—"the trumpet and the kettledrum" of Claudius. We can say of him what the slave in Terence says of his deluded master, that "everyone knows what is going on except him."²⁶ It would be very funny except that what is going on inside is not a delightful party,

²⁵ Euripides may have written many early morning songs. In the much disputed *Rhesus*, a song describes the setting of the stars, lament of the nightingale, and piping of shepherds on the hills: see G. H. Macurdy, "The Dawn Songs in *Rhesus* (527-56) and in the Parodos of *Phaethon*," *AJP* 64 (1943) 408-16. H. Parry, "The Approach of Dawn in the *Rhesus*," *Phoenix* 18 (1964) 283-93, remarks that imagery of light in such songs often evokes hopes "which are doomed in a tragic setting to remain unfulfilled;" see also his remarks (note 21) that "Because of the fragmentary nature of the *Phaethon*, the dramatic significance of the nightingale reference in its parodos cannot be gauged with any certainty. However, it is at least likely that the bright expectations of this dawn song (significantly tinged with a mention of death and hints of disquietude) are in part foil for Phaethon's subsequent death, and his mother's lament." The point would be still more striking if Clymene, like the nightingale, was herself to bear some responsibility for her son's death. Perhaps mention of the swan in the parodos is also foreboding. In Ovid's version, Cynus was a lover of Phaethon, later transformed in lamentation into a swan. Did he appear in Euripides' play? It is interesting that many elements of the parodos recur in the first part of Horace, *Odes* 4.12, right after his allusion to Euripides' Phaethon tragedy in *Odes* 4.11, 25-26.

²⁶ Terence, *Adelphi* 548: *rideo hunc: primum ait se scire: is solu' nescit omnia*.

but Phaethon's corpse smouldering away in the treasure chamber: so that, as Horace says:

terret ambustus Phaethon avaras
spes.

In the usual interpretation, Horace uses Phaethon's disaster to discourage over-ambitious hopes, presumably like Phaethon's own. It seems more likely that Horace, with Euripides' play in mind, is thinking precisely of the ironic scene in which Merops' "greedy hopes" for the wealthy marriage he has planned for Phaethon are confounded by reality in the presence of smoke emanating from Phaethon's blasted body.²⁷ Horace will not fall into Merops' trap: the moral for him comes nearer comedy than tragedy; but in Euripides' play, there is no final comedy, and perhaps not just the brilliant youth who died but the foolish old Ethiopian king receives his due of tears.

Comedy always lies close to tragedy, but the reverse is also true. Sometimes it seems only an accident that Fortune's wheel turns a little further and plays like *Ion* or *Helen* or *Iphigenia among the Taurians* end happily. Yet these plays should be taken as seriously as the darker tragedies; their happy endings are not caused by the playwright's whim, or his catering to the escapist wishes of his audience; and although, as Professor Knox has shown, they include numerous comic elements (by which New Comedy was to profit),²⁸ to call them Euripidean comedies is both unhistorical and misleading to a modern reader. Much suffering lies beneath their surface, evoking (as Aristotle saw) the requisite pity and terror; only a dimly realized providential grace keeps mother and son from murdering one another, or sister from sacrificing brother; and even the happy endings are deeply shadowed by unhappy memories, associations, and future possibilities: for only in wish and dream, Euripides seems to say, can the land of happy ever after be attained.

²⁷ Most critics have treated *ambustus Phaethon* as though it meant "the fiery death of Phaethon" (cf. the familiar *Caesar mortuus terruit Romanos*). Yet it was precisely the smoking corpse that terrified Merops; as I shall show in a later article, this point, and the fact that the "miserly hopes" were of Merops, not Phaethon, should change our usual reading of Horace's ode in several important respects.

²⁸ B. M. W. Knox, "Euripidean Comedy," *The Rarer Action* (New Brunswick 1971) 68-96. Professor Knox calls our attention also to the many comic elements in *Electra*, which is tragic in the usual sense but today would be called black comedy, as well as in *Ion*, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, and *Helen*.

The heights of bliss are soon past, like the lovely reunion scenes. Yet we must understand that the plays which end happily can go as deep in meaning as the others, that Euripides found in both kinds of myth something to which his psychological and historical instinct responded. As Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale* and *Measure for Measure* are fully tragedies, so are *Ion* and the others: tragedies of grace, we might call them, but also tragedies of human growth and fulfillment in season. Suffering is behind, perhaps also ahead; but we have the sense of emerging from it, though not finally, into the light of charity and forgiveness and relief from pain, much as winter is followed by spring:

Thou mettest with things dying,
I with things new born. (*The Winter's Tale*, Act III, Sc. 3.)

To understand such Euripidean tragedies better, we may also look back to Homer. The *Odyssey*, for all its comic elements, embraces much pain and suffering; and yet it moves constantly through these to the achievement of rest and happiness. In its emphasis on psychological growth, acceptance of life, and triumphant self-fulfillment, the story of Odysseus' travels and return contrasts strongly with that of Achilles' lonely, rebellious, and disastrous quest: yet the two epics in the end seem very companionable. And so do the two types of tragedy which spring from them.

These general remarks provide the necessary context for a more specific observation, that the tragic quality so much discussed in this paper, of "loss of innocence," must disappear in tragedies where acceptance of human growth becomes, as it was in the *Odyssey*, a central theme. Since Euripides flirts with the "loss of innocence" them in *Ion*, but only to deny it, comparisons between *Ion* and *Hippolytus* and, so far as possible, with *Phaethon*, are highly instructive. For *Ion* is on first glance yet another idealistic youth sucked down into the maelstrom of messy human emotions. A son of Apollo, he is associated with ritual purity; he is *integer vitae scelerisque purus*; his beautiful monody, dwelling on light and water, purity and freedom, owes much to the psychological imagery of *Hippolytus*, much also, it seems, to that of *Phaethon*. Again, *Ion*'s initial rejection of Xuthus' proposal, that he come to Athens as prince and heir, may correspond in many ways to *Phaethon*'s rejection of the proposed marriage in his argument with

Merops: a sensitive youth clinging, each time, to the quiet, uncomplicated life which he has enjoyed, whether characterized by athletics or contemplation or temple service. Yet in *Ion*, personal maturing and submission to historical reality are not altogether tragic. The youth's reluctance disappears soon enough. He will come to Athens. He will claim the inheritance in which light and dark elements are strangely combined (though not mingled): the olive sprig, suggesting continuity even of a certain innocence, along with the serpents and the gold. It is not so terrible, then, that Ion must depart from the earlier, simple-minded innocence of his boyhood and temple service. That is why the description of that innocence has comic elements—warding off bird droppings—which were lacking in the earlier plays. Ion rather anticipates Dostoevski's splendid Alyosha Karamazov, whose awakening from a spiritually cloistered boyhood is ultimately welcomed as a necessary and right stage of spiritual growth: he is better, happier, and stronger for it. By such a view, loss of innocence no longer provides a moving dramatic symbol of man's powerlessness for good and the failure of his aspirations, as it did in *Hippolytus* and *Phaethon*, but is accepted and even welcomed as an aspect of right living. Again, in the earlier plays, sexual involvement is intimately linked with death. One side of the wedding-song therefore predominated, the mourning for virginity and the proclamation of separation and loss; but now, as in the fuller view of marriage, death to one's earlier self serves the transition to a richer, more complete life. To use a different Euripidean image: his *Phaethon* laments the gentle light of very early dawn, or of the morning star, effaced by the terrible burning of the sun; but *Ion* (as suggested in the tent hangings) completes the cycle, from day to night and into the coming of a new dawn of hope.²⁹ Dark and light, death and renewal: a great tragedy may start and end either way, with equal depth of meaning.

Now it seems likely from metrical indications, inadequate as these

²⁹ This point is developed by my colleague, Professor H. R. Immerwahr, in a paper, as yet unpublished, which he kindly showed to me. The contrast with *Phaethon* would be the more striking if Ovid's description of sculptures on the Sun's palace went back to Euripides. For my understanding of *Ion* generally, I am much indebted to A. P. Burnett, "Human Resistance and Divine Persuasion in Euripides' *Ion*," *CP* 57 (1962) 89-103, and C. Wolff, "The Design and Myth in Euripides' *Ion*," *HSCP* 69 (1965) 169-94.

are, that *Phaethon* was produced somewhere between *Hippolytus* and *Ion*, perhaps in the period 420–16 B.C. In many ways, both dramatic and psychological, it would provide a nice transition between the two, strongly recalling themes and images of the “loss of innocence” complex from *Hippolytus*, but also pointing forward to *Ion* and the other later plays of maturation and acceptance. It seems likely that many plays produced by Euripides in the Twenties shared the general theme and mood of *Hippolytus*. The *Hecuba* offers striking parallels; so too, less obviously, does *Andromache*. It seems only natural that Euripides should have moved on, not only from the dramatist’s natural desire for new woods and pastures green, but also from his own personal sense of growth, with corresponding changes in his psychological interests and outlook. This is not to suggest any easy formulation of such a complex and fascinating process. If we had all eighty-eight or ninety-two of Euripides’ plays, they would probably display a variety comparable to Shakespeare’s; and we could see how familiar motifs, images, dramatic relations and structures constantly recurred in new imaginative contexts where their meanings were utterly changed: in short, we might move from *Hippolytus* to *Phaethon* to *Ion* much as we move from *Hamlet* to *Lear* to *The Winter’s Tale*. Magnificent though they are, the single parts of the constellation are still less fascinating than the whole.

We have moved away from *Phaethon*: I think, rightly. To work with fragments, to reconstruct a lost play, is always exciting: would that new discoveries would confirm our attempts—or else confound them! But the critic must forever be turning and returning to existing plays, with increasing admiration and enjoyment, and with increasing gratitude. We may well regret the loss of so many fine plays of Euripides, and not least (for all practical purposes) of the *Phaethon*; but how many have come to a full and final appreciation of all the plays we have?