

This paper is a case study of three of Euripides' tragedies, one complete and two fragmentary, which share a common theme: that of a young hero whose violent and untimely death is connected with chariot-driving. While it is a difficult task to analyze a theme—even one as striking as a chariot crash—in a fragmentary work, we are helped by several coincidences. Euripides' *Phaethon* is one of the more substantial fragmentary tragedies that survive, largely because of two relatively recent discoveries of new fragments (1907 Berlin P. and 1962 Oxy. P.), including a hypothesis. Thus the play, incomplete though it is, lends itself more readily to analyses of its structure and themes. Secondly, the myth of Phaethon appears in the second stasimon of the *Hippolytos*, another tragedy in which the hero dies in a chariot wreck. This is interesting given the metrical analysis of the *Phaethon*, which suggests that Euripides composed the two plays within several years. Thus a comparison with the complete *Hippolytos* is a fruitful one.

As with *Hippolytos*, a youth whose reluctance for sex and marriage may be connected with his status as a bastard son of Theseus (Ebbott 2003), Euripides' *Phaethon* too is young, reluctant to marry, and anxious about the paternity of his father. Phaethon borrows Helios' chariot to allay his own doubts about his true identity (*eiper pater pephuken*, 52) and his supernatural death, like that of *Hippolytos*, is described in a messenger speech of great detail and beauty. Likewise, *Hippolytos*' spectacular chariot crash is also connected with his father Theseus, since it is his curse that causes Poseidon's bull to appear and overturn *Hippolytos*' chariot. The theme of marriage in the *Phaethon* appears to be a Euripidean invention and is one of the most controversial aspects of interpreting the tragedy (e.g. Wilamowitz 1913, West 1966, Diggle 1970, Reckford 1972). Other striking similarities between the two tragedies include the repeated use of the verb *phuo* ("to be by nature"), the emphasis on *Hippolytos* and *Phaethon*'s youths and their distaste for political power. These shared aspects of the tragedies are not surprising, if one major theme in both works is the representation of illegitimacy. (It is noteworthy that Ovid's account of *Phaethon* in the *Metamorphoses*, which may have been influenced by Euripides' play, also represents the youth as a bastard child marginalized in society.)

Another useful *comparandum* for my reading of the *Phaethon* is Euripides' fragmentary *Chrysippos*. Although very little of this work survives, the traditions surrounding the myth are extremely suggestive: a comic fragment by Strattis tells us that the son of Pelops was abducted and raped by Laios while learning to drive a chariot (Fr. 55 PCG). A number of south Italic vases (LIMCC III.286-89), which show Laios and *Chrysippos* in a chariot, seems to support this tradition. Not surprisingly, the *Orestes* scholia, Hyginus, and Hellanikos all name *Chrysippos* as a bastard son of Pelops (the same may be inferred by the omission of *Chrysippos* in a list of Pelops' sons in Pindar, Ibykos, Pherekydes, Theognis, and Euripides). If so, the concerns about the nature of nobility expressed in some of the *Chrysippos* fragments make sense, for parallel debates appear elsewhere in works that explore the concept of illegitimacy (e.g. Euripides' *Hippolytos*, Sophocles' *Ajax*). In the *Hippolytos*, the *Phaethon*, and the *Chrysippos*, then, Euripides appears to explore the condition of illegitimacy through the image of the failed charioteer. In examining this theme, my paper implicitly considers the reliability of a methodology that analyzes fragmentary tragedies by way of parallels in other tragedies, tragic fragments, comic fragments, the scholia, and vase paintings.