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EURIPIDES' *OEDIPUS*: A RESPONSE TO LIAPIS

SUMMARY: This article examines the hypothesis, recently advanced by Vayos Liapis in this journal, that most of the quoted fragments of Euripides' *Oedipus* belong not to that play but to a much later rhetorical exercise. It argues that the overwhelming majority of the faults alleged by Liapis are fully compatible with Euripidean language and style; and that even if the authenticity of one or two fragments can be called into question, there is no evidence to support the view that they come from a work written centuries after Euripides' death.

In a recent major article, Vayos Liapis argues that most of the fragments quoted by ancient authors as coming from Euripides' *Oedipus* are not in fact by Euripides, but rather belong to a much later rhetorical exercise.¹ He presents his case with enviable learning and skill, but another view may nevertheless be possible. In this article I argue that the overwhelming majority of the faults alleged by Liapis are in fact fully compatible with Euripidean language and style; and that even if the authenticity of one or two fragments can be called into question, there is no evidence to support the view that they come from a work written centuries after Euripides' death.

Let us first get an overall sense of the fragments, beginning with those quoted by other authors. Some are attributed specifically to Euripides' *Oedipus* by at least one of the authors that cite them (fr. 540, 542-45, 546-54, 555).² One is attributed to an *Oedipus* (fr. 541), although since this fragment comes from the Euripidean scholia, there is a presumption that Euripides' play is meant. A further fragment (fr. 545a) has its first six lines ascribed to Euripides, and the rest to "tragedy"; the whole passage was conjecturally attributed to Euripides' *Oedipus* by C. F. Hermann.³ Another has no attribution in its quoting author (fr. 539a), but was conjecturally attributed to Euripides' *Oedipus* by Meineke.⁴

In the second half of the twentieth century our knowledge of the play was augmented thanks to the publication of several papyri. P.Oxy. 2455, a papyrus of the early second century AD containing an alphabetised list of Euripidean plays (offering in each case their title, first line, and narrative summary), was first published as Turner 1962a.⁵ It contains the first line of the play, explicitly stated to be such. Snell matched the papyrus text with a quotation of the line by Plutarch, which Meineke had already conjecturally ascribed to Euripides' *Oedipus* – an ascription rejected by Nauck in his edition, who gave the fragment the designation Tr. Adesp. fr. 378.⁶ But thanks to the new evidence provided by the papyrus, Kannicht included the fragment among the fragments of Euripides' *Oedipus*, as fr. 539a.

A second papyrus, P.Oxy. 2459, from the fourth century AD, was published as Turner 1962b.⁷ The detailed description that it contains of the Sphinx and its riddle overlaps with text from Aelian (attributed to Euripides, overlapping with lines 2-3 of the papyrus), from Erotian (attributed to Euripides' *Oedipus*, overlapping with line 2), from Athenaeus (unattributed, overlapping with line 2), and from Plutarch as cited by Stobaeus (unattributed, overlapping with lines 7-9; conjecturally ascribed to Euripides' *Oedipus* by Valckenaer, but printed as Tr. Adesp. 541 by Nauck).⁸ The combined papyrus and quotations make up fr. 540 in Kannicht's edition.

Two more papyri published in the 1960s contribute further evidence for the play. P.Bodmer 25, from the second half of the third century AD, and first published by Kasser and Austin 1969, contains a marginal scholium that identifies lines 325-26 of Menander's *Samia* as coming from Euripides' play (fr. 554b). And P.Oxy. 2536, from the second century, and published by Turner 1966, from Theon's commentary on Pindar (first century BC), cites two lines which the author specifically attributes to

Euripides' *Oedipus*. There is an overlap with a quoted fragment from Hesychius, itself specifically attributed to Euripides' *Oedipus* (fr. 556).

The table below, arranged by quoting author, reflects our current state of knowledge about the quoted fragments. As well as indicating whether or not a given quotation fragment overlaps with a papyrus, I have also stated for each individual fragment whether or not Liapis believes that it comes from Euripides' play.

Quoting author	Attributed to	Kannicht fr. number	Overlaps with papyrus?	Accepted by Liapis?
Aelian	Euripides	540	Yes	Yes
Athenaeus	n/a	540	Yes	Yes
Clement of Alexandria	Sophocles	542	No	No
Clement of Alexandria	Euripides	545-46	No	No
Clement of Alexandria	Euripides (lines 1–6); “tragedy” (7–12)	545a	No	No
Erotian	Euripides' <i>Oedipus</i>	540	Yes	Yes
Hesychius	Euripides' <i>Oedipus</i>	556	Yes	Yes
Hesychius	Euripides' <i>Oedipus</i>	557	No	? (See fn. 9)
[Menander], <i>Monostichoi</i>	n/a	543	No	No

Orion	Euripides	542	No	No
Philodemus	Euripides	542	No	No
Plutarch	n/a	539a	Yes	Yes
Plutarch (quoted by Stobaeus)	n/a	540	Yes	Yes
Scholia to Euripides	<i>Oedipus</i>	541	No	No
Stobaeus	Euripides' <i>Oedipus</i>	542-45, 546- 54, 555	No	No
<i>Theosophia Tubingensis</i>	Euripides' <i>Oedipus</i>	554a	No	No

As will be apparent from the table, Liapis argues that every quotation fragment which matches a papyrus that provides evidence for Euripides' *Oedipus* does indeed come from that play; and that every quotation fragment which does not match a papyrus is spurious.⁹ He believes that these spurious quotation fragments were not written by Euripides at all. Instead, they came from a rhetorical exercise composed hundreds of years later that was confused with Euripides' play. Liapis argues for this on the basis that the quoted fragments presuppose an impossible plot, offer content impermissible in Euripidean tragedy, or show unEuripidean features of language and style.

This view is open to challenge, and I respond to it in detail below, fragment by fragment, in the third and longest part of my case. However, two additional arguments against Liapis's position can be raised – arguments that do not require any reference

to the specifics of plot construction or to the details of language or style. I begin with these.

I. According to Liapis, all the quoted fragments that have subsequently been discovered to overlap with a papyrus are authentic, whereas all the quoted fragments which do not benefit from such an overlap are inauthentic.¹⁰ Such a coincidence is, to say the least, remarkable. The papyrus gods have apparently given us enough papyri to confirm the authenticity of all the genuine quoted fragments. They have not left any genuine quoted fragment without a helpful confirmatory papyrus; nor have they confused the issue by providing any papyrus of the putative rhetorical exercise which Liapis regards as the origin of all the other quoted fragments. Generous gods indeed, we might think. Is this really plausible?

II. My second argument concerns the authors who cite the fragments that Liapis doubts. One of those authors is Philodemus, a scholar of extraordinarily wide reading, who knew more Greek than we ever shall.¹¹ According to Liapis, Philodemus failed to distinguish between genuine Euripides and a much later piece of hack work that merely aped his style. Is this likely? Authors who quote texts do make mistakes, of course; we have seen one such mistake in the table above, when Clement attributed to Sophocles a fragment that he should have awarded to Euripides.¹² But the error that Liapis posits is exceptionally grave. He believes that these authors (or previous authors from whom they took the quotations, if they were quoting at second-hand) and whoever originally excerpted the quotations that ended up in Stobaeus, Orion, and the like, mistook a play (or a scene of a play) written centuries after Euripides for the real thing, not through an error of memory or a slip of the pen, but by reading the

text in question, or a significant part of it, and getting it wrong. The failure of judgment that he hypothesises is enormous.

Moreover, it is not even that the text in question, according to Liapis, was a particularly good imitation of Euripides. Liapis believes that he can identify the inauthenticity of this hypothetical work from a mere handful of lines, so riddled are they with errors and inconsistencies. On this basis (since there is no reason to think that the fragments quoted from the play were disproportionately prone to exhibiting unEuripidean features), the entire work would have offered many instances of language, style, and plotting inconsistent with genuine Euripides; a disastrous composition that would have embarrassed any author with a sense of shame. Yet a writer such as Philodemus, despite all his reading, was fooled. And he, and others, made this enormous error when a text of the real *Oedipus* by Euripides was in circulation – since if the play was being read at Oxyrhynchus in the fourth century, it was certainly being read in a wide variety of locations in the centuries before that.

Raising this point requires us to consider briefly the *Rhesus* ascribed to Euripides, and the *Prometheus Bound* ascribed to Aeschylus. Both these plays, most scholars today believe, were not written by the playwrights to whom they were attributed for most of antiquity. According to my argument above, ought their inauthenticity not have been noticed? There are three reasons why this is not a satisfactory riposte, as follows.

First, in the case of *Rhesus*, at least, its authenticity was indeed questioned; “some” suspected that the play was not by Euripides because it rather showed a “Sophoclean stamp.”¹³

Second, the *Rhesus* falsely attributed to Euripides was probably written in the early fourth century, and the *Prometheus Bound* falsely attributed to Aeschylus was

probably written no later than about a quarter of a century after Aeschylus' death in 456.¹⁴ Plays written so early – barely after the lifetimes of the playwrights under whose names they would in time be transmitted – were more easily confused with the genuine work of Euripides and Aeschylus.¹⁵ By contrast, under Liapis's hypothesis, an *Oedipus* written centuries after Euripides' lifetime, when the Greek language was different and when dramatic conventions will have developed in directions quite unforeseen in the classical period, was taken to be a play by Euripides: a completely different proposition.

Third, people in antiquity reading and quoting *Rhesus* and *Prometheus Bound* did not have access to any alternative, genuine *Rhesus* by Euripides or *Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus.¹⁶ There was no opportunity, once Euripides' *Rhesus* had been lost at an early stage in the transmission, for anyone to note the existence of two homonymous plays attributed to the same author and to wonder whether both were in fact by him. Under Liapis's hypothesis, the *Oedipus* falsely ascribed to Euripides coexisted with the true Euripidean play for centuries, and yet educated authors are happy to quote the former as if it were genuine Euripides even though the real Euripidean play was well known, as the papyri testify. Playwrights did, of course, use the same title for different plays; but at least in the case of classical playwrights, one or both of the homonymous plays was assigned a sobriquet (probably no later than the fourth century, to assist the book trade and the growing reperformance tradition – people will have wanted to know exactly which play they were getting). Under Liapis's hypothesis, both the genuine and the inauthentic play were presumably circulating under the unadorned title “Euripides' *Oedipus*,” since no evidence for a sobriquet is preserved in any of the quotation fragments. Yet such a remarkable state

of affairs either did not trouble anyone, or at least did not trouble those learned and bookish authors who made the appalling blunder with which Liapis credits them.

III. Either of the two arguments above on its own is, in my view, sufficient to cast the gravest doubt on Liapis's case; taken together, their force is overwhelming. However, it is still worth examining Liapis's individual arguments about each separate fragment; since even if his overall case seems improbable, he could be right about the authenticity of an individual fragment or group of fragments. In citing the fragments, I use Liapis's own translations, in the interests of fairness. I begin with a fragment where the attribution to Euripides in the source text is problematic; I move on to three fragments where Liapis's case against authenticity is based simply on the gnomic character of the fragments; and I conclude by considering the remaining fragments, where his case is based on language and, occasionally, inconsistency with the plot that Liapis reconstructs from the papyri. Within each section, I cite the fragments in the order that Liapis cites them; and to avoid innumerable repetitions of 'Liapis 2014', cite his article simply by page number throughout.

1. *Problematic attribution in the source text*

fr. 555 (**B16**)

ἀλλ' ἡ Δίκη γὰρ καὶ κατὰ σκότον βλέπει

The truth is, Justice sees even in darkness

Stobaeus cites this line, preceded by another line, under the lemma Εὐριπίδης Οἰδίποδος. But the preceding line is by Callimachus, as its coincidence with a

papyrus has revealed; and so the possibility must be acknowledged, as Kannicht notes, that the second line too has been misattributed. Kannicht's doubts, which for Liapis (p. 354) constitute the reason for rejecting the authenticity of the line, did not in the end lead Kannicht himself to deny either that Euripides was its author, or that it came from his *Oedipus*. Nevertheless, that attribution is not certain, as Liapis is correct to highlight. He says nothing further about the likely origin of the fragment; when discussing his hypothesis of a late rhetorical exercise, he cites fr. **B1-B15**, but not **B16**. If the text of Stobaeus has indeed gone seriously awry here and the lemma Εὐριπίδης Οιδίποδος does not belong with the line quoted above, there is, however, no reason to think that the line must have come from a work centuries after Euripides' time, nor indeed from an *Oedipus*. A date in the fifth or fourth century is more likely, since plays from this period provided the preponderance of quotations in gnomological works like that of Stobaeus. So although Liapis is right to note the chance that this particular ascription is wrong, there is no support here for his hypothesis of a late rhetorical exercise.

2. "Trite" gnostic fragments

fr. 549 (**B9**)

ἀλλ' ἡμᾶρ <ἐν Nauck> τοι μεταβολὰς πολλὰς ἔχει

But one day truly holds many changes

fr. 544 (**B10**)

ἄλλως δὲ πάντων δυσμαχώτατον γυνή
And besides, a woman is the hardest of all things to fight.

fr. 554 (B14)

πολλάς γ' ὁ δαίμων τοῦ βίου μεταστάσεις
ἔδωκεν ἡμῖν μεταβολάς τε τῆς τύχης
The god gave me / gave us many transformations of our life and changes to
our fortune

Of the first of these fragments Liapis writes (p. 346) “The line seems unexceptionable, but the theme of the mutability of fortune is such a trite one, endlessly repeated and reworked in *gnomologia* and rhetorical handbooks, that the fragment could just as well be a concoction by a late teacher, gnomologist or apprentice orator”; of the second that (p. 347) “The idea that a woman is ‘the hardest of all things to fight’ or ‘the most ferocious of wild beasts,’ etc. is found already in fifth- and fourth-century drama . . . But similar *sententiae* are also common stock in gnomologies”; and on the third he argues that (p. 352) “the repetition τοῦ βίου μεταστάσεις – μεταβολάς . . . τῆς τύχης is feeble” and that “the theme of the mutability of fortune [is] the tritest of gnostic *topoi*.”

In each of these cases the main argument advanced against Euripidean authorship is the gnostic nature of the text.¹⁷ But if we are to eliminate all maxims from tragedy, we will have to wield the deleter’s scalpel with abandon. Moreover, without the context we cannot tell the use to which these maxims were put. What in isolation seems an unremarkable iteration of a standard idea might have been more pointed in the mouth of a particular character in a given situation. There is no reason, then, to treat any of these fragments with suspicion.

3. Language and/or content

fr. 541 (B1)

ἡμεῖς δὲ Πολύβου παῖδ' ἐρείσαντες πέδῳ
ἐξομματοῦμεν καὶ διόλλυμεν κόρας.

Pressing Polybus's son firmly to the ground we blind him and destroy the pupils of his eyes.

The scholia to Euripides, who quote the lines, indicate that they are spoken by one of Laius's servants. They imply a plot in which Oedipus's blinding took place at the hands of a third party, before the discovery that his real father was Laius, and connected in some way with his killing of Laius. Such a startling account of the event, so different from that found in other authors, would be a characteristically Euripidean divergence from the typical version of a myth; one thinks (for example) of his decisions in *Phoenissae* to have Jocasta live on at Thebes as a figure of authority after the discovery of her incest with Oedipus, in *Antigone* to have Antigone end up married to Haemon, or in *Electra* to have Electra married off to a peasant farmer. Moreover, the apparent brevity of the description of the blinding may have been intended as a deliberate contrast with Sophocles' play, where the blinding was a gruesome high point in the final scene, later itself augmented by interpolation.¹⁸

The authenticity of these lines was first questioned by Schneidewin, who doubted that Euripides could have diverged from Sophocles' account to such a degree.¹⁹ He noted that the scholia say simply "in *Oedipus*" (ἐν τῷ Οἰδίποδι), and that the name of another playwright could easily have dropped out. Such a mechanical error by the original commentator or by subsequent copyists would have been easy. It is inevitable that some fragments in our editions are wrongly attributed because we

are relying on a single attribution that happens to be wrong, but which we are in no position to disprove. *Oedipus* plays by other authors did exist: we hear of such plays by Achaëus, Philocles the Elder, Xenocles (victorious at the Dionysia in 415 with a tetralogy made up of *Oedipus*, *Lycaëon*, *Bacchae*, and satyric *Athamas*), Nicomachus of Athens, Meletus the Younger (an *Oedipodeia*, dated c. 399, the same year that Meletus took part in the prosecution of Socrates), Nicomachus of the Troad, Carcinus the Younger, Diogenes of Sinope, Theodectes, Timocles (victorious at the Dionysia in 339), Lycophron (two *Oedipus* plays), and Nicomachus of Alexandria.²⁰ On the other hand, in the Euripides scholia it would be legitimate to refer to Euripides' *Oedipus* simply as *Oedipus*; if an author's name has not dropped out, Euripides' play is the only one that could be meant by this designation in this context. And we should not posit that a name has dropped out if we do not have good cause to advance that hypothesis.

Liapis offers several arguments against the authenticity of the fragment. (1) "In fifth-century tragedy subjects cannot be expected to attack, let alone disfigure their kings, much as a king's fall is a favorite tragic theme" (p. 317). (2) The blinding cannot have been towards the end of the play (as we would naturally have expected), since in that case (i) "there would have been little or no time for Oedipus's identity as son of Laius and Jocasta to be revealed" (p. 317), (ii) "even if both Oedipus's forcible blinding and the revelation of his true identity could somehow be crammed into the same play, the climactic effect of the one would surely have undermined that of the other" (p. 318), and (iii) "Laius's servants would have surely recognized Oedipus as the murderer of their former master the moment he entered Thebes; it is hardly believable, therefore, that they should have waited until he was proclaimed king, married Jocasta and possibly had children by her" (p. 318). And if the blinding had

taken place before the action of the play, or early on in the drama, further problems result, which he describes. (3) It is not clear why Laius’ servants should have blinded Oedipus rather than denouncing or killing him (pp. 318-19). (4) “One would expect that the forcible blinding—whether a departure from the self-blinding that we now perceive as the canonical version of the myth or an ancient variant otherwise unknown to us—would have left some trace in later art or literature” (p. 320). (5) “In classical tragedy ἐξομματόω generally means ‘restore one’s eyesight,’ not ‘blind’ as it certainly does in our fragment” (p. 322) . . . “with one possible exception (ἐκχυμώω ‘to extract juice from’ in the Hippocratic *De morbis* 2.47, VII.68 Littré), it is only in Hellenistic times—and much more so in the first centuries of our era—that ἐκ- compound verbs start to denote annulment or invalidation of the action expressed by the simple verb” (p. 323). (6) “There seems to be no point in the repetition ἐξομματοῦμεν καὶ διόλλυμεν κόρας except to pad out the line” (p. 323). (7) “διόλλυμεν κόρας is unidiomatic: διόλλυμι properly means ‘bring to nought,’ usually with a person or community as its object. The intended meaning here is obviously ‘we destroyed Oedipus’s pupils,’ i.e., ‘we blinded him,’ but in this case the *uox propria* would have been διαφθείρομεν κόρας (admittedly unmetrical)” (p. 324).

My reply to these points is as follows. (1) There may be no other example in tragedy of subjects attacking their ruler, but it seems excessive to elevate this into a canon of the genre. Such attacks are rare because they do not on the whole form part of the mythology from which tragedy takes its plots; but there was nothing to stop a tragedian in search of an innovative approach to a well-worn myth from introducing such a variant if he so wished.²¹ Moreover, as Martin Cropp points out to me, it is not certain that Oedipus was ruler of Thebes at this point; he is referred to merely as the son of Polybus. (2) A competent playwright could have structured a climax to his play

whereby Oedipus's role in the killing of Laius was discovered, and punished, ahead of the discovery of his real paternity. That indeed is the direction in which Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* appears to be heading during the long central scene between Oedipus and Jocasta, when Oedipus begins to suspect that he is a regicide, but has not begun to grasp that he is also a parricide. As for the point about Laius's servants, we know too little about the plot to be able to state that there is no possible scenario in which (as appears from the fragment) they blind Oedipus when his killing of Laius has become clear but his real paternity has not. Greek tragedy does not typically proceed with the same regard for strict logic that we might expect of the modern detective novel, as we are well aware in the case of *Oedipus the King* – why, in that play, does Oedipus fail to summon the only surviving eyewitness to the killing of Laius in the first episode? Why does he ignore crucial pieces of evidence from Tiresias and Jocasta that should have led him to the truth a long time before he actually reaches it? And so on.²² (3) In the absence of the complete play, we will never know why Laius's servants blinded Oedipus rather than killing or denouncing him. Perhaps they had previously decided that such a fate would have been more painful to endure than mere death; perhaps the blinding was intended to be a prelude to further torture and subsequent death; and so on. The possibilities are endless, and it is not appropriate for a modern scholar to declare that such an event could not have happened in a Euripidean tragedy. This may, indeed, be an instance of where Euripides has changed one major aspect of a myth (making the servants of Laius responsible for the blinding) and retained another (the blinding itself); compare how in *Electra* he introduces a new element to the story by marrying Electra off to a mere farmer, but simultaneously retains the inherited detail that she was a virgin. (4) The dominance of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* in later times is explanation enough for

why this variant on the traditional myth was not taken up in subsequent (surviving) art or literature. (5) Liapis's detailed account of the changing semantics of ἐκ- verbs over time is convincing. He has shown that such a meaning in the fifth century would be highly unusual, but not that it can be ruled out. There has to be a first instance in extant literature somewhere, and such an instance might well have been in Euripides; Liapis cites a text with such a sense from the fourth or third century, and as such the semantics do not require us to posit the existence of a much later work. (6) The repetition is rhetorically effective in the description of Oedipus' blinding, a significant moment in the play, and if the first verb involved a linguistic usage rather bold in Euripides' time, then (as Referee 2 points out) the iteration of the same idea would have clarified its sense. (7) The expression that Liapis condemns seems within the bounds of what would be acceptable in Greek poetry; using a word in a slightly extended sense when the context makes that clear is far from unusual.

The strongest point that Liapis advances is number (5). This might be an indication that the fragment comes from a fourth-century tragedy, but it is far from imposing this conclusion, and a Euripidean origin is still more than possible; as a result, I would continue provisionally to accept Euripidean authorship of the fragment. Whatever we conclude on that point, Liapis's argument provides no support for the idea that the fragment comes from a much later work on the Oedipus myth.

fr. 542 (B2)

οὔτοι νόμισμα λευκὸς ἄργυρος μόνον
καὶ χρυσὸς ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ κἀρετὴ βροτοῖς
νόμισμα κεῖται πᾶσιν, ἧι χρῆσθαι χρεῶν.

I tell you, bright silver and gold are not the only currency, but virtue too is for
all mankind an established currency, which they should use.

Noting the usual topos that virtue is superior to human wealth, Liapis objects to its particular instantiation here (p. 325): “The intractable καί in κάρετή shows that virtue, far from being proclaimed superior to silver and gold, is rather envisaged as being *on a par* with silver and gold—as just another form of currency”²³ while “the whole idea of virtue as a form of coinage is a feeble and rather incoherent one.” But for a poetic parallel for equality when superiority might be more naturally expected, albeit from Hebrew poetry rather than from Greek, cf. *Song of Solomon* 8.6 κραταιὰ ὡς θάνατος ἀγάπη, σκληρὸς ὡς ἄδης ζῆλος (‘Love is as strong as death, jealousy unyielding as the grave’). There is no reason why Euripides should have reproduced the topos in exactly its usual form, since by varying it he shows his skill as a poet. Indeed, above we saw Liapis objecting to fragments because they (in his view) reproduce a topos in a hackneyed manner; we might have hoped that he would welcome the originality of the thought here rather than dismissing it as a ‘feeble and rather incoherent’ conceit. His objection to πᾶσιν, that it implies that “virtue is a kind of currency, which—unlike silver and gold—is available to *all* people,” seems misplaced too. First, καί implies that everything predicated of ἀρετή is true also of ἄργυρος and χρυσός, so his phrase “unlike silver or gold” is misleading. Second, his paraphrase “available to *all* people”, as Referee 1 points out, “prejudices the issue: the dative need only mean “in the eyes of” (“for all mankind an established currency,” his translation on his p. 325, is better than his paraphrase quoted here, because his translation does not imply that all mankind actually are (able to be) virtuous).”

Liapis’s additional scepticism (p. 327) towards the phrase λευκὸς ἄργυρος, as being unique in the fifth century, cannot be justified. For what it is worth, Aesch. fr. 310 is the only place in classical Greek where λευκός qualifies χοῖρος, but there is no

reason to doubt the authenticity of that fragment on this ground. He cites Eur. fr. 790a οὐκ ἔστ' ἐν ἄντροις λευκός, ὦ ξέν', ἄργυρος, rightly pointing out that the attribution to Euripides is conjectural; but even if the line is not Euripidean, it could still be from the fifth century. The central point against his argument is that some combinations of quite ordinary words will be attested only once in classical Greek, and, unless special circumstances apply, there is no reason to take such unique combinations as evidence for spuriousness.

fr. 543 (B3)

μεγάλη τυραννὶς ἀνδρὶ τέκνα καὶ γυνή

.....

ἴσην γὰρ ἀνδρὶ συμφορὰν εἶναι λέγω

τέκνων θ' ἀμαρτεῖν καὶ πάτρας καὶ χρημάτων

ἀλόχου τε κεδνῆς, ὡς μόνων τῶν χρημάτων

.....

ἢ κρεῖσσόν ἐστιν ἀνδρὶ, σῶφρον' ἢν λάβηι.

Children and a wife are a great kingdom for a man <text missing?> For it is, I say, an equal disaster for a man to lose children, fatherland and money, as (to lose) a good wife, since possessions alone <text missing?> truly (it?) is better for a man, if he gets a virtuous (wife).

Liapis dislikes the metaphorical use of τυραννὶς, noting (p. 329) that the fragment “uses τυραννὶς as a *metaphor* to signify a precious possession. But a metaphor is precisely what τυραννὶς never is in Euripides (nor, as far as I can see, in classical Greek literature)” and going on to conclude that “if a Euripidean character says, ‘a wife and children are a great τυραννὶς,’ he must mean, absurdly, that through wife and children one can actually exercise real despotic power.” The fragment does indeed offer an original metaphor, but there is no reason to think that a later writer

was more capable than Euripides of employing striking imagery.²⁴ Moreover, the now lost context may have paved the way for the metaphor, making it easier to understand.

For example, Hector's bold claim (Hom. *Il.* 12.243)

εἷς οἰωνὸς ἄριστος, ἀμύνεσθαι περὶ πάτρης

One omen is best, to fight on behalf of one's country
would be paradoxical if that line had survived merely as a fragment in isolation. How is it, scholars might ask, an omen to fight for one's country? One might do that in response to an omen, or to fulfil some omen, but how could such fighting itself actually *be* an omen? And so on. But because the context of the line survives, we can see that Hector is using the term contemptuously, after a preceding passage in which he dismissed the omens cited by his brother Polydamas to encourage him to check his troops' advance. In our fragment too, the immediately preceding lines could have supported the metaphor somehow; perhaps the value of holding political power was being debated, and contrasted with the enjoyment derived from family life.²⁵

Moreover, given our ignorance of the context, we cannot rule out the possibility that the line comes from a different place altogether, and τυραννίς is the subject, which results in the sense "Absolute power is, for a man, (as valuable as) a wife and children;" thus Referee 2, noting that the line could have been "attracted to a context in which the value of wives and children is spoken of."

Liapis's further objections to the fragment are no more compelling. So his argument that "Line 1 extols the value of having a wife *and* children, whereas lines 2–5, though seemingly explaining (γάρ) line 1, speak of the pricelessness of a good *wife* only" (p. 330) is unsatisfactory because there may have been some reason why the loss of a wife needed to be highlighted at that point in the speech. Poetry is not always completely logical or consistent; and there is no reason why we should expect a later

writer to be less logical than a classical one. Moreover, we are dealing here not just with a fragment, but a lacunose one, and this should make us all the more cautious about asserting what Euripides could and could not have done. There is plainly a lacuna between lines 4 and 5, and an excerptor capable of leaving out one block of text could just as easily have omitted two. And to claim that a fragment cannot be Euripidean on the ground of the progression of its thought, when that thought is interrupted by two gaps of indeterminate length, is bold indeed. Liapis's complaint that "hypothetical lacunae provide only an illusory solution to the syntactic anomalies of the passage" (pp. 331-2) does not note that his argument, too, is a hypothesis; and it seem easier to posit lacunae in a single fragment than the existence of an entire new work.

His further objection to "the unusual number of apparently otiose repetitions" (p. 331) does not take account of how common repetitions are in ancient poetry. The "unusual number" of repeated words is two: ἀνδρί and τέκνα/—ων (Liapis also cites γυνή and ἀλόχου, but although these mean the same thing they are different words). Across this passage of at least seven lines (allowing for two lacunae of at least one line) ἀνδρί is repeated twice (1, 2, 5), τέκνα/—ων once (1, 3). For this to be suspicious, Liapis would need to formulate a plausible rule about tragic repetition that this passage violated; it is not easy to imagine what such a rule would look like.

Liapis questions the lacuna after line 4, which in his view presupposes that "the subject changed rather dramatically into a demonstration of why 'money alone' is not enough for a man to be happy—quite a radical departure from the *laus uxoris* that is the theme of the previous lines" (p. 332). But such a statement could have been made briefly enough, as part of the praise devoted to the wife; moreover, χρημάτων in 4 could have entered the text from 3, displacing some other word (such as

κτημάτων, suggested by Weil, as Liapis notes). It seems futile to deny Euripidean authorship of a fragment, and indeed to attribute it specifically to a work from centuries later, on the basis of a guess concerning what may or may not have stood in a lacuna of indeterminate length. As for Liapis's claim that the fragment "with its mention of Oedipus's wife and children, is incompatible with fr. 540 in which Oedipus has only recently defeated the Sphinx . . . , and so must be still unwed and childless" (p. 332), this rests on an illegitimate inference about fr. 540 which I have dealt with above (see n. 23).

fr. 545 (B4)

πᾶσα γὰρ δούλη πέφυκεν ἀνδρὸς ἢ σώφρων γυνή·
ἢ δὲ μὴ σώφρων ἀνοίαι τὸν ξυνόνθ' ὑπερφρονεῖ.

Every sensible wife is her husband's slave; any who is not sensible looks
down upon her partner out of folly.

Taking these words to be the utterance of Jocasta, Liapis argues that "the idea that a good wife should comply with her husband in all things rather than contradict him is . . . put forth in [tragedy, but] there never is the slightest hint that such a wife must also be her husband's *slave*" (p. 334). But we do not know who spoke these lines, or in what context. A situation in which an overbearing male character delivers these lines is not hard to imagine. Equally, a female character may have had some purpose in emphasising her obedience in such emphatic terms. Without knowing the context, it is rash to claim that it is impossible.²⁶

Liapis additionally objects to the language of the piece: (1) that the lack of an article with ἀνδρὸς is unidiomatic; (2) that πᾶσα . . . ἢ σώφρων γυνή should be

πᾶσα σῶφρων γυνή or ἡ σῶφρων γυνή; (3) that πᾶσα γάρ “is multiply suspect: the syntagma occurs nowhere else in Euripides; it provides a convenient building block with which to begin both trochaic and anapaestic lines; and it looks like a ready-made tool for facile, gnomology-like generalizations”; (4) that “ἀνοίαι following hard upon ἡ μὴ σῶφρων creates an offensive redundancy”; (5) and that “ὁ ξυνών = “husband” is unattested in classical tragedy outside of the present fragment and the equally suspect fr. 545a (B5).”

To take these points in turn: (1) For the bare genitive ἀνδρός in the sense “her/your own husband” cf. fr. 546.1, *Tro.* 665-66 καίτοι λέγουσιν ὡς μί’ εὐφρόνη χαλαῖ | τὸ δυσμενὲς γυναικὸς εἰς ἀνδρὸς λέχος, *El.* 1072-73 γυνή δ’ ἀπόντος ἀνδρὸς ἦτις ἐκ δόμων | ἐς κάλλος ἀσκεῖ, διάγραφ’ ὡς οὔσαν κακὴν. (2) As Martin Cropp suggests, if we translate the phrase “The sensible wife is wholly her husband’s slave” the problem disappears. (3) It is of no significance that πᾶσα γάρ occurs only here (and in two other fragments attributed to Euripides’ *Oedipus*); in a limited corpus such freak results involving the combination of two words are to be expected, and instances of πᾶς γάρ, πᾶν γάρ, and πάντα γάρ are not hard to find. (4) Redundancy is a natural feature of language in general and tragic language in particular; here we might just as well refer to effective repetition of the same key idea using a different term. (5) σύνεστι denoting marriage or sexual union is not unusual in tragedy (cf. Eur. *Hel.* 296-97, Soph. *El.* 275-76).

fr. 545a (B5)

εὖ λέγειν δ’, ὅταν τι λέξῃ, χρὴ δοκεῖν, κἂν μὴ λέγῃ,
 κάκπονεῖν, ἂν τῷ ξυνόντι πρὸς χάριν μέλλῃ ἴλέγειν.

.....
 ἡδὺ δ’, ἦν κακὸν πάθητι, συσκυθροπάζειν πόσει

ἄλοχον ἐν κοινῶι τε λύπης ἠδονῆς τ' ἔχειν μέρος

 σοὶ δ' ἔγωγε καὶ νοσοῦντι συννοσοῦσ' ἀνέξομαι
 καὶ κακῶν τῶν σῶν ξυνοίσω, κούδ' ἐστὶ μοι πικρόν

 οὐδεμίαν ὤνησε κάλλος εἰς πόσιν ξυνάορον,
 ἀρετὴ δ' ὤνησε πολλάς· πᾶσα γὰρ †ἀγαθὴ† γυνή,
 ἣτις ἀνδρὶ συντέτηκε, σωφρονεῖν ἐπίσταται.
 πρῶτα μὲν γε τοῦθ' ὑπάρχει· κἂν ἄμορφος ἦι πόσις, 10
 χρὴ δοκεῖν εὐμορφον εἶναι τῆι γε νοῦν κεκτημένῃ·
 οὐ γὰρ ὀφθαλμὸς †τὸ κρίνειν ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ νοῦς

She (sc. a good wife) should think that he (sc. her husband) speaks rightly whenever he says anything, even if he does not; and she should work to achieve whatever is likely to gratify her partner through her words(?). <Text missing?> It is pleasing too, if her husband has some setback, for a wife to put on a sad face with him and to join in sharing his pains and pleasures. <Text missing?> Now that you suffer this affliction, I will endure sharing your affliction with you and help to bear your misfortunes; and nothing will be (too) harsh for me. <Text missing?> Beauty benefits no wedded woman in regard to her husband, but virtue benefits many. Every good(?) wife who has melted in union with her husband knows how to be sensible. Her first principle is this: even if her husband is unhandsome, to a wife with a mind at all he ought to appear handsome; what judges(?) <a man?> is not the eye but the mind.

Liapis complains that (1) “the repetition of λέγειν is as disagreeable as it is pointless” (p. 336); (2) the “emphasis on gratification by *deeds* in line 2 should have been complemented by a symmetrical emphasis on gratification by *words* in line 1” (p. 337); (3) συσκυθρωπάζειν (“to put on a sad face with him”) is “oddly specific” (p.

337) and nowhere else occurs in serious poetry; (4) “Jocasta’s statement that a wife should participate not only in her husband’s grief but also in his *joy* comes across as an irrelevance in this context” (pp. 337-38); (5) “the addition of ἐν κοινῶι (‘in common’) creates a tautology with ἔχειν μέρος” (p. 338); (6) ὤνησεν εἰς πόσιιν (which he takes to mean “for the purpose of finding a husband”) “is an odd phrase: whereas ὤνησεν εἷς τι (e.g., εἰς γάμον) is acceptable Greek, ὤνησεν εἷς τινα (εἰς πόσιιν) is not” (p. 339); (7) “the syntagma οὐδεμίαν ὤνησεν is prosaic, and οὐδεμίαν in particular occurs nowhere else in tragedy except in the *lyric* Soph. *El.* 142” (p. 339); (8) “Instead of ‘for every good(?) wife who has melted in [loving] union with her husband knows how to practice sound-mindedness,’ one should have expected the speaker of these lines to say, inversely, ‘a woman who has sound-mindedness will melt in loving union with her husband,’” (p. 340); (9) “the use of συντέτηκε in line 9 to signify intense love [is] a nearly unparalleled usage” (p. 341); (10) μέν γε is a combination suspect in serious poetry.

But (1) seems more of a personal reaction to the text than a reason to question its authenticity, especially since ancient tolerance of repetition was different from ours; moreover, there seems to be rhetorical point in this repetition, which concentrates attention on the act of speaking and the correct manner of going about it. (2) begs the question; why should Euripides have been required to express a wife’s duties by means of a symmetrical expression rather than by the means that he seems to have chosen? (3) As Martin Cropp says, ‘*looking* as unhappy as he does is step one in showing her sympathy with him’ (MC’s italics), and for the emphasis on the facial expression of an unhappy person cf. *Alc.* 773 οὗτος, τί σεμνὸν καὶ πεφροντικὸς βλέπεις; As for the verb itself, it is attested in Xenophon, and the uncompounded form in Aristophanes, Xenophon, and Plato, which means that we should not be

inclined to deny it to Euripides. (4) As Liapis himself points out, the speaker's words could be a so-called polar expression in which one of the alternatives is more relevant to the speaker's meaning than the former.²⁷ (5) In place of "tautology" we might just as well say "effective reinforcement of a thought by the insistence on a key idea." (6) εἰς here is no more problematic than at e.g. Soph. *OT* 706 τό γ' εἰς ἑαυτὸν πᾶν ἐλευθεροῖ στόμα "with regard to himself, he keeps his speech completely clean," since the phrase as whole could mean "with regard to, in her dealings with her husband" (see also (8) below). (7) The only other tragic occurrence of οὐδεμία is indeed in lyric; it also appears at Ibyc. fr. 286.7 *PMGF*. But if it is good enough for lyric, it can hardly be too prosaic for trochaic tetrameters. (8) The sense of the fragment seems inoffensive; the speaker is referring to how a wife can accommodate herself to her husband's wishes during a marriage. (9) Liapis himself cites a Euripidean fragment with exactly this verb in this sense (fr. 296.2), and a Sophoclean passage (*Tr.* 463) that has ἐντακεῖν with this meaning (p. 342n138). (10) μέν γε appears at Agathon *TrGF* 39 F 8.1, but apparently nowhere else in tragedy. This might be significant, but is sufficient only to cast doubt on the individual phrase, which could be emended; it does not mean that the fragment as a whole has to be unEuripidean.

As noted above, the whole fragment is attributed to Euripides' *Oedipus* only by conjecture; its source, Clement of Alexandria, cites the first six lines as coming from Euripides, and the second six lines from 'tragedy'. Although the attribution to our play has been generally maintained by scholars for nearly two centuries, the grounds for doing so are far from overwhelming; true, they would fit a play in which Jocasta showed sympathy to Oedipus after his fall, but they would also fit other situations, now unknown, in other lost plays. In the case of the last six lines, it is a

conjecture merely to say that they come from Euripides. I would therefore not include this fragment in an edition of the fragments of Euripides' *Oedipus*. Yet Liapis's arguments based on language and style do not help us to tackle the problem – for as we have seen, there is nothing here that could not be by Euripides.

fr. 546 (B6)

πᾶσα γὰρ ἀνδρὸς κακίων ἄλοχος,
κἂν ὁ κάκιστος
γῆμηι τὴν εὐδοκιμοῦσαν.

Every wife is inferior to her husband, even if the most inferior of men marries
a woman of high standing.

Liapis's chief objection (p. 343) against the authenticity of this passage lies in κακίων, where the iota is short where we would have expected it to be long. James Diggle's discussion of the phenomenon shows that none of the alleged parallels in classical tragedy is secure; in our passage he canvasses the possibilities that the word is corrupt (noting the conjecture χείρων) or that the passage is wrongly attributed to Euripides.²⁸ Liapis counters, citing Christopher Collard, that the repetition κακίων . . . κάκιστος looks deliberate; so it might be, although alternatively original χείρων could have become κακίων under the influence of preceding κάκιστος. The prosody means that the attribution to Euripides is insecure; but if Euripides is not the author, there is no reason to suppose that the fragment long postdates him. Our data for fourth-century tragedy, for instance, is far too thin for us to deny that –ίων comparatives with short iota could have found a home there.

Liapis finds fault with the article in τὴν εὐδοκιμοῦσαν, saying that it “would suit a superlative” (p. 343). But after the generalising statement in the first line, it

makes sense for the type of woman to be specified using the article. Compare fr.

402.1-5 νόμοι γυναικῶν οὐ καλῶς κεῖνται περί· | χρῆν γὰρ τὸν εὐτυχοῦνθ' ὅπως πλείστας ἔχειν | [γυναῖκας, εἴπερ τροφή δόμοις παρῆν], | ὡς τὴν κακὴν μὲν ἐξέβαλλε δωμάτων, | τὴν δ' οὔσαν ἐσθλὴν ἠδέως ἐσώζετο, where again, after a universalising claim about women, the speaker refers to specific types of woman by means of designations using the article followed by a non-superlative adjective.

Liapis further objects that “the requisite article is missing before ἀνδρός in line 1: the sense requires ‘every wife is inferior to *her own* husband (τὰνδρός).” I have dealt with this point above (see fr. 545.1).

fr. 547 (B7)

ένος <δ'> ἔρωτος ὄντος οὐ μί' ἠδονή·
οἱ μὲν κακῶν ἐρώσιν, οἱ δὲ τῶν καλῶν.

Although love is a single thing, its pleasure is not single: some love what is bad, others what is good.

Liapis calls attention to the strange thought expressed by this couplet, writing (p. 344) “If there is a difference between the pleasure derived from desiring good things and that derived from desiring bad things, then there must also be a difference between the respective desires themselves.” Yet again, we do not know the context; the second and final line of this fragment might have been only the first line of a longer explanation for the paradoxical statement with which the fragment opens. For example: “Although love is a single thing, its pleasure is not single. Some love what is bad, others what is good, some love women, some love men, some love peace, some love war; but the pleasure that they derive from their loves can be wholly

different in each case.” Or, as Referee 2 suggests, “but the pleasure derived from good things is lasting, that from bad things is fleeting.” If we can come up with these, Euripides certainly could have managed something better.

After noting that “the motif ‘there is not one X but two, one good and one bad’ is a well-known *topos*” and citing parallels for it, Liapis claims (p. 345) that it “represents a botched attempt to reproduce the *topos* adumbrated above, whereby this or that emotion or activity is attributed a good and a bad aspect.” It seems more likely that the variation of the *topos*, drawing an unusual distinction between ἔρως and ἡδονή, supports Euripidean authorship; a mere hack writer is less likely to have created such an original thought. Moreover, Euripides is not saying that there are two sorts of pleasure – just that there is more than one. Liapis’s belief that two sorts of pleasure are at issue derives from his belief that the thought contained in the fragment is self-contained, but there is no reason to believe this.

fr. 548 (B8)

νοῦν χρῆ θεᾶσθαι, νοῦν· τί τῆς εὐμορφίας
ὄφελος, ὅταν τις μὴ φρένας καλὰς ἔχη;

The mind is what to watch, the mind! What use is handsomeness when one
does not have good sense?

Liapis (p. 345) objects “φρένας καλὰς will not do. The *uox propria* would be φρένας χρῆστας,” citing parallels for the latter expression; but it is the mark of competent poets that they do not always make use of the same expression as everyone else. The same objection can be raised against Liapis’s idea that θεᾶσθαι, usually “gaze intently at, take in with the eyes,” is the wrong word in this context, which requires the sense

“examine, focus one’s attention on”; the meanings do not seem so distinct that we can fairly deny Euripides the use of the word in this way. Indeed, a case can be made that both phrases are the result of artistic choice. As Martin Cropp argues, “καλός is purposeful, pointing the contrast between a beautiful body and a ‘beautiful’ mind; and θεᾶσθαι similarly points the contrast between gazing on a beautiful body and ‘gazing on’ (i.e. admiring) a beautiful mind.”

fr. 550 (B10a)

ἐκ τῶν ἀέλπτων ἢ χάρις μείζων βροτοῖς
φανεῖσα μᾶλλον ἢ τὸ προσδοκώμενον

Delight resulting from unexpected events is greater for men when it appears
rather than what is expected

On this fragment Liapis states (p. 348) that “If we ignore the inept line 2, this is the only one among the anthologic fragments that is free simultaneously of linguistic errors, stylistic flaws, and triteness.” Like some previous editors, Kannicht deletes line 2, but Housman’s defence of the language (which he cites) seems adequate:

“neither spurious nor corrupt, I must take heart to say. Construe φανεῖσα with ἐκ τῶν ἀέλπτων, and for the pleonasm μείζων μᾶλλον see *Hec.* 377 θανῶν δ’ ἂν εἴη μᾶλλον εὐτυχέστερος | ἢ ζῶν.”²⁹ Kannicht counters that the order μείζων . . . μᾶλλον is unusual, but μᾶλλον may have been delayed to go next to ἢ. Yet even if line 2 is corrupt or spurious, there is no reason to doubt line 1; Kannicht does not, and Liapis admits that he can find nothing wrong with it.

fr. 551 (B11)

φθόνος δ' ὁ πολλῶν φρένα διαφθείρων βροτῶν
ἀπώλεσ' αὐτὸν κάμῃ συνδιώλεσεν

Envy, which ruins / corrupts the minds of many men, destroyed him and
destroyed me with him.

Liapis objects (pp. 348-49) (1) to the “poor jingle” produced by φθόνος – φρένα – διαφθείρων; (2) to the repetition ἀπώλεσε . . . συνδιώλεσε which, in his view, “probably betrays the hand of a poor versifier”; and (3) to the sense “corrupting people’s minds” for φρένα διαφθείρων βροτῶν, which in his view “is in all likelihood an aberration from tragic usage” since “διαφθείρειν in connection with φρένες indicates ‘deterioration from “sound-mindedness”’ or ‘mental or sensory deprivation,’ but never, apparently, ‘moral corruption.’” But objection (1) is arbitrary since tragic language and Greek in general abounds in assonance.³⁰ Objection (2) can be countered by tragic parallels for similar repetition (involving a verbal stem and the same stem compounded with συν–), such as fr. 545a.5, *Phoen.* 1657-58 (Av.) ἐγὼ σφε θάψω, κἄν ἀπεννέπηι πόλις. | (Κρ.) σαυτὴν ἄρ' ἐγγύς τῶιδε συνθάψεις νεκρῶι, *Tro.* 62 συνθελήσεις ἂν ἐγὼ πρᾶξαι θέλω;, *Her.* 831-32 Ἦρα προσάψαι κοινὸν αἴμ' αὐτῶι θέλει | παῖδας κατακτείναντι, συνθέλω δ' ἐγὼ, *Suppl.* 1006-7 ἥδιστος γάρ τοι θάνατος | συνθνήσκειν θνήσκουσι φίλοις, *Alc.* 1103 νικῶντι μέντοι καὶ σὺ συννικᾷς ἐμοί, *Soph. El.* 495-98 πρὸ τῶνδέ τοι θάρσος | μήποτε μήποθ' ἡμῖν | ἀφεγῆς πελᾶν τέρας | τοῖς δρῶσι καὶ συνδρῶσιν, *Tr.* 797-98 ὦ παῖ, πρόσσελθε, μὴ φύγης τοῦμὸν κακόν, | μηδ' εἴ σε χρή θανόντι συνθανεῖν ἐμοί, fr. 953.1 θανόντι κείνῳ συνθανεῖν ἔρωσ μ' ἔχει; cf. also Eur. *Her.* 754-55 (cited by Kannicht in his apparatus), where Lycus's cry ἀπόλλυμαι δόλωι is followed by the chorus's rejoinder καὶ γὰρ διώλλυς. As for objection (3), we again seem to be

dealing with distinctions of meaning finessed to extremes. Sound-mindedness and morality are hardly such sharply differentiated concepts in ancient thought that we can be confident that the verb could convey one of these nuances but definitely not the other. Even if we could, it is not certain that morality, and not mental judgment, is at issue here.³¹

fr. 552 (B12)

πότερα γενέσθαι δῆτα χρησιμώτερον
συνετόν ἄτολμον ἢ θρασύν τε κάμαθῆ;
τὸ μὲν γὰρ αὐτῶν σκαιόν, ἀλλ' ἀμύνεται,
τὸ δ' ἡσυχᾶϊον ἀργόν· ἐν δ' ἀμφοῖν νόσος.

Is it indeed more useful to be intelligent without courage, than both headstrong and crass? The one of these is foolish but defends itself; the other, which is peaceable, is lazy; there is weakness in both.

Liapis writes (p. 349) “τὸ μὲν γὰρ αὐτῶν is a redundancy: a simple τὸ μὲν γὰρ would have made for better tragic idiom.” But the same construction is found at *Bacch.* 1054-6 αἱ μὲν γὰρ αὐτῶν . . . | αἱ δ', with reference to the Maenads mentioned in the previous lines. He goes on to argue that “τὸ μὲν αὐτῶν (i.e., τὸ θρασύν τε κάμαθῆ εἶναι) is an abstract notion that coheres rather ill with the concrete specificity of ἀμύνεται: head-strong and crass persons can be said to defend themselves; ‘the fact of being headstrong and crass’ cannot.” But that very verb is predicated of abstract ideas at Aesch. *Ag.* 102 ἐλπίς ἀμύνει and Eur. *Hclid.* 302-3 τὸ δυστυχῆς γὰρ ἠύγενει' ἀμύνεται | τῆς δυσγενείας μᾶλλον. Liapis's further point (pp. 349-50) that νόσος “seems too strong a word to designate merely a ‘shortcoming’ or ‘disadvantage’” seems wholly subjective, and again neglects our ignorance of the context – the speaker may have gone on to describe the

consequences of one or both of these mental states in such a way that justifies such strong vocabulary.³²

fr. 553 (B13)

ἐκμαρτυρεῖν γὰρ ἄνδρα τὰς αὐτοῦ τύχας
εἰς πάντα ἀμαθές, τὸ δ' ἐπικρύπτεσθαι σοφόν
It is stupid for a man to testify to his misfortunes in front of everybody; concealing them is wise.

Arguing that these lines must have been spoken after the discovery of the truth about Oedipus, Liapis claims (pp. 350-52) that ἐκμαρτυρεῖν must then mean not “bear witness” (since there was no point in bearing witness to sufferings that had already happened), but “reveal, make public”; yet (he writes) ἐκμαρτυρεῖν in that sense is not attested before the mid-second century AD (and then in the middle). But the initial claim, that the lines imply a situation where Oedipus’s true situation has already been revealed, is not compelling; the τύχαι in question could have been almost anything, spoken by anyone with reference to anyone. The rest of Liapis’s argument thus becomes moot.

fr. 554a (B15)

ἐγὼ γὰρ ὅστις μὴ δίκαιος ὢν ἀνήρ
βωμὸν προσίξει, τὸν νόμον χαίρειν ἔῶν
πρὸς τὴν δίκην ἄγοιμ' ἂν οὐ τρέσας θεοῦς·
κακὸν γὰρ ἄνδρα χρὴ κακῶς πάσχειν αἰεί.

Any man who, being unrighteous, sits in sanctuary at an altar—I would myself dismiss the law and take that man to justice without fear of the gods; for a bad man should always be treated badly.

Liapis objects to the content of this passage; noting that elsewhere in tragedy attempts are made to dislodge suppliants from altars, he claims that in this passage (p. 353) “what is unparalleled is Creon’s (?) forthright and ruthless admission that he is prepared openly to disregard the gods by showing no fear of them.”³³ In effect, he is positing a rule for classical tragedy: that although characters may try to remove suppliants from sacred places in defiance of the gods, they are not allowed to state that this is what they are doing in such terms. I see no reason to posit such a rule.³⁴ And again, we know nothing of the context of this passage – nothing of the character (presumably a highly uncongenial one) who uttered these words, and why. Their content provides no evidence for inauthenticity.

Liapis adds (p. 354) that “The author’s characteristic incertitude regarding the use of the definite article . . . is once again very much in evidence here: πρὸς τὴν δίκην ἄγοιμ’ ἄν is unidiomatic: the formula is πρὸς δίκην ἄγειν.” But for τὴν δίκην in a quasi-legal context where we might have expected simply δίκην see Eur. *Hclid.* 1025 οὗτος δὲ δώσει τὴν δίκην θανῶν ἐμοί, *Andr.* 358-9 αὐτοὶ τὴν δίκην ὑφέξομεν | ἐν σοῖσι γαμβροῖς, Soph. *OR* 551-52 εἴ τοι νομίζεις ἄνδρα συγγενῆ κακῶς | δρῶν οὐχ ὑφέξειν τὴν δίκην, οὐκ εὔφρονεῖς; also Tr. Adesp. fr. 498 (of uncertain date) ἄγει τὸ θεῖον τοὺς κακοὺς πρὸς τὴν δίκην.

In the great majority of cases (thirteen fragments), there is no justification for the view that the quoted fragments attributed to Euripides' *Oedipus* do not in fact come from that play.³⁵ In two cases (fr. 545a = **B5**, fr. 555 = **B16**) we may doubt whether a fragment does come from that play because of problematic attribution in the text that cites it; the problematic nature of those attributions was known before the publication of Liapis's piece. In two further fragments a linguistic or metrical issue casts a degree of doubt over the attribution of the text to Euripides; one of these (fr. 541 = **B1**), where a linguistic problem has been identified by Liapis, I would still provisionally retain as Euripidean, the other (fr. 546 = **B6**), where a metrical problem had previously been identified by James Diggle, I would provisionally reject. In these four fragments where a doubt concerning Euripidean authorship has some plausibility, nothing whatsoever suggests the existence of a much later *Oedipus* wrongly attributed to the classical tragedian.

Not only is it possible to counter the great bulk of Liapis's arguments against individual fragments, but his overall case is stymied by two fundamental objections, set out as points I and II above. The combination of these points means that his bold and exciting hypothesis has virtually no chance of being right. I therefore hope that scholars and students will continue to cite the vast majority of these fragments as genuine, if frustratingly meagre, excerpts from Euripides' *Oedipus*.

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¹ Liapis 2014.

² These and other fragment numbers in this article refer to *TrGF* unless otherwise indicated. One of these fragments, fr. 542, was attributed to Sophocles by Clement of Alexandria; but Philodemus and Orion attribute it to Euripides, and Stobaeus to Euripides' *Oedipus*.

³ Hermann 1837: 17–19.

⁴ Meineke 1843: 289.

⁵ For more recent analysis see Van Rossum-Steenbeek 1998: 20-21, 208-9.

⁶ Snell 1963, Nauck 1889; Plut. *Reg. et Imp. Ap.* 205c, *Cic.* 27.4.

⁷ See the review by Lloyd-Jones 1963: 446-47.

⁸ Valckenaer 1767: 194.

⁹ He nowhere mentions the tiny fr. 557; accordingly, I do not discuss it either.

¹⁰ It is not a matter of papyrus fragments versus quotation fragments, as might be inferred from Liapis's statement "papyrus fragments and quotation-fragments are not compatible as parts of a coherent plot—a fact which, surprisingly, has gone largely unnoticed so far" (p. 308). Rather, it is a case of, on the one hand, papyrus fragments and those quoted fragments which happen to coincide with them, and on the other hand, all the other quoted fragments.

¹¹ In *On Poetry* 3 fr. 28 (pp. 88-89 Janko) Philodemus carefully analyses the literary merit of a tragedian whose name is not preserved (not one of the "big three"); Janko *ad loc.* compares a passage in *On Poetry* 2 which contrasts the merits of Euripides with those of Carcinus and Cleaenetus as writers of tragedy.

¹² For one remarkable case of misattribution see the text that appears as Soph. fr. 1126 in Pearson 1917 (= Tr. Adesp. 618 *TrGF*) with Pearson's n.; Christian writers from c. 150 C.E. onwards, including Clement, cite a passage of trimeters as coming from Sophocles when their content is blatantly monotheistic.

¹³ Hypothesis (b) (Diggle 1994: 430.23-24) τοῦτο τὸ δράμα ἔνιοι νόθον ὑπενόησαν, Εὐριπίδου δὲ μὴ εἶναι· τὸν γὰρ Σοφόκλειον μᾶλλον ὑποφαίνειν χαρακτῆρα; translation from Fries 2014: 22.

¹⁴ "If the extant *Rhesus* is not by Euripides, it belongs in all likelihood to the first quarter or third of the fourth century BC" (Fries 2014: 28); for the date of *PV* see Sommerstein 2008: 433-4, 2010: 231-32.

¹⁵ Cf. the description by Barrett 2007: 323 of the Greek written by the anonymous author responsible for the end of Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* as it survives in our manuscripts: "that hack was writing in Athens at a time when *nondum obliti erant Athenis loquier lingua Graeca*; and if I show him

to use that language without . . . solecisms . . . , I am merely showing him to possess the natural birthright of a fourth-century Athenian. His linguistic incompetence will manifest itself not in solecisms but in straining the language in what he mistakenly supposes to be the manner of Aeschylus, or in falling flat where Aeschylus would have risen”.

¹⁶ There is no reason to think that Aeschylus wrote any play called *Prometheus Bound*. Euripides did write a *Rhesus*, but an error in the early transmission, probably at Alexandria in the third or second centuries (cf. Fries 2014: 23-28), led to the fourth-century *Rhesus* being attributed to Euripides, and the disappearance of the genuine Euripidean play.

¹⁷ I say “the main argument” since he objects to repetition in the last of the three. But repetition is hardly unusual in tragedy, and what seems to him a feeble repetition seems to me an elegant enough chiasmus.

¹⁸ Soph. *OT* 1266-81; see further Finglass (2017) on lines [1278-79], [1280-81].

¹⁹ Schneidewin 1852: 47-48.

²⁰ See *TrGF* I pp. 124, 141, 153, 155, 188, 212, 232, 252, 277, 286; also II pp. 15-16.

²¹ Although it does not involve subjects killing a king or the death of a character who has previously appeared on stage, Neoptolemus is killed by an anonymous group of Delphians (primed beforehand by Orestes) at Eur. *Andr.* 1085-1165, showing that such lynching was conceivable within a tragic context.

²² Liapis previously argues that “the Sphinx episode, although not part of the play’s action, was supposed to have taken place the day before, or not much earlier. The play would have begun on the morning after the incestuous marriage” (p. 312), on the ground that “detailed, *ekphrasis*-like descriptions in tragedy [such as we find in fr. 540 = A1, from a papyrus] are never used with reference to events in the distant past; it is only for very recent occurrences that the mode is reserved” (p. 311). It is clear from his n. 19 that he means not ‘in tragedy’ but ‘in tragic trimeters’, since *ekphrasis*-like descriptions are attested in lyric (to the examples that he cites we may add Eur. *El.* 452-78). But as he admits in the same note, detailed descriptions of the past are rare in tragic trimeters anyway; he cites only two examples, enough to establish that the presence of a detailed description of the past in tragic trimeters is not in itself suspicious, but woefully too few to establish the kind of characteristics that such a description must or must not possess.

²³ μόνον has the same effect, as Referee 2 points out.

²⁴ As Referee 2 points out, τύραννος is used metaphorically in classical Greek: Eur. *Hipp.* 538 (Eros), *Hec.* 816 (Peitho), Pl. *Resp.* 573b (Eros).

²⁵ For a debate in tragedy on the value of holding political power see Soph. *OT* 584–99 (with τυραννίς 592).

²⁶ Referee 2 points to Medea’s complaint about marriage (Eur. *Med.* 232–34) as equivalent to a woman’s purchasing a δεσπότης; Martin Cropp points to Eur. *Phaethon* fr. 775 ἐλεύθερος δ’ ὦν δοῦλός ἐστι τοῦ λέχους, | πεπραμένον τὸ σῶμα τῆς φερνῆς ἔχων (“Though a free man, he is a slave of the marriage bed, having sold his body for a dowry”; translation from Diggle 1970: 125), where a husband is his rich wife’s slave.

²⁷ For the polar expression in Greek thought see Lloyd 1966: 90–94.

²⁸ Diggle 1981: 29–30.

²⁹ Housman 1888: 271 = 1972: 175; for this type of construction see Battezzato 2017 on the *Hecuba* passage. Referee 2 calls this ‘difficult, perhaps even impossible, with the predicate *and* the (articular) noun with which φανεῖσα agrees intervening’; certainly the word order is unusual, but whether it is impossible is something that only a native speaker could tell us.

³⁰ Referee 2 compares Eur. *Cycl.* 671, where -εσ- occurs in four consecutive syllables with no apparent significance.

³¹ The point in this last sentence is owed to Referee 2, who additionally points to Willink 1986 on Eur. *Or.* 297: “διαφθίρεισθαι is applicable to any deterioration from ‘sound-mindedness’.”

³² “Timidity and rashness are νόσοι in much the same way as an unbridled tongue (Eur. *Or.* 10)” (Martin Cropp, pointing also to *Antiope* fr. 226, which is not adequately dealt with by Liapis at p. 350n162).

³³ Martin Cropp points out that the speaker may be speaking not in defiance of the gods, but out of the belief ‘that he does not need to fear divine punishment if he visits justice on someone who is not entitled to the gods’ protection’, comparing Creon’s religious arrogance at *Ant.* 280–89; he also notes that we do not know if the speaker acted on this declaration.

³⁴ Referee 2 points to Eur. *Andr.* 1002–8, where Orestes claims that Apollo will actually collude with Orestes’ murder of Neoptolemus, which will take place at Apollo’s own altar; and to Capaneus, who does not fear the power of the gods (Aesch. *Sept.* 427–31).

³⁵ Thus fr. 542 (**B2**), fr. 543 (**B3**), fr. 545 (**B4**), fr. 546 (**B6**), fr. 548 (**B8**), fr. 549 (**B9**), fr. 544 (**B10**), fr. 550 (**B10a**), fr. 551 (**B11**), fr. 552 (**B12**), fr. 553 (**B13**), fr. 554 (**B14**), fr. 554a (**B15**).