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The Garland of Hippolytus

Abstract: This article discusses a set of remarkable scholia on the dedicatory address and prayer which Hippolytus offers to Artemis as he places a garland at her statue (Euripides, *Hippolytus* 73–87); the scholia consider a variety of allegorical interpretations for the garland and for Hippolytus' moral elitism. The article sets these scholia within the context of the poetic interpretation of later criticism and traces their roots in the language of classical poetry itself. The affiliations of Hippolytus' language and why it attracted the notice of the scholiasts is also explored, as is the way in which this scholiastic interest points us also to a very important strand of the play's meaning.

Keywords: allegorical interpretation, Euripides, Pindar, Orphics, scholia

One of the most celebrated Euripidean passages is the dedicatory address and prayer which Hippolytus offers to Artemis as he places a garland at her statue, immediately after the hymn which he and his fellow-huntsmen have sung to her as they enter:

σοὶ τόνδε πλεκτὸν στέφανον ἐξ ἀκηράτου
λειμώνος, ὦ δέσποινα, κοσμήσας φέρω,
ἔνθ' οὔτε ποιμὴν ἀξιοῖ φέρβειν βοτὰ 75
οὔτ' ἤλαθέ πω σίδηρος, ἀλλ' ἀκήρατον
μέλισσα λειμών' ἠρινὴ διέρχεται,
αἰδῶς δὲ ποταμίαισι κηπεύει δρόσοις,
ᾧσοις διδακτὸν μηδὲν ἀλλ' ἐν τῇ φύσει
τὸ σωφρονεῖν εἴληχεν ἐς τὰ πάντ' αἰεί, 80
τούτοις δρέπεσθαι, τοῖς κακοῖσι δ' οὐ θέμις.
ἀλλ', ὦ φίλη δέσποινα, χρυσέας κόμης
ἀνάδημα δέξαι χειρὸς εὐσεβοῦς ἄπο.
μόνῳ γάρ ἐστι τοῦτ' ἔμοι γέρας βροτῶν·
σοὶ καὶ ξύνειμι καὶ λόγοις ἀμείβομαι, 85
κλύων μὲν αὐδῆς, ὄμμα δ' οὐχ ὀρών τὸ σόν.
τέλος δὲ κάμψαιμ' ὥσπερ ἠρξάμην βίου.

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Mistress, I bring you this woven garland which I have fashioned from an unravaged meadow, where no herdsman chooses to graze his animals nor has iron ever passed there, but in the springtime the bee traverses the unravaged meadow and *Aidōs* nurtures it with river waters; those who have no share in the taught, but in their natures *sôphrosynê* has its place in all things for all time – these may pluck [from the meadow], but for the wicked it is not permitted. Mistress of mine, receive from a pious hand a wreath to bind your golden hair. Alone of men do I enjoy this privilege, for I keep company with you and converse with you, hearing your voice, though I do not see your face. May I end my life as I have begun it.

Euripides, *Hippolytus* 73–87

The extant scholia on these famous verses offer a compilation of detailed and rather remarkable readings, extracts from which deserve to be quoted at length:¹

Scholia on v. 73: ‘This is a notorious problem (*zêtêma*). Some suppose that Hippolytus garlands Artemis with a garland of flowers, but others suppose that Hippolytus is saying this about himself, namely “Goddess, I dedicate myself as a garland to you”, that is as the most blooming ornament (*kosmos*), for it is an ornament to the virgin to pass time with the most *sôphrôn* of the young men. Others say that the poet is not riddling (*αἰνίττεσθαι*) or allegorising at all, but using words in their straightforward sense (*κυρίως λέγειν*) and Hippolytus is in fact carrying a garland which he derived from a meadow in which it is not holy (*ὅσιον*) for us to pluck flowers. ‘Iron has never entered it’ (v. 76) indicates that the meadow has never been cropped or worked by anyone. Others say that Euripides metaphorically (*τροπικώτερον*) calls the hymn to Artemis a garland, for it would be remarkably strange to imagine that there was a flowery meadow where flowers were picked and it was of such a kind that those who entered were examined as to whether their *sôphrosunê* was taught or naturally acquired and the meadow was irrigated by *aidōs*. Like a philosopher he says that he is bringing a woven garland to the statue, a hymn to the god. ‘From an unravaged [meadow]’ means ‘from my mind (*διάνοια*) which lacks deceit and corruption’.

Alternatively: Poets quite reasonably liken their own natures to meadows or rivers or bees, and their poetry to garlands: the flowers indicate the variety and beauty of poetry, the rivers its mass and the impetus (*ὄρμη*) to creation, the bees its sweetness, and the garlands the honour (*kosmos*) of the subjects of song. The poet has combined all of these things and thus made the nature of his allegory more brilliant (*ἐφάιδρυνε*). ‘From an unravaged meadow’ indicates that someone who is to practise *mousikê* must have a soul which is pure and unravaged, unstained by any evil, and most of all partakes

1 I generally follow Schwartz’s text, though more work clearly needs to be done on the text of the scholia.

of *aidós*. It is because of the importance of *aidós* that they represent the Muses, who are most fertile (γονιμώταται), as virgins.

Alternatively: ... He calls the hymn a woven garland because they compose hymns by putting together words as in weaving. The unravaged meadow from where the flowers are woven into the garland and where not even a shepherd thinks it proper to graze his animals is an allegory for a virginal and undeceitful intention (ἔννοια). The flowers of this meadow are the results of wisdom and virtue. No iron has come to cut this meadow and crop its flowers; by 'iron' he means either evil meddlesomeness (φιλοπρωγονία) and wrong-doing or the corruption of shameful pleasures, and in this way he makes clear Hippolytus' virginal and guileless character. The bee, however, is an allegory of the soul itself, for the bee is the purest of creatures (whence poets call priestesses 'bees'). He calls it² 'of the springtime' either because bees rejoice in the spring because of the flowers or because pure souls are always blooming, and spring is when flowers are produced.

Scholia on v. 78: This cannot be understood if one wants to understand it literally (κυρίως) as being about gardens. Therefore there is an allegory here. Poets reasonably liken their own natures to bees and rivers and meadows, and poetry itself to garlands; the flowers indicate the variety and beauty of poetry, the rivers its mass and the impetus to creation, the bees the labour (τὸ ἐπιμελές) and concentrated effort involved,³ as well as the sweetness of the poems, and the garlands indicate that those who are praised win glory through them. Euripides has combined all of these things and thus made more brilliant the allegory through which he wished to describe his hymn to Artemis; other poets use these devices (τρόποι) in a scattered fashion. Plucking from unravaged meadows indicates that a poetic soul must be pure and unravaged, and unstained by any evil. Those who are going to practise *poiêtikê* must most of all partake of *aidós*. For this reason some call the Muses too virgins.

Scholia on v. 79: A quality which does not derive from nature, but is achieved by constant practice (μελέτη), is 'learned' (διδασκτόν). Philosophers call bad things 'learned' and good things 'natural' ...

Although the whole of Hippolytus' speech here eventually comes under the scholiastic microscope, the 'notorious problem' is introduced as that of the garland: is it a real or an allegorical garland? The scholars whose work lies behind the scholia presumably knew, and may even have been prompted to their interpretations by, the epithet Στεφανίας or Στεφανηφόρος which was attached to this *Hippolytus* by at least the

2 The reference is either to the bee or the meadow, depending on which reading is adopted.

3 Reading τὸ συντεταμένον for the transmitted τὸ συντεταγμένον, cf. *LSJ s.v.* συντείνω I 2.

time of Aristophanes of Byzantium.⁴ Our scholia on Euripides go back ultimately to the work of Hellenistic scholars in Alexandria, most notably Aristophanes and Aristarchus,⁵ though we may find it hard to imagine either of these figures behind the metaphorical readings of the scholia. The very stark interpretative choice that the scholia offer between ‘allegorical’ or ‘riddling’ readings on the one hand and ‘literal’ (κυρίως) readings on the other is, of course, very familiar in ancient criticism, and these scholia are an excellent illustration of one turn of the scholiastic mind: interpretation begins from the question ‘What do the verses say?’, and if the answer is ‘something which cannot be meant literally’ (after all, *aidōs* is not ‘literally’ a gardener), then one must seek other explanations in ‘troped’ language and ‘allegory’. This latter term covers a very wide range of phenomena,⁶ and in this instance we are dealing with a set of interpretations which largely appeal, not – as do many ancient ‘allegorical’ readings – to a scheme of the order of the cosmos, as for example does Porphyry in his famous discussion of Homer’s ‘Cave of the Nymphs’,⁷ but rather more simply to a metaphorical system which ancient readers tended to think of as inherent in the art of poetry itself. Before turning to the question of how, if at all, these scholia can help us to understand the *Hippolytos*,⁸ we should investigate the intellectual affiliations of the scholia in rather greater detail.

The principal individual elements of the ‘troped’, poetological interpretations (the poet as bee, the ‘garland’ of song, the meadow of the Muses etc.) are very familiar and familiar from poetry well before Euripides.⁹ Behind these scholia lies a very long tradition of high poetic metaphors for song; Simonides is reported to have called Hesiod a gardener and Homer a garland-weaver because the former ‘planted the mythologies of gods and heroes’ and the latter ‘wove from them the gar-

4 Cf. Barrett 1964, 10 n.1.

5 Cf., e.g., Pfeiffer 1968, 222–4, Dickey 2007, 32.

6 Struck 2004, Pontani 2005, 26–40 and the contributions to Boys-Stones 2003 offer an excellent introduction to this subject.

7 Nauck 1886, 56–81; translation and discussion in Lamberton 1983.

8 Commentators on the play have (perhaps unsurprisingly) paid these scholia scant attention; unless I am mistaken, Barrett’s only reference to them (n. on 76–7) is to label ‘absurd’ the ‘allegorisation’ of the bee as really referring to the soul.

9 Cf., e.g., Steiner 1986, 35–9, Nünlist 1998, 60–3, 206–23.

land of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*' (Simonides T 47k Campbell).¹⁰ Unsurprisingly, it is Pindar, whose victorious patrons receive both songs and (literal) garlands, who supplies our richest source of such figures (and this itself is a fact of some significance for the *Hippolytus*).¹¹ When Pindar asks the eponymous nymph of Akragas to 'receive this garland from Pytho' (*Pythian* 12.5), it is hard not to recall Hippolytus' prayer to Artemis. In *Nemean* 7 the song is a highly wrought and precious crown,¹²

εἶρειν στεφάνους ἔλαφρόν, ἀναβάλεο· Μοῖσά τοι
 κολλᾶι χρυσὸν ἔν τε λευκὸν ἔλέφανθ' ἄμᾶ
 καὶ λείριον ἄνθεμον ποντίας ὑφελοῖσ' ἔέρσας.

It is not difficult to weave garlands – strike up the prelude! The Muse binds together gold and white ivory together with the lily flower she has removed from the sea's dew

Pindar, *Nemean* 7.77–9

and at *Nemean* 8.15 the song is a 'Lydian headband embroidered with resounding music',¹³ where the scholia note that the poet is speaking 'allegorically'. *Nemean* 3 offers a particularly elaborate 'cocktail of song':

ἐγὼ τόδε τοι
 πέμπω μεμιγμένον μέλι λευκῶι
 σὺν γάλακτι, κίρναμένα δ' ἔερσ' ἀμφέπει,
 πόνμ' ἀοίδιμον Αἰολίσσιν ἐν πνοαῖσιν αὐλῶν κτλ.

I send you this honey mingled with white milk, attended by the foam which has been stirred, a drink of song among the Aeolian breaths of pipes ...

Pindar, *Nemean* 3.76–9

Here the scholia connect milk with the natural talent, the *phusis*, needed for poetry and the honey with the πόνος of bees, and this is precisely the realm of ideas in which the Euripidean scholia also move.

Poets freely used such images for their own work, but these were also the very stuff of how poetry was explained, and this intimate link with the imagery of poetry itself is fundamental for understanding the

10 The story obviously implies the chronological priority of Hesiod, but to what extent it provides firm evidence for Simonides' view of the matter may be debated.

11 Cf. below p. 28–9.

12 Cf. further below p. 29.

13 To the commentators add Kurke 1991, 190–1, Ford 2002, 117–18.

language of ancient poetic criticism; it is telling that two of Quintilian's three Latin examples of 'allegory through metaphor (*allegoria continuatis tralationibus*)' are poetological images from Lucretius and Virgil (Quintilian 8.6.45). In the present case, however, what stands out is the Platonic background of the Euripidean scholia. Like the scholia, many modern critics have stressed the analogy between the 'unravaged meadow' and Hippolytus' virginal soul, but crucial here is a famous passage of Plato's *Phaedrus* which was very important for later, particularly of course neo-Platonic, discussions of poetry:¹⁴

τρίτη δὲ ἀπὸ Μουσῶν κατοκωχή τε καὶ μανία, λαβοῦσα ἀπαλὴν καὶ ἄβατον ψυχὴν, ἐγείρουσα καὶ ἐκβακχεύουσα κατὰ τε ᾠδὰς καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἄλλην ποίησιν, μυρία τῶν παλαιῶν ἔργα κοσμοῦσα τοὺς ἐπιγιγνομένους παιδεύει· ὃς δ' ἂν ἀνευ μανίας Μουσῶν ἐπὶ ποιητικὰς θύρας ἀφίκηται, πεισθεὶς ὡς ἄρα ἐκ τέχνης ἱκανὸς ποιητὴς ἐσόμενος, ἀτελής αὐτὸς τε καὶ ἡ ποίησις ὑπὸ τῆς τῶν μαινομένων ἢ τοῦ σωφρονοῦντος ἠφανίσθη.

There is a third sort of possession and madness which comes from the Muses. It takes hold of a tender and untrodden soul, and by rousing it and inducing a state of Bacchic possession in song and other forms of poetry, it educates future generations by celebrating the countless deeds of men of old. But whoever comes to the doors of poetry without madness from the Muses, in the belief that craft (*technē*) will make him a good poet, both he and his poetry, the poetry of a sane man, will be incomplete¹⁵ and eclipsed by the poetry of the mad.

Plato, *Phaedrus* 245a

In his commentary on the *Phaedrus*, Proclus explains that the soul which is to receive the divine inspiration of the Muses must be clear of all other distracting influences and ideas, including (we may assume) over-subtle intellectual calculations;¹⁶ we are here not far from the scholastic explanation that the rejected 'iron' of Hippolytus' speech stands for 'evil meddlesomeness (φιλοπραγμαυνία)'.¹⁷ Be that as it may, the soul which, in Proclus' words, is ἀπαθής καὶ ἄδεκτος καὶ ἀμιγής to everything except the 'breath of the divine' (1.181.16–17 Kroll) is at least

14 It is intriguing to find part at least of this passage cited already in Satyrus' *Life of Euripides* (F 6 fr. 16 col. I Schorn), perhaps in a contrast between Euripides and truly 'inspired' poetry (? Aeschylus), cf. Schorn 2004, 193–4.

15 Commentators rightly note that ἀτελής both means 'uncompleted' and also suggests 'uninitiated'.

16 *Commentary on Plato's Republic* 1.181.2–17 Kroll.

17 For scholarly and intellectual 'meddlesomeness' cf. Hunter forthcoming (b), Struck 2004, 72.

how Hippolytus sees himself, even if, of course, his Artemis is much more associated with *sôphrosynê* than with *mania*; the language of poetic inspiration and the language of mystical religious devotion are here, as so often, very close.

Plato's ἄβρατος 'untrodden' for a young man's soul is a word, like Hippolytus' ἀκήρατος, which can have sacral resonance – it is used for a holy place (such as a meadow) which may not be entered except under special circumstances; whereas, however, the sexual resonance of ἀκήρατος and related words is very well attested, ἄβρατος in the sense '(sexually) unmounted' is only found in a humorous context in Lucian (*Lexiphanes* 19). Nevertheless, it is easy enough to see how any reader would feel this resonance in the Platonic passage, particularly when ἄβρατος is put together with ἀπαλός (and particularly in the context of the ἐρωτικὸς λόγος of the *Phaedrus* as a whole), and here perhaps lies part of the origin of the scholiastic stress upon the purity of soul needed by those who wish to practise *mousikê* or *poiêtikê*. So too, although Hippolytus uses κοσμήσας (v. 74) in the sense 'arranging, putting together [i.e. the garland]', it is clear that the scholia felt that the word contributed importantly to the 'metaphorical' sense of the passage, and the explanation that poets compare their poems to garlands to indicate 'the honour (*kosmos*) of the subjects of song' (p. 13. 23 Schwartz) picks up Plato's claim that possession from the Muses 'celebrates (κοσμοῦσα) the countless deeds of the ancients' (*Phaedrus* 245a4).

In choosing ἄβρατος Plato was also, as often, imitating in language the subject of his discourse. 'Untrodden' to describe a soul is, to put it simply, the kind of 'metaphor' which one might expect to find in poetry;¹⁸ in describing the possession which comes from the Muses, Socrates speaks like one possessed in just that way. The most significant analogy here, as for the passage of the *Phaedrus* itself, is Socrates' famous account in the *Ion* of poetic inspiration and of why poetry is precisely the result of ecstatic inspiration rather than *technê* (533c8–535a2). Here too poets are like bees and the language imitates their alleged 'flights':

Poets tell us that, like bees (μέλιτται), they are bringing us songs (μέλη) which they have gathered (δρεπόμενοι) from springs flowing with honey (μελιρρύτων) in gardens and groves of the Muses, and they do this in flight.

18 The discussion of Plato's style at Dion. Hal. *Dem.* 5–7 is obviously relevant here.

They speak the truth: for a poet is a light and winged and holy thing, and unable to compose before the god is inside him and he becomes out of his senses and his mind no longer resides in him.

Plato, *Ion* 534a7–6

It is precisely poetic imagery and metaphor, of a kind very close to Hippolytus' imagery, which 'proves' the irrational nature of poetic composition.¹⁹ Aristotle more than once stressed that 'metaphor' was the most important aspect of poetic language and that making metaphors was a natural gift:

It is important to use each of the elements I have mentioned appropriately, including double nouns and glosses, but by far the most important aspect of diction is the metaphorical. This is the only aspect which cannot be acquired from another and it is a sign of natural gifts (εὐφύια), for to make good metaphors is to observe similarity.

Aristotle, *Poetics* 1459a4–8²⁰

Although this is not the same point as Plato's insistence that poetry is the result of inspiration, not *technê*, they could clearly be seen to stand in the same tradition, particularly as it is metaphorical language which Plato uses in the *Ion* to illustrate the irrational nature of poetic composition. From the perspective of this later tradition, Hippolytus' highly metaphorical address to Artemis would illustrate the very lesson he teaches, namely the primacy of *phusis* over 'taught qualities', for only someone with a very special εὐφύια, who does not in any sense rely on what he has 'learned', could 'make metaphor' like this. We will see that Euripides certainly had other reasons as well for making Hippolytus speak like this,²¹ but it is perhaps not utterly idle to wonder whether the tradition of reflection upon the nature of poetic metaphor which we have found in Plato and Aristotle had roots already in fifth-century discussion of poetry and is reflected in Hippolytus' opening speech.

Before proceeding, it may be as well to cast a quick glance at the poetological ideas themselves which the scholia display. Many are, as we have noted, very familiar and not to be traced to any particular intellectual tradition, but we may suspect that much can again be traced back to Plato's *Ion*. The notion that poets and poetry are likened to rivers because of

19 We might compare the comparison of poetic inspiration to the workings of a magnet (*Ion* 533d–e) which some have seen as (pointedly) an adoption of the mode of epic simile.

20 Cf. *Rhetoric* 3.1405a8–10.

21 Cf. below p. 33.

‘mass (πληθύς) and the impetus (όρμή) to creation’ might seem, on one hand, to pick up Socrates’ claim that poets and rhapsodes only perform in that one ‘genre’ ‘towards which the Muse impels (ώρμησεν) them’ (*Ion* 534c1–2).²² On the other hand, however, the reference to ‘mass’, suggestive of epic grandeur or the raging and swollen mountain torrent which is Horace’s vision of Pindar (*Odes* 4.2),²³ might seem untrue to the apparent exclusivity of the ποτάμια δρόσοι which water Hippolytus’ garden of *Aidós*, a source perhaps more Callimachean than epic.²⁴ The scholia are, of course, nothing if not eclectic. If rivers denote the rushing power of poetry, the bee indicates, as it does for Horace in the same poem, the *labor plurimus* involved in making *operosa ... carmina*;²⁵ in the scholiast’s τὸ ἐπιμελές καὶ τὸ συντεταμένον we are not far from ‘Callimachean’ ideals, and Aratus’ σύντονος ἀγρυπνίη (Callimachus, *Epigram* 27.4 Pfeiffer), if that is the right reading, may particularly come to mind.

As compilations, the scholia are of course less concerned with a consistent poetic ‘program’ than with the very overload of poetological imagery which they find in the Euripidean verses. For us that imagery looks both forward and back. Callimachus’ famous image for his poem at the end of the *Hymn to Apollo* shares more than one element with Hippolytus’ remarkable prayer:

Δηοῖ δ’ οὐκ ἀπὸ παντὸς ὕδωρ φορέουσι μέλισσαι,
ἀλλ’ ἦτις καθαρή τε καὶ ἀχράαντος ἀνέρπει
πίδακος ἐξ ἱερῆς ὀλίγη λιβὰς ἄκρον ἄωτον.

To Deo the bees do not carry water from every source, but only from that which rises up pure and untainted, a tiny trickle from a holy spring, the height of perfection.

Callimachus, *Hymn to Apollo* 110–12

22 Murray 1996, 119 notes that Plato’s expression here picks up the Homeric ὀρμηθεὶς θεοῦ (*Odyssey* 8. 499 of Demodocus, where, though many modern editors take a different view, the scholia note the ὀρμή from the god); *pace* Murray, however, it is far from clear that Proclus, *Commentary on Plato’s Republic* 1.184.27–8 Kroll, who notes Homeric influence on Plato here, is actually thinking of this passage of the *Odyssey*.

23 On this imagery cf., e.g., Hunter 2003, 220–3. Somewhere behind the scholiast’s language is probably *Iliad* 2.488 πληθύν δ’ οὐκ ἂν ἐγὼ μυσήσομαι κτλ.

24 Cf. below.

25 The etymological play in the scholia on μέλισσα and ἐπιμελές is not, to my knowledge, found elsewhere, though it might be thought that the Horatian passage implies it.

The bee image (the Euripidean scholia note the usage of ‘bee’ as ‘priestess’ which must be part of Callimachus’ image)²⁶ and the stress on a sacral purity and exclusivity strongly recall Hippolytus’ attitudes, the metaphorical language in which he expresses them, and the explanations of the scholia.²⁷ Modern criticism has tended to write ‘religion’ out of Callimachus’ poetry, with the result that his sacral language is seen as ‘purely literary’, but Hippolytus’ prayer should make us pause. If the scholia offer as one interpretation that Hippolytus’ garland is in fact the song in the goddess’ honour, the Callimachean *Hymn to Apollo* is indeed an offering to the god, and one which we know that he accepts.²⁸ Callimachus draws the sacral boundaries in much the same terms as does Hippolytus:

ὠπόλλων οὐ παντὶ φαίνεται, ἀλλ’ ὅτις ἐσθλός·
ὅς μιν ἴδῃ, μέγας οὔτος, ὃς οὐκ ἴδε, λιτὸς ἐκεῖνος.
ὀψόμεθ’, ὦ Ἐκάεργε, καὶ ἐσσόμεθ’ οὔποτε λιτοί.

Apollo does not appear to everyone, but to he who is good; he who sees him, this man is great, he who does not see him, that man is of no value; we shall see [you], Far-Worker, and we shall never be of no value.

Callimachus, *Hymn to Apollo* 9–11

If Hippolytus knows that he will never actually ‘see’ his goddess (cf. vv. 85–6, 1391–6), it is nevertheless the *κακοί* – those whom Callimachus would call the *ἀλιτροί* (v. 2), the *οὐκ ἐσθλοί* (cf. v.9), and the *λιτοί* (vv. 10–11) – who may not enter the meadow.²⁹ If viewed through a Callimachean lens, the ‘metaphorical’ interpretation of Hippolytus’ speech which we find in the scholia becomes, if not necessarily easier to accept, at least firmly contextualised. As we have seen, there are important differences between the various elements of the pattern. Whereas Hippolytus, like Pindar before him (cf., e. g., *Olympian* 9.100–4), rejects ‘the taught’ in favour of natural gifts,³⁰ the scholia seem to ac-

26 For discussion cf. Williams’ note on v. 110; of particular importance is *Supplementum Hellenisticum* 990.2.

27 *καθαρός* is a particularly good example of the seepage between sacral and critical language, cf., e. g., ‘Longinus’, *On the Sublime* 33.2.

28 For these ideas in Hellenistic and Roman poetry cf. Hunter 2006, 14–15.

29 On a second century AD inscription from Attica members of a club are to be tested to see εἴ ἐστι ἀγνὸς καὶ εὐσεβὴς καὶ ἀγαθός (Sokolowski 1969, no. 53, line 33). There is a helpful discussion of the mystical aspect of Hippolytus’ language in Asper 1997, 51–3.

30 Barrett calls the idea ‘a commonplace of old aristocratic thought’ (1964, 173).

knowledge both as important poetic ideas; if Callimachus does not explicitly (but cf. vv. 42–6) stress *techné* in the *Hymn to Apollo* and the image of the pure spring would seem to foreground the gifts of divine nature, nevertheless, his emphasis on this elsewhere is well known, and it can be argued that the ‘Reply to the Telchines’ precisely lays claim to both *techné* and the divine inspiration of the *Ion*.³¹

Hippolytus’ mode of speech looks back also. As we have seen, some of the closest parallels are to be found in Pindar, and it is in Pindar too where the sharpest lines are drawn between those who can and cannot understand. A famous passage of Pindar’s *Second Olympian* asserts the special nature of what Pindar has to say:

πολλά μοι ὑπ’
 ἄγκῶνος ὠκέα βέλη
 ἔνδον ἐντὶ φαρέτρας
 φωνάεντα συνετοῖσιν· ἐς δὲ τὸ πᾶν ἔρμανέων
 χατίζει. σοφὸς ὁ πολλὰ εἰδὼς φυᾶι·
 μαθόντες δὲ λάβροι
 παγγλωσσίᾳ κόρακες ὡς ἄκραντα γαρύετων
 Διὸς πρὸς ὄρνιχα θεῖον·

I have under my arm many swift arrows inside their quiver which speak to those who understand; in general, however, they require interpreters. Wise is the man who naturally knows many things. Those who have learned are unruly and their words spill out; they are like a pair of crows who caw in vain against the divine bird of Zeus.

Pindar, *Olympian* 2.82–9

Eustathius took this passage as programmatic of Pindar’s poetry as a whole, and to ancient scholars (at least from Aristarchus on),³² confronted – as in Euripides’ *Hippolytus* – with a passage where a ‘non-allegorical’ reading was simply not possible (Pindar does not ‘literally’ have arrows and a quiver, any more than *Aidós* is a market-gardener), where there is an explicit contrast between ‘the wise man who knows much by nature’ and ‘those who have learned’, and which followed directly on a passage of apparently mystical eschatology, it was clear that Pindar was asserting that his difficult poems required ‘interpreters’ (i. e. commentators) for ordinary people (‘common folk’, ‘the non-specialists’, ‘the many’). It was then entirely ‘natural’ to see the crows and the eagle as ‘riddling’ referen-

31 Cf. Hunter 1989.

32 Aristarchus is cited by the scholia on v. 85 (Drachmann p. 98). For Eustathius cf. Drachmann III.287.1–8.

ces to (respectively) Simonides and Bacchylides and Pindar himself. The text itself seemed to direct the scholars to read ‘riddlingly’. Such dichotomies in the potential audience either originally arose in or were confirmed by sacral or mystical contexts; Hippolytus’ exclusivity suggests this, and indeed any claim to purity implies a group of the ‘impure’, as we can see, for example, on the gold leaves of the Underworld.³³ These dichotomies soon found their way, however, into the exegesis of texts, particularly, though not exclusively, what we might call ‘allegorical’ exegesis, for such interpretation inevitably constructs a dual readership – the ‘few’, the ‘wise’, the ‘initiated’ on the one hand, and ‘the many’, ‘the vulgar’, the ‘uninitiated’ on the other.³⁴ The process is now most familiar from the Derveni papyrus, where the commentator seems to distinguish (the text is unfortunately broken) between ‘the many’ and ‘those pure (?) of hearing’ (col. VII.10–11); given the nature of that text, the process of transition from ‘religious’ to ‘literary’ exegesis is here starkly exposed. ‘Metaphorical’ and ‘riddling’ language creates boundaries and displays them openly. On the elaborate ‘crown of song’ at *Nemean* 7.77–9, Andrew Ford comments that this image ‘is a form of kenning ... but it is also a form of knowing, a mode of addressing the *sophoi*’,³⁵ just the same could be said of Hippolytus’ images.

Another, though closely related, distinction drawn within archaic poetry is also relevant here. The language of the ἀγαθός and the κακός, and indeed of σωφροσύνη, is of course most familiar from the socio-political world of sympotic elegy. Theognis describes a world turned upside down:

νῦν δὲ τὰ τῶν ἀγαθῶν κακὰ γίνεται ἐσθλὰ κακοῖσιν
 ἀνδρῶν· ἠγέονται δ’ ἐκτραπέλοισι νόμοις·
 αἰδῶς μὲν γὰρ ὄλωλεν, ἀναιδείη δὲ καὶ ὕβρις
 νικήσασα δίκην γῆν κατὰ πᾶσαν ἔχει.

But now good men’s evils have become virtues for the base; they rejoice in customs turned upside down. *Aidós* has perished, and shamelessness and outrage have defeated justice and hold sway over the whole land.

Theognis 289–92

33 Cf., e.g., texts 5–7 and 9 in Graf-Johnston 2007.

34 Through Philodemus we can see traces of these dichotomies in Hellenistic literary criticism, cf. Fantuzzi-Hunter 2004, 452. [Plutarch], *De Homero* 92 also explicitly refers to the two classes of Homeric audience, the φιλομαθεῶντες and the ἀμαθεῖς, cf. Pontani 2005, 32–3.

35 Ford 2002, 123.

αἰδώς is as much a catch-word for the self-appointed ἀγαθοί in Theognis' world of aristocratic power and values, as it is in Hippolytus' dominating sense of self; elsewhere the same point is made explicitly:

ἀνδράσι τοῖσ' ἀγαθοῖσ' ἔπεται γνώμη τε καὶ αἰδώς·
οἱ νῦν ἐν πολλοῖς ἀτρεκέως ὀλίγοι.

Judgement and *aidōs* attend the good; now they are really few among many.

Theognis 635–6

In another well known passage which concludes one of the fullest early examples of the 'ship of state' allegory, the now familiar language of the ἀγαθός (or the ἐσθλός) and the κακός is combined with an appeal to the 'decoding' of poetic imagery:³⁶

φορτηγοὶ δ' ἄρχουσι, κακοὶ δ' ἀγαθῶν καθύπερθευ.
δειμαίνω, μὴ πως ναῦν κατὰ κῦμα πίηι.
ταῦτά μοι ἠνίχθω κεκρυμμένα τοῖσ' ἀγαθοῖσιν·
γινώσκοι δ' ἂν τις καὶ κακός, ἂν σοφὸς ᾖι.

The cargo-carriers are in charge, and the base are above the good; I am afraid that a wave will swallow up the ship. Let these be my veiled riddles for the good; even a base man, if he is wise, would know the meaning.

Theognis 679–82

If we then ask about the resonances of Hippolytus' extraordinary imagery for an Athenian audience in the late fifth century, there will of course be more than one answer, but prominent among them will be not just the sacral, but also the world of the aristocratic, perhaps now 'old-fashioned', symposium and the poetry which accompanied it; this is one of the important truths to which the neglected scholia direct us. When at the start of the *Homeric Problems* 'Heraclitus' illustrates what *allēgoria* is, the three examples he chooses are now famous instances of archaic poetry – Archilochus (fr. 105 W) and Alcaeus (fr. 208, 6 V) describing storms, which are 'in fact' war and internal strife, and Anacreon (*PMG* 417) addressing a Thracian filly, who is really a lovely girl. The setting for all such poems was very probably a male gathering such as the symposium, i. e. a closed 'reception context', a gathering of 'those who know', and one in which, as we have seen, both 'coded' modes of speech, such as the riddle and the *eikôn*, and (at least during the later fifth century) what we now call 'poetic

36 Cf. further Ford 2002, 75–6, Hunter forthcoming (a).

criticism' flourished. The gradual disappearance of this style of figured speech is a major issue of literary history; how archaic this style was already felt to be as Hippolytus spoke is a question to which the scholia direct us.

Hippolytus' prayer takes us, of course, in other (related) interpretative directions as well. We may wish (rightly) to set this speech within an epistemological pattern whereby the three central characters of the tragedy are each characterised by a different form of knowledge which orders (but eventually undermines) their world: Phaedra, particularly of course in her great speech to the chorus at 373 ff., by moral reflectiveness leading to clear ethical principles, Theseus by a straightforward reliance upon perception and inherited values, and Hippolytus by a 'revealed' truth and certain sense of self; the very way he speaks shuts out 'the many'. So too, critics have long discussed the battle for control of language in this play, for example for control of the meaning of σωφροσύνη or Phaedra's struggle with the semantic range of αἰδώς;³⁷ Hippolytus' speech, with its claims to the control of metaphor and by its juxtaposition to his exchange with the servant, who insists upon a kind of ὀρθόπεια while also revealing the traps language sets for us (the ambiguity of σεμνός etc.), introduces this theme to powerful effect.

The division of the world into 'those who understand' and 'those who do not' which is implied in Hippolytus' prayer and which, as we have seen, is a prominent feature not just of forms of religious worship but also of the world of archaic poetry and its exegesis, resurfaces, as do Hippolytus' claims to σωφροσύνη (vv. 995, 1007, 1013, 1034–5) and αἰδώς (v. 998), in the speech of self-defence which he makes to his father. He begins with a very striking proemium:

ἐγὼ δ' ἄκομπος εἰς ὄχλον δοῦναι λόγον,
 ἐς ἡλικας δὲ κώλίγους σοφώτερος·
 ἔχει δὲ μοῖραν καὶ τόδ'· οἱ γὰρ ἐν σοφοῖς
 φαῦλοι παρ' ὄχλῳ μουσικώτεροι λέγειν.
 ὁμῶς δ' ἀνάγκη, ξυμφορᾶς ἀφιγμένης, 990
 γλῶσσάν μ' ἀφεῖναι.

I am not clever at speaking to the rabble, but more skilled before my equals and a small audience. This is only reasonable. Those who fail before the

37 Cf., e.g., Goldhill 1986, 132–7, Gill 1990.

wise have more success with speaking in front of the rabble. Nevertheless, in this present misfortune, I must let loose my tongue.

Euripides, *Hippolytus* 986–91

This ‘tactless ... contempt for his audience’ (Barrett) might seem a truly remarkable form of the ‘unaccustomed as I am’ topos, but much is at stake here. Barrett notes that Hippolytus’ reference to the *ochlos* is ‘especially tactless since although there is of course a crowd gathered round ... it is only to Theseus that his arguments are addressed’, but we may wonder if this is not one of those places in tragedy where the audience may well feel itself involved, if not specifically addressed; *ochlos* is (unsurprisingly) one of the terms for the audience used in the famous account of Athenian theatrical history offered by Plato, yet another élitist (*Laws* 3.700a–1b). It is the fact of public ‘performance’, as well as the ignorance of the broad audience, which Hippolytus rejects. Words matter to him, ‘letting loose the tongue’ (991) is not a mode which he favours; as we know from the violence of his reaction to the Nurse’s attempt to win him over (653–5), even hearing words of a morally corrupt kind threatens to make him κακός and stains his purity (ἀγνεύειν) so that he will need to wash out his ears with ‘water from running streams’. Here it is now very hard not to remember (again) the distinction in the Derveni commentary between ‘the many’ and ‘those pure (?) of hearing’ (col. VII.10–11), in a chapter precisely about the exegesis of an ‘allegorical’ text; Tsantsanaglou’s τῆ]ν ἀκοήν [ἀγνεύο]ντας is there almost universally accepted.

As the rejected crows of Pindar’s *Second Olympian* are indiscriminate in their choice of language (λάβροι παγγλωσσίαι), so the exercise of linguistic choice is the activity of the *sophos*. The Plutarchan treatise ‘On the Education of Children’ quotes *Hippolytus* 986–9 in support of the need to expose children only to the right kind of education, and the distinctions which Plutarch draws make the passage worth quoting at length:

I say again that parents must cling to the uncorrupted and healthy education and must take their sons as far away as possible from the rubbish of public speeches (τῶν πανηγυρικῶν λήρων), for to give pleasure to the many (οἱ πολλοί) is to displease the wise (οἱ σοφοί). Euripides supports this ... *Hippolytus* 986–9 ... I see that those whose practice it is to speak in a manner which pleases and wins favour with the vulgar rabble (τοῖς συρφετώδεσιν ὄχλοις) turn out generally to be dissolute in their lifestyle and fond of pleasure. This is just what we would expect. If as they provide pleasure for others they neglect what is honourable (τοῦ καλοῦ), they would be slow in-

deed to place what is morally correct and healthy (τὸ ὀρθὸν καὶ ὑγιές) above the pursuit of their own luxurious pleasures or what is modest (τὸ σῶφρον) above the delightful (τοῦ τερπνοῦ).

Plutarch, *On the education of children* 6a–c

The context here is quite different from that of the *Hippolytus*, but Plutarch too is the spokesman for a self-appointed élite, the σοφοί, whose authority depends upon a shared body of knowledge (*paideia*) which excludes the ‘uninitiated’; like Hippolytus, Plutarch equates verbal excess and facility with a morally impure life and an absence of *sôphrosunê*.

From the outside such claims, whether those of a Hippolytus or of a Plutarch, are always open to charges of hypocrisy (as, for example, Lucian knew only too well). Thus Theseus famously throws in Hippolytus’ face the charge of hypocritical allegiance to ‘Orphic’ behaviour:

ἤδη νυν αὔχει καὶ δι’ ἀψύχου βορᾶς
 σίτοις καπήλευ’ Ὀρφέα τ’ ἄνακτ’ ἔχων
 βάκχευε πολλῶν γραμμάτων τιμῶν καπνούς·
 ἐπεὶ γ’ ἐλήφθης.

Now hold your high opinions and with your lifeless food make a show of your diet; with Orpheus as your leader revel on and honour writings, insubstantial as smoke. You have been found out!

Euripides, *Hippolytus* 952–5

What is important here is not whether or not Hippolytus was really an Orphic, but rather the familiar and much commented upon phenomenon of the association of ‘Orphics’ with ‘books’ (cf. Plato, *Rep.* 2.364e); here, if anywhere, were Greeks with ‘sacred books’ to be honoured (v. 954) and, as the Derveni papyrus has shown us, interpreted.³⁸ Such books offered a kind of knowledge not (to be) widely available and one which both seemed to invite, and may perhaps have exploited, *allegoria*. Texts which are intended for and/or taken up as privileged by particular groups are always fertile ground for ‘metaphorical’ or ‘allegorical’ reading, for this is precisely one of the ways in which the specialness of the text is preserved. In principle, of course, this may also apply to oral ‘texts’, as we see not just in pre- or partially literate societies, but in, say, the ‘secret knowledge’ of closed societies (fraternities, Masons etc.) in highly literate contexts. Committing knowledge to writing risks its promulgation among the ‘profane’, and if this must be done, the knowledge must therefore be ‘encoded’ in such a way that it is of

38 Cf. Henrichs 2003 for a discussion of the general phenomenon.

no use if it falls into the wrong hands; metaphor and ‘allegory’ are forms of literary code. In antiquity the idea of religious ‘mysteries’ is never far away in this context: the Platonic Socrates seems to link ‘allegory’ with eschatological rites (*Phaedo* 69c), the critic Demetrius tells us that ‘the mysteries are conducted through allegory to increase their power to instil amazement and terror ... for allegorical language is like darkness and night’ (*On Style* 101), and the Hippocratic ‘Law’ concludes by noting that the holy facts of medicine are to be revealed only to those who have been initiated through knowledge (*CMG* I.i.8).³⁹

The metaphorical and mystical mode of Hippolytus’ opening speech may thus be seen to prepare us for his terrible fate. Theseus’ angry words – ironically placed in the mouth of a ‘tyrant’ – reflect the ‘democratic’ suspicion that those who hide things in books have something (perhaps risible) to hide; metaphorical language may, by its very nature, seem antithetical to the proclaimed transparency of democratic principles.⁴⁰ Hippolytus, who of course surrounded himself with ἀριστοὶ φίλοι (v. 1018), is thus damned both ways: on the one hand, his language and behaviour suggest the closed circle of the aristocratic symposium, predominantly of course an oral culture, and on the other he can be assimilated to suspect sects who claimed to find revealed truth in writings. Both frames testify to the very singularity of this character and the struggle to find the appropriate categories for him. That singularity was strikingly signalled by his opening dedicatory address to Artemis which invites ‘interpretation’, whether we call this ‘allegorical’ or prefer (with Barrett) to speak of ‘transparent symbolism’.⁴¹ It is this invitation to interpretation upon which the ancient scholiasts focused, and so should we.

The scholiasts sought to understand the intellectual structure which lay behind Hippolytus’ words; we may not wish to follow the path they trod, but their curiosity is something we should ponder hard before going our own way. If there is a continuing tradition of criticism from antiquity to the present, then it is one of debate and struggle, and the authors of many of our scholia knew that the texts of the past mattered and were worth struggling over. Old trends are often the best.

39 On allegory and the Mysteries cf., e.g., Pontani 2005, 34–6.

40 Cf. the remarks of Ford 2002, 87.

41 Barrett 1964, 172.

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