PROLEGOMENA
I

THE MYTH

The foundation for all study of the Phaethon myth is the article by Georg Knaack published in Roscher’s *Mythological Lexicon* in 1909. Knaack’s article is a monument of industry and patience, but its misrepresentation of several crucial features of the evidence has led astray and still continues to lead astray commentators both on Euripides’ play and on the myth in general. My purpose is not to reassemble the material accumulated by Knaack but to reassess it. I begin with a brief sketch of the history of the Phaethon myth in Greek and Latin literature. In the two sections which follow, and in three Appendixes, I develop in detail the features where I diverge from the prevailing accounts. In the two immediately following sections I discuss the evidence for the treatment of the myth by Euripides’ predecessors, Hesiod and Aeschylus. In the Appendixes I discuss the surviving treatments of the myth by Euripides’ successors, and the treatment of the myth in art, and I attempt to distinguish those elements in which Euripides may be thought to have influenced his successors. Euripides’ *Phaethon* will often disappear from view in this discussion, but the discussion is unavoidable. Only a proper assessment of the mythographical tradition as a whole can reveal the place which Euripides’ play occupies in that tradition and the means by which reconstruction of the plot of the play may and may not legitimately be attempted.

The reader may find it helpful, before he begins the following sections, to acquaint himself with the known facts about the play by consulting the summary of the fragments on pp. 35–44.
PROLEGOMENA

A. PHAETHON IN GREEK AND LATIN LITERATURE:
   A SKETCH

It is not known when the myth of Phaethon, son of Helios, made its first appearance in Greek literature. In Homer the participle φαήθων is several times attached as an epithet to Helios; and just as ἡμπρῖον is used in early poetry both as an epithet of Helios and as the name of Helios' father, so the epithet φαήθων came to be used, at whatever date, as the name of a son of Helios, Phaethon.

Hesiod speaks in the Theogony (984–91) of a son of Eos and Cephalus named Phaethon, a favourite of Aphrodite. This figure is unconnected with our Phaethon, and the attempts which have been made to identify him with the charioteer are misguided (see pp. 10–15). Several late authorities do, however, attribute to Hesiod a detailed narrative of the Phaethon story, but reasons will be given for regarding their evidence with gravest distrust (pp. 15–27). It remains doubtful whether Hesiod so much as mentioned the story of Phaethon.

A myth which became inseparably linked with that of Phaethon told of the origin of amber in the far west—how the Heliades, daughters of Helios, were transformed into poplars and wept tears of amber on the banks of the Eridanus. When we first meet the myth of Phaethon it is linked with this

1 H. 11.735, Od. 5.479, 11.16, 19.441, 22.988; cf. h. Helios 351 2. Hes. Theog. 360, S. El. 284, E. El. 484. The name Phaethon is applied to a horse of Eos at Od. 23.946, and a daughter of Helios is called Phaethousa at Od. 12.132. In Latin, and in later Greek, Phaethon was used as the name of the Sun-god himself: Verg. Aen. 5.105, Val. Fl. 3.213, Sil. It. 11.259, al., Mart. 3.677, St. Thib. 4.717; Orph. fr. 298.10 Kern, Nonnus Basiwm (cf. cp. 33.151 f. 'Helios & / ofi 693wn ëxen twn oivon oivneia'), Hadrian A.P. 9.157,3.
3 Several local Phaethons, having no discernible connection with our Phaethon, are attested in various regions throughout Greece and the Aegean: cf. Knaack, Myth. Lex. iii. 2178 f., Türk, R.E. xix. 154.
THE MYTH

story. For the myth of Phaethon and the Heliades Pliny cites the five earliest authorities known to him: Phaethonitis fulmine exiti sorores lactu mutatas in arbores populos lacinias electrum omnibus annis fundere iuxta Eridanus annem, quem Padum vocamus, electrum appellatum quotziam sol vocitatus sit Elector, plurimi poetae dixere primique, ut arbitror, Aeschylus Philoxenus Euripides Nicander Satyrus (N.H. 37.2.31). Of Aeschylus’ Heliades a few unhelpful fragments survive: the course of the play can only be conjectured (see pp. 27–32). Of the treatment of the legend by the dithyrambic poet Philoxenus (436–380),2 the didactic Nicander,3 and the unknown Satyrus,4 we have no evidence. Euripides speaks of the amber tears of the Heliades in a choral ode of the Hippolytus: ‘Ἡρὶδον θ’ ὀδόρ, ἕνα τορφόρον στολάς–/ους’ εἰς ὀθύμα τάλαναι / κόρας Φαλέθους δίκησα δεικτόν / τάς ἥλεκτραβάς αὐγάς (737–41).

It is certainly to this and not to our play that Pliny refers.5

We cannot tell from what source Aeschylus took the story of Phaethon. We can only record with surprise the absence of the myth from the remains of early Greek poetry and from the whole of extant Greek lyric poetry. The earliest reference to the myth after the tragedians is a regrettably uninformative allusion by Plato (Tim. 22c): τὸ γάρ ὄνη καὶ παρ’ ὦν ἄγωμαν, ὡς ποτε Φαλέθων Ἡλίου παῖς τὸ τοῦ πατρός

1 Whether the story of the Heliades’ amber tears had a separate existence at an earlier time cannot be determined. It is possible that Hesiod alluded to the Heliades weeping amber beside the Eridanus, though, if he did, he did not mention Phaethon in the same context (see p. 24). According to Pliny (N.H. 37.4.40) Sophocles said that amber was produced beyond India from the tears of the nileagrides (guinea-fowl) lamenting Meleager: cf. A. C. Pearson, Fragments of Sophocles, n. 66, and see below, p. 46. 2 =fr. 63 Schneider. Nicander’s date is uncertain: see Gow and Scholfield, Nicander: The Poems and Poetical Fragments (Cambridge 1953), 3–8. His Heteropenmena was probably used by Ovid in the Metamorphoses, so that it is possible that he was one of Ovid’s sources for the episode of the Heliades: cf. W. Vollgraff, Nicander und Ovid (Groningen 1909), 105–9. 3 He wrote about precious stones: cf. Pliny N.H. 37.6.91 and 37.7.94, R.E. v A. 235. 4 Even if amber tears appeared in our play (cf. p. 46), the Eridanus did not.
PROLEGOMENA

ἄρα ποτὲ διὰ τὸ μὴ δυνατός εἶναι κατὰ τὴν τοῦ ποτρὸς δέντων ἔλεον τὰ τ' ἐπὶ γάμου συνέκαουσι καί αὐτὸ τὰς κεραυνωδῆς διαθέμι. Θαυμάζω τὴν αὐθεντικίαν τους εἰς τὸ ποτήριν τοὺς τράφυμα διαφέρῃ. Θαυμάζω τὴν αὐθεντικίαν τους εἰς τὸ ποτήριν τοὺς τράφυμα διαφέρῃ. Thereafter the allusions become more common. Aristotle records that according to Pythagorean doctrine the Milky Way had been formed by the course of a star dislodged from its place during Phaethon's ride (Meteor. 345a; cf. Diod. Sic. 5.23.2). The Hellenistic poets furnish scattered allusions. Aratus speaks of the constellation Ποταμός as λείψανον 'Ἡράκλεαι πολυκλαύον τοπομαύριον (360), the epithet suggesting the lamentations of the Heliades. Apollonius Rhodius also speaks of the Eridanus, ἰθαρ' σον' αἰθαλάλεντα τιμῆς πρὸς στέρνα κεραυνοῖ / ἄμιθανος Ποείδεων πέσεν ἄμφοτος Ἡλιοίῳ / Λήμνης ἡ προχώρας πολυβεβέθες· ἢ δ' ἐν τοῖς νυν περ' τραύματος αἰθουμένου βαράν ἀνακήκης οὕτων (4. 597–600). And a story which probably dealt with the association between Phaethon and a comrade Cycnus found a place in the Ἑρώτης ἦ Καλοῖον τοῦ Φανακοῦ. These are the meagre traces of the myth surviving in Greek literature. Which of the lost accounts most influenced the shaping of the myth we cannot tell. The influence of Aeschylus was probably large. The influence of Euripides was probably much smaller. It is plausible to assume that, when

1 He speaks of the weeping Heliades at 4.603–11 and 624–6, and adds a Celtic version of the origins of amber wherein the amber tears are shed not by the Heliades but by Apollo (611–17).

2 = fr. 6 Powell: see below, p. 195 n. 2. There survives also, from the Alexandrian period, a fragmentary epitaph on Phaethon's death (Pap. Tch. 3.1–10). Line 1: ἁπλῆς Λήμνης οὐξεραν[...], i.e. ἐλατηρθαὶ ἐνθάδε, preceded perhaps by νυμφήν (cf. Str. 9.2.25 etc., Verg. Æd. 7. 21), but the connection between Boeotian (or Thracian) nymphs and Phaethon is not obvious (for his burial by a different set of nymphs see pp. 195, 198), and they are hardly compatible with the Eridanus (I. 2 Ἡράκλεος τοῖς παρ' ἡδέοις, suppl. ed. pr.). Lines 9–14 allude to the broken chariot. Lines 5–6: οὐκετος, οὐ διδαχτοι σάρκα κεραυνός. / ἐκνητικὸς λόγος στρεβάλλει τοὺς οὐκέτος κρίσιν ἔρχοντον (ed. pr.). Lines 7–8: he will be lamented by his sisters: φθαίνον κλαύσονται (κλαυθ̓ - parr.) ἄνθρωπον / —κτήσεως πλησσόμενοι.

3 Diod. Sic. 5.23.2 testifies to the popularity of the myth, which, he claims, has been recounted by πολλοὶ...τῶν τε ποιητῶν καὶ τῶν συγγραφέων.
THE MYTH

Euripides ascribes the birth of Phaethon to an illicit encounter between Helios and Clymene and introduces as Clymene’s lawful husband and Phaethon’s putative father the Ethiopion king Merops, he is seeking to elaborate his predecessor’s more straightforward plot. ¹ These features, whether or not they were Euripides’ own invention, gained no place in the later poetic tradition. ² Phaethon’s marriage, the one undoubted invention of Euripides, went entirely unnoticed. None the less the play continued to be read as late as the first century A.D. It is quoted by Strabo, ‘Longinus’ and Plutarch, and imitated in part by Ovid³ and Seneca.⁴ Cicero betrays an acquaintance with it: Sol Phaethontii filio, ut redeamus ad fabulas, facturum se esse dixit quidquid optasset: optavit ut in currum patris tolleretur: sublatus est: atque is, antequam constisset,⁵ iacta fulminis deflagratavit. quanta melius fuerat in hoc promissum patris non esse servatum. quid quod Theseus exigit promissum a Neptuno? (De Off. 3.25.94).⁶

There is little of Phaethon in Roman literature before Ovid. Cicero in his Phaenomena (146–8) expands Aratus’ single line allusion by a lengthy elucidation of the epithet παλυκλαυτόν: finestum magnis cum viribus annem, / quem lacrimis maestae Phaethontis saepe sores / saperunt etam maerenti

¹ Why and from what source the name Merops was chosen is indeterminable. In Greek tradition Merops was the most famous legendary ruler of Cos: cf. R.E. xv. 1065 f. Hesychius has the note Μέροπες... ἀντὶ Μέροπος τοῦ πατρός (Wilamowitz: πρὸ codd.) Φαθόντος Κωιδο. Phaethon’s mother is regularly called Clymene (for an exception see p. 91), but the name need not have been first given her by Euripides (it is borne by a Nereid at H. II. 18.47 and by a daughter of Oceanus and Tethys at Hes. Thes. 351, 508).
² Σ Π. Od. 11.326 [=- Hes. fr. 66 MW] says Πέινοι δὲ σύνθεν [τὴν Κυ- μήνην] προκαμάθησιν φαείν᾽ Ἑλείας, ἐὰν οὖ Φαθόνον ξένων παῖς. We do not know whom he meant by Πέινοι.
³ See pp. 182 f., 186, 200.
⁴ See pp. 96 f.
⁵ 'Before coming to a halt’, i.e. ‘in mid flight’. See pp. 41, 196.
⁶ For the 'promise' see lines 45–6 of the play. The same two examples of fatal promises are found at De Nat. Deor. 3.31.76: deus fallis qui potuit? an ut Sol in currum cum Phaethontem filium sustulit, aut Neptunus cum Theseus Hippiolytum perdedit, cum ter optandi a Neptuno patre habuisset potestatem?
PROLEGOMENA

voce canentes. Catullus speaks in neoteric fashion of the metamorphosed poplars: non sine mutantes platano lentaque sorore / flammati Phaethontis (64.290 f.). Lucretius tells briefly of Phaethon’s ride: avia cum Phaethonti rapax vis Solis equorum / aethere raptavi toto terraque per omnis. / at pater omnipotens ira tum / perclusus acri / magnum Phaethontia repenti fulmine ietis / deturbavit equis in terram, Solque cadenti / obeius aeternam suscepit / lampada mundi / disiectaque redigit equos iuxtaque tremens, / inde / sumum per tier recreavit cuncta gubernans, / siclicet ut veteres Graium / cecinere poetae (5.397–405). The manner in which the Sun- / god’s rescue of the bolting horses is described suggests that / Euripides is not the least among the Graium poetae to whose / authority Lucretius appeals (see p. 196). The isolated / line of Varro Atacinus (fr. 10 Morel) tum te flagranti detectum / fulmine, Phaethon, perhaps translates Ap. Rh. 4.597 f. (quoted / above). Virgil at Æl. 6.62 f. curiously calls Phaethon’s sisters / Phaethontiades, and he transforms them not into poplars but / into alders; and at Æn. 10.189–93 he alludes to the story / (derived perhaps from Phanocles) of the love of Cynus for / Phaethon. Horace adduces Phaethon, alongside Bellerophon, / as a caution against overreaching ambition: terret ambustus / Phaethon auras / spe (Carm. 4.11.25 f.). And the author of the / Culex is unable to mention the poplar without appending / a crabbled account of its mythical origin: at, quibus ignipedum / (Heinsius: insigni coedd.) currus proiectus equorum / ambustus / Phaethon luctu mutaverat artus, / Heliades teneris implacae brachia / truncis / candida fundebant tentis velamina ramos (127–30). / The Greek sources which Ovid used for his Phaethon / narrative in the Metamorphoses are uncertain. The influence / of Euripides, who was not his chief source, can alone be / recognised. Certain of the unconventional details from the / Euripidean version, though incompatible with the version / which served as the basis of Ovid’s account, found an un- / happy and precarious place in his narrative (see pp. 182 f., / 1 He is followed by several later authors: see Knaack, Myth. Lex. m. / 2002.)
THE MYTH

186, 200). But after Ovid the search for Euripides must cease. Ovid’s successors, both Roman and Greek, could not remain immune from his influence. The poets of the Silver Age did not emulate him but were content to employ the briefest allusions to the story.¹ Soon the rhetorical aspects of the myth passed into the repertories of the declamatory schools. Τίνι δὲ λόγος χρήσιτο Ζεύς ἐπηνύομεν Ἡλίων ὅτι τὸ ὄρος Ἑδωκε Φαεθοντι; was the theme of the Greek hexameters, inspired by Ovid, of a Roman schoolboy in the time of Domitian.² Only one later poet, Nonnus, writing in the fifth century at Egyptian Panopolis, ventured to compose a Phaethontic narrative as ambitious as that of Ovid. That Nonnus’ account is often close in content and expression to the narrative of Ovid has fostered a belief, propounded long ago and current still, that each poet drew independently upon a common model, a hypothetical epyllion composed in Hellenistic times (see pp. 180–200). The truth is rather that Ovid’s influence had penetrated even to Panopolis and that the Metamorphoses must be acknowledged to be no small element in that ‘great variety of learning’ of this ‘able Grammarian though…very ordinary Poet’.³

¹ For references see Knaack, Myth. Lex. iii. 2192 f. To the allusions in Statius may be added Thesp. 2.281, with Heliodor us for Hesperidum as suggested by J. B. Poynton, C.R. lxxvii (1963), 259.
² See pp. 201 f. I have nothing to say about the inscrutable and half-literate Greek anaepatic monody found on a papyrus of the late second century A.D. (H. J. M. Milne, Cat. Lit. Pap. Brit. Mus. [London 1927], no. 51; E. Heitsch, Die griechischen Dichterfragmente der römischen Kaiserzeit [Göttingen 1963], i, pp. 42–4, with review of the earlier literature), except that claims that it is a lament for Helios for Phaethon are patently false.
PROLEGOMENA

B. PHAETHON AND HESIOD

1. Theog. 984–91

Πωνονίοι δ’ Ἡλίς τεκε Μέμωνας χαλκοκορυκὴν,
Ἀθήνην βασιλῆσα, καὶ Ἡμιτίθωνα ἀναστα.

συμποτοι τοι Κοιρόλοις φοιτέσατο φαῦσιν γέλαν,
Jestefts Φασίσταντας, θεσίς ἐπεικέλον ἄνδρας—
τὸν πα νεόν τέρνας ἄνδρος ἔχον τ’ ἐρυκτὸς ἄρης
παιδί ἀπαλά φοινίκας φιλομελήθης Ἀφροδίτης
ἀδρν ἄνευραιμαν καὶ μν ἔκλεισι ἐν ἁρσὶ

νυπότολον μύχων ποίησατο, δαίμονι διόν.

991 μύχων] μύχιον codd.: cf. Σ (p. 291 Flach) τουτέστιν ἄραν λαθραίον—
According to a conjecture of Σ (p. 291 Flach) τουτέστιν ἄραν λαθραίον—
’Αριστερχος δὲ γράφει μύχων, οἷον ἐν τοῖς μυχοῖς τοῖς ἄδωτοι.

§1. Interpretation. Phaethon is described as a handsome youth who excites the admiration of Aphrodite. She carries him off, appoints him her temple-keeper and makes him immortal. His fate is similar to that of the Homeric Erichtheus, whom Athene locates in her temple on the Acropolis.1 Both are to be thought of as dwelling alive in the temples of their goddesses, Phaethon in the inner shrine.2 The legend is referred

Hermes xvi (188g), 440, that Phaethon’s fall attempts to explain in mythical terms why the sun sinks blazing in the west as if crashing to earth in flames and yet returns to its task unimpaired the following day, cannot be entertained. Phaethon’s crash is an event out of the ordinary, a sudden and unexpected calamity, occurring once and not daily. If we must try to explain myths in these terms, I have more sympathy with the view advanced by Goethe and developed by F. X. Kugler, Sybillinische Sternkampf und Phaethon (Münster 1927) [known to me only through the review by W. Gundel in Gnomon iv (1928), 449–51], that the picture of a blazing sun-like body falling from heaven accompanied by a crash of thunder may have been suggested by the experience of falling meteorites. For typical descriptions of the impressions both of sight and sound made by such phenomena on bewildered onlookers see Sp. N. Marinatos, “Two Interplanetary Phenomena of 468 B.C.”, Πραγματεία τῆς Ἀκαδημίας Ἀθηνῶν, xxiv, 4 (1965).

1 ll. 2–545–51. Cf. Rohde, Psyche (English transl. by W. B. Hillys), 98 and 111 n. 35. For other parallels see West on Theog. 991.

2 This, rather than underground (Rohde, 111 n. 35), is probably the implication of μύχων.
THE MYTH

to by Pausanias in his description of the Stoa Basileios in the Athenian Ceramicus (1.3.1):

ταύτης ἔπειτι τοῖς κεράμοις τῆς στοάς ὁγύμασα ὡπτῆς γῆς, ἀφεις Θησέως ἐς θάλασσαν Ἐκρόωνα καὶ φέροντα Ἡμέρα Κήρα-
λου, διὰ κάλλιστον γενόμενον φανερόν ὑπὸ Ἡμέρας ἔραξκείς ἰρτασθηκότινα: καὶ οἱ παῖδα γενέσθαι Ψαλίδουτα, ἡν ὤπετον ἢ
Ἀφροδίτη ἱρπασεν καὶ φύλακα ἐποίησεν τοῦ ναοῦ. τοῖς ἑλλάδι τε καὶ Ἡσίοδος ἔρημην ἐν ἔπειτι τοῖς ἐς τὰς γυναικές. ¹

Pausanias' φύλακα τοῦ ναοῦ paraphrases Hesiod's νηπόταν.

Two late authors hint at the tale and interpret Aphrodite's interest in Phaethon as erotic: Clem. Alex. Protr. 2.29 Ἀφροδίτη δὲ ἐπ᾽ Ἀρεία κατηγορυχουμένη μετήλθαν ἐπὶ Κυνόραν καὶ Ἀγγέλαν ἐγέμην καὶ Ψαλίδουτα ἀλοχα καὶ Ἠρα Ἀθανίδος, Arnobius Adv. Gent. 4.27 nonne spectis cautem est litteris (various love affairs of goddesses and mortals)... et post Vulcanam Phaethontem Martem in Anchisae nuptias ipsam illam Venerem Aeneadum matrem et Romanae dominationis autorem.²

§2. Misinterpretation. It was upon a misconception of these lines that Wilamowicz built his reconstruction of our play. Pursuing a hint offered by the Hellenistic astronomers he claimed that Phaethon was to be interpreted in these lines as the Morning and Evening Star, Phosphoros-Hesperos, the two phases of the planet Venus. The story reflected by Hesiod, he suggested, told of a mortal youth endowed with such surpassing beauty that he was elevated to heaven by

1 = [Hes.] fr. 373MW. For the identification of Hemera with Eos see Myth. Lec. 1. 2032. A supplement such as that of Hartung and Urliechs printed in the text is demanded by both sense and syntax. Pausanias' attribution of the story to the Catalogue of Women must be a mistake: see West on Thog. 986–91.

2 It remains very doubtful whether we should adurnce, in evidence for a cult connection between Aphrodite and Phaethon on Samothrace, Pliny N.H. 36.5.25: Socius (the sculptor, ncc. iv)laus cum his certat. is factum Venerem et Pothon et Phaethontem, qui Samothracis sanctissimos euripomnis coluntur. Most manuscripts omit Phaethontem; his inclusion is defended by K. Kerényi, Symb. Ovil. xxxi (1955), 141 f.