

Euripides, *Medea* 1059–68: a Problem of Interpretation

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I

THE FIFTH *episodion* of Euripides' *Medea* is not only the decisive scene of this play, it is also one of the outstanding passages in Greek tragedy. Except for a few introductory lines in which the Paedagogus and Medea talk to each other, the entire scene is a monologue spoken by Medea. Its importance in Greek literature has often been noted. In 1809, A. W. Schlegel—by no means an admirer of Euripides—spoke of it in these terms: “Auf das innigste rühren die Anwandlungen mütterlicher Zärtlichkeit mitten unter den Zurüstungen zu der grausamen Tat.”¹ Later, H. J. G. Patin called it “la scène capitale du drame . . . scène d’une invention singulièrement hardie, scène de la plus heureuse exécution, et qu’on ne peut louer qu’en la citant.” And more specifically: “. . . cet admirable monologue, où se résume, dans le douloureux combat de la passion et de la nature, l’esprit de la pièce entière.”² Indeed, this scene contains the first clear example of a new literary form. A conflict within the soul of a human being is expressed in tragic monologue. Although such dilemmas are enacted elsewhere in tragedy from Aeschylus onward, nowhere else is the decision realized on stage in such a fully developed monologue form.

But scholars find here not only a new dramatic form, but also a new approach to the human soul. This new approach, they say, offers a new direction to drama. M. Pohlenz wrote: “Erst in der *Medea* fühlt die Problematik einer neuen Zeit, einer anderen Dichternatur den Zwiespalt in der Seele des Menschen stark genug, um sich die Form zu schaffen, die diesen Kampf der verschiedenen seelischen

¹ *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur*, 3d ed. (repr. Stuttgart 1966) 122.

² *Études sur les tragiques grecs, Euripide I* (Paris 1841), 5th ed. (Paris 1879) 137 and 142.

Kräfte rein abprägt.”³ According to K. Reinhardt the scene represents the “Durchbruch der Psychologie auf dem Theater.”⁴ Certainly there is truth in these statements, but there is exaggeration too. Knowledge of the human soul is an indispensable part of tragedy. On the other hand, the term ‘psychology’ is vague and has often been misleading in the interpretation of Greek tragedy. Here especially the dramatic importance of this particular scene in the action has perhaps led to a certain overaccentuation of its psychological meaning. It is, in fact, the difficulty of the scene which has probably created the impression of a uniquely complex psychology at work.

Indeed, the general interpretation normally given this passage appears on closer examination to be built on dangerous ground, for there are so many lesser problems of text and interpretation that some scholars have been prompted to excise the second half of the monologue as spurious (from v.1059 onward), in the conviction that it is a weak repetition of the first part.⁵ For example, v.1079, the most famous line of the play, has always been quoted without a satisfactory explanation of the relation between *θυμός* and *βουλευματα*.⁶ In line 1077, there is a problem of grammar. Is this due to Euripides, or to the hand of an interpolator, or to the tradition? Or a more general problem: do the children enter the house? In 1053 Medea seems to send them into the house, but in 1069 she talks to them.⁷ Other problems of interpretation seem to depend on the ambiguity of Medea’s words. As long as the Paedagogus is on stage, her purpose is obvious. The Paedagogus speaks about her separation from the children and thinks of separation by distance; she herself thinks of

³ *Die griechische Tragödie*² (Göttingen 1954) 261. On this scene see especially his note to p.256 (pp.106–108 of the “Erläuterungen”).

⁴ “Die Sinneskrise bei Euripides,” originally publ. in *Die Neue Rundschau* 68 (1957), now in *Tradition und Geist, gesammelte Essays zur Dichtung* (Göttingen 1960) 227–256; the quotation is from p.237. This article has been very influential on German-speaking scholars.

⁵ Th. Bergk, *Griechische Literaturgeschichte* III (Berlin 1884) 512 n.140; G. Jachmann, “Binneninterpolationen II,” *NAkG NF* I.9 (1936) 193 n.1; G. Müller, “Interpolationen in der *Medea* des Euripides,” *StItal* NS 25 (1951) 65–82.

⁶ A convincing solution of the problem was recently offered by H. Diller, *Hermes* 94 (1966) 267–275. Diller was partly anticipated by Morton Smith, whose suggestion about this line is mentioned by J. J. Walsh, *Aristotle’s Conception of Moral Weakness* (New York and London 1963) 19. I owe this reference to Professor William W. Fortenbaugh.

⁷ For a discussion of this problem see G. M. A. Grube, *The Drama of Euripides* (New York 1941) 160 n.1. With others, I do not agree with Grube’s arrangement and think the children remain on stage all through the scene.

separation by death. But even after the Paedagogus has left, she continues to speak in ambiguous terms. We may use this as an argument for the presence of the children. But sometimes it seems impossible to explain her words, even if we know the general meaning, especially in 1053–55. Again, there are two ‘repeated lines’ in the scene: vv.1062–3 occur again in 1240–1. They are usually considered an interpolation. But the fact that they are ‘repeated lines’ is not an absolutely convincing argument for rejecting them, and any full discussion of this scene, therefore, has to take them into account.

The main problem may be described in the following way. On the one hand, there is Medea’s plan to kill the children. Her intention is but thinly veiled by the ambiguity of her words. The only alternative is to take the children to Athens, and twice she yields to this thought (1045, 1058). Apparently she is free to do either. On the other hand, she says that she has to kill the children, for otherwise the Corinthians would harm them (1060–1). This alternative is valid only on the assumption that the children must stay in Corinth. How, then, can she simultaneously imply, it has been asked, that the children can go to Athens and that they cannot go? She does not say that she shifts from one premise to the other; and there is no hint, either in this scene or in the rest of the play, that any reason besides the will of Medea prevents her from taking the children to Athens.⁸ As it stands now, there is obviously a plain contradiction in Medea’s monologue.

Various solutions have been offered. An early explanation involves the assumption that Euripides sometimes constructed the plot of a play somewhat carelessly.⁹ The contradiction here would thus depend simply on the inadequacy of Euripides’ dramatic technique and would have no significance for the interpretation of the work. We may call this the ‘technical’ solution. Subsequent scholars tried to transform the flaw into a virtue. Medea is deceiving herself, they said, because she wants to overcome her hesitation,¹⁰ or she is simply

⁸ W. Steidle, *Studien zum antiken Drama* (München 1968), tries to show (on pp.158ff) that the children are too young to be taken to Athens. The play does not provide much evidence for this opinion, and we have to ask, why does the poet not state this important point explicitly? A. J. A. Waldock would doubtless suspect an example of ‘documentary fallacy’ when we ask for the age of the children: see ch. II of his *Sophocles the Dramatist* (Cambridge 1951).

⁹ This seems to be the view of Schlegel, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) 122. He admits, however, another possibility: see n.11 *infra*.

¹⁰ Patin, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.2) 143: “Le raisonnement qui la trompe, est, en effet, très-peu concluant. Mais elle veut se tromper . . . elle accepte à la hâte et sans examen le premier

yielding to emotion.¹¹ Thus instead of awkwardness, one assumes psychological subtlety on the part of the playwright. This is the ‘psychological’ solution.¹² In our century scholars have gone even further. They have claimed that Medea is not confused, because both premises are valid. They find here that juxtaposition of necessity and freedom which is traditionally thought to be the heart of real tragedy. Medea wants to kill the children because she longs for vengeance, but this interferes with another motive, the threat by the Corinthians. W. Schadewaldt, the chief proponent of this interpretation, speaks of “Kindermord aus Rache und Notwendigkeit.”¹³ The contradiction has been transformed into an intentional juxtaposition. This we may call the ‘integrated’ solution; it is an interpretation that has been widely accepted.¹⁴ Still, the problem which underlies it sometimes seems forgotten.¹⁵ As soon as we return to the details of the text, we must admit that the difficulty remains, for the reason that the solution has been based on an inadequate analysis of the problem.

In the beginning of the scene, the children return with the Paedagogus. They have delivered the presents to Creusa. The Paedagogus informs Medea that the mission has been a complete success: Creusa has accepted the presents and the children have been allowed to stay in Corinth. But the meaning of this fact depends on what we know about the hidden power of the presents. The Paedagogus does not

prétexte qui peut la pousser au crime qu’elle désire.” This interpretation is often referred to under the name of H. von Arnim, who adopted it in the introduction to his translation of Euripides’ plays.

¹¹ Schlegel, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) 122, wrote cautiously: “Doch lässt sich dies vielleicht durch die Verwirrung des Gemüts, wozu das vollbrachte Verbrechen sie stürzt, rechtfertigen.” Since then, this explanation has been repeated again and again. Pohlenz especially made a strong point of it. D. L. Page has adopted it in his Commentary; see n.14 *infra*.

¹² By ‘psychological solution’ I do not mean a psychological interpretation in general, but a momentary measure taken to solve an isolated problem which resists rational explanation. Two main points must be raised against this solution. First, its applicability is unlimited. Why should we not explain metrical or grammatical difficulties in this way, e.g. v.1077 of Medea’s monologue? Second, Euripides describes mental confusion normally in a rational way, e.g. in *Orestes*, *Heracles* and *Bacchae*; the confusion is stylized, not real.

¹³ *Monolog und Selbstgespräch* (Neue Philologische Untersuchungen II, Berlin 1926). On this monologue see pp.193–198.

¹⁴ Page simply refers to Schadewaldt “for a detailed discussion.” Consequently, Page contends that there is no problem in the text. But on the other hand he realizes that there is some “inconsistency,” and he calls in the ‘psychological solution’: see his note to v.1058.

¹⁵ For example, the reader of Grube’s book must get the impression that this necessity is no problem at all.

know anything of this. When he says 'peace' (1004), therefore, we may hear 'war'; when he says 'good news' (1010), we know that there something sinister is lurking. We remember line 975, where Medea sent the children off with the hope for 'good news'; and we know that she will receive 'excellent news' in 1127, viz. the message that Creon and his daughter are dead. But after 1127 she expresses joy, whereas in 1010 the Paedagogus has the impression that he actually is bringing bad news. We know he is right. This different reaction does not mean that the situation has changed, but that Medea is involved in a different problem. After 1004 she realizes what the mission of the children means to herself. She has taken the first step on her way to revenge; now she is thinking of the second, the death of the children. Later, when the message comes that Creon and Creusa are dead (1125–6), Medea does not think of the children, but she exults in the success of her first step.

There is a connection between the death of Creusa and the death of the children. We know as early as 772–797 that Medea has decided to kill the bride of Jason and the children. But when Medea explained her *βουλεύματα* for the first time, all this was a mere plan. Now the first step has been executed; Creusa will certainly die. The consistency of the plan forces Medea to think of the death of the children. In the first part of the monologue, she visualizes her separation from the children (1021–39). The ambiguity here is similar to that in the dialogue with the Paedagogus. Obviously, there is no word which simply says 'death'. An interpretation in the sense of 'separation by distance' seems possible. But on the other hand, thought and vocabulary are of the kind we know from speeches addressed to a dead child. This is quite clear from 1025 onwards.¹⁶ Therefore I think the meaning of *ἐς ἄλλο σχῆμ' ἀποστάντες βίου* (1039) is 'death', and we would be deceived by the ambiguity if we doubted it. Up to this point, Medea talks as if the death of the children is a fact from which there is no escape and as if the only thing she can do is to say goodbye to them. This fully coincides with the plan of 772–797, where the Chorus is told only (819), "All words are superfluous." But now, when the children smile at her, she herself utters such words, and she shrinks from her original plan and chooses the opposite, i.e. 'life' (1040–48). In the next passage she returns to 'death' (1049–55). Once more she shrinks back (1056–

¹⁶ Cf. e.g. Eur. *HF* 454ff, *Tro.* 1167ff, *Andr.* 1173ff, *Supp.* 1094ff.

58): she wants to take the children to Athens. At last, she returns to ‘death’ (1059–68). The ensuing lines (1069–80) look similar to the first passage (1021–39); ‘death’ is a fact which is no longer doubted.

So far there will be little disagreement, and we may, then, speak of five steps in this monologue represented by five passages (1021–39, 1040–48, 1049–55, 1056–58, 1059–68). The main problem of this scene, the ‘contradiction’, is in the last of these five passages. Here Medea makes her decisive turn back to ‘death’. And here she thinks again of the earlier step she has taken to murder Creusa. It seems to influence her decision. But apparently this influence lies not in the consistency of her plan, but in something which is independent.¹⁷ A plan can be revoked, but here, it is argued, there is a fact which is not within her reach. That there is such a fact cannot be doubted. If Medea kills Creon and Creusa, the Corinthians will try to take revenge; and if they cannot reach her, they will certainly try to hurt her indirectly.¹⁸ If they can kill her children, they will do so. But to be able to do this, they must have the children in their power. From Medea’s standpoint, this means that she would have to leave her children in Corinth. And this is our problem. Why should she abandon the children so that the Corinthians can kill them? Because she cannot take them with her or because she does not realize that she can take them with her? Again, it seems, we look in vain for an answer given by the poet if we do not accept either the ‘technical’ or the ‘psychological’ solution. The ‘integrated’ solution does not work either because it depends on the assumption that there is something like a necessity which interferes with Medea’s freedom. But this necessity

¹⁷ Vv.976–7 are often quoted in this connection in order to show that the mission of the children means their exposure to death. But since the children return safely—apparently no one thinks of such a danger (for Medea see 975)—it is far more probable that the Chorus do not allude to this danger, but to Medea’s plan, which comprises two steps. The Chorus comment on the first step (murder of Creusa) with a prospective reference to the second (death of the children). The murder of Creusa is a mere intrigue; the Chorus remind us of the background of this intrigue. For a more detailed discussion of this chorus, see below pp. 304–5. Compare the following note.

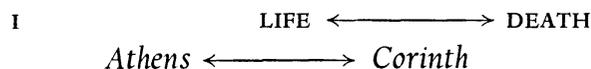
¹⁸ It has often been said that the children are in danger because by ancient standards they are actually the murderers of Creusa. For a recent example of this opinion see Steidle, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.8) 160. There are two objections to this. First, Jason introduces the children, and he asks Creusa to accept the presents (see 1151–55). Thus he participates in the murder to an even higher degree than the children. But he does not think that any danger threatens himself (see 1293ff). Second, Jason fears for the children because of the deed of their mother, and not because they themselves are involved in the murder (1304–5). Compare the words of the Chorus, 990–95.

is just the problem. Apparently there is no such necessity. To leave the children in Corinth would be rather an act of freedom. To make two freedoms interfere with each other in this way is perhaps good psychology, but it is certainly bad logic. To solve the problem logically, we must first understand its nature.

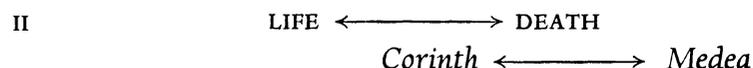
II

It is in this sense—explanation of the problem—that I shall try to reconsider the passage. To be as clear as possible I shall use diagrams. For those who anticipate a misuse of logic, I may add that a diagram never can replace interpretation of a tragedy: a diagram needs interpretation itself. It may well be that we must reject the logic of a diagram when we move from the problem to its solution, *i.e.*, the interpretation of the play. But then we ought to know the reason for this.

When the children return at the beginning of the scene, Medea has to decide what she wants to do about them. There are only three possibilities: she may try to take them with her; she can leave them where they are; she can kill them. All these possibilities have been mentioned before. Creon had ordered her to leave the country together with the children (352–4); now she receives the message that the children may stay in Corinth; and, third, she has revealed her plan to kill the children (792–3). If we put the three points together in a diagram, it turns out that this is not simply a tripartition, but a combination of two disjunctions. The two disjunctions are connected as genus and species. First, Medea has to decide whether she chooses ‘life’ or ‘death’ for the children. Then, if she has chosen ‘life’, she has to decide whether the children should be in ‘Corinth’ or ‘Athens’:

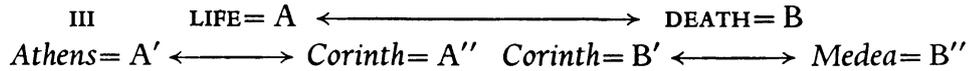


But she had said that she would kill the children, and Creon and Creusa are dying at this moment. Therefore ‘Corinth’ actually means ‘death’ to the children. So we must draw another diagram:



If she chooses 'death', she has to decide whether the children should die by the Corinthians or by her own hand.

By combining these two diagrams, we may represent a complete set of the several possibilities in this scene:



This is an illuminating diagram. The most important fact is that the two sides exclude each other, because they are based on different premises. A'' presupposes 'no threat by the Corinthians', B' is based on the opposite, 'threat by the Corinthians'. But if we do not care about the premises, it may easily happen that we forget the difference between A'' and B'. Sometimes we may even forget that this diagram is a blend of two quite different diagrams. From the standpoint of logic we could say that the left side represents the thoughts of the Paedagogus and the right side the thoughts of Medea. But a 'psychological' solution, like Pohlenz's for instance, may take advantage of this situation and make Medea herself slip from one premise to the other.

For our problem another fact is more important. The diagram shows that we must be very careful when we use words like 'life' and 'death'. 'Life' may mean A or A' or A'', 'death' B or B' or B''. Furthermore, the diagram consists of a generic and a specific level. This is quite obvious, and as long as we look simply at the diagram, we may feel safe from any mistake in that respect. But when we say A, this does not exclude the possibility that we actually mean A' or A'' without noticing it. A' or A'' can function as A, *i.e.* they can be used on the generic level. There is only one way to be certain whether we are on the generic or the specific level when we say A, A', A'', B, B', or B'': we must look for the opposite term. If a member of the A-group is opposed to a member of the B-group, this certainly means that we are on the generic level. If the opposite term is within the same group, we are on the specific level. When we return to the text, we must keep in mind this theoretical background.

We found five steps in the monologue which correspond to five sections of the text: 1 (1021–39) death; 2 (1040–48) life; 3 (1049–55) death; 4 (1056–58) life; and 5 (1059–68) death. This looks as if we have to write B—A—B—A—B. But our diagram clearly reveals that the situation is not so simple. 'Life' is not A, but A'; and we must write

B—A'—B—A'—B. This is no problem. A' is opposed to a member of the B-group and not to A'', *i.e.* it has the generic function. What about 'death'? There is no specification in sections 1 and 3. Even if we are inclined to write B'' instead of B, we have to admit that we are on the generic level because B'' would be opposed to a member of the A-group and not to B'. Therefore I write B—A'—B—A', not because I am convinced that there is no specification in 1021–39 and 1049–55, but in order to make it clear that we are on the generic level and to avoid a confusion which may mislead us when we turn to section 5. Here we find an explicit specification: οὗτοι ποτ' ἔσται τοῦθ ὅπως ἐχθροῖς ἐγὼ παῖδας παρήσω τοὺς ἐμούς καθυβρίσαι is to be translated non-B'. This means that the B of section 5 is opposed to this B', and for 5 we must write B'', in the sense of species. On the other hand, this B'' is opposed to A' of section 4, *i.e.* it has the generic function and is equivalent to B of sections 1 and 3. We must express this double function in section 5, and I write:

$$\text{IV} \quad \begin{array}{c} \text{B—A'—B—A'—B} \\ \text{B'—B''} \end{array}$$

A'—B and B'—B'' are the two disjunctions of our second diagram. But there is a decisive difference. In diagram II the terms are connected in a logical way. B'—B'' is the subdivision of B, *i.e.* it depends on B. We have first to choose B before it becomes necessary to choose B' or B''. But here in section 5, the two disjunctions are blended. And the problem is how they are blended. Medea does not first choose B and then B''. In v.1059 and the successive lines, when she turns back to 'death', she uses non-B' (1060–1) as argument for this decision. But where does B' come from? Except for line 1059, A' and B' touch each other without any connecting link, a link which could only be B. The text reads as if A' of section 4 implicates B'. But A' means that B' is not valid. A' and B' exclude each other because their premises are contradictory. B' presupposes the decision B; it cannot replace it. A' must be eliminated before B' can become valid. This connection of A' and B' is our problem. As we have now seen, it includes a contradiction and a double meaning of 'death' from the standpoint of rational argument.

It is quite natural that this situation has provoked different interpretations. Scholars who really went into the details took into account the contradiction; but, as far as I see, they always overlooked the

double meaning of B and B'' respectively, that is, death in any case for the children, and specifically at Medea's hand. They think, therefore, that they can get rid of the contradiction in some way or other if only they can reach B or B''. But actually, they only reach B (genus) and B'' (species). The contradiction remains, but it is hidden behind this double meaning, for which we may write B(').

The last diagram also shows how vaguely the term 'necessity' is used in the 'integrated' solution. 'Freedom' is the motive on the generic level: Medea longs for revenge and is restrained by love. 'Necessity' is the motive on the specific level, the choice between B' and B'': if the children are to be killed by the Corinthians, Medea *has to* kill them herself. But this 'necessity' is caused by the love for the children, and love could be called 'freedom' as well as 'necessity'. On the other hand, the wish for revenge forces Medea to act and to kill the children. We may speak of a 'necessity' of revenge. Strictly speaking, there is no 'necessity' at all either on the generic or on the specific level. But if we allow a rather vague meaning to 'necessity', we may use it in several different ways, and we may even mistake it for 'necessity' of logic. Scholars have sometimes taken advantage of these possibilities. They did not, it seems, always realize that they were using a rather doubtful meaning of 'necessity'.

With the help of our diagrams, it would be easy to analyse the interpretations offered for this scene. Even if these scholars did not want to base their interpretations on a strict logic, a glance behind the scenes is revealing. I mention only a few points. Schadewaldt introduces B' (in the second line of diagram iv) as an objective fact. And he is right, because we can take it for granted that the Corinthians will try to kill the children. But for Medea this fact is relevant only under a certain condition, namely that the children have to stay in Corinth, a condition omitted by Schadewaldt. He introduces B' as the wish of the Corinthians, which may be written (B'), and then he changes it into a real threat B' without mentioning the condition. Or another point: the juxtaposition of 'freedom' and 'necessity' leads to one conclusion in Schadewaldt's interpretation, but actually Medea draws two different conclusions, B and B''. The interpretation of Pohlenz is more complicated because he has adopted G. Hermann's conjecture concerning v.1058¹⁹ and because he gives a different

¹⁹ G. Hermann, "Adnotationes ad Medeam ab Elmsleio editam," *Opuscula* III (Leipzig 1828) 231, suggests *κεῖ μὴ* instead of *ἐκεῖ*.

interpretation to the first part of the monologue. The five sections look like this in his interpretation: $A''-A'-B-A''-B''$. The second A'' (step 4) functions as a kind of catalyst. Pohlenz passes from B (step 3) to A'' (life in Corinth); but then, he thinks, Medea realizes that A'' actually means B' (death in Corinth). He does not overlook the facts that he is shifting from (B') to B' and that he has to get rid of A' (life in Athens) if he wants to replace A'' by B' . He adds, therefore, that the step from A' to B is so conclusive that Medea cannot return to A' . He calls this "brutal erledigt." But Medea returns at least to a member of the A-group, which is the really relevant fact and makes the exclusion of A' even psychologically unacceptable.

We had pushed our analysis of step 5 to the point where we had to write a second line: $B'-B''$. This allowed us to criticize some points in the interpretations of Schadewaldt and Pohlenz. But this second line is not the solution of the problem. On the contrary, this second line is the problem itself. As long as we cannot explain how this disjunction is connected with the first line, we have a problem without solution. In other words, we cannot explain the train of thought in the section 1059-68.

The question we must ask is this: how is $B'-B''$ inserted into section 5, which as a whole means B or B'' ? The answer is not difficult to find if we look at the text. 1060-1 is certainly B' , 1062-3 certainly B'' . In 1064-68 we find no specification, and read by itself it has the meaning B (genus). But these lines can have the meaning B'' (species) likewise, if the context is on the specific level. Thus these lines contain the double meaning for which I wrote B'' . More difficult is line 1059. Looked at from 1056-58, which is A' , it has the meaning B. But this line is a single exclamation which actually is not B but seems to introduce B. We can write only (B). But in 1060-1 we do not find B, but B' (which is rejected in favour of B''). This is the core of our problem.

When we return to diagram iv and try to insert $B'-B''$ into the first line, we cannot do so without accepting a break in the last section. For 1059-68 we must write (B)/ $B'-B''$ /B''. For the sake of clarity it will be convenient to repeat the meaning of this notation: an exclamation which introduces 'death anyway' (1059); then a disjunction on the specific level (1060-1 and 1062-3); at last a passage which may belong either to the specific level (death at Medea's hand) or the generic one (death anyway). The sign / marks a missing con-

nection. There is no problem in B"/B("), because 1064–68 can have the meaning B". It does not even matter whether we keep 1062–3 in the text or not. Thus we can write a simpler version (B)/B'—B". The problem is (B)/B' or, in other words, the transition from 1059 to 1060. Everything would be clear if we had a little more in 1059 than the mere exclamation, e.g. the words "I shall not give up my revenge," and ἀλλά in 1060. Then we would have a real B and the connection of the two disjunctions in diagram II. Medea would first choose B and then decide against B' and keep B". But there is nothing like this in these lines.²⁰

The earlier discussions of these lines locate the problem not after 1059 but after 1058. Our analysis shows why this cannot lead to a clear solution. O. Regenbogen rightly concluded in 1950, after a penetrating study of this passage and its interpretations, that "The fundamental difficulty in this monologue still persists."²¹ A new suggestion by H. Patzer has come closer to the problem than any before it.²² Patzer thinks that the motive behind 1060–1 is not 'pity' or 'love' but the wish for 'absolute revenge'. If the children were to be killed by the Corinthians, this would weaken Medea's revenge. His suggestion obviously improves the transition from 1059 to 1060–1 by eliminating the abrupt shift in motives. There would be only one motive behind 1059–68, namely 'revenge'. But there remain two difficulties. In Patzer's interpretation 1059–61 would be simply B' instead of (B)/B'. This means that we have no connection to 1056–58. The thought shifts abruptly from the generic disjunction to the specific one. So this solution is not so simple as Voigtländer thinks,²³ but it is certainly simpler than (B)/B'. But there is a second difficulty which cannot be overcome. The motive behind 1060–1 is without doubt 'pity' and not 'revenge'. καθυβρίσαι (cf. vv.782 and 1380) is a possibility to be avoided, because it interferes with Medea's love for the children. We cannot get rid of (B)/B'.

²⁰ In this respect it does not make any difference whether we follow Patin's opinion (Medea rejects in 1059ff the real possibility of 1045 and 1058) or Steidle's recent suggestion (Medea realizes in 1059ff that 1045 and 1058 are based on an illusion). This is a secondary question. The problem is the fact that there is nothing in the text which connects 'real possibility' and 'rejection' or 'illusion' and 'reality'.

²¹ "Randbemerkungen zur Medea des Euripides," *Eranos* 48 (1950) 21–56.

²² Reported by H. D. Voigtländer, "Spätere Überarbeitungen im grossen Medea-monolog?" *Philologus* 101 (1957) 217–237, esp. 234 n.2. Cf. H. Diller, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.6) 270 n.3.

²³ See n.22 *supra*.

There is no escape. We must face the fact that there is no convincing solution for (B)/B'. By rational standards it is impossible to reconcile 1059 with 1060–1. If we decide to accept a 'technical' or 'psychological' solution, we must admit that such a solution serves a very limited purpose, namely the transition between two lines. This looks too much like a solution *ad hoc*. The missing transition from 1059 to 1060–1 is an isolated problem which is not covered by the general technical or psychological procedure in this monologue. Therefore I doubt strongly that this difficulty originates with the poet.

As noted above, we need very little for a sufficient connection between 1059 and 1060–1. A lacuna of one line after 1059 could possibly explain the difficulty. Before accepting this solution, we may return once more to our diagram iv. When I tried to insert B'—B'' into line one, I first wrote (B)/B'—B''/B(''), or I could have written 1059 (1060–1—1062–3) 1064–68. The meaning of 1064–68 depends on the context. I could, therefore, have written (B)[B'—B'']B. This means, if we leave out B'—B'', that we have to write simply B.

We may now recall that 1062–3 is usually considered an interpolation. The bracketing of these lines is possible only because 1064–68 can be given the interpretation B'', *i.e.* because it can assume the function of 1062–3. It has, therefore, been overlooked that there is a very close connection between 1060–1 and 1062–3. This connection is the explicitly specific level which is common to these four lines, and to these four lines alone. If we should excise 1062–3, it would only follow that we must throw out 1060–1 too. It seems to me that this is the only acceptable solution to the whole problem.²⁴

The reason that it is preferable to excise 1060–63 instead of stating a lacuna after 1059 lies in the fact that 1062–3 are dubious lines on the ground of their repetition in 1240–1. Repetition alone, as noted earlier, is not a very strong argument, but it is bolstered by additional evidence: vv.1062–3 not only break through the ambiguity which is maintained consistently throughout the monologue, but are linked to the two preceding lines, which cannot be connected with 1059 in a satisfactory way. These considerations are sufficient grounds, I think, to regard 1060–63 as an interpolation.

²⁴ Steidle, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.8) 158, states the fact that recent scholarship is inclined to neglect lines 1060–1 (in addition to the excision of 1062–3). This observation can be extended, *e.g.*, to Pohlenz. Even Schadewaldt is not far from such an interpretation when he writes (p.197): "Die Rache ist es schliesslich, die die Kinder tötet, aber die Mutter tötet dennoch nicht um der Rache willen."

But there is still more evidence, and this evidence is independent of our analysis of the passage 1059–68. When we look at 1240–1, *i.e.* the lines which are identical with 1062–3, we find that they are closely linked to the two preceding lines 1238–9. These four lines form a unit, as is clear not only from their interior connection, but also from their relation to the surrounding context. They are inserted into a context where Medea makes up her mind to enter the house and to kill the children. In lines 1238–41 she descends for a moment to a subordinate thought, namely the thought that she cannot wait any longer. She has decided to kill the children (1236–7) and she knows that she must hurry because the Corinthians might interfere with her plan. Therefore she has to do now what she intended to do from the beginning of her plan in 792–3. Expressed in the language of our diagram iv, lines 1236–41 run: B—B'—B". Medea has decided B, then she enters the specific level and, rejecting B', she chooses B". This means that lines 1238–9 and 1060–1 are identical in thought despite their verbal difference. Even if there were no problem in 1059–68, we should have to ask whether the repetition possibly comprises four lines instead of two.

III

In conclusion we have to describe in a few words the interpretation which results from the excision of 1060–3. In my opinion, lines 1059, 1064–68 turn out to be the central lines of the monologue, and there emerges a carefully balanced connection with the play as a whole.

When the children leave the stage in 975, the first step of Medea's plan is set into action. This is a decisive moment because this step cannot be revoked. The following choral ode comments on it in a way which shows that this first step is a kind of symbol for the whole of the plan. The Chorus take the whole for granted and insert the death of Creusa into the major issue, the death of the children. Therefore they interpret the departure of the children as their way to death (976–77).²⁵ Then they reflect on the minor issue, the death of Creusa (978–995). In 996 they return to the major, this time from Medea's point of view. They address the mother of the children, *ὦ τάλαινα παιδῶν μητέρα*, and name the cause of all this, the unfaithful Jason.

²⁵ See n.17 *supra*.

When the children return at 1002, only one of these motives is kept: the mother who knows that her children are going to die. Up to 1058 there is no word which refers to the death of Creusa; and up to 1039 there is not a single word about her enemies at all, no word about the reason why the children must die. Up to 1039 there is only one thought: the children will die and their unfortunate mother will leave the country.

But Medea knows that she herself has made the plan (*ταῦτα* 1013) and she can revoke it. The scene up to 1039 contains nothing which could not be revoked. Therefore the smile of the children is enough to make her reject the plan (1040ff). The plan (*βουλεύματα* 1044, 1048) here means the second step alone.²⁶ Now another motive is added, namely the reason that the children are destined to death—‘revenge’ (1049–50); and Medea returns to the plan (*τάδ’* 1051). But the thought of revenge apparently is not enough, and she changes direction again (1056–58) and turns a second time against her own plan (*τάδε* 1056). Up to this point the struggle could have happened after 797. There the Chorus allude to the unfortunate (*ἀθλιωτάτη* 818) Medea of our monologue. But in 1059ff the answer is broadened once more. Now Medea refers to the plan (*ταῦτα* 1064) as a whole, including the first step. As a whole the plan cannot be revoked. Medea returns here to the determination expressed in 772–97 and in the stasimon 976ff. The technical impossibility of revoking the plan as a whole is but a symbol of this determination to which Medea submits. The first step is taken; the second will follow. Now she acknowledges that she has handed herself over to this plan, and she realizes that she is irrevocably on the way to a destination which she abhors. Here she becomes aware that she is driving and is driven at the same time. There is no word about revenge any longer. She feels doomed to her destination, and she knows that she is.

There is a reciprocal movement in this monologue. The more general the ‘plan’ becomes, the more constricted is Medea’s resistance. As long as the second part of this plan, ‘death of the children’, is isolated and not seen together with the whole, she can give orders (*χαιρέτω βουλεύματα* 1044, 1048). As soon as she admits the thought of revenge (1050), she can only implore (1056–58). When she returns to the plan as a whole (1059, 1064), she must yield.

²⁶ Note the difference from *βουλεύματα* in 772.

In this interpretation v.1064 is the pivotal point of the scene. The *ταῦτα* implies everything comprised in the plan as a whole. I think that the difficulties of this line result from the fact that different concepts are compressed here into a single charged kernel of thought. *ταῦτα* means not only the murder of Creusa as such, but also the beginning of the whole plan. And this plan is not yet executed. Therefore I suggest that *ἐκφεύζεται* includes not only Creusa, but also the whole plan, *i.e.* the children and Medea.²⁷ This comprehensive ambiguity is maintained in the next line. In 1054 Medea spoke of *θύματα* and thought of the children. Thus, in 1065 too, we may think of the children who are the victims and who are designated for the sacrifice.²⁸ Even if the meaning of *στέφανος* were limited to Creusa, this word would be more than a reference to the gifts, because Medea is using the terminology of a funeral.²⁹

A brief look at 1236ff may show the connection to the later part of the play. Here the situation is decisively different. The struggle is over and the decision is made. Here the word ‘death’ can be uttered without ambiguity (*κτανούση* 1237). There remains a small barrier which makes Medea hesitate for a last time: the deed has to be done *now*. The ‘mother’ does not fight and does not implore. The only thing she has to do is to forget (1246–48). There is not the least hesitation about the fact that the children must die. The reminiscence of

²⁷ If we take into account the parallelism of *πέπρακται* and *ἐκφεύζεται*, it seems next to impossible to give different grammatical subjects to the two verbs. I think, therefore, first, that the subject of both is *ταῦτα* and, second, that we have to acknowledge the fact that *πέπρακται* suggests a passive meaning of *ἐκφεύζεται*. The passive meaning of *φεύγειν* does not occur elsewhere in this period; according to J. Wackernagel, *Vorlesungen über Syntax I* (Basel 1920) 143, the earliest examples come from Josephus; *LSJ*, however, cite an example from Epicurus (fr.423). But v.1064 appears to be an exceptional case, serving a special purpose. Compare *πεπράζεται* in Eur. *Heracl.* 980 for a similar prediction. At least we must agree that the form of *ἐκφεύζεται* cannot exclude the passive meaning which is suggested by *πέπρακται*. If we admit this, a parallelism of meaning follows. By *ἐκφεύζεται* the thought of *πέπρακται* is simply extended into the future. *πέπρακται ταῦτα* has a double meaning: first, the plan has been successful; second, the plan cannot be revoked. Correspondingly *ἐκφεύζεται* means, first, success will not escape (an allusion to the narrower meaning ‘Creusa will not escape’ is obvious); second, there will be no escape from the plan (an allusion to ‘the children will not escape’). For this interpretation we do not need the passive meaning of *ἐκφεύζεται*, though it would be more natural. But Medea, I think, is also alluding to herself, a fact which presupposes a passive meaning. I therefore prefer the translation “there is no escape,” which includes Creusa, the children and Medea herself.

²⁸ Compare, *e.g.*, Eur. *IA* 1080.

²⁹ Compare Eur. *Tro.* 1143ff.

the first part of the plan (1239) and the possible danger for the children which results from it have no meaning in themselves. They form a small point which may remind her that she has to act and which may help her to forget.³⁰

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