# THE VIRTUES OF ADMETUS

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THE *Alcestis* nowadays is commonly described as a psychological drama which has as its true subject an absurd disparity between outmoded ideals and actual human conduct. It is usually said that Euripides has portrayed the noble action of a fairy-tale heroine, then capped it with ignoble consequences. Some scholars, however, turn a skeptic's eye even upon Alcestis and her sacrifice. Those who admire the queen often assert that she dies disillusioned, while the true debunkers explain that she is dying for base reasons that show her to be as false and calculating as her mate. Critics who believe in Alcestis but find her husband unworthy of her read the play as a bourgeois-realist comedy with a plot that breaks all the rules of realism.[1] Those who find both the king and the queen to be cheap imitations of tragic nobility discover a Shavian marital fable ending with the reunion of a pair who will live unhappily ever after, each a thorn in the other's flesh.[2] Both groups believe that the secret of the play is hypocrisy, conscious or unconscious; they argue that principals and chorus often do not mean what they say, and that Euripides meant only the simpletons in his audience to take his play at face value. These critics seem to forget, in dealing with the *Alcestis*, the enormous spatial candor of the ancient theater, and the difficulty of conveying innuendo from behind a mask.

I should like to play the simpleton, and attempt a naive reading of Euripides' *Alcestis*. The way has been prepared for many years, ever since Lesky's study of the fable's fairy-tale forms[3] showed that the story itself makes no evaluation of the husband's acceptance of his wife's sacrifice, though it plainly condemns the parents. Euripides, then, in choosing as his *mythos* the mixed tale of the bargain with death and the love sacrifice, was not choosing a story which necessarily dealt with a cad or a coward. It was doubtless within his power to give the king these qualities if he wished, but if the conventional story of a favorite of the gods was to be given a new tone of moral corruption, the change would have to be strongly made.[4] A straightforward dramatist would establish the altered ethical coloring of his king as soon as possible; a writer of more subtlety might lull his audience for a while, then suddenly force them to see the baseness of the man they had admired. In this case, however, the longer the revelation was postponed, the more shocking and incontrovertible it would have to be when made. Euripides, however, follows neither of these courses. His opening description of Admetus is of a king, hero, and favorite of Apollo. At the play's end the entire kingdom, the entire generation, has had its admiration of the man, his wife, and his friend, strengthened and confirmed. The audience has nowhere been instructed to separate its judgment from that of the chorus. Nor has its attention ever been directed to what must be, in a reevaluation of the Admetus story, the

crucial moment for revision: the moment when Admetus accepted his wife's offer to trade her life for his. Euripides, in fact, has gone to considerable trouble to discourage his audience from thinking of this moment at all.

In fairy tale the bargain and its fulfilment both belonged to the king's wedding day; the family refuses, the bride insists, and at once she sinks away as her dying husband is revived. Euripides has split this single action in two, making a new chronology that stretches over an indefinite length of time. No word of his text describes the circumstances of the past bargain: how Apollo announced it, how Admetus made his canvass, how Alcestis offered herself, and how Admetus received that offer. All these matters are ignored, though three passages mysteriously suggest that Admetus was virtually dead at the time (13, 462–63, 633). The bargain is stated as fact; Apollo's first (and presumably inalterable) arrangement with the Moirai in two lines (14–15), the subsequent actions of Admetus and his family in three (15–18). The only motivation discussed is that of Apollo; he sponsored the bargain as a boon for Admetus, to show his gratitude for that man's pious hospitality. Euripides' new chronology supplies one new detail, however; in his version of the bargain, the death that was offered and accepted was not an immediate death but one set vaguely in the future, allowing a certain amount of continued common life to both the receiver and the giver. This amelioration would hardly have been added by a poet bent on condemning the king.

The play allows us to watch what happened on the day the bargain was fulfilled, but places behind a veil of time the day when Alcestis made her promise to the Fates. It was Euripides, as far as we know, who made this unmeasured chasm of years appear in the middle of the old story, and the effect of the innovation is plain. The bargain assumes the unquestioned inevitability of historical event. In the course of his play the dramatist explores and evaluates Alcestis' decision by making her, on this later day, repeat her old reasons, but there is no similar exploration in the case of Admetus. He has no decision today, since her death cannot now be prevented, and the audience is not encouraged to think that he was allowed a decision on the long-ago bargain day. That bargain was engineered by Apollo and presented to Admetus in token of gratitude, and one thing Euripides has made his chorus say, at a crucial moment in the denouement, is that one must accept the gift offered by a god (1071, a positive version of Solon's δῶρα δ' ἄφυκτα θεῶν).

The visible action of the *Alcestis* represents the bargain's fulfilment, and then its remarkable dissolution. The cost is met, the article secured, then suddenly the price is returned and the purchase becomes a free gift. The audience sees Alcestis die and sees her carried out; it sees her husband take a visitor into his house and drive another away; it sees him refuse to go back into his house alone and refuse to take a strange woman in with him; then suddenly the strange woman proves to be the dead wife, and the man who bought his own life at the price of hers re-enters his house, his purchase still secure but with the price paid once more in his hands. This is the skeleton of the *Alcestis*; it acquires its flesh and form, its ugliness or beauty, from the speeches which Euripides has written for his characters. As they speak the king and queen at least must be heard

with the ordinary good faith granted to all the figures who walk the classic stage, for there is nothing in the tradition, nothing in their past, and nothing in the play's overt system of rewards and punishments to suggest that this man and woman are false. If the dramatist is playing a subtle game with the material he has chosen, if in spite of the positive evaluations of the action he himself has created he means his creatures to be doubted, he will label their lies, or show a strong contradiction between their words and their accomplished deeds.[5]

In the *Alcestis* prologue a god and a demon meet at Admetus' threshold; Apollo is just leaving the house Death is about to enter. Apollo toys for a while with the demon, pretending to dissuade him with a courteous plea, then standing aside sardonically to let him pass. He knows that Death is to lose his prey, and ignominiously, submitting to force and getting no thanks for what he will have to grant (64–71). The prologue thus shows the apparent defeat of what is bright and young and good, while promising that in the end these qualities will be victorious over the power that is black and old and evil.

As the two supernatural beings dispute, their speeches investigate the ideas of graciousness, justice, and repayment. Viewed from heaven, this whole affair is merely an incident in a series of repayments, transgression for transgression, made between Zeus and Apollo (3–7). On earth there has been a series of benefactions; Apollo is here because of a positive repayment, the benefaction he returned to Admetus after his kind reception (9). Such chains of repayment must begin somewhere; the heavenly one began, according to Apollo, with Asclepius' raising of the dead—a boon to men but an evil in the eyes of Zeus. The earthly chain began with Admetus' hospitality to Apollo. In the course of the prologue Apollo asks, perhaps not quite seriously, if Death will not perform another such gratuitous initial act (60). If Thanatos had agreed, a continuing courtly exchange of favors between him and Apollo would presumably have been founded (70). Death, however, is interested in justice, in getting and giving exactly what is due on the basis of old debts and established law (30–31). An independent act of graciousness is incomprehensible to him (63).

Apollo suggests, like Athena in the *Eumenides*, that there is more to justice than Death supposes, that the quality of an act is to be considered as well as its quantity, and that repayment is to be made not only in kind but with love or hatred in addition. Admetus' hospitality was technically repaid by the tricking of the Moirai, but in addition Admetus, the man who was *hosios*, has become dear to the god. Apollo is interested now in the death of Alcestis, not because he still has any debt to discharge, but because he shares the griefs of his mortal friend (42). In Death's way of thinking, this is contrary to justice (41). And Thanatos' refusal to become Apollo's benefactor provides an opposite case; he is to be repaid exactly, according to his own notion of justice, by receiving no thanks (70), but in addition he will become the enemy of Apollo (71). Thus the motifs of friendship and enmity are added to those of *dike* and repayment while the demon and the god confront each other. The ambiguous word *charis* is also introduced as they converse; it is used to describe an original, gratuitous benefaction (60), or the necessary return of good for good (70).

The prologue introduces, beyond these abstractions, one concrete concept. Apollo opens the play by stepping forth from the house of Admetus and turning to address it. The house is dear to him (23), and he has acted for its aid and salvation (9, 41). He has in some sense occupied the house ever since he first entered it as a servant, and he now leaves it only because he cannot stay under the same roof with Death. Heracles will enter the house in his stead, and then Death's work will be undone. There are ten direct references to the house in 76 lines; a lighter but still unusual density characterizes the rest of the play, where there are at least sixty mentions of *domos* or *oikos*, and as many more to roofs, walls, gates, etc., in the total of 1163 lines.

The prologue's motifs of house and repayment, *dike* and *charis*, are—like its symbolic action—prophetic of the play to come. As the prologue begins with an apostrophe to the house, so does the denouement (861ff.), and at the center of the whole, marking the beginning of the reversal, is the great House of Admetus Ode (569–605). This house is the formal object of the action, and the action is moved by the mechanism of repayment. Apollo entered the house in repayment of his crime against the Cyclopes. He repaid his host by arranging for his escape from death at the price of another death, which causes Apollo to leave the house and Death to enter. Death's entrance is followed by Alcestis' exit from the house as a corpse, a departure that leaves the house temporarily emptied and diminished. Apollo, moved by his love for Admetus and his respect for the house, and also perhaps by his need to do Zeus a new disservice, brings Heracles upon the scene and Admetus, repaying old obligations to his friend, opens his house to the agent of the god. Admetus has, in repayment to Alcestis, promised to close the house to a future wife; as part of the same repayment, he closes it also to his father and mother. Finally Heracles, repaying Admetus, keeps Alcestis from entering the House of Hades and restores the House of Admetus by sending her once more within its doors. I hope to demonstrate that this formal structure of action and motivation represents the true action of Euripides' play as a device or an emblem might.

As long as the prologue lasts, Alcestis' approaching death appears to the audience as it does to Apollo simply as an event in the history of the House of Admetus. The death is fixed and has been for many years; there is, as Admetus later says, a sense in which it has happened long ago (421; cf. 527). Very soon, however, it becomes immediate.

This death, although it is to be reversed, is the central fact of the drama, and it is at once created and dissected in a fashion typical of Euripides. First the causes of the death are expressed, in the barest possible form, by Apollo. Then the death is represented symbolically, as the god withdraws before its miasma and the demon enters to cut his lock of hair. Next the death is mourned by the citizens of Pherae, as they sing the parodos, and only at this point does the dying woman instead of the death itself become important. She is given public praise as the best of women, whose death will be the fullest expression of her *aristeia*. A third shift of focus comes with the speech of the servant woman who in effect forces the eye of the chorus to the keyhole of the women's apartments. She allows them, and the audience with them, to watch what no man could have witnessed, knowing that the purity of Alcestis' private actions will be the more blind-

ing for having been spied upon. After this incomparable glimpse of stately preparations and heartbroken farewells a brief ode is sung to say that there is no escape from death. The surface of the song is funereal, but the audience simultaneously anticipates both the terror of death and the joy of revival, since they know that Heracles is somehow to save the queen.

At last Admetus and his dying wife appear, and in the scene that follows the presence, the words, and then the silence of Alcestis drive out all consciousness of artistry or illusion. In a passage of only 150 lines Alcestis first experiences her death, in a brief and pitiful agon with an invisible enemy, and then explains it. She gives a crystalline statement of the reasons which led her to chose this death and of the results she wishes it to have. Then, as soon as she is assured that her death will be effective, she simply ceases to live. The child's song follows, releasing the emotion of the audience and providing testimony that the woman who spoke so clearly a moment ago is really gone. All memory of Apollo's promise is momentarily lost and the death seems beyond redemption.

Euripides' prismatic technique for dramatizing this death also allows evaluations of it to come from different sources. Apollo made no judgment, he simply said the queen was young and not yet ready to die; but the chorus of citizens and the serving woman have saluted the queen as the finest of women. To them her action is a just expression of her superlative virtue. Alcestis says the same of herself, and with her statement of reasons and demands the audience is allowed to test all these opinions and to judge the woman and her action for themselves.

Alcestis begins with the fact that her promise to die was freely made, not forced upon her. It was, in the prologue's terms, a gratuitous benefaction of the sort that inaugurates a repayment chain. Thanatos had objected that such actions are not required by *dike* and are made at the expense of the benefactor. He refused to perform a minor act of graciousness, but Alcestis has decided upon a major one. What can move a human being to a freely chosen act that is in the interest of another but against his own? This is the question that Euripides explores in Alcestis' discussion of her case, a case in which the cost of her action to herself was the highest any human could pay.

The lucid economy of Alcestis' explanation has shocked some moderns,[6] but her secret is that she sees the problem as simple. She knows of course that her action will bring *kleos* and that fame is an honorable thing, but this prize she gives away to her husband and her children as a consolation. For herself she wants only one thing—success. Self-sacrifice has no inherent value since life is good; it is conceivable only when careful calculation has shown that death will bring results that life could not, results that are more valuable even than life.

Alcestis chose to die rather than to live as Admetus' widow (the two existing possibilities, once Pheres and his wife had declined) because she saw that in these circumstances her death would best serve that to which her life was dedicated, her marriage. She states this with cool precision, but Euripides makes her reveal as well her passionate idealism. She would not betray her marriage bed and her husband (180–81); she honored her husband's life more than her own soul, though she

loved life well (282ff.); her children can be despots in their father's house, though she is dead, as they could not be in the house of a stepfather (280ff.). In Alcestis' cosmos Marriage is a pure element to be named with Sun, Air, and Earth (244–49). Husband and bed are one, as are husband and hearth;[7] she confides her children to Hestia (163ff.) and to Admetus (375), for the two are inseparable in her thought. Husband, children, house, and marriage make up a single ideal concept which her death will save. It is more valuable to her than her sharp delight in life, and having seen what was best she felt that to choose any course but death would have been shameful (180; cf. Plato *Apol.* 28B).

Alcestis' farewells are made to her marriage bed, the symbol of temporal union; her recommendations for the future are made to the goddess of the eternal *foyer*, from whose altar nothing can be taken away.[8] Nothing that she does has any reference to romantic love, for this concept is unknown to her. She is ruled by *philia* (279), the feeling proper among friends and members of the same family.[9] She expects to be forgotten (381, 387) and assumes that another will sleep in her bed (181–82), but these things do not interest her. The success she demands is that her marriage should continue after she is gone; it must not be imitated or replaced, for her death is to make it immortal.

Alcestis dies only when the results she wants have been promised her. What she asks is specific; she says in effect: "I refused to give our children a stepfather; I ask in return that you shall not give them a stepmother." This finely calculated return of like for like which takes no account of the quality of the initial benefaction and which has nothing to do with gratitude or love, this repayment which cannot pretend to be worthy of Alcestis' deed, she labels "just" (302). It is the kind of *dike* that Death understands. Admetus agrees as a matter of course (note how his reference to Thessalian brides, l. 331, echoes hers to Thessalian grooms, l. 285; they make exactly paired renunciations), but he is no more satisfied than an Apollo would have been by this mean return of like for like. Hastily he adds extensions and embellishments to his covenant in the attempt to respond to her *philia*: he will not only not marry a new wife, he will grieve for this one forever, sacrificing not only the joy of future sons, but all joys. He will not only close his house to the potential enemy stepmother, he will drive away the actual enemy, the father who has behaved like a stepfather (636ff.). A comparison of his parents' action with that of Alcestis has proved to him that they deserve not love but hatred from him (338-41; cf. her accusation of them at 290ff.). From this day on he will be a stranger to the pleasures of music and masculine company, nor will he have any female companion to solace him.

Had he simply proposed never to install the concubine Alcestis took for granted, the effect could only have been crude. Admetus instead makes a promise that is positive, delicately stated, and filled with a powerful meaning:

σοφῇ δὲ χειρὶ τεκτόνων δέμας τὸ σὸν
εἰκασθὲν ἐν λέκτροισιν ἐκταθήσεται,
ᾧ προσπεσοῦμαι καὶ περιπτύσσων χέρας
ὄνομα καλῶν σὸν τὴν φίλην ἐν ἀγκάλαις
δόξω γυναῖκα καίπερ οὐκ ἔχων ἔχειν·
ψυχρὰν μέν, οἶμαι, τέρψιν, ἀλλ' ὅμως βάρος
ψυχῆς ἀπαντλοίην ἄν. ἐν δ' ὀνείρασι
φοιτῶσά μ' εὐφραίνοις ἄν· ἡδὺ γὰρ φίλους
κἀν νυκτὶ λεύσσειν, ὄντιν' ἂν παρῇ χρόνον
[348–56].[10]

Since he is not Orpheus (357) this will be his way of bringing his wife back from Hades. He will live in the dream he hopes to induce with the *eidolon*, himself a sleeping image of death, host to her phantom imitation of life. She has asked that her marriage be kept alive; Admetus determines as far as possible to keep his wife alive too, as statue and as ghost (cf. 328). At the same time he arranges to die with her; his life will be like death (288, 242–43, 278, 666, 802, 1082, 1084), its goal that moment when his corpse will lie beside death's image of her while his soul seeks her shade in the house she is to prepare below (363–68).

Admetus' promised repayment exceeds Alcestis' bid for justice and attempts to reflect something of the quality of her action. His words are approved by the chorus, which calls his promises, thus extended, *axia*, worthy of her sacrifice (370; cf. 300). Whether his actions are likewise worthy of her, whether the play as it continues is worthy of her, are the questions which next must be considered. Both dramatist and characters must meet the test of Alcestis' death: its motives, its demands, and its beauty. Alcestis has explained the results she hopes for; the audience will witness the results the playwright has arranged.

Alcestis' body is carried into the house, and Admetus accompanies it, to close the first episode. The next phase of the action is expressed in a pair of scenes in which one visitor is almost violently brought into the house and another is more violently driven away. These scenes of reception and ejection stand on either side of the axial House of Admetus Ode, the physical center of the play, a song in celebration of the welcome once given to Apollo and of the blessedness of wealth that was its reward. The two scenes occupy the space between the death and the decision to revive Alcestis and so, unless this is a very foolish play indeed, they must in some way cause or explain the happy reversal which occurs.

Pheres, as one of the refusing parents, belongs to the love-sacrifice tale, but Heracles is an intruder. An alternate and probably older version made Persephone return Alcestis to her lord,[11] and this detail is echoed in the folk-tale solution of direct divine intervention.[12] Phrynichus had made use of Heracles in his more primitive drama, but such a precedent was far from binding, and Euripides emphasizes the technical superfluity of this visiting hero in his prologue. Apollo has already cheated death once by making the Fates drunk, and on Admetus' doorstep he teases Death in the manner of a satyr-play Sisyphus about to trick Hades himself. Clearly the god could save Alcestis at once; instead he announces a story change: the bargain will be reversed, not by divine interference, but by the heroic act of a mortal. Even in this form, however, the story does not need Heracles. If someone is to wrestle with death, Admetus is on hand, and there is no dramaturgical need to bring in an outsider. Euripides emphasizes this point too, by making Admetus himself touch on the possibility of a journey to the underworld.

Heracles is plainly necessary to Euripides' particular intentions toward his story, and the dramatist as plainly wants us to realize this. The brute effect of Heracles' introduction is that something of the satyr drama invades the tragedy of Alcestis' death and salvation, echoing the drunken Moirai in the story of Admetus' escape. A more subtle result is the restored prominence

given to the king. Admetus had figured in a god-come-to-visit story in which he was rewarded for his piety with wealth, a beast chariot with which to win a wife, and escape when he was threatened with death.[13] He had also figured in a love-sacrifice tale. The two stories had no essential connection, but had been given a point of contact through Apollo when the final reward for hospitality that ended the first became the bargain with death that began the second tale. Euripides succeeds in conflating the two, by refusing Persephone and choosing Heracles, an envoy of Apollo's, to act as Alcestis' savior. By means of this semidivine friend he is able to stage a version of the god-come-to-visit story concurrently with his drama of the love sacrifice. He can thus consider, in a single play, the characteristic virtues of both Alcestis and Admetus.

As soon as Admetus has sent his friend indoors the audience is reminded of that other, gratuitous act which stands with Alcestis' decision as one of the two mortal causes of everything seen on the stage. The reception of Heracles is the double of Admetus' original reception of Apollo and will have the same sort of consequence; this much is made explicit in the ode which follows (605; cf. Apollo at 68–69). Thus Admetus, making the first move of his new life, is shown to re-enact the past. He faces a second test of hospitality, more difficult than the first, since Heracles' arrival is apparently so untimely. However, his new duty to Alcestis (his promise to mourn and yet to live as if his wife were still alive) coincides with his continuing duty as a nobleman. His simple impulse to deny Alcestis' death shows him the way, and he has soon fulfilled Apollo's requirement by offering the hospitality of his house to Heracles. When the traveler's fateful entrance into the guest quarters has been accomplished, Admetus explains his reasons (553–60). He could not have turned his friend away, for to do so would have threatened the reputation of his house and the future reception of its members elsewhere. Whereas Alcestis saw the house from within, an enclosed space with the marriage bed at its center, Admetus honors its outward aspect. For him the house includes the city (553), a city which has obligations toward other cities. The house where Alcestis' children are to rule is also the *polis*, and he values its good name more than his own sharp need to grieve alone for his wife. Even the servant, whose views are much more limited than his master's, recognizes that Admetus was governed by *aidos*, the sense of proper reverence felt toward one's family and the gods (823).

Once, before the play began, Admetus had taken in a guest without realizing the full meaning of his action, and he will do so again, before the play has ended. The three actions are given such heavy echoes that they stand each as a type of the other two. Apollo was presumably unrecognized; Heracles is recognized only as a friend, not as a savior; Alcestis will be veiled. In every case Admetus acts out of respect for his house: the desire to give it its due and to preserve in this way its ideal existence in men's opinion. The first reception resulted in *philia* (42), the second has friendship as its partial cause (1037); in the final case, the desire that a friend shall not become an enemy causes the reception (1106) which has the return of Alcestis' *philia* as its effect.

In the scene that follows, this act of friendship and welcome is matched by an act of enmity, as Pheres is abused and driven away. The primary fairy-

tale identification of Pheres is not as father but as one who refused to do what Alcestis did, and Euripides has done his best to preserve this single character for the old man. When he arrives on the scene one fact and only one is known about him, but it has been stated four times over: Pheres, though ripe for death, refused to exchange his life for his son's (16, Apollo; 290–92, Alcestis; 338–39, Admetus; 468–70, Chorus). His presence now makes possible the completion of the central inquiry of the play; through him the dramatist can consider again what it is that could induce a human being to give up his life for another. The woman who chose to die has given her reasons; now, in the presence of her corpse, the audience hears the explanation of the man who refused.

Pheres begins with a fair speech in praise of Alcestis. If there was a convention for portraying the hypocrite, the actor probably followed it here, for Euripides has made Pheres' own words prove him disingenuous. He begins by saying that he would sympathize and share in his son's misfortunes (614), but soon he admits that whether Admetus be wretched or joyful is no concern of his (685–86). Alcestis he calls wise (615) when he thinks he has benefited from her action (625), an idiot (728), when it is suggested that he might have done as she did. The noble deed (623) becomes a stupid error when he imagines himself performing it (710). He congratulates Alcestis on her most glorious life in his first speech (623), but reveals in his next that he does not believe in glory (726). He wishes her well in Hades (627), then states his own conviction that the time below is long but never sweet (692–93). With each self-contradiction he proves what Admetus had earlier said (339)—he is a friend only in words.

When his trumpery offering of praise has been rejected, Pheres states his reasons for refusing to save his son, beginning at the same point that Alcestis had chosen. No debt bound him to die for Admetus, and he loved life. *Dike* was enough for him, and *dike* meant holding on to the same tangible things that Alcestis had decided to relinquish. The house, for him, was a complex of lands and flocks (687) to be counted and consumed, not a complex of ideals to be preserved. He values only the sweets of this earth (693) and thus the best life is the longest one. Pheres does not care for reputation and he admits that he knows nothing of sympathy; it is his own fate a man cares about, not that of anyone else (712). And in so denying *philia* he isolates himself from every other being in the play save Death alone; all the rest, from god to slave, experience what it is to live with two souls instead of one (Admetus, 883–84; cf. Apollo, 42; the household, 192–93 and 825; the chorus, 210–12; Alcestis, 313–19; Heracles, 1010). Thus the problem posed by Apollo was even simpler for Pheres than it had been for Alcestis, since self-sacrifice is inconceivable to a man who stands outside society, recognizing nothing but material goods. Such a man could easily allow his own kin to be protected by one who was not of their blood, though he thus betrayed his house as well as his son.

Pheres freely admits that his present good fortune is owed to Alcestis (620–21. 625), and he comes with a token repayment. She, however, had not intended to be his benefactor, and so his gift is refused. Admetus then proceeds to withdraw the advantages which had come to the old people through Alcestis' sacrifice, and as he explains himself he repeats words that she had

spoken (651–52; cf. 295–96). He charges Pheres with responsibility for Alcestis' death, and honoring the symmachy of marriage makes her enemy his and that of his house. Pheres is forbidden access to the hearth where her spirit resides, and is driven away from the halls that belong now to her children. The old parents will have, however, exactly what they bargained for (662–66, 735–36). Pheres had chosen, not honorable death for himself and survival for his son, but continued life for himself and death for his son. Burial at the hands of his son had not then seemed important to him. Now Admetus says in effect: "You have the continuing life that you wanted; you will have also the rest of your choice, the dead son and a burial by strangers." He renders his father the sort of justice the old man had proclaimed, the calculated *dike* of Thanatos, and could say now in his father's words, "How do I wrong you? What do I deprive you of?" (689). Admetus casts off his father, not by doing any violence to the man, but by announcing his own symbolic death (666).[14] At the same time he declares that he will substitute Alcestis, although she is dead and an outsider, for his living father and mother; she will receive the honor and care due by tradition to Pheres and his wife (646–47). And so Admetus states again the two fictions of the paradoxical dream in which he will live if live he must: Alcestis remains alive and he is dead. When Pheres is gone, Admetus moves away at his wife's side to the grave where he would join her (897–99).

In receiving Heracles, Admetus repeated his original reception of Apollo; in refusing Pheres he seems to repeat Apollo's confrontation with Death. As in the earlier scene, a young and powerful figure comes out of the house, meets an old man[15] who has entered from the parodos, and a dispute about Alcestis ensues. Admetus, like Apollo, argues that the old are meetest for death, while Pheres, like Thanatos, denies it. Pheres accuses Admetus of having too little respect for established custom, as Death had reproached Apollo. Apollo asked a favor; Thanatos refused; Apollo answered, "It will happen anyway, by another agency, and you will get no thanks but become my enemy." Admetus had long ago asked a favor and Pheres had refused; now Admetus says, "It has happened anyway, by another agency, and you will get no thanks but be my enemy." The visual and verbal parallelism suggests that the Pheres scene has been constructed with a special intention. This scene is the play's agon in the technical sense, and it is made to seem almost a life and death struggle. One of the curiosities of the *Alcestis* is that it has four separate agons, all reflections of the heroine's central match with death. She gives in after the briefest resistance (259–63), but Apollo teases Thanatos, Heracles wrestles with the greedy demon, and Admetus drives off her human enemy, the immediate cause of her demise. In so doing he duplicates one of Heracles' other exploits, the defeat of the demon Old Age (a figure scarcely distinguishable from a Ker or from Death himself).[16] The spectator is left with the subrational sense that the ugly figure whom Apollo allowed to enter the house has now been driven off by Admetus.

In the paired scenes upon which the plot of the *Alcestis* turns the spectator watches Admetus begin to act. He repays a friend of the house with a benefaction and its enemy with enmity; the one who has threatened his house is driven away and the one who will

save it is taken in. Since Heracles is young and jolly, a banqueter and a bringer of life, while Pheres is old and mean and associated with death, the king has shown himself truly king by driving out old Hunger and bringing in Wealth and Health.[17] Like a celebrant at the Anthesteria he has said to Pheres, θύραζε κῆρ;[18] to Heracles, like the citizens of Thasos, ἐνθάδε κατοικεῖ (1151).[19] These actions strengthen his house, and likewise strengthen his alliance with Alcestis, as he makes her friends his friends, her enemies his.[20]

As Admetus has an agon in Alcestis' name, so he also has a pathos. *Philia* means sharing both the good fortune and the suffering of another being (1054, 1103, etc.), living with two souls (see 900, where Admetus would have given Hades two souls instead of one, and its contradiction to 54),[21] and the full experience of what this can mean reaches Admetus on his return from the tomb. In spite of his fictions,[22] he is to suffer life, not death, and he realizes that here, at last, he has outstripped his wife in unhappiness (935–36). The scene (861–961) in which he greets the humiliating actuality of an unwanted life is the mirror image of her farewell to a richly desirable world. She, before, with face unstained by any tear, had moved serenely through a much-loved house where linen lay folded in orderly chests. Admetus now loathes the very walls of the building and cannot enter where she is not; he cries out and longs for death, as he imagines the sordid minutiae of the life that awaits him in this ill-kept house filled only with emptiness. Her tears fell only once, in farewell to the bed she would not betray; in the service of that same bed, now deserted (925), he must waste his spirit in a struggle with each day's petty lusts (950–53). She willed the joy of her good fame to those she left behind, but Admetus looks forward to the agony of knowing himself slandered by enemy tongues (954–60).

At this point the natural results of Alcestis' death have had their full description. The sacrifice is a success, as far as mortal endeavor can make it so, for Admetus has maintained the external life of the house she died to preserve. Her action has found its *dike*, its narrow due, but the real has not become the ideal. The immortal marriage will be a grievous phantom thing at best and the continuing house will be shadowed by slurs on its master's reputation. But the world is not fully defined by the natural, and Euripides will not allow the story to end this way. Apollo has sent Heracles and he by a miracle brings to husband and wife a true *charis* (1101; cf. 1074), something far beyond the limits of mere justice.

Heracles re-enters, the first words in his mouth a description of the reciprocal duties of friendship (1008–11); as Pheres is the false kinsman so Heracles is true friend. His protestations, unlike those of the old man, are borne out by his actions. He claims that Admetus' deceit has caused him to fail in his own friendly duty of sympathy; it has also laid him under a new obligation to his host, since Admetus had meant with his deception to serve their friendship (855–60).[23] By returning Alcestis he can erase the evil fortune he had failed to share, and he can repay the host who so honored his arrival. And by keeping what he is doing a secret, he can even return in kind Admetus' well-meaning deceit. Here the direction of Apollo is more than ever evident, for Heracles' heavy sprightliness serves many more purposes than

he can suppose. The disguise of Alcestis allows Admetus a symbolic repetition of the act that first earned him Apollo's patronage as, for the third time, he receives a god-sent guest. The veil causes Alcestis, whose death had deprived the house of its spirit, to return in the guise of Hestia herself; it also allows her to witness a test of her husband's promised faithfulness. Only her corpse was present when Admetus, for her sake, quarreled with his father; now she hears him make public his plan to love and honor her though she is dead until he dies himself (1085–96).

The trick being played on Admetus creates the peculiar, happy tension of this scene. It makes this third test of friendship, hospitality, and faith by far the most difficult of all. Admetus must close his door to betrayal of his wife, and yet open it to the gift of his friend and the gods (1071). He must reject what he takes to be a False Alcestis without depriving himself and his house of the true presence of his wife. The audience watches Admetus' nobility guide him once again in a situation he does not wholly understand. The entertainment of this woman will, he believes, bring him a grief more bitter than any he has felt (1069), but rather than damage his friendship with Heracles (1106) he will accept this further suffering. Heracles' ironical offer of a joyful reward does not tempt him (1101); his resistance breaks only when his friend urgently begs the favor (1107). His plain statements that he can have nothing to do with the girl (1056, 1090) have served to separate the threat to Alcestis from the threat to himself, and thus he agrees to receive the property of Heracles (at the cost of pain to himself), while he refuses to accept a substitute for his wife. In so acting he completes the salvation of Alcestis (1020, 1119) and bears out the chorus' prediction that his aristocratic piety, incomprehensible to themselves, will find a reward at last (600–605, the close of the House of Admetus Ode). And in fact Admetus crosses his threshold not with his friend's property but with his own wife restored, for Heracles sees to it that he shall receive the recognition token, the touch of Alcestis, before the eyes of the audience. Husband and wife step back into their restored house each in his own character and each aware of his new felicity.[24] Their alliance has been strengthened, the false friendship of Pheres is at an end, the true friendship of Heracles is firmer than before (1152, he will return), and the reputations of king, queen, and house have been fixed forever by the miracle. Admetus and Alcestis are harbored now in a better life than any they had known before (1157), and at last the ideal is become real. The Homeric description of the best of marriages has found its perfect illustration:

> οὐ μὲν γὰρ τοῦ γε κρεῖσσον καὶ ἄρειον,
> ἢ ὅθ' ὁμοφρονέοντε νοήμασιν οἶκον ἔχητον
> ἀνὴρ ἠδὲ γυνή· πόλλ' ἄλγεα δυσμενέεσσιν,
> χάρματα δ' εὐμενέτῃσι, μάλιστα δέ τ' ἔκλυον
> αὐτοί [*Od.* 6. 182–85].

When Admetus and Alcestis close the play by walking back into their castle, they do not merely exit through a conventional palace-front set. They enter a place altogether different from those dim and planless tragic palaces which seem to contain no more than a noose or a blood-filled bath. They have idealized the House of Admetus, but Euripides has made it real, no longer a façade but an interior. The House of Admetus has storerooms and chests, household altars, throne room, guests' quarters, men's hall, and a *thalamos*

with its marriage bed. In it one may bathe or feast or play the lyre, scold a servant or listen for a woman's call of greeting. It is a house where dust can gather and children cry. It was not the poet's vulgarity that dictated these details, though Aristophanes would have it so. The subject of the play is the salvation of this house, and by a miracle it, like Alcestis, has been saved whole, an ideal clothed again in full reality.

The play has shown a pair of human beings faced with a number of choices. Each was able to discriminate between real and apparent qualities and each valued certain timeless things above the joy or pain of the moment. Both follow the path of virtue and it brings them grief and separation, but a god is interested in their case and he, by reversing nature, reunites the pair, restores their happiness, and gives their ideal transcendent reality. This is not the sort of tale we have been taught to expect from Euripides, but he has told it. The pleasure he took in dramatizing it is evident, for the pathetic emotion of the death scene, the hard accuracy of the quarrel, the bitterness of Admetus' return from the burial, and the complicated sport of the final moments all display the characteristic Euripidean talents at their height. In addition, the pervasive recurrence of a bit of wordplay suggests that Euripides saw in the Admetus–Alcestis *mythos* other opportunities not strictly dramaturgical.

"Who can say if what we call life is not death, and death life?" (Frag. 638 Nauck[2]) sounds fully as foolish out of context as Aristophanes intended it should. In the *Alcestis*, however, Euripides shows the kind of profit he could make from such a paradox. He uses it as if for decorative effect, but in fact it lies at the heart of his subject, with Alcestis herself its embodiment. When Admetus begins his ambiguities about the state of his wife with διπλοῦς ἐπ' αὐτῇ μῦθος ἔστι μοι λέγειν (519; cf. 521 and 525) he is only repeating the play's initial description of Alcestis: "You could say that she was living and you could say that she was dead" (141). The two conditions are always mixed in her. She has in a sense been dead for many years (527); when she first enters the chorus has already described her funeral, and when she returns to the house in the end she still has the touch of Death upon her. While she is in her tomb, the living declare that they too are dead (825, 1082); she on the other hand is to be treated as if she were yet on earth (329, 999–92, 1096). They lead a life that is not life (242–43), she lies in a tomb that is no tomb (995). The only ease Admetus hopes to find in life is death (1086), though by his own definition he and all mortals with him are dead already (527). Everywhere this "double tale" is told. When Heracles, like the impatient comic poet, objects that there is generally thought to be considerable difference between the two states, Admetus answers, "You indeed may think so, but I see the matter otherwise" (528–29).

Euripides constructed his drama so that there would be at its core a time when life and death, Heracles and Thanatos, were housed under a single roof. This is the situation within, while the House of Admetus Ode is sung, and this is the situation which provides the technical causation of the plot's reversal. The simultaneous celebration of banquet and funeral serves to provoke the outraged slave, producing the revelation that moves Heracles to save Alcestis. The sounds of mourning and

rejoicing have been kept from sacrilegious mingling by the ritual foresight of Admetus, bent on carrying out to the letter his promise to Alcestis (548). Nevertheless they have risen from the house in the same moment (760) in a double strain that finds a fanciful echo later just before the miracle of Alcestis' return, when Admetus mixes the remembered music of his wedding with the present music of his grief (915ff.).

A house in which a corpse is laid out while a feast goes forward is a plain but profoundly suggestive image in a drama of death and its reversal. Heracles, the satyrlike glutton, creates this symbolic situation,[25] and Euripides makes him also its exegete. Fallen upon an elegiac mood, he decides to share the secret of life with the man who serves him; his speech is remarkably close to another, put into Apollo's mouth by Bacchylides as the moral of Admetus' escape from death (782–91; cf. Bacchyl. 3. 76ff.):

βροτοῖς ἅπασι κατθανεῖν ὀφείλεται,
κοὐκ ἔστι θνητῶν ὅστις ἐξεπίσταται
τὴν αὔριον μέλλουσαν εἰ βιώσεται·
τὸ τῆς τύχης γὰρ ἀφανὲς οἳ προβήσεται,
κἄστ' οὐ διδακτὸν οὐδ' ἁλίσκεται τέχνῃ.
ταῦτ' οὖν ἀκούσας καὶ μαθὼν ἐμοῦ πάρα,
εὔφραινε σαυτόν, πῖνε, τὸν καθ' ἡμέραν
βίον λογίζου σόν, τὰ δ' ἄλλα τῆς τύχης.
τίμα δὲ καὶ τὴν πλεῖστον ἡδίστην θεῶν
Κύπριν βροτοῖσιν· εὐμενὴς γὰρ ἡ θεός.

Anyone who will not live this way, he concludes, ends with a life that is no life at all. He thus repeats the old lesson in Dionysiac terms, his own example (added to that of the drunken Moirai) enforcing the notion that this is the way, not just to happiness but to salvation. He has hardly finished when he learns of Alcestis' death. Off he goes to surprise Thanatos, hardly sober, still wreathed, his tuneless song echoing yet. He makes the day his own by sharing his victory with a friend, honoring the Aphrodite of Admetus' marriage.[26]

Even Heracles at his most buffoonish slips into the paradoxical way of talking which assumes that life may not be life; even for him there is an ideal life to be sought. He states the commonplace, positive side of the proposition, in contrast to Alcestis' heroic negative statement. The ordinary man is to take what best pleasure the day may offer and not count the number or the rewards of the days to come, since he may die tomorrow. This is the exact opposite of Pheres' rule of life; the old man, who ends with a life that is no life at all, thinks always of tomorrows—how sweet, how few, they are. Heracles on the contrary says, "Today is sweet: live as if there were no tomorrow." The noble man is to follow the same lesson, according to Heracles' example, in a bolder and more elevated form. Heracles' victory and Alcestis' sacrifice teach him that the day's best pleasure may be an exercise of virtue, even though choosing it should mean counting the days to come at precisely naught, risking death today or fixing it for tomorrow. The difference between life and death is nominal, that between a virtuous act and a shameful one absolute.

Euripides has made of his *Alcestis* an elegant mystery play for the uninitiate, the revelation of a world in which friendship may resurrect and virtue is the key to miraculous blessedness. This saving virtue is bred in a mind that makes life and death its simultaneous guests; the virtuous man hears always the mixed strains of dirge and revelry, for the knowledge that he may die tomorrow is also the knowledge that he may be snatched from death. A man who understands what Heracles taught will not argue always from *dike*,

but will be free to perform the uncalculated act of graciousness, and such a man may attract the favor of the gods, who know how to be gracious in return. Gods do sometimes befriend mortals, for there is an aspect of divinity that interests itself in man, cutting simples for Asclepius or urging the Moirai to tipple, opposing the will of Death and the justice of a jealous Zeus. His own play becomes a final figure for what Euripides says about life under the dominion of such a company of gods, for in it tragedy, comedy, and satyr drama touch and intermingle. Death and Old Age are real, and are only temporarily defeated, but this time, at least, Heracles the satyr-savior did appear, as if in answer to the hymn addressed to him by Orphic votaries:

ἐλθέ, μάκαρ, νούσων θελκτήρια πάντα κομίζων,
ἐξέλασον δὲ κακὰς ἄτας κλάδον ἐν χερὶ πάλλων,
πτηνοῖς τ' ἰοβόλοις κῆρας χαλεπὰς ἀπόπεμπε.[27]

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## NOTES

1. Most recently Bruno Snell, *Poetry and Society* (Bloomington, Ind., 1961), pp. 83ff. Snell sees Alcestis as embodying the archaic virtue of the wife, in the company of an Admetus who is husband only in name, a Pheres who is likewise a false parent, and a Heracles so perversely idealized as to prove that the "true friend" does not exist in the real world. U. Albini, "L'*Alcesti* di E.," *Maia*, XIII (1961), 1–29, offers a nonironical reading in which, however, Admetus is shown as consistently weak.

2. K. von Fritz, *Antike und moderne Tragödie* (Berlin, 1962), pp. 301–21, inspired by Browning, finds an Alcestis disillusioned on the day of her death, and T. Rosenmeyer, *The Masks of Tragedy* (Austin, Texas, 1963), pp. 224, 227, 229, discovers her to be hard, cruel, and vindictive. Rosenmeyer (with Browning) believes that Admetus learns as the play proceeds, but Von Fritz finds no improvement in him. C. R. Beye, "Alcestis and Her Critics," *GRBS*, II (1959), 124, speaks of the "lifeless and selfish grounds on which Alcestis chose to die," and concludes, p. 127, "neither Admetus nor Alcestis are very attractive people" (*sic*).

3. A. Lesky, "Alkestis, der Mythus u. das Drama," *SB Akad. Wien* (*Ph.-hist. Kl.*), CCIII: 2 (1925), 1–86; cf. his summary of recent German *Alcestis* criticism in *Die tragische Dichtung der Hellenen* (Göttingen, 1956), pp. 157–61.

4. Remnants of what the Athenian audience knew as the story exist in a fragment of a drinking song (schol. of Praxilla, Frag. 21 Bergk), eight lines of Bacchylides (3. 76–84), six lines of the *Eumenides* (723–28), and one scrap of the play by Phrynichus (Frag. 2 Nauck²). In none of these passages is there any suggestion that Admetus was anything but the type of the man so loved by a god that he was granted an extraordinary fortune. L. Weber has attempted a "reconstruction" of the Phrynichus play, ΦΡΥΝΙΧΟΥ ΑΛΚΗΣΤΙΣ, *Rh. Mus.*, LXXIX (1930), 35ff., but his results are at best hypothetical; the only things securely known of this piece, which may have been tragic, satyric, or burlesque, are that Thanatos appeared and that at some point a wrestling match was reported.

It might be noted that Plato, when he mentions the Alcestis story (*Symp.* 179B–C) shows no consciousness that the old evaluations have been questioned. Nor did late antiquity, which must have known the story chiefly through Euripides, find anything in it unsuitable to the exaltation of family grief and the promise of salvation: see refs. to plastic representations of the myth in *RE*, I (1903), 1513–14, *s.v.* "Alkestis" (Escher), and the exx. collected by L. Bloch, *Alkestisstudien* (Leipzig, 1901), Figs. 1–4 at end of text; add G. Q. Giglioli, "Sarcofago di Genova col mito di Alcesti," *Arch. class.*, V (1953), 222–31.

5. It has been cited as evidence of Admetus' hypocrisy that his expressions of grief are excessive (scholars of another turn of mind have found his "tragic flaw" in the honest excess of his grief), but his phrases are conventional; they can be paralleled in tragedy (e.g., Soph. *Ajax* 588; *OT* 1217–20; Eurip. *Hipp.* 817ff., 1410, 1456) and were imitated in grave inscriptions.

If Admetus were shamming grief in the farewell scene, covering his actual relief at having found a substitute, his falsity would be comparable to that of Clytemnestra's on hearing of Orestes' death; and the Aeschylean example shows how careful a tragedian must be, even with a lady of Clytemnestra's reputation, to provide his audience with external evidences and corroborating witnesses of hypocrisy.

6. But in its defense, note A. Lesky, *Tr. Dicht.*, p. 159.

7. Cf. Eurip., Frag. 318 Nauck²: γυνὴ γὰρ ἐξελθοῦσα πατρῴων δόμων/οὐ τῶν τεκόντων ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ λέχους.

8. M. P. Nilsson, *Gr. Rel.*, I, 314.

9. See Snell, *loc. cit.*, on *philia* in marriage. Some moderns, recognizing that Alcestis is not acting "for love," conclude that she is either calculating or disenchanted; others, confusing her salute to her bed with a romantic gesture, believe that she is acting "for love," and that Admetus is a brute for not returning her feeling. She tells the audience and Admetus that reason, not passion, moved her; had her motive been passion, her choice would have been less to her credit (cf. *Medea* 526–31). Phaedrus, in the *Symposium*, tried to make Alcestis a figure for the power of *eros* (179C), but he is corrected at 208D, where Alcestis is said to have acted ὑπὲρ ἀρετῆς ἀθανάτου.

10. A great deal of nonsense has been written about this passage, proving only that scholars take their Krafft-Ebing too seriously. The ideas of death, simulacra, resurrection, and marriage had a strong association, since every year at the Anthesteria the dead Dionysus was imaged by a mask fixed to a post, then brought to life to enjoy the ritual of his marriage (see Nilsson, *op. cit.*, I, 551, 555; G. van Hoorn, *Choes and Anthesteria* [Leyden, 1957], pp. 24–25; and for use of a Dionysus herm in the *hieros gamos*, see Hetty Goldman, "The Origin of the Greek Herm," *AJA*, XLVI [1942], 58–68, esp. p. 66 and fig. 9). The statue motif occurs also in the story of Laodameia (Hyg. *Fab.* 103, 104), about whom Euripides wrote a tragedy (see U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, "Sepulcri Portuensis imagines" [1929], *Kl. Schr.*, V: 1 [1937], 524–27, where it is argued that Admetus' speech proves that Laodameia's love was impious and perverse!). Here the wife who would not betray her husband

though he was dead (Frag. 655 Nauck²), and who kept him alive as best she could with a statue in her bed, was rewarded with his miraculous brief return to life. Admetus, grieving and rejoicing over the image of his wife, becomes the masculine counterpart of Venus with Adonis, and prefigures the initiates described by Firmicus Maternus *De err. prof. rel.* 22. This complex of ideas finds expression in the later practice of heroizing the dead by means of statues in the guise of Dionysus or Aphrodite, as Charite did Tlepolemus (Apul. *Met.* 8. 7; cf. [Plut.] *Amat.* 753F; and note in illustration M. Gütschow, *Atti d. Pont. Accad. Rom. di Arch.*, Ser. III, Mem. IV: 2 [1938], Pl. xvii). One of the effects of Euripides' use of the statue motif in the *Alcestis* is that her resurrection is understood poetically as the breathing of life into a statue, a process which may have been dramatized in Sophocles' satyr play *Pandora* (see F. Brommer, *Satyrspiele*² [Berlin, 1959], p. 52)..

11. Wilamowitz, *Isyllos von Epidauros* (Berlin, 1886), pp. 57ff.; note, however, Preller-Robert, *Gr. Myth.*⁴, II: 1, 32, where it is argued that the earliest version of all left Alcestis in the underworld.

12. Lesky, *SB Akad. Wien*, CCIII: 2, 27, 30.

13. Paus. 3. 18. 6; Apollod. 1. 9. 15; Hyg. *Fab.* 50, 51; the details may have originated with Hesiod, see Wilamowitz, *Isyllos*, pp. 68ff. Cf. J. T. Kakrides, ΑΔΜΗΤΟΥ ΕΡΑΣΤΑΙ, *Hermes*, LXVI (1931), 235ff.

14. His father in a sense casts him off in return by charging him with murder; the term *phoneus* (730) is precisely as accurate as the *haima* of 733 is real, but Pheres can thus revenge himself. The mention of Acastus creates a dim echo of the story of Aegisthus' daughter who charged Orestes with the murder of her father.

15. For death as an old man, bald, ugly, and almost naked, see C. Smith, "A Vase with a Representation of Heracles and Geras," *JHS*, IV (1883), 100ff.

16. P. Hartwig, "Heracles und Geras," *Philol.*, L (1891), 185ff.

17. See O. Kern, βουλίμου ἐξέλασις, *Arch. f. Religionswiss.*, XV (1912), 642, for an argument that a public ritual of this sort existed at Athens in the early 4th cent. F. Cornford, *The Origin of Attic Comedy* (London, 1914), p. 78, compares the Pheres scene with the final agon of the *Clouds* and its preceding whipping scene, viewing it as an example of the conflict of the Young King and the Old King. The Impostor scenes of Old Comedy would seem to offer a closer parallel (esp. the gift-bearing impostors of the *Birds*); these figures are often stripped of their clothing or attributes, as Pheres is stripped of his fatherhood and his share in Admetus' house.

18. Van Hoorn, *op. cit.*, p. 20; Nilsson, *op. cit.*, I, 564.

19. For apotropaic door inscriptions naming Heracles, see *BCH*, LXXXVI:2 (1962), 608–9; for a general description of Heracles as protector of door and hearth, see Ch. Picard, "Hercule, héros malheureux et bénéfique," *Hommages à Jean Bayet* (Brussels, 1964), pp. 561ff.

20. He thus makes his city like the prosperous, godloved city described at *Eumen.* 984–86, where citizens would χάρματα δ' ἀντιδιδοῖεν / κοινοφιλεῖ διανοίᾳ / καὶ στυγεῖν μιᾷ φρενί.

21. This play's figure of an experience, in one body, of the suffering of two souls, because of *philia*, is expressed in the opposite form in the proverb φιλία ἐστὶ μία ψυχὴ ἐν δύο σώμασιν ἐνοικουμένη (G. H. Opsimathes, ΓΝΩΜΑΙ [Leipzig, 1884], p. 19).

22. These fictions are reinforced now by the chorus; Alcestis' tomb is to be no tomb but a shrine (999; note *sebas* and its echoes from Admetus at 279 and 1060).

23. Heracles' speech, 1017ff., has often been misunderstood. He says, "I blame you for having caused me to behave unsuitably, though certainly I have no wish to add pain to your suffering." The condition which arouses his blame is παθὼν τάδε, which is explained by ἔστεψα κρᾶτα and θεοῖς ἐλειψάμην σπονδάς (1015; cf. 859–60). He does *not* blame the general tenor of Admetus' actions; he sees them as a form of *euergesia* at 860, and says explicitly αἰνῶ μέν, αἰνῶ at 1093, as if to correct any misunderstanding of his μέμφομαι.

24. Alcestis' silence is sometimes treated as if it were a sullen silence, evidence that she means to begin a lifelong tongue-lashing as soon as she gets her husband into the house. The silence has a complex of serious causes, both dramaturgical and poetic. However many actors Euripides had to work with, he needed a silent Alcestis here, because he had to demonstrate somehow, verbally and visually, the fact that the woman truly had been dead. If she spoke now, the audience could hardly be blamed for becoming a congress of Verrallians who refused to believe that she ever had been buried. The extent and the wonder of the miracle can only be proved by showing it to be not quite complete yet. In addition, Admetus is to be given a part in Alcestis' salvation; it is not secured until the recognition touch. For the ritual three days, see the inscription from Iulis cited by H. J. Stukey, "Purity," *TAPA*, LXVII (1936), 295.

25. For parallels to the mixed strains, see Aesch. *PV* 555; *Agam.* 700ff.; *Choeph.* 342ff.; [Bion] *Lament for Adonis* 87ff.; for association of death and marriage, Artem. *Onirocrit.* 2. 65. Heracles' gluttony, a fixed motif of satyr drama, is a reminder of his cornucopia, his role as bringer of plenty, his companionship with Dionysus and his mystical connections; see R. Stiglitz, "Herakles auf dem Amphorenfluß," *Jahreshefte Oest. Arch. Inst. Wien*, XLIV (1959), 113–41. It is time for modern critics to abandon the 18th cent. view of this scene, superbly expressed by Voltaire: "Il ne faut pas disputer des goûts; mais il est sûr que de telles scènes ne seraient pas souffertes chez nous à la foire" (*Dict. philos.*, I, *s.v.* "Anciens et Modernes").

26. For Aphrodite ζυγία as goddess of marriage, see V. Magnien, "Vocabulaire grec reflétant les rites du mariage," *Mélanges Desrousseaux* (Paris, 1937), p. 295; the evidence (*IG*, II–III², 4533) is not strong enough to justify Magnien in calling this one of Aphrodite's cult titles, since Ariphron's paean appears in a variant version, without the word ζυγία, at Ath. 15. 702A.

27. *Hymn.* 12; G. Quandt, *Orph. Hymni* (Berlin, 1955), pp. 13–14.