given by, e.g., p. 131, 'rhetorical ethos is a matter of assuming in a given speech the *persona* which best suits and supports the thought there expressed'; and Goldhill 1986*a*, 230 ff.). I might defend myself against those criticisms by observing that my intention in the paper was to evaluate the 'formal debate' as a dramatic form in its totality—something recognized by Conacher 1981, 3–25 and pp. 81–101 below, who (esp. at 94–101) has very useful supplementary remarks on the *agōn*; to his generally wider treatment of rhetoric in drama should be added especially Buxton 1982, with (pp. 162 ff.) remarks on the *agōn*; and on Euripides, Knox 1985, 327–30.

Two details:

n. 6: the text of *Or.* 491 continues to exercise editors. Bothe is followed by Willink 1986, who dismisses Porson as involving 'too much alteration' and 'inferior'. West 1987 changes to *πρὸς τόνδ' ἀγών τις τοῦ σοφοῦ γ' ἥκει πέρι* ('What has an intelligence contest to do with this fellow?'), *σοφοῦ* like Porson giving the *agōn* the positive headline ('wisdom') which I am sure it must have. The line is obelized by Diggle (1994).

n. 17: *Pho.* 438–42 are retained as authentic by both Craik 1988 and Mastronarde 1988.

4
Rhetoric and Relevance in Euripidean Drama

D. J. CONACHER

The highly rhetorical nature of Greek Tragedy in general, and the agonistic character of much Sophoclean and Euripidean Tragedy in particular, have nowadays become so well recognized that most Classicists accept the fact and its implications: this was the convention within which, for whatever reason,[1] the Greek poets composed their tragedies (at least in the latter half of the fifth century) and modern critical judgments as to what is probable and relevant in any given dramatic speech or debate, and what is consistent with the overall characterization of the speaker, must undergo drastic revision when applied to Greek Tragedy. Indeed, now the pendulum has swung the other way. When one reads critics like Dawe on Aeschylus, Tycho Wilamowitz (admittedly a bit ahead of his time) on Sophocles, Zürcher and (more moderately) A. M. Dale on Euripides, one finds so much emphasis on the effects of the individual speech or scene, that it is now the critic who looks too closely for the larger dramatic relevance of various speeches or (God forbid!) some consistent thread of characterization in their speakers, who is under fire.[2] The present

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[1] Jacqueline Duchemin (cited by Christopher Collard in his interesting paper, Collard 1975*a*, 58: above, pp. 64–80, claims that this characteristic of Tragedy was inherited from a pastoral tradition of dramatic poetry composed in alternating form. See the supplement to Duchemin 1945, Duchemin 1969, 247–76. I prefer the more general explanation given in Duchemin's original study, 236–8, that the antithetical form sprang from 'des tendances les plus profonds de l'esprit grecque et en particulier l'esprit athénien', which Sophocles and especially Euripides developed in their individual ways.

[2] See Dawe 1963, 30; Wilamowitz 1917, *passim*; Dale 1954, xxii–xxix (and articles noted below, nn. 6 and 7). The whole question of 'characterization' in Greek Tragedy has been much debated in recent years; the reader is referred to two excellent studies.

paper should not be regarded as an attempt to put the critical clock back, as it were, but rather to find some compromise between the extremely 'atomistic' approach just described, which allows only a vague cohesive force to the overall tragic theme, and the more old-fashioned approach of the formal critic, who expects every speech to be uttered with a view to furthering the dramatic action, developing the theme or exhibiting the character of the speaker. Since Euripides is admittedly the most 'rhetorical' of the Greek tragic poets and yet also the one providing the most clearly-marked tragic themes and the subtlest psychological effects (in individual scenes if not in overall characterization), his work seems the most suitable in which to pursue the question of 'rhetoric and dramatic relevance'. To what degree, and in what ways, did Euripides seek to make those set speeches and debates whose immediate effect (both rhetorical and dramatic) is most obvious, contribute to the larger dramatic meanings of the play? Or was the poet and his audience content to take their tragedies scene by scene, even speech by speech, for their own isolated effects, with no more than a general requirement that some large tragic idea ('The King has offended the gods in such and such a way; the King must die!') should suffice to provide a unifying coherence to the tragic action?

Two overlapping issues are raised in considering the question of 'rhetoric and relevance' in Tragedy: one concerns the kind of relation which we may expect to find between the content of a given speech

assessing recent critical trends, by Charles Garton, 1957, 247–54 and 1972, 389–413. In most of the studies referred to at the beginning of this note and in Garton's review articles, the reaction against the excesses of 'psychological' or 'individualizing' critics commenting on characterization in Greek Tragedy is very marked; this basically healthy and well-substantiated reaction has been further developed by Jones 1962, e.g., in his attack on the 'baneful' concept of 'the tragic hero', pp. 16 ff., and in various comments by Hugh Lloyd-Jones (see, for example, his comments on 'character' in Aeschylus in Lloyd-Jones 1964, 370–1, and in the Introduction to his translation of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (Lloyd-Jones 1979*a*), 6–7). Two recent articles by P. E. Easterling, 1973, 3–19, and 1977, 121–9, have attempted to select what is valuable in the attacks on the 'psychologizing critics' while still insisting on the presence of individualized and credible dramatic personalities in the works of Aeschylus and Sophocles. Finally, John Gould in an excellent article, Gould 1978, 43–67, seeks to put 'the new criticism' on character in Greek Tragedy in a fresh perspective by discussing the various ways in which 'the framing process of dramatic language and dramatic form', as used by the three tragedians, affect our perception of dramatic personality in the particular medium in which various 'dramatic persons' exist (see ibid. 44). I shall have occasion below to indicate agreements and disagreements with Gould's study where it impinges on certain points to be made in the present paper.

or debate and the theme of the play as a whole; the other concerns the degree, if any, to which we may expect a speech to be 'in character', to tell us something significant about the speaker, especially if that speaker is a central figure in the play. I shall try to address these issues separately, though they are not, of course, wholly separable. As a sort of Prologue, I should like to consider certain comments of A. M. Dale in her Introduction to Euripides' *Alcestis*. Assailing with some justice the excessive interest of critics in the character and psychology of Admetus in this play, Miss Dale maintains that apart from the King's ὁσιότης ('piety') mentioned at v. 10, Euripides had no particular interest in the sort of person Admetus was.

> For in a well constructed Euripidean Tragedy, what controls a succession of situations is not a firmly conceived unity of character but the shape of the whole action, and what determines the development and finesse of each situation is . . . the rhetoric of the situation—what Aristotle calls διάνοια.[3]

Miss Dale would replace the question, 'What would X, being such a man, be likely to say in such a situation?' with the question, 'Suppose a man involved in such a situation, how should he best acquit himself? How gain his point? Move his hearers . . . ?'

> The aim of rhetoric [Miss Dale continues] is Persuasion, Πειθώ, and the poet is, as it were, a kind of λογογράφος ('speech-writer') who promises to do his best for each of his clients in turn as the situations change and succeed one another.

Now, in venturing to criticize some of the more extreme features of Miss Dale's view on the characterization of Admetus in *Alcestis*, I should make it clear that I think that her interpretation of the play as a whole is, for the most part, sound. The *Alcestis* is more concerned with the irony of the situation, 'the irony of human intentions measured against their outcome',[4] than with an estimate of, or judgment on, Admetus' character. Its central theme is, as Miss Dale says, 'summed up in his [Admetus'] words, ἄρτι μανθάνω ('too late, I learn') . . . What Admetus realizes too late is that this life of which he has cheated Destiny is a useless possession.'[5]

What does trouble me in Miss Dale's interpretation is the, to my mind, gratuitous removal of *all* interest in the sort of person Admetus is, her doctrinaire refusal to allow anything of what he says, or of

[3] Dale 1954, xxvii. For the following three quotations, see ibid. xxviii.
[4] Ibid. xxv. [5] Ibid. xxii.

what others say about him, to tell us anything about what sort of man he is. In another short essay, 'The Creation of Dramatic Characters', Miss Dale warns against allowing attitudes of mind, religious and moral beliefs of other generations and cultures, to influence our impressions of a play's characters: only the dramatist's words and their implications provide real justification for such impressions.[6] It seems to me that in the *Alcestis*, Euripides does supply us with 'words and their implications' which do, in fact convey a somewhat unfavourable, even satirical 'characterization' of Admetus, particularly in his own speeches in the *agōn* ('dramatized debate') with Pheres, where, according to Miss Dale's account of the poet's role as λογογράφος ('speech-writer'), we would least expect to find it. All that I shall be arguing for here is not that such 'characterization' is central to some sort of πάθει/μάθος ('learning through suffering') theme (such as one might argue in the case of Creon in *Antigone*) but rather that Admetus himself, for a certain blindness or insensitivity which he shows throughout the course of the *present* action, is included in the 'dry mock' which Dale has rightly concluded to be the dominant note in the play.

The allegedly naive reaction of modern readers to Admetus, as he mournfully watches Alcestis die in his place and as he berates his father Pheres for allowing Alcestis to sacrifice herself for him, when Pheres might have done so himself, is to feel that the King is in a somewhat disadvantageous, not to say invidious, position. We are warned by the critics, however, that such a reaction may be *merely* modern and sentimental: it may never even have occurred to a fifth-century Greek in the audience. We find in the play, however, evidence that such a thought could, and in fact did, occur to a fifth-century Greek, namely Euripides, when he allows Pheres (admittedly in a moment of anger) to say, without contradiction, that Admetus will have ill-renown (ἀκούσῃ . . . κακά, 705) for the shame of 'having killed his wife' (ταύτην κατακτάς, 696), and allows Admetus later (954–60) to fear that this is precisely what his enemies *will* say of him. This is evidence also, by the way, that the poet means us to understand that even in the mythical times and circumstances of the play Admetus could (and so *would*) be viewed in the unfavourable light to which some critics ask us to close our eyes.

[6] Dale 1969, 278.

Having established that this unfavourable view of Admetus is at least a possible one for a fifth-century Greek and that the playwright does not expect us to regard it as impossible (or even improbable) in the dramatic time and circumstances of the play, one might still argue that the playwright did not wish *us* to think of Admetus in this light: there are all manner of extenuating circumstances and possibly it is only Admetus' enemies who might be expected to take the uncharitable view. If this were the case, then surely the poet must avoid giving the 'sympathetic' characters, and *particularly Admetus himself*, any lines which would make us think of the more invidious aspects of his position, that he in fact has caused and accepted his wife's death by letting her die for him. In this case, surely the last words which he should put into the King's mouth during the death scene of Alcestis is the plea, twice repeated, that his wife should not *betray* him (μὴ προδῷς, 250; μὴ πρός ⟨σε⟩ θεῶν τλῇς με προδοῦναι, 275) ('Betray me not!' 250; 'Don't, I beseech you by the gods, have the heart to abandon me!' 275) by dying.

The purist will reply, 'But this is just the sort of thing which the rhetorical-dramatic convention requires of the husband at the moment of his wife's untimely death.' Precisely, but it also happens to be the last thing which someone in Admetus' particular position *can* say, with any conviction: Euripides seems to me to be exploiting, for ironic effect at Admetus' expense, the conflict between the conventional and the particular aspects of the situation. However, this inference is, I am aware, debatable: it is at best an interpretation, not a dramatic certainty.

Be that as it may, ironic mockery of Admetus is surely developed, with devastating effect, in the speech given to him in the Pheres scene. Even before he knows he is unwelcome, Pheres sets the tone for this effect when he praises his son's union with Alcestis as a model of profitable marriage (627–8). Now let us look at Admetus' tirade against Pheres in some detail, for if, as Miss Dale insists, Euripides like a good logographer is concerned to let the speaker made the best case for himself on each occasion, then surely he has failed badly here: Admetus scores so many points *against* himself.

We may, perhaps, pass over the rather obvious irony of Admetus' initial amazement at Pheres' audacity in mourning one whom he has himself allowed to die, and accept as merely an ironic overtone Admetus' use (v. 646) of the word ὀθνείαν ('not a blood relation') of Alcestis, the same unusual and ambiguous term as he has earlier

used when he sought to 'deny' to Heracles that the dead woman in his house was even a member of his own family. But surely the most telling shaft which Admetus lets fly against himself is the one which comes near the end of his speech, when he has formally repudiated his parents (itself a fearful thing for a Greek to do) and all duties toward them:

> *My* hands will never bury *you*, since, as far as it lay in *your* power, I've perished. But since I live by chancing on (*τυχών*) another saviour, I say that I am *that one*'s son and loving guardian of her old age (665–8)

γηροτρόφον ('old-age-tending'; 668) as a description of Admetus *vis-à-vis* Alcestis who, *χάριν αὐτοῦ* ('for his sake'), will never reach old age! I find it impossible not to believe that here the poet (far from doing his best for his client Admetus, as Dale would have it) is here indulging in a bitter irony at the speaker's own expense. And if this is the case here, it may well be the case in the less obvious instance cited. Dare one suggest that the insensitive lack of perception which Admetus' unconscious irony reveals, reflects onstage the blindness which he has earlier shown in choosing survival under conditions which he will find intolerable?[7]

There is, indeed, quite another way (rather less doctrinaire than Miss Dale's) of looking at the rhetorical aspect of Tragedy and of Greek literature generally. J. H. Finley, for example, reminds us that the art of rhetoric implied more than skill in language and argumentation: it implied an ability to understand broad laws of individual and social conduct. 'The common ground [between Euripides and Thucydides]', he adds, 'is that in both alike the concrete issues at hand are looked

[7] Something of the theoretical background of Miss Dale's view of 'character' in Greek Tragedy appears in Dale 1969, 139–55. Space forbids a detailed critique of this interesting article. The (in my view) excessive restrictions which Miss Dale imposes on the function of 'character' in Greek Tragedy, according to Aristotle, spring from a possible misinterpretation of *Poetics* $1450^{b}8$ (compare, with her interpretation, Lucas' (1968) note ad loc.), from a refusal to allow to *dianoia* in Aristotle's discussion of Greek Tragedy any of the 'intellectual' aspect which it has in the *Ethics*, and from a failure to give adequate attention to Aristotle's reminder (at *Poetics* $1449^{b}36$ ff.) that *ēthos* and *dianoia* (which together provide an approximation of the English concept of 'character': cf. Dale, 143, 145–6) jointly determine the quality of actions in Tragedy. However, one can agree with her modest claim that the various Aristotelian distinctions which she discusses are 'some sort of reflection of actual differences between Greek and more modern tragedy' (ibid. 146). It is mainly in considering the degree of those differences (as exemplified in our discussions of the *Alcestis*) that I venture to differ from Miss Dale.

on as not, so to speak, interpretable in and through themselves but only through the more universal laws they exemplify.'[8] The same awareness of a certain universalizing quality in Euripidean rhetoric (a quality which suggests interest in larger themes, even while depicting the cut and thrust of furious debate) is present also in Friis Johansen's comments on Euripides' use of 'general reflections' in his speeches. Contrasting this with Sophocles' 'reluctance against working in two separate levels of thought', he remarks: 'Euripides never seems to have doubted the necessity and desirability of a superstructure of general thought and action.'[9] Now this 'generalizing element' in Euripidean rhetoric did not, of course, always find expression in relation to the larger theme of the play (as opposed to the individual scene) but I would suggest that sometimes this was the case. There is a tendency even among critics who, like Lucas and Zürcher, find something approving to say about Euripides' psychological subtlety, or about his concern for the motives of his characters, always to concentrate (with some justice) on individual scenes.[10] So, too, even recent defenders, such as Hans Strohm, of Euripides' dramaturgy in connection with his 'rhetoric', have dwelt mainly on his increasing skill in incorporating his 'debates' into properly dramatic scenes: Collard develops Strohm's approach, which he cites with approval, though he also speaks in very general terms of the success of agonistic scenes in Euripides as depending in part on 'the harmony of their themes with the main direction of the plot . . .'.[11] However, it is with the subtler, more detailed connections between the 'generalizing' rhetorical passages in Euripides and both the themes of their plays and our overall impression of the characters who speak them that we shall be concerned in the rest of this discussion.

John Gould has suggested that one result of this 'pervasive intellectualism' (his term for the 'generalizing element' noted above) surrounding many Euripidean characters is that these characters 'seem not to be grounded in the common sensible feel of life but to move restlessly in the thinner air of uncertain abstraction'.[12] This effect he contrasts (unfavorably, in this regard) with 'the general shape and feel . . . of concrete reality and of present circumstances' which he

[8] Finley 1967, 52. [9] Friis Johansen 1959, 174.
[10] See below, p. 93 and n. 19.
[11] See Collard 1975*a*, 66 ff.; pp. 68 ff. above. For Strohm's view on the matter (cited by Collard, ibid. 59, 62 and nn. ad loc.; pp. 65, 69 above), see Strohm 1957, 44–6.
[12] Gould 1978, 53.

finds in the Sophoclean *agōn* (the scene at Sophocles' *Electra* 516–609 is his particular example). As far as this comparison with Sophocles is concerned, one must admit the justice of Gould's observation concerning the effect on characterization of the generalizing aspect of speeches in Euripides. I would argue, however, that even some of the most abstract and 'philosophic' speeches which Euripides appears to 'put in the mouths' of his characters are often more relevant to a fuller understanding of those characters and to their part in the dramatic action than this critic would have us believe. A brief discussion of two scenes from Euripides' *Hippolytus* (which Gould also selects to illustrate *his* points) may serve to substantiate this view and to distinguish it from Gould's rather different opinion on the matter.

The 'philosophical discourse' of Phaedra at *Hippolytus* 373–430 is certainly one of the finest and most interesting speeches, considered in and for itself, in all Euripides. Here indeed the poet has done his duty well as Phaedra's logographer, providing her with a speech admirably suited to her situation. Yet the speech is clearly something more than this. On the one hand, it blends most expertly certain ethical generalizations with their precise application, made by the speaker herself, to Phaedra's own case. This feature saves the speech from appearing, in places, to be merely an exposition of Euripides' own views as some (Bruno Snell, for example) have argued, but this much Miss Dale's 'speech-writer' for Phaedra in her immediate situation might well have achieved. On the other hand, however, the speech provides us with certain information about Phaedra which, while it is certainly not characterization for its own sake, will be most relevant to our reactions to two coming events in the play of which neither we nor the speaker are yet aware.

Phaedra begins with a little disquisition on the cause of human disaster (ἦ διέφθαρται βίος, 376): first, not ignorance (for many of us *do* have sound moral judgment, εὖ φρονεῖν, 378) but the distractions of pleasure prevent man from doing the good they know; then αἰδώς, *in the bad sense* of diffidence or indecisiveness[13] is also the

[13] Here I follow Barrett's interpretation of 'the bad αἰδώς' in his notes to vv. 381–5 and 385–6 in his edition of *Hippolytus* (Oxford, 1964), though I must admit to continuing uncertainty about the matter. Barrett's explanation is, at any rate, the most convincing among the several divergent views offered by scholars (see especially his references to other ancient passages on the ambivalence of αἰδώς, including Plutarch's explanation (*De Virtut. Mor.* 448 f.) of our *Hippolytus* passage. Barrett's interpretation also has the advantage, which he presses, of fitting in well with Phaedra's own situation: her difficulty in 'fighting down her love as she knows she should', whether by suicide (on which she appears to decide later in the speech, but which—fatally, for Hippolytus—she postpones fulfilling), or by any other means.

bane of houses (ἄχθος οἴκων, 386). From this philosophical basis, Phaedra turns to her own case (388 ff.): having failed to overcome her love (for though she 'knows what's right' she cannot do it), she will commit suicide and the rest of the speech (403–30) shows clearly that it is the fear of scandal, which is the cause of her decision.

The second half of this demonstration goes from the particular to the general (the reverse of the earlier sequence):

> May all men know my deeds, if noble;
> If shameful, may few witness them. (403–4)

From this spring-board, Phaedra embarks on a general condemnation of adultery in noble houses as the source of similar corruption in society in general. The passage ends with a characteristic rhetorical flourish:

> How can the false ones on their spouses look
> Not fearing the very walls will shriek their guilt! (405–18)

The peroration (419–30) arises from Phaedra's personal fear, with this significant statement:

> This it is that kills me, friends, the fear lest I
> be caught shaming my husband and the children whom
> I bore!
> (419–21)

Again the particular fear is generalized into a fine rhetorical statement about εὔκλεια ('reputation') and about the horror of family disgrace when at last the dread secret is revealed. As before, a vivid image caps the sequence:

> Time, in its passing, shows the evil ones
> Like mirrors set before a maiden's face:
> 'Mid such as these may I be never seen! (428–30)

As I have suggested, the speech is a model of Euripidean rhetoric in its blend of philosophic generalizations and of their particular applications to the speaker's fears and resolutions. But besides this immediate application, the speech is most relevant to two scenes which are yet to come. When Hippolytus gives his great indictment

of Phaedra with all womankind, we judge the extent of his injustice from the evidence of nobility which Phaedra has provided in the present speech, and since Hippolytus' tirade marks the turning-point in the play, and leads directly to his own undoing, we feel a certain justification (ironic and tragic, however 'unfair') about his downfall. Secondly, Phaedra's great emphasis on εὔκλεια ('reputation') does more than explain, as Phaedra intends, the Queen's decision to slay herself. Not so much innocence as good *reputation* is all-important: the Queen's *total* commitment to this as a family obligation renders probable, in proper Aristotelian fashion, the extreme measures (suicide and the false incrimination of Hippolytus) which she eventually takes to protect it. Thus I would maintain that here the poet has not only provided Phaedra (as Miss Dale would expect) with a speech admirably suited to her conscious needs in her immediate situation; he has also provided the audience with a passage essential to the understanding of Phaedra (insofar as her character will be relevant to the coming action) and of the tragic meaning of the play.[14]

Such defences of the relevance behind the rhetoric of such speeches as Phaedra's are, as I have already indicated, by no means generally accepted today. Thus Gould comments as follows on the speech we have just discussed:

> I do not think that we make any particular headway in understanding the movement of the scene by looking for Phaedra's 'purposes' in uttering this *epideixis* ('exhibition speech'): when Mr Barrett says that the disquisition here is by Phaedra and not by Euripides, I have the feeling that the critical cat is out of the bag. A speech such as this presents, in the Euripidean theatre, a facet of the action, arrested and illuminated by rational analysis: the movement of the verse in Phaedra's speech is antithetical and inferential, with scarcely a flicker of the emotional distraction and the restless, defensive evasion which she displayed in the earlier part of the scene.[15]

[14] An indication that the dramatist himself regarded at least certain aspects of both Phaedra's and Hippolytus' flights of rhetoric as dramatically relevant is provided by the rhetorical *clausulae* which he has each of the characters aim (indirectly) at the other. 'Let someone teach them (women) to be chaste (σωφρονεῖν) or let me trample on them forever!' cries Hippolytus (667–8) at the end of his speech castigating Phaedra and all womankind. 'In dying,' cries Phaedra before her suicide. 'I will become a bane to that other one as well . . . he will learn at last to moderate his utterance!' (σωφρονεῖν μαθήσεται, 731, an almost untranslatable expression in the context). The degree to which Phaedra and Hippolytus respectively can claim σωφροσύνη ('moderation', 'self-control'), and the degree to which each falls short of it, has been amply demonstrated in their two great speeches at 373 ff. and 616 ff., respectively.

[15] Gould 1978, 55–6.

Gould's rejection of any such formulation of 'personal motivation' as I have attempted for this speech rests mainly on its rhetorical form and the contrast which its dispassionate rationality provides with the emotional utterances of Phaedra in the preceding scene. I have discussed elsewhere this highly artificial (but extremely effective) Euripidean device (most observable in the *Alcestis*, the *Medea* and the *Hippolytus*) for showing two conflicting aspects of a character's personality in juxtaposition;[16] however, the lack of 'realism' involved in this Euripidean exploitation of Greek dramatic convention need not imply that the 'rational aspect' of a character thus displayed is any less valid or credible than the emotional aspect. The formal parallel between Phaedra's speech here and Medea's speech to the women of Corinth at *Medea* 214 ff. (which also follows an emotional outburst from the same speaker, in that instance off-stage) further arouses Gould's suspicions concerning the 'in character' nature of Phaedra's great speech: if we 'psychologize' Medea's calm speech, he argues, we must take it as 'Machiavellian dissembling', and since such an interpretation does not work in the case of the 'parallel' speech of Phaedra, he rejects the 'in character', or 'psychological' (to use Gould's term) interpretation for both speeches. But surely this conclusion involves a *non sequitur*: the contexts of the two speeches are quite different. It is not *simply* the 'tone of reasonableness' which leads us to the possible suspicions that Medea is 'dissembling'; she has an axe to grind in her reasonable persuasion of the Chorus, whereas Phaedra has not; nor does Phaedra, in her reasonable speech, suppress anything which she has revealed in her hysterical outbursts, while Medea does (*viz.* the wish for the death of her children along with their father, at vv. 112–14). Neither Phaedra nor Medea can be expected to be hysterical all the time. All that we are entitled to expect of the formal similarity between the 'Phaedra-sequence' in the *Hippolytus* and the 'Medea-sequence' in the *Medea* is that the poet is using the same dramatic device for similar purposes: to provide us (in addition to some intrinsically 'interesting' philosophizing) with information relevant to the dramatic situation—information, which may (and usually does) include some revelations about the characters themselves, in passionate and in rational mood. There is no reason why *what* is revealed should be similar.

[16] Conacher 1972, 199–203.

Another highly rhetorical passage in the *Hippolytus* is the *agōn* between Hippolytus and Theseus (902–1101) and here, too, in my opinion, Euripides is remarkably successful in relating the immediate rhetorical effects to dramatic meanings of wider significance. I have discussed elsewhere, from this point of view, the preliminary exchanges (902–42) between Hippolytus and Theseus in this scene;[17] here I shall restrict myself to discussion of Hippolytus' speech of self-defence against Theseus' accusations based on Phaedra's lying suicide note naming Hippolytus as her seducer.

The speech is a model of forensic rhetoric, complete with exordium, brief narration of the alleged offence, proofs of innocence, and refutations of anticipated rebuttals (both nicely based on τὰ εἰκότα, 'the probabilities' of the situation), and a resounding peroration, ending with a clever and ironically significant play on words in the speaker's favour. But before we conclude that this speech too has been written by Miss Dale's ubiquitous λογογράφος ('speech-writer'), we should note again the recurrent terms and self-characterizing touches which, like thematic hooks, relate the speech to the tragic characterization of Hippolytus throughout the play. Thus Hippolytus spoils the conventional *captatio benevolentiae* of the exordium with characteristic haughtiness ('unaccustomed as I am to public speaking' acquires the unfortunate addendum, 'for only the vulgar can speak before the mob', 988–9). Among the 'improbabilities' of his alleged fall from grace is included a tactless reminder of Phaedra's limited charms ('Was she, after all, so beautiful?' 1009–19). Finally, the repeated occurrences of the term σώφρων ('temperate, chaste'), in one form or another (995, 1007, 1013, 1034), provide sinister reminders that this 'virtue', linked with Hippolytus' σεμνότης ('haughtiness'), has been played up throughout as the catastrophic element in this tragedy.[18]

The *Hippolytus* is, to be sure, one of Euripides' best constructed (some would say, 'most Sophoclean') plays. A brief glance at his *Electra*, an extremely 'rhetorical' play, may indicate the wisdom of lowering one's sails somewhat in one's claims for Euripidean 'relevance', or at least of sailing rather more closely to the wind of rhetoric. Here I am thinking particularly of Electra's own great 'set speeches', her vaunt over the head of the slain Aegisthus (907–56)

[17] Conacher 1972, 206–7.

[18] For a contrasting view of the Hippolytus–Theseus *agōn* in the *Hippolytus* see Gould 1978, 57–8.

and her indictment of Clytemnestra at 1060–85, in the one formal *agōn* in the play.

Aegisthus is assailed for his adultery, for his ignominy in marriage (as 'Clytemnestra's husband', 931) and for his presumption in thinking to be *someone* (τις εἶναι, . . . 939) on the basis of wealth and pretty looks rather than on natural nobility. The speech lends itself well to effective gnomic passages, e.g.

> Money's worth nothing, save for brief companionship.
> Not wealth but one's nature (φύσις) is enduring:
> for that stands ever by one and defeats one's woes.
> Wealth blossoms but a little while, then flies the coop,
> Taking its base companions with it. (940–4)

All this, one might argue, has little to do with either Aegisthus' major crimes or their avenging. Yet the whole drift of Electra's assault on Aegisthus is consistent with the sordid frustrations and deprivations (of 'substance' and marital status) which are at the heart of Electra's woe. So, too, Electra's indictment of Clytemnestra (1060–85) dwells mainly on her mother's infidelities, thus allowing the poet to frame her arguments with moralizing maxims on the proper—and the improper—behaviour of wives in wartime:

> Any woman who adorns her beauty (ἐς κάλλος ἀσκεῖ) when her man's away, strike her off as a harlot! (1072–3)

> Evil behaviour provides a model—'gainst which the good may shine! (1084–5)

Yet once again, however much these topics are pursued 'for their own sake', in flights of fancy rhetoric, the topics themselves are close to Electra's own bitter heart and to her own jealous motives in pursuing the mother-murder.

Critics unwilling to accept the possibility of 'unitary characterization' in Greek Tragedy (that is, the intentional presentation of an individual consistently illustrating the same or similar characteristics in a variety of situations throughout the play) go to surprising lengths to deny this description to Euripides' presentation of Electra. Zürcher, for example, describes this Electra as 'zwar psychologisch, nicht aber charakterologische motiviert'.[19] He believes that Electra is provided

[19] Zürcher 1947, 131. (I am indebted to Charles Garton, 1972, 403 and 408, for this and the following citation of Zürcher.)

with certain character traits in accordance with the various situations in which she finds herself throughout the play which do, in effect, add up to a fairly constant *ēthos* ('character'). This *ēthos*, it is alleged, 'appears as a natural result of the situation at various points . . .' and participates in shaping the action without governing it.[20] Now it is true that Euripides' 'characterization' of Electra cannot be said to 'govern the action' in any basic sense: the myth of the return of Orestes, his recognition by Electra and the subsequent vengeance on Aegisthus and Clytemnestra, which forms as it were the *ur*-plot of this and other 'Electra and Orestes' plays, precedes any conception of Electra on which Euripides may have decided. But for the rest Zürcher's formulation seems perversely to put the matter the wrong way around. Euripides, with a clear conception from the start of the kind of Electra which he wished to present, surely devised scenes and their 'occasion' (witness the novel introduction of Electra's vaunt over the slain Aegisthus) which would best illustrate the character (in an admittedly restricted sense) and motivation of Electra throughout. What is of particular interest for our study here is that he effected this largely through the most rhetorical parts of the play: Electra's 'set-speeches', including that of the *agōn*, which still produce, along with this 'character-deployment', their usual Euripidean quota, and more, of 'everyday topics' not normally associated with this heroic theme.

So much must suffice, within the limits of the present paper, concerning the 'characterizing' aspects of rhetorical passages in Euripides, though similar demonstrations could, I think, be attempted with respect to certain other Euripidean plays, most notably, perhaps, the *Medea*. Let us turn now to the examination of a few Euripidean '*agōn*-scenes' whose relevance to the theme and action of the play has been particularly questioned by the critics.

Jacqueline Duchemin, in her useful book, *L'ΑΓΩΝ dans la Tragédie Grecque*, remarks on the tendency of Euripidean *agōnes* to show increasingly less connection with the theme and action of their respective plays.[21] This is, on the whole, true—and certainly true of Euripides in contrast with Sophocles; nevertheless, Duchemin does seem to me often to underestimate what connection there actually is. Thus in the case of the *Helen's agōn* (one of the few which, *pace*

[20] Zürcher 1947, 134.

[21] Duchemin 1945, 124 ff.

Hans Strohm,[22] actually do affect the action of their plays), Duchemin wrongly attributes the success of Helen's and Menelaus' plea to Theonoe not to their arguments but to the fact that Theonoe had from the beginning decided not to betray the pair to the Egyptian King:[23] a strange conclusion in view of Theonoe's line, in her opening speech, 'Who, then will go and reveal this man's presence to my brother, so that *my* safety may be secured?' (892–3).[24] Duchemin also finds it 'extraordinary' that in this *agōn* the two antithetical speeches (by Helen and Menelaus) defend the same case in perfect agreement[25] but had she pursued the matter further, she might have noticed that it is actually the contrasts between these speeches which provide one of the organic links with the rest of the play. While this is not a play involving 'tragic characterization' in any depth, nevertheless we have already been given clear if superficial impressions of both pleaders in the *agōn*: Helen as a melancholy and reflective beauty (contrasting ironically with other 'Helens' of Euripides), pondering the causes, whether natural or supernatural, of her undeserved reputation; Menelaus, a man of action, presented in possibly mock-heroic manner, whose brain-cudgelling over the problem of 'the two Helens' suggests a certain lack of philosophic subtlety. Their two pleas reflect nicely these contrasting personalities, Helen's plea being a complex blend of the ethical and the theological ('How shameful if you, a

[22] Cf. Strohm 1957, ch. 1, *passim*, esp. pp. 37–8, who argues for the unproductive nature of the Euripidean *agōn*. Another possible exception is the first *agōn* in Euripides' *Supplices* (110–262), which has at least the 'negative result' of deciding Theseus (at this point in the play) against accepting the Argive supplication.

[23] Duchemin 1945, 128.

[24] The authenticity of these verses (*Hel.* 892–3) as they stand, has, it is true, been questioned by several scholars, e.g. Wilamowitz (who regards the verses as an interpolation); Zuntz (who argues for a sizeable lacuna after v. 891); see Dale's note ad loc., in her edition of the play (Dale 1967). I accept Dale's defence of both these verses as they stand and her rejection of any lacuna here: the verses are faultless in themselves, intelligible as they stand (even if they do not fit some scholars' views of what Theonoe might be expected to say at this point) and could be addressed to one of the Chorus. Kannicht in his edition of the play (Kannicht 1969) obelizes v. 892; in his note he develops Zuntz's argument for a lacuna but adds no compelling arguments of his own. However, even if Zuntz's strenuous argument (Zuntz 1960, 206 ff.) for a lacuna after v. 891 be sound, my point, above, about the importance of Helen's and Menelaus' pleas to Theonoe is in no way invalidated: Zuntz believes that, in the (incompletely transcribed) conclusion of Theonoe's speech here, she is simply expressing the danger to herself of failing to reveal Menelaus' presence to her brother. Zuntz concludes: 'Helen's and Menelaus' appeal are felt by no means to be a mere rhetorical exercise when it is realized that success is anything but a foregone conclusion' (1960, 210).

[25] Duchemin 1945, 128 n. 4; cf. also pp. 75, 118.

priestess, should know all *divine* matters . . . and yet not know what is just!' 922–3); Menelaus', a blunt (if slightly confused) soldier's appeal for his rights . . . and a promise of bloodshed all around if he doesn't get them. There is, moreover, another (this time ironic) connection between the content of this *agōn* and the subsequent action. Helen argues, successfully, that Theonoe should not perform base and unjust favours (χάριτας πονηρὰς, 902) for her brother Theoclymenos by delivering to him what is not rightly his (namely, herself, Helen); in the sequel, it is Helen who will exploit 'base χάρις' ('favour'), when she secures Theoclymenos' aid in the feigned 'sea-burial' of Menelaus, with the false promise, χάρις . . . ἀντὶ χάριτος (1234) ('favour for favour'), of what is not, and never will be his (namely herself, Helen). These connections are, perhaps, superficial, and suited to the somewhat improbable action of the *Helen*; nevertheless, they indicate the playwright's awareness, as he composes his rhetorical *agōn*, of what is going on in the rest of the play.

Let us consider next three agonistic passages in Euripides' *Hecuba*, each of which makes its separate rhetorical impact in its immediate context. In the first, Hecuba pleads with Odysseus for the life of her daughter, doomed to be sacrified to the shade of Achilles; in the second, Hecuba pleads with her victorious enemy, Agamemnon, for aid in vengeance on Polymestor, the Thracian King who has treacherously slain her son, Polydoros; in the third, Hecuba defends herself before Agamemnon against Polydoros' indictment of her for the slaughter of his children. Can we find, in addition to the separate effects of these scenes, any connections between them which relate to the larger theme of the play?[26]

In the first scene, Hecuba is seeking a favour from Odysseus, namely that he should save the life of her daughter in return for a favour she once did him in saving *his* life, when he might have been captured by the Trojans. (The Greek concept of *charis*, 'favour', traditionally contained this reciprocal element.) Hecuba concludes her plea with a significant *sententia* ('wise sentiment') on 'persuasion'. Odysseus' *stature* among the Greeks (she tells him) will persuade them, *even if he speaks badly*:

> For the same argument coming from men of repute and from men of *no* repute has very different weight. (294–5)

[26] Only the first and third of these passages is, properly speaking, in the form of an *agōn*. For the limited dramatic relevance which Duchemin finds in them, see Duchemin 1945, 128–30.

Odysseus rejects Hecuba's plea based on *charis*, stating that the personal favour which he owes to her is outweighed by the *political* favour which is owed to Achilles, for the latter carries implications for other warriors who may be asked to die for their country. *Greeks*, Odysseus reminds her scornfully, understand this principle of honouring their heroic dead, and so prosper; barbarians do neither.

As the play progresses, the suffering Queen is crushed not only by the sacrifice of Polyxena but by the further blow of Polydoros' murder. Hecuba's earlier appeal to Odysseus was based on *just* claims of favour for favour; now, in her desperation, she resorts to an ignoble use of the *charis*-argument: she begs her victorious enemy Agamemnon for aid in avenging Polydoros in return for erotic favours from her daughter Cassandra (vv. 826–30). This time, Hecuba's gnomic utterance on Persuasion (*Peitho*) occurs in the middle of her speech and is now adapted to the base use to which she is about to put the art of rhetoric:

> Why do we mortals labour at all other arts. . . . and yet spend neither sweat nor gold to learn Persuasion, man's only mistress, by which we might achieve whatever we might wish . . .? (814–19)

(A *cri de cœur* reminding us of the base descriptions of rhetoric urged by certain sophistic opponents of 'Socrates' in Plato's *Gorgias*.)[27]

In the last of our three scenes from the *Hecuba*, the Queen's pronouncement on Rhetoric comes at the *beginning* of her defence before Agamemnon in the *agōn* between her and her victim Polymestor. It is now her enemy Polymestor who has had recourse to the *charis*-argument: he now claims vengeance on Hecuba for murdering *his* children in return for his favour to Agamemnon for murdering the young Trojan prince. Once again, the changed circumstances produce a significant difference in Hecuba's view of the art of Persuasion:

> Never (she cries) should words have greater power than deeds! Only if men do good should they have power of speech! (1187–9)

Polymestor's 'favour-for-favour' claim on Agamemnon, Hecuba neatly rebuts by taking a leaf out of Odysseus' book. Odysseus has

[27] e.g. by 'Polus', at Plato, *Gorgias* 466a ff.

scornfully shown her the gulf between Greeks and barbarians when she has pressed her claims of gratitude on him:

> Base one! [she now cries to Polymestor] How could your *barbarian* race be friend to Greeks? What favour urge on them? (1199 ff.)

Hecuba has learned her lesson well.

In these three passage, Euripides rings the changes on several well-worn rhetorical ploys concerning *charis* ('favour') and the art of rhetoric itself. In so doing, he shows us also how men's values, like their use of rhetoric, change tragically with the vicissitudes of fortune and this, I would maintain, is an essential element in the tragedy of Queen Hecuba, as it is presented in this play.

In a section entitled '*L'agōn hors d'œuvre*',[28] Duchemin describes the adaptation of the *agōn* by Euripides to a new use: that of presenting his own ideas, on topics of contemporary interest, in debates of a sophistic type between two people defending opposed points of view. At the extreme end of this development, Duchemin places the debate on 'Democracy versus Tyranny' in Euripides' *Supplices*. In between, she places such scenes as that between Ion and his newly found 'father' Xouthos (*Ion* 517–65), in which Ion unsuccessfully urges various reasons why he should remain as a temple-boy at Delphi instead of assuming his position as a young prince at Athens. Here she finds that, though the subject of the debate does arise from the action, the theoretical discussion has only a 'quite intellectual' link with the situation of personages involved. Now it is quite true that in Ion's long speech (584–647) the speaker develops several set and 'detachable' topics, some of them favoured elsewhere by Euripides and other tragic poets: such are 'the unpopularity of foreigners at "autochthonous" Athens' (589–94; cf. *Medea* 222 ff., 252 ff.); the hard lot of ambitious young men in a keenly competitive state (596–606); the fear-ridden life of the τύραννος ('tyrant') versus the peaceful life of the private citizen (621 ff.; cf. *Hipp.* 1016–20; Sophocles, *OT* 584–99; Shakespeare, *Henry V*, Act IV, Sc. 1). But Duchemin fails to point out the very real links which this speech does contain with the thematic material of the play, including Ion's own ambiguous situation and his own characteristic reactions to it, both here and elsewhere in the action. The myth of Athens' autochthonous origins has already received considerable attention (265–93) and it is to form

[28] Duchemin 1945, 132–5.

the basis of the Chorus' and the old Tutor's encouragement of Creousa to murder the young interloper. Secondly, in the midst of his 'political' worries about moving to Athens, Ion expresses a touching concern for the childless Queen Creousa's feelings which his presence at Athens as the King's son might evoke. This surely reaffirms the instinctive sympathy between Ion and his unknown mother, Creousa, which has been such a prominent feature of their first encounter (see 237–369, passim) and which is to add a piquant irony to the two murder plots (mother versus son and son versus mother) and their happy *denouement* later on. Once again, it would appear that Euripides has done much to atone for the rhetorical excursions which he does make in this agonistic speech.

Let us turn to a 'political' play of Euripides, his *Supplices*, where the agonistic passages have been singled out as lacking both dramatic relevance and any concern for 'character' in the utterances of the principle *persona* ('character in a play'), Theseus. The first *agōn* of the play occurs (87–262) between Theseus and Adrastus as they debate the issue of Adrastus' supplication: namely, whether Athens should force Thebes to return the bodies of the Argive heroes slain in battle. Illustrating his view of the 'inherent contradiction between the *agōn*-form and natural drama', Collard comments (in his recent edition of the play): 'When the debaters argue "politics", they rationalize Adrastus' defeat and Theseus' rejection of the suppliants according to attitudes and premises which rely less on the tragic world of myth than on contemporary Greece or Athens: their immediacy develops naturally from the *agōn*-form's essential independence.'[29] Of Theseus in this context, Collard remarks: 'His words are informed by the needs of the *agōn*, what A. M. Dale well described in the general context of Tragic character-drawing as "the trend of the action and the rhetoric of the situation". It matters less in *Supplices* that we need to balance attitudinizing in an *agōn* against a whole portrait, because Theseus is important not as an individual, a "character" with feelings, faults or destiny, but as a symbol, a representative, a catalyst of the action.'[30]

Now we may readily grant that neither the character nor the destiny of Theseus is the central concern of this tragedy. Nevertheless, Theseus is more than a symbol through whom the appropriate rhetoric is piped. Both major decisions in this play are made by

[29] Collard 1975*b*, vol. I, p. 28. [30] 1975*b*, 30.

Theseus, decisions which involve 'choice' and so (as Aristotle would tell us) 'character'.[31] Paradoxically, *both* Theseus' decisions, first to reject, then to accept Adrastus' supplication turn on his attitude to the gods and on the 'world view' which this entails, though it takes his mother's advice to open his eyes to the true issue. Ironically, the major expression of this 'world view' (which is maintained consistently throughout the play) is to be found in a passage which is most in danger of being mistaken for a mere rhetorical *excursus* on a contemporary theme. Theseus begins his formal rejection of Adrastus' plea with a little disquisition (vv. 195–213) on man's social evolution. Theseus praises 'whichever of the gods' it was who first separated man from his bestial existence by giving him intelligence whence he acquired successive arts and may successfully conduct his life. Significantly, Theseus' list of the arts ends with the divine art of augury which Adrastus neglected when he ignored the warnings of his prophet and joined bad allies in an unjust war. Thus it is Adrastus' infringement of the rules of 'the well-ordered universe' in which Theseus believes which results in the initial rejection of the Argive supplicants, but when Aithra opens her son's eyes to the greater wrongs now being done the suppliants, he goes to war with the Thebans in defence of that same 'well-ordered universe'. This is the point of his repeated claims to the Theban Herald later that he is championing the ancient law of the gods (*νόμος παλαιὸς δαιμόνων*, 563) and the international law of all the Greeks (*Πανελλήνων νόμος*, 671) in insisting, by force if necessary, that the Thebans allow burial of the enemy dead.

This is perhaps about as much as we can claim, in the way of 'dramatic relevance' and 'in-character opinions' for Theseus' speech to Adrastus and his debate with the Theban Herald. Those parts of the former speech which deal with ambitious war-mongering 'hawks', who plague the state (232–7) and which describe and evaluate the three orders of society (238–45) are, of course, nothing more than political *topoi* ('common-places') based on contemporary circumstances which have 'nothing (or at any rate very little) to do with the case'. The same is true of the celebrated debate, 'Tyranny versus Democracy', which forms the main substance of the second *agōn*, that between the Herald and Theseus. This passage, which reads almost like a set piece from a rhetorician's school, has only the most general kind of connection with the dramatic situation (e.g. the contrast between 'good' democratic Athens and 'bad' despotic Thebes), and contains various rhetorical criticisms and defences of each constitution which are quite irrelevant to it.

[31] Cf. Aristotle, *Poetics* 1450^{b}8–9; cf. 1449^{b}36–1450^{a}2.

I have purposely concluded this discussion of Euripidean rhetoric with mention of a passage which is least amenable to the kinds of defence, in terms of dramatic relevance and appropriateness, which I have urged in other, more debatable examples. I am not concerned in this paper with any special pleading for Euripides; indeed, I am sure that readers of the dramatist will think of various other passages, and not all of them from the so-called 'political plays', which could be assailed almost as effectively, on this score, as the 'Theban Herald debate' in *The Suppliants*. All I have sought to establish is that, generally speaking, Euripidean rhetoric is not as dramatically inorganic as many scholars have argued, and that many passages which have been assessed simply as set pieces of sophistic debate also contain much that is relevant to the major themes and even to significant revelations of character (in relation to the dramatic action) in the plays to which they belong.

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PREFACE

> *Winnie-the-Pooh* is, as practically everyone knows, one of the greatest books ever written, but it is also one of the most controversial. Nobody can quite agree as to what it really means! . . . Like other casebooks, such as those on Harper's Ferry, Edith Wharton, and the personality adjustment difficulties of Poe and Ezra Pound, this one is frankly designed to keep you in confusion. Try as you may, you will find it impossible to decide which of the critics represented has 'the word' about *Pooh* . . .

So begins the Preface of Frederick C. Crews's *The Pooh Perplex*, a splendid parody of various types of literary criticism and of the humble, but useful, genre of the student casebook. Like many parodies, it encapsulates some important truths about its models. All casebooks aim to present the reader with a variety of different approaches to one subject or author, and that inevitably, and rightly, results in a multifaceted product which by definition does not give you 'the word' about the subject—indeed, why write about any subject so easy of resolution? This casebook is no exception. Indeed, because the author with which these essays are concerned is particularly enigmatic, difficult, and diverse, it may be more 'confusing' than most such collections. That has certainly complicated the choice of material, since the fact that Euripides' surviving output is so much greater and more diverse than Aeschylus' or Sophocles' means that it was impossible simply to include an essay on each play. Euripides has also provoked more controversy over the centuries than either of the other great dramatists, and that means that any collection which aims to include pieces representative of scholarly views of the last thirty or forty years is bound to include essays which contradict one another (and none of them necessarily represents the point of view of the editor). The Publisher's policy for this series is to avoid including excerpts from books or very recent pieces, and this has been adhered to, though many of the authors have been kind enough to make some revisions to their contributions. It is still, inevitably, the case

Chapter 5

Plura quidem, sed et haec laniato pectore dixit

Staging rhetoric

[Introduction.]

2. *Medea: A heroine debuts*

In contrast to Euripides' Medea, whose "great monologue"[1] (*Med.* 1021-1280) comes toward the end of both her tragedy and her mythological career, the Medea of the *Metamorphoses* delivers her monologue early in her narrative and her career — about as early as the poet can manage both, in fact. In the previous chapter, we noted that the outward voyage of the *Argo* occupies precious little space: all told Jason and company sail from Iolcus to Colchis in six verses (7.1-6).[2] The latter, of course, is the resting place of the golden fleece, which is the Argonauts' objective; yet Colchis is also Medea's home, the starting point of her adventures, and the place which the narrative must reach with all due haste in order to introduce the heroine. Indeed, with the *Argo* safely moored on the Phasis (6), Medea comes to the fore, while Jason himself fades into the background:

> dumque adeunt regem Phrixeaque vellera poscunt
> lexque datur Minyis magnorum horrenda laborum,
> concipit interea validos Aeëtias ignes
> et luctata diu, postquam ratione furorem
> vincere non poterat, "frustra, Medea, repugnas:
> nascioquis deus obstat," ait.
>
> While the Minyans are approaching the king and demanding the fleece of Phrixus, and while a terrifying mandate for mighty deeds is handed down, the daughter of