

EURIPIDES, *MEDEA* 1056-80, AN INTERPOLATION?¹

Bernd Seidensticker
Freie Universität Berlin



Euripides' *Medea* is the story of a woman who, after having sacrificed everything for the man she loves, is betrayed by him. It is the tragedy of a woman who is too proud to bear this outrage, too intelligent not to find the most effective revenge, and too strong-willed not to carry through this revenge against enemies and friends—and against herself. Medea is not a tragic figure amidst the storms of her still aimless emotions at the beginning of the play;² neither does she appear tragic in the three successive encounters with men who are no match for her determination and intelligence. She becomes tragic in the moment when the desire for revenge, spurred by the triple goad of hatred, jealousy and slighted pride,³ and assisted by her superior intelligence, is opposed by her maternal feelings and the clear awareness of what the revenge she intends means for her. This happens in the last and longest of her great monologues, at the moment when the old tutor has brought the news that Creusa has accepted the fatal presents, i.e. at the moment when the first part of the revenge, for which she has used Jason and the children, has been successful and Medea realizes that she now has to carry out the second part herself.

Medea opens her monologue with an address to her children, full of grief and despair (1021-39). The moment of the last and definitive farewell evokes the dreams, promises, and hopes she once attached to the birth and rearing of her children (1026ff.). The impending unnatural and brutal separation calls forth agonizing pictures of happy and peaceful separations of mothers and children (1026f., 1032-35). Medea realizes and expresses what she previously did not fully realize or was forced to suppress, namely that the destruction of the children will destroy her own life too.⁴

The naive and innocent smiles of the children (1040f.) shake Medea's resolution and lead to the first of several reversals: *αἰαί· τί δράσω* ("Alas! What shall I do?," 1042). Medea tries to persuade herself that she is still free to abandon the plan of revenge which would hurt her more than Jason, and to take the children with her (1044-48). The choppy style of the passage—a series of short, asyndetic sentences bursting out of her—and the urgent repetition of *χαιρέτω βουλευματα* ("farewell to my plans") indicate both the intensity of her wish to spare the children and the strong emotional resistance which she has to overcome and which immediately reasserts itself: *καίτοι τί πάσχω*; ("But what is wrong with me?," 1049).

The unbearable notion of becoming the laughing-stock of her enemies, a fear that has spurred her vindictiveness from the beginning,⁵ once again prevails [90] over Medea's maternal feelings and forces her to denounce all tender thoughts as signs of cowardice (1049-52). She tells the children to go into the house and states her determination to go through with the necessary sacrifice (1053-55).⁶ But the reference to the hand (1055) with which she will have to kill the children evokes the physical brutality of the deed and once again triggers a reversal: *ἄ ἄ* (1056). She tries to assuage her *θυμός* (*thumos*, "spirit, seat of passions"), which she addresses as if it were something—or rather somebody—outside herself,⁷ with the reminder that the children, if taken to Athens, would gladden "him" (1057-58). But again she fails (1059ff.). She cannot bear the thought that the children, spared by herself, will fall victim to the Corinthians. She feels cornered. The successful first step of her revenge seems to demand the second (1059ff.).⁸

Conscious of the wretched and frightful path she has to take (1067f.), she again turns to the children for a last farewell (1069-75) and then sends them off into the house because she can no longer bear their sight (1076f.). Their exit is followed by the well-known lines in which Medea sums up her tragic dilemma in a pointed formulation:

καὶ μανθάνω μὲν οἶα δρᾶν μέλλω κακά,
θυμὸς δὲ κρείσσω τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων,
ὅσπερ μεγίστων αἴτιος κακῶν βροτοῖς.

And I understand what evils I am about to do,

but my *thumos* is stronger than my *bouleumata*—

[this *thumos*] which is the cause of the greatest evils for
mortals. (1078-80)

Lines 1021-80 represent one of the most famous monologues of Greek tragedy and certainly the most famous monologue of Euripides—if it was indeed written by Euripides himself in the form preserved in our manuscripts. In the new Oxford Classical Text Diggle has deleted lines 1056-80. In the apparatus criticus he refers to Bergk and Reeve, to the *πρῶτος εὑρετής* of the problem and to the scholar whose competence and authority as a textual critic have secured for the old thesis that lines 1056-80 are an interpolation the attention it deserves.

When one traces the history of the problem it is worth noticing that in the long and rich discussion of the play in antiquity there is no indication whatsoever that the authenticity of these lines has ever been doubted by philosophers, grammarians, or philologists who quoted, discussed and explained them.⁹ Bergk's thesis that lines 1056-80 did not contain anything new and could be explained best as dittography did not meet with widespread approval (possibly, as Müller [p. 65] suggests, because it was ignored by Wilamowitz). Still, Wecklein, in his popular edition, deleted the lines, and Murray at least included a reference to Bergk and Wecklein in his apparatus criticus. Page, however, mentions the problem neither in the apparatus nor in his influential commentary, despite the fact that in the meantime Bergk had

found a follower in Bethe (1918), and, only two years before Page, the notorious “interpolation-hunter” Jachmann had taken up Bergk’s argument, for the first time condemning the lines as a mediocre product of an interpolator. Jachmann’s verdict proved ineffective. In 1951 Regenbogen (p. 45), without even mentioning Jachmann, [91] stated that Bergk’s proposal did not require a refutation. But only one year later Müller started a fresh—and equally unsuccessful—attack; and in the same year in which Lesky authoritatively declared that Müller’s radical solution of the problem had rightly not been approved by anybody,¹⁰ Reeve published his penetrating study in defense of Müller, which moved the question right back into the center of interest.

Since Reeve’s paper lines 1056-80 have become the most discussed problem of authenticity in Greek tragedy, and in view of the size and importance of the alleged interpolation the extent and intensity of the discussion are not surprising. For lines 1056-80 are not only of crucial importance for the understanding of the play and the tragic conflict of its heroine; the passage also contains lines 1078-80, which have dominated the scholarly discussion and the poetic adaptation of the play since antiquity.

In view of the diversity and incompatibility of the arguments, one may feel justified in doubting both the rationality of the discussion and the possibility of arriving at an objective solution. But my *thumos* to accept the challenge is stronger than these cautionary thoughts. I shall try to deal with the numerous minor and major problems in an ascending order, facing the highest waves at the end of the paper.

1. No help can be expected from subjective impressions and evaluations of the literary quality of these lines. For these judgments differ enormously. The same 26 lines that are condemned by Jachmann as “Spottgeburt” (p. 193) and by Müller as the addition of a “Pfuscher” (p. 77) are praised by Bethe (p. 14 n. 1), Schadewaldt (p. 198), and Lesky (p. 307f.) as a poetic and psychological highlight of Euripidean art. With regard to Medea’s farewell to her children (1069-75), Müller (p. 73) and Hübner (n. 20) speak of melodramatic sentimentality, whereas for Regenbogen it is “das unvergeßliche Glanzstück dieses Monologs” (p. 45), lines which at that time no one but Euripides could have produced; what critics of the passage view as longwinded repetition is justified by defenders as effective climax. In any case, even if scholars agreed on the mediocre poetic quality of the lines, this agreement would say nothing about their authenticity unless we thought it right to delete each and every mediocre line and passage in Euripidean plays.

2. Of some importance are arguments that are based on the alleged lack of linguistic and intellectual clarity and precision (mainly in lines 1056-64), which I will discuss briefly although I believe that they have largely been refuted by the defenders of this passage.

a) 1058: Reeve (p. 52) is irritated by the “vagueness” of ἐκεῖ (“there”). But, as Lloyd-Jones (p. 54) has pointed out, nobody in the audience is likely to have forgotten where Medea plans to go after her revenge, even if she last mentioned Athens in 771 and in the monologue simply speaks of ἄλλη γαῖα

(“another land,” 1024), or states that she will take the children along on her flight (1045).

b) 1058f.: Reeve (p. 52) criticizes the lack of any indication in line 1059 that Medea has changed her mind again. But Medea’s invocation of the ἀλάστορες (“demons of vengeance”) in Hades does not leave much room for doubt.¹¹

[92]c) 1062f.: These two lines are identical with 1240f. and thus must be interpolated either there¹² or, more likely, here.¹³ To the arguments put forward for deletion of 1062f. one could add that without these lines the transition from Medea’s fear that the Corinthians may lay hands on the children (1060f.) to the reason for this fear (1064-66) would be smoother.

d) 1064: Critics complain that the reference of ταῦτα πέπρακται (“these things are done”) is vague and that the subject of ἐκφεύξεται (“will escape”) is left unclear. But Lloyd-Jones (pp. 56f.) rightly insists that given the immediate dramatic and linguistic context the audience should not have too much trouble understanding Medea’s words as: “At all events the deed is done¹⁴ and she (sc. Creusa) will not escape.” The sudden change of subject from ταῦτα (“these things”)¹⁵ to “she” is grammatically somewhat harsh, but hardly impossible;¹⁶ the notion—and formulation!—that Creusa will not escape is prepared in the preceding choral ode (οὐχ ὑπεκφεύξεται, “she will not escape,” 988!) and the following lines 1065f. immediately clear up whatever obscurity line 1064 may have created in the mind of a slow-witted spectator.¹⁷

Thus the alleged minor problems of language and thought in lines 1056-64 do not warrant excision.

3. All critics who argue for deletion of lines 1056-80 particularly stress the clumsy dramaturgic handling of the children who are ordered inside in 1053, but are obviously at hand in 1069f. for a last farewell. Have they left in 1053 and are now called back out of the house, as Murray thought? But there is hardly enough time between 1069a and 1069b.¹⁸ Most scholars agree that it is more likely “that the children hesitate, seeing their mother’s strange demeanor, and do not actually leave the stage at 1053” (Page *ad loc.*). This would be psychologically plausible, but seems to offend against the “grammar” of dramatic technique. Usually orders to leave are carried out immediately. Reeve (p. 55) insists that whenever an ordered exit is delayed the text offers a clear reason for the delay.¹⁹ It could be argued either that this rule has no exception only if one accepts Barrett’s objections against Eur. *El.* 360 and Reeve’s major cuts in Orestes’ rhesis 367ff.,²⁰ or that 1056 does indeed offer the required textual signal. Medea’s double cry ἂ ἂ causes the children who have begun to move towards the palace door to stop.²¹

But even if the dramaturgic handling of the children could not be paralleled, this would not force us to blame the “mistake” on an interpolator. The author of *Medea* himself, who did not realize or did not care that, by keeping Medea on stage and at the center of our attention from her first entrance in 214 till 1250, he failed to give her time and opportunity to prepare

the poisonous gifts,²² could have made this minor dramaturgic “mistake” as well.

Reeve (pp. 59f.) further attaches great importance to the argument that 1056ff. could not possibly be spoken in the presence of the children because, whereas the genuine first half of the monologue is deliberately vague and ambiguous, these lines point so clearly to the impending murder that the children could not possibly fail to understand what their mother is talking about. This argument, however, does not carry much weight, even if one accepts the premise on which it rests. For—except for the dubious lines 1062f.—there is nothing in the second half of the monologue that is more direct [93]than 1046f.²³ But, as Lloyd-Jones (p. 57) and others have pointed out, the premise itself cannot be accepted. Children on the tragic stage are usually handled as *νήπιοι*, and here the children’s reaction to Medea’s agony in lines 1040f. proves that they do not really understand what is going on.²⁴ The thrill of the dramatic situation lies exactly in the strong tension between Medea’s anguish and the touching innocence of her victims.

Finally, since we are talking about dramatic technique, we should not forget that without lines 1056ff. the scene (and thus the whole play) would be without a true farewell between Medea and her children.²⁵ Thus the minor technical improvement, achieved by deleting lines 1056-80 in order to avoid the clumsy handling of an ordered exit that is not carried out immediately, would be paid for with a major drawback.

4. A much more serious problem is presented by the inconsistency between 1056-58 and 1059ff. In 1058—as in 1045—Medea’s alternative to killing the children is to take them with her to Athens, and there is no indication that she is not free to do that. But two lines later Medea suddenly implies that not to kill the children means leaving them in Corinth, where they will be maltreated and killed by the Corinthians. This harsh contradiction in dramatic logic, already observed by Hermann,²⁶ has always been one—if not *the*—crucial argument against the authenticity of the passage, and the illogicality is indeed striking and disturbing, especially if one realizes the even graver contradiction it entails in the motivation of the murder. Until now the whole argument of the play and everything Medea has said have convinced us that she must kill the children to punish the traitor Jason; but here, suddenly, it seems that it is not this “inner necessity” of Medea’s ethos that drives her, against her maternal feelings, towards the deed, but the “outer necessity” of a situation which no longer allows a free decision.

To my mind the many solutions offered so far have not obviated this problem:

a) A first group of explanations tries to get by without any operation on the text. Thus for the critic who believes in Zürcher’s thesis that Euripides is not interested in the psychological unity of his characters and in the inner logic of their behavior, the problem simply does not exist. But I must confess that I believe neither in the general thesis of Zürcher’s book nor in its application to Medea and her monologue.²⁷

Dyson (p. 23ff.) is convinced that the inconsistency has been imported into the text by a misunderstanding. He thinks that Medea in 1060f. does not refer to the Corinthians but to enemies in general, i.e., that she is talking about the humiliating treatment which her children could expect in exile. But the text does not offer any indication that the children, if taken to Athens, would not be safe and well protected by Medea's royal host Aegeus against maltreatment,²⁸ and the immediate context seems to exclude Dyson's reading, since on this reading there would be no connection between lines 1060f. and 1064ff.

Voigtländer (p. 234f.) and Diller (p. 362) think that there is no contradiction between inner and outer necessity, since in lines 1059ff. Medea states her desire for *absolute* revenge, i.e., the revenge would be less perfect if [94]the children were killed not by herself but by the Corinthians.²⁹ The plausibility of this solution, however, is not only weakened by the fact that the text indicates nowhere that the perfect revenge is not to be seen in the physical destruction of the children itself but rather depends on the personal execution of the murder by Medea. Moreover the interpretation is excluded by the immediate context: *καθυβρίσαι* ("to treat with outrage") leaves little doubt that Medea's motive behind 1060f. is love of her children and not perfection of her revenge, and 1064ff. can only point to the pressure of outer necessity which is the result of Medea's successful *mēchanēma* against Creusa.

Erbse and others argue that Medea's spontaneous idea to take the children with her should not be understood as a serious alternative, but as a tempting illusion that Medea entertains in the first half of her monologue until she must face the truth that in reality she is not free any more, since the death of the children is the inevitable result of the deaths of Creusa and Creon.³⁰ Quite apart, however, from the fact that we have to supply the crucial point of the argument (i.e. Medea's realization that she has been entertaining an illusion), this interpretation threatens to destroy the importance of the pressure put on Medea by the inner necessity of her character and thus damages the deep seriousness of the arguments she presents from *parodos* to *exodos* without softening the equally strong contradiction between lines 1059ff., with their stress on outer necessity, and the famous ending of the monologue, where Medea again speaks only about the inner necessity that forces her to kill the children: *θυμὸς δὲ κρείσσω τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων* (cf. *infra*).

The most popular solution, however, is what Reeve calls the "psychological defense" of the passage, i.e., to concede the inconsistency and to try to explain it, a solution that has been offered in numerous variations from August Wilhelm Schlegel and Maurice Patin to Page, Pohlenz, Schadewaldt, Voigtländer and Easterling. We are told that Medea's mental confusion and *ἀμηχανία* ("sense of helplessness") make her fall a prey to conflicting emotions and contradictory thoughts. This interpretation even succeeds in turning the alleged vice into a virtue. "Here ... she returns to the possibility of taking the children with her to Athens, and then reverts immediately to the probability that they will be left in Corinth at the mercy of her enemies. The 'inconsistency' of

1058 with 1059ff. is intensely moving and dramatic; emendation or deletion destroys all the force of Medea's changes of temper."³¹ Unfortunately the inconsistency we are talking about cannot be explained away as "changes of temper"; and, besides, we may ask ourselves whether the Medea Euripides has shown us up to this point is likely to lose her head so completely that, within a few lines, she would give two mutually exclusive accounts of her situation.

Easterling avoids the simple psychological explanation, according to which the inconsistency is the result of mental and emotional confusion. For her Medea "is filled with a sudden sense that she is caught in the tide of events and has no longer any choice" (p. 188). Easterling points to the results of modern socio-psychological analyses which show that "the murder of children often is committed in the atmosphere of sudden urgency. The parent becomes convinced of a threat to the children that clinches the feeling that they would be [95]better dead" (p. 188). Lloyd-Jones is wrong when he sneers at what he calls "psychological niceties" that are not part of Euripides' stock-in-trade (p. 55); but he has a strong argument on his side when he reminds us "that it would not be characteristic of Medea, who is not given to self-deception," and what is perhaps more important, Easterling's analogy does not quite apply to Euripides' Medea, who does not appear to be panic-stricken by a sudden sense of urgency, but rather to be tortured by the agony of conflicting thoughts and feelings.

Thus these and similar attempts to transform the criticized inconsistency into a psychological and dramatic masterstroke are fraught with difficulties. As far as I can see no one yet has convincingly explained the logical inconsistency between 1058 and 1059ff. and the deeper motivational contradiction that is implied.

b) Therefore it seems reasonable to suspect the text before we blame the author for what appears to be a major violation of dramatic logic and psychological and thematic consistency. Hermann's change of ἐκεῖ ("there," 1058) into καὶ μὴ ("and if not...") does not help much, since it smoothes the transition to lines 1059ff., but does not really remove our problem. The contradiction between two mutually exclusive alternatives to the murder (i.e. taking the children to Athens or leaving them in Corinth) is still apparent (cf. 1045). The minor cuts that have been suggested by Seeck (1060-63) and Lloyd-Jones (1059-63) do not solve our problem either. For 1064ff. still introduce the notion of outer necessity.³² Kovacs' excision of 1056-64, while removing most of the real and supposed problems of the passage, leaves us with a rather unsatisfactory transition from 1055 to 1065; furthermore, Kovacs is forced to read lines 1065f. as Medea's apprehension "that there will be little or no time for delay." But in the following Medea does not show any sign that she is pressed for time (cf. 1133-35!). This dramatic motif has its proper place after the long messenger-speech (1238f.).

Finally, even the radical amputation of the entire second half of the monologue does not really cure the patient.³³ For the doctors seem to have overlooked or underestimated the fact that lines 1236ff. contain just the same idea which they have tried to get rid of by the deletion of lines 1056ff.:

φίλοι, δέδοκται τοῦργον ὡς τάχιστα μοι
 παῖδας κτανούσῃ τῆσδ' ἀφορμᾶσθαι χθονός,
 καὶ μὴ σχολὴν ἄγουσαν ἐκδοῦναι τέκνα
 ἄλλῃ φονεύσαι δυσμενεστέροι χερί.
 πάντως σφ' ἀνάγκη καταθεῖν· ἐπεὶ δὲ χρῆ,
 ἡμεῖς κτενοῦμεν, οἵπερ ἐξεφύσαμεν.
 My friends, the deed is decided upon—as quickly as
 possible
 to kill my children and leave this land,
 and not to delay and thereby surrender my children
 to be slain by another, more hostile hand.
 They must die in any case. Since this must be,
 I shall kill them, the very one who gave them birth.

(1236-41)

In 1236ff. the dramatic motif of outer pressure that forces Medea to kill her children can neither be deleted nor can it be explained away.³⁴ Even if it be [96]granted that in 1236ff. the urgency of the dramatic situation has increased—the messenger tells Medea to leave immediately (1121ff.) and she knows that time is running out—nevertheless, as in lines 1059ff., there is no explicit reason anywhere in the text why she cannot take the children along as contemplated in 1045 and 1058, and, as in 1059ff., the crucial motive of inner necessity immediately reappears (1245).

Thus I would argue that lines 1236ff. virtually prove the authenticity of 1056ff. or, to be more cautious, the possibility that Euripides in the great monologue connected two inconsistent motivations for the deed. Why he did (or should have done) that, I cannot say. I am prepared to concede that this negative result of my survey of previous attempts to deal with the problem is unsatisfactory, but the clearing away of false solutions may open the way for a convincing explanation of the inconsistency which, as it seems, we have to accept as Euripidean.³⁵

5. But the patient is not quite out the woods yet. The end of Medea's speech contains a major crux of interpretation that during the last two decades has dominated the discussions of *Medea* in general and of the authenticity of the monologue in particular. Lines 1078-80 (already quoted above) "have caused more trouble than all the rest of the speech together."³⁶

καὶ μανθάνω μὲν οἷα δρᾶν μέλλω κακά,
 θυμὸς δὲ κρείσσω τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων,
 ὅσπερ μεγίστων αἴτιος κακῶν βροτοῖς.
 And I understand what evils I am about to do,
 but my *thumos* is stronger than my *bouleumata*—
 [this *thumos*] which is the cause of the greatest evils for
 mortals.

The first problem is the meaning of *βουλευμάτα* (*bouleumata*). For more than 2000 years philologists, philosophers and poets have understood 1079 as referring to a conflict of passion and reason. Stadtmüller in 1876 was the first

to point out that Medea has used the word four times (769, 772, 1044, 1048) to refer to her plan to kill the children. Thus—he and his many followers argue—the spectator cannot but associate *bouleumata* with Medea’s plan of revenge and therefore the word in 1079 cannot mean what it must mean to make sense.³⁷

This line of argument has been widely accepted, even by defenders of the authenticity of the passage. Their proposals for a solution range from unconvincing changes of the text³⁸ to almost desperate re-interpretations of language³⁹ and meaning⁴⁰ of line 1079. But I think Lloyd-Jones (p. 58) is right when he insists that “in itself the word *bouleumata* is colourless; it takes its colour from the context. Here the meaning is made clear by Medea’s immediately preceding statement that she knows what evil she is about to do.” Thus Medea in 1079 is saying: my *thumos* is stronger than my calculations (caused by the awareness of what the murder of the children would mean). The required general meaning of *βουλευματα* as “thoughts, deliberations, counsels” can be paralleled in all three tragedians.⁴¹

But as soon as we have defended *bouleumata*, lines 1078-80 threaten to present a second, much graver difficulty for the understanding not only of the monologue but of the whole play. A number of critics have argued that lines [97]1078f. either cannot be understood as they have been understood traditionally or cannot have been written by Euripides, because they introduce a conflict between passion and knowledge of what is best that is alien to the rest of the play.⁴² According to these critics *Medea* is not a tragedy of passion (*Leidenschaftstragödie*), but rather a tragedy of slighted *τιμή* (*timê*, “honor”), since the heroine’s planning and execution of the revenge are not triggered and spurred by the passionate emotions of a betrayed woman that break through all rational defenses, but are postulated and governed by the unwritten laws of the old heroic code of honor and thus dictated not by the emotions of hatred, anger, and jealousy but by Medea’s pride and self-esteem, by her strong moral sensibility and extraordinary intelligence. This argument has become the second of the two crucial pieces of evidence in the case against the authenticity of lines 1056-80.

I am far from trying to play down the great importance of an aspect that has been well established.⁴³ What I would like to argue is that the importance which the heroic code of honor undoubtedly has for Medea’s feelings, decisions, and actions does not force us to delete lines 1078-80 simply because they stress the victory of Medea’s *thumos* over her *bouleumata*. It seems to me that Dihle, Zwierlein, and Manuwald have constructed a rather artificial antithesis of the two driving forces behind Medea’s behavior which are not mutually exclusive but inextricably linked to each other: passion *and* reason.

In the prologue and parodos Euripides has done everything to show how deeply Jason has hurt Medea, who in the past, out of passionate love, has sacrificed what she loved most, and who now, in her passionate wrath, is not able to rest until she has gotten even with the man who betrayed her, with the woman who took her husband away from her, and with the father who as *kurios* (“responsible male kin”) authorized the marriage. It is true that in the following

scenes Euripides presents a more restrained and clever Medea who, just because of her cool rationality, is far superior to her male opponents. That, however, does not mean that the impression we received at the beginning of the play was false; rather, the change is due to the fact that Medea here must not hand herself over to her emotions if she wants to secure the ways and means for the revenge she so passionately desires. That her extraordinary intelligence and operational cleverness enable her to manipulate the chorus and Creon, Jason and Aegeus says nothing about the strength and intensity of her emotions, to the service of which her rational qualities are devoted. Throughout these scenes the violent agitation under Medea's rational surface is clearly felt manifesting itself especially throughout her first encounter with Jason (446ff.) and in the monologues in which she expresses her true thoughts and feelings after her victories over Creon (364ff.) and Aegeus (764ff.).

It seems methodically objectionable to play down the importance of the many references to Medea's violent *thumos*⁴⁴ with the argument that these are statements of other dramatic characters who do not fully understand Medea (Manuwald, p. 49 n. 50) or to insist that Medea herself never states that she is driven by passions such as love, hatred, and jealousy (Dihle 1976, p. 180). Indirect characterization is a common and legitimate dramatic technique, and the analysis of a character's motives can never confine itself to what the character [98]himself says *expressis verbis*. Psychologically it is most unlikely that a betrayed woman would declare that she is driven by hatred and jealousy, even if she were; but her language and her behavior will betray her. The numerous passages that, directly or indirectly, bear witness to Medea's anger, hatred, and jealousy⁴⁵ certainly justify the statement of 1079 that her passionate and violent temper—her *thumos*—is stronger than the considerations of her motherly love.

We only have to remember Achilles and Ajax, to whom Medea has been compared often and aptly, in order to realize that the claims of the heroic code and the demands of the *thumos*, far from being incompatible, belong together. The *thumos* is roused by the violation of the *timê*-code and the feeling of having been wronged, insulted, and treated with disrespect, and the resulting "anger" (*ὄργη*) and "wrath" (*χόλος*) drive and dominate all deliberations and plans, decisions, and actions. This is true of Achilles and Ajax as it is true of Medea, who has been dishonored by Jason's betrayal. Her anger is heightened by her conviction that Jason has violated his oaths⁴⁶ despite the fact that she has done nothing to deserve this treatment: far from having done him any wrong, she saved his life and made him all he is by giving up everything she was. Her outrage is further intensified by the awareness of her isolation and loneliness in a foreign environment. But the heart of the matter is that Jason by his new marriage has offended her feelings and her strong sense of honor and self-esteem as a woman and wife. The concrete symbol of what Jason has violated is the "bed" (*λέχος*), symbol of her love, her marriage, her family, and of her pride and honor as a woman.⁴⁷ Against this violation of the bed, and what it stands for, Medea's *thumos* violently revolts. This is what the chorus

assumes;⁴⁸ this is what Creon and Jason suspect;⁴⁹ this is what Medea herself tells us repeatedly.⁵⁰ But it is not a blind, irrational revolt. Medea has strong religious, moral, and social convictions which not only stimulate and feed but also define and regulate her anger, and which supply her with strong rational arguments: ὕβρις (“outrage”), προδοσία (“betrayal”), ἀδικία (“injustice”), ἀτιμία (“dishonor”).

If we understand *thumos* in 1079 as “shorthand” for this complex syndrome of emotional stimuli and rational arguments, and if we do not fail to realize that *bouleumata* too are a blend of rational and irrational components (the deliberations, warnings, and counsels of her instinctive motherly feelings as developed in the monologue), then the line is not inconsistent with the rest of the play, but rather a terse and pointed summary of its meaning.⁵¹

* * * * *

Of the different objections raised against the authenticity of lines 1056-80, only the logical inconsistency of lines 1056-58 and 1059ff., and the deeper contradiction of inner and outer necessity it entails in the motivation of the murder, bear close examination. No attempt to explain it (or to explain it away) is convincing; neither are the attempts to get rid of it by minor or major cuts. Lines 1236ff. make it appear highly probable that it is not an interpolator, but Euripides himself who is responsible for the violation of dramatic and thematic consistency. The blemish, which does not seriously impair the poetic quality and dramatic impact of Medea’s great monologue, may perhaps caution us against the growing tendency to clean Euripides’ plays of each and every defect by invoking anonymous interpolators.



NOTES

1. The most important discussions of the problem are: Th. Bergk, *Griechische Literaturgeschichte* (Leipzig 1884) III.512 n. 140; E. Bethe, *Medeaprobleme* (*Berichte der Sächs. Ges. der Wiss.* 70, Leipzig 1918) 8-16; E. Christmann, *Bemerkungen zum Text der Medea des Euripides* (Diss. Heidelberg 1962); A. Dihle, "Euripides' Medea und ihre Schwestern im europäischen Drama," *A&A* 22 (1976) 175-84, *Euripides' Medea* (*Sitzungsber. der Heidelb. Akad., Ph.-hist. Kl.* 1977, 5), and "Zum Streit um die 'Medea' des Euripides," in *Catalepton: Festschrift für Bernhard Wyss* (Basel 1985) 19-30; H. Diller, "θυμὸς δὲ κρείσσων," *Hermes* 94 (1966) 267-75 (= *Kleine Schriften zur antiken Literatur* [Munich 1971] 359-68); M. Dyson, "Euripides, *Medea* 1056-80," *GRBS* 28 (1987) 23-34; H. Erbse, "Zum Abschiedsmonolog der euripideischen *Medea*," *Archaiognosia* 2 (1981) 66-82; U. Hübner, "Zum fünften Epeisodion der *Medea* des Euripides," *Hermes* 112 (1984) 401-18; G. Jachmann, "Binneninterpolation II," *NGG* 1936, 193 n. 1; D. Kovacs, "On Medea's Great Monologue (E. *Med.* 1021-80)," *CQ* 36 (1986) 343-52; E. Kraggerud, "Hva skjer i Medeias store monologue," *Museum Tusulanum* 36-39 (1979) 45-52; H. Lloyd-Jones, "Euripides, *Medea* 1056-80," *WJA* 6a (1980) 51-59; B. Manuwald, "Der Mord an den Kindern," *WS* 17 (1983) 27-61; G. Müller, "Interpolationen in der *Medea* des Euripides," *SIFC* 25 (1951) 65-82; M. D. Reeve, "Euripides, *Medea* 1021-1080," *CQ* 22 (1972) 51-62; O. Regenbogen, "Randbemerkungen zur *Medea* des Euripides," *Eranos* 48 (1950) 21-56; W. Schadewaldt, *Monolog und Selbstgespräch. Untersuchungen zur Formgeschichte der griechischen Tragödie* (Berlin 1926); G. A. Seeck, "Euripides, *Medea* 1059-68, A Problem of Interpretation," *GRBS* 9 (1968) 291-307; W. Steidle, *Studien zum antiken Drama* (München 1968); H.-D. Voigtländer, "Spätere Überarbeitungen im großen Medeamonolog?," *Philologus* 101 (1957) 217-37; O. Zwierlein, "Die Tragik der Medea-Dramen," *Literaturwiss. Jahrbuch* 19 (1978) 27-63. In the body of this essay these works are referred to by name and page only. Earlier versions of this paper were presented at Yale (1987) and UT Austin (1988). I wish to thank the editors and David Blank, Christian Wildberg, and Nikolaus Eberl for their advice and help.

2. On the much-discussed question, *when* Medea decides to kill her children, cf. Manuwald (*supra* n. 1) 27-38.

3. Cf. *infra* pp. 97-98.

4. Cf. 791-96, 899-905, 922-31.

5. Cf. 383, 404, 797 (807), (1049, 1362).

6. Cf. W. Burkert, "Greek Tragedy and Sacrificial Ritual," *GRBS* 7 (1966) 87-121, esp. 117-19.

7. Schadewaldt (*supra* n. 1) 196.

8. Cf. *infra* pp. 93-96.

9. Dihle, "Zum Streit..." (*supra* n. 1) 28.

10. A. Lesky, *Die tragische Dichtung der Hellenen*³ (Göttingen 1972) 311.

11. Cf. Σ ad 1059; as D. J. Mastronarde reminds me, the form of the oath with *μὰ* is a rather clear indication of a change of attitude: "no, by..."; for *μὰ* (usually followed by a negative) with the force of a rejection of an alternative cf. Eur. *Andr.* 934, *Ion* 1528, *Cycl.* 262-64, *Phoen.* 1006, *IA* 739, 948.

12. Valckenaer (ad *Phoen.* 1286), followed by Elmsley, Porson and Leo; cf. Reeve (supra n. 1) 53 n. 5.

[100]13. Pierson; cf. Erbse (supra n. 1) 72-75. Kovacs (supra n. 1) 347 repeats the argument of Reeve (supra n. 1) 53 that within the context of 1056ff. lines 1062f. are indispensable; for without them “Medea will not have announced her intention of killing the children between the opposite announcement in 1056-58 and the parenthetical reference to killing them in 1068.” But cf. supra item 2 b), and Erbse: “Daß die Ankündigung, die Kinder nicht dem Zorn der Korinther zu überlassen, ihren Tod durch Medeas Hand bedeutet, kann einem Zuschauer nicht zweifelhaft sein, der die Einheit des Racheplans im Blick behält.”

14. *ταῦτα* (cf. 1013), as 1064-66 shows, refers to the first part of the plan: the murder of Creusa, which Medea (as well as the chorus in 978ff.) takes for granted as soon as the tutor has reported that the fatal gifts have been accepted; the line of thought in 1064-66 (first the conclusion and then the explanation), criticized by Müller (supra n. 1) 66 n. 5, is psychologically plausible and rhetorically effective (Schadewaldt [supra n. 1] 196; Erbse [supra n. 1] 72 n. 1).

15. *ταῦτα* can hardly be the subject of *ἐκφεύξεται*; the intransitive use of *ἐκφεύγειν* in the sense of “it will not get away,” though linguistically perhaps not impossible (Dyson [supra n. 1] 27; cf. already Voigtländer [supra n. 1] 224 n. 2; Steidle [supra n. 1] 160 n. 51) would produce a rather inept repetition of *πέπρακται*. We may assume that the actor delivered line 1064 with a slight pause after *ταῦτα*.

16. Kovacs (supra n. 1) 347, who is right when he points out “that if two third-person verbs in one line are connected by ‘and’ and the first has a subject expressed the other will have the same subject unless this impression is corrected in the next line,” seems to have overlooked that the correct stipulation added to the rule is fulfilled by lines 1065f.; the fact that *νύμφη* appears as grammatical subject not in the next line but in the line after does not carry any weight since Creusa must be understood as logical subject of *καὶ δὴ ἐπὶ κρατὶ στέφανος*.

17. For the use of *καὶ δὴ* cf. J. D. Denniston, *The Greek Particles*² (Oxford 1954) 250-53, in particular 250, (2)(i) and 252, (iv).

18. Dodds’ suggestion to read *δεῦτ’* instead of *δὸτ’* (*Humanitas* 4 [1952] 14) does not help much, since it only moves the problem of the awkward pause from the middle to the end of line 1069.

19. D. Bain, *Actors and Audience* (Oxford 1977) 24-27, and *Masters, Servants and Orders in Greek Tragedy* (Manchester 1982) 33; but cf. D. J. Mastronarde, *Contact and Discontinuity. Some Conventions of Speech and Action on the Greek Tragic Stage* (*UC Publ. Cl. St.* 21, Berkeley 1979) 105-113, esp. 109f.

20. M. D. Reeve, *GRBS* 14 (1973) 151-53 (Barrett, n. 20); cf. Mastronarde (supra n. 19) 106.

21. Page ad 1053; Diller (supra n. 1) 161; Erbse (supra n. 1) 67ff.; Bain (supra n. 19) 25-27 gives a perfectly convincing interpretation along these lines and then refuses to accept it.

22. Page ad 789; Lesky (supra n. 10) 306 n. 28.

23. Cf. Dihle “Zum Streit...” (supra n. 1) 29 n. 14; Reeve (supra n. 1) 59 himself concedes that 1046f. must be as disturbing as 1057 and 1068; 1073f. presumably are above their heads as are 1049-55 (for a possible explanation of 1073f. cf. now Dyson [supra n. 1] 28f.).

24. von Arnim ad 1041; Steidle (supra n. 1) 159, 163; Erbse (supra n. 1) 67.

25. Steidle (supra n. 1) 163 and Erbse (supra n. 1) 67 are right in arguing that lines 1021-39 cannot fully serve this function.

26. Hermann (apud Elmsley's ed. [Oxford 1828]) ad 1056-61.

27. W. Zürcher, *Die Darstellung des Menschen im Drama des Euripides* (Basel 1947) 61ff.

[101]28. Medea fears only her enemies in Iolcus and Corinth (734, 781f., 1238f., 1303-1305); for the euphemistic use of *καθυβρίσαι* cf. Eur. *Hclid.* 457.

29. Cf. also Hübner (supra n. 1) notes 2, 15, 20.

30. Erbse (supra n. 1) 69ff.; similarly Steidle (supra n. 1) 161f.; Schadewaldt (supra n. 1) 196f.; Dihle (infra n. 40); but cf. Manuwald (supra n. 1) 61; Hübner (supra n. 1) 401 n. 2; Kovacs (supra n. 1) 345.

31. Page ad 1058.

32. Cf. Manuwald (supra n. 1) 58.

33. In recent years (after Reeve and his predecessors) the deletion has been accepted by Diggle in the Oxford Classical Text as well as by Zwierlein (supra n. 1), Bain (supra n. 19), Manuwald (supra n. 1), and Hübner (supra n. 1), who goes so far as to throw out lines 1040-55 too.

34. Lloyd-Jones' explanation of 1240f. ([supra n. 1] 56) is desperate: "The statement that in <any> case they have to die might have no reference to any danger from the Corinthians; all mortals have to die and that may well be what Medea means to say."

35. It is worth recalling that *Medea* offers a second example (cf. further supra n. 16). As Manuwald (supra n. 1) 35f. observed, Jason is well aware of the fact that the children are exiled (461), but he still goes on talking as if they were to stay with him in Corinth (559ff.). A closer parallel to the motivational inconsistency of *Medea* is provided by the *Cyclops*: in Homer Odysseus must blind Polyphemus because it is his only chance to get himself and his companions out of the cave. The dramatic presentation of the story requires that the hero must be free to emerge from the cave at will. Therefore Euripides had to supply a new motive for the blinding. Just like Medea, his Odysseus acts because he wants to defend his heroic honor and take revenge (441, 692-95). But right next to the *timê*-motif there still appears the Homeric motif of "salvation" / "escape" (196f., 428-30, 478f.). As in *Medea* (albeit in the *Cyclops* it is not as obvious) we have the inconsistent combination of outer necessity caused by the dramatic situation and the inner impulse of the hero's ethos. And, as in *Medea*, the motive of outer necessity does not really fit the general dramatic premises of the play. In both cases it seems possible to argue that the inconsistency between the different motives for the central action of the play (blinding, murder) is due to the fact that Euripides created the new motive of inner necessity (desire for revenge and heroic honour) without totally eliminating the outer necessity of his literary or mythological source (the Homeric cave and the threat posed by the Corinthians respectively).

36. Lloyd-Jones (supra n. 1) 57.

37. H. Stadtmüller, *Beiträge zur Textkritik der euripideischen Medea* (Progr. Heidelberg 1876) 31 n. 1; Müller (supra n. 1) 73; Reeve (supra n. 1) 55; Dihle *Euripides' Medea* (supra n. 1) 13 n. 18.

38. Erbse (supra n. 1) 79f.: *μαθημάτων* (cf. already Koechly apud Stadtmüller, supra n. 37).

39. Diller (supra n. 1) 367: *κρείσσω* = *κρατῶν*, i.e., "my *thumos* is master of, controls, governs, my plans of revenge"; but cf. R. Kassel, *RhM* 11 (1973) 102 and n. 21.

40. The most ingenious argument was put forward by Dihle (in all three works cited supra n. 1), who tried to establish a complete reversal of the traditional interpretation of

line 1079, which he takes to mean: “my emotion (i.e. *thumos* = tender emotional feelings) is stronger than my plans of revenge.” This interpretation, according to which Medea at this point gives up her plan to kill the children but is later forced to do it nevertheless, requires a rather strained explanation not only of lines 1079f., but also of 1056ff. and 1076-78; cf. esp. Zwierlein (supra n. 1) 35 n. 24c; Manuwald (supra n. 1) 56-58.

[102]41. E.g. Aesch. *Pers.* 1570-72, *Sept.* 594; Soph. *Ant.* 178-81; Eur. *Hipp.* 400-402, *Supp.* 743f., *Or.* 1085, *Ba.* 845f.

42. Dihle, “Euripides’ Medea...” (supra n. 1) 180ff.; *Euripides’ Medea* (supra n. 1) 12ff.; “Zum Streit...” (supra n. 1) 19; Zwierlein (supra n. 1) 35; Manuwald (supra n. 1) 59f.

43. E. B. Bongie, “Heroic Elements in the *Medea* of Euripides,” *TAPA* 107 (1977) 27-56; P. E. Easterling, “The Infanticide in Euripides’ *Medea*,” *YCS* 25 (1977) 177-91, and esp. B. M. W. Knox, “The *Medea* of Euripides,” *YCS* 25 (1977) 193-225.

44. Cf. 91, 106-108, 271, (485), 862-65, 878f., 883; cf. further the references to Medea’s violent and “bestial” temper: 37ff., 44f., 103f., 108-110, 119ff., 187ff., 1342f., (1358), 1406f.; and to her *αὐθάδεια*: 104, 621, 1028.

45. *ὀργή*, *χόλος*: 93ff., 99, 119ff., 171f., 176f., (183), 286, 395ff., 446ff., 520, 525, 588-90, 615, 639ff., 870ff., 897f., 904f., 908ff., 1265f. Hatred: 310f., 463, 467, 1374. Jealousy: (555, 568), 623ff., (957), 966ff., 1127-35, (1356), 1394, and many of the *λέχος*-passages cited in n. 47 infra.

46. For the importance of the motive cf. A. P. Burnett, “*Medea* and the Tragedy of Revenge,” *CP* 68 (1973) 1-24, esp. 12-15.

47. *Λέχος* is the central leit-motif of the play: (16-19), 155ff., (163), 207, 263ff., 285ff., (330), 398-400, 435f., 443-45, 488-91, 555ff., 568ff., 591f., 623ff., (627ff.), 637ff., (692ff.), 886-88, 999ff., 1291ff., 1336ff., 1354ff., 1366ff., (1394).

48. Cf. 205ff., 639ff., 996ff., 1290ff.

49. Cf. 286, 555ff., 568ff., 1336-38, 1367.

50. Cf. 263ff., (623ff.), 1354ff., 1366ff.

51. In the context of the play this complex meaning of the line should be evident. On the other hand it is easy to see that, taken out of its context, it could be used by philosophers (since Chrysippus) for their discussion of incontinence, especially since they could find a number of similar statements in other Euripidean plays which showed that Euripides was interested in the problem of *ἀκρασία*: *Hipp.* 380-83; fr. 840, 841, 220, (718) N². All four statements, however, are more general, the terminology is more abstract and philosophical, and the antithesis between reason and passion (desire, emotion) is clear. This antithesis should not be read back into *Medea*. Thus, if Snell is right that Socrates was stimulated by *Med.* 1078-80 to develop his famous paradox that virtue is knowledge, that no one can choose what he knows to be worse, then he misunderstood the *Medea*, a fruitful misunderstanding, but a misunderstanding nevertheless: cf. B. Snell, “Das früheste Zeugnis über Sokrates,” *Philologus* 97 (1948) 125-34, and “Leidenschaft und Erkenntnis,” in *Szenen aus griechischen Dramen* (Berlin 1971) 25-75, esp. 51-75; T. Irwin, “Euripides and Socrates,” *CP* 78 (1983) 183-97.