the individual within the conflicting claims of *polis* and *oikos* ideology is what this tragedy seems to put at risk. The *Antigone* works through the logic of the conventional moralities of the terms to the point of destruction. The secure conclusion of an Hegelian synthesis or *Aufhebung* at the end of this 'labour of the negative' seems notably absent. The questioning of the morality and obligations surrounding the terms of relations and relationships remains unresolved.

In the light of such questioning, is there not some need to qualify what might be meant by the epithet 'conservative' as traditionally applied to Sophocles? What sort of reading of *Antigone* can lead a critic to assert of Sophocles 'In his plays the ideas expressed are conventional and conservative and we are not invited to reject them'?[43] For it would seem rather that it is precisely through the limitations and contradictions of the conventional and conservative morality surrounding the terms of *philos* and *ekhthros* in juxtaposition to the values of the city that the tragedy of *Antigone* develops. After the complex interplays and dislocations of the moral language of relations we have read in this play, it seems to me difficult to see in what terms it would be possible to assert that Sophocles simply reflects a conventional or conservative attitude. As we have seen before and will see again in the course of this book, it is only for conservative and conventional critics that the texts of tragedy have lost their power to question and challenge.

[43] Hester 1971, 46.

5 · SEXUALITY AND DIFFERENCE

A woman is a sometime thing.
GERSHWIN

Time and again the line of argument in my discussion has approached the question of sexuality, and has been forced to restrain itself. In the *Oresteia*, I argued, the relations between the sexes are an essential dynamic of the trilogy and any discussion of language, politics, imagery in that work is forced always to reconsider its siting in a sexual discourse. I attempted to show further that in any description of how the Greek city might try to delimit itself the polarized realms of a male world and female world were an essential, if difficult, marking of that not entirely physical topography. With regard to those primary words of human relations in the family and city, *philos* and *ekhthros*, the sexual was explicitly interwoven in the semantic range – and dislocations – of such terms. In this chapter, I wish to focus on this topic of sexuality, which is so important to Greek tragedy, and after I have looked at some of the complex problems involved in approaching this subject, I shall be considering in particular Euripides' *Hippolytus*.

In Homer's *Odyssey*, which I will have cause to discuss in more detail in the next chapter, there is a continuing focus on the relations between the sexes.[1] In his journeys, Odysseus passes through a series of liaisons with various females, divine and mortal, which reflect (in a fractured manner) the relation between Penelope and himself towards which he is travelling. Part of the extended process of homecoming is this constant redefining of the male and female positioning in the home. Indeed, whereas Virgil's Aeneas sees in the underworld above all a procession of the future military and political heroes of Rome, Odysseus sees a procession of the famous women of the past – starting from his own mother. In both narratives, the journey to the underworld offers a sense of an insight into the truth of the epic.

Hesiod, too, in perhaps a more directly didactic manner, concerns himself with the role of women in the *oikos*. In his *Works and Days*, not only is there an extensive discussion of the sort of woman to marry, but this is also linked to a mythic narrative which places the origin of human woes in the hands of the

[1] See Goldhill 1984a, Foley 1978.

over-curious first woman, Pandora.[2] In the iambic poet Semonides' most famous extant work, various sorts of women are humorously described in terms of a bestiary, which combines an epic cataloguing with iambic derogatory malice.[3]

There is, in other words, a continuing and varied emphasis on sexual difference in the works of the Greek literary tradition, an emphasis that has prompted some critics in recent years to talk of a continuity of Greek misogyny.[4] The way in which the extant fifth-century tragedies return again and again explicitly to a conflict of the sexes, as the comedies of the period frequently play with the possibility of sexual role reversal, has prompted an extensive discussion of the role of women in Greek theatre and society.[5] It is, of course, not by chance that this debate has flourished in the last twenty years – a period which coincides with the rise of the women's movement and the very widest discussion of the role of women in society. The debate goes back, however, as I mentioned in Chapter 2, at least as far as the influential work of Bachofen, which has fuelled many modern Marxist and feminist polemics.[6] And among classicists challenged by the dissenting voices of Gomme and Kitto, and, most recently, Gould, there has also been considerable argument about the description and evaluation of women's lot in classical Greece.[7]

I write 'description and evaluation' but this 'and', rather than linking two self-evident terms, is precisely the locus of the most fervent discussion. For Kitto, the problem of the relation between description and evaluation is one of the irreducibly alien status of Greek culture for us: 'As far as Greece is concerned, the most Hellenic of us is a foreigner, and we all of us know how wide of the mark even an intelligent foreigner's estimate can be ... The foreigner so easily misses the significant thing.'[8] This difficulty is compounded by the textual nature of the evidence that has been brought to bear in the debate. With the exception of some archaeological remains and some pictures (which few would regard as evidence which does not involve similar problems of interpretation) scholars have used the written remains of fifth-century Athens to build up their picture of 'the accepted view ... that the Athenian woman lived in an almost Oriental seclusion, regarded with indifference, even

[2] On Hesiod and the sexes see Arthur 1973; 1981; 1983; Bergren 1983.
[3] For an interesting study of Semonides and women, see Loraux 1981b, 75–117.
[4] This sense of continuity has been challenged in different ways by Arthur 1973; Goldhill 1984a.
[5] A good general introduction to the material is Gould 1980. Several collections of essays have recently been published: Foley 1982b; Cameron and Kuhrt 1983; *Arethusa* 6 (1973), and *Arethusa* 11 (1978) (now republished under the editorship of J. Peradotto and J. Sullivan). These contain extensive bibliographies.
[6] For a survey of the Bachofen heritage, see Coward 1983.
[7] Gomme 1925; Kitto 1951; Gould 1980.
[8] Kitto 1951, 223.

contempt'.[9] This 'accepted view' has, for example, made much of Pericles' famous dictum that woman's 'greatest glory is to be least talked about by males, either for praise or for blame'.[10] This is said to be 'typical of the disdain Athenians felt for women'. Kitto retorts 'But suppose Gladstone had said "I do not care to hear a lady's name bandied about in general talk whether for praise or dispraise", would that imply disdain or an old-fashioned deference and courtesy?'[11] A good rhetorical question, for sure, but a rhetoric which today might well get a different answer from the one Kitto may have expected – particularly if the question were asked of recent feminist scholars of Victorian England. Being 'alien' is not limited to the fifth century B.C.

What do we make of that dictum of Pericles, then, which was after all written by Thucydides? It occurs in that most famous of Thucydides' set pieces, the funeral speech which was delivered over the first Athenian dead of the war that would finally break Athenian power. The funeral speech over the city's war-dead in the special cemetery for those fallen in battle was an institution that formed a constituent part of the civic discourse of Athens.[12] In this institutionalized speech, the city glorified itself through the burial of the members of the citizen army who fought and died for it. The force of Pericles' speech in Thucydides' narrative, however, is more than that of good political rhetoric. Towards the beginning of the narrative of that fateful war, the first casualties of the city still at the height of its power bring forth from the figure who gave his name to the golden years of Athenian supremacy a statement that is to sum up the nature of Thucydides' own city. This is a speech from Pericles on the glories of Periclean Athens. But as much as it serves to express the view of an era, it also looks forward to the destruction of that era in the history to follow. Periclean Athens is constituted as a zenith by the downfall which follows. Not only is the special ideological nature of the funeral speech marked, but also its siting in the artfully composed narrative of glory and disaster suggests one should be careful before accepting it as the transparent representation of 'Athenian Thought'. Perhaps Kitto should have asked 'But what if Disraeli wrote a piece about the collapse of the British Empire in which Gladstone gave a speech in which he said ...?'

Moreover, Thucydides himself writes programmatically about such speeches in his history: 'I have found it difficult to remember the precise words used in the speeches which I listened to myself and my various informants have experienced the same difficuilty; so my method has been, while keeping as closely as possible to the general sense of the words used, to

[9] Kitto 1951, 219. [10] Thuc. 2.46. [11] Kitto 1951, 224.
[12] See Loraux 1981a, passim.

make the speakers say what, in my opinion, was called for by each situation.'[13] As Finley comments 'There is no way to get round the incompatibility of the two parts of that statement. If all speakers said what, in Thucydides' opinion, the situation called for, the remark becomes meaningless. But if they did not always say what was called for, then, insofar as Thucydides attributed such sentiments to them, he could not have been keeping as closely as possible to the general sense of the words used.'[14] So with Pericles' funeral speech are we reading the gist of what Pericles said or what Thucydides thought the situation required?

The layers and lies of such rhetoric are often repressed or ignored by the simple selection of such a piece of writing as a portion of bounded 'evidence' for Greek Thought. Not only is the 'description' of such a remark forced to become involved in the ins and outs of voice and discourse in that speech in that narrative of that war (involved, that is, in 'evaluation'), but also the selection of such a dictum to serve as 'description' of Greek culture out of its context marks in its very selectivity a degree of evaluation – the far from innocent naivety of the argument which simply selects a series of remarks from Greek literature as a transparent illustration ('anthology', 'reader') of Greek Thought.

From this example, we can begin to see the problems involved in approaching the textual evidence. Even when we take a remark from a historical text, a work which proclaims its own truth value, if we try to put it in its context, we find that such a remark no longer seems as clear and simple and offering ready access to truth as its common use in arguments on the status of women would suggest. Moreover, Thucydides' text is, of course, not a text in a vacuum: we can extend the context further by considering other relevant texts to help us build up the picture. Indeed, the more one attempts to take into account the contexts of explicit remarks on the relations of the sexes, the more the texts for consideration multiply and the problems of relating all these different texts to a stable entity 'Greek Thought' increase. As Just[15] has pointed out, the very variety of types of evidence, which includes texts of history, philosophy, medicine, myth, law, makes it less surprising that a uniform or consistent view of the sexes has been difficult to formulate. Indeed, even such constants as the fact that all the surviving fifth-century texts are written by men[16] introduce a particular bias which disorients a simple link between the written evidence and a view of the whole society, with regard to how sexual difference is conceived. As Gould writes, it is 'naive and misleadingly, even grossly, over

[13] Thuc. 1.22. [14] Finley 1972, 26. See also Sainte-Croix 1972, 7–16, and appendix III.
[15] Just 1975. See also Pomeroy 1977a, 141.
[16] Female writers did exist, however. See Pomeroy 1977b; Lloyd 1983, 60.

simple . . . to proceed as though there were some single and univocal scale of values on which it would be possible to place "women" as evaluated by "men".'[17]

These problems of evaluating and describing a heterogeneous body of texts in relation to the society that produced them have been treated in different ways with varying subtlety and force. One of the most stimulating approaches to Greek Thought and the body of Greek texts in recent years has come from Jean-Pierre Vernant and those influenced by him and his colleagues in Paris.[18] Drawing on a wide range of material from different genres of texts in the ancient world and from comparative anthropological work, Vernant and others have developed a sophisticated series of readings of Greek culture. For Vernant, the problem of reading the relations of the sexes in ancient Athens is a question of 'discourse'. Rather than considering each statement as a transparent illustration of thought, Vernant attempts to read the systematic relations between the more or less explicit statements on sexual difference. Like Foucault, he approaches the question of determining the conditions of possibility that give rise to these expressions, that is, the verbal, social, mental organizations implied by and constituted in the system of statements that the texts offer. Being alien to a culture meant for Kitto a dangerous increase in the possibility of a reader's misinterpretation or misrepresentation of what the culture itself believed. Vernant, however, rather than repressing his necessarily alien status, insists on the possible advantages of such a position. Like many anthropologists, rather than taking a culture's explicit agreement or recognition as the criterion of judgement for his analyses, Vernant stresses that the outsider's view can investigate the tacit knowledge of a society; it can illuminate the blind-spots of a culture's ideas by investigating what is taken for granted or assumed. Indeed, Bourdieu, the highly influential theoretical anthropologist, has argued that a stable society continues on its course precisely by *not recognizing* the arbitrary limits and organization of its own system of beliefs, which it determines as 'natural' and 'proper'. For Bourdieu, the establishment of what is thought 'natural' in each culture depends on such 'misrecognition' – which is how he terms the working of the unquestioned organization of ideas inherent in a culture's attitudes and assumptions. Despite the evident risk of the arbitrary imposition of the observer's own categories (which is part of Kitto's fear), the anthropologist involved in the investigation of such 'misrecognition' cannot expect to maintain the recognition or express agreement of the observed culture as the criterion of judgement

[17] 1980, 39.
[18] I include Detienne, Kahn, Loraux, Vidal-Naquet. See also the essays published in his honour in *Arethusa* 16, 1983.

for his analyses. Rather than relying, like Kitto, on what a society determines as 'the significant thing', the anthropologically based critique looks also at the unrecognized system of ideas and organization of attitudes giving rise to the express statements of significance. In times of flux in a society, however – such as fifth-century Athens – the stability of the agreed 'nature' of things is no longer assured. There develops a recognition of the process of 'misrecognition', a realization which marks and emphasizes the tensions in a system of thought. What was taken for granted and assumed 'natural' is placed under question, replaced with a different series or organization of beliefs. It was indeed precisely through the consideration of the relation between what constituted the 'natural' and the 'conventional', 'arbitrary' and 'proper', that the sophists proved such a threat to the traditional pattern of ideas in fifth-century Athens. An investigation of what is thought 'natural' will also question the boundaries and area of the sexual, a topic which always attracts statements about what is 'natural' and 'proper' – a topic, too, which many recent writers have shown to rely all too often on an unrecognized system of ideas.[19] Thus in my investigation in this chapter of the markings of a discourse of sexuality in fifth-century Athens it will also prove necessary to attempt to take into account the complex relations of explicit statement, tacit knowledge, and a culture's possible questioning of its own ideas. For a discourse is not necessarily a stable system, as the work of the anthropological critiques outlined above may help us appreciate.

Although it will be through a study of such a discourse of sexuality and its interrelations with the various languages of the city (e.g. economic, spatial, linguistic . . .) that I shall first approach the *Hippolytus*, this is not to suggest that the anthropologically based ideas of Vernant and his associates provide a grid into which specific tragedies can be slotted for explanation. Although tragedy has provided an important body of material for such studies, and there have been some literary readings based on such material,[20] there is still an important methodological tension between the generalizing attitude of anthropological studies of Greek culture and the difficulties of reading specific literary texts. For not only do the projects of such anthropological critiques in general not aim at literary explication or consider its problems, but also literary language, particularly in the public festival of tragedy with its transgressions, paradoxes, archaisms has an oblique relation to the formulation of such a discourse, contesting as it constructs, challenging as it develops. Not only does the make-up of a non-stable society with its interplay of tacit

[19] Two examples: on 'natural' and changing ideas of the family, see Stone 1977; on childhood, see Ariès 1962.

[20] See e.g. Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 1981; Loraux 1981b, 197–253; and the contributors to *Arethusa* 16, 1983. Zeitlin 1978; 1982a; 1982b are especially useful.

knowledge, explicit statement, and self-questioning create difficulties with regard to formulating a general view of a subject like sexuality, but also the specific genre of tragedy with its disruptive questioning highlights these tensions and differences in a normative discourse rather than offering any harmonized view of the workings of society's attitudes. As we will see, it is not a safe assumption that the texts of Greek tragedy simply and directly 'reflect' a Greek view of sexuality. As I shall be outlining the features of a sexual discourse in my reading of the *Hippolytus*, so I shall be investigating the fractures of that discourse in the tragic text, the challenge in tragedy to the stability of a discourse of sexuality.

There have been a series of readings of Greek tragedy that consider this difficult notion of the way the texts 'reflect' society, often specifically with regard to the status of women. Indeed, tragedy has often proved a central subject for many arguments on the role of women in Athens. There is a clear and specific reason for this. The tension in the debate is this: whereas much explicit ideology particularly from prose works, as we saw in Chapter 3, indicates a specific linking of the women with the inside, with the house, and with a denial of public life and language, nevertheless tragedy flaunts its heroines on stage in the public eye, boldly speaking out. This tension between repression and outspokenness has been resolved by critics in various ways with regard to fifth-century attitudes. For Kitto, Attic tragedy is a major argument against the extreme view of the repression of women: 'it is hard to believe that the dramatists never, even by accident, portrayed the stunted creatures among whom (we are to suppose) they actually lived, and got these vivid people out of books – from Homer'.[21] For Slater on the other hand, who offer a psychopathological view of the Greek male through his literature, tragedy is the expression of the social pathology of Athens. A combination of 'sex antagonism, maternal ambivalence, gynephobia and masculine narcissism'[22] gives rise to tragedy as a sort of fearful expiation of the double feelings of men towards women. Women, repressed in life by men, find a voice through men in the institution of tragedy. The tension is, for Slater, a tension in Athenian life between the rejection or repression of women and the guilty projection of their power in the special worlds of myth and literature. Shaw, however, has coined the phrase 'the female intruder' for the role of women on stage. He argues that in drama women step out of the enclosed world of the *oikos* whose values they represent, not as a psychopathological projection, but as a dramatized response to the failure of the male to respect the interests of the household in his own sphere of action, the *polis*.The woman's action does represent an upsetting reversal of the norms of behaviour. But, Shaw argues,

[21] 1951, 228. [22] 1968, 410.

the dramas close with a compromise, explicit or implicit, between male and female, *oikos* and *polis*, which blocks the assertion either of a pure masculinity or a pure femininity. He sees therefore the battle of the sexes in Attic theatre as 'dramatising the points of conflict between the *oikos* and the state'[23] and he regards the artist as seeking to 'chart the limits and shortcomings of the civic virtues'.[24]

His excessively schematic reading fails to take account of the fact that the struggles that dominate so much of tragedy are often intrafamilial; also, as Helene Foley has pointed out, while useful in pointing to the 'intrusive female', his analysis 'fails to recognize sufficiently that a dialectical opposition puts both poles (male and female, *oikos* and *polis*) into a relation in which each defines the other'.[25] For the city's male is also the ruler of the *oikos* – the one who enters and leaves, who gives in marriage, who controls the finances and property. And the woman is not only the guardian of the house but also of state fertility, particularly through the exclusively female state religious festivals. As the producer of the citizen army, she donates her son, the hoplite, to the army and the state, much as the man can offer the tax of *leitourgia*.[26] Attic drama plays out the recognition of the tension between, on the one hand, the assumed continuity of *oikos* and *polis* as institutions of power and, on the other hand, the conflicts of interest between *oikos* and *polis*, which seems to set them in opposition to each other; but, as we saw in the *Antigone*, there is no simple opposition of 'household' and 'state'.

Nor is it easy to accept Shaw's postulated final compromise of opposites. While many have seen the end of the *Oresteia* as glorification of a civic harmony (and many have seen the opposite), when one considers the end of such plays as *Bacchae*, *Antigone* or *Medea*, where dissolution, aggression, and disappointment seem to stress the shattering tragic oppositions, the construction of any final reconciliation seems placed in question.

There is a further specific problem of interpretation which these critics have not articulated adequately. Unlike the historian's work, tragedies do not claim to represent a true history of contemporary society, but rather they are fictional depictions of a series of ancient stories most often set in cities other than Athens. The question is not simply how to discuss the representation of sexual difference in the texts of a society but also how to evaluate and describe the range of differences and similarities between a society and its fictionalized portrait of the past. How are we to determine to what degree and in what ways these women of archaic tales in modern plays are to be thought of as different

[23] 1975, 266. [24] Ibid. [25] 1982a, 21.

[26] *Leitourgia* was a contribution to the state, a sort of personal sponsorship of, say, a warship or the costs of a tragic festival. See Loraux 1981c for the parallel between *leitourgia* and children.

from fifth-century society, or as commenting on that society, or as offering parallels to society? As we saw with Antigone's heroic stance, the archaism of Greek tragedy introduces a series of tensions and paradoxes which resist a simple, univocal reading. So, although the challenge of women in Attic drama may be thought to remain a challenge to the dominant orderings of patriarchal society, it is not a challenge that can be reduced to the sort of all-embracing formula that Shaw and others have proposed. The disruptive interplay of civic and familial discourses in which the specific roles of women play an essential part, and the archaism of tales of other times, other places (for which the prominence of women may have a variety of significances) challenge the possible simplicity of any relation of 'reflection' assumed between tragedy and society. As we will see in *Hippolytus*, far from any 'final compromise' the crisis of transgression and the dissolution of order threaten precisely the security of the discourse of sexuality.

I hope I have outlined, then, some of the problems involved in attempting to read a discourse of sexuality in Greek tragedy – problems all too often ignored by critics keen to understand Athenian society through its drama. In the light of this discussion, Euripides offers an especially interesting set of texts for study. Reviled by Aristophanes and others in both antiquity and modern days as a misogynist, hailed by many more recent writers as a feminist, Euripides brings to the fore many of the difficulties of description and evaluation that I have been discussing. Many of his plays revolve around a specifically sexual tension. In the *Bacchae*, which I shall discuss in Chapters 10 and 11, the doubt and suspicion of the young Pentheus towards the women in the city – and the feminine in Dionysus – form an essential dynamic of the tragic tensions and reversals of the play. In the *Women of Troy (Troiades)*, the heroic focus of the *Iliad* shifts to the fate of a city's women in the disasters that war brings: the concentration on women as the object of men's sexual and military aggression helps to develop the harshness of this play. Medea in *Medea*, a fine example of the heroic woman taking control of her affairs with a force and determination which seems at odds with much of the ideology of contemporary prose writing on women, delivers a famous speech which brings up many of the problems I have been discussing (230–51):

> Of all things that are living and can form a judgement
> we women are the most unfortunate creatures.
> Firstly, with an excess of wealth it is required
> for us to buy a husband and take for our bodies
> a master; for not to take one is even worse.
> And now the question is serious whether we take
> a good or bad one; for there is no easy escape
> for a woman, nor can she say no to her marriage.

She arrives among new modes of behaviour and manners,
and needs prophetic power, unless she has learned at home,
how best to manage him who shares the bed with her.
And if we work out all this well and carefully,
and the husband lives with us and lightly bears his yoke,
then life is enviable. If not, I'd rather die.
A man, when he's tired of the company in his home,
goes out of the house and puts an end to his boredom
and turns to a friend or companion of his own age.
But we are forced to keep our eyes on one alone.
What they say of us is that we have a peaceful time
living at home, while they do the fighting in war.
How wrong they are! I would very much rather stand
three times in the front of battle than bear one child.

On the one hand, although this speech clearly echoes (from a woman's viewpoint) the didactic narrative of Hesiod, say, about the right sort of woman to choose or Semonides' humorous view of the different types of women, it also draws on what Vernant and others have outlined as a specific fifth-century set of attitudes towards sexual relations particularly with regard to marriage: the idea of the difficulties for a woman in a strange house needing new knowledge to deal with the strange alteration in position from daughter to wife would find an echo in a piece as different, say, as Xenophon's didactic prose work the *Oikonomikos* ('Household management'), where he describes precisely the problems from the husband's point of view of educating and overseeing a new wife. The emphases on marriage as an exchange parallel to a financial transaction, on the husband as master with the freedom to leave the confines of the house to spend his time with his friends or associates in the city, are, as we will see, important ways of describing the relations between male and female in the household. In particular, the opposition Medea draws between warfare, the male prerogative of standing in the battle-line, and childbirth, the necessary risk to female life, can be seen drawing on a whole system of interlocking ideas in fifth-century ideology that I shall be outlining later in this chapter. Medea's opposition of warfare and childbirth is not just bravado rhetoric but a remark which draws its force from the common oppositions of Athenian attitudes. It is important, then, to see how this speech draws on such ideology. And in complaining of the state of women in this system of ideas – the very adoption of the female's standpoint marks a certain reversal of traditional ideas – Medea has been taken as espousing a feminist cause, and (of course?) as representing Euripides' own views on the matter.

On the other hand, Medea exhibits all the signs of 'otherness' of which I have written. She is a woman from ancient myth, in a foreign city.[26a]

[26a] On the foreign city in tragedy, see Zeitlin 1986; Vidal-Naquet 1985.

Throughout the play, Jason remarks on her being a barbarian and capable of things no Greek woman would attempt (cf. e.g. 536ff., 1330ff.). It will be in Athens that Medea is promised by King Aegeus that she will find sanctuary. She is related to the gods, a sorceress, a semi-divine figure who appears in a divine chariot for her final exit – an apotheosis which some have felt to be unsuited to her crimes. The woman, indeed, who makes this speech of female helplessness kills her rival and her children to hurt her husband, the male yoke she complains of here. 'I'd rather die', she says, but it is killing that she will adopt as plan of action. Indeed, as she speaks to the chorus, she goes on to mark her difference even from them (252–8):

Yet what applies to me does not apply to you.
You have a country. Your family home is here.
You enjoy life and the company of your friends.
But I am deserted, a refugee, thought nothing of
by my husband – something won in a foreign land.
I have no mother or brother, nor any relation
with whom I can take refuge in this sea of woe.

Rather than the strange loneliness of married life, that Medea earlier decribed, these women enjoy themselves with the company of friends. Medea is the female outsider as much as she is the female intruder. Medea's speech with its various slants on 'the lot of women' cannot, then, be taken as a transparent expression of Euripides' or a Greek view of the status or position of women, although it seems to draw on what have been considered to be specifically fifth-century Athenian attitudes. The ideas of a woman's plight may seem clear and traditional enough – but they are not only ironized by Medea's murderous actions of power and trickery against her husband, and her escape by divine chariot: they are also delivered in the complex context of a tragic festival by a character depicted as an ancient barbarian sorceress, as someone 'other' to the chorus and to the audience. The description and evaluation of Medea, like Antigone, remains involved in a complexity of relations which challenges the possibility of univocal response. The insights that Medea and the *Medea* offer into a sexual discourse, then, cannot be separated from the complex problems of interpretation and reading that I have been outlining in this chapter.

Hippolytus provides a good focus for this discussion of a discourse of sexuality, as it is a play which explicitly revolves around relations of the sexes and attitudes to the sexual – and it is to *Hippolytus* that I wish to turn for the remainder of this chapter.[27]

[27] While writing this book, I have had the good fortune to see and discuss several drafts of Froma Zeitlin's article on *Hippolytus* which will be published by the time my book is out (Zeitlin 1985). My debt to her is large; her article offers the best extended reading of the play I know.

The dramatic scenario which Aphrodite announces in the prologue to *Hippolytus* – Hippolytus' rejection of sexuality and Phaedra's divinely inspired passion for her stepson – is played out in the opening scenes of the drama in a way which marks the structuring force of the relations of the *oikos* in the discourse of sexuality. For Hippolytus' rejection of the goddess Aphrodite cannot be separated from the idea of the male role in the *oikos*. His self-enforced virginity has none of the Christian overtones of self-denial, chastity and control:[28] the need for sexuality is also the need for procreation, the often expressed desire for the continuity of the *oikos* through children. While virginity[29] was generally regarded as a virtue for girls before they married, the aim of successful child production is of paramount concern to the household. Although 'sexual desire', *eros*, is often portrayed as a dangerous, mastering force over the mind and actions of men, which Plato for one regarded as a disruption to the philosophical life that had to be controlled,[30] such exhortations to self-control do not involve a monk-like total avoidance of sexual life as part of an ideal. Indeed, permanent virginity or even prolonged abstinence from sexual activity was regarded by the writers of the Hippocratic corpus as unhealthy; frequently, protracted virginity is regarded as the cause for various, often 'hysterical', symptoms in girls, which marriage and procreation could cure.[31] For men in fifth-century Athens, prostitutes and slaves offered further regular opportunities for sexual activity, apparently quite without moral or social stigma.[32] Periods of abstinence from sexual activity for religious reasons are required for women in certain cases and for men far less commonly;[33] and some cases of abstinence for medical reasons, or, at any rate, cases describing the detrimental effects of sexual activity are recorded;[34] and, as Onians mentions, there is a common belief in the weakening effects of sexual intercourse, the 'drying' which follows from loss of vital fluid.[35] But despite these hesitations, the interest in continence and chastity which the later medical writers of the Roman and Christian eras maintain[36] seems not to have been a similar concern of the writers of the

[28] For the development of the valuing of virginity in the ancient world, see Rousselle 1983.
[29] For virginity in general, see Gernet 1981, 23–4; Lloyd 1983, 58–111, especially 84; King 1983; Sissa 1984.
[30] For examples, see Dover 1973, 61–5, and especially 70; Dover 1974, 208–9.
[31] For examples, see Lloyd 1983, 84 n. 102.
[32] There was a stigma attached to becoming a prostitute – one was liable to lose citizen rights. But this does not apply to the use of prostitutes. On the dangers of extravagant expenditure on prostitutes, see Dover 1974, 179–80.
[33] See Fehrle 1910 for examples, especially 28–35. Virginity is a common requirement for certain priestesses, usually for a short-term office. It is almost unheard-of for priests, see Fehrle 1910, 75ff. See now Parker 1983, 74–103 and 301.
[34] For examples, see Lloyd 1983, 84 n. 103. [35] Onians 1951, especially 109 n. 103.
[36] For one view of this, see Rousselle 1983; but see also Lloyd 1983, 168ff.

Hippocratic corpus, and through a great variety of texts in the fifth century the notions of the self which are developed link ideas of self-control to a narrative of sexual development and procreation within the *oikos*, rather than any ideal of total abstinence. Hippolytus' total rejection of sexuality sounds, then, already a note of disruption.

With this strange rejection of sexuality and the goddess Aphrodite, Hippolytus dedicates himself to Artemis and the hunt, and Hippolytus' first entrance is with his hunting companions, praying to the virgin goddess, Artemis.

This entrance is also to be seen within the terms of Hippolytus' rejection of sexuality. For hunting is not merely a sport or a means of getting food. It has a particular and important functioning in the ideological representation of the development of a person, which has been a topic of much recent analysis. 'Hunting', writes Vidal-Naquet, 'has a wide range of representational meanings.'[37] In the first place, 'it is a social activity which is differentiated according to the various stages of a man's life'.[38] Thus one can distinguish between the *initiatory hunt*, the first hunt of the young man who wishes to join the adult male sphere of action, and the *hunt of the hoplite*, the heroic hunt of the men, leaving the city together to confront wild animals. In the hunt of the young initiand, cunning, trickery and individuality stand as a reversal of the values of the heroic hoplite hunt, where the men in a group face a direct and straight challenge. So through the first hunt, first kill, the youth aspires to join the world of men in an activity rigidly male – and, as is characteristic of initiation practices, a period of reversal precedes the actual incorporation into the body of the men. Indeed, the hunt performs a primary function, argues Vidal-Naquet, in the self-definition of man in his world: he leaves the city, marking its boundaries, to face the wild animal, and brings the conquered animal back to the city to be cooked. So, for Vidal-Naquet, 'hunting is an expression of the transition between nature and culture'.[39]

Hunting places man in a relation to the wild, then, in much the same way as sacrifice, the other way of obtaining meat to consume, places man in a relation to the divine. Both express man's sense of himself through a relation with something other than himself. Indeed, the sacrifice, with its links with agriculture and the city's order, forms a complement and contrast to the hunt. With the killing of a domestic animal, sanctified by corn and wine, the products of man's labour, the sacrifices of the city and the household serve to express man's differentiation from the divine and the bestial in the systematiz-

[37] 1981c, 151. See also Vidal-Naquet 1968; 1974. The relevant articles have been collected and revised in Vidal-Naquet 1981a. For the connections of hunting and sexual development, see Schnapp 1984.
[38] 1981c, 151. [39] 1981c, 151.

ation of things, much as the hunt with its slaughter of the wild animal places man in relation to the wild, uncultivated world of nature. So, it is interesting to note that in the *Oresteia* and the *Philoctetes*, for example, two plays very much involved with young men coming of age, there is a regular return to the imagery of hunting and sacrifice, particularly in the corrupt form of illicit sacrifice and human hunting,[40] which forms a complex system of ideas essential to the reversals and transgressions of those plays, and essential to the representation of the placing of man in his world. In the *Bacchae*, too, where the young ruler Pentheus attempts to control and order his surroundings with authority, it is in a wild parody of a hunt, a pursuit of a human prey by the city's women, half-dressed and armed with natural weapons or with merely their bare hands rather than man-made spears, that the destruction of the young man is completed.

War has an important part in this system also, not only in its similar cultural determination of the functioning of violence in society, but also in the way it helps to specify and organize the placing of a man in society. The aim of the Athenian male, the *telos* of his life, is, as Vernant has influentially argued,[41] to take his place as a citizen in the hoplite rank ready for war. This is also a point of rigid delimitation of sexual role: the man is the one who is recognized as a full citizen, the man is the one to take his place in the citizen army. War, like hunting and sacrifice, is not just the outbreak of violence, but constitutes a group of concepts which functions as a means of ordering and distinguishing differences and relations in society. Hunting, sacrifice, war form an interrelated system of ideas through which man finds his place in the order of things.

Hippolytus' denial of his sexuality and dedication to hunting, then, places him in a specifically distorted role. The hunt, in the interlocking system of ideas I have been outlining, should mark a part of Hippolytus' role as male entering a position and status in society. But his desire to remain apart from society in his refusal of sexual relations and continual worship of Artemis through the chase perverts this functioning of the hunt: it marks his desire to remain outside society, on the edge, away from his role in the *oikos*. Hippolytus' rejection of Aphrodite, then, is not just a desire for chastity or purity, but also a subverting of his passage to manhood. His entrance on stage from the wilds of the countryside with the youths of his own age to spurn the worship of Aphrodite marks how Hippolytus resists the narrative pattern of the development of his role in society, the distortion of the positioning of the self. As he himself says 'May I turn the post at life's end (*telos*) as I began' (87).

[40] See Vidal-Naquet's two essays in Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 1981; also Zeitlin 1965; Foley 1985.

[41] See Vernant 1980, 19–70.

He hopes to finish in the same place, manner, as he started; he hopes to avoid the passage, the stages of a man's life.

After Hippolytus' exit to fodder his horses, the focus shifts to the female world, as the chorus of women enter to tell of Phaedra's sickness. The queen's illness is keeping her inside on a sick-couch with her head hidden under her robes, fasting herself to death. They suggest various possible sources for these strange symptoms. First, divine possession, or sickness as a punishment for a ritual offence – though the real divine cause is notably not mentioned. Second, ironically enough, her husband's supposed infidelity. Third, bad news that has weighed upon her spirit. These suggested causes lead to a general statement of the condition of women's misery (161–9):

> Unhappy is the compound of woman's nature;
> the torturing misery of helplessness,
> the helplessness of childbirth and its madness
> are linked to it for ever.
> My body too has felt this thrill of pain,
> and I called on Artemis, Queen of the Bow;
> she has my reverence always
> as she goes in the company of gods.

The phrase 'unhappy compound' translates the Greek words *dustropos harmonia* which imply 'troublesome (hard to turn, badly turned) harmony, balance of parts'. This is a suggestive phrase, which in this play's focus on the balance and organization of the self seems almost programmatic for the dislocations and struggles to come. Nor do 'is . . . the nature' and 'linked to' capture the strong sexual hints of the Greek verbs *philei* and *sunoikein*. *Philos* and related words, as we have seen, are often explicitly sexual terms, and *sunoikein*, translated 'linked to', is the normal Greek for to 'share an *oikos*', 'live together', often in a sexual sense. This vocabulary looks towards the specific helplessness of the woman's lot, which is to risk life and pain in childbirth. As the *telos* of a man's life is found in the hoplite rank and war, so for woman the aim and final point is marriage and the procreation of children. 'Marriage is to the girl what war is to the boy.'[42] The word for 'woman' and 'wife' in Greek is the same (*gune*). In Greek, being a 'woman' – that is, changing one's status from young girl, unmarried female, virgin (*parthenos, kore, numphe*) – cannot be easily separated from, indeed implies, being given and taken in marriage for the procreation of children. And indeed the vocabulary of childbirth and war is often constructed in similar terms, particularly in Euripides,[43] as we have already seen in the *Medea*: Medea's opposition of childbirth and fighting, like this juxtaposition of childbirth and

[42] Vernant 1980, 23.

[43] See Loraux 1981c.

the returning hunt, is not just the opposition of actions involving risk to life but the opposition of concepts defining the essential difference of male and female roles. As hunting can mark a transitional moment in the young male's gradation to the status of man (*aner*), so marriage and child-production mark the point of passage from girlhood to womanhood for the female.

The final address to Artemis in these lines is interesting. If it appeared at first sight from the opening scene that the opposition of Aphrodite and Artemis was clear-cut (sexual life-creator versus virgin huntress), the connection of Artemis with childbirth confuses any such polarization in terms of a life involved with sex and one unsullied by it. For Artemis, the virgin huntress, is also the goddess who presided over childbirth.[44] Nor is childbirth the only moment of a woman's life over which Artemis exerted influence. As has been much discussed in the scholarly literature of late, the festival of Artemis at Brauron seems to have been an important part of the conception of the stages of a woman's life in Athens.[45] Harpocration tells us that girls 'had to become bears before marriage in honour of Artemis at Mounychia or Artemis at Brauron'.[46] Little is known for sure about the details of this ritual. It seems to have consisted of a procession from Athens (the women leaving the city, crossing its boundaries) and a stay at the shrine of Artemis at Brauron for a period of seclusion preceding and preparing for marriage. The myths told concerning this ritual 'involve an original killing of a bear by some boys, the retribution for which was at first a human sacrifice and later this ritual of substitution was performed by the girl-bears'.[47] Vidal-Naquet, noting the initiatory quality of this myth, offers this analysis: 'In exchange for the very advance of culture implied by the killing of wild animals, an advance for which the men are responsible, the girls are obliged before marriage – indeed, before puberty – to undergo a period of ritual "wildness".'[48] It would seem that at moments of transition in the passage of a woman's life, her explicit connections with Artemis, the goddess of the wild, in a similar way to hunting for the man, mark that transition in terms of a relation of culture to wildness, in terms of the city's self-determination through its sense of an other.

The female's connection with the natural world in the basic biological function of childbirth shows how in certain ideological formations the woman tends towards occupying an uneasy, liminal position in the Greek city. She

[44] See King 1983, for connections between women and Artemis in terms of flow of blood.
[45] See Lloyd-Jones 1983 for a survey of the recent material.
[46] The small size of the shrine building suggests the rite could not have involved all Athenian girls of a certain age every year. See Lloyd-Jones 1983, 93.
[47] Vidal-Naquet 1981d, 179.
[48] 1981d, 179. Osborne 1985, 162–6 notes that the bear, which walks on hind legs and has some other human characteristics, is possibly more difficult to classify than the simple determination 'wild'.

seems not quite a full member of the city as a cultural ideal (despite her necessary role), nor yet a creature of the outside, the wild. Indeed, throughout a great variety of texts[49] in a series of hierarchical oppositions we see, associated with the female, darkness as opposed to light, left as opposed to right, odd as opposed to even, and, as in the stanza I am still glossing, irrationality as opposed to rationality, that prime civic virtue – disorder as opposed to order. Through these oppositions, the female is conceptualized in a devalued position, with a tendency towards exclusion. The Dionysiac women of the *Bacchae*, scarcely dressed in the skins of wild animals, ripping apart animals or even humans with their bare hands, can be seen as a specific tragic distortion of this already devalued positioning of the female – a transgression into an extreme wild state. In a different way, the women in the assembly of Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae* constitute a comic reversal in the opposite direction, as women usurp the male civic roles.

Her biological, religious and cult connections with fertility and childbirth mark woman as necessary and as separate from man. But in that all too often hierarchical separation, as she is ideologically at any rate kept 'on the inside', so at moments of transition or transgression she tends towards the extremes of the uncertain realms beyond the boundaries and order of the city. It is not merely her entrance into the outside world of the state that marks woman's intrusive, transgressive movement – she is, indeed, a *dustropos harmonia*, a balance-of-parts that is troublesome!

It is worth stressing here again, however, that the inside and the outside, as I argued in Chapter 3, are not to be thought of as a strictly and entirely physical topography. The fact that this chorus of young noble ladies go to fetch water immediately marks a tension in the rigidity of the opposition of inside and outside, if the inside is thought of as an 'Oriental seclusion' of the house itself – unless this chorus' freedom stresses the difference between contemporary fifth-century culture and the archaic world of the tragic story. Despite scholars' disagreements about the precise limits and licence of movement outside the house for women of different classes[50] or backgrounds, the regular association of women with the inside and the dangers associated with women when they go outside are extremely important to the normative discourse of sexuality. Whatever the realities of fifth-century Athens – and there is a variety of evidence suggesting that women, especially those of poorer backgrounds, were more involved with work outside the house[51] – the requirement to keep women 'on the inside' is often and forcefully stated. Medea, like Orestes reproaching Clytemnestra in the *Oresteia* (*Cho.* 919–21),

[49] See Lloyd 1966. [50] See Gould 1980 for the discussions, especially 47–51.
[51] See Gould 1980, 47–51 for examples. Also Jameson 1977.

recalls a commonplace of Athenian writing when she asserts men's claims to toil on the outside while women sit at home.

The entrance of Phaedra and the nurse indeed explicitly marks the movement outside – as so often in Attic drama[52] (179–82):

> I have brought out the couch on which you tossed
> in fever – here clear of the house.
> Your every word has been to bring you out,
> but when you're here, you hurry in again.

Indeed, Phaedra responds by trying to remove the covering from her head and then (208–11) by expressing her desire for a pastoral escape beyond the house and city 'beneath the poplars in the tufted meadow'. The 'uncut meadow', the virgin field untouched by man, was the place from where Hippolytus brought his offering to Artemis in his opening iambic lines (73–4). Phaedra follows her far from respectable requests with the even more outrageous appeal to go hunting in the hills (215–21):

> Bring me to the mountains! I *will* go to the mountains,
> among the pine trees where the huntsmen's pack
> trails spotted stags and hangs upon their heels.
> God how I long to set the hounds on shouting!
> And poise the Thessalian javelin, drawing it back –
> here where my fair hair hangs above the ear –
> I would hold in my hand a spear with a steel point.

Phaedra's sickness is seen in her transgressive desire for the outside, the male world of hunting in which Hippolytus roams. Indeed, she addresses Artemis (228–31) not as the chorus had in the goddess's connection with childbirth and women but as the huntress and horse-tamer. This address not only marks her transgressive desire, but also recalls in this juxtaposition of the male and female involvements in the conceptualization of Artemis how one-sided a view of Artemis Hippolytus himself worships. 'It is precisely because of the complexity of divinities like Aphrodite, Artemis, and Poseidon ... and the conflicting drives they instil in men that this simple view is doomed.'[53] In this light, it is interesting that the chorus sing of Diktynna (145) as one of the possible causes of Phaedra's malaise. Diktynna is a Cretan goddess (suitably enough for Phaedra, whose Cretan origin is emphasized later in the play), who is regarded later in the play and elsewhere[54] as the equivalent of Artemis especially in her relation to wild animals. Their mention

[52] Gould 1980, 40 notes well that women's freedom on the stage is not as absolute as it is sometimes made out to be.

[53] Segal 1965, 140.

[54] See 1130. Also *I.T.* 126ff.; Ar. fr. 1359. See Barrett ad loc. for further discussion.

of this goddess not only brings Artemis to the fore as a goddess of the wild, as Barrett suggests, but also implies a variation of cult and name in the worship of Artemis, as well as the variety of implications for both sexes in the portrayal of this divine figure.

Phaedra's appeal to go hunting in the wild makes the nurse cry: 'This is sheer madness that prompts such whirling, frenzied, senseless words' (231). In her sickness, Phaedra's desire for the outside world of the hunt is seen as a corruption of her rationality. With her transgressive move outside comes the tendency to excess – totally to abandon her female role, leave the city like a Bacchant, rush out to hunt in the hills. Such is the corruption of woman's mental processes, her 'madness'. Such is the corruption that follows from the unhinging of female desires. Her outburst is not just 'a hysterical expression of her desire for Hippolytus',[55] but is intertwined with the process of self-definition which is at risk in this play. Wildness, madness, female desire – dangers that society must define and control.

The movements inside and outside in the *Hippolytus* are closely interwoven with the interplay of speech and silence. After Phaedra is brought out into the open, it will be an attempt to make her bring her hidden desire into the open by speaking out that will dominate the next scene. The nurse will slip into the recesses of the house to speak of the queen's passion to Hippolytus, who in the famous third scene rushes from the house threatening to tell all. This drives Phaedra back into the house where she will kill herself – but not before leaving a letter, which, brought into the open, causes Theseus to accuse Hippolytus. The boy's silence in the face of the accusation of rape leads him to being driven off-stage, out of the country. And his death will be caused by Theseus having spoken out. If her confession of desire seems to set Phaedra's tragedy in motion, so Hippolytus' silence seems to hasten his. 'The choice between speech and silence', writes Knox in his classic article, 'is the situation which places the four principal characters in significant relationship. The poet has made the alternation and combinations of choice so complicated – Phaedra chooses first silence, then speech, the nurse speech, then silence, then speech, then silence, Hippolytus speech, then silence, the chorus silence and Theseus speech – that the resultant pattern seems to represent the exhaustion of the possibilities of human will.'[56] Indeed, the apparent fulfilment of Aphrodite's plan through the ins and outs of this patterning suggests the uncertain basis, even the futility, of the continually expressed concern for the outcome of action and the logic of moral choice. Moreover, as we shall see, this game of speech and silence also points towards the problematic role of language itself

[55] Knox 1952, 6.

[56] Knox 1952, 5–6.

in the flow of events. Uncertainty as to which words to use, and whether to use words at all, is an essential dynamic of this tragic text.

The scene between the nurse and Phaedra revolves, first, around the attempt to get Phaedra to name her malaise. For the nurse, as Knox notes, 'there is no problem which cannot be resolved by speech'[57] (295–9):

> But if your troubles may be told to men,
> speak, that a doctor may pronounce upon it.
> So, not a word! Oh, why will you not speak!
> There is no remedy in silence, child!

When, however, after the fencing of hesitation, questioning and manipulation, the secret is out, the nurse has at first no retort, words fail her, and she can only leave the stage, bewailing the lot of her house so cursed by Aphrodite. This leaves Phaedra, unburdened of her silence, to explain her position to the chorus. In a speech famous for its obscurities as much as its nobility, Phaedra expounds her processes of thought. Eros, that external force, has struck. Her first notion was to fight with silence: 'for the tongue is not to be trusted' (395). The doubleness and uncertainty of language is to be combated by a grim silence. Secondly, she planned to overcome this corruption in her attitude (*anoia*, 'madness') by a strong determination to display *sophrosune*, that is, the quality which saves (*sozo*) the mind (*phren*) – self-control, orderly, social, controlled attitudes. *Sophrosune* and related words, as we will see later in this chapter and in Chapter 7, are a prime group of terms of moral valuing – and appropriation – in Attic drama. Thirdly, she resolves finally to die.

Phaedra's reasoning here reflects well that what might be expected of an upper-class Athenian woman. She evinces a self-marked misogyny ('I know I am a woman, object of hate to all'), and this misogyny is juxtaposed to the need for the control of women's dangerous desires in enforced monogamous chastity ('Destitution light upon the wife who plays the tempter and strains her loyalty to her husband's bed by dalliance with strangers'). The fear of uncertain paternity is also a fear of confused property status in inheritance and thus the collapse of the economic order and continuity of the *oikos*. The desire for the continuity of the *oikos* through stable, male inheritance combines with the belief in woman's uncontrollable (hysterical, irrational) sexuality to justify a belief in the rigid maintenance of the strict control of women sexually and socially. With women controlled on the inside, the dangers of the corruption of the paternal order are reduced. Women are given (exchanged) in marriage by men, and their alienability and inviolability are essential to the functioning of the maintenance of the boundaries and social organization of property, of what is owned, one's own. Adultery threatens precisely the bonds and links of

[57] Knox 1952, 7.

society, not just a relationship between man and wife.[58] The woman's chastity is essential to the continuity of the *oikos* as social and economic unit through the production of legitimate children to inherit the family property and continue the paternal line.

It is interesting in this light that Hippolytus is a bastard. He was the offspring of Theseus and Hippolyta, the queen of the Amazons, who had been defeated by Theseus. The Amazons, the warlike race of women who fight and hunt, notably confuse the characteristic boundaries defining the difference between male and female roles. Moreover, they alternate between a virginal rejection of sexual relations with men, and a promiscuity necessary to propagate their race. For them, the bonds and bounds of marriage and society have no place – or rather, these females stand as a permanent transgression of the city's constitution. Theseus' defeat of these women is as much a part of Athenian self-projection as the Lapiths' defeat of the half-beast, half-man centaurs – another fight to protect the inviolability of marriage.[59] Both Theseus' and the Lapiths' victorious battles against the forces of wild anarchy and the corruption of sexual roles were popular subjects for state-financed temple sculptures: like modern political murals, the triumph of the forces of good marks the self-glorification of the state and its ideology. The Amazons and the centaurs are part of the postulation of a negated form of life by which the city determined its own boundaries. They 'affirm the normative values of the male, city-dwelling, hoplite, agriculturally supported warrior by enacting the non-viability of the opposite'.[60]

The bastard Hippolytus (a 'natural child') stands on the edge of these normative values, then, not only in his rejection of sexuality but also in the transgressive sexual act by which he was engendered. As bastard stepson, his role in the family is far from secure.[60a] Phaedra, too, has a dubious sexual background. Her mother was Pasiphae, who through divine displeasure was driven into a passion for a bull, by which she gave birth to the Minotaur. As much as the expected model of generational continuity postulates a moral order and regulation, so in this situation there is a history of transgressive desire and disorder. Well might Phaedra say 'It makes the stoutest man a slave, if in his soul he knows his parents' shame' (424–5). The sins of the father . . .

The nurse returns to dispute with her mistress: 'Second thoughts are somehow better.' Her arguments in juxtaposition to the morality of Phaedra

[58] See Tanner 1980 – an excellent study.

[59] The centaurs attacked the Lapiths during the marriage of the king, to carry off the bride. See du Bois 1984.

[60] Segal 1981, 30–1. See also du Bois 1984; Tyrrell 1984.

[60a] On bastards, see Vernant 1980, 50–1; Hansen 1985, 73–6.

draw on all the manipulative powers of sophistic rhetoric, and in contrast to her previous despairing lack of an answer to her mistress, now the nurse finds the situation 'not beyond thought or reason' (*logos*). It is through the deceptive qualities of *logos* that the nurse proceeds to combine the vocabulary and mythic images of traditional morality and religion in order to suggest the ignoring of both – to the point that she can argue that since the gods are divine and unconquerable, it is hubris to attempt to fight the god Eros. Not giving in to her passion is to be seen as an arrogant act against the power and authority of the gods.

She concludes: 'men would take long to hunt devices out, if we women did not find them first'. The ambivalent valuing of the ability to use the manipulative rhetoric and devices to get one's way – an ability which is one of Odysseus' most notable characteristics – is here aligned with the female, and specifically female speech. Indeed, the seductive vagaries of communication, as well as deviousness in action, are often construed as female qualities in the hierarchy of values – as we saw with Clytemnestra in the *Oresteia*. As much as this Athenian discourse attempts to place woman on the margins, so she is conceived of as using forms of language and action which manipulate the boundaries and margins of proper behaviour. And it will be a deceptive device of a woman, the letter of Phaedra, on which the plot will turn.

Despite her initial horror at the nurse's argument, Phaedra finds that her notion of 'good name' is being systematically undercut by the appeal to the 'real need' to save Phaedra's life by some action – an argument which is itself a neat reversal of Phaedra's opposition of 'fair-seeming words' and the reality of morality. The nurse offers a *pharmakon* for the queen's sickness in her speech. The hoped-for cure, which will turn out to be a poison, marks the irony in this ambiguous term, which can imply both a good medicine and a harmful drug. Indeed, the nurse markedly side-steps the queen's request that she say nothing to Hippolytus, and it is with some foreboding – Phaedra's and the audience's – that the nurse is seen to leave the stage. It is at this point of tension and uncertainty in the narrative that the chorus sing the famous ode on the destructive force of Eros.

At a juncture, then, between the establishment of the cause of Phaedra's sickness and the downfall into disaster through the nurse's revelation and its results, the chorus significantly reflect on the murderous results of Eros' influence. It is interesting that unlike, for example, Aeschylus' ode on Eros in the *Choephoroi*, it is not the transgressive desires of women that are placed at the centre of the collapse of human relationships. Rather, the externalized force of Eros is depicted as attacking human beings, and in the mythological examples of Iole and Semele it is women who suffer destruction, abasement,

and misery through the warlike aggression of males under the sway of Eros. Are these examples to be taken as programmatic for the Aphrodite-inspired actions to come, the rash aggressiveness of both Hippolytus and Theseus?

The baneful influence of passion and its results are all too quickly in evidence. Hippolytus rushes out of the house, claiming his purity tainted by the words he has heard. He extends his outrage into a lengthy diatribe against the whole female sex, in terms which relate closely to the discourse of sexuality I have been discussing. He wants to remove the necessity of women completely; to replace the exchange of marriage as a means of producing children with the exchange of money for children in a temple. He objects in particular to the woman who is clever (that is, who demonstrates the deceitful wiles of the seducing corrupter). And for Hippolytus the cause of this corruption of the clever is lust, Aphrodite's weapon (642–4):

> . . . Lust breeds mischief
> in the clever ones. The limits of their minds
> deny the stupid lecherous delights.

It is only stupidity which prevents all women from following the path of the clever. Hippolytus, moreover, rejects the very possibility of communication for women, for whom language is means and matter of transgression (646–7):

> . . . give them as companions voiceless beasts,
> dumb . . . but with teeth, that they might not converse.

It is to the company of wild beasts that the hunter Hippolytus, who cannot have his fill of hating women (664), would reduce the female sex.

This diatribe, then, like Medea's speech on the race of women, may be read in terms of the discourse I have been outlining. Woman as necessary producer of legitimate children, but whose lusts challenge the status of the house and property, which must be maintained through the rigidity of certain monogamy; woman as dangerous both in her attributes of cultured life (language and communication in her mouth become deception and seduction) and in her tendency towards the wild world beyond the boundaries and order of the city. But this speech also marks the difficulty of reading particularly an explicitly misogynist statement in such a dramatic text as a transparent means to either Euripides' or a Greek audience's view. Is Hippolytus' total rejection of womankind to be seen as part of the tendency to excess in his attitude? Does it mark an unlikely corruption and distortion of the civic valuation of women? And if this diatribe is such a distortion, is it in order to point towards the danger of such excess inherent in a more normal Athenian male standpoint? Or is it in order to justify the status quo by putting forward an obviously

distorted extremism which can safely be rejected by an appeal to the norms of everyday reality? Or is this speech designed to question that status quo by a *reductio ad absurdum* of such a male standpoint? How is it to be seen in relation to the searching struggle of Phaedra to maintain her honour? Or in terms of the nurse's sophistic manipulation? Or the chorus' supportive uncertainty? Despite Euripides' misogynist reputation in antiquity, it is difficult to separate this speech out from the dialectic of the drama as a privileged insight into 'male attitudes' (the poet's or the audience's).

It will, however, be a female communication and trick which will finally compel Hippolytus to defend himself against a charge of rape before his enraged father, Theseus. And it will be the word of the father, with the full weight of his own father, Poseidon, which will not only banish Hippolytus from his paternal home, but also send him to his doom, torn by his own horses.

Although many critics, especially in our post-Freudian age, have been quick to see the bull from the sea in terms of the discourse of sexuality so important to this play, the reversals and distortions of this tragic disaster also reflect the wider markings of the system of human relations in the language of the city. For this curse from the father which kills the son (the denial of the possibility of generational continuity) sets in motion that domesticated animal of agriculture, the bull, the father of the herd, whose sacrifice is normally the most important and the most circumscribed with controls and regulations. And this monstrous aggressor is sent against the hunter and his team, with the result that the team turns and destroys its master, the hunter. And his body is brought in by his companions, as it were, their own prey – a scene which mirrors[61] Hippolytus' first entrance in a tragically different light. The inversions and transgressions of order that we have seen throughout this drama, the distortions of man's and woman's positioning of the self in society and in language in terms of sexual difference, are reflected in these oxymoronic images of the *tauron, agrion teras* (1214), the 'bull from the wild, a monster': the dangerous animal which must be domesticated for agriculture is here wild (and as such a 'monster', 'prodigy'); the hunter is hunted; and destroyed by the very beasts with which he normally proves himself the hunter and master – his own team. It is not only the illicit passion of Phaedra's mother that is recalled by the prodigy of the bull from the sea, but the interlocking series of images of the play by which sexual roles have been expressed.

So through a discourse of sexuality and its interrelations with the other languages of the city I have approached a reading of this play which focuses

[61] Cf. Taplin 1978, 134–5, who regards Hippolytus' exit in exile also as a 'mirror scene' of his first entrance.

explicitly on the role of man and woman, sexual desire, sexual fulfilment. We have seen how the hunter Hippolytus' linkings with Artemis relocate his notion of himself as a (young) man: his rejection of sexuality is involved with a dislocation of this role in the *oikos* (which may reflect his status as 'natural child'), as his particular form of hunting-life seems to fit uneasily into the city's model of its own organization. Phaedra, whose divinely inspired passion for her stepson stands to corrupt her role as chaste protector of the economic, sexual, spatial boundaries of the household as social unit, fights to maintain her values in the face of the dual onslaught of the attacks of Eros on the one hand and the sophistic rhetoric of the nurse on the other; but, in reaction to Hippolytus' savage denunciation of the whole race of women, she resolves both to die and to avenge herself on his lack of understanding. The divine Aphrodite's resolve to punish the excess of one man sets in relief the doubts and inversions, the misreadings and errors, the over-determination of cause and motivation that characterize the human interrelations of this tragedy. Each character distorts or is distorted by his or her relation to his or her sexual role. Indeed, it would seem that the possibility of anything but a *dustropos harmonia* for mortals in this play is evinced only in absence and lack. The misogyny of Hippolytus is not merely a sign of his inverted or distorted attitudes but also a symptom of a specifically tragic *Weltanschauung*.

There is, however, as always, another twist and turn to the process of interpretation that interrupts the passage of that argument, and returns us to the problems of reading a discourse of sexuality with which I opened this chapter.

The *Hippolytus* is unique among extant tragedies in that what we possess is a second version by the same writer. The first *Hippolytus* has not survived except in a few fragments and in some reports of its lack of success. In this first version, it would seem that Phaedra made an explicit attempt on stage to seduce her stepson, who fled covering his head in shame – an act which gives the play its title *Hippolytus Kaluptomenos* ('Hippolytus veiling himself'). About the remainder of the play little is known for certain, but the character of Phaedra was singled out as especially shameless and outrageous, and the play seems to have caused a general outrage. It was the second *Hippolytus*, with a virtuous Phaedra, which won first prize.

Now there are specific echoes of the first play in the second, discernible even from the few fragments we possess. Phaedra's covering and uncovering of her head in the opening scene, as with the bringing out and taking back inside of her bed, seems to suggest even in Phaedra's struggle for morality Hippolytus' earlier moral outrage at the direct sexual approach. So, too, Hippolytus' final covering of his head (1458) as he dies on stage pathetically recalls the earlier

bold rejection of Eros: the result of the upright Phaedra's action is the same, finally, as her immoral predecessor. On a specifically textual level, the few lines of the first play which survive find interesting repetitions and differences in our *Hippolytus*. Fragment 430 (Nauck), for example, claims Eros as the best teacher for boldness (*tolma*) and daring (*thrasos*) when faced with a hopeless situation. The word for 'boldness', *tolma*, indicates often a spirit of transgression, the impulse to evil, as well as the power of endurance. In this fragment, it is normally assumed, Phaedra prepares herself to approach Hippolytus. In the second *Hippolytus*, the nurse, that teacher of the ways of Eros in Phaedra's hopeless situation, attempts to educate Phaedra through a notable ambiguity: *tolma d' erosa*, she exhorts, which means both 'endure your passion', 'bear your love', and also 'be bold, daring in your love'. The nurse as manipulator of language towards evil adopts the language of the earlier Phaedra to persuade her moral mistress. So, indeed, Theseus cries at Hippolytus (937) in direct echo of the first Phaedra's line 'Where will daring impudence find limits?', 'Where will there be an end to *tolma* and *thrasos*?' His accusation of Hippolytus, ironically enough, marks the continuation of the outrageous language of the first Phaedra's steps towards seduction at this turning-point of the moral Phaedra's revenge.

Such specific interplays can be multiplied, but it is a wider intertextual irony that I wish to follow. I have already discussed the focus in this work on language as language. Specifically, I looked at the way that the exchanges of speech and silence in contrast with the explicit divine planning marked the imbroglio of mortals' attempts to control communication and choice. And it is to this focus on language, with regard to the use of the vocabulary of moral, sexual control that I wish to return.

In Chapters 1 and 2, I discussed the self-reflexive concern with language as language and the rhetoric of appropriation which twists language into a power struggle over meaning rather than a transparent medium of communication. Now in *Hippolytus*, 'Euripides is keenly aware of the ambiguous, "protean", quality of moral terms which most strongly guide our conduct ... His attention to the shifting meaning of words like *semnos* and *sophron* is obvious.'[62] Indeed, the terms of purity and self-control in relation both to a person's conception of herself/himself and to the nature of moral action (inasmuch as these can be separated) set in play not only the various tensions between humans (as in the opening scene between Hippolytus and the servant) but also the motivations of divine reasoning. Aphrodite in her prologue, for example, expresses her disapproval of those who *phronousin eis hemas mega*, 'have a great, proud disposition of mind towards me'. This is

[62] Segal 1970, 278.

picked up by the servant, after Hippolytus rejects his appeal to show some honour (*time* 107) to Aphrodite (as she had declared, 'honoured (*timomenoi*) by mortals the gods rejoice' 8). He prays to Aphrodite, rejecting the young men whose 'disposition of mind is thus' (*phronountas houtos*). So Phaedra describes her attempt to reach a safe disposition of mind in similar terms (376, 378, 390, 412 repeat words of the root *phren*, 'mind'). And the nurse's rhetoric against the queen, her second thoughts (*phrontides*), echoes Aphrodite herself as she warns against 'having a great, proud disposition of mind' (445) against the goddess. Hippolytus' final words in his diatribe against women exhort the need for women 'to be chaste', as Grene translates. But the verb is *sophronein* (from which, the noun *sophrosune*, and adjective *sophron*). The etymology of the term *sophronein* is *sos phren*: 'safe, sound, mind'; and it means something closer to 'sound attitudes', 'self-control', 'due observance of limits' than 'physical chastity'.

Phaedra's last line ironically echoes that final outburst of her stepson. I quote again from Grene's translation: 'he will have his share in this my mortal sickness and learn of chastity in moderation'. The strange phrase 'chastity in moderation' is another attempt to render the same word in the same metrical position, *sophronein*. She returns precisely his threat of a future learning of this quality.

The choral ode which follows describes the locus of the tragedy firmly as in the *phren*, 'mind' (765, 775, translated by Grene 'spirit' and 'heart'). Moreover, the debate between Theseus and Hippolytus which follows opens with an exchange again explicitly in terms of *phren* (919–22):

> Theseus: ... One thing you never hunt for – a way to teach fools wisdom.
> Hippolytus: Clever indeed would be the teacher able to compel the stupid to be wise.

The term for wisdom (920) is *phronein*, which I translated earlier as 'to be of a particular disposition of mind'. Hippolytus' answer picks up but specifies further Theseus' bitterly ironic language. 'The stupid' is *tous me phronountas*, those who do not *phronein*. And the term for 'to be wise' is *eu phronein* – not merely *phronein* but qualified by the adverb *eu*, 'well': 'It would be a wise teacher who could teach those who can't think to think well.'

From this beginning, the vitriolic argument between son and father continually harps on the mutual accusation of and concern for the other's state of mind. *Phren* and related words are repeated 926, 930, 983 (where they are not translated explicitly by Grene) and 936, 969. Indeed, Hippolytus' claim in his own defence is that no man is 'more *sophron*' than himself (995). The translation 'chaste' here continues to blur the issue: for it is the general word for soundness of mind, or observance of the boundaries and order of things that

Hippolytus has appropriated for his regime, rather than a direct expression of chastity or virginity (which scarcely allows of degrees). Bound by his oath, Hippolytus cannot speak out the truth – but in his tortured attempt to indicate something of his dilemma, it is precisely his language of *sophronein* that divides against itself. In the following lines, 'virtuous' translates *sophron* (1034–5):

> Virtuous she was in deed, although not virtuous:
> I that have virtue used it to my ruin.

The vocabulary of *sophronein* at this point seems to display a disjunctive and corrupting force rather than its normal association of moral virtue and a positive value as a criterion of action.

From this all too brief analysis, it will, I hope, be clear that the correct attitude of mind and observance of bounds and limits in terms of the vocabulary of *sophronein* and *phronein* is an extremely important part of the discourse of sexuality and the self in this drama. The notion of a 'correct' form of *sophronein* is postulated only through its absence from the system of different and competing claims. As an object of appropriation and dislocation, the moral terminology serves to undermine the prospect of a unified didactic message in this play (unless, perhaps, if such a message concerns the disjunctions of moral language). Indeed, in the final scene as Artemis apparently explicates and expounds the truth to the characters on stage, she disconcertingly calls Hippolytus *sophron* (1402). If there is one character in the play whose notion of *sophronein* has been at risk from the opening of the play, it is Hippolytus. It is surprising to have it authorized by the divinity at the moment of his demise. The security and harmony that some have felt from the divine framing and from the final reconciliation of father and son in this play does not extend to any neat bounding or limitation of the moral vocabulary. How are we to read Artemis' claim that Hippolytus showed himself *sophron* and Aphrodite hated him for it? The open-ended language resists any comforting harmonization. Rather than simply developing the nobility of Phaedra, the readoption of the vocabulary of the observance of proper limits brings its own ironies and uncertainties.

Phaedra herself in famous lines (338ff.) also discusses the ambivalence of another key term, *aidos*. Now I do not intend to look at the various arguments as to what she might mean by this ambivalence,[63] but I do want to consider the vocabulary by which she expresses her sense of the doubling of language. I use my own translation (385–7):

[63] Cf. Barrett ad loc.; Segal 1970; Avery 1968; Willink 1968, who discuss these lines.

> . . . There are two sorts of *aidos*; the one is not evil,
> the other a burden on the *oikos*. If the right measure were clear,
> then there would not be two things having the same letters.

The ambiguity in moral language is expressed as the ambiguity in the signifying form of the letters: one set of letters for two ideas. This is what hinders the clarity of the 'right measure', of 'hitting the target'.

The nurse in her speech to the queen recalls old written texts[64] (451) in which Zeus' love for Semele is depicted. This example is used as an argument for the need to give way to love, which cannot be conquered. It seems significant that in the following choral ode, the chorus recall that same story (555–64) to indicate the murderous, destructive force of passion – immediately before the cries of the outraged Hippolytus are heard. It would seem that the nurse's appeal to written evidence is doubled into doubt by its juxtaposition to the chorus' reading of the myth.

The letter of Phaedra is the prime example of the possibility of misinterpretation of the written word (both in its composition and its reading). The letter 'cries aloud' (877), it has 'a song' (880), it is a 'sure accusation' (1057–8). This is opposed to Hippolytus' appeal to the house to bear him witness (1074), which Theseus dismisses scathingly as a 'clever appeal to witnesses without a voice' (1076). The assumed certainty of the written word leads Theseus to utter the irreversible curse, the spoken word which bears no retraction. And it will be the very uncertainty, the very doubleness of letters as a signifying medium, which will lead him to wish back his curse in vain.

In these terms, it is interesting that the most famous line of this play, which reputedly caused a scandal for the Athenian audience, asserts the possibility of a complete disjunction between words and thoughts, moral choices, intellectual decisions – and so the impossibility of sure reading: 'my tongue has sworn but my mind (*phren*) is unsworn'. That Hippolytus does not speak out but obeys his oath to his own death, does not totally repress the fearful spectre of a language, a religious invocation, totally divorced from intention, clarity, truth. At one pole, stands Theseus' curse, performative language with no slippage, no error, but the total fulfilment of intention in expression (though his intention becomes seen as misplaced); at the other pole, the possibility of a complete disjunction between words and what they might be read to signify. It is not surprising that Phaedra regards the tongue as not to be trusted (395).

Now the device of Phaedra's letter 'must be private to this one play'.[65] How, then, does that piece of writing relate to the rewriting of the *Hippolytus*,

[64] *Graphai* can mean either paintings or writings. Barrett, following Dodds, regards writings as the only possible meaning here.

[65] Barrett 1964, 38.

the second writing (reading) of the myth? The second play, which wins first prize with its reconstruction of its heroine in terms of the traditional morality of a 'good woman', does not simply 'correct the impropriety so objectionable in the first play'.[66] For not only does it place at risk specifically the vocabulary of moral restraint that it seems to have readopted (as we saw with *sophronein*), but also it challenges and disrupts the positioning of such morality both by its juxtaposition to the cynicism of sophistic rhetoric, and by the disturbing portrayal of the divine world (that authorization of the traditional moral tenets). Moreover, the notion of 'second thoughts being wiser' is put in the mouth of the sophistic nurse to justify her lengthy challenge to traditional morality, as the need for rereading Phaedra's letter, the nurse's written stories, the letters of the words of moral language, all suggest the uncertainty of the process of textual interpretation. Misreading is an essential dynamic of the *Hippolytus*.

Between this emphasis on misreading and the shifting of misleading language, the security of the interpreter of Euripides' play is undermined. Where does he stand in the twisting, ironic inversions of language and reading that constantly assert his tendency to error? In other words, rather than offering a simple rectification of the first play's representation of corrupt femininity, the second *Hippolytus* through the very act of *rewriting* restresses the divisions and divisiveness of language and discourse, that undermine the accurate and fixed determination of sexual, social, intellectual boundaries and order. The interplay between the two *Hippolytuses*, rather than stabilizing the moral vocabulary, can only re-emphasize its instabilities. Rewriting, rereading cannot but mark the problems of *difference* in repetition. Division and divisiveness are constantly being stressed in the relation between the two plays, even as the latter is accepted as rectifying the first. And the introduction of the letter of Phaedra into the second play, the text within the text, written to deceive, read and reread, itself suggests that the dangers of slippage in the process of communication stem from the possible inversions of a text's message.

It is, then, not so much 'morality', but the difference between 'morality' and 'immorality' as classifications that seems to be set at risk in this play. Could it be that Euripides' drama questions the Athenians' judgement, which nevertheless went on to give him first prize second time round, but reviled the first play for its flaunting of morality?

The sense in which these ironic inversions of Euripides' play undermine the definition of morality and immorality in relation to each other must affect our reading of the sexual discourse of the *Hippolytus*. As much as it seems

[66] This phrase is translated from the play's hypothesis (II, 6–7).

necessary to approach the play through a sense of the Athenians' different system of ideas that constitutes the way the relations between the sexes are formulated, so the play itself seems to be challenging the possibility of the definition or delimitation of that system. The language of the play does not simply reflect a discourse of sexuality but challenges, ironizes, undermines the safe use of the language of that discourse, particularly in the way that the play contests the security of the processes of classification, reading, interpretation, by which distinctions, decisions, regulations are determined. A sexual discourse cannot provide the grid, the framework, into which this play can be fitted, and controlled, and ordered. Rather than offering an explanatory model, as some Freudian or anthropological readings have asserted, the language and logic of sexual difference reinscribe the divisions and divisiveness of meaning within the tragic text.

There is, then, a constant tension in the dialectic of the play between explicit statement, tacit knowledge, and the questioning that the tragic text instigates. This tension or interplay between the necessity of a reading which takes into account a specific cultural discourse of sexuality and the necessity of a reading which is alive to Euripides' decentring, vertiginous ironies, requires a constant reinterpretation, a constant turning back on oneself, one's self. The final fixing of meaning with regard to the moral, social languages of sexuality is subverted in Euripides' tragic text. One cannot hope to avoid rereading the rewritten . . .

READING GREEK TRAGEDY

Simon Goldhill
Fellow of King's College, Cambridge

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS