19

EURIPIDES: POET OF PARADOX

ERICH SEGAL

The progress of Greek tragedy has been likened to the famous fire-relay held at the Panathenaic festival. Aeschylus, nobly bearing the torch lit with the spark of Prometheus, handed it to Sophocles who carried its splendor still further, before giving it to Euripides. But this last playwright was not only too weak to carry the torch, he could not even keep the flame alive.[1] A dramatic simile, but like so much that is said of Euripides, wholly inaccurate. We are led to believe that Euripides 'killed tragedy'. Aeschylus himself argues as much in the *Frogs*, and this gospel according to Aristophanes has been echoed through the ages, especially by vigorous apostles like Schlegel and Nietzsche. And yet there is a problem here, even for those who believe that the ancient classics never lie. Did not Aristotle consider Euripides 'the *most* tragic of the tragic poets' because most of his plays end – as the best tragedies should – sadly (*Poetics* XIII 9–10)?

No one would dispute that some of Euripidean drama presents the most unmitigated misery ever witnessed on a stage. The ruthless tyrant Alexander of Pherae was so ashamed to be crying at the sorrows of Hecuba that he had to leave the theater before the *Trojan Women* was over. But then what of the 'escape plays' like the *Helen* or the *Andromeda*, in which misery turns suddenly to mirth and – that most comic of catastrophes – marriage? Scholars can provide another convenient explanation for this Euripidean 'development' by adducing the example of Shakespeare. After the storms of *King Lear* came the smiling calm of *The Winter's Tale* or *The Tempest*. Likewise, after the tearful *Trojan Women* came the happy *Helen*. Unfortunately, Euripides will not lie still on the literary bed of Procrustes, for after the *Helen* came the *Bacchae*. And before all of them came the *Alcestis*.

To discuss Euripides is to speak in paradoxes, even Aristotelian ones. The *Poetics* insists that the dénouement of a tragedy conform with a certain justice. Good men must not suffer ill and, most important, evil men must not prosper. This last instance, Aristotle argues, would be the most *un*tragic situation of all (*Poetics* XIII 3). In light of this, how can we evaluate Euripides' *Heracles*, whose tormented protagonist is not only totally innocent, but has been constantly hailed as the greatest benefactor of mankind? It is not a question of a hero being more sinned against than sinning. Heracles has not 'sinned' at all; in fact, even before his heroic quest he has proved himself a paragon of *pietas*. Similarly, in the *Trojan Women* the playwright goes to great pains to emphasize that Andromache has been a saintly wife (cf. lines 643 ff.), and yet Hector's widow is doomed to endure what she herself describes as a fate worse than death: a life without hope. In direct contrast, Helen, who is considered by everyone to be responsible for all the misery (and indeed *everyone* gets to indict her during the play), goes scot-free. While the Trojan widows sing sorrow in sackcloth and ashes, Helen is blithely arranging her *toilette*, so that she can appear well groomed (and, miraculously, well gowned) for her happy reunion with Menelaus. By Aristotle's own rules, this play is a paradox: 'most tragic' because of its sad ending, and most 'untragic' because the wicked Helen prospers.

It is important to realize that Euripides was an iconoclast from the beginning. We have nothing from the earliest years of his creative life, but we can see that his first extant play was a bold departure from traditional dramaturgy.[2] In the year 442 or 441, Sophocles' Antigone marched bravely to her death, lamenting that her tomb was also to be her wedding chamber (lines 891 ff.). In 438, Euripides also presented a self-sacrificing young woman who likewise dies voluntarily out of family loyalty, but who goes *to* her tomb and then *back* to her wedding chamber. And already in the *Alcestis* we see articulated the famous Euripidean life-in-death paradox which Aristophanes would so often mock.[3] Before our very eyes, a funeral has turned into a wedding, 'tragedy' has suddenly become 'comedy'. Characteristic of Euripides, the paradox is vividly visual: the bride wears black. (In the *Iphigenia at Aulis* the victim is dressed in bridal white.) Moreover, it is no accident that this change has been effected by Heracles, half-human, half-divine, a drunken Dionysiac in the service of Apollo. In the *Alcestis* we find innumerable motifs which appear again and again, with differing emphases, throughout Euripides' *oeuvre*: a sudden shift of fortune, demonstrating the potential joy-in-sorrow (and vice versa) all emphasized by verbal paradoxes in the dialogue; Salvation in the Nick of Time; *deus* (in this case, demi-god) *ex machina*; the perplexing problem of what is real and what illusory, and perhaps most important, the evasion of limit.

A longing for escape seems to permeate all the plays of Euripides. But

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the question of which characters do escape and which do not defies rational analysis. Magically, a flying car arrives to rescue the 'villainess' Medea and whisk her to safety. Though her actions are the precise opposite of those of Alcestis, she enjoys the same rewards. Small wonder that Aristotle singled out Medea's *ex machina* exit for special censure (it is, of course, 'most untragic'). And yet Phaedra – who is no Alcestis, but surely no Medea either – is denied rescue from her dilemma. The famous 'escape ode' from the *Hippolytus* has significance even beyond its context, and bears quoting. Gilbert Murray's somewhat quaint translation may not be the most literal, but it is still perhaps the best known piece of Euripides in English:[4]

> Could I take me to some cavern for mine hiding,
> In the hill-tops where the Sun scarce hath trod;
> Or a cloud make the home of mine abiding,
> As a bird among the bird-droves of God!
> Could I wing me to my rest amid the roar
> Of the deep Adriatic on the shore,
> Where the waters of Eridanus are clear,
> And Phaëthon's sad sisters by his grave
> Weep into the river, and each tear
> Gleams, a drop of amber, in the wave.
>
> To the strand of the Daughters of the Sunset,
> The Apple-tree, the singing and the gold;
> Where the mariner must stay him from his onset,
> And the red wave is tranquil as of old;
> Yea, beyond that Pillar of the End
> That Atlas guardeth, would I wend;
> Where a voice of living waters never ceaseth
> In God's quiet garden by the sea,
> And Earth, the ancient life-giver, increaseth
> Joy among the meadows, like a tree.

Faced with the various miseries of life, many of Euripides' choruses yearn for the wings of a bird (e.g., *Helen* 1478 ff.), to fly from the face of disaster. But here in the *Hippolytus*, the cry for escape itself contains an ironic indication that there will be none at all. The chorus of Troezenian women wishes to travel to the edge of the earth, the Atlantic pillars. In a few moments Theseus will wish that he could banish Hippolytus to this same far-off frontier (line 1053). But the very theme of this play is no exit; hell hath no limits. In the opening lines of the prologue, Aphrodite has told us that her power (which is, among other things, the power to destroy whomever she wishes) extends even as far as the pillars of Atlas. Moreover, the paradise to which the chorus would flee has already

seen one fatal chariot accident. Would Hippolytus himself find safety where young Phaëthon fell after losing control of his horses? Even at the limits of the earth, the situation strangely resembles what is about to occur on stage. Phaëthon's sisters, the 'Daughters of the Sunset' are but another – typically Euripidean – chorus of grieving women, who weep with such sorrow that their tears turn to amber. What good, then, to fly off like a bird? Grief may be transmuted, but it cannot be transcended.

The second stanza of this escape ode reminds us that the desired place of refuge was also the scene of one of Heracles' greatest triumphs, where he gathered golden apples, and shouldered Atlas' burden: the weight of the world. In a later play, Euripides' chorus can boast that the protagonist has actually journeyed to this fabled territory (*Heracles* 392 ff.):

> Thence among the singing maidens,
> western halls' Hesperides.
> Plucked among the metal leaves
> the golden fruit, and slew
> the orchard's dragon-guard
> whose tail of amber coiled the trunk
> untouchably. He passed below the sea
> and set a calmness in the lives of men
> whose living is the oar.
> Under bellied heaven next,
> he put his hand as prop:
> there in the halls of Atlas,
> his manliness held up
> heaven's starry halls.
> (trans. Arrowsmith)

What is more, just as he did in the *Alcestis*, Heracles has arrived precisely in time to rescue a household menaced with death; this time, it is his own family. But, just as the *Alcestis* turned suddenly from tragedy to triumph after the savior's arrival, here matters take the opposite course. Having successfully gone to the limits of the earth (and beneath it) Heracles is trapped. Hera sends Madness personified against him and he will not escape (line 842). This unexpected demon *ex machina* causes Heracles to murder his own wife and children. When he awakens to the full horror of his deed, he too wishes to escape as a bird:

> Oh no – what can I do? Where can I find refuge
> from these ills? Fly off with wings? Dive beneath the earth?
> (lines 1157–58)

But no, he cannot fly. Quite the contrary, as he tells Theseus a few moments later, it is his own happiness that has taken wings and flown from him (line 1186). And why dive beneath the earth? He has, in fact, just returned from a trip to Hades, but now hell is inside his head (lines 1297 ff.). No divine epilogue relieves this new misery, not even a goddess like Artemis in the *Hippolytus*, to tell him why things must be as cruel as they are.[5] Heracles is abandoned like Sophocles' Philoctetes, although he must live forever with both wound *and* bow (cf. *Heracles* 1376 ff.), offered no promise of surcease from pain. There is, moreover, an ironic parallel between Heracles' outcry (quoted above), and *Medea* 1296 ff, where Jason, hell-bent on punishing the villainess who has just murdered the King and the Princess of Corinth, shouts that Medea would have to 'hide herself beneath the earth, or fly winged into the air' to avoid the retribution she deserves. And yet but a moment later, her hands stained with still more innocent blood, Medea will in fact soar into the sky . . . completely free. Aristotle was understandably outraged by Medea's escape; but he does not even comment upon the horrible fate of Heracles. Indeed, it is beyond the pale of rational criticism. But the question is its own answer: this is Euripides. In fact, the *Alcestis* and the *Heracles*, with the same demi-god first as savior and then as victim, present the polarities of Euripidean drama: the untragic and the hypertragic.

A similar Euripidean paradox is visible in the figure of Helen. While often vilified as the oversexed bitch who caused the Trojan War,[6] she appears in the *Helen* as 'virginal' and pure,[7] waiting to be rescued by her beloved Menelaus and, though dressed in black, to be rewedded to him during (of course) a funeral ceremony. Moreover, Helen had never even been to Troy; an image had gone in her place to cause all that slaughter.[8] In the *Alcestis*, King Admetus is a widower who is simultaneously burying his wife and marrying her again. Here Helen is a widow simultaneously burying (an image of) and marrying (the real) Menelaus. Moreover, the play concludes with the appearance, *ex machina*, of Castor and Pollux, earlier described as 'both dead and not dead' (line 138), who absolve Helen from any guilt whatever, noting with supreme irony that 'the world has few like her' (line 1687). It is small wonder that when scholars tire of calling Euripides 'the Greek Ibsen', they dub him 'the Greek Pirandello'.

Dare we ask why, according to Euripides, a 'deceitful' Iphigenia escapes from Tauris, while a 'noble' one is immolated at Aulis? We have earlier been indiscreet enough to broach this matter in the case of Alcestis and Medea. It is the same question we ask concerning the bad Helen of the *Troades* (or the *Orestes*) and the 'virgin' waiting in Egypt like patience on a monument. It is not merely a case of comparing plays, for the dramas themselves abound in contradictory characters and

situations. Every play of Euripides seems to be asking a question or else boldly stating some mythical and/or visual paradox. It is easy to see why Euripides was, even in antiquity, branded 'the philosopher of the stage', and linked with men like Protagoras, whose new philosophy called all in doubt, and who composed, among other things, an *Antilogiai* (Contradictions), a kind of paean to paradox, celebrating the power of rhetoric to affirm uncertainty.

All the while Euripides was composing his plays of dubious genre and questionable morality, Sophocles was writing – there is no better term – heroic tragedy. And there are no *antilogiai* in the Sophoclean protagonist; he is a monolith, unyielding and uncompromising. If he is at odds with the world, he will leave it, but 'Ajax will 'quit himself like Ajax'. The cowardly messenger may run backward and forward while en route to bring Creon the news of Antigone's defiance, but she herself never hesitates for a moment. She never doubts that she is doing the 'right' thing. (Hegel grants Creon a case of equal 'rightness', but that does not detract from Antigone's self-assurance.) Sophocles' admiration for this sort of heroism, the divine in man, is nowhere more evident than in the well-known choral ode from the *Antigone* (lines 332 ff.) which begins:

> There are many awesome things [*deina*] in the world, but nothing more awesome [*deinoteron*] than man.

The sentiment is similar to the Hebrew psalmist's 'I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: awesome are Thy works.' The word *deinon* connotes both admiration and fear, but Sophocles is clearly focusing on what is to be admired. The world of Euripides is also full of *deina*, awesome – if rarely admirable – things, but man is definitely not one of them. In fact, what is *deinon* usually acts *upon* man. Sometimes this force has a name, like Dionysus:

> He [Pentheus] shall come to recognize
> that Dionysus son of Zeus has come into the world, undeniably a god,
> at once most awesome [*deinotatos*]
> and gentlest to mankind.
>
> (*Bacchae* 859–61)

It is the ultimate irony that Greek drama, which began, as Herodotus tells us, with the suffering of Dionysus for humanity, should culminate in a play which presents the suffering of humanity for Dionysus. This new 'god' is the supreme paradox, an irrational, self-contradicting force that is at once most benign and most horrible.[9]

But Euripides' Dionysus is not merely an external *deinon* to whom men are as flies to wanton boys (this is Seneca's reinterpretation), it is also a force acting from within. In contrast to the single-minded Sophoclean characters, we have Euripides' Medea, the first expression of what Bernard Knox has called 'the unheroic temper'. Stricken with doubt, torn by conflicting inner forces, Medea changes her mind four times in twenty lines (1044 ff.). Finally darker Dionysiac passions conquer her reason. The denouement of the *Bacchae* demonstrates that Pentheus is lord of nothing, least of all his own actions. And Hippolytus, champion charioteer, is unable to control the horses he has been training his entire life (lines 1355 ff.). It is a striking coincidence, and all the more striking because it is a coincidence, that Freud uses a similar image of a horse out of control to describe the overwhelming power of the Id.[10]

Our most familiar classical tragedies have a single stage setting: the palace of a king. From play to play the palace remains; only the monarch changes. Today it is the House of Atreus, tomorrow the House of Oedipus – or of any royal family whom Aristotle deemed worthy of tragic treatment. The play might depict the fall and/or rise of princes, but the palace remained intact. Agamemnon is carried out; Orestes soon marches in. If we seek an image to describe what Euripides 'did' to classical tragedy, we can do no better than say he destroyed the palace. Two particular instances come to mind. In the *Trojan Women*, Troy lies in ruins *on the stage*. The citadel has already been sacked when the play begins, and the heroes – princes one and all – are dead. We may argue the topicality of this drama, reminding ourselves that the Island of Melos had been sacked the previous year and that the *Trojan Women* was Euripides' castigation of war. But the play is more than a reportage of ruin; it contains as much symbolism as journalism. It is saying that in 415 BC the royal palace was a shambles and that Homer's epic heroes no longer have a dwelling place in the Greek theater.

Still another palace was to fall. In the final play of Euripides, Dionysus tears down the palace of Pentheus, before, in fact, he tears the king himself into pieces. Ironically, this ultimate destruction of the dignity of man (if not man himself), demonstrates that he is king neither over his house nor over his mind.[11]

But the theater itself was not destroyed. The Euripidean revolution merely changed the decor and the *dramatis personae*. In place of the classical *reges et proelia* ('kings and battles'), Euripides brought to the stage what Aristophanes derides as *oikeia pragmata* (*Frogs* 959), 'familiar affairs', or still more literally, 'household things'. The living room replaces the throne room. But he did not wait until his later plays to present these bourgeois people in their bourgeois surroundings. What is preserved at the end of his first extant play is not so much the 'House of Admetus' as the *home* of Alcestis.[12] We are back to where this essay – and Euripides – began.

On the authority of the Parian Marble, we can place the birth of Euripides at 484 BC. He was born early enough to know Athens in its glory and to witness the final plays of Aeschylus, notably the *Oresteia* in 458. He made his own debut in 455, a year after Aeschylus' death, with a *Peliades*, clearly some version of the Medea story, but did not win the first of his (very few) victories until 441. He is said to have written ninety-two plays, seventy-eight of which were known to the librarians in Alexandria who at the same time, possessed 123 plays by Sophocles. The fact that we still have eighteen (nineteen if we count the *Rhesus*) by Euripides and only seven by Sophocles gives some indication of the favor enjoyed by Euripides in later times.

That he was a bold theatrical innovator is indisputable. Sophocles, as Aristotle quotes him, acknowledged that Euripides presented men as they actually were – people, not paragons. Euripides therefore owns the distinction of having brought 'realism' to the stage. Visually as well as verbally, he rejected the 'epic' (or perhaps we should say 'Homeric') theater. Gone forever were the Aeschylean red carpet and purple passages. Euripides' dialogue is extremely simple, although both Aristotle and 'Longinus' recognize a sublime quality in this simplicity.[13]

It is also true that Euripides banished choral drama from the stage. His 'intrigue' plays made the chorus seem very much out of place. Fifteen Ideal Spectators may look well in a palace, but they considerably clutter up a living room. (Eric Havelock has aptly described the Euripidean revolution as 'putting on stage *rooms* never seen before'.) Time and again his choruses are cautioned to keep secrets that they have overheard; it becomes increasingly clear that they should not be there in the first place. And yet, as if to confound the scholars, Euripides finishes his career with the *Bacchae*, almost as much a choral drama as the *Oresteia*.

The vast influence of Euripides throughout the ages is ample testimony that what he gave the drama was not a *coup de grâce*, but many *coups de théâtre*. He made a deep impression on everyone, including philosophers, poets, and the apostle Paul (who quotes him in I *Corinthians*). Needless to say, the playwrights worshiped him, comedians as well as tragedians. This awe is reflected in the famous remark by Philemon, writer of Greek New Comedy, who claimed he would hang himself to meet Euripides. Euripides' influence on Seneca is well known, while the romantic comedy he inspired in Menander gave models to Plautus and Terence for their Roman entertainments. Whether Euripides 'killed' tragedy is open to debate; that he created melodrama has never been doubted. The long thread from such intrigue-plays as the *Ion* wove innumerable handkerchiefs for centuries of heroines to drop.

And in one way or another, 'Euripidean drama' is still being written. There are conscious emulations like O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* (from the *Hippolytus*) or T. S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party* (from the *Alcestis*) and *The Confidential Clerk* (from the *Ion*). But other writers have more forcefully, if unconsciously, presented Euripides *redivivus*. I think especially of García Lorca and Edward Albee. The Spanish poet is justly admired for his portraits of women swept up in the tidal wave of passion. The Novia in *Blood Wedding* is caught in the very same dilemma as Phaedra, her sense of what is right (and honorable) in violent conflict with a sexual desire that is driving her insane.[14] The same author's Yerma, like Medea, is a victim of a passion which 'poisons' her, turning love into hate ('me estoy llenando de odio', she cries), and drives her to a bloody act of revenge. Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* also deals with the vague boundary between love and hate and culminates, like the *Medea*, with a *Kindermord* (albeit an imaginary one) as the supreme act of vengeance. All of this proves not so much that Euripides was ahead of his time as that the issues he broached were timeless.

One final point. There is a common notion that Euripides was unpopular, unappreciated in his own day. If 'success' be measured merely by prizes won, then he surely was a failure, for he received the best-in-festival award only four times in his entire life. But this might indicate, as one scholar suggested, that the judges 'were either idiots or bribed'. It is easier to argue their aesthetic shortcomings, since this same group of arbiters also failed to give first prize to *Oedipus Rex*. But if we look carefully, we can see evidence that in the playwright's own day, the public 'adored Euripides like a god'.[15] We have Plutarch's authority that the average Athenian sailor could recite whole passages of Euripides by heart. To be singing his odes is *ipso facto* to be singing his praises.[16] And contemporary authors were not loath to alter their style in the wake of the Euripidean revolution. Sophocles himself owes a stylistic debt to his innovating contemporary, one particularly visible in the *Trachiniae* and *Philoctetes*.[17] Many scholars have even found verbal echoes. On a quiet night they can hear the voice of Alcestis in Sophocles' Deianira. And there is an interesting similarity between *Alcestis* 941 ff. and *Trachiniae* 900 ff., two passages which describe a tearful spouse wandering through the living quarters of a palace, bewailing the death of domestic happiness – with the significant distinction that in Euripides' play it is *King* Admetus who displays 'unmanly grief'.

But without any doubt the greatest contemporary admirer of Euripides was Aristophanes. His imitation was surely a form of flattery, his parody an expression of reverence. And so much of what Aristophanes had the comic license to utter, Euripides was daring to say on the 'serious' stage, not the least of which involved such frightening issues as the death of God, the New Morality, and the changing relations between the sexes. We think immediately of 'Cloud-theology' (Euripides in several passages replaces Zeus with 'Aether'), as well as the escape theme of the *Birds*. And the significance of Euripides' 'appearance' in the *Thesmophoriazusae* far transcends both parody and caricature. These two playwrights were so much alike that Cratinus, a contemporary comic author, coined the verb 'to Euripidaristophanize'. Euripides was always popular. He presented his 'familiar affairs' not so much to shock the good burghers of Athens as to please them. It is naïve to argue, like H. D. F. Kitto, that the Athenian public preferred art 'with themes of importance', and hence rejected Euripides in favor of Aeschylus and Sophocles.[18] Heroic drama, like the epic which inspired it, had run its course. The people wanted Euripides.

It is therefore fruitless to speculate on why Euripides left Athens in the last years of his life. (It is odd that scholars have not sought for 'deeper meanings' in the fact that Aeschylus died in far-off Sicily.) Whatever the reason, it was certainly not because the public – or his wife – rejected him. Euripides' 'exile' to Macedonia is far more enigmatic than Ovid's to the Black Sea. For one thing, we are at least sure that the Roman poet did not go voluntarily. To consider the various tales of Euripides' misanthropy (or misogyny) is to descend to the level of his scandal-mongering biographers, or to misconstrue Aristophanes, who, we *must* remember, was only joking. The comic poet who had mocked his friend Socrates and seen his comic gibes become tragic accusations surely knew that a Euripidean paradox like 'who knows if life is death, or death life' was no laughing matter.

true, when it is viewed without the element of time. Oedipus is so near the state of a god that he can speak as from outside of time.

35. Cf. Pohlenz, 363, and Bowra, 314 ff.

36. 'An das Göttliche glauben / Die allein, die es selber sind', F. Hölderlin, 'Menschen beifall' (trans. F. Prokosch).

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1. This image was surely inspired by Aristophanes' *Frogs* 1085 ff. The 'he to Hecuba' incident is recounted by Plutarch, *Pelopidas* 29.

2. It is not enough to dismiss the 'innovations' of the *Alcestis* by noting that it was presented in place of the usual satyr-play. Besides, on this same occasion Euripides presented the *Telephus* which, according to Aristophanes, was even more 'scandalous'.

3. e.g. *Alcestis* 242–3: Admetus will 'live and not live' for the rest of his days. Also lines 518–21: Admetus tells Heracles that his wife 'has died and not died'.

4. *Hippolytus* 732 ff. Although T. S. Eliot would later complain that Gilbert Murray 'interposed between ourselves and Euripides a barrier more impenetrable than the Greek language', the lines printed have caught the fancy of many English writers (e.g. Galsworthy), who quoted them time and again.

5. And yet Artemis does not even allow Theseus to express his own longings for escape. When she appears at the end of the *Hippolytus*, she says (lines 1290 ff.) that she knows *he* would like to dive beneath the earth or fly away like a bird, as if, sadistically, to remind him that all routes leading away from torment are sealed off.

6. And in matters of sex, Euripides never minces words. Helen's lust is referred to as (among other things): *aplēstia lechous*, 'insatiable bed-hunger' (*Andromache* 218).

7. In the very first line of the play, Helen describes herself as waiting faithfully by the 'beautiful-virginal', *kalliparthenoi*, waters of the Nile.

8. Despite its ostensibly comic aspect, the *Helen* is a far more vehement anti-war statement than *The Trojan Women*. Helen may have gone to Troy in name only, but the soldiers who went as men and are *returning* only as names on the casualty list (cf. lines 399 ff.) would not be comforted by this.

9. This point was first – and best – articulated by E. R. Dodds, in his landmark essay, 'Euripides the Irrationalist', *Class. Rev.* 43 (1929), 97–104.

10. Sigmund Freud, 'The Ego and the Id', *Complete Psychological Works* xix, ed. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), 25.

11. See Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death* (New York, 1959), 16: 'True humility, he [Freud] says, requires that we learn from Copernicus that the human world is not the purpose or the center of the universe; that we learn from Darwin that man is a member of the animal kingdom; and that we learn from Freud that the human ego is not even master in its own house.'

12. And what makes a home is, of course, *philia*. This bond of humanity is all that remains for a grieving Theseus or Heracles, and even at the conclusion of the *Bacchae* for Agavê and Cadmus.

13. Aristotle *Rhetoric* iii. 2; 'Longinus', *On the Sublime* xv.

14. In his famous eulogy of Euripides (*On the Sublime* xv), 'Longinus' states that the Greek playwright 'works hardest and best' at portraying *love* and *madness*.

15. *Paideia* i. 380.

16. In *Nicias* 29, where Plutarch tells the pretty story of how Greek sailors, captured in Sicily, gained their freedom by being able to quote Euripides, he goes on to describe how, after these men returned to Athens, whenever they encountered the playwright, they would warmly thank him 'with *love* in their hearts'. Such incidents are usually ignored by those who would build a case for 'unloved Euripides', the social outcast brooding alone in his cave by the sea.

17. Sophocles presents a unique literary example of an author dealing not merely with what Harold Bloom calls 'the anxiety of influence', i.e. the great tradition of Aeschylus weighing heavy upon him, but the innovations of a younger playwright as well. On the former, see R. P. Winnington-Ingram, *Sophocles: An Interpretation* (Cambridge, 1980), 3 *et passim*.

18. H. D. F. Kitto, *The Greeks* (Baltimore, 1951), 129.

Anne Pippin Burnett: The Virtues of Admetus (pp. 254–271)

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

2. K. von Fritz, *Antike und moderne Tragödie* (Berlin, 1962), 301–21, inspired by Browning, finds an Alcestis disillusioned on the day of her death, and T. Rosenmeyer, *The Masks of Tragedy* (Austin, Texas, 1963), 224, 227, 229, discovers her to be hard, cruel, and vindictive. Rosenmeyer (with Browning) believes that Admetus learns as the play proceeds, but von Fritz finds no improvement in him. C. R. Beye, 'Alcestis and Her Critics', *Gk. Rom. Byz. Stud*, ii (1959), 124, speaks of the 'lifeless and selfish grounds on which Alcestis chose to die', and concludes, p. 127, 'neither Admetus nor Alcestis are very attractive people' (*sic*).

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

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

It might be noted that Plato, when he mentions the Alcestis story (*Symp.* 179 B–C) shows no consciousness that the old evaluations have been questioned. Nor did late antiquity, which must have known the story chiefly through Euripides, find anything in it unsuitable to the exaltation of family grief and the promise of salvation: see refs. to plastic representations of the myth in *RE*, I (1903), 1513–14, *s.v.* 'Alkestis' (Escher), and the exx. collected by L. Bloch, *Alkestisstudien* (Leipzig,

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