2

A WOMAN'S PLACE IN EURIPIDES' *MEDEA*

Margaret Williamson

The main stimulus for this treatment of the *Medea* was a distinction which has recently been gaining currency in the study of the Athens of the fifth century BC – namely that between public and private spheres. The recent growth of interest in this dichotomy has many sources, among them the concern of structuralist anthropology with the social categories constructed by different cultures. Another more specific one is the discussion within modern feminism of the long-standing association of women with the private sphere[1] – an association which was challenged by the 'private is political' slogan of the early 1970s.

Fifth-century Athens was clearly a crucial period in the construction of the idea of the private, and tragedy is an important source for our understanding of it. Two writers who have recently dealt with the public–private split in a way which opens up many possibilities for the interpretation of the plays are Sally Humphreys and John Gould. In the opening chapters of *The Family, Women and Death*[2] Humphreys sketches the way in which the private world of the *oikos* and the public one of the *polis* became more sharply differentiated, and she points to tragedy as one index of the conflicts caused by this polarization. The distinction is invoked from a different angle by Gould in his essay on dramatic character, and again in considering our evidence about the position of women in classical Athens.[3] These two writers concur in relating the prominence of female characters in tragedy to the primary association of women with the *oikos*, in contrast to the public, male world of the *polis*. Thus, in Humphreys' view, the peculiarly active and larger-than-life women in tragedy 'belong to a discourse on the relation between

public and private life rather than to a discourse on the relations between the sexes'.[4]

The Greek stage was, of course, rich in semantic possibilities when it came to exploring this relationship. Most of the action in a play takes place in an open, public space, the *orchestra*, which is partially surrounded by the audience; this space is also defined as public by the presence in it of the chorus for most of the play. Behind the *orchestra*, however, is the *skene*, the stage-building, and behind that a more remote space which the audience normally cannot see. In this and many other plays this unseen space represents the interior of a house: it is, in a phrase adapted by Gould from Wilamowitz, an 'offstage indoors',[5] and the tragedy takes place at the intersection between inside and outside, private and public. When Medea, in this play, emerges with the words 'I have come out of the house' (ἐξῆλθον δόμων, 214), her statement can be read symbolically as well as literally, as a movement from the private sphere of the house into the public one – normally associated with men – of the city.[6] An important corollary of this transition is the corresponding change in the language she uses. From within the house we hear her expressing extremes of rage, misery, and hatred in lyrical anapaests; as soon as she steps outside it her language becomes controlled, abstract, intellectualizing and indistinguishable from that of any of the male characters she confronts in the early scenes of the play – including Jason. It is the gap – never to be bridged – between these two modes which chiefly concerns me, and I shall suggest that it is intimately linked with the violence which the play portrays.

In what follows I shall do three things. First I want to consider some of the manifestations and implications of Medea's transition into the public sphere. Then I shall look at some of the registers in which she speaks in the early scenes of the play, and the language which she shares with the male characters; and finally I shall consider what the play seems to be implying about that language.

To dwell a little longer on the spatial semantics of the play: comparison with some of the plays which preceded this one suggests how problematic the relationship between public and private spaces will be here. In both Aeschylus' *Oresteia* and Sophocles' *Antigone* (both obvious comparisons because of the dominant female characters in them) the sphere represented by

the 'off-stage indoors' is the house of the ruling family, which is thus also the centre of the city: the spheres of *oikos* and *polis* are concentric. Despite disorder within both spheres (in the *Oresteia*) or conflict between them (in the *Antigone*), the possibility of a restoration of harmony is always there. In this play, however, the off-stage space has been displaced.[7] The centre of Corinth is not Medea's house but Creon's; Medea's house is in a kind of no-man's-land, and would be so even without Jason's desertion. The other thing which gives her household its problematic quality is the fact that she is barbarian, so that the space from which she emerges is not only inner, but also outer and alien. This troubling paradox makes the 'off-stage indoors' even more remote and inaccessible to the audience.[8]

In addition, of course, as the prologue makes clear, the *oikos* for Medea is fractured by betrayals, and has been so ever since her marriage to Jason. Even before telling us of Medea's present situation, the Nurse recounts her destruction of Pelias through his daughters (9); and shortly afterwards we hear that Medea has also betrayed her own father and home (31–2). It is these events, no less than Jason's desertion, which are responsible for her present plight: she has, unlike a divorced Athenian woman, no home to return to, and so she is precipitated perforce into the public domain.

This movement occurs, I think, on many levels, one of which is also indicated in the prologue. The Nurse tells us that Medea's marriage to Jason was guaranteed by ὅρκοι – oaths – and δεξιαί – pledges; it is these, and the gods who witnessed them, which the betrayed Medea invokes (21). The significance of this is two-fold. First, oaths did not normally form part of either the betrothal or the actual giving-away stages of a marriage ceremony;[9] they are usually associated with public life and especially, as Humphreys points out, with entry into it.[10] Second, any contract involved in a marriage would normally be between the husband and the wife's father or guardian. Medea, however, represents Jason's oaths and pledges as having been given to herself. In contracting a marriage on this basis she has already translated herself into the role of a male citizen, operating in the public sphere as Jason's equal.

There is a similar bias in her celebrated speech to the Corinthian chorus about their common lot as women. Medea's account of the giving of dowries contains a subtle distortion: she

again represents the woman as an active partner in the transaction when she says that women must 'buy a husband for an extravagant sum' (χρημάτων ὑπερβολῇ πόσιν πρίασθαι, 232–3). In fact, once again, it would be a woman's father who engaged in the transaction, not the woman herself; and her dowry, rather than being exchanged for a husband, would both accompany her and, if she was divorced, return with her. Medea is here representing all women as practitioners of exchange, just as she herself contracted her own marriage; rather than, in Levi-Strauss's phrase, the exchange of women, she talks here of exchange by women.[11]

In the speech in which she first attempts to dissuade Creon from banishing her (292ff.), the extent to which she speaks like a male citizen is again remarkable. To his order to leave she replies with a sententious speech about the dangers of having a reputation for *sophia*. No *man* (ἀνήρ), she says, with any sense would have his children brought up to be very clever (σοφοί): because the ignorant will not understand you if you are clever, whereas those with aspirations will be made envious by your pre-eminence. She goes on to apply this to her own situation; but up to the point at which she makes explicit reference to herself, her words describe a community of male citizens and are scarcely applicable to the situation of a woman – much less of a foreigner in fifth-century Athens.[12]

The most remarkable manifestation of her entry into the public sphere is, however, her transaction with Aegeus. She and Aegeus meet as equals, and form a contract based on exchange; and in Medea's case what she both offers and receives is a version of what a woman would give and receive in marriage. She offers Aegeus fertility – the power to beget children; he gives her in return, not the safety of an *oikos*, but that of the Athenian *polis*. The equivalence between this exchange and the contract of marriage is confirmed by the account Medea later gives of it to Jason: she tells him that she is going to 'live with Aegeus' (Αἰγεῖ συνοικήσουσα, 1385). This relationship too, like Medea's with Jason, is sealed by oaths, and the transaction can be seen as completing the translation from private to public of the marriage bond which her relationship with Jason had already initiated.

Medea's move out of the house, then, is paralleled by other moves into the sphere and the discourse of male citizens, and its

most remarkable effect is this version of the marriage relationship. Instead of a relationship based on an absolute and irrevocable difference of status, and a change in status which is usually also permanent, marriage has become a contract based on exchange and reciprocity between equals.

One of the reasons why this transmutation is interesting is that these two types of relationship are themselves the subject of discussion within the play, and Medea is an active participant in the discussion. They are particularly at issue in the scenes between her and Creon, and then between her and Jason. The degree to which, in these scenes, Medea commands the same range of arguments and analyses as her interlocutors is another indication of her transition into the world which they inhabit. However, the manner in which these arguments are wielded casts considerable doubt on their validity; and in addition, the very fact that Medea's exit from the house has involved the kind of transmutation and distortion which I have mentioned puts in doubt any claim she may have had to speak for the *oikos*. We would expect her, as a woman, to be closely associated with the sphere from which, symbolically, she emerged at line 214; but the early scenes of the play suggest that her emergence has fatally weakened her association with the *oikos* – and also that it is irreversible. This is of crucial importance when – as in her debate with Jason – the topic at issue is the relationship which is at the heart of the *oikos* – marriage.

It is possible to sketch in the early scenes with Creon and Jason a spectrum of types of relationship. At one extreme are close blood-relationships – primarily those between parents and children – which are asymmetrical, fixed and irrevocable, and based on an absolute distinction of status between the people involved. At the other are relationships involving exchange between equals, which are fluid and subject to alteration. The first extreme is characteristic of relationships within the private sphere, and the second of relationships between male citizens in the public sphere of the *polis*.[13] Between these two poles are other kinds of relationship, most notably that between suppliant and supplicated, and that of ξενία (guest-friendship), which are based on differentiation and inequality in status but involve a change in status, effected by ritual and witnessed by the gods.

The scene between Medea and Creon alludes to the full range of these types of relationship, and juxtaposes them so sharply as

to emphasize their discontinuity and set them against, as much as alongside, each other. Medea's attempt to persuade Creon to allow her to stay opens with the account of the dangers of being considered clever to which I have already referred. She continues with another highly abstract argument against his fear of her, this time framed in judicial terms. Creon has not, she says, wronged her in marrying his daughter to whomever he chose, and therefore should expect no retribution from her (307–10). This is an argument about the relationship between two equals whose exchange with each other is defined in terms of an abstract concept of justice. It is also partial in that it takes no account of personal feeling, and indeed runs counter to her inclusion of Creon in the category of enemies earlier in the scene (278); and he rejects it as mere words (321).

The next tactic which Medea employs is more successful. She becomes a suppliant, adopting a posture in which she has a tangible, and not merely theoretical, claim on Creon. The suggestion made by Gould about this episode seems to me right: that she begins by beseeching Creon only verbally, but becomes effective at the point when she adopts the physical posture of a suppliant and clings to him (335, 339, and later 370).[14] She has thus moved to what I have defined as the middle ground, and appealed to a relationship based on a sharp differentiation in status whose obligations are guaranteed by ritual. The success initiated by this move is consolidated by an appeal to Creon as being, like Jason, a father (344–5). She does not, obviously, appeal to an actual blood-relationship between Creon and her own children, but to Creon's feeling within a parallel relationship; and in so doing she has now moved to the other end of the spectrum.

Medea employs, then, in her persuasive assault on Creon three approaches which are sharply differentiated in every possible way. The first begins with a generalization which is elaborated at length before being applied to her own situation, and which entirely excludes personal feeling. The second, her supplication, is stichomythic; the third, which is based on personal feeling alone, is made in a speech of eight heavily alliterative lines. The discontinuity which is thus formally highlighted reflects particularly harshly, I think, on the abstract and judicial language of the first appeal. Besides being, in itself, an improbably sententious response to a sudden personal disaster,

it is also the least successful of her ploys. All three approaches, however, are overshadowed by a mode of persuasion – Medea's supplicatory pose – which, if Gould is right, is effective by means of gesture rather than of words, and which thus casts doubt on the efficacy of any of Medea's arguments if taken alone.

The linguistic discontinuities which are thrown into relief in this scene do not end here. Medea's rationalistic arguments to Creon, and her adoption of the perspective of a male citizen in 292ff., can only heighten our sense of the gulf separating this from the voice we first heard from within the house. As if to widen this gulf Euripides now, on Creon's departure, gives to the chorus a lament which echoes the first cry we heard from Medea:

δύστανε γύναι,
φεῦ φεῦ, μελέα τῶν σῶν ἀχέων (357–8)

'Oh unhappy woman, alas, wretched in your pain', they sing, echoing Medea's

ἰώ,
δύστανος ἐγὼ μελέα τε πόνων

'Oh, unhappy that I am, wretched in my troubles' at 96. The mode of Medea's earlier expression of suffering is, it seems, no longer available to her, but only to the chorus: their evocation of it here, set beside the abstract and rhetorical way in which she is now using language, points to what has been lost in her exit from the house. The suffering she expressed from within the house is now issuing, in characteristic Euripidean sequence, in action outside it; but the sense of dislocation which this linguistic gap produces already – before we know what Medea's plans are – casts a shadow over that action. It is becoming clear that her emergence from the house involved both distortion and loss, and the eventual outcome of her plans is marked in advance by that distortion too.

The *agon* between Medea and Jason begins with another verbal echo hardly less significant than that of the chorus. Jason's first speech opens with a line which differs by only two words from that with which Medea began her attempt to sway Creon: compare her

οὐ νῦν με πρῶτον, ἀλλὰ πολλάκις, Κρέον ...

'This is not the first time, Creon; [I have] often [had the same experience] ...' at 292 with his first words in this scene:

οὐ νῦν κατεῖδον πρῶτον ἀλλὰ πολλάκις ... (446)

'This is not the first time: I have often seen...' The association not only marks him as what he will indeed turn out to be – the arch-rationalizer and theoretician of the play – but also locates the debate, for Medea and Jason equally, at that level of persuasive rhetoric which emerged from the Creon scene as least successful.[15] In this scene what is at issue between Medea and Jason is principally the nature of their relationship. In this context, more than any other, we might expect Medea to associate herself with the relationships most characteristic of the *oikos*, and particularly with blood-relationships. However, the range which she commanded in the Creon scene, as well as the parallel already allusively suggested between her and Jason, should warn us that this will not be so; and indeed the case turns out to be more complex.

Both she and Jason have a range of ways of conceptualizing their relationship. Each at some point refers to it as one of exchange. Medea cites the fact that she saved him, and details the way in which she did so; it was, she says, after receiving this treatment from her that he betrayed her (488–9). We recall the Nurse in the prologue quoting Medea's cry to the gods to witness what kind of recompense – οἵας ἀμοιβῆς (23) – she has received from Jason: there the vocabulary of exchange was quite clear. Jason in turn invokes the same concept when he tells her that she has received more than she gave in saving him (534–5), and proceeds to list the benefits to her.

At the other extreme, Medea invokes blood-relationships when, after listing her benefits to Jason, she charges him with contracting a new marriage even though children have been born, saying that if he were childless his desire for a new marriage would be pardonable (490–1). The existence of children, according to her, creates a bond between husband and wife which, though it is not a blood-relationship, derives an inalienable quality from the relation of each to their children.

In this scene too, then, there are appeals made to ways of thinking about relationships which are fundamentally different; and once again the effect of their juxtaposition is to put them all in question. Although Medea invokes blood-relationships, she has no stable association with this as a way of thinking about marriage: she is equally capable of regarding exchange between equals as the basis of her link with Jason. In this scene even more than the previous one, each protagonist uses language to assault the other, and the scene abounds in allusions to language as instrument and even as weapon.[16] Here, however, the relationship which is at issue is of central importance to the continuation of the *oikos*; and the fact that Medea's and Jason's heterogeneous and colliding arguments have no purchase on it is the more damaging for this reason.

It is not, however, from either of the two extremes which I have mentioned that the motive force of Medea's revenge – which takes the action forward from this point – comes. The argument which she consistently offers, from now until her famous monologue at 1021ff., is that Jason's crime was to harm his *philoi*. This is the first charge she makes against him in the *agon* (470), and the chorus seem to confirm her definition of their relationship as one of *philia* in the two-line interjection (520–1) in which they say that anger is particularly implacable when it is between *philoi*. It was also stressed in the prologue that Jason had offended against the principle of doing good to one's friends and harm to one's enemies (84).

But the speech in which Medea pleads this principle before Jason also shows how problematic is its application here. Although a relationship of *philia* can arise in other ways, the sphere in which it can normally be assumed is with regard to relatives: the range of an individual's *philoi* would begin with his kin and spread outwards.[17] But in Medea's case Euripides makes it very clear that this central point does not exist. In her catalogue of benefits to Jason (476ff.), it is explicitly mentioned that saving Jason involved, twice over, the destruction of the bond between parent and child – first when she betrayed her own father, and again when she destroyed Pelias and his *oikos* by means of his daughters. She reiterates her account of both these crimes later in the speech, again stressing the damage to the two *oikoi* which was involved, and this time she makes it clear that she too, like Jason, has inverted the treatment due to friends and enemies:

τοῖς μὲν οἴκοθεν φίλοις
ἐχθρὰ καθέστηχ', οὓς δέ μ' οὐκ ἐχρῆν κακῶς
δρᾶν, σοὶ χάριν φέρουσα πολεμίους ἔχω.

(506–8)

'To my friends [*philoi*] at home I have become hateful; and in helping you I have made enemies of others I had no cause to harm'. When she speaks to Jason, then, of the duty to do good to one's *philoi*, her words are – almost literally – hollow. The relationship which she claims Jason has violated was itself based on a similar violation. She cannot, therefore, invoke the kind of relationship in which the claims of *philia* are clearest; the only place where she can take her stand is in an area where the relations involved are more fluid and ambiguous. Besides referring to close kinship the word can also cover less permanent associations between male citizens, including members of the same drinking group and those who, somewhat as Jason aspires to do, have formed a tie with another *genos* through marriage.[18] Logically, in view of her own actions, Medea can only be defending this much less clear-cut and less stable category of *philia*: the central area, and the one with which we would expect her, as a woman, to be associated, is absent.

This makes it all the more remarkable that the spur to action which she constantly places before herself and the chorus is the duty to do good to one's *philoi* and harm to one's enemies. In her monologue at the end of the Creon scene she refers twice to her enemies (374, 383), and she takes up the same theme again after her exchange with Aegeus. There she not only refers to her enemies four times, but also ends with an explicit statement of the old heroic ethic: she wants, she says, to be thought 'hard on her enemies and good to her friends' (βαρεῖαν ἐχθροῖς καὶ φίλοισιν εὐμενῆ, 809) because it is this kind of behaviour that wins renown.

Both these speeches, as Bernard Knox and others have pointed out, are framed in the language and style of a Sophoclean hero.[19] Medea's implacable anger against her enemies, and her definition of them as such, are equally uncompromising. Both the grief which she expressed earlier from inside the house and the range of arguments she deployed against Jason are absent from these two speeches. Instead, Jason, Creon, and his daughter are all defined in absolute terms as

enemies, and her revenge on them as a matter of heroic daring, expressed in such lines as

ἕρπ' ἐς τὸ δεινόν· νῦν ἀγὼν εὐψυχίας
(403)

'On to the terrible deed; this is the test of my spirit' and

νῦν καλλίνικοι τῶν ἐμῶν ἐχθρῶν...
γενησόμεσθα
(765–6)

'Now I shall win a glorious victory over my enemies'.

Medea thus adds another vocabulary, another kind of discourse, to those over which she has already shown such mastery. One reading of this new style is that it gives Medea heroic dignity, and adds weight to her as a spokesman for the rights of women.[20] But the shift to a heroic, Sophoclean, and once again masculine style has another function too: it heightens even further our sense of the gaps and dislocations not only between her voice from within the house and that with which she speaks after emerging into the open, but also within her public voice. Her heroic stance is paradoxical and contradictory not only in its central formulation but also in its consequences: the distinction on which it rests has already been subverted by Medea herself, and it leads yet again to the destruction of the most intimate bond of *philia*, that between parents and children. It reappears twice in her crucial and apparently wavering monologue, each time as an argument in favour of the children's death, and each time with an uncompromising reference to her enemies (1049–50, 1059–61).

When Medea subsequently goes inside to carry out the murder, she is both re-entering the *oikos* and entering it for the first time. The transmutations and distortions which we have seen to be involved in her exit at line 214 mean that – to use the terms with which I began – it is partly as a representative of the public, male sphere that she now crosses the threshold. She now shares with Creon and Jason a vocabulary which has been discredited as a means of understanding the relationship central to the *oikos*, and her heroic language is equally inappropriate to it. It is inevitable, therefore, that the consequence of her entry into the house should be wordless violence – the murder of the children who are the most stable measure of its central relationship.

The violence can, indeed, be traced further back than this. Medea's relationship to the *oikos* has always been marked by violence: her emergence at line 214 represented in spatial terms a movement which in fact began long before the action of the play, and which was initiated by destruction within her own *oikos* and then Pelias'. It is this destruction which is the condition of her presence on stage: violence to the *oikos* is both cause and consequence of her emergence into view at line 214. In marking that emergence so sharply by means of the linguistic and conceptual discontinuities and distortions which I have discussed, the play seems to me to be pointing, among other things, to the inadequacy of the language available for thinking about the *oikos*. The private, it suggests by analogy, cannot be spoken in the language of the public except on condition of its destruction; and Medea's status as representative of the private was compromised as soon as she emerged into public view.

I began by relating the two juxtaposed theatrical spaces in this play to the division between public and private; but it would be misleading to suggest that this is the only meaning which they have. Some of their other resonances are suggested by the work of Ruth Padel, who argues that women's possession of an inner space makes them particularly suited to the representation of inner experience in general: the inner space of the *oikos* would be an extension of the same metaphor.[21] This can be related to another opposition which is important in the play but which I have not mentioned – between *eros* and the rationality exemplified in its purest form by Jason (though also, of course, shared by Medea) – as well as between the languages of passion and of action. The discrepancies I have mentioned between different ways of defining relationships can be related to conflicts existing within public life as well as between public and private life; so that the *oikos* may stand both for itself and for a type of relationship within the public sphere.[22]

I would not want, however, to lose sight entirely of the fact that, whatever else it may represent, the *oikos* is the province of women, so that the linguistic inadequacies to which the play points are in part inadequacies in the representation of women. The opposition between male and female may be articulated with that between public and private; but this does not mean that the former opposition need be completely displaced by the latter in the interpretation of the plays. This may seem like a

move back towards a simplistic and over-literal kind of reading. I find support for it, though, in the ode which the chorus sing immediately after Medea's first monologue, and which is directly about the representation of women.

In this monologue (364–409) Medea has for the first time revealed a plan to kill Creon, his daughter, and (at this point) Jason, using the heroic language to which I have referred. This heroic mode is, however, undercut even here, most obviously at the end of the speech. After asserting her determination not to be her enemies' laughing-stock, Medea closes the speech by saying that women are, after all

ἐς μὲν ἔσθλ' ἀμηχανώταται,
κακῶν δὲ πάντων τέκτονες σοφώταται.
(408–9)

'incapable of doing good, but the cleverest contrivers of all evil'. Immediately after this comes an ode in which the chorus seem, at first sight, to be singing the praises of women. They begin with a reference to general moral and religious disorder, which they appear, in the following line, to attribute to the faithlessness of, above all, men:

ἀνδράσι μὲν δόλιαι βουλαί ...
(412)

'It is men who make deceitful plans....' They conclude the strophe by saying that women's reputation and honour will now be enhanced.

As a response to Medea's speech, this is strange; and the ode is in fact in a deeply paradoxical relationship with what went before it. It is Medea who has just exposed her 'deceitful plans', and whose mastery of strategy has been revealed in the exchange with Creon. In view of this, and of her own closing comment, the improvement in women's standing which the chorus are projecting seems a dubious honour: it is based on a judgement which Medea has shown to apply at least equally to herself, and at best it can only consist of women not being as bad as men.

The antistrophe builds on the paradoxical nature of this praise by pointing to the inadequacy of the terms being used, even by the chorus themselves – and they are, we remember, a chorus of women played by male actors and orchestrated by a

male poet. Essentially the chorus say that the true history of women is as yet unspoken. If women had been granted the power of divine song, they could have countered that of men, and the story would be a different one:

μακρὸς δ'αἰὼν ἔχει
πολλὰ μὲν ἀμετέραν ἀνδρῶν τε μοῖραν εἰπεῖν
(429–30)

'The passing of time has much to tell of our lot and of men's.'

Knox, writing about this ode, declares that it is unnecessary for the chorus to use the future tense in predicting a change of direction in legends about women; because, he says, 'Euripides' play itself is the change of direction'.[23] I should prefer to see this change as dependent on a more complex syntactical alteration. The appropriate mode both for this ode and for the play is that of an unfulfilled condition – in which one does not use the future, or even the present, tense. The possibility of true speech by and about women remains, like the domain from which Medea emerged, off-stage.

NOTES

1 See, for example, Michelle Rosaldo, 'A theoretical overview', in M. Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (eds), *Woman, Culture and Society* (Stanford, 1974) pp. 17–42.
2 S. C. Humphreys, *The Family, Women and Death* (London, 1983).
3 J. Gould, 'Dramatic character and "human intelligibility" in Greek tragedy', *PCPhS* ns 24 (1978) pp. 43–67, and 'Law, custom and myth: aspects of the social position of women in classical Athens', *JHS* 100 (1980) pp. 38–59. There is also an interesting section on the private-public dichotomy in Helene Foley's essay 'The conception of women in Athenian drama', in H. Foley (ed.), *Reflections of Women in Antiquity* (New York, London, and Paris, 1981).
4 Humphreys (n. 2), p. 72.
5 Gould, 'Dramatic character' (n. 3), p. 64 n. 21.
6 The importance of this moment is also stressed in a suggestive essay by K. Reckford, 'Medea's first exit', *TAPA* 99 (1968) pp. 329–59.
7 This point is made by A. P. Burnett, who refers to other 'centrifugal' plays – *Ajax, Hecuba, Trojan Women* – but points out that Medea's household is in an even more unstable position (A. P. Burnett, '*Medea* and the tragedy of revenge', *CPh* 68 (1973), pp. 1–24). It was also nicely made in a recent adaptation by Barney Simon

of *Medea* at the Riverside Studios, London, in which Medea's 'home' was a makeshift canvas tent.

8 Vernant's discussions of the organization of space in ancient Greece are relevant here: see particularly 'Hestia-Hermes', in which he explores the paradoxes inherent in the position of a wife, who comes into the *oikos* from outside but is also at its centre (ch. 5 in J.-P. Vernant, *Myth and Thought among the Greeks*, London, 1983), and 'Space and political organisation in ancient Greece' (ch. 8 in the same volume).

9 A brief account of both stages of a marriage is given in R. Flacelière, *Daily Life in Greece at the Time of Pericles* (London, 1965), pp. 60–6.

10 Humphreys (n. 2), p. 1.

11 Humphreys comments on this speech as a whole that it represents a man's view of 'what it would feel like ... to be the kind of wife Athenian men wanted' (73), and she regards this as symptomatic of the limitations of 'even the most strenuous attempt ... to see life from a woman's point of view' on the part of the dramatists. Sophocles, however, puts into the mouth of Procne, in his *Tereus*, a far more orthodox version of this transaction: 'When we are girls, our life in our father's house is sweetest.... But when we come to years of discretion, we are thrust out and sold in marriage (διεμπολώμεθα) far away from our ancestral gods and from our parents. ...' (Radt 583, tr. Jebb). This suggests that more is involved in Euripides' account than a simple failure of imagination.

12 Line 300 – τῶν δ'αὖ δοκούντων εἰδέναι τι ποικίλον ('Those who have a reputation for subtlety ...') – bears some resemblance – perhaps fortuitous – to parts of the passage in which Plato, fifty years later, represents Socrates as describing the dangers which arose from his reputation: see *Apology* 20d–23c, esp. 21b–22.

13 This association is most clearly described by Michael Shaw, 'The female intruder: women in fifth-century drama', *CPh* 70 (1975), pp. 255–66. On the different types of relationship in general, and contemporary thinking about them, see Reckford (n. 6), pp. 340–2, Humphreys (n. 2), p. 74 and *passim*, Vernant (n. 8), p. 227 and *passim*.

14 J. Gould, 'Hiketeia', *JHS* 93 (1973) pp. 74–103, esp. 85–6.

15 Another striking echo occurs at l. 583: compare Medea's description of Jason as οὐκ ἄγαν σοφός ('not so very clever') with her earlier εἰμὶ δ' οὐκ ἄγαν σοφή (305) ('I am not so very clever').

16 See, for example, 523–5, 546, 585.

17 'The Greek is surrounded, as it were, by a series of concentric fortifications against the outside world ... the innermost fortress includes his nearest kin and friends, the outermost wall embraces all Hellenes': F.R. Earp, *The Way of the Greeks* (London, 1929), p. 32. See also K. J. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford, 1974), esp. pp. 273ff.

18 W. R. Connor, *The New Politicians of Fifth Century Athens* (Princeton, NJ, 1971), esp. pp. 30ff.

19 B. M. W. Knox, 'The *Medea* of Euripides', *YCS* 25 (1977), pp. 193–225.

20 See esp. Knox (n. 19), p. 211.

21 R. Padel, 'Women: model for possession by Greek demons', in A. Cameron and A. Kuhrt (eds), *Images of Women in Antiquity* (London, 1983), pp. 3–19.

22 See the works cited in notes 13 and 18, and esp. Connor, p. 53.

23 Knox (n. 19), p. 224. On the place of the idealizing odes in the play, see Reckford (n. 6), pp. 342–6, and P. Pucci, *The Violence of Pity in Euripides' 'Medea'* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 1980), esp. pp. 116ff. The influence of Pucci's reading of the play on my argument will be apparent.

EURIPIDES, WOMEN, AND SEXUALITY

Edited by Anton Powell

ROUTLEDGE
London and New York