

## TWO PROBLEMS IN THE THIRD STASIMON OF EURIPIDES' *MEDEA*

GLENN W. MOST

THE THIRD CHORAL ODE of the *Medea* (824–65), with its lavish encomium of Athens' cultural accomplishments and natural beauty, is one of the most celebrated passages in all of Euripides' poetry. The stasimon's general structure is simple and clear: the first pair of strophes praises the city, beginning in the first strophe in general terms with its divine protection (824–26) before moving on to specify in particular its wisdom and culture (Harmonia and the Muses, 829–34<sup>1</sup>), and then, in the first antistrophe, continuing with a further particular aspect, this time Aphrodite (835–40), to conclude by climactically combining both themes in the correlation of Sophia and the Erotes (840–45); the second strophic pair draws the consequences from this general characterization of Athens (οὖν 846) and applies them to the specific dramatic situation, turning to address Medea directly, asking her how so holy a city could possibly accept her if she kills her children (846–50), begging her to desist from her horrendous plan (851–55), wondering how she could possibly have the reckless audacity to carry it out (856–62), and finally suggesting that in the end she will prove unable to do so (863–65). Nor does the ode's specific relevance to the immediate dramatic situation present any difficulties: in the preceding scene with Aegeus, Medea has finally secured the place of refuge whose necessity she had recognized when considering her various options for vengeance (cf. 386–88), so that now she can go ahead with the plan she had preferred; when she tells the chorus that she has decided to kill the children so as to punish Jason (790–810), the Corinthian women react with courteously formulated horror (811–13), asking her some of the very same questions they will then go on to repeat in this ode (compare especially *τολμήσεις* 816 and *τόλμαν* 859) and expressing for the first time an emotional distance from her which will increase throughout the rest of the play.

1. In lines 830–32 it is syntactically ambiguous which of *Μούσας* and *Ἀρμονίαν* is subject and which is object. Page argues that *Μούσας* must be the subject (D. L. Page, *Euripides "Medea"* [Oxford, 1938], pp. 132–33 ad 831), but he is surely mistaken, for how are we to imagine nine mothers having a single child? In a purely conceptual context, of course, the various individual arts might well be said to cooperate to produce harmony. But such a harmony would scarcely be said to have blonde hair: as Musgrave already observed (C. D. Beck, *Euripidis tragoediae fragmenta epistolae*, vol. 3: *Samuelis Musgravii notas integras in Euripidem* . . . [Leipzig, 1788], pp. 244 ad 834 [839]), it is the epithet *ξανθή* that indicates that *Ἀρμονία* is a proper noun, the name of a personification.

Harder to answer with certainty, on the other hand, are such more delicate questions as, first, whether this praise for Athens' wisdom was intended as ironic, or would inevitably have been taken as though it were, coming as it does immediately after a scene in which the great Athenian hero Aegeus has been depicted as being astonishingly dull-witted<sup>2</sup>; and, second, whether, and if so to what extent, the chorus' doubts about whether the ancient Athenians would be willing to accept Medea were designed to forestall, to foretell, or even to provoke, the unwillingness of the contemporary Athenian audience to accept *Medea* (in the end, as the hypothesis attributed to Aristophanes of Byzantium reports, Euripides' play came in only third in the dramatic competition of 431 B.C.).

But if the general structure of the ode is clear, two passages in the second strophic pair present particular difficulties and have been the object of considerable scholarly attention. It is to these that the present article is addressed.

### 1. *Medea* 846–50:

πῶς οὖν ἱερῶν ποταμῶν  
ἢ πόλις ἢ φίλων  
πόμπιμός σε χώρα  
τὰν παιδολέτειραν ἔξει,  
850 τὰν οὐχ ὁσίαν μετ' ἄλλων;

"How, then, will this city of sacred rivers or this land, that gives safe escort to those it holds dear, accept you, the child killer, the unholy one μετ' ἄλλων?" The reference and the point of the concluding prepositional phrase have seemed obscure to many, and it has been variously understood and emended. In line 850, van Looy prints the reading transmitted by all the manuscripts and implied by the scholia<sup>3</sup>; but that he feels some degree of doubt about it is suggested by his mentioning two conjectures in the apparatus, Bradac's μεθ' ἄγνων<sup>4</sup> and Lueck's μέταυλον.<sup>5</sup> Diggle, on the other hand, simply prints Lueck's conjecture without comment.<sup>6</sup>

2. Despite Aegeus' repeated emphasis upon the superhuman difficulty of the oracle (675, 677), the riddle it poses, once he finally breaks the suspense by citing it (679), turns out in fact to belong to a widespread class of popular obscene double entendres, and can scarcely have offered much resistance to the understanding of even the least cultured adult members of the audience; for schoolchildren it is explained at Schol. ad 679 (E. Schwartz, *Scholia in Euripidem* [Berlin, 1887–91], vol. 2, p. 178, ll. 10–18). The slightly comic quality of the Aegeus scene renders Medea's immediately following disclosure of her decision to kill her children all the more shocking.

3. H. van Looy, *Euripidis "Medea"* (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1992).

4. F. Bradac, "Zu Euripides' *Medea* v. 130, 846ff.," *Philologische Wochenschrift* 53 (1933): 731–32. In fact, Bradac suggested μετ' ἄγνων [sic], and μεθ' ἄγνων should be assigned anyway to Elmsley (see below, n. 21).

5. I have not succeeded in tracking down the source of Lueck's conjecture beyond N. Wecklein and R. Prinz, eds., *Euripidis "Medea"* (Leipzig, 1899), p. 73, Appendix ad 850, who attribute to G. Lueck the suggestions "μέταυλον vel μέτηλυν." A G. Lueck published *De comparationum et translationum usu Sophocleo. Pars I. Gymn.-Progr.* 4 (Neumark i. Westpr., 1878), *Pars II* (Neumark, 1880), *Pars III. Gymn.-Progr.* (Stargardt 1882); as I have not seen these volumes, I do not know whether this is the same Lueck as the one involved here and, if so, whether he proposed the emendation in one of these publications, or somewhere else. I am grateful to Prof. James Diggle for his help on this point (*per lit.* 9.ii.1998).

6. J. Diggle, *Euripidis Fabulae* 1 (Oxford, 1984).

Their suspicion of the transmitted reading is easy to understand, since none of the ways in which it has been taken hitherto yields a satisfactory sense:

(1) The scholia punctuate before μετ' ἄλλων and attach the words to the following sentence, as their paraphrase shows<sup>7</sup>; on this reading, the "others" are any people other than Medea herself with whom she is being invited to engage in shared reflection on the merits and defects of her planned course of action, above all, in the present situation, the members of the Chorus. This reading persisted well into the Renaissance, and indeed beyond: it was adopted by Aldus Manutius and Lascaris, and was defended by Josua Barnes against the doubts of Henri Estienne.<sup>8</sup> But no scholar seems to have proposed this interpretation seriously since Matthiae<sup>9</sup> and Klotz,<sup>10</sup> for in fact it amounts to nothing more than what Page rightly dismisses as the fatuous suggestion that Medea consult with others before going ahead and taking the rash step of killing her children.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, already the anaphora σκέψαι . . . σκέψαι (850–51) should be enough to indicate that, unless compelling reasons urge otherwise, μετ' ἄλλων must be taken with the preceding words; it is not unlikely that the scholia's attempt to construe the words otherwise implies that ancient readers had difficulty understanding them with the preceding words, but perhaps we can succeed where they failed.

(2) Most scholars have taken the Chorus' ἄλλοι to be not just any other people, but rather, more specifically, the other citizens of Athens, to whom Medea would be added if the city were to grant her asylum; so for example Reiske, who first proposed punctuating after ἄλλων and translated, "tenebit una cum aliis civibus"<sup>12</sup>; indeed, Jacobs sought to produce the very same sense with the emendation μετ' ἀστών.<sup>13</sup> But whether achieved by

7. Schol. ad 851 (186.21–23 Schwartz): σκέψαι τεκέων πλαγάν: τὴν πληγὴν, φησί, τὴν τῶν τέκνων καὶ τὸν φόνον μὴ προπετῶς δράσης, ἀλλὰ πρότερον μεθ' ἡμῶν ἢ ἄλλων τινῶν σκέψαι εἰ τοῦτο χρή σε δρᾶσαι. The garbled scholium ad v. 850 in Schwartz's ms. B<sup>1</sup> (186.20 Schwartz) may conceivably have pointed originally in a different direction, but it is no longer possible to tell for sure: Schwartz reports that the transmitted reading is ὁ τὴν ἄλλως εὐσεβῶν σὲ ἀσεβῆ οὖσαν [sic], which he emends to σὲ τὴν μετ' ἄλλων εὐσεβῶν ἀσεβῆ οὖσαν.

8. Cited from P. Elmsley, *Euripides "Medea"* (Leipzig, 1822; reprint, Hildesheim, 1967), p. 224 ad 823–24.

9. A. Matthiae, *Euripidis Tragoediae et Fragmenta*, vol. 6 (Leipzig, 1821), p. 495 ad 839: "μετ' ἄλλων intelligo cum aliis, non mecum de caede puerorum delibera."

10. R. Klotz, *Euripidis tragoediae* (Gotha, 1842), p. 112 ad 837.

11. Page, *Medea*, p. 135 ad 850. As though the transmitted reading, understood in this way, were not already silly enough, J. Brodaeus (*Notae in Euripidem*, in G. Stiblinus, *Euripides poeta tragicorum princeps* [Basel, 1562]; cited from Musgrave, *Notas*, p. 244 ad 850), S. Petitus (*Miscellaneorum libri IX* (1630), vol. 3, ch. 20: "accurate perpendens"; cited from Elmsley, *Medea*, p. 224 ad 823–24), and B. Heath (*Notae sive lectiones ad tragicorum graecorum veterum Aeschylus Sophoclis Euripidis quae supersunt dramata* [Oxford, 1762]; cited from Musgrave, *Notas*, p. 244 ad 850) all sought to emend the text to produce just the sense the scholiasts postulated, by conjecturing μεταλλῶν—alas (as observed by J. Barnes, *Euripidis quae extant omnia* [Cambridge, 1694], p. 200 ad 850), a masculine participle, addressed to Medea, and in a context which does not generalize beyond her person and hence in which her grammatical femininity is not in doubt.

12. J. J. Reiske, *Animadversiones in Euripidem et Aristophanem* (Leipzig, 1754); cited from Elmsley, *Medea*, p. 225 ad 823–24.

13. F. C. W. Jacobs, *Animadversiones in Euripidis tragoedias* (Gotha and Amsterdam, 1790) 25: "civibus suis adscribere poterit." Jacobs' conjecture has now been adopted by D. Kovacs. See D. Kovacs, ed. and trans., *Euripides, "Cyclops," "Alceste," "Medea"* (Cambridge, MA and London, 1994), p. 372 ad loc., and *Euripidea*, *Mnemosyne Suppl.* 132 (Leiden-New York-Cologne, 1994), p. 171 ad 846–50. Kovacs also conjectures, unnecessarily, θεῶν for the unanimously transmitted φίλων in line 847.

interpretation or by emendation, such a meaning is intolerably flat, for to whom else would Medea be added, if she were indeed accepted by Athens, if not to the city's other citizens? Why should Euripides have bothered to have his chorus say something so tautologous? Perhaps this was what induced Elmsley to understand μετ' ἄλλων as being equivalent to ὥς οἱ ἄλλοι πολῖται: "the one who is not holy as the other citizens of Athens are."<sup>14</sup> But μετὰ does not ever have the force required for this interpretation.

(3) A third approach, by contrast, has been to take the ἄλλοι to be a group distinguished from the Athenians rather than identical with them. Thus Weil interprets the chorus to be asking, "comment pourra-t-il [scil. Athens] t'accueillir quand tu auras tué tes enfants, quand il ne te sera plus permis de converser même avec d'autres, moins purs et moins religieux que le noble peuple d'Athènes?"<sup>15</sup> But nowhere in this ode does the Chorus' praise of Athens explicitly contrast that city favorably with some other, less blessed city. Besides, an a fortiori argument here would be strained and artificial: the point is surely neither the contrast between Athens' high degree of holiness and some other city's lower degree nor between some other city's (possible) rejection of Medea and Athens' acceptance of her, but that between Athens' holiness and Medea's pollution. Other cities are simply not relevant.

(4) A fourth and final line of defence has interpreted the ἄλλοι as an undefined class of people with whom Medea is contrasted. Thus Paley translates "you who are unholy among others," understanding this to refer to any people who would be polluted by the presence of Medea.<sup>16</sup> But this is obscure and otiose, suggests absurdly that Medea would not be so unholy if she were alone, and leaves embarrassingly undetermined the degree of holiness of the others with whom Medea is being contrasted.<sup>17</sup>

Hence it is understandable that some scholars have sought to heal the passage by emendation. But none of the conjectures proposed hitherto is convincing.<sup>18</sup> Musgrave's κατ' ἄλλων (paraphrased as "minime puram erga alios, Aetam scilicet et Peliam")<sup>19</sup> and Gottfried Hermann's uncharacteristically outlandish μέγ' ἄλλων (offered as the equivalent of τὰν μέγα ἀνοσίαν)<sup>20</sup> are at most of historical, or prophylactic, interest. Elmsley's

14. Elmsley, *Medea*, p. 225 ad 823–24.

15. H. Weil, *Sept tragédies d'Euripide* (Paris, 1868), p. 164 ad 850.

16. F. A. Paley, *Euripides with an English Commentary*,<sup>2</sup> vol. 1 (London, 1872), p. 128 ad 846. Page, *Medea*, p. 135 ad 850, adopts this suggestion dubiously.

17. N. Wecklein, *Ausgewählte Tragödien des Euripides. I: "Medea"* (Leipzig, 1874), p. 94 ad 850, felt obliged to explain, "dieser Gegensatz erweckt den Gedanken τὰν οὐχ ὁσίων μετ' ἄλλων ὁσίων ὄντων"; already Bothe had paraphrased along the same lines, "quaenam regio te habebit (i.e., te patietur) cum aliis, sive inter alios innocentes, ὁσίους? nam hi opponuntur τῇ οὐχ ὁσίῃ Medae" (F. H. Bothe, *Euripidis dramata* [Leipzig, 1825], p. 261 ad 803). This prompted Verrall's complaint, "But we may fairly ask by what word the supplement ὁσίων ὄντων is suggested and whether οὐχ ὁσίων ὄντων is not 'suggested' as much" (A. W. Verrall, *The "Medea" of Euripides* [London, 1881], p. 75 ad 846–50).

18. Besides the conjectures discussed in the text, the following, even less plausible ones might also be noted: μετὰλλα (Klette), μεταλλᾶν (Haupt), μεταλλῶ (Verrall), μετασπῶ (Mekler), μεταῖθις (Metzger), μετέγνων (Mekler), μέτοικον (Prinz), ταλαινῶν (Burges).

19. Musgrave, *Notas*, p. 245 ad 850 (855). But why should the poet refer to Aetetes and Pelias as ἄλλοι?

20. Cited from Elmsley, *Medea*, p. 378 ad 823. But the construction is far-fetched and the justification ("ἄλλων, positivo, ut saepe, superlativi vicem sustinente") strained; only paleographically does the conjecture display Hermann's characteristic genius.

μεθ' ἄγνων<sup>21</sup> attempts to create a text which can be understood along the lines of interpretation (2), opposing a polluted Medea to the other, pious Athenians. But his suggestion, though paleographically possible, is semantically very difficult: qualified by an appropriate genitive or other modifier, ἄγνός can certainly mean “free from blood-guilt”<sup>22</sup> and could thus provide a suitable contrast to the potentially infanticidal Medea; but used absolutely it refers to a degree of religious purity and inviolate sanctity far beyond both what the contrast to Medea requires here (even ordinary people, let alone holy ones, would find her deed repellent) and the degree of praise which can be applied to Athenian citizens, even before an Athenian audience, without seeming hyperbolic (the city may be holy, but not necessarily its citizens, even its ancient ones).<sup>23</sup>

Lueck's μέταυλον<sup>24</sup> is apparently thought by most of its supporters to mean “sharing the same courtyard (αὐλή)” and to be supported by the word σύναυλος, which occurs twice in this meaning (including once metaphorically) in Sophocles' extant works.<sup>25</sup> This conjecture might, perhaps, be plausible—if only this word were otherwise attested anywhere in extant Greek literature. Not even the ancient lexicographers, so attentive to rare linguistic usages of school authors, indicate its existence. Of course, the fact that we possess only tiny remnants of ancient Greek literature means that we can be certain that, besides the words that we know, at least some other words must have existed in the language which have left no trace in the surviving record; so that in principle the total of words recorded must be less than the total of the lexicon of the language, and no conjecture can safely be excluded on the sole grounds that it produces a *hapax*. But on the other hand, the fact that ancient Greek is a dead language means that, as contrasted with the case of a living language in which we can determine what is linguistically possible simply by asking a competent native speaker, the only way we can be quite certain that some word or usage could indeed have been possible in ancient Greek is if we have evidence from an attestation that it actually did exist; so that a conjectured *hapax*, denied as it is *per definitionem* the support of a transmitted parallel, must be examined with partic-

21. P. Elmsley, *Museum Criticum Cantabrigense*, vol. 2, p. 29: “paullo minus frigidum [scil. than Jacobs' conjecture μετ' ἄστων] esset μεθ' ἄγνων”; cited from R. Prinz, *Euripidis “Medea”* (Leipzig, 1878), p. 40 app. crit. ad 850. The same conjecture is also proposed by H. van Herwerden, “Euripidea,” *Mnemosyne* 4 (1855): 358–82, here 368.

22. E.g., Soph. *Anr.* 889 (ἄγνοι τοῦτ' ἰνδὲ τὴν κόρην); Eur. *Or.* 1604 (ἄγνός γάρ εἰμι χεῖρας), *Hipp.* 316 (ἄγνός . . . χεῖρας αἵματος), *El.* 975 (μητροκτόνος νῦν φεύξομαι, τόθ' ἄγνός ὢν), *IA* 940–43; Plato *Leg.* 759c (φόνου . . . ἄγνόν).

23. On the meaning of ἄγνός cf. R. Parker, *Miasma. Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford, 1983), 147–51. Euripides' griggish Hippolytus may well describe himself as ἄγνός when he explains why he prefers to revere Aphrodite from afar: Eur. *Hipp.* 102: πρόσθεθεν αὐτὴν ἄγνός ὢν ἀσπάζομαι. The adjective, applied to maidens, often means “undefiled, chaste, virginal,” e.g., Pind. *Pyth.* 4.103; Aesch. *Supp.* 228, Fr. 242.

24. Lueck's conjecture is supported by E. Herkenrath, “Zur Medea des Euripides,” *Philologische Wochenschrift* 50 (1930): 60–63, here 62, and rejected by R. Zimmermann, “Zu Euripides' Medea,” *PhW* 51 (1931): 156–59, here 158.

25. Herkenrath (“Medeia”) and Page (who mentions Lueck's conjecture doubtfully: *Medea*, p. 135 ad 850) cite Soph. *OT* 1126 (χάροις μάλιστα πρὸς τισιν ξύναυλος ὢν), *Aj.* 609–13 (καὶ μοι δυσθεράπευτος Αἴας | ξύνεστιν ἐφεδρος, ὦμοι μοι, | θεῖα μανία ξύναυλος | ὃν ἐξεπέμνω πρὶν δὴ ποτε θουρίῳ | κρατοῦντ' ἐν Ἀρεῖ). One might also add, in the same meaning, πάραυλος at Soph. *OC* 785, *Aj.* 892, Fr. 503.2 Radt, and ἐμπάραυλος at POxy. 2452.3.18 = Soph. Fr. 730c18 Radt.

ular care lest it turn out to be merely the product of a modern scholar's imagination.

But the conjecture μέταυλον is not only subject to these general methodological doubts; it also raises certain specific difficulties. First, though a substantive μέταυλος would indeed be a *hapax* in the required sense, there already exists in the ancient Greek lexicon another word of identical form but of a very different meaning—the adjective μέταυλος, the Attic form of μέσσυλος, designating (with the substantive θύρα added or understood) the door between the courtyard (αὐλή) and the inner part of a house.<sup>26</sup> The Athenian adjective μέταυλος, familiar from everyday usage, would most likely have caused an unwelcome semantic interference with the postulated substantive μέταυλος in this context: could Euripides have been quite certain that no one in his audience would have momentarily misunderstood τὰν οὐχ ὅσιαν μέταυλον to mean “the unholy inner door”? Second, the metrically identical σύναυλος and πάραυλος, well attested in the language of Attic tragedy with precisely the meaning ascribed to Lueck's conjecture μέταυλον in Euripides' text, so far from lending support to it, in fact provide an argument against it. For if Euripides had wanted to use a word meaning σύναυλος or πάραυλος, why would he have risked the incomprehension or confusion involved in μέταυλος instead of choosing the easily available, metrically and semantically entirely appropriate tragic lexeme σύναυλος or πάραυλος? If he had meant σύναυλος or πάραυλος, he could have just written τὰν οὐχ ὅσιαν σύναυλον or πάραυλον. Third, the notion that the *hapax* μέταυλος might find support in the attested σύναυλος presupposes that the two words are synonymous, differing in form only in their semantically equivalent prefixes but identical in meaning. Yet the evidence of Euripides' usage points in a different direction: while the prefix συν- tends in his vocabulary to mean “sharing, participating together,” the prefix μετα- usually implies “change, alteration, sequence.”<sup>27</sup> In other words, Euripides uses the prefix μετα- as though it were derived from the preposition μετά as used with the accusative (“after”), not as used with the genitive (“with”): if he had indeed written μέταυλον, he would probably have meant not “sharing a courtyard” but rather “changing to a new courtyard.” And finally, the meaning of the conjecture μέταυλος, even if it could be accepted as having

26. So too in Eur. *Alc.* 549, θύραι μέσσυλοι, where however Ussing, referring to Moeris' Atticist lexicon s.v. (cf. J. Pierson and G. Æ. Koch, *Moeris Atticista Lexicon Atticum* [Leipzig, 1830; reprint, Hildesheim and New York, 1969], M 25, p. 242), proposed emending to μέταυλοι (cited from A. Garzya, ed., *Euripides "Alcestis"* [Leipzig, 1980], p. 22 app. crit. ad loc.).

27. Contrast μεταδρομή “running after” (*IT* 941) with συνδρομάς “running together” (*IT* 421), μεταίρω “lift up and remove” (*IT* 1157) with συναίρω “take part in something with someone” (*Or.* 767), μεταλαμβάνω “get a share of” (*Bacch.* 302) with συλλαμβάνω “assist, collect, grasp” (*Med.* 813, etc.), μεταλλάγή “change” (*HF* 765) with συναλλαγή “interchange, reconciliation” (*Supp.* 602, *Hipp.* 652), μετástasis “change” (*Andr.* 1003, etc.) with σύστασις “conflict, assembly” (*Hipp.* 983, etc.), μετεύχομαι “change one's wish” (*Med.* 600) with συνεύχομαι “pray together with someone” (*IT* 1221, *Hel.* 646), μέτοικος “alien resident, settler from abroad” (*Hipp.* 837, *Supp.* 892) with σύνοικος “dwelling in the same house” (*Herac.* 81, *Ion* 235), μέτοχος “sharing in, partner” (*HF* 721, etc.) with σύνοχος “joined together, in accord with” (*Bacch.* 164, *Hel.* 172). Of course, Euripides' usage is not unique; it is merely remarkably consistent. Only in later, and less careful, Greek does the difference between the two prefixes tend to vanish: LSJ cite σύνοικος as meaning μέτοικος from *SIG* 480.2 (Delphi, third century B.C.) and μέτοικος as meaning σύνοικος from Sammelb. 5837 (second century A.D.).

been a real word, would be far too strong for this particular context: for to accept Medea into the city would not be the same thing as accepting her into one's own courtyard—the suppliant may well have the right to protection in one's city, but not necessarily to shelter within the very same household with oneself.

These considerations do not perhaps quite suffice to refute Lueck's conjecture, but they certainly counsel extreme caution in regard to it. Surely, before adopting so dubious a measure, it would be preferable to turn once more to the unanimously transmitted reading to see whether it can be satisfactorily interpreted after all. What other category of people, designated here as οἱ ἄλλοι, might usefully be contrasted with Medea besides those already proposed and discussed above: any people with whom she might discuss her situation, the Athenian citizenry, non-Athenians, and simply any group of human beings compared with Medea? There is at least one other relevant category that seems, oddly, to have been considered only once hitherto<sup>28</sup>: the other suppliants besides Medea to whom Athens has already offered refuge in the past and to whom it will continue to offer refuge in the future. This very same group of people has already been referred to once in the preceding lines, when Athens was described as being φίλων πόμπιμος . . . χώρα: a second reference to them in the words under discussion would hardly be surprising.

Understanding the words in this way produces an entirely acceptable sense. After all, Athens prided itself upon its legendary and historical protection of suppliants: the stories of how the city defended the sons of Heracles against the Peloponnesian forces led by Eurystheus, took in the polluted Oedipus at the end of his wanderings, compelled Creon to return to their grieving relatives the bodies of the Seven against Thebes, and provided a final solution to the sufferings of Orestes supply the material for the plots of numerous tragedies and form a recurrent topos in the funeral orations in which the city presented its ideological identity to itself as well as to foreigners.<sup>29</sup> But such protective hospitality depends upon the conviction that the suppliant, whatever deeds he or she has committed, is in fact not irrevocably guilty of any heinous crime—otherwise, religious and moral scruples will urge punishment, not protection. For the Chorus, Medea's killing of her children would evidently be on the far side of the line which separates tolerable misdeeds from intolerable μιάσματα: hence, if she goes through with her plan, how will Athens bring itself to extend to her the same protection it has provided other suppliants? How will it accept her as it has accepted others? “How, then, will this city of sacred rivers or this land, that gives safe escort to those it holds dear, accept you, the child-killer, the unholy one, with the other ones [scil. suppliants]?” By postponing μετ’ ἄλλων to the very end, Euripides surrounds the phrase describing the potentially murderous Medea (σε . . . τὴν παιδολέτειραν . . . τὴν

28. Zimmermann, “Medea.” Zimmermann does not provide a detailed critique of other interpretations and does not provide arguments in support of his own; his article seems to have been entirely neglected.

29. See especially N. Loraux, *L'Invention d'Athènes. Histoire de l'oraison funèbre dans la « cité classique »* (Paris-La Haye-New York, 1981), pp. 67–69, nn. 252–54.

οὐχ ὀσίαν) with a pair of references to the other, less guilty suppliants (φίλων . . . μετ' ἄλλων) to whom Athens has offered protection on other occasions but with whom, as an infanticide, Medea could surely not be placed in the same category without both offending them and putting Athens' hospitality into a questionable light. The enormity of the crime she is planning, and the distance between her and the guiltless city in which she plans to take refuge, could not be expressed more vividly.

## 2. *Medea* 856–59:

πόθεν θράσος ἦ φρενὸς ἦ  
χειρὶ † τέκνων σέθεν †  
καρδία τε λήψῃ  
859 δεινὰν προσάγουσα τόλμαν;

856 πόθεν] πῶς δὲ L<sup>1</sup> φρεσὶν Beck 857 τέκνοις Elmsley τέκνων σέθεν] τεκνοκτόνον  
Page dubitanter : locus nondum sanatus 858 καρδίαν Elmsley

This is van Looy's text for the beginning of the second antistrophe, together with his apparatus criticus for the lines in question. Diggle is more generous with his daggers (he obelizes the whole phrase ἦ φρενὸς ἦ χειρὶ τέκνων σέθεν), less so with his apparatus (he indicates only Elmsley's conjecture at line 858).

The meter of these lines is unimpaired, and their general sense is not in doubt: the Chorus must be asking Medea a question along the lines of "However will you bring yourself to perform so horrific a deed (scil. as killing your children)?" But the devil is in the details: just how these few words are to be construed grammatically so as to obtain this meaning has perplexed both ancient and modern scholars.<sup>30</sup>

Two paraphrases for the general sense of the passage as a whole are to be found in the scholia:

τοὔτεστι· τίς σε τῶν πάντων πείσει τοσοῦτον θράσον ἐνθεῖναι τῇ σου τῆς ψυχῇ ἢ τῇ δεξιᾷ  
ὀπλιζομένη κατὰ τῶν φιλότατων παίδων. (AB)

τὸ ἐξῆς οὕτως· πόθεν θράσος λήψῃ φρενὸς καρδία ἢ χειρὶ, κατὰ τῶν τέκνων σου δεινὰν προσ-  
άγουσα τόλμαν. λείπει γὰρ ἡ κατὰ. (187.1–4 Schwartz)<sup>31</sup>

Both paraphrases concur in construing θράσος as the direct object of λήψῃ and in taking together the two datives χειρὶ and καρδία τε as indirect objects of the verb. But it is on the two genitives φρενός and τέκνων σέθεν that the two glosses disagree, and founder. The first paraphrase seems to gloss the genitive φρενός with the dative τῇ σου τῆς ψυχῇ, while the second

30. H. Stadtmüller, *Beiträge zur Texteskritik der Euripideischen "Medea,"* Beigabe zum Programm des Grossherzoglichen Gymnasiums zu Heidelberg für 1876 (Heidelberg, 1876), 19–22, provides an acute critique of earlier proposals for interpreting or emending this passage but then goes badly astray when proposing his own emendation, μένος for τέκνων.

31. In addition, the scholia also offer detailed paraphrases of certain individual phrases or words in this passage: Schol. ad 856 (186.24 Schwartz): πόθεν θράσος· ἀντὶ τοῦ· τίνι λογισμῷ χρησαμένη. (187.5): τὸ δὲ ἢ καρδία ἢ χειρὶ ἀντὶ τοῦ ἢ ἐννοία ἢ πράξις (A). ad 858 (187.6–7): ἀντὶ τοῦ· κατὰ τὴν σου τῆς καρδίας καὶ τὸν λογισμὸν. προσλήψῃ σχήσεις (B).



one apparently combines φρενός with καρδιά.<sup>32</sup> As for τέκνων σέθεν, the two paraphrases differ in whether the words are to be referred to the main verb or to the participle, but they agree that the bare genitive must be understood as though the words were dependent upon a supplied preposition κατά—"for," as the second paraphrase blandly explains, "the κατά is missing." Obviously, none of these expedients will do: φρενός cannot be simply ignored; the word-combination φρενός καρδιά is either intolerably tautologous (if the two words designate psychological functions) or else intolerably self-contradictory (if they denote anatomical organs), and in either case φρενός is far too distant from καρδιά to be plausibly linked with it; and the notion that the mere genitive could be equivalent to the genitive with κατά and mean "against" is, like the suggestion that the preposition is "missing," simply silly.<sup>33</sup>

It is these same genitives φρενός and τέκνων σέθεν which have furnished the target for most of the considerable conjectural energy which has been expended upon these lines.<sup>34</sup> Reiske emended ἡ φρενός to εἰς φρένας, but then went on to rewrite the whole passage without any regard for the meter.<sup>35</sup> The words transmitted as ἡ φρενός ἡ were changed by Musgrave to ἐνθεμένα<sup>36</sup> and by Porson (excusing himself with the words, "in re desperata paullo plus audaciae condonandum est") to θανατηρόν,<sup>37</sup> while Beck replaced φρενός with φρεσίν,<sup>38</sup> but, apart from their individual defects,<sup>39</sup> none of these suggestions does anything to help with the second problematic genitive, τέκνων σέθεν. Resolving the difficulty posed by this second genitive is the goal of Elmsley's τέκνοις (together with the change of

32. It is unlikely, but perhaps not quite impossible, that in the first paraphrase φρενός has been understood together with καρδιά, and that in the second one, despite the word order, φρενός was intended to be combined with θράσος.

33. Cf. Stadtmüller, *Beiträge*, 19. Nonetheless, this view of the genitives is accepted by Klotz, *Tragödiæ*, p. 113 ad 844f.

34. Besides the conjectures discussed in the text, the following, even less plausible ones might also be noted: 856 πόθεν δε θράσος φρενός ἡ (Hermann), πόθεν δε θράσος τεκέων ἡ φρενός ἡ χερός (Weil), πόθεν θράσος ἔρνεσι σοῖς ἡ χερός ἡ φρενός καρδιά τε λήψει (Weil), πόθεν θράσος ἡ φρενός ἡ καρδιάς γε λήψει χειρὶ τέκνων (or τέκνοις) (Hoffmann), πόθεν θράσος ἡ φρενός ἡ καρδιά πλῆψει, χειρὶ τέκνων σέθεν (Hartung), πόθεν θράσος ἡ καρδιάς σὺ λήψει, χειρὶ τέκνοις σέθεν (Koechly), ἡ φρένας ἡ χέρα νῦ σέθεν (Badham), ἀφρονι σῇ (anonymous reviewer of Porson's edition in *Classical Journal* 1:565), ἐς φόνον . . . χειρός ἔσω σέθεν (Blaydes); 857 χειρὶ τε νῦν σθένος (Heimsoeth), χειρὶ μένος σέθεν (Stadtmüller), χειρὶ σέθεν τέχναν (Verrall), χρωτί (Wecklein), τέκν' ᾗ (Bernardakis), τέκνοις (Metzger), τεχνών (Faust), μένος (Stadtmüller), κότον (Housman), τόνον (Willink); 858 καρδιάν θ' ὀπλίζει (Semitelos), καρδιάν πεπασή (Kirchhoff), καρδιά σὺ τόλμαν δεινὰν προσάγουσα λήψει (Barthold), καρδιαῖσι (Schneidewin), καρδιά τι (Seyffert), κατὰ φίλων ὀπλίζει (Pflugk), τε] σὺ (Kayser).

35. πῶς δε θράσος εἰς φρένας, εἰς καρδιάν τε λήψει, χειρὶ τέκνοις σέθεν δεινὰν προσάγουσα τόλμαν: Reiske, *Animadversiones*; cited from Elmsley, *Medea*, p. 226 ad 828–30. Elmsley comments, "Non opus ut moneam, ingeniosum hunc virum vix unquam metri rationem habuisse." In fact, therefore, the credit for the emendations τέκνοις and καρδιάν, attributed by van Looy to Elmsley, should go instead to Reiske, despite the remarks of L. Dindorf, *Euripidis fabulae cum annotationibus* (Leipzig, 1825), p. 239 ad 858.

36. Musgrave, *Notas*, p. 245 ad 856.

37. R. Porson, *Euripidis "Medea"* (London, 1801; reprint, Leipzig, 1824), p. 88 ad 852.

38. Cited from Elmsley, *Medea*, p. 226 ad 828–30.

39. Brunck's and Porson's conjectures leave the transmitted text so far behind that they seem quite arbitrary. In Beck's conjecture, the resulting string of datives ἡ φρεσίν ἡ χειρὶ καρδιά τε is not only rhetorically rapid but also grammatically dubious. For such a string can be construed in either of two ways, neither satisfactory: either φρεσίν is opposed to the single unit made up of χειρὶ and καρδιά (but what could such an opposition possibly mean?); or else the three substantives are coordinate and are opposed to one another on the same level (but τε after ἡ is "very rare": J. D. Denniston, *The Greek Particles* 2 [Oxford, 1954], 514).

καρδίαν for καρδίᾳ),<sup>40</sup> Nauck's τέκνον,<sup>41</sup> and Page's doubtfully offered τεκνοκτόνον<sup>42</sup>; but, apart from their individual defects,<sup>43</sup> none of these proposals helps to deal with the syntactic difficulty of φρενός. Elmsley's substitution of καρδίαν for καρδίᾳ, finally, provides a double accusative object (θράσος καρδίαν τε) for the verb λήψῃ, but at the cost of an unpleasant otiosity of expression—and until the grammatical structure of the sentence as a whole has been understood, any such change, even if it produced a more satisfactory sense, would be premature.

Emendation, therefore, does not seem likely to be the right therapy.<sup>44</sup> Let us return to the unanimously transmitted text and see whether it cannot be construed after all. Page takes the genitive φρενός in parallel with the datives χειρὶ καρδίᾳ τε and explains the opposition between the first term and the other two as being one of "*mind to hand and heart*, i.e., as *contemplation* or planning of the proposed deed to *courage in the execution* of it."<sup>45</sup> Although this identification of the psychological values of the various anatomical organs in question is surely along the right lines, his grammatical construal is open to serious objections: the hendiadys χειρὶ καρδίᾳ τε balances oddly with the single term φρενός, given that all three of the terms involved are familiar both as bodily organs and as psychological functions, and that we would therefore expect each of the three to have its own independent value; and above all Page does not explain, nor is it at all easy to understand, just what kind of genitive φρενός is supposed to be or how it can be taken as being coordinate with the datives χειρὶ καρδίᾳ τε.

On the contrary, prior to any examination of this sentence's semantic dimension, the most basic syntactic considerations would lead us to expect φρενός to be set in parallel not with the datives χειρὶ καρδίᾳ τε but instead with the other genitive in the sentence, τέκνων σέθεν, which is located only a few words away from it. If we make an inventory of the sentence's components, we find an interrogative adverb (πόθεν), a finite verb (λήψῃ), an accusative direct object (θράσος) for this verb, two genitives (φρενός and τέκνων σέθεν), two datives (χειρὶ and καρδίᾳ), a nominative feminine singular participle (προσάγουσα) sharing its subject with the finite verb, and an accusative direct object (δαινᾶν . . . τόλμαν) for this participle. The conjunction τε links the two datives χειρὶ and καρδίᾳ; evidently, the twin conjunctions ἥ and ἥ can serve no other purpose than to oppose the two genitives φρενός and τέκνων σέθεν. Construing the grammar of the sentence in this way leaves little doubt how we are to understand the syntactic

40. Elmsley, *Medea*, p. 226 ad 828–30.

41. A. Nauck, *Euripidis tragoediae superstites et deperditarum fragmenta* (Leipzig, 1854).

42. Page, *Medea*, pp. 135–36 ad 856 sqq.

43. Elmsley's suggestion separates the dative τέκνοις from the participle προσάγουσα supposed to govern it and sets it instead directly next to another dative, χειρὶ, with which it has nothing to do, resulting in what Stadtmüller, *Beiträge*, 20, aptly calls a "*Chaos bunt zusammengewürfelter Begriffe*"; Nauck's requires the Chorus to direct a vocative to Medea which is completely incompatible with their character, her character, and the immediate dramatic and rhetorical situation (cf. Stadtmüller, *Beiträge*, 21); and Page's involves an implausibly complicated mechanism of corruption.

44. Page, *Medea*, p. 135 ad 856 sqq.: "If I thought the problem soluble by emendation, I should read τεκνοκτόνον for τέκνων σέθεν."

45. Page, *Medea*, p. 136 ad 856 sqq. (his italics).

function of the datives *χειρί* and *καρδία*: they indicate, for the verb and object *λήψη θράσος* and for the participle and object *προσάγουσα τόλμαν* the indirect object for the sake of which Medea will take on or supply courage or daring.<sup>46</sup> What, then, of the genitives *φρενός* and *τέκνων σέθεν*? Surely they must both be assigned the same syntactic function. But then *φρενός* cannot be dependent upon *θράσος* (as has often been thought), for there is no way in which *τέκνων σέθεν* too could be linked with *θράσος*. Instead, both genitives must surely be taken, in parallel with the interrogative adverb of source *πόθεν*, as ablative genitives indicating possible sources from which Medea could derive courage.<sup>47</sup> So the transmitted text, put into a more prosaic word order, would correspond to the sentence *πόθεν ἢ φρενός ἢ τέκνων σέθεν λήψη θράσος χειρὶ καρδίᾳ τε δεινὰν προσάγουσα τόλμαν* and must mean, “Whence, either from your mind or from your children, will you take courage for your hand and heart, supplying a terrible daring [scil. to your hand and heart]?”

This solution is grammatically simple and permits us to understand the transmitted text without having to emend it. It might, however, be thought to be open to two objections: (1) the word order might seem to require that we apply the second *ἢ* not to *τέκνων σέθεν* but to the word immediately following the conjunction, *χειρὶ*; and (2) what would it mean for Medea to derive courage either from her mind or from her children? But both objections can be answered—though it must be left to individual taste and judgement to decide how plausible or implausible the answers proposed here really are. In any event, it seems worthwhile to attempt a last concerted defense of the *paradosis*; if this fails, then perhaps the most sensible course of action will indeed be to obelize.

(1) There is no doubt that the word order postulated by this solution is unnatural and artificial: instead of the expected *ἢ φρενός ἢ τέκνων σέθεν χειρὶ καρδίᾳ τε*, the first term of the second pair of substantives (*χειρὶ*) has been moved forward and interjected between the conjunction *ἢ* and the second term of the first pair of substantives (*τέκνων*), creating a chastically interlaced arrangement of the words (*ἢ φρενός ἢ χειρὶ τέκνων σέθεν καρδίᾳ τε*: **ABAB**). In a prose author, we would surely be inclined to emend the text in order to restore what would be felt to be the more natural word order. But in a poetic context, and especially in the highly sophisticated language of choral lyric, such artifices can be felt to lend the special charm of a particularly “poetic” diction at moments of unusually banal thought or, as here, of particularly strong emotion. Indeed, even Aristophanes can deploy a similar *hyperbaton* in lyric iambs to achieve an effect of special dignity.<sup>48</sup>

46. Theoretically, an instrumental dative would also be possible, but it is hard to see how in this sentence the datives could be understood in this way. Presumably Euripides’ choice of the dative case for *χειρὶ* and *καρδίᾳ* has been influenced by the participle *προσάγουσα*, with which they are also understood, for *προσάγω* regularly takes a dative together with the accusative object.

47. Cf. Kühner-Gerth, 1.394–95.1 (cf. especially Soph. OT 1004: *χάριν γ’ ἂν ἀξίαν λάβοις ἐμοῦ*). An alternative, but perhaps less satisfactory, analysis of the construction proposed here would take the two genitives as partitive genitives with the adverb *πόθεν*, cf. Kühner-Gerth 1.340c.

48. Elmsley, *Medea*, p. 223 ad 820–21 (cited with approval by Page, *Medea*, p. 135 ad 847) compares Ar. Av. 420: *κρατεῖν ἂν ἢ τὸν ἐχθρὸν ἢ φίλοισιν ὠφελεῖν ἔχειν* = *ἢ κρατεῖν ἂν τὸν ἐχθρὸν ἢ φίλοισιν ὠφελεῖν ἔχειν*. R. Kannicht brings to my attention Eur. *Erechtheus* frag. 362.29–30 Nauck.

These are, to be sure, general considerations. But to demonstrate the possibility of such a word order in the present passage it is enough to refer to a single text, the beginning of the second strophe of this same third stasimon in Euripides' *Medea*: πῶς οὖν ἱερῶν ποταμῶν | ἢ πόλις ἢ φίλων | πόμπιμός σε χώρα | τὰν παιδολέτειραν ἔξει, | τὰν οὐχ ὅσιν μετ' ἄλλων; (846–50). Although the construction in this passage too has caused some difficulties—most manuscripts read ἢ φίλων ἢ πόλις against the meter in line 847, a later hand in Vat. gr. 909 (ca. 1250–80) has altered ἢ πόλις to ἡ πόλις, the ancient scholia are obliged to give a highly circumstantial explanation and paraphrase,<sup>49</sup> and modern scholars have proposed numerous emendations<sup>50</sup>—it has been recognized by most critics at least since Elmsley that the text is sound and that the construction represents a relatively simple hyperbaton of the conjunction ἢ: instead of being placed in the normal position immediately before the syntactic unit it governs (in the present case ἱερῶν ποταμῶν πόλις), the first of the two conjunctions has been interjected into the middle of that unit; only the second one precedes its syntactic unit (φίλων πόμπιμος χώρα) in the regular fashion, but this time the pronoun σε has been interjected into the middle of that unit.

These first lines of the second strophe of the third stasimon correspond metrically to the first lines of the second antistrophe and come only eight short lines before them; though the two forms of hyperbaton of ἢ in the two passages are not identical (in the strophe, ἢ has been interjected into the unit it governs; in the antistrophe, another word has been interjected between ἢ and the unit it governs), it is hard not to see some close connection between them. Clearly, the hyperbaton in the strophe has not only the value of a corroborative parallel which lends support to the possibility of the construction argued for here in the antistrophe: what is more, it seems to have been designed by Euripides as a way of sensitizing his listeners to the presence of a specific syntactic feature which, once they had heard and understood it one time, they would have less difficulty recognizing and understanding a second time shortly thereafter in a metrically corresponding passage. Euripides has taken care to train his Athenian audience well, at least in this thoroughly minor point of poetic syntax: what better proof could he have supplied for the Athenians' literary sophistication and general culture, for which in the first half of the stasimon he has made such an eloquent claim?

(2) What could the Chorus possibly mean by suggesting that Medea might derive the courage required for her planned infanticide either from her mind or from her children?

The Chorus' question, "Whence will you derive the courage to kill your children, either (A) from your mind or (B) from them?" is evidently only grammatically a question to which the expected answer might be "(A)" or

49. Schol. ad 847 (186.8–13 Schwartz).

50. E.g., 846 τίς οὖν (Hermann), ἱερῶ ποταμῶ ἢ φίλῳ ἢ πόλιν (Verrall); 847 ἢ del. Badham, ἦδε πόλις, φίλων (Herwerden), εἰ πέλας; ἢ φίλων (Murray), εἰ πόλιν ἢ φίλως πόμπιμόν (Kvicala), πόμπιμός σε χώρα ἢ πόλις ἢ φίλων (Hartung), πόλις πόρος (Musgrave), φίλων] φωτῶν (Wecklein). Bradac, *Medea*, deletes the words ἢ πόλις ἢ φίλων and hence must considerably rewrite the corresponding lines in the antistrophe: πόθεν θράσος ἢ κραδίαν σοῖς τέκνοις λήψῃ δεινάν etc.

“(B)”; in fact it is surely to be understood instead as a rhetorical question to which the only answer the Chorus could possibly expect to receive would be “neither (A) nor (B).” Thus the Chorus’ question in fact functions as a *reductio*, listing two possible sources of matricidal courage only so as to demonstrate the absurdity of both of them and thereby the impossibility of naming an adequate source for such a counterintuitive act; it could be paraphrased as, “Surely you will not derive the courage to kill your children either (A) from your mind or (B) from them (or, by implication, from anywhere else either)!” Separately, each of the two members of the Chorus’ pair of alternatives, (A) and (B), must make sense on its own as at least a conceivable source of courage in general; but taken together in this question, both are decisively excluded as plausible potential sources in this particular situation. In precisely the same way, in the corresponding lines of the strophe, the parts of Attica linked together by ἤ . . . ἤ might each conceivably be capable in general of offering a suppliant shelter, but the point of the Chorus’ question is instead that neither of them, and hence no part of Attica, will in fact really do so in the particular case of Medea.

As the Chorus point out in these lines, if Medea is to carry out the murder of her own children, her heart (καρδία) must steel itself to this resolve and her hand (χείρ) must perform the deed. But the mother who will cry out to the Chorus, when the moment of murder approaches, αἰαῖ· τί δράσω; **καρδία** γάρ οἴχεται, | γυναῖκες, ὄμμα φαιδρὸν ὡς εἶδον τέκνων (1042–43), who will have to urge on her flagging will with the words, ἀλλ’ εἴ’ ὀπλίζου, **καρδία**. τί μέλλομεν | τὰ δεινὰ κάναγκαῖα μὴ πράσσειν κακά; (1242–43), and who will end up addressing to her own hand the pitiful and pitiless imperative, ἄγ’, ὃ τάλαινα **χείρ** ἐμή, λαβὲ ξίφος (1244) is one in whom neither heart nor hand can be fully counted upon to fulfill the murderous design she assigns to them. The frequent references throughout the play, but especially in its last scenes, to Medea’s heart<sup>51</sup> and to her hand<sup>52</sup> help us focus our attention upon these crucial parts of her body as the insistently rebellious but finally submissive instruments of her will; these passages not only form part of a significant network of interconnected allusions to parts of the body within a tragedy which emphasizes embodiment as few others do, but also thereby make clear just how difficult, how contrary to nature, Medea’s frightful task will be. The Chorus, in order to dissuade her, heighten that difficulty as far as possible rather than diminishing it in any way. Whence, they ask, will she possibly be able to derive the courage that on their own her hand and heart will surely lack?

(A) φρήν and (B) τέκνα are both traditional sources of courage and anger in military contexts, and especially in exhortations to martial valor, throughout ancient Greek culture (and not only there). From Homer on, they furnish two of the most frequently employed topoi in battlefield descriptions when

51. Besides the passages cited in the text, cf. 99, 432, 590; cf. also 245, 1360.

52. Besides the passages cited in the text, cf. 496, 864, 959, 1034, 1055, 1239, 1254, 1271, 1283, 1309, 1378; cf. also 4, 335, 370, 612, 784, 899, 939, 956, 973, 981, 1003, 1070, 1071, 1141, 1206, 1320, 1322, 1412.

warriors fight with particular bravery and in military paraenesis when soldiers must be urged on to combat the enemy with the utmost valor. Either soldiers already have a *φρήν* which is filled with such violent passion that they display exceptional courage in the face of the enemy; or, if that is not enough, they are told to think of their wives and children and to consider the fate that will await them should the enemy win. A few examples should suffice:

(A) Already in Homer, the *φρήν* or *φρένες* are a standard seat and source of martial courage or of exceptional anger<sup>53</sup>; they continue to serve this function throughout later Greek literature.<sup>54</sup> Within the *Medea* itself, there are at least nine other references to her *φρήν* as the location and origin of her overwhelming and dangerous wrath.<sup>55</sup> Against the background of these passages, the Chorus' question *πόθεν φρενὸς λήψη θράσος*; ("Whence, from your *φρήν*, will you take courage?") means, simply enough, "Will you really be able to derive from your anger the courage necessary to kill your own children?"

(B) Again, already in Homer, soldiers whose *φρήν* might otherwise not provide sufficient martial courage often remind themselves, or are reminded by others, of their children, for whom they must provide a model of bravery, upon whom they must not bring shame, and whom they must protect from the ravages of a victorious and pitiless enemy.<sup>56</sup> The scene between Hector, Andromache, and Astyanax at the Skaian gates in *Iliad* 6 derives much of its extraordinary pathos from our knowledge that at the fall of Troy the son of Hector will be murdered by the son of the man who will kill Hector. Once again, references to children as a source of bravery continue throughout later Greek (and Roman) literature.<sup>57</sup> Understood against the background of such passages, the Chorus' question *πόθεν τέκνων σέθεν λήψη θράσος*; ("Whence, from your own children, will you take courage?") means, simply enough, "Will you really be able to derive from the thought of your own children the courage necessary to kill them?"

Medea's obsessive fear that her enemies might laugh at her and her choice of drastic, public action in order to avenge herself upon them belong not so much to an ordinary woman and mother, but rather to a heroic man

53. *Il.* 1.103; 2.241; 4.245; 8.413; 10.232; 13.280, 487; 16.61, 157, 242; 17.111; 19.127, 169; *Od.* 1.89; 3.76; 4.661; 6.140, 147; 17.238; 19.347; 21.298.

54. E.g., Pind. *Pyth.* 5.51, Aesch. *Eum.* 88, Soph. *Aj.* 46. Cf. in general A. Cheyns, "La notion de *phrenes* dans l'*Illiade* et l'*Odyssée*, I," *Cah. Inst. Ling. de Louvain* 6 (1980): 121–202; S. M. Darcus, "A Person's Relation to *φρήν* in Homer, Hesiod, and the Greek Lyric Poets," *Glotta* 57 (1979): 159–73; S. Darcus Sullivan, *Psychological and Ethical Ideas. What Early Greeks Say*, Mnemosyne Suppl. 144 (Leiden-New York-Cologne, 1995): 36–53; T. Jahn, *Zum Wortfeld "Seele-Geist" in der Sprache Homers*, *Zetemata* 83 (Munich, 1987); R. B. Onians, *The Origins of European Thought about the Body, the Mind, the Soul, the World, Time, and Fate* (Cambridge, 1951), 23–40; R. Padel, *In and Out of the Mind. Greek Images of the Tragic Self* (Princeton, 1992), 20–23.

55. Eur. *Med.* 38, 104, 143, 177, 266, 316, 599, 1052, 1373; cf. also 55. There are also two references in the play to *φρήν* as the seat of intelligence (316, 677), but this meaning is certainly far less pertinent to the passage in question.

56. *Il.* 9.594; 15.497, 663.

57. Callinus 1.7 West; Tyrtæus 10.1–14, 12.29–34 West; Aesch. *Sept.* 16, *Pers.* 404; Thuc. 7.69.2. Cf. also Livy 5.49.3, 8.10.4, 21.41.16, 28.42.11, 30.33.11; Sil. 12.589–92; Stat. *Theb.* 10.573; Tac. *Ann.* 12.34.4, *Hist.* 4.18.

and soldier<sup>58</sup>—indeed, has she not declared in her opening monologue that she would rather stand three times in the line of battle than give birth once (250–51)? Hence the Chorus, taking her here with bitter irony at her own word, turn upon her the rhetoric of martial encouragement to ask her whence she will find the courage she needs. Surely her anger (φρήν) is not great enough to drive her to kill her own children. And if it is not, the children themselves (τέκνα), so far from providing a sufficient motivation for her to kill them, will provide the strongest motivation for her to spare them. To be sure, the two alternatives the Chorus oppose to one another with the disjunctive particles ἢ . . . ἢ are in fact not equally balanced but form a kind of conceptual zeugma: for the one question, “Will you really be able to derive from your anger the courage necessary to kill your own children?” could conceivably be answered in the affirmative (and will indeed be so answered, later in the play), while the other question, “Will you really be able to derive from the thought of your own children the courage necessary to kill them?” is obviously absurd (logically, this question is a *reductio ad absurdum*). That is precisely why the Chorus, in the following lines, concentrate exclusively upon her children and entirely drop the reference to Medea’s φρήν (which does not serve their purpose quite as well). The very next lines elaborate in pathetic detail what would happen if Medea looked to, or at, the children in order to motivate their murder: πῶς δ’ ὄμματα προσβαλοῦσα | τέκνοις ἄδακρυν μοῖραν | σχήσεις φόνου; (860–62). The continuity of thought between these two questions is indicated by a series of verbal parallels—πῶς / πόθεν, προσβαλοῦσα / προσάγουσα, τέκνοις / τέκνων, σχήσεις / λήψη—which suggest that the Chorus believe the very thought of the mother’s glance at her children to be a sufficient argument to dissuade Medea from killing them. And so the Chorus can delude themselves that she will never be able to act in a fashion so contrary to her, and their own, female nature: οὐ δυνάσῃ, | παίδων ἱκετᾶν πιτνόντων, | τέγξαι χέρα φοινίαν | τλάμονι θυμῷ (862–65). Once again, the optimistic coherence of their argumentation is underlined by a series of verbal parallels: παίδων / τέκνοις / τέκνων, χέρα / χειρί, φοινίαν / φόνου, θυμῷ / καρδίᾳ.

The threefold recurrence of words for “children” in as many sentences on the part of this Chorus, desperate to persuade Medea, is hardly accidental: not only are these the same children she intends to murder, they are also, as children, a particularly apt means of persuasion. After all, a large part of the devastating effect of this tragedy derives from the fact that a play which ends with the murder of children has repeatedly used these very same children during its course as the most effective rhetorical means of arousing pity, swaying the listener, and achieving one’s end.<sup>59</sup> The *Medea* presupposes throughout that by nature we cannot resist the pity we feel for children—and concludes with a mother’s murder of her own. Just as the Chorus

58. This aspect of Medea’s character has been explored especially by B. M. W. Knox, “The *Medea* of Euripides,” *YCIS* 25 (1977): 193–225 (reprinted in B. Knox, *Word and Action. Essays on the Ancient Theater* [Baltimore and London, 1979], 295–322), and A. Dihle, *Euripides’ “Medea”*, SB Heidelberger Akad. d. Wiss., Phil.-hist. Kl. 1977:5 (Heidelberg 1977), pp. 16–17, and 42–44, n. 29.

59. *Eur. Med.* 342–45 (cf. 283, 329), 713–18 (cf. 669, 671, 721), 780–83, 894–945, 1151–55.

have predicted, Medea will indeed lose the heart to kill her children precisely at the moment that she turns her murderous eyes upon them: she will cry out to the Chorus, αἰαῖ· τί δράσω; καρδία γὰρ οἴχεται, | γυναῖκες, ὄμμα παιδρὸν ὡς εἶδον τέκνων (1042–43). But her weakness will be only temporary: her φρήν will triumph. Had the Chorus reflected that it was Medea herself who, once she had decided to kill her children, cynically deployed for rhetorical ends the very children whom she intended to kill, and that she did so precisely in order to create the circumstances in which she would have no alternative other than to kill them, they might have suspected that an argumentative strategy of the sort they adopt in this ode was not after all very likely to be successful when applied to her.<sup>60</sup>

*University of Heidelberg*  
*University of Chicago*

60. I am grateful to James Diggle and Richard Kannicht for their criticism of an earlier version of this article; they should not be thought to agree with all its conclusions.