

EURIPIDES' *MEDEA* 723–30 REVISITED*

οὐτῷ δ' ἔχει μοι· σοῦ μὲν ἐλθούσης χθόνα,	723
πειράσομαί σου προξενεῖν δίκαιος ὢν.	
τοσόν γε μέντοι σοι προσημαίνω, γύναι·	725
ἐκ τῆσδε μὲν γῆς οὐ σ' ἄγειν βουλήσομαι,	
αὐτῇ δ' ἑάνπερ εἰς ἐμοὺς ἔλθῃς δόμους,	
μενεῖς ἄσυλος κοῦ σε μὴ μεθῶ τι.	
ἐκ τῆσδε δ' αὐτῇ γῆς ἀπαλλάσσου πόδα·	
ἀναίτιος γὰρ καὶ ξένοις εἶναι θέλω.	730

But here is how matters stand with me. If you come to my country, I shall in justice try to act as your protector. This much, however, I tell you in advance: I will not consent to take you from this land. But if you manage by yourself to come to my house, you may stay there in safety, and I will never give you up to anyone. You must go on your own, then, from this land. I wish to be blameless in the eyes of my hosts as well. (trans. D. Kovacs)¹

The text of the second part of Aegeus' reply to Medea's asylum request (723–30) – cited above as transmitted by a unanimous medieval manuscript tradition – has been viewed as repetitious by some modern scholars who have attempted to ameliorate the text through athetization and/or transposition of verses. The most influential intervention in the text was advanced by Kirchhoff, who in his *editio maior* of Euripides (1867–8) bracketed 725–8.² To his mind, Aegeus' declaration that came out of Euripides' pen was short and terse: 'This is how matters stand with me: if you come to my country, I will try to protect you in accord with justice. But leave this land on your own! For I also do not wish to give cause for blame to guest-friends'.

Kirchhoff's proposal has been endorsed by Prinz (1878),³ Weil (1879² and 1899)⁴ and Wecklein (1880² and 1899),⁵ while recently the case has been forcefully restated by

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¹ *Euripides*: Cyclops, Alcestis, Medea, edited and translated by D. Kovacs (Cambridge, MA and London, 1994).

² *Euripidis Fabulae*, rec. A. Kirchhoff (Berlin, 1867–8) (*Medea* in vol. 3). No alteration to the text of the passage is to be found in Kirchhoff's *editio minor* of Euripides (*Euripidis Tragoediae*, ex recensione A. Kirchhoff [Berlin, 1855], *Medea* in vol. 1) contrary to what is stated in the appendix, 'Qui versus deleverunt vel suspectos habent', to H. Van Looy's edition of *Medea* (*Euripides Medea*, ed. H. Van Looy [Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1992], p. 127).

³ *Euripidis Fabulae*, ed. Rudolfus Prinz, vol. 1.1 *Medea* (Leipzig, 1878). From the editor's critical note ad loc. ('725–8 damnavit Kirchhoffius in ed. min., quem nunc secutus sum. olim (de Solonis Plut. font. p. 44) 723.24 cum Hirzelio, 729 cum Nauckio delendos, 730 vero post 726 transpondendum esse putabam') it follows that he had previously considered other possible solutions.

⁴ *Sept tragédies d' Euripide*, ed. H. Weil (Paris, 1879²) and *Euripide Médée*, recension nouvelle par H. Weil (Paris, 1899).

⁵ Wecklein finds in this passage 'Spuren einer doppelten Recension', see *Ausgewählte Tragödien des Euripides für den Schulgebrauch erklärt von N. Wecklein, Erstes Bändchen: Medea* (Leipzig, 1880²), at 25–6 and *Euripidis Fabulae*, vol. 1.1: *Medea*, edd. R. Prinz and N. Wecklein (Leipzig, 1899²) app. crit. ad loc.

Hübner (1987)⁶ who traces in the verses a penchant for 'superfluous expansion and pedantic explanation' uncharacteristic of Euripides. Other scholars – more specifically Nauck (1859 and 1884³),⁷ Hirzel (1862),⁸ Way (1912),⁹ Müller (1951)¹⁰ and Seeck (1972)¹¹ – have bracketed 723–4, while by far the most extensive athetizations were proposed by Kvičala (1879)¹² who argued that the entire passage offers an example of 'parallel interpolation', the layers of which overlap (οὕτω δ' ἔχει μοι = τοσόνδε μέντοι σοι προσημαίνω, γύναι; πειράσομαί σου προξενεῖν δίκαιος ὢν = μενεῖς ἄστυλος κοῦ σε μὴ μεθῶ τινι; αὐτὴ δ' ἑάνπερ εἰς ἑμούςς ἔλθῃς δόμους = ἐκ τῆσδε δ' αὐτὴ γῆς ἀπαλλάσσου πόδα) and proposed to throw out both 723–4, 729 (as doublets for 727–8 and 726 respectively) and 730 (as the product of an interpolator who wished to provide a reason for Aegeus' refusal to escort Medea out of Corinth in 729).

The integrity of the passage has, on the other hand, been defended by different scholars on different grounds: Murray (1902),¹³ who obviously viewed Aegeus as a garrulous character, argued (in an attempt to counter Kirchhoff's deletion of 725–8) that repetition in the passage is '... *personae congrua*'. Page (1938)¹⁴ defended the repetition of 726–8 by 729 on the grounds that it serves the arousal of dramatic suspense. In his own words: 'it (sc. the *iteratio*) also emphasizes a new point of great interest. ... Medea has now her place of refuge: well and good; but there is a curious reservation to the promise – *she must effect her own escape from Corinth*. From this moment the question arises and persists – how is Medea, in this play, going to escape from Corinth? ... Aegeus' language here is emphatic simply because an entirely new point is being made, one which, if missed, will destroy a great deal of the suspense of the sequel'.¹⁵ Finally, Erbse (1981)¹⁶ has pointed out in passing that the presumed doublets are not exactly equivalent in terms of meaning, thus dealing a blow to the notion that we are faced with a case of double recension or of 'parallel interpolation'.

⁶ U. Hübner, 'Kritische Notizen zu Euripides, Medea 706–756', *RhMus* n.F. 130 (1987), 204–16, at 206–8.

⁷ *Euripidis Tragoediae*, rec. A. Nauck, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1884³). Nauck also bracketed 729 (on the grounds that the expression ἀπαλλάσσου πόδα is strange and that Euripides would have avoided the repetition ἐκ τῆσδε μὲν γῆς and ἐκ τῆσδε δ' αὐτῇ γῆς in adjacent passages, see A. Nauck, *Euripideische Studien* [Mém. de l' Acad. imp. des Scienc. de St.-Petersbourg, VII^e Sér. 1.12] [1859], 1–139, at 122–3) and transposed 730 after v. 726. The athetization of 729 has been supported by E. Christmann (*Bemerkungen zum Text der Medea des Euripides* [Diss. Heidelberg, 1962], 118–21) who deems the repetition of 726 in 729 (especially the almost identical beginning of the two verses) exceedingly unpoetical (op. cit. '... so undichterisch wie nur möglich').

⁸ H. Hirzel, *De Euripidis in componendis diverbiis arte* (Diss. Bonn, 1862), 55–8.

⁹ *Euripides* IV, with an English translation by A.S. Way (Cambridge, MA and London, 1912).

¹⁰ G. Müller, 'Interpolationen in der Medea des Euripides', *SIFC* n.s. 25 (1951), 65–82, at 80. Müller also athetizes 729.

¹¹ *Euripidis Sämtliche Tragödien und Fragmente*, I Alkestis, Medea, Hippolytos, trans. E. Buschor, ed. G.A. Seeck (München, 1972).

¹² J. Kvičala, 'Studien zu Euripides mit einem Anhang sophokleischer Analekta', *Denkschriften der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Phil.-Hist. Cl., B. 29 (Vienna, 1879), 237–341, at 253–5.

¹³ *Euripidis Fabulae*, ed G. Murray, vol. I (Oxford, 1902).

¹⁴ *Euripides Medea*, ed. D.L. Page (Oxford, 1952²), 124 ad 723 ff.

¹⁵ Page's reasoning has been deemed convincing by Collard who also supports Nauck's proposal to bracket 729, see: C. Collard, review of James Diggle, *Euripides Fabulae*, vol. I: Cyclops, Alkestis, Medea, Heracleidae, Hippolytus, Andromacha, Hecuba (Oxford, 1984), *CR* 36.1 (1986), 17–24, at 21.

¹⁶ H. Erbse, 'Zum Abschiedsmonolog der euripideischen Medea (Eur. *Med.* 1021–1080)', *Archaiognostia* 2 (1981), 66–82, at 74.

THE TESTIMONY OF *P.Oxy. LXVII 4549* (= *Π*¹¹; M-P³ 404.1)

The discussion would have remained at this, had not a new and potentially very important piece of evidence come to light. For the preparation of his 1984 OCT edition of Euripides, J. Diggle had recourse to a number of unpublished papyrus fragments of *Medea*, belonging to the Oxyrhynchus collection.¹⁷ One of these, *Π*¹¹, in a slanting 'formal-mixed' hand datable to the third century A.D.,¹⁸ has shaped his edition of the passage in question. In the mind of Diggle and other scholars the papyrus confirms the suspicions about the soundness of the textual transmission of 723–30, raised by nineteenth-century scholars, as it omits 725–6 and transposes 729 immediately after 724, followed by 727, a verse that may be identified with 728,¹⁹ and 730.

This is Diggle's version of the passage in question:

οὐτω δ' ἔχει μοι· σοῦ μὲν ἐλθούσης χθόνα,	723
πειράσομαι σου προξενεῖν δίκαιος ὢν.	
[τοσόνδε μέντοι σοι προσημαίνω, γύναι·	725
ἐκ τῆσδε μὲν γῆς οὐ σ' ἄγειν βουλήσομαι].	
ἐκ τῆσδε δ' αὐτῇ γῆς ἀπαλλάσσου πόδα·	729
αὐτῇ δ' ἐάνπερ εἰς ἐμοὺς ἔλθης δόμους,	727
μενεῖς ἄστυλος κοῦ σε μὴ μεθῶ τινι·	728 ²⁰
ἀναίτιος γὰρ καὶ ξένοις εἶναι θέλω.	730

Diggle's athetization of 725–6 and rearrangement of 727–9 on the authority of a papyrus copy from the Roman period has been endorsed by Mastronarde who finds that the text offered by the medieval manuscripts contains 'some repetition that most critics have rightly found feeble and suspect'.²¹ Mastronarde offers the following scenario to explain how the medieval version of the text came about: 725–6 were inserted into the text as a doublet for 729, introduced by a reader or actor who felt that the μέν-limb in 723 needed a clear contrast of a first-person statement to balance the σοῦ. The doublet replaced 729 which was at a later point restored in the margin in some copies and later re-inserted into the text after 728. Mastronarde acknowledges, however, that in the version of the text offered by the papyrus and adopted by Diggle the repetition of αὐτῇ in consecutive verses is odd²² and finally evades taking a stance

¹⁷ *Euripidis Fabulae*, ed. J. Diggle, vol. I (Oxford, 1984), 86–7.

¹⁸ The papyrus was published in 2001 by D. Hughes and A. Nodar as *P.Oxy. LXVII 4549*. See also: A. Ponzio, 'La tradizione papiracea della *Medea* di Euripide', *AnPap* 8–9 (1996–7), 95–142, at 103 (and n. 24). For an image of the fragment see <http://163.1.169.40/gsd/collect/POxy/index/assoc/HASH01bc.dir/POxy.v0067.n4549.a.01.hires.jpg>

¹⁹ On this verse see nn. 20 and 29.

²⁰ It should be noted that it is very likely, though not absolutely certain, that l. 10 of *P.Oxy. LXVII 4549* is a version of Eur. *Med.* 728. What is to be read on the papyrus is the sequence:]ῥῶπότ[. The line is restored by the editors of the papyrus and Diggle as *Med.* 728 on the assumption that προ]ῥῶ πότ[ε is a variant for μεθῶ τινι. The editors of the papyrus allegedly base their restoration on a scholion ad loc. κοῦ σε μὴ μεθῶ τινι· προδῶ. Strangely, the scholion in question is not to be located in the corpus of the extant scholia to *Medea* (*Scholia in Euripidem*, ed. E. Schwartz, vol. 2 [Berlin, 1891] and *Euripides Medea mit Scholien*, ed. E. Diehl [Bonn, 1911], 64). The supplement may nevertheless be correct as the only other conceivable supplement with support from the scholia, namely ἐκ]ῥῶ πότ[ε, would create an intolerable hiatus. Note that ποτέ in 728 was a conjecture advanced by the French humanist M.A. Muret.

²¹ *Euripides Medea*, ed. D.J. Mastronarde (Cambridge, 2002), 291–2 ad 725–30. See also D.J. Mastronarde, review of *Euripidis Fabulae*, vol. I, ed. J. Diggle (Oxford and New York, 1984), *CP* 83.2 (Apr. 1988), 151–60, at 154, n. 5.

²² He proposes to render 729–727 as: 'but make your way out of this land yourself; if *all* by yourself without my aid, you come to my house ...'.

on the problem by speaking of the solution as 'not so certain'. In the same spirit the editors of the papyrus refer to the speech of Aegeus as 'somewhat confused and patently repetitious', but observe that although the papyrus may appear to be an improvement on the medieval text (to their mind, the loss of 725–6 only spares the repetition of sentiments), it still does not furnish us with a very satisfactory text in view of the repetition of *αὐτῇ* in consecutive verses (729 *ἐκ τῆσδε δ' αὐτῇ γῆς* ...; 727 *αὐτῇ δ' ἐάνπερ* ...). In addition, the occurrence in the papyrus copy of 729 before 727–8 has influenced the judgement of H. Van Looy, who – not without some caution, it is true – proposes the following order of verses: 723, 724, 725, [726], 729, 730, 727, 728.²³ Finally, Günther has viewed the sequence 727–728–730, offered by the papyrus, as the original one and has further taken the occurrence of 729 in place of 725–6 as an indication of their interchangeability. In his opinion 722 was originally followed by 725–6, 727–8 and 730.²⁴

If, however, the papyrus is to be made the basis for the constitution of the text of the passage, it must ideally be shown to preserve a text that is superior in terms of both style and meaning (or, less ideally, in terms of either style or meaning) to that of the medieval manuscripts. That the text offered by the papyrus attempts to efface one repetition (that of 726 in 729) but creates another, equally eye-catching one, has been already pointed out by both Mastronarde and the editors of *P.Oxy.* LXVII 4549. In addition, this version of the text retains the repetition of the content of 723–4 in 727–8 (the only new element in the latter pair of verses being the emphasis to *αὐτῇ*), while the idea that Aegeus will protect Medea as his guest (724 *πειράσομαί σου προξενεῖν* ...) is echoed in his closing statement (730 *ἀναίτιος γὰρ καὶ ξένους εἶναι θέλω*). The above means that from the point of view of style the papyrus version of the passage retains some considerable amount of repetition.

It remains to examine the text of the papyrus in terms of its meaning and content. This is what Aegeus says to Medea according to this version of the text:

This is how matters stand with me: If you come to my country, I will attempt to be just and act as your protector. But make your way out of this land yourself! If all by yourself you arrive in my country, you will be granted asylum and I will not hand you back (I betray you) to anybody. For (γάρ) I do not wish to offer cause for offence to a refugee (*ξένους*).

This is certainly a neat and comprehensive reply, but is it a more satisfactory one in terms of meaning? I will argue that this is not the case. The reason is that the transposition of 729 after 724 makes the content of Aegeus' reply different in one very important respect and, in my view, much more trivial than what the Athenian king says according to the medieval manuscripts. In the papyrus version Aegeus connects his preoccupation not to offend *ξένους* (730) not with his refusal to escort Medea out of Corinth himself – in which case it is Creon and perhaps also Jason he has in mind²⁵ – but with Medea's status as a refugee in Athens. If Medea manages by her own means and devices to reach Athens, asserts Aegeus, she will be offered asylum and will not be

²³ *Euripides Medea*, ed. H. Van Looy (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1992), app. crit. ad loc.

²⁴ H.-C. Günther, *Exercitationes Sophocleae* (Göttingen, 1996), 21–2.

²⁵ This is the line of interpretation taken by the ancient scholiasts. Scholia A and B to 730 paraphrase thus: οὐδὲ γὰρ βούλομαι, φησὶ, παρὰ τῶν περὶ τὸν Κρέοντα αἰτιαθῆναι, ὡς αὐτὸς σε ἀπαγαγόν, while the marginal scholia B to 724 offer two explanations of Aegeus' refusal to take Medea with him (ἴσως ἵνα μὴ λυπήσῃ τὸν Ἰάσονα ἢ ἐπειδὴ ἀπήγει πρὸς τὸν Περθέα). The latter scholion belongs either to 726 or to 729 and its displacement suggests that in some ancient editions (e.g. the one adhered to by *P.Oxy.* LXVII 4549) 729 constituted the sequel to 724.

handed back to her pursuers. For a ξένος, an asylum-seeking foreigner, should not be given cause to complain. In other words, in this version of the text, the referent of the word ξένοις at 730 is not Creon (or Jason) and the function of the verse is not to provide a reason for Aegeus' refusal to escort Medea out of Corinth himself. Instead, the referent of ξένοις is Medea herself and 730 is offered (by dint of the introductory particle γάρ) as an explanation or further elaboration to Aegeus' statement that when Medea arrives in Athens, she will enjoy the protection due to a foreigner who has been granted asylum. Accordingly, the term ξένοις cannot in the papyrus version be interpreted as 'guest-friends' or 'hosts', but as 'strangers, refugees, asylum-seeking foreigners'.²⁶

In this connection lies, to my mind, the weakness and inferiority in terms of meaning of the version of the text preserved by the papyrus and endorsed by recent editors and commentators of the play. By dissociating Aegeus' concern not to offend a ξένος from his preoccupation to remain on good terms with Creon and associating it instead with his promise that Medea will secure asylum and safety in Athens as befitting a foreign refugee, the papyrus version of the Athenian king's speech leaves Aegeus' refusal to escort Medea personally out of Corinth (by either taking her with him to Troezen or simply by offering to escort her out of Corinth and then send her on to Athens) utterly unmotivated and inexplicable. The question arises why does Aegeus in this version of his reply state his willingness to protect Medea in her capacity as a refugee in Athens twice (723–4 and 727–30) – the second time around even producing a superfluous reiteration of a widely known precept of unwritten law – but evade giving an explanation as to why he refuses to extend his assistance to her to the present. This question is inextricably bound to the issue of poetic intention as regards the characterization of Aegeus. Is it credible that Euripides cast Aegeus as a long-winded character who indulges in repeating himself and stating obvious truths but does not see the necessity of shedding light on the motives of his actions in the face of Medea's extremely serious present situation? This is, I believe, far from the intentions of the poet, who by means of this speech portrays the Athenian king as a cautious *Realpolitiker* who in situations of decision-making attempts to strike a balance between morally correct and personally or politically realistic behaviour: just as when determining to grant Medea's plea Aegeus is motivated by a combination of piety towards the gods (720) and self-interest (721), similarly his decision to assist her in the future but not at present attempts to strike a balance between the obligations towards an asylum-seeking stranger (723–4 and 727–8) and the obligations and restrictions arising from his position as a guest in Creon's territory (729–30),²⁷ although the latter concern is in reality a mere metonymy for foreign policy considerations. That this is the intended meaning of 730 is, to my mind, signalled by the particle καί, the occurrence of which immediately before ξένοις suggests that 730

²⁶ In the plays of Euripides the term ξένος may refer, depending on the context, either to the person bestowing hospitality, be it temporary or permanent, upon an arriving stranger (e.g. *Alc.* 8, 476, 484 etc.; *Med.* 388, 613, 616) or to the person who arrives as a stranger and finds him-/herself at the receiving end of hospitality (all occurrences in *Cycl.*; *Alc.* 540, 542, 550 etc.).

²⁷ Aegeus' speech is symmetrically constructed in that it begins and is rounded off with a declaration of motives. Another symmetrical pattern within the speech – the chiasmus ... σου προσεῖν δίκαιος ὢν (724) vs ἀνείτιος ... ξένοις ... (730) – highlights the shift in Aegeus' motives according to his position. In Athens where he himself is a ruler he will try to be δίκαιος by protecting his ξένη. In Corinth, however, where others rule and he himself is a ξένος, his concern is to be ἀνείτιος.

contrasts and complements 724: Aegeus wishes to act as a patron to Medea; but he wishes to remain on good terms also with his present host(s).²⁸

To return to the textual testimony of *P.Oxy.* LXVII 4549 (*IT*¹¹): the papyrus does not, in my view, preserve a version of *Med.* 723–30 in any respect superior to that offered by the medieval manuscript tradition. Stylistically Aegeus' speech remains repetitious in that it contains two double statements. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, according to this version of the text, Aegeus refuses to help Medea out of Corinth for apparently no reason. It would appear that Euripides casts Aegeus as a garrulous bore – an aspect not confirmed by Aegeus' conduct in the rest of the episode. For these reasons the version of the text preserved by the papyrus should, in my view, be dismissed as the basis for constituting the text of *Med.* 723–30.

As to what motivated the assumed interference of the ancient editor of the text adhered to by *P.Oxy.* LXVII 4549 with the passage, two hypotheses may be advanced. (a) That the dislocation of 729 arose from a misunderstanding of the meaning of ξένους in 730 and an erroneous belief that this word must mean 'stranger' and apply to Medea's state as a refugee in Athens. 729 was consequently removed from its original to the only other position natural for it, that is immediately before the conditional clause of 727. This in turn necessitated the athetization of 725–6 because of the awkward similarity of 726 and 729 in both content and expression. (b) Alternatively, the ancient editor made a clumsy effort to shorten and rearrange what he (anticipating Kirchhoff and a number of modern editors and commentators) perceived as a repetitious passage.²⁹ But he failed to notice first, that his amendment of the assumed repetition is only partial and second, that his retention of 730 after 727–8 inserts a triviality into Aegeus' response while obscuring the crucial issue of the Athenian king's motives for refusing to help Jason's former wife out of Corinth.³⁰

THE RHETORICAL STRUCTURE AND DRAMATIC FUNCTION OF *MED.* 723–30

In what follows I shall attempt to show that Aegeus' speech in general and lines 723–30 in the form transmitted by the medieval witnesses in particular constitute a dense and coherent piece of rhetoric in which at the level of rhetorical structure repetition is a strategy employed consciously and efficiently on the part of the speaker who strives to manoeuvre between conflicting interests in a delicate and demanding situation, while at the level of dramatic structure it serves to impress upon the minds of the audience a key element of the action.

Aegeus' rhetoric first: having declared his willingness to grant Medea's plea (719–20), Aegeus proceeds to set out the expectations Medea is entitled to entertain with regard to her admission and treatment as a refugee in Athens (723–4). This new section of his speech, introduced by the programmatic οὕτω δ' ἔχει μοι ('this is how things stand from my point of view'),³¹ conveys the first, seemingly unconditional

²⁸ The point has also been made by Christmann (n. 7) at 119.

²⁹ Another indication of the ancient editor's preoccupation with eliminating repetition from the passage may be the replacement of μεθῶ τινι with προδῶ ποτε, if indeed l. 10 of the papyrus is 728 with a variant. By means of this replacement the editor presumably sought to eliminate the repetition of the same verb in neighbouring verses (728 ... κοῦ σε μὴ μεθῶ τινι and 736 ... οὐ μεθεῖ' ἄν ἐκ γαίης με).

³⁰ Of modern editors of *Medea* Nauck and Van Looy have obviously noticed the difference in meaning, resulting from placing 730 after 727–8 (instead of after 729). The former proposed to transpose 729–30 after 724 and the latter after 725.

³¹ On the combination of ἔχω with adverb see LSJ s.v. B II.2.

expression of the Athenian king's pledge to give Medea shelter in Athens. When Medea reaches Athens (σοῦ μὲν ἐλθούσης χθόνα), declares Aegeus, he will attempt to act as her protector (πειράσομαί σου προξενεῖν ...), an expression that prompted Kvíčala to reject 724 in favour of 728 on grounds of dullness. Yet, there is – in my opinion – a perfectly good reason for considering the conative expression put in the mouth of Aegeus as very appropriate at this particular point, namely that its employment by the Athenian king conveys a first hint at the reservation about to be introduced. The connotation of this formulation is that Aegeus will do his best to act as Medea's patron, although this might not be the absolute best from Medea's, her supporters' (and the audience's) point of view. A further note of caution on Aegeus' part may lurk in the formulation δίκαιος ὥν if the participial expression is interpreted 'as far as this is compatible with justice'.³²

The caution subtly incorporated in the formulations of 724 appears in the reservation contained in Aegeus' follow-up statement (725–6) uttered in an authoritative tone with echoes of divine or oracular authority:³³ 'But (μέντοι) this much I reveal to you, woman: I shall not consent to escort you out of this land'. As the presence of μέντοι in its adversative capacity signals,³⁴ the content of the statement that depends on and complements 725, that is 726 (ἐκ τῆσδε μὲν γῆς οὐ σ' ἄγειν βουλήσομαι), contrasts and corrects the Athenian king's initial pledge to act as Medea's patron.

But the balance is immediately redressed in that Aegeus' refusal to assist Medea at present (contained in the μὲν-clause of 726) is in its turn rectified through the reiteration of his pledge to help her in the future, contained in the δέ-clause immediately following (727–8 αὐτῇ δ' ἄνπερ εἰς ἑμοὺς ἔλθῃς δόμους / μενεῖς ἄστυλος κοῦ σε μὴ μεθῶ τινι). In reiterating his promise of assistance with a condition attached to it, the speaker adjusts it to the refusal just uttered. At the same time the reiteration of his promise displaces his refusal to the background and mitigates its strictness.

In this reading lines 725–8 emerge as a closely interwoven group of verses. Line 728 is not a superfluous repetition of 724 but a necessary complement of 727 which moderates and makes amends for the puzzling refusal of assistance uttered in 726. In addition, and perhaps more importantly – despite the doubts expressed by Kirchhoff and his followers and seemingly strengthened by the omission of 725–6 in *P.Oxy. LXVII* 4549 – the four verses in question are closely linked to their preceding pair of verses (723–4). In a densely articulated and closely interdependent string of statements Aegeus first proclaims Medea's admission to Athens only to attach a reservation to it which calls for its revision and reformulation. Lines 725–8 form an indispensable sequel to the preceding pair of verses in that they convey first a partial retraction and then a partial revision of the seemingly unconditional pledge of assistance given in 723–4. In the same vein, the conditional clause of 727 does not merely repeat the participle of 723, as claimed by Hübner,³⁵ but *sheds a new*

³² The poet's intention is to create an ironic contrast between the caution initially shown by Aegeus and his subsequent rather naive entrapment, when he readily guarantees by oath that Medea will on no account be given up (749–51).

³³ Aegeus' authority is underlined by the double employment of the vocative γύναι (720 and 725) in addressing Medea. Previously Medea had been addressed as φίλη (664) and σοφή (677). As for his presumptions of divine or oracular authority, they are conveyed through the use of the verb προσημαίνειν, employed in contexts where gods or their oracular agents foretell the future, see Hdt. 1.45, 6.27, 6.77; Eur. *Suppl.* 213.

³⁴ The contrast is forecast by the μὲν in 723, see J.D. Denniston, *The Greek Particles* (Oxford, 1954²), 404–5 (2.i).

³⁵ Hübner (n. 6) at 208.

retrospective light on it, disclosing that it is not to be interpreted as equivalent to a simple temporal clause ('when you come to Athens ...'), as perhaps initially understood by Medea (and the audience), but to a temporal-conditional clause: 'when and if you come to Athens ...'.

Finally, as argued extensively in the previous section, the closing pair of verses (729–30) supplies the reason for Aegeus' refusal to assist Medea by escorting her out of Corinth. They come as an answer to a question that is likely to have reigned prominent in the minds of the audience ever since line 726: if Aegeus is willing to shelter Medea in the future, why is he unable to help her now? Line 729 undoubtedly replicates in terms of both form and content what has already been stated in 726. Yet, far from being superfluous, this is a necessary repetition³⁶ since with 727–8 Aegeus' train of thought is back to Medea's treatment as an asylum seeker in Athens. In order to explain why he is determined not to offer assistance at present Aegeus therefore needs to return to the present and this is what 729 does. In addition, this statement may again be viewed not as a genuine repetition but as a reformulation, since Aegeus' focus has shifted from what he himself will not do (726) to what Medea herself needs to do (729).³⁷

The foregoing discussion of the rhetorical structure of Aegeus' reply to Medea's asylum request (719–30) has hopefully shown that far from being a sample of garrulity, infested with unnecessary repetitions, Aegeus' speech is a coherent, densely built and accomplished sample of rhetoric, by means of which the cautious *Realpolitiker* proceeds to revise his initial, seemingly unreserved admission of Medea to Athens in such a manner that the blatancy of his first refusal (725–6) is 'sandwiched' and thus absorbed and moderated between the first declaration of Medea's admission to Athens and its reformulation, while his second refusal (729) is couched between a firm affirmation of future help (728) and a perfectly legitimate reason for being unable to help her at present (730).

Despite the foregoing analysis one might, however, still feel troubled by the double statement – in almost identical terms – of Aegeus' reservation (726 and 729). Two considerations pertaining to the dramatic function of Aegeus' refusal to take Medea with him out of Corinth make its reiteration by the poet very expedient. The one has been set forth by Page, who has stressed that the double statement of the idea that Medea must effect her own escape from Corinth functions as a means of emphasis, serving to highlight in the minds of the audience the crucial question on which much of the suspense of the play from now on depends: if Aegeus will not help Medea out of Corinth, by what means will she escape the city in this play?³⁸ Or even: will Medea proceed with her preferred revenge plan (set out in 384–91), although she has no guarantee of immediate assistance to reach the safe haven offered to her in Athens? A related consideration may be formulated as follows: the repetition of the idea that Medea must not count on Aegeus' help to leave Corinth emphasizes a key element in the plot, namely that the heroine needs the opportunity to act alone in Corinth in order to fulfil her murderous plan.³⁹ Any other development would have seriously

³⁶ As argued in the previous section, the absence of 729 between 727–8 and 730 would result in a different, and in my view untenable, interpretation of Aegeus' motives and character.

³⁷ The change of perspective is conveyed through chiasmus: ἐκ τῆσδε μὲν γῆς οὐ σ' ἄγειν βουλήσομαι | αὐτῇ δ' ... (726–7) and ἐκ τῆσδε δ' αὐτῇ γῆς ... (729).

³⁸ See p. 453 above.

³⁹ The dramatic necessity of Aegeus' refusal has also been pointed out by Christmann (n. 7), at 119, who, however, appears to believe that the repetition (of 726 in 729) is the work of an interpolator who wished to emphasize precisely this dramatically important element.

hindered the projected unfolding of the plot. Had Aegeus offered to take Medea with him at once, she would have missed the chance to proceed with her plan; had he offered to wait for her for the space of time granted to her by Creon (355), the play would have ended in the untenable situation of Aegeus becoming the accomplice, conscious or not, of a murderess. It is therefore a matter of utmost dramatic necessity and importance that Aegeus should refuse to help Medea while she remains in Corinth. Repetition is the formal means employed by the poet to impress upon the minds of the audience this very important element of the dramatic situation which entails that Medea gets the opportunity to act alone now and find a welcoming shelter in Athens later. Kirchhoff's short and terse version of Aegeus' reply destroys this effect.

To conclude: considerations of rhetorical structure as well as the dramatic significance for the plot of the play of Aegeus' refusal to help Medea while in Corinth support the thesis that the repetitions contained in the verses are of an organic and functional character and that there is no need to alter the text offered by the medieval manuscript tradition.

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