

EURIPIDES, MEDEA 1056-80

Critical scholarship has won many of its greatest triumphs by applying remorseless logic to the problems presented by the texts of ancient authors, so often disfigured by corruption and interpolation. Let anyone who doubts it compare the text of any Greek tragedy in an edition earlier than Hermann with a modern edition of the same play. But the very qualities which have been responsible for these successes can also lead to failures; scholars may easily come to take it for granted that poets should be as logical and as matter-of-fact as they themselves, and so themselves damage the texts which they are trying to protect. The eminent man whom we are honouring has long been conscious of this danger, and has several times come to the rescue of poets threatened by the too sharp pruning-shears of textual critics. That encourages me to offer him a few remarks about a problem that has aroused much controversy in recent years.

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No ancient author seemed to the fin-de-siècle closer to itself than Euripides, and no ancient author suffered more from having its preoccupations read into his work. The Ibsenite Euripides of Wilamowitz and the Shavian Euripides of Gilbert Murray have even now not been fully exorcised. Euripides was assumed to be wholly preoccupied with the doctrines of a fifth-century enlightenment having a surprising amount in common with the enlightenment of modern times. He was assumed to have employed the traditional trappings of myth only because they were part of the furniture of tragedy; the mythical and the heroic were held to have no real importance in his work. Some scholars treated him as though he were a sophist or philosopher, concerned to recommend certain opinions to the public through his plays; others saw him as chiefly interested in the psychology of his characters. For the former group, the chief interest of the *Medea* lies in the struggle between reason and passion in the mind of the heroine; in showing how she gives way to passion, Euripides is making 'polemic' against the excessive intellectualism of Socrates. For the others, Euripides' main interest in the *Medea* is in the heroine's psychology, not to say pathology. She is a barbarian witch, a prey to her excessively violent emotions, Jason a cold-hearted cynic; the play is a cautionary tale, showing us what is likely to happen when two such persons become involved with one another. Kitto¹ is uneasily conscious that Medea ought to be tragic, and sets out to prove her so. His *Medea* is „tragic in that her passions are stronger than her reason (*θυμὸς δὲ κρείσσων τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων*, 1079) she is drawn with such vigour and directness, everything she does springs so immediately from her dominant motive that she is eminently dramatic; nevertheless she is no tragic heroine as we have hitherto un-

¹ H.D.F. Kitto, *Greek Tragedy*, 2nd. edn. 1961, 194; cf. 197.

derstood the term; she is too extreme, too simple". Kitto admits that „it may seem absurd" to call Medea „a purely passive figure", but is driven to argue that it is not absurd. The truth is that his Medea cannot be tragic, because she has been denied her true heroic status, and a Medea who is not heroic cannot be tragic. Still less can Kitto's Jason, who is „an unrelieved villain", „a ready-made villain", have any tragic status.

The way to a new approach was paved by Kurt von Fritz² with his rehabilitation of Jason; effectively comparing the treatment of the subject by later authors, he showed that we have no reason to doubt Jason's claim that he is doing what he thinks best for his family and himself. Yet Jason has broken his oath; and he fails to understand what price he will have to pay for his disloyalty. The heroic and tragic Medea has been rehabilitated above all by Bernard Knox³; instead of the psychotic barbarian witch he delineated a great heroic figure, comparable with the Ajax or the Electra of Sophocles. Her notion of honour demands that she must reward her friends and be avenged upon her enemies; she is of such heroic nature that, like the Sophoclean Ajax, she conducts herself like one of the Olympian gods of tragedy who ruthlessly punish those who have refused them proper honour, the Apollo of the *Agamemnon* and the *Niobe* of Sophocles, the Athena of the *Ajax* or the *Ajax Locrensis*. The finest general study of the play in modern times is that of the late Eilhard Schlessinger⁴, who presents it not as a contribution to intellectual history or as a psychological study, but as a tragedy. What we witness during the great monologue that begins at l. 1021 is not a struggle between passion and reason, which may end in one way or another, but the agonised reaction of Medea's maternal feelings to the dreadful action to which her unswerving determination to obtain revenge has long before committed her. The last scene unmistakably brings out her likeness to the gods; embarrassingly for those who have worked so hard to reduce the tragedy to their own bourgeois level, the poet has chosen to lay the strongest emphasis on those supernatural affinities of the heroine which they have found so distressing. She and no other acts the part of the god from the machine. But these gods have no human pity, and though her apotheosis richly satisfies her longing for revenge, it cannot bring her human happiness.

During the prologue, Medea curses her children and her own family (112 f.); the Nurse, who knows her well, takes from the start the darkest view as to what action may be expected from her. When at the end of her first great speech (214 f.) she begs the Chorus not to betray her plans, she is already determined on revenge (259-63). In the speech she utters after her interview with Creon (364 f.) she

² See 'Die Entwicklung der Iason-Medea-Sage und die Medea des Euripides', in: *Antike und Abendland* 8, 1959, 33-106 = *Antike und Moderne Tragödie* 1962, 322-429.

³ See 'The Medea of Euripides', in: *Yale Classical Studies* 25, 1977, 193-225 = *Word and Action* 1979, 295-322. Anne Burnett in *CJ* 68, 1973, 1-24, rightly stressed the importance of revenge in the *Medea*.

⁴ See 'Zu Euripides' Medea', in: *Hermes* 94, 1966, 26-53; there is an English version in Erich Segal, *Euripides: a Collection of Critical Essays*, 1968, 70-89. Almost simultaneously, the significance of the Aegeus scene was shown and its importance vindicated by Schlessinger 46 f. = 85 f. and by Hartmut Erbse, in: *Wiener Studien* 79, 1966, 120-133; cf. U. Albin, *Studi classici e orientali* 19-20, 1970/1 = *Interpretazioni teatrali*, 1972, 66-77.

expresses her intention of killing Creon, the princess and Jason (374-75). The ideal opportunity given by the arrival of Aegeus allows her to perfect her plan (764 f.); doubtless it is the preoccupation of Aegeus with his childlessness that makes her realise that the perfect revenge on Jason will be the murder of his children (791-97). The women of Corinth plead with her (812 f.), but come up against her absolute determination; when they sing the fourth stasimon (976 f.), they know that the children are already doomed.

After the song the Paidagogos enters with the children (1002 f.), bringing the news that the sentence of exile upon them has been rescinded; the princess has graciously received the gifts they brought. The old man is disappointed by Medea's reaction to news that he had hoped would give her pleasure; he attributes her sorrow to the knowledge that she will henceforth be separated from her children. He tries to console her, but Medea dismisses him, and in the presence of the children embarks upon her fourth great speech (1021 f.).

She tells the children that they have a city and a home where they will dwell forever without their mother; the ancient commentary rightly says that she means Hades. As for her, she will go into exile without having had the satisfaction of seeing them married; nor will they, as she had hoped, be there to care for her in old age and to render her the last rites. That hope has vanished, for she will live out a sad life without them; and they will no longer look with loving eyes upon their mother, having moved away from her into another form of life; that means, of course, the life of the world of the dead.

Already in the last stanza of the third stasimon (860) the Corinthian women have asked Medea how she will be able to refrain from tears as she looks upon the children whom she is about to kill. Now (1040) she asks the children why 'they are looking upon her and smiling for the last time. 'What can she do', she asks the women; her heart has left her as she looks upon the children's smiling faces. 'I could not do it!', she exclaims, 'farewell to my earlier plans! I will take my children out of the country! Why must I bring twice as much evil on myself by using their ruin to hurt their father? No, not I; goodbye to my plans!'

At this moment Medea is checked by the thought that she will be mocked by the enemies whom she has allowed to go unpunished. Throughout the play that consideration affects her as no other does (note 381 f. 404-6. 807-10. 1354-55. 1361-62). She must go through with it; it was cowardice even to listen for a moment to soft-hearted counsels. She tells the children to go into the house, declaring that she will not fail to carry out the action on which she has decided.

We now come to a passage twenty-five lines long which many scholars have excised. Theodor Bergk⁵ in 1884 was the first; his view was revived by Erich Bethe in 1918 and by Günther Jachmann in 1934. Gerhard Müller trenchantly restated it in 1951; yet in 1972 Albin Lesky was able to remark that he had rightly found no followers. He spoke too soon; during that same year, Müller found a powerful

⁵ Th. Bergk, *Gr. Literaturgeschichte* iii, 1884, 512, n. 140; E. Bethe, *Ber. über die Verh. der Kl. Sächs. Ges. der Wissenschaften, Ph.-hist. Kl.* 70, 1, 1918, 8 f.; G. Jachmann, in: *Nachr. Götting. Ges. der Wissenschaften* 193, n. 1 and 214, n. 1; G. Müller, in: *SIFC* 25, 1951, 65-82; M.D. Reeve, in: *CQ* 22, 1972, 51-61; O. Zwierlein, *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch* 19, 1978, 33 f.; for further bibliography see Reeve's article.

advocate in M.D. Reeve. Since then Reeve's argument for athetesis has won the support of Otto Zwierlein (1978).

At the beginning of the passage in question, Medea again momentarily relents (1056); addressing her *θυμός*, she forbids it to act and begs it to let them be, to spare the children; they shall live with her there and gladden her heart. The address to one's *θυμός* is of course Homeric; but as often in tragedy the *θυμός* is not merely one of several more or less vague terms for the seat of the intelligence but connotes pride, spirit, anger, something like what Plato means by *τὸ θυμοειδές*.

„Medea has changed her mind again”, Reeve writes (p. 52), „she must spare the children and let them gladden her heart ‘there’”. I detect a certain impatience in his way of referring to the second change of mind; perhaps he feels that as a rational being she should have made up her mind once for all and got it over with. At such a moment we might expect emotion to have some effect upon Medea's utterances, so that this consideration cannot weigh heavily against authenticity. Also, ‘change of mind’ is too strong a way of referring to what is after all a momentary hesitation; we find it natural to talk in these terms because of our long conditioning by the school of critics who find the main interest of the tragedy in the struggle between reason and passion in Medea's mind.

Reeve notes that the word *ἐκεῖ* (1058) is interpreted in the scholia as meaning ‘in Athens’; „but Medea”, he complains, „last mentioned Athens at 771. More vaguely „in exile?”. But a member of the audience who has heard Medea explain what her plan is, if only she can find a place where she can take refuge after its execution, who has heard Aegeus offer her that place, and has listened to the great ode (824 f.) in which the Chorus remarks on the inappropriateness of Athens, of all places, sheltering the murderess of her children is not likely to have forgotten what place Medea has it in mind to go to. Reeve seems to find 1058, like 1024, somewhat vague; but can we really doubt what *ἐκεῖ* means, in either place?

In the lines that follow (1059 f.) Medea declares that she will never abandon her children to the mercy of her enemies. ‘By the infernal avengers in Hades!’, she exclaims, ‘this will never come about, that I shall leave my children to be insulted by my enemies. In any case they have to die; and since die they must, we who gave them birth will kill them’. Once more she appears to have changed her mind, with what some critics feel to be suspicious abruptness; but there is a graver difficulty. Only a moment before the alternative to killing the children seemed to be taking them to Athens; but it is now implied that if Medea spares the children they will remain in Corinth, where the Corinthians will kill them.

Many scholars have tried to remove the contradiction, some by means of emendation and others without it; let us consider the latter group first. The most popular way⁶ of doing so was once to suppose that Medea is prone to lose her head and is a prey to different emotions in quick succession. But would this cause her to give a different account of the situation and its possibilities from the one she has given immediately before? Euripides does not commonly depict a rapid shift from

⁶ See, for instance, M. Pohlenz, *Die griechische Tragödie*, 2nd. edn. 1954, 262; D.L. Page, *Euripides, Medea*, 1938 (reprinted with corrections, 1952), on l. 1058; André Rivier, *Essai sur le tragique d'Euripide*, 1946, 59, citing W. Schadewaldt, *Monolog und Selbstgespräch*, 1926, 195.

one emotion to another by means of inconsequences of this sort. For W. Zürcher⁷, who applied to Euripides the method used by Tycho von Wilamowitz in his famous study of the dramatic technique of Sophocles, there was no problem; Medea could easily be one person one minute and another the next. Wolf Steidle⁸ has argued that the children are too young to be taken to Athens; Lesky agrees with him. Patricia Easterling⁹ writes that „she is filled with a sudden sense that she is caught in the toil of events and no longer has any choice; parents who kill their children, she tells us, often ‘become convinced of a threat that clinches the feeling that they would be better dead’”. That argument will convince only those who believe that such psychological niceties are part of Euripides’ stock-in-trade; even if they are, it would not be characteristic of Medea, who is not given to self-deception. Schlesinger (p. 32) says that when Medea speaks of the necessity of the children’s death, she really means the necessity of her revenge; on his view she will be offering herself the alleged danger from the Corinthians as an excuse. It is true that for Medea her revenge is always necessary; but would she feel obliged to offer such an excuse to herself?

Others have emended in one way or another. Hermann changed *ἐκεῖ* in 1059 to *κεῖ μῆ*. Barthold (followed by Méridier) emended it to *καὶ μῆ*, at the same time deleting 1045 after Kvčala. These are not very great changes, but we must note that they are made simply to remove this difficulty.

1061-62 are identical with 1240-41; they were deleted by Valckenaer in the eighteenth century, and most modern editors follow him (e.g. Weil, Verrall, Méridier, Diehl and Page). Page¹⁰ has shown that repeated verses within the same play are unlikely to be genuine in both places; and at 1240-41 the couplet is far harder to disengage from its context. G.A. Seeck¹¹ in 1968 put forward an ingenious but excessively complicated argument designed to show that 1060-61, as well as 1062-63, were interpolated; he spared 1059, which as Lesky has pointed out (l.c.) does not go easily with 1064, only the second of whose two clauses is negative and so suitable to go with a phrase starting with *πάντως*.

1060-61 suspiciously resemble 780-82, the first of the three passages in which the notion that the children might fall victims to the Corinthians is alluded to. This is part of the speech which Medea utters after the scene with Aegeus; she is explaining to the Corinthian women that she means to ask for the sentence of exile upon her children to be rescinded, not because she has any intention of leaving them in Corinth to become the victims of her enemies, but in order to compass the murder of the princess. In that place the allusion to the danger from the Corinthians is perfectly natural; the danger is envisaged as arising in a wholly different way from what we find at 1059-61, although the words employed are notably similar. Now let us consider the mention of the possibility at 1240-41. The messenger has described the awful deaths of Creon and his daughter, and Medea must act swiftly and

⁷ Die Darstellung des Menschen im Drama des Euripides, 1947, 61 f.

⁸ Studien zum antiken Drama, 1968, 157 f.; cf. A. Lesky, Die tragische Dichtung der Hellenen, 3rd. edn. 1972, 311 f.

⁹ ‘The infanticide in Euripides’ Medea’, in: Yale Classical Studies 25, 1977, 189.

¹⁰ Actors’ Interpolations in Greek Tragedy, 1934, 103-105.

¹¹ Greek Roman and Byzantine Studies 9, 1968, 291-307.

accomplish her revenge and be away before the pursuit catches up with her. 'I must not', she tells the Chorus, 'by delay hand over my children to hands more inimical to slaughter'. Then follow 1240-41, which are identical with 1062-63. In this place there is no implication that Medea is going to kill the children simply because she cannot take them with her; there is no assertion that to take them with her would be impossible. The statement that in case they have to die might have no reference to any danger from the Corinthians; all mortals have to die, and that may well be what Medea means to say.

I have argued that in the two other places in the play in which there is mention of possible danger to the children from the Corinthians, it is unaccompanied by any suggestion that Medea could not, if she wished, take the children with her. And this not surprising; because the whole argument of the play demands that Medea must kill the children not because she cannot take them with her and does not want them killed by the Corinthians, but to punish Jason. We have also seen that not only are 1062-63 identical with 1240-41, and much harder to remove without damage to the context, but that 1060-61 could very well have been suggested by 780-82. I think we must reckon with the possibility that 1059-63 are the work of a producer of the play, probably during the fourth century, when mummer-worship was already rife, who wanted the great speech to be as impressive a vehicle as possible for some popular performer, and could not resist working into it the powerful distich 1240-41. In order to lead up to them, he started with a striking invocation of the Erinyes (1059), perhaps taken from another play, and then made 1060-61 out 780-82. This seems to me on the whole the likeliest cause of the trouble.

Suppose then that we delete 1059-63; what will be the sense of 1064? Accompanying as it will a break in the thought and a pause in the delivery, the asyndeton will cause no trouble; Medea will be saying 'At all events the deed is done, and she will not escape'. Reeve objects that „recent commentators offer no parallels for this use of the perfect, and the few offered by older commentators are inadequate". He begs the question by refusing to accept as parallels places where the perfect used of a future event as one in effect already complete stands in the apodosis of a conditional sentence; even that unreasonable stipulation does not rule out all the instances collected by Kühner—Gerth i 384-5 (p. 150)¹². In any case, how could any spectator, hearing Medea say 'the deed is done', fail to realise that she means that, since the gifts are already in the hands of the princess, the children's fate is now determined?

Reeve also complains that „to understand that the princess is the subject (of *ἐκφεύξεται*) would surely have been even more difficult for the audience to understand than that *πέπρακται τῶτα* refers to her murder". It is true that it is some time since the princess was mentioned, and a strictly logical or a very stupid person might feel aggrieved at being expected to work out that she is the person spoken of. But the audience — an Athenian, not a Boeotian audience — that has been watching the Medea will be familiar with the situation; and in any case the words that follow

¹² E. g. Plato, *Phaedo* 80 D ἡ δὲ ψυχὴ ἕρα, τὸ αἰδές, τὸ εἰς τοιοῦτον τόπον ἕτερον οἰχόμενον ..., αὐτὴ τε δὴ ἡμῶν ἢ τοιαύτη καὶ οὕτω πεφικκία ἀπαλλαττομένη τοῦ σώματος εὐθὺς διαπεφύσητα καὶ ἀπόλωλεν, ὡς φασὼ οἱ πολλοὶ ἀνθρώπων;

'already the crown is on her head' — leave little room for doubt¹³.

At 1067 f. Medea expresses her intention of taking leave of the children; she implies quite clearly that she is going to kill them. At 1053 she has told them to go into the house; and Reeve makes much of the supposed inconsistency between this fact and her addressing them once more at 1067 f., complaining that they „show greater obtuseness than is displayed anywhere else by a character who is ordered off the stage”. Would they really have been so obtuse to hesitate, as Page and others have suggested that they do, when they notice their mother's altered demeanour as she speaks 1056-58? I do not think so.

Now Medea addresses to the children which many readers have found to be among the most moving ever written by Euripides (1069-75). Reeve agrees that *ἐκεῖ* in 1073 must mean in Hades, but asks what it can mean to the children. Paley, he says, thought the children are meant to understand 'in exile', and Reeve finds it strange that the children should believe this. If it were common for the tragedians to represent children in anything like a naturalistic fashion, this objection might have substance. The tragedians tend to be vague about the ages of the children whom they bring onto the stage¹⁴, but in general they treat them as being *νήπιον*¹⁵. In this particular instance, Steidle has given reasons for thinking this to be the case¹⁶. The children's apparent incomprehension supplies very little evidence against authenticity.

1076-77 contain, as Reeve remarks, „a recognised crux”. But the general sense is clear, even if no single emendation stands out as the ideal solution; Medea is telling the children that she can no longer look at them, because she is overcome by her troubles (*νικῶμαι κακοῖς*). What are these *κακά*?, Reeve asks, „scarcely”, he says, „what it means in 1078”. *κακά* is a vague expression; does it always have to refer to precisely the same thing?

Now come the lines that have caused more trouble than all the rest of the speech together. They are generally taken to mean, 'And I know what kind of evil it is that I am about to do, but my pride, my anger, my passion is stronger than my calculation-pride, that causes the greatest evils for mortals'.

Many critics, beginning apparently with Stadtmüller in 1876¹⁷, have objected

¹³ Reeve (p. 53) writes that „a corollary of taking 1064 to refer to the murder of the princess is that 1062-3 cannot be removed, or else Medea will not have announced her intention of killing the children between the opposite announcement in 1056-8 and the parenthetic reference to killing them in 1068”. But if one imagines the speech delivered without 1059-63 and with a pause before 1064, the audience will have no difficulty in seeing that the implication of 1064 f. must be 'too late'.

¹⁴ 'Suo nimirum iure nimis constantem in hac re rationem poeta non hoc tantum loco aspernatus est': R. Kassel, *Quomodo quibus locis apud veteres scriptores Graecos infantes atque parvuli pueri inducantur describantur commemorantur*, Diss. Würzburg 1954, 54-55.

¹⁵ See H. Herter, *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 4, 1961, 146 f. = *Kl. Schr.*, 1975, 598 f.; note especially the words "Nur das Eine wird nie vergessen, daß das Kind *νήπιον* ist" (151-605).

¹⁶ *Op. cit.* (in n. 8) 158 f.

¹⁷ *Beiträge zur Textkritik des Eur. Medea*, 1876, 31, n. 1.

that elsewhere in the play (at 769, 772, 1044 and 1048) the word *βουλευματα* refers to Medea's plan to kill her children. Müller strongly urged this objection. To evade it Hans Diller¹⁸ suggested that *κρείσσω* in this place might be equivalent to *κρατῶν*, so that the words meant 'my pride is the master of, controls my plans for revenge'. This is altogether unconvincing; Rudolf Kassel¹⁹ has pointed out that the natural way to take the word *κρείσσω* is exemplified by l. 965 of this same play, *χρυσός δέ κρείσσω μυρίων λόγων βροτοῖς*. Another eminent scholar, Albrecht Dihle²⁰, has tried to escape the difficulty by taking *θυμός* here not to mean 'pride' or 'spirit' but to refer to the seat of the tender emotions; Medea, he thinks, is referring to the cowardly behaviour which she knows she will be guilty of if she relents. That is a subterfuge no less unconvincing than that of Diller; as Zwierlein²¹ has pointed out, it involves forcing the word to bear a sense which would be altogether unnatural in this context.

Let us consider again the word *βουλευματα*. It is true that in four places in this play it refers to Medea's plan for revenge; in each of these the context makes it unequivocally clear that it does so. But the word in itself is colourless, as one can see by looking through its numerous occurrences in Euripides. At 449 it is applied to Creon's decision that Jason shall marry the princess; at 886 to Jason's plan to leave Medea and marry Creon's daughter; fortunately in each of these places the context makes its meaning clear, so that no scholar has yet complained that it must refer to Medea's plan for revenge, because it does in the other four places. If we read this speech as most readers have read it in the past, taking each word and phrase as it is natural to take it, Medea will be saying that she knows what evil she is about to do — and *δρᾶν κακά* of course implies positive action —, but that her pride, her anger is stronger than her plans, her calculations. In itself the word *βουλευματα* is colourless; it takes its colour from its context. Here its meaning is made clear by Medea's immediately preceding statement that she knows what evil she is about to do; that knowledge would counsel her to abstain from action, but her *θυμός* is more powerful than such counsels. She has been aptly compared to Achilles in the ninth book of the *Iliad*²², who recognises the truth of what Ajax has said to him, but who tells Ajax that his *θυμός* still swells with anger at the thought of how Agamemnon treated him.

Zwierlein in approving Reeve's arguments for athetesis says that 'if one were to allow the celebrated lines 1078 f. to guide one in one's assessment of the play's tragic content, one would be compelled to import into the play a conflict between passion and knowledge of what is best that otherwise plays no part in it'. No one could sympathise more strongly than I do with Zwierlein's rejection of the views of

¹⁸ *Hermes* 94, 1966, 267-275 = *Kl. Schr.*, 1971, 359-368; cf. V. di Benedetto, *Euripide: teatro e società*, 1971, 41 f.

¹⁹ *Rheinisches Museum* 116, 1973, 103, n. 21.

²⁰ 'Euripides' Medea', *SB der Heidelberger Akademie, Ph.-hist. Kl.*, 1977, Abh. 5, 13 f.; 'Euripides' Medea und ihre Schwestern im europäischen Drama', in: *Antike und Abendland* 22, 1976, 180 f.

²¹ *Op. cit.* (in n. 5), p. 35, n. 24 c.

²² *Op. cit.*, p. 29; K. Matthiessen, in: *Das griechische Drama*, 1979, 117 also makes the comparison. Di Benedetto cites the Homeric passage, but introduces subtle distinctions which seem to me to lack substance (43-44).

those who so much exaggerated the importance of such a conflict that they have seemed to imagine that there is a real possibility of Medea's renouncing her revenge; but I do not believe that the lines in question oblige us to take such a view. The fate of the children has long since been decided²³; Medea has never seriously contemplated renouncing her revenge, for if she did so, she would not be Medea²⁴. The poet is not showing us how Medea makes her decision; that decision has been taken, swiftly and silently, long before; rather, he is showing us the full extent of the agony which the prospect of the decision's execution causes. Medea's human instincts are for mercy, but what determines her decision is her pride; as she remarks, *θυμός* is the cause of the greatest harm to mortals.

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²³ See H. Strohm, *Euripides: Interpretationen zur dramatischen Form*, 1957, 101-103; his excellent exposition makes this point particularly clear.

²⁴ Cf. W.-H. Friedrich, 'Medeas Rache', *Nachr. der Göttinger Akademie, Ph.-hist. Kl.*, 1960, No. 4, p. 110: „Barbarei, Zauberei, Ekstase: damit reicht nachher die andere Welt gleichsam bis auf die Bühne; mit der Wegnahme der Kinder und überhaupt jeglichem Beweggrund, der Medeas Tat verständlicher, verzeihlicher machen könnte, reicht unsere Einfühlung bis auf die Bühne, bis in das Geschehen hinein. Von entgegengesetzten Seiten nähern sich die Pole einander, bis die Entladung unvermeidlich scheint. Wieviel Hölle die Stücke auch in Rede und Aktion aufbieten mögen: alle die Erfindungen, die dem Kindermord aus verschiedenen Richtungen entgegenkommen und ihn zeitigen helfen, suchen uns moralisch und ästhetisch mit ihm zu versöhnen, soweit dies irgend möglich ist. Was nicht als Aufbegehren einer gekränkten Seele, als Ausgurt einer wenigstens im Keim noch allgemein menschlichen Leidenschaft verstanden werden kann, soll aus Medeas dämonischem Wesen mit eigener Folgerichtigkeit hervorgehen; was uns nicht mehr natürlich ist, soll doch der Tochter des Fabelreiches natürlich sein. Euripides hat sein Stück anders angelegt; die Tat bleibt ganz Medeas Eigentum, nichts und niemand nimmt sie ihr ganz oder teilweise ab". Cf. Di Benedetto, l. c., 45-46.