1 *ALIENATED COUPLES IN EURIPIDEAN TRAGEDY: A BAKHTINIAN ANALYSIS*

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In two early essays, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* and "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity", both composed between 1920 and 1924, Mikhail Bakhtin develops a model to describe ethical interactions between two or more parties in a variety of contexts, real and fictive. His model has a general application, both to successful interactions and to failures. In this essay I begin by looking at Bakhtin's model for the interaction of couples as he deploys it in his reading of Pushkin's poem "Parting", then use it to illuminate interactions between marital couples in three Euripidean plays, *Iphigenia at Aulis* (*I.A.*, 405), *Alcestis* (438), and *Medea* (431). For each play, I focus on an exchange that takes place at a moment of rupture or impending rupture or at a crisis. In all three cases, the wife tries to exact reciprocity from her husband based on her previous acts of generosity toward him. Clytemnestra in *I.A.* asks Agamemnon to spare their child, arguing that she was consistently a virtuous wife who fulfilled her spousal duties despite his violence in wooing her. Alcestis bases her request that Admetus not remarry on her voluntary self-sacrifice for him and on his love of their children. Medea reminds Jason how she saved him and gave up everything for him and how he was therefore in her debt. Then she reviles him because he betrayed her, disregarding all her favors and violating his sacred oath.

Though Euripides represents each of the three couples uniquely, all miscommunicate in some fashion. By providing a way almost to "measure" the ingredients in their interactions and to monitor changes in those ingredients over time, a Bakhtinian analysis illuminates this

miscommunication. Using such an approach, a critic can describe with precision moments of rupture and crises in understanding, as well as efforts by either partner to end discord and (re)introduce reciprocity, or else to retaliate and exact revenge. With this precise descriptive information, instead of viewing the interrelation as irreparably flawed, tragically doomed, or precluded because of the incontestable hierarchical nature of the marital relation in fifth-century Athenian society, a critic can envision alternative, positive pathways for them. Such an expanded vision of alternate possibilities for the couple explains some of the intensity of the tragedy,[1] which turns out to arise from a failure to communicate that is anything but necessary.

Bakhtin begins *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* by insisting on the radical singularity of each person at every moment and by asserting the impossibility that one individual can penetrate the alterity, or otherness, of an other. Since we each organize the world according to our own complex of values, our "value-centers" belong to each of us uniquely; they are our "blind spots", the uniqueness of which Bakhtin celebrates: "Life knows two value-centers that are fundamentally and essentially different, yet are correlated with each other: myself and the other; and it is around these centers that all of the concrete moments of Being are distributed and arranged" (TPA, 74). Accordingly, each person, having acquired knowledge, imparts a "tone" to it and "signs" or "acknowledges" it, bringing the knowledge toward the self by attaching it to that self. This "signature", this "attachment", produces "answerability" — a prerequisite for any dialogic relation.[2]

Bakhtin introduces three complementary terms for describing interactions: "I-for-myself", "the-other-for-me", and "I-for-another". All three, taken together, express an inter-dependence between a self and an other which respects the radical singularity of each.[3] The absence, however, of a single ingredient makes full dialogism impossible. What we will see in the Euripidean tragedies that I examine is the absence of dialogism, which can be expressed by any combination of the *inverse* of these three categories: "I-against-myself" (self-denigration, even self-destruction), "the-other-against-me" (victimization), and "I-against-another" (revenge).

Bakhtin applies these intertwined ideas to Pushkin's "Parting" in two complementary studies (TPA, 65–66 and AH, 211–221). For Bakhtin, this poem offers a complex of overlapping and interacting value-centers, seen from the diverse perspectives of its two characters. Its protagonist — the "author-hero" — is the representation of a person with all the emotional-volitional tones and values, as put into completed form, or "finalized", by the poet. As "author-creator", Pushkin gives shape to his protagonist through "live-entering", i.e. through finding domains of shared value with his character, as an other, while still maintaining his own place — his own "outsideness" — with respect to that other. Only

from his own perspective can he be said to "live-enter" his character. Since his relation to this personage is unidirectional and hence asymmetrical (the character does not "live-enter" his author-creator in turn), his "live-entering" differs radically from that between characters in art or, in life, between an I and an other (AH, 4–22), which can be and often is reciprocated.

In "Parting", the author-creator (Pushkin) represents the author-hero or protagonist ("I") at two poignant moments in relation to his beloved ("you"): one is the moment of separation, the other the imagined moment of reunion (in death). As the poem begins, the author-hero is describing the moment of parting:

> Bound for the shores of your distant homeland
> You were leaving this foreign land.
> In that unforgettable hour, in that sorrowful hour,
> I wept before you for a long time.
> My hands, growing ever colder,
> Strained to hold you back.
> My moans implored you not to break off
> The terrible anguish of parting.

Bakhtin proceeds through the three-stanza poem, tracing shifts in value-centers and identifying the emotional-volitional tones of the lyrical hero and heroine that predominate at any textual moment. One technique he uses is to establish the reference point, or *origo*, from which events are experienced. In the opening couplet, for example, Italy is "homeland" and Russia "this foreign land" from the heroine's value-center, even though the hero is speaking.[4] Thus the narrator-hero, at this stage, "live-enters" the heroine, capturing her perspective in his speech. Some items, like the hour and its epithets "unforgettable" and "sorrowful" (3), are events both for him and for her; but throughout the first stanza, it is his emotional-volitional tone that predominates. It is *his* hands (third couplet), in immediate proximity to *his* body, that he describes as straining to keep her within their spatial environment; likewise *his* moans (in the fourth couplet) implore her at this moment of parting:

> But you tore away your lips
> From our bitter kiss;
> From a land of gloomy exile
> You called me to another land.
> You said: "On the day of our meeting
> Beneath an eternally blue sky
> In the shade of the olive trees,
> We shall once more, my beloved, unite our kisses of love."

In the second stanza, the lover depicts his beloved's context and his own in a state of intense interpenetration: the eternally blue sky that exists for every mortal life, including theirs, is presented as the site of their future meeting. Indeed, while her value-center takes some precedence, it nevertheless remains encompassed in his. Since he is the objectified author, his concrete reference-points remain primary. "The beloved", in Bakhtin's words, "is valuatively affirmed and founded by the lover, and consequently her entire valuative event-context (in which Italy is her homeland) is affirmed and founded by him as well."

> But there — alas! — where the sky's vault
> Shines with blue radiance,
> Where the waters slumber beneath the cliffs,
> You have fallen asleep forever.
> Your beauty and your sufferings
> Have vanished in the grave —
> And the kiss of our meeting has vanished as well...
> But I am waiting for that kiss — you owe it to me...

The two couplets that open the third stanza concretize the place that she designates for their meeting. Here the lover transforms the possible site of the future meeting (in Italy) into the actual site of her death. He also uses her word ("blue radiance" echoing "blue sky") and refers back to her language ("that kiss"). The world of stanza 2, dominated by her value-center, a place where she might exist and they might meet again, gives way in stanza 3 to a world characterized — for him — by her absence. In the final couplet his value-center decidedly prevails: the tone of the parting and unrealized meeting *here* turns into that of the assured and inevitable meeting *there*. His last line — "But I am waiting for that kiss — you owe it to me..." — collects her earlier promise: "We shall once more, my beloved, unite our kisses of love." Not only does the lover acknowledge his beloved by using her language and referring to the kiss she promised, but he also changes his direction in the course of the poem: he will travel to her homeland, to Italy. He quotes her words in stanza 2 and then shows himself as changed by them, obedient to them. The poem *performs* "I-for-another", in that the narrator-lover, in the very choice of words, incorporates the vantage point of his beloved.

Bakhtin's analysis illustrates how one can describe the shifts between value-centers as a poem moves forward, shifts discernible even when the speaker (in this case, the lover) dominates the discourse. Though in such cases the subjectivity of the beloved never gets represented completely, a measure of dialogicality is nonetheless remarkably conveyed. As we shall see, Bakhtin's model is equally suitable for describing the dialogic potential

of cases, such as those in the Euripidean tragedies discussed below, in which the interaction between couples is far less equal.

DIALOGICAL COUPLES

Given the structure of Greek marriage and given the attitudes of (many, most, all?) Greek males, from the archaic period onward (the misogynistic documents and statements, the utopian vision of a world without women, the exclusion of women from public life), it is important first to ask: can reciprocity between husband and wife even occur? Then, if our answer is yes, we can tackle further questions: Does Euripides present couples in his tragedies aspiring to dialogicality? If so, why do they fail?

Winkler (1990) and Zeitlin (1990) both see ancient Greek theater as providing an arena in which males can explore societal issues, using the female as their cognitive tool.[5] As Zeitlin remarks, "in Greek theater [...] the self that is really at stake is to be identified with the male, while the woman is assigned the role of the radical other" (68). "Even when female characters struggle with the conflicts generated by the particularities of their subordinate social position", she continues, "their demands for identity and self-esteem are nevertheless designed primarily for exploring the male project of selfhood in the larger world" (69). Winkler, in his companion essay, emphasizes the profoundly political function of tragedy within the Athenian *polis*. He sees the City Dionysia, at which tragedies were performed, as a "festival of self-representation" in which the youngest citizen-soldiers (the ephebes) occupied a central role (1990, 62). According to Winkler, tragedies were addressed, in some fundamental way, to this ephebic audience. Rabinowitz (1993) uses these civic hypotheses to argue that Euripidean tragedy reinforces negative stereotypes of women as dangerous, irrational and in need of containment or control. She sees Euripides as deeply implicated in his male-dominated culture. In her view, the plays reinforce male bonding and male domination but also have a civic impact on women in the audience, whom they acculturate to play their appropriate (inferior and disenfranchised) roles in Athenian society. In viewing Euripides as a playwright who reinforces the male ideology of his pervasively misogynistic society, Rabinowitz (despite disclaimers, 14) continues an ancient line of interpretation that goes all the way back to the women in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* of 411. They too charge Euripides with vilifying women (cf. Mica's attack on the playwright at 384–432 and the In-law's defense at 471–519). Many subsequent accusations of misogyny in the scholia date back to Aristophanic comedy (Lord 1908, 12) or at the least express the same untenable equation between the playwright and his misogynistic characters. Cf. the scholiast's

note on *Troades* 1057, e.g.: "By this too [Menelaus' diatribe against women] Euripides shows his own hatred of women; for he says that it is not ever an easy thing for a woman to be self-controlled (*sôphronisai*)." As recently as 1990, in her essay "Euripides the Misogynist?" (1990), March is still defending the playwright against such attacks.[6]

Rabinowitz reframes traditional charges of misogyny by incorporating them into her hypotheses about "the ways in which the plays structure audience reaction and thus impose a gender hierarchy consistent with and supportive of the sex/gender system of the time" (1993, 14). She suggests that, in fifth-century Athens, institutionalized bias was relentlessly hegemonic. Thus she takes a strong position on the power of male ideology to control the discourse of all members of a society, leaving little room for resistance by individual men or women. Rabinowitz may present the official ideology subtending Classical Athenian society and evident especially in the institution of marriage, but that does not mean that this communal ideology went unchallenged or that such challenges could not be imagined and represented mimetically on the stage.

As we examine what male writers describe as the operative structures, official and unofficial, under which men and women live, it is equally important to document instances of agency by individuals and communities of both sexes, agency which defies those structures or works around them by subterfuge. As Giddens (1984) has shown, a dialectic exists between institutional structures and individual agency: structure is the medium through which agency is achieved, and agency reproduces or changes structure through the use of that structure in carrying out agency. Recognition of this dialectic leaves room for understanding how sudden or cumulative shifts in societal values and behavior may occur, whenever enough agents in a society challenge and thereby erode the hegemonic ideology.

In his tragedies, Euripides constructs female voices which strongly counterbalance the sometimes misogynistic and consistently male-centered voices of his male protagonists. The result, in my view, is a polyphonic text, one that contains both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourse on gender issues. For Euripides, the voices of male and female characters are in genuine dialogue with one another: the male voice by no means silences the female one nor exercises a monopoly on audience approval. Hence Euripidean tragedy is controversial as to meaning and difficult to interpret, often disturbingly so. The playwright frequently seems as fascinated with the flawed male as with the flawed female, with male as with female psychology. The very diversity in his male figures, play to play, is itself a testimony to the potential for individuality within the institution of marriage. We need to study each instance, case by case, *oikos* by *oikos*, and not assume that the societal model prescribes what everyone practises. Like the *Odyssey* poet before him, who depicts diverse *oikoi*, Euripides is pluralistic in his representation of marital relations.

In an earlier paper on "Bakhtinian Alterity, Homeric Rapport" I examined the Odysseus–Penelope relationship in the *Odyssey* in Bakhtinian terms (Felson-Rubin 1993). In particular, I discussed scenes in which each character is shown acting "I-for-myself" — yet laying the groundwork for "I-for-another" and occasionally acknowledging "the-other-for-me". Such details as Odysseus' articulation to Nausicaa of the principle of "like-mindedness", or *homophrosunê*, as the basis for a stable marriage (*Od.* 6.181–185) and the remarkable reverse-gender similes (e.g., *Od.* 8.523–531, 19.108–114, and 23.233–240) suggest a potential for reciprocity, even interchangeability, between marital partners. Indeed, at one narrative moment Penelope even plays the role of pursuer and entrapper in their second courtship, thus reversing the gender pattern usually found in erotic scenes in Greek (non-Sapphic) lyric and Greek myth. Her lie at 23.177–180 about the moving of their marriage bed prods Odysseus to reveal his side of the secret — how he constructed that immovable bed — and thereby to disclose his identity. His revelation, in turn, enables Penelope to recognize him unequivocally. At the same time, by entrapping him in a lie, she is able to outdo Odysseus in contriving, which Athena said would be difficult for anyone, even an immortal, to accomplish (cf. 13.291–292). This climactic scene between husband and wife suggests that Homer *designs* their roles as reciprocal and reversible, as part of his conception of what might be regarded as their *homophrosunê*. Alongside Odysseus' "I" and Penelope's "other" Homer counterpoises Penelope's "I" and Odysseus' "other", giving us Penelope's version of things (from her own value-center) as well as Odysseus'.[7] Characteristic of their interaction is the way each makes room for the value-center and field of vision of the other: their respective timetables, agendas, and desires. Odysseus attempts to "live-enter" Penelope when he asks his mother's shade of her plans and intentions (11.177). Penelope attempts to "live-enter" Odysseus when she not only inquires about the journey he must take to placate Poseidon but accepts its necessity (23.260–262 and 286–287). There is pain and risk in experiencing radical otherness; in Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus and Penelope both undergo that pain and take that risk, and, despite the fundamental "polytropy" of each, their relationship survives intact.[8]

Another epic couple worth examining in these terms is Andromache and Hector, whose exchange of speeches at *Iliad* 6.406–465 reveals a similar capacity for each member of the couple to "live-enter" the other. Andromache has left her house to stand at the wall and watch the battle. She forcefully asserts her value-center to Hector when she begs him not to fight (431–434). She bases her argument on his importance to her (429–430). He hears and fully acknowledges her concerns; indeed, beginning at 454 he even imagines her lived experience once he is gone.[9] He even envisions, from her position, how she will feel when someday a man will say of her: "This is the wife of Hector." Hector also explains his perspective to Andromache, in an effort to explain why he

must fight (440–446: "I would feel deep shame before the Trojans"). By having Andromache and Hector each demonstrate "I-for-myself" and "I-for-another" and by having each experience "the-other-for-me", Homer represents their intimacy and mutuality. Thus, in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* couples exhibit reciprocity, despite the traditional nature of marriage (as an institution in which the father hands the daughter over to the husband) and despite a clear division of labor and of public and private spheres between husband and wife. That the *Odyssey* poet is exploring the power dynamic between spouses, as a theme, is clear in his treatment of the Phaeacian royal couple, Arete and Alcinous, particularly in his calling attention to the high status of Arete compared to "such women as nowadays have households under men" (*Od.* 7.66–68) — a deictic reference to his own contemporaneous culture.[10] Together with such texts as *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (ca. 650), which demonstrates, at a family level, the consequences of bypassing the mother (Demeter) in the betrothal of the daughter (Persephone), Homeric epic gives evidence for "kinder, gentler" transactions than would suit a relentlessly misogynistic society. Because of the undisputed prestige of the Homeric tradition, which offers a substantial role to female characters, its absorption into fifth-century Athenian society in itself suggests a multifaceted ideology.[11]

The speeches I examine from the *Iphigenia at Aulis*, *Alcestis*, and *Medea*[12] contain a wife's version of the narrative either of her betrothal (Clytemnestra, Medea) — how it felt to her, from where she stood, as a lived event — or of her self-sacrifice (Alcestis).[13] In each case Euripides sets up the possibility of a dialogical relation between his two characters, but the characters themselves never achieve "Bakhtinian rapport". The audience may hear the wife's voice but her spouse (her interlocutor) either ignores all that she says (Agamemnon), seems to hear but later reveals his lack of understanding (Admetus), or hears and understands every point she makes but, like Menelaus at *Od.* 4.274–289, challenges her very perception of things (Jason). In different ways, each husband falls short as a spouse, a human being, and an interlocutor.

By juxtaposing the two wives' perspectives on the present rupture with their recollections of the originating moment of their marriage, Euripides links the two instances, which both involve violations of reciprocity. Clytemnestra and Medea paint negative portraits of their husbands during courtship, revealing to the audience an initial absence of reciprocity — a deficiency, from the wife's perspective, of "the-other-for-me". In the case of Alcestis and Admetus, Euripides uses irony to highlight the couple's lack of rapport; but first he represents a measure of dialogicality in their communication, as Alcestis explains her self-sacrifice to Admetus and as Admetus swears an oath to her not to remarry. His violation of his oath, and perhaps her failure to anticipate that violation, are evidence for the failure of

reciprocity. The happy ending to the play, because it is ironic, does not endorse Admetus' hegemonic vision of the proper spousal role for Alcestis as the statuesque and silent wife.[14]

IPHIGENIA AT AULIS (405 BCE)

At line 1146 of the play Clytemnestra begins her attempt to prevail upon her husband not to sacrifice their daughter Iphigenia. Before asking him "not to kill the girl — who is I your child and mine" (1207–1208: *tên sên te kamên paida*) and to "be moderate" (*sôphrôn*) (1208), she makes two maneuvers. First, she criminalizes Agamemnon's behavior at the time of their courtship[15] and elevates her own, which she presents as especially exemplary because he did not deserve it. Second, she characterizes her speech as transparent: she will unveil (1146, *anakalupsô*) her words and not use obscure riddles, in pointed contrast to his riddling speech in their preceding exchange (1132–1141), where he tried to avert her direct questions through double-talk. By elevating her own straightforward speech style and denigrating his ambiguous and duplicitous one, she insinuates that their manners of speaking differ as markedly as their earlier behavior, when he courted her violently but she responded in an exemplary and generous way.

What Clytemnestra calls her open or unveiled speech includes a blunt reproach of Agamemnon for killing her first husband and her child:

> Hear me now —
> For I shall give you open speech and no
> Dark saying or parable any more.
> And this reproach I first hurl in your teeth
> That I married you against my will, after
> You murdered Tantalus, my first husband,
> And dashed my living babe upon the earth,
> Brutally tearing him from my breasts. (1146–1152)

With language that vividly expresses her emotional-volitional tone, Clytemnestra concretizes the moment of violent courtship from her value-center: "against my will, by force, murdered, dashed, brutally tearing". Besides adding rhetorical force to her speech, her vivid catalogue of past wrongs creates a space within which Euripides' audience can vicariously relive her experience from her value-center. The intensity of her language and her choice of censorious words indicate that she still feels outrage at what he once did to her; she does not "live-enter" him, consequently subduing her tone and taking his feelings into account. Yet her

primary goal in recollecting the courtship in this way, at a crucial moment of pending rupture, is to persuade Agamemnon to exercise restraint now, to behave other than how he acted then. At this moment in their interaction, she still hopes he will change his mind.

In Bakhtinian terms, her full argument runs as follows:

> Even though you were utterly incapable of thinking or acting "the-other-for-me" in relation to me during our courtship, or of imagining my field of vision, nevertheless, after I was reconciled, I unilaterally acted "I-for-another" in the marriage: I was modest (*sôphrônousa*) with respect to Aphrodite, I increased your household, and I bore you children, three daughters and a son. Thus I fulfilled my part of the marital bargain, taking your interests as my own ("I-for-another"). In short, I was more generous to you than you deserved; therefore, do what I ask of you now.[16]

The speech continues at 1171–1193 with Clytemnestra previewing the consequences should she fail to dissuade Agamemnon from sacrificing their daughter. She imagines her loneliness and mourning, the resentment of their surviving children, and the welcome her husband will receive when he returns from war. Here we see her beginning to despair of any hope that she will prevail. To deter him from actually committing the crime, she resorts to a veiled threat that she may become a woman of evil in a plot of revenge. This threat may suggest to Agamemnon (and to the audience) that she is beginning to plan her retaliation just in case her rhetoric fails.

As Clytemnestra concludes her speech (1206–1208), her language reflects a lingering hope that she can still succeed in obtaining reciprocity and fair treatment:

> And now at last answer me
> If in anything I have failed to speak
> Justly, but if my words are fair and
> Truly spoken, be . . . prudent (*sophrôn*).
> Repent! And do not kill the girl — who is
> Your child and mine [...].

Her repetition of key words pertaining to moderation and negotiated decision-making underscores her plea for reciprocity. Just as she was *sôphrônousa* (1159) in their marriage, so he should be *sôphrôn* (1208) now.

Clytemnestra's central tactic is to use Iphigenia as a living focus of their potential rapport. She, more than Agamemnon, sees the child as the site of the interpenetration of their two value-centers. Indeed, Euripides even re-enacts dramatically his characters' use of the child when he too

sandwiches Iphigenia's moving attempt to dissuade her father from taking her life between the speeches of each parent (1211–1252).

Clytemnestra's recollection of their courtship sets Agamemnon's present intention to murder Iphigenia within his personal history of violent actions. It creates a historical, psychological context for this still-pending second instance of violence. By delineating the excesses in his wooing and characterizing him as a criminal in the past, Clytemnestra makes it seem all the more plausible that he may again commit murder, this time against his own daughter. Her characterization of him as a violent suitor has a profound dramatic function: it would not be lost on Euripides' audience, whom we can hardly imagine not condemning Agamemnon for such crimes, which exceed even traditional mythic standards for abducting a bride. As presented to him by Clytemnestra, his actions place him among the centaurs and other unruly monsters who violently abducted maidens.[17]

Agamemnon responds by affirming his love of his children:

> I know what calls
> To me for pity and compassion, and
> What does not. I love my children!
> Did I not I would be mad indeed. (1255–1256)

This affirmation brings to mind Clytemnestra's characterization of Iphigenia as *philopatôr* (638), "especially loving of her father". Here, by professing to love his children (*philô t'emautou tekna*, 125b), Agamemnon accepts one important ground for Clytemnestra's plea not to kill Iphigenia. Yet even here, Agamemnon excludes Clytemnestra, who had specifically referred to Iphigenia as "your child and mine" (1208). His emphatic use of the possessive pronoun *emautou*, *my* children, directly contradicts her diction. Thus he assumes the role of sole parent, relieving her of any rights.[18]

As Agamemnon presents his dilemma to his wife, he gives her the opportunity to understand his perspective:

> Terrible it is to me, my wife, to dare
> This thing. Terrible not to dare it.
> Here is my compulsion absolute. (1257–1258)

He sees his dilemma in terms of a conflict between public and private duty. Characteristically, he does not acknowledge any debt to his wife (a private matter), instead asserting his own value-center as a public figure, as well as his exclusively private grief. He takes up none of the private issues that she presented — neither her characterization of his behavior during their courtship nor her claim to have been a blameless wife. Thus he neither

offers her "I-for-another" nor acknowledges her "the-other-for-me". From the time of her arrival in Aulis (590), and in his speech at 1255–1275, he shows himself to be oblivious to his wife's concerns, just as he overran her wishes when he wooed her. His only care is that she not obstruct his plans.[19] Nor does Clytemnestra express any understanding of her spouse's (probably sincere) public concerns. She does not "live-enter" him, the way Penelope does when she acknowledges Odysseus' last obligation to make an inland journey (*Od.* 23.260–262 and 286–287) or Andromache when she leaves her household and runs to the Skaian walls (*Il.* 6.370–373 and 386–389). In this work, it is Iphigenia who deviates from the stereotypical female, uninterested in politics, when she espouses her father's political values. Though Euripides' take on this "conversion" is surely ironic, Iphigenia provides a foil for the relentlessly private Clytemnestra, whom she indeed instructs once she has embraced her father's patriotic vision (1368–1401). For the marital couple, however, the private values of the wife and the public preoccupations of the husband remain at cross-purposes, and neither character changes in the slightest in response to the other. As a couple, then, they are not dialogic in Bakhtin's sense; and they do not operate on the Odyssean principle of *homophrosunê*.

Aware that his audience already knows the traditional outcome, that Agamemnon will kill Iphigenia and Clytemnestra will murder Agamemnon, Euripides exploits that widespread knowledge to reveal unexplored layers of conflict. Against the backdrop of Clytemnestra as future murderess of her husband[20] he presents an articulate, younger, more hopeful Clytemnestra, whose version of her courtship and whose fear of what she might do in retaliation should Agamemnon kill their daughter make her not only intelligible but sympathetic. The fact that she anticipates the failure of her various gambits and realizes at some level that her efforts are doomed reminds the audience of the end of the story that they know so well. Indeed, their sense of fatality is heightened by the allusions to Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, making Clytemnestra's hopefulness almost unbearable.

ALCESTIS (438 BCE)

What is the dynamic between Alcestis and Admetus from the moment when we see her implementing her decision to die in her husband's place until her "return", as silent "new" bride, from the Underworld? How dialogic are the communications between them? What modifications in a Bakhtinian analysis are needed when describing spousal interactions in this highly ironic play?[21]

Throughout the *Alcestis*, the couple lacks one component of a full Bakhtinian rapport. Whereas Alcestis frequently exhibits "I-for-myself"

and "I-for-another", she seldom experiences "the-other-for-me" though, as we shall see, she explicitly requests it from her husband. Likewise, Admetus experiences ample "I-for-myself" and "the-other-for-me" but is deficient in "I-for-another", even when it is explicitly asked of him. Thus, while on two separate occasions he is generous toward his *xenos* Heracles, he does not fulfill fundamental obligations to Alcestis. Euripides presents him as lacking a genuine "I-for-another" in relation to his spouse. Put another way, his *xenia* for Heracles, while admirable in itself, is undercut by his violation of *philia* toward his wife and by his own comments about his plight, which reveal his self-absorption and lack of understanding (cf. von Fritz 1962, 256–321 and Smith 1960).[22]

Because Alcestis dies voluntarily, it would be easy to see her as simply a victim within a misogynistic culture, sacrificing her life because she values it less than that of her husband. But Euripides precludes such an interpretation by the strength with which Alcestis explains her choice and by the oath which she exacts from Admetus. Thus her decision is never presented as the "natural" course for a wife to take. Rather, she makes this extraordinary choice self-consciously, exercising personal agency within constraints set by her circumstances (that Admetus or a substitute must die) but not in compliance with cultural norms. Here, in her farewell speech (280–325), Alcestis explains her rationale to Admetus:

> So
> I die, who did not have to die, because of you.
> I could have taken any man in Thessaly
> I wished and lived in queenly state here in this house.
> But since I did not wish to live bereft of you
> and with our children fatherless, I did not spare
> my youth, although I had so much to live for. (283–289)

By articulating her alternative, a marriage alliance she could have made (after his death) with any man in Thessaly, Alcestis demonstrates that her decision was not made by default.

Next, Alcestis aligns herself with her husband in blaming his parents for not laying down their lives for him. She envisions the consequences if only they had been willing to do so (294–297), and imagines this happier scenario in terms that reflect "I-for-myself" ("That way | I would be living") and "I-for-another" ("you would live the rest of our time, | and you would not be alone and mourning for your wife | and tending motherless children"). Like Hector at *Iliad* 6.440–465, she is able to visualize her spouse's life after she dies, from his vantage point. She "live-enters" him in this vision. The two of them are partners (at least for the moment) in league against his parents.[23]

With a maxim expressing her resignation and attributing agency to "some god, who has so wrought that things shall be this way", Alcestis makes her single poignant request for requital ("the-other-for-me"):

> But swear now to do, in recompense (*kharin*),
> what I shall ask you — not enough, oh, never enough,
> since nothing is enough to make up for a life,
> but fair, and you yourself will say so, since you love
> these children as much as I do; or at least you should.[24]
> Keep them as masters in my house, and do not marry
> again and give our children to a stepmother
> who will not be so kind as I, who will be jealous
> and raise her hand to your children and mine. Oh no,
> do not do that, do not. That is my charge to you. (299–308)

Here, too, she explicitly sees herself as making the extreme sacrifice of a life that is of no less value than her husband's. Because of her sacrifice, she feels justified in asking Admetus to swear not to remarry. By exacting this oath, she exercises agency within a fairly tight (and acknowledged) social structure in which he would be entitled (even expected), by cultural norms, to remarry. Speaking as a mother, she appeals to him on the basis of his love for their children, the site of the interpenetration of their two selves. He should remain unmarried not so much for her sake as for the benefit of their children, especially their daughter, who will have no ally once her mother is gone (312–319). Admetus grants her request unequivocally (328–331; 374), and their interaction is fleetingly dialogic.

Alcestis' advocacy of her daughter's interests reveals, simultaneously, a recognition of gender hierarchy in the society and a determination not to let that hierarchy disadvantage her daughter. Her concern for her daughter's future well-being recalls a similar concern for herself ("I-for-myself") when she chose to die rather than to live bereft of her husband and with fatherless children.

Alcestis then asks Admetus to do the ultimate "live-entering" after her death by occupying her place as mother of their children: "And now I you must be our children's mother, too, instead of me" (377). It is a cross-gender request reminiscent of the reverse gender similes of the *Odyssey*, mentioned above. Perhaps, in Bakhtinian terms, the demand exceeds what a self may legitimately ask of an other. In any case, he will disappoint her expectations in spirit.

The "I-for-another" that Admetus uncharacteristically exhibits when he takes his oath soon breaks down, as Admetus twice puts *xenia* for Heracles ahead of *philia* for Alcestis.[25] In the first instance, he offers Heracles hospitality even though his entire household is in mourning for his wife.

Later, he accepts Heracles' gift of a bride, at first reluctant to take her by the hand (1110–1118), but finally relenting.[26] Shortly before he accepts the bride-gift, he reaffirms his promise to Alcestis: "Let me die if I betray her, though she is gone" (1096).

Admetus fully understands the implications of accepting this "new" bride. As Buxton (1987, 18–27) shows, when he grasps her by the hand, in a ritual act familiar to an Athenian audience, he actively participates in receiving her as his bride. Her subsequent unveiling by Heracles (1121–1122) completes the ceremony.[27] By the same two ritual gestures, Admetus betrays Alcestis and, ironically, reclaims her.

The weakening of Admetus' resolve not to replace Alcestis can be seen to indicate excessive "I-for-myself" — a second instance of the attitude that allowed him, in the first place, to expect another to die in his stead. Thus, his action of taking the bride by the hand and yielding to Heracles' playfully insistent plea signifies an incapacity to sustain the "I-for-another" embodied in his oath to his dying wife. We witness him breaking the oath that we earlier heard him swear to Alcestis on her deathbed.[28]

Whereas Alcestis expresses action that can be labeled "I-for-myself" and "I-for-another", she does not receive an equivalent "the-other-for-me" from Admetus. He even interprets her self-sacrifice and premature death as a betrayal (202) ("the-other-against-me") and not simply as an act of generosity ("the-other-for-me").[29] When he gives his word, at her request, there is a fleeting reciprocity between them; but once she is dead, Admetus — unlike the lover in Pushkin's "Parting" who moves toward his beloved's homeland to be reunited with her in death — continues to exhibit an excessive amount of "I-for-myself" and scanty "I-for-another". Thus Alcestis' efforts to build a dialogic interaction fail because Admetus lacks the necessary ingredients.

MEDEA (431 BCE)

Like Clytemnestra in *Iphigenia at Aulis*, Medea addresses her spouse with a speech in which she recalls their courtship. She speaks to him in anger — in what is dramatically her first opportunity, since he abandoned her, to vent her rage. After he opens the exchange (446–464), she rebukes him for his cowardice and shamelessness in coming before her. Then, shifting her tone, she says (with sarcasm):

> But you did well
> To come, for I can speak ill of you and lighten
> My heart, and you will suffer while you are listening. (472–474)

Her stated purpose, then, for the entire speech that follows is to give Jason, her "worst enemy", the pain he deserves. This intention can be understood as the inverse of "1-for-another" which, in this case, is revenge. She begins this retrospective speech "from what happened first", telling how she saved his life at the cost of violating her relatives (*philoi*):

> I saved your life, and every Greek knows I saved it,
> Who was a shipmate of yours aboard the Argo,
> When you were sent to control the bulls that breathed fire
> And yoke them, and when you would sow that deadly field.
> Also that snake, who encircled with his many folds
> The Golden Fleece and guarded it and never slept,
> I killed, and so gave you the safety of the light.
> And I myself betrayed my father and my home,
> And came with you to Pelias' land of Iolcus.
> And then, showing more willingness to help than wisdom,
> I killed him, Pelias, with a most dreadful death
> At his own daughters' hands, and took away your fear.
> This is how I behaved to you, you wretched man,
> And you forsook me, took another bride to bed,
> Though you had children; for, if that had not been,
> You would have had an excuse for another wedding. (476–491)

She proceeds to enumerate her "benefactions" to Jason. Twice she mentions her betrayal of her father and homeland (483 and 502/3; cf. 166–167 and 800–802) and twice she reminds Jason (484–487 and 504/5) that, for his sake, she contrived for Pelias, King of Iolcus, to be murdered by his unsuspecting daughters.[30] She emphasizes the negative side of such past kindnesses — loss of family and homeland — as if now first felt, as a result of Jason's betrayal. She expresses anguish now at the consequences of her earlier, ruthless actions, whereas until now, presumably, marriage with Jason provided adequate compensation. Now, deprived of that marriage, she faces isolation and abandonment in a foreign land with no family as protection and no homeland to which to return.[31]

That Jason sees the matter differently is evident from his speech at 522–575, in which he challenges Medea's perspective on past events. He discredits her insistent claim to have saved him and to have put him under obligation for past kindnesses:

> Since you insist on building up your kindness to me,
> My view is that Cypris was alone responsible
> Of men and gods for the preserving of my life.
> You are clever enough — but really I need not enter

> Into the story of how it was love's inescapable
> Power that compelled you to keep my person safe. (526–531)

Thus, whereas Agamemnon was silent about the violence of his courtship and the other claims made by Clytemnestra, Jason hears Medea but refutes her. He denies that she acted selflessly and even exploits the very same events as proving *his* generosity. His rhetorical strategy is to show himself acting "I-for-myself", thus usurping the role of benefactor. Included in his benefactions is his "rescue" of Medea from barbarism:

> You have certainly got from me more than you gave.
> Firstly, instead of living among barbarians
> You inhabit a Greek land and understand our ways,
> How to live by law instead of the sweet will of force. (535–538)

It is from his own value-center that Jason characterizes Medea's people as barbarians who live by force. Unlike the author-hero of Pushkin's "Parting", who uses "homeland" and "foreign land" in such a way as to represent the beloved's value-center and perspective, Jason refuses to imagine the world as Medea sees it. As for their present rupture, Jason gives a completely different reading of it than would make any sense to Medea:

> It was not — the point that seems to upset you — that I
> grew tired of your bed and felt the need of a new bride:
> Nor with any wish to outdo your number of children.
> We have enough already. I am quite content.
> But — this was the main reason — that we might live well,
> And not be short of anything.
> [...] Do you think this a bad plan?
> You wouldn't if the love question hadn't upset you.
> But you women have got into such a state of mind
> That, if your life at night is good, you think you have
> Everything: but, if in that quarter things go wrong,
> You will consider your best and truest interests
> Most hateful. It would have been better far for men
> To have got their children in some other way, and women
> Not to have existed. Then life would have been good. (555–575)

Jason gives expedience and a chance for prosperity as his motivations for replacing Medea with the Corinthian princess — values consonant with his use of Medea's help to obtain the golden fleece. In an abusive move ("I-against-another" = victimization) he viciously attacks her "typically female" passion for him (568–575), further polarizing their two positions

or value-centers. Later, of course, Medea pretends to accept his "reading" (869–893), but, as she explains to the Chorus of Corinthian women, she is only feigning acquiescence.

How would we describe Medea in Bakhtinian terms? Her choice to help Jason at any cost involved a denial of "I-for-myself" and of the value-center that connects a person to family and homeland. Through this move at the time of their elopement, Medea weakened her position *vis-à-vis* Jason; she embraced his value-center excessively and at her own peril. What we see, as the drama opens, is her aporia in the face of Jason's decision to abandon her — the consequence of her earlier violent acts against her family and homeland and of her imbalanced dependence on her husband.

Imbalance characterized Medea's relationship with Jason from its inception in Colchis: she acted excessively "I-for-another" and insufficiently "I-for-myself" when she helped him obtain the golden fleece and when she murdered her brother and scattered the pieces of his body over the water to delay her own father's pursuit. By contrast, Jason always acted excessively "I-for-myself", never "I-for-another" toward Medea; he only later claimed, as a rhetorical strategy, to have provided her with benefactions. His complete self-centeredness is seen on-stage in his response to her retrospective speech, by his flat (and absurd) denial of her claim to have helped him in any way.

With all this asymmetry in mind, it is fascinating to see Medea break through into an "I-for-myself" in her riveting, parodic speech to Jason at 869–893. Here she mockingly "mirrors" Jason, incorporating his arguments and pretending to embrace them. She uses his very words, recast in parodic fashion in a pretended self-rebuke (cf. Rehm 1989 and Boedeker 1991). Her speech, by exaggerating her willing abandonment of her own subjectivity for his sake, re-enacts the earlier asymmetry in their relation. The hyperbole and the appropriation of his themes (e.g., advancement, advantages for their children, even derision of "we women") expose the sarcasm in her tone. She makes her speech seem straightforward to her immediate interlocutor, Jason, whose credulity is another measure of his self-absorption, even while she communicates her heartfelt contempt for him to the Corinthian women and Euripides' live audience:

> Jason, I beg you to be forgiving toward me
> For what I said. It is natural for you to bear with
> My temper, since we have had much love together.
> I have talked with myself about this and I have
> Reproached myself. "Fool" I said, "why am I so mad?
> Why am I set against those who have planned wisely?
> Why make myself an enemy of the authorities

> And of my husband, who does the best thing for me
> By marrying royalty and having children who
> Will be as brothers to my own? What is wrong with me?
> Let me give up anger, for the gods are kind to me.
> Have I not children, and do I not know that we
> In exile from our country must be short of friends?''
> When I considered this I saw that I had shown
> Great lack of sense, and that my anger was foolish.
> Now I agree with you. I think that you are wise
> In having this other wife as well as me, and I
> Was mad. I should have helped you in these plans of yours,
> Have joined in the wedding, stood by the marriage bed,
> Have taken pleasure in attendance on your bride.
> But we women are what we are — perhaps a little
> Worthless; and you men must not be like us in this,
> Nor be foolish in return when we are foolish.
> Now, I give in, and admit that then I was wrong.
> I have come to a better understanding now. (869–893)

Medea parodies several themes in Jason's earlier retort at 522–575. There he emphasized how he had brought advantages to her, how he was the sensible one and she the senseless one. Here, through mimicry and role playing, she pretends to accept his version of events. This pretense enables her to disconnect herself now from her former subservient self, a self enamored of and exclusively dedicated to Jason (''I-for-another''). In other words, she sheds her overly dependent role by first impersonating and thereby reifying that role, and then by distancing herself from that former role through disdain.

For the first half of the play, Euripides portrays Medea as neither a monster nor a sorceress, despite her responsibility for two previous murders. As Easterling argues, the playwright wants us to take Medea seriously: ''The barbarian sorceress with a melodramatic criminal record who could so easily be a monster must become a tragic character, a paradigm, in some sense, of humanity'' (1977a, 179). Sorcery, a traditional aspect of her character, is first mentioned in connection with the benefaction she offers Aegeus to enable him to have a child (717–718); later, her talents as a sorceress are indeed invoked, in a sinister context, by the poisoned garments she sends to Jason's new wife Glauce via the children (789, 806).

By the end of the play, Medea has become the heartless murderess. But for most of the drama, she is not without human feeling. Nor is she set on killing her children from the start. On the contrary, the playwright carefully emphasizes her humanity and downplays her divine connections — until the appearance, at 1317 near the end of the play, of the chariot of the Sun. Her humanity wins us over, as it does the chorus of

Corinthian women, until she commits the crime. At that point, the murder, performed practically before our eyes, re-enacts the two previous murders known from the tradition and mentioned by Medea herself (167 and 505); it re-enacts as well the murder of Creon's child, Glauce, and indirectly of Creon himself.

If the audience had been detached from Medea from the start, the play would have no efficacy. For dramatic reasons, as the play unfolds in time we encounter a human Medea tormented by her dilemma and seeking some novel escape, which indeed she cleverly devises. Her decision to kill the children is an emergent, not a pre-meditated idea. We witness its torturous birth. It is legitimate, therefore, to see Medea as a struggling abandoned wife in a desperate situation[32] and not, I think, as a cunning sorceress able automatically to rescue herself from a dire circumstance.[33]

Unlike the typical Greek bride, whose father gives her away in marriage to her husband, Medea contracted the marriage by her own agency, exacting an oath from Jason as if on equal footing. Acting as a subject, she arranged her own destiny; yet trusting in the oath, she *became* vulnerable, having weakened her "I-for-myself". Clever though she was, she left herself no back-up, should the marriage fail. Not only did she leave her father and homeland behind but she severed all her ties, eliminating any context for herself except one in which she depended on Jason's loyalty. She distinguishes herself from the chorus members, whose sympathy and allegiance she has won, by the fact that they have a country (253–255) while she does not. Her action exaggerates the patrilocal practice which is presented (and examined) in the play. As a consequence of her actions, when Jason abandons Medea and violates the oath he swore upon their elopement, she resorts to an extreme form of negative reciprocity — revenge (= "I-against-another").

Thus, at the moment when their bond originated in the pre-drama story,[34] Medea left no room for "I-for-myself", left no place for her self to stand, but assimilated disproportionately and in an imbalanced way to Jason's emotional-volitional field — a move symbolized spatially by her translocation to Greece. If children are commonly the site of the interpenetration of the two value-centers of their parents and if, as I have argued, Medea has irreparably undermined her own value-center, then her killing of the children to get even with Jason has a certain grim logic. In killing them, she harms him more than herself because she has already undercut her own selfhood: so diminished, even obliterated, is she as a self with a history and a place. Already, by her marriage contract, she has participated in obliterating her full stake in the children; they are disproportionately his.[35] Whereas she thought she was annihilating one identity (as daughter and Colchian princess) but gaining another (as wife and Hellene), in fact she was setting in motion a chain of events which would culminate in annihilating her children.

CONCLUSIONS AND COMPARISONS

If we compare the heroines and heroes of these Euripidean tragedies, using our Bakhtinian conceptual framework and vocabulary, we find that whereas the young Clytemnestra still has some hope for establishing rapport with Agamemnon, for Medea all hope has vanished. The children — commonly the site of shared values for their parents — become her best weapon against Jason ("I-against-another"), though she weeps as she kills them. Medea has already abandoned her subject position ("I-for-myself") and, for that reason, she can experience the infanticide *primarily* as revenge against Jason ("I-against-another") and not as destruction of herself ("I-against-myself"). Clytemnestra, on the other hand, acts on behalf of Iphigenia as an extension of herself and in her role as mother ("I-for-myself") — until Iphigenia sets the boundary between them and takes her life decision into her own hands. With respect to her husband, Clytemnestra never receives any semblance of "the-other-for-me", nor did she even at the time of their courtship, as she reminds him. Of the three wives, Alcestis has the strongest sense of "I-for-myself"; what sabotages her "success" in achieving dialogicality with Admetus is his unreliability: his offers to her of "I-for-another" never materialize. Thus she too, in the end, like Clytemnestra and Medea, experiences an insufficent "the-other-for-me".

As we explore exchanges between wife and husband in Euripidean tragedies, noting shifts in their discourse from play to play, Bakhtin's interactive model for ethical behavior between one self and an other enables us to pinpoint the dynamic of their marital relations and to identify moments of rupture and their consequences. It also might help us situate literary representations of marriage within their cultural and historical contexts. For example, Euripides seems to ascribe asymmetry and the failure of dialogicality to marriages in a patrilocal, patrilineal culture, a culture where women (especially foreign women) have few rights and are isolated from brothers and fathers who would ordinarily protect them. By showing ruptures in his tragedies Euripides is acknowledging the (at least hypothetical) possibility of things being otherwise, the possibility of something like reciprocal, dialogical, marital rapport.

I would like to imagine that, eventually, a much expanded study of this sort could be read alongside recent studies of changing attitudes toward women and marriage, particularly during the Peloponnesian War. Several scholars, using evidence from vase paintings, have detected such changes, notably Sutton (1992) and Stewart (1995). Sutton traces the evolution of gender relations from male self-expression and male superiority and domination in the archaic period and much of the fifth century to romantic love in marriage from the mid-fifth century onward. In the period of early democracy and the Persian Wars, he observes, vase painters depict women (and young boys) being used impersonally by dominating males, with no

eye contact, emotional distance, rear-entry positions, and female passivity, whereas subsequently their products express a revaluation of female sexuality, with female eroticism seen as a means of personal happiness and social stability, especially on vessels fashioned for female eyes. He finds, in the later classical period, a growing interest in exploring specifically sexual elements, with vase paintings offering possible role models with which a young bride could identify as she was led off to a strange house by a virtually unknown man. The increasingly erotic tone, and the frequent presence of Eros, signify (Sutton argues) that the citizens of Athens had high hopes for affection and sexual fulfillment; viewing these erotic visions on wedding and other feminine vessels might even have had an impact on male sexuality and on their conception of women. Similarly, Andrew Stewart sees a decline in "rigorously androcentric — even phallocentric" images of rape after ca. 450 BCE. He ascribes this decline, which he establishes statistically, to the "triumph of self-regulation, summed up in the Greek word *sophrosyne*" which, by the fourth century, "had acquired a name of its own: *enkrateia*, or the establishment of internal control" (Stewart, 1995, 87). "In this atmosphere", he remarks, "pursuit, abduction, and rape were acts of self-indulgence akin to gluttony or alcoholism." From the middle of the fifth century, when more and more vases were painted for women, these images were either "gradually banished from the 'city of images' and confined to the bestial, uncouth, and intemperate Centaurs [...] or sanitized for the female gaze."

Such findings contrast with widespread scholarly presumptions about the complete absence of reciprocal interactions between spouses in classical Athens and the complete subservience of women.[36] Along with my own work, they raise challenging questions for gender relations during the span of the fifth century. A Bakhtinian model can provide the theoretical foundation for literary analyses that complement new approaches to the pictorial evidence.

NOTES

1. This observation about the avoidability of disaster may illuminate what Aristotle means when he calls Euripides the most tragic of poets (*Poetics* 1453a30). Avoidable disaster would be more likely to involve the tragic audience than disaster which was inevitable from the start. Thus it would be more likely to arouse pity and fear, pity for the failure and fear that the same disaster could happen to you.
2. By its very etymology the Russian word for "answerability", which contains the root meaning "answer" or "respond", implies dialogicality. In a dialogical relation, the two individuals are never reduced to one.
3. Note that, in Bakhtin's conceptual framework, "I-for-myself" is not self-ishness: it means to live *from* oneself, not *for* oneself alone.

4. In one version of the poem Pushkin presented both lands from the value-center of the hero (AH, 213): "Bound for the shores of a distant foreign land | You were leaving your homeland [...]." The replacement of "a distant foreign land" with "your distant homeland" and of "your homeland" with "this foreign land" shows how intentionally the poet intertwines their two value-centers in what appears to be his final version of the poem.
5. The issue of whether women attended tragedy in fifth-century Athens remains unresolved: see Henderson 1991. Winkler 1990, in a highly speculative model, envisions only a minor presence of women at the periphery of the theater, whereas the targeted audience of ephebes is seated, by clan, in the central wedge. For ancient sources on the Athenian audience of the fifth and fourth centuries, including the composition of the audience, see Csapo and Slater 1995, 286–305.
6. March 1990 uses Euripides' manipulation of myth and innovations in translating a traditional story into acted drama to argue persuasively against the view of Euripides as unsympathetic to women.
7. In epic, unlike lyric, we have no author-hero, since the author-creator does not inhabit the same time–space frame as his characters. Even so, at times "Homer" (as author-creator-performer) seems to "live-enter" a character who displays his bardic traits and becomes his analogue in the world of the text. Odysseus in the Adventures (*Od.* 9–12) is the prime example.
8. A fuller development of these ideas is in Felson 1994, 125–144.
9. Hector's use of the deictic demonstrative "this" in the quoted "*tis*-speech" removes him from his time and place and relocates him in a future which he will not in fact occupy. By reproducing what "someone" will someday say of her, Hector slips into the vantage point of that indefinite speaker. At the same time, he captures the focalization (and feelings) of a future Andromache hearing that speech.
10. Counter-examples in epic complete the spectrum of possibilities. These include the divine couple, Zeus and Hera, who are quintessentially adversarial throughout the *Iliad*, as well as the reunited Spartan couple, Helen and Menelaus, who, in telling their competing and incommensurable Trojan tales, reveal dissonant perspectives on their past and a lack of *homophrosunê* (*Od.* 4.235–289).
11. Thus the pervasive practice of a father giving away his daughter in marriage to the bridegroom, and of the bride serving as a medium for exchange may not always have the same valence. Variables include the degree of consensus among the parties (particularly the extent to which the subjective will of the bride-to-be is taken into account, as well as the consent of her mother), along with the prospective suitor's use of *peitho* ("persuasion") during courtship versus *bia* ("force", "violence"). On the patterns in Athenian marriage, see especially Seaford 1987 and 1990, and Patterson 1991, with extensive citations. In my view, even in the face of the exclusion of Athenian women from civic life, their inferior status within the *polis*, and, after marriage, their domination within the *oikos* by their husbands (as *kurioi*, "masters"), as before marriage by their fathers, reciprocity was nonetheless feasible. Indeed, reciprocity is attempted, without success, by couples in Euripidean tragedies. While Euripides did not invent the topos of spouses trying to communicate, he did, like Aristophanes,

extend its scope, thus contributing to the gender ideology of his times. The dramas of Euripides and Aristophanes often expose fault lines of the social structures. According to Konstan, e.g., Aristophanes' plays are engaged in social themes and have a complex ideology: "lapses in unity at the level of plot and characterization make manifest the effort of the text to synthesize diverse elements in the ideological repertoire" (1995, 3–11).

12. The Greek text is cited from Diggle 1984 and 1981. Translations of the *Medea* are by Rex Warner, of the *Iphigenia at Aulis* by Charles R. Walker, and of the *Alcestis* by Richmond Lattimore in Grene and Lattimore 1955, 1955, and 1958, respectively.
13. Both characters, Clytemnestra and Medea, have rhetorical ends that shape how each presents her recollections to her spouse. On the "characterizing" aspects of rhetorical passages in Greek tragedy, see Conacher 1981. On the potential similarity, for a maiden, between marriage and death, see Rehm 1994 and Seaford 1987.
14. Intriguing is the proposal by O'Higgins that the Alcestis Heracles retrieves as a prize may be no different than the *simulacrum* that Admetus earlier imagines as his consolation and as a substitute for his wife (348–354) (O'Higgins 1993, esp. 92–95). Both statue and prize are "mute", a "shell", an artefact, an ornament (*agalma*). Has the outspoken and forceful Alcestis now been relocated in her appropriate, subordinate place? In view, again, of the ironical tone of the ending, this clear resonance between the imagined statue and the silent Alcestis surely highlights Admetus' ideological deficiencies. He receives from Heracles, Euripides seems to convey, the objectified wife, and not a wife with whom he may enjoy reciprocity. On the ritual aspect of Alcestis' silence, see Buxton 1987, 22 and n. 27.
15. This has to be used as a euphemism in the case of Clytemnestra and Agamemnon.
16. Note that "I-for-myself" is not prominent in self-sacrificing wives, who (in Bakhtin's language) might be said to reflect its obverse: "I-against-myself". Clytemnestra surely displays more "I-for-another" than "I-for-myself". One could argue that the social norms gave her no choice, no agency; but even if that were the case in late-fifth-century Athens, Euripides seems to call such an imbalance into question. Thus, through Clytemnestra's recollection, he underscores the similarity between Agamemnon at the time of courtship and Agamemnon in the present moment: on neither occasion did she experience "another-for-me". In short, the absence of "another-for-me" was accompanied by an excess of "I-against-myself", fueled by traditional social norms which Euripides is interrogating and confronting.
17. Among mythic abductions, cf. Nessus' near rape of Deianeira, the Centaurs' attacks on the Lapith women at the wedding banquet of Peirithoos, and Theseus' abduction of the Amazon queen Antiope. For a full discussion of the changing portrayal of rape in fifth-century vase paintings, see Stewart's argument that after ca. 450 such scenes of violence were in very bad taste (1995).
18. Agamemnon's appropriation is consonant with the medical belief, voiced by Apollo at *Eumenides* 658–661, that the father is the true parent: "The mother is no parent of that which is called l her child, but only nurse of the new-planted

seed | that grows. The parent is he who mounts. A stranger she | preserves a stranger's seed, if no god interfere." For an overview of the medical literature within which this point of view makes historic sense, see Dean-Jones 1994. For a discussion of competing theories on the question of who contributed "seed" to the progeny, see especially Lloyd 1983, 58–111.

19. Freedom of the fatherland — Agamemnon's rationalization for murdering his daughter — might have had a certain resonance for Euripides' audience during the onset of the Peloponnesian War (431–404), less so perhaps toward its conclusion, when this play was posthumously produced (405). The Athenians had been hearing about this theme for several decades. In fact, the play cynically undercuts the value by a number of dramatic techniques, including the vacillations of the two brothers, Agamemnon and Menelaus, and the reversals in their stance toward the sacrifice. Thus by the time we get to Iphigenia's conversion to her father's public point of view, that ideological vision has been seriously undermined. Agamemnon's use of a patriotic pretext ultimately rings hollow, at least as an endorsed value of the play. (Cf., however, Aristophanes' *Frogs*, also 405, where concern about this issue is prominent.)
20. See the discussion of literary and artistic representations of the tale in Gantz 1993, especially 591–592 and 664–685.
21. On the disagreement, among scholars, about "the play's tone, the genre (or genres) to which the play should be related, and the play's 'happy ending'", see Scully 1986, 135. Cf. Smith 1960 on the ironic tone of the play and on its problematic genre. A long-standing debate continues, as well, on the nature of character in tragedy (cf. Easterling 1973 and 1977b and Gould 1978) and on the characterization especially of Admetus in the *Alcestis*. Scully 1986, 135 ff., with references, following Conacher 1981, 6, soundly counters the widespread tendency to refuse to take characters such as Admetus as dramatic personalities. Cf. also Steidle 1968, 132–151. At the opposite extreme, Gregory 1979, 258 eschews psychological critical approaches to the *Alcestis*, mainly, it seems, because critics use the same passages to support opposed interpretations.
22. On *xenia* and *philia* as conflicting themes, see Goldfarb 1992, with extensive citations, esp. n. 12, and Schein 1988.
23. It is difficult to extend Bakhtin's model, so useful in describing ethical interactions between a self and an other, to two selves against the larger world. The problem of conflicting claims is not easily addressed.
24. The translation "or at least you should" is misleadingly didactic for *eiper eu phroneis* (303); more literally, "if indeed you have good sense".
25. See Goldfarb 1992 for an excellent study of this conflict of obligations in the *Alcestis*.
26. That Heracles offers the maiden unambiguously as a future bride is clear from 1087: "A wife, love, your new marriage will put an end to this (sc. excessive mourning)." Heracles is here the right arm of the playwright, moving the plot and the characterization forward: as he restores Alcestis, he acts as if he is bringing his friend a new bride. While his language exploits the ambiguities of the pretense, his action exposes the weak character of Admetus.
27. It is significant, as Buxton 1987 and Foley 1992 demonstrate, that Admetus participates in the symbolic gesture of *kheir epi karpoi* ("leading a bride by the hand") and *anakalupteria* ("unveiling of the bride", where bride and groom

look at one another for the first time). Admetus recoils from the first gesture, expressing his dread at accepting the new "bride" by a simile: "I extend my hand, like one beheading a gorgon" (1118). To remarry is to behead a gorgon, a convoluted allusion to Perseus' feat that won him Andromeda as a bride-prize. The perspective implicit in the simile is that of a hero about to perform his heroic act. But the tone is mock-heroic: Admetus compares himself to Perseus at the very moment when he is breaking his sworn oath to Alcestis. Behind his character's back, as it were, the playwright underscores Admetus' anti-heroism, and the simile contributes to the play's tragicomic deconstruction of heroism, a strategy most apparent in the mock-heroic portrayal of Heracles.

28. Contrast how, in Jason's case, we only learn that he has broken his marital oath from Medea's speeches (495, 511).
29. On Admetus' character, see esp. Smith, who writes: "What he finds most notable in his wife's death is his own suffering, and there is a certain exorbitance in all that he says, and an incongruity" (1960, 131), and Schein, whose analysis of the complexities of his relationship of *philia* with Alcestis discloses a persistent self-centeredness and self-absorption (1988, esp. 196–198).
30. On the details of Medea's role in engineering Pelias' death, see Gantz 1993, 191 and 365–368.
31. See Bremmer 1997, 100: "By killing her brother, Medea [...] also permanently severs all ties to her natal home and the role that it would normally play in her adult life."
32. So March 1990. In "psychologizing" about Medea, I follow the principle of "human intelligibility" put forth by Easterling 1973 and 1977b and refined by Gould 1978. To psychologize about a character is to make sense of her, taking her figuration in the text as though it were real and as though it existed in a stable and unchanging, if fictive, ontology. Such labor would have been performed by members of the live audience, whatever its composition. See my discussion of this way of reading character in epic Felson 1994, 19 and 126–129, with references. Especially useful is Bal 1987, 107–108.
33. In the traditional myth and in Euripides' hands, Medea is a wife who follows the patrilocal practice to a tee, moving to the land of her spouse. Ironically, even though she chooses to accompany Jason to *his* homeland, Iolcis, she sabotages their chance of remaining there as "natives". Thus she turns him into an exile, like herself, from his homeland; and as an outsider in Corinth, he makes a matrilocal marriage. His status as an outsider weakens his position in Corinth and sets the stage for him to cast off the foreign, non-Greek Medea and marry the indigenous Corinthian princess, for advancement's sake.
34. On versions of the story and artistic representations before and after Euripides, see Gantz 1993, 358–373.
35. For a different view, cf. Segal: "the asymmetry between her joyful triumph and Jason's suffering is only partial, for by killing the children she also inflicts a heavy burden of suffering upon herself, as she fully recognizes (1046f.)" (1996, 18). Segal cites several lines (e.g. in the speech at 1021–1080, esp. 1044–1048) in which Medea either hesitates because she cannot bring herself to kill her children or realizes that, in killing them, she is also wounding a part of herself.

36. Cf. Lysias' "On the Murder of Eratosthenes" 6.14 and Xenophon's *Oikonomikos* 12–13 on the subservient role of the wife.

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