

# EURIPIDES

## MEDEA

THE TEXT EDITED WITH  
INTRODUCTION AND COMMENTARY  
BY  
DENYS L. PAGE, M.A.

CLARENDON PRESS · OXFORD

## COMMENTARY

1. Ἐπαινείται δὲ ἡ εἰσβολὴ διὰ τὸ παθητικῶς ἄγαν ἔχειν καὶ ἡ ἐπεξεργασία "μὴδ' ἐν νάπαισι" καὶ τὰ ἐξῆς· ὅπερ ἀγνοήσας Τιμαχίδας τῷ ὑστέρῳ φησὶ πρῶτῳ κεκρῆσθαι, ὡς Ὅμηρος "εἴματά τ' ἀμφιέσασα θυώδεα καὶ λούσασα".—Schol., whose criticism of Timachidas is justified: 'would that Argo had not sailed . . . would indeed that she had never been built' is not an *hysteron-proteron*, but a logical sequence of thoughts. Ennius reversed the sequence: 'Utinam ne in nemore Pelio securibus | caesa accidisset abieгна ad terram trabes, | neve inde navis incohandi exordium | coepisset, quae nunc nominatur nomine | Argo, quia Argivi in ea delecti viri | vecti petebant pellem inauratam arietis | Colchis, imperio regis Peliae, per dolum. | Nam nunquam era errans mea domo efferret pedem | Medea, animo aegra, amore saevo saucia.' Leo, *Plaut. Forsch.*<sup>2</sup>, pp. 87 sq.

The first line of this play was chosen by Eur. to weigh against a line of Aeschylus in *Ar. Ran.* 1382. It was subsequently much admired and imitated, cf. Catullus 64. 171 sq., whence Verg. *Aen.* iv. 657 sq.: *Christus Patiens* init.: Rhodius' *Josephus*, init.: Byron, cit. F. L. Lucas, *Euripides*, p. 160. The alliteration of the letters κ and π in the beginning of this prologue is very striking.

διαπτάσθαι: the 'wings' of a ship are the oars rising and falling rhythmically on each side. The metaphor was applied only to warships, not to merchant-vessels, which were generally too bulky to be propelled by oars, cf. Aristotle *de incessu animalium* 10, cit. Torr, *Ancient Ships*, p. 20. Cf. λ 125 ἐρετμά, τὰ τε πτερὰ νηυσὶ πέλονται: A. *Hik.* 734 νῆες ὠκύπτεροι: *Pers.* 559 νᾶες ὁμόπτεροι: *Ag.* 52 πτερύγων ἐρετμοῖσιν ἐρεσσόμενοι: Eur. *Ion* 161-2 ἐρέσσει κυκνος: *Tro.* 1086 ἐμὲ δὲ πόντιον σκάφος πτεροῖσι πορεύσει: *Hel.* 147 νεὸς οὐριον πτερών: Polybius, I. 46 νῆες ἐπεῖχον ἐπτερωκυῖαι πρὸς τὴν ἐμβολήν: Moschos, ii. 59-60 ὄρνις ἀγαλλόμενος πτερύγων πολυαυθεί χροίῃ | ταρσὸν ἀναπλώσας ὥσει τέ τις ὠκύαλος νηὺς: Plutarch, *Anton.* 63 ταρσοὺς τῶν νεῶν ἐγείρας καὶ πτερώσας ἐκατέρωθεν: Lucian, *Tim.* 40 εἰρεσία τῶν πτερῶν: Verg. *Aen.* i. 301 remigio alarum: Prop. iv. 6. 47 quod classis centenis remiget alis.

- 2 Κόλχων ἐς Αἶαν· πόλις ἐν Σκυθίᾳ οὕτω καλουμένη, Schol.: cf. Hdt. i. 2. 2 'the Greeks . . . sailed to Aia, a city of Colchis on the river Phasis; from whence . . . they carried off Medea, the King's daughter'. With the name Αἶα cf. Αἰήτης and Αἶα, the island of Kirke (who was sister to Aietes): cf. Hdt. vii. 193. 2 ἐπὶ τὸ κῶας ἔπλεον ἐς Αἶαν [τὴν Κολχίδα], vii. 197. 3 Αἴης τῆς Κολχίδος. But it is unlikely that Eur. intended the proper name here. It is clear from this line that Eur. thinks of Argo passing through the Sym-

plegades on the *outward* journey: cf. P. P. iv. 208 sqq. δεσπό-  
 ταν λίσσονται ναῶν | συνδρόμων κινήμων ἀμαίμακτον | ἐκφυγεῖν  
 πετρᾶν διδύμαι γὰρ ἔσαν ζω-|αί, κυλινδέσκοντό τε κραϊνότεραι | ἡ  
 βαρυγδοῦπων ἀνέμων στίχες: Ap. Rhod. ii. 568 sqq., Val. Flacc. iv.  
 561 sqq. But the incident occurs on the *homeward* voyage in  
 Homer μ 69-70 οἷη δὲ κείνη γε παρέπλω πομποπόρος νῆς | Ἀργῶ  
 πᾶσι μέλουσα, παρ' Αἰήταο πλέουσα: cf. *infra* 432 sq. Medea sailed  
 διδύμους ὀρίσαα πόντον | πέτρας, 1263 sq. κυανῆαν λιποῦσα (sc.  
 Medea) Συμπληγάδων | πετρᾶν ἀξενωτάταν ἐσβολάν, Ovid, *Am.* ii.  
 11. 3.

Further, the difference between the Συμπληγάδες (Πληγάδες  
 Ap. Rhod. ii. 596; singular Eur. *IT.* 241) and the Πλαγκταί is  
 commonly obscured by the poets. That they were in fact  
 different is clear (*a*) from their natures—clashing and wandering,  
 (*b*) from their position: the former were in the east, the latter in  
 the west, (*c*) from the accounts in Ap. Rhod.: ii. 568 sqq. the  
 Argonauts pass through the Clashing Rocks in the east on the  
 outward journey; iv. 992 sqq. they come to the Wandering Rocks  
 in the west on the homeward journey. The confusion is as old  
 as Homer (loc. cit.): cf. Hdt. iv. 85 ἔπλεε ἐπὶ τὰς Κυανέας καλεο-  
 μένας, τὰς πρότερον Πλαγκτὰς Ἕλληες φασὶ εἶναι: *Periḗl. Euxini*  
 (cit. Merry and Riddell on μ 61) αὐταὶ δὲ αἱ Κυανεαὶ εἰσιν  
 ἃς λέγουσιν οἱ ποιηταὶ Πλαγκτὰς πύλαι εἶναι: Pliny, *NH.* vi. 12. 13  
 insulae in Ponto Planctae sive Cyaneae sive Symplegades.

Doubtless the oldest legend made Argo pass through the  
 Clashing Rocks on the outward journey, and come to the  
 Wandering Rocks on the way home. Since the two sets of  
 rocks were confused, it is easy to understand the doubt whether  
 the passage through the Symplegades occurred on the home-  
 ward or on the outward voyage.

The Symplegades were rocks which seemed to clash together,  
 Simonides, *fr.* 30 συνορμίδες: Eur. *IT.* 124-5 συγχωρούσας πέτρας,  
 ib. 421 πέτραι τὰς συνδρομίδας. The origin of the idea is well  
 explained by a Scholiast—δι' ἀπάτην τῆς ὄψεως, following Eratos-  
 thenes' *Geographoumena*, iii: καθ' ὃν καιρὸν ἂν τις πρὸς τὰ δεξιὰ  
 ἐκκλίνῃ, σφόδρα φαντάζεται τὰς πέτρας συναγομένας, ὅταν δὲ κατὰ  
 μέσον, ὁρᾷ διωστανέας καὶ ἔμπαλιν εἰς τὰ ἀριστερὰ διαλλάξας ὁρᾷ  
 συντρεχούσας. The sides of a narrow passage seem to close  
 immediately in front of a ship sailing through, and to close  
 immediately behind it. For explanations of the Πλαγκταί v.  
 Merry and Riddell, loc. cit. κυανέας Συμπλ. after Homer μ 75  
 νεφέλη δὲ μιν ἀμφιβέβηκεν | κιανέη.

The Cyanean rocks (there are twelve: the largest still called  
 Kyani) lie off the lighthouse on the extreme point of the Euro-  
 pean shore of the Bosphoros: they were one of the limits for  
 Persian men-of-war after the peace of Kallias. See How &  
 Wells on Hdt. iv. 85.

3. νάπαισι: νάπη, νάπος, mean 'dell' or 'glade'. Cf. βῆσσα, a

glade, esp. wooded: ἄγκος is a hollow. There seems to be no exact equivalent to our 'valley' in Greek. Theocritus, requiring such a general word for valley, uses the proper name τέμπεα (l. 67).

Πηλίου: 5,308 feet high, still thickly tree-clad, overlooking the Pagasaeon Gulf. Cf. *Hel.* 229 sqq. τίς Ἑλλανίας ἀπὸ χθονὸς | ἔτεμε τὰν δὲ κρυόεσσαν | Ἰλίου πευκάν: Catullus, lxiv. 1 Peliaco prognatae vertice pinus: Prop. iii. 22. 12 Peliacae trabis: Ovid, *Am.* ii. 11. 2 Peliaco pinus vertice caesa.

4. πύκη: the general rule in Greece was always that the hull for war-ships was built of fir (ἐλάτη), for merchant-ships of pine (πεύκη or πίτυς): Torr. *Ancient Ships*, p. 32.

ἐρετμῶσαι κώπαις ἀρμόσαι, Hesych., cf. πτεροῖν = πτεροῖς ἀρμόσαι. The subject is πύκη, the object χέρας, 'provided their hands with oars'. Orph. *Argon.* 358 χεῖρας ἐρετμώσαντες (= lay hands to oars) is very similar. In Nonnus *D.* vii. 185, the phrase means 'use hands as oars', i.e. swim.

5. ἀρίστων or ἀριστείων? Porson observed that the Argonauts are ἀριστεῖς in Ap. Rhod. i. 70, ii. 460, 465, 960, iii. 1004; cf. further Theocr. xiii. 17 τὸ χρύσειον ἔπλει μετὰ κώας Ἰήσων | Αἰσονίδας, οἱ δ' αὐτῷ ἀριστῆες συνεποντο: Pseudo-Demo. lx. p. 1392 οἱ μὲν ἐξ ἀπάσης τῆς Ἑλλάδος ὄντες ἀριστεῖς δέκ' ἔτη τῆς Ἀσίας ἐν χωρίῳ πολιορκούντες μάλιστα ἔδον. The word occurs in Eur. *IA.* 28 ἀνδρὺς ἀριστεῶς. For the corruption cf. Eur. *Alk.* 921 ἀρίστων codd., ἀριστεῶν Dobree: A. *Pers.* 306 ἀριστος codd., ἀριστεύς Blomfield: Eur. *Rhes.* 479 ἀριστεῖς codd., ἀρίστους Cobet. One seems as good as the other: where nothing is gained by change, I follow the unanimous agreement of MSS. and Scholia. Cf. Apollod. i. ix. 16, Jason ordered by oracle to sail συναθροίσαντι τοὺς ἀρίστους τῆς Ἑλλάδος.

δέρας or δέρος? δέρος Porson, cf. Eustath. ad Il. E, p. 600, 11 = 456, 51. MSS. have δέρος at S. fr. 11, *Med.* 5 (L), 480 (L), *Ph.* 1120, *Ion* 995, *Hyph.* jr. 3. i. 23, Ap. Rhod. i. 245: δέρας at *Med.* 5, 480 (most MSS.), *Ba.* 835. II (saec. iii-ii B.C.) has δέρος, which may seem the likelier spelling, (a) because found here in a presumably pre-Alexandrian papyrus, (b) because of Eustathius' explicit testimony. But the variety of spellings may be ancient. Like σέβας, λέπας, etc., the word is used only in nom. and acc. sing.

6. Πελίῳ: 'for Pelias', i.e. for the benefit of Pelias, the *dativus commodi*.
7. πύργους: accus. of motion to, without preposition as often in poetry: distinguish from the use in 1067, qu. v. For the omission of definite articles, cf. v. 1 and *passim*: this is a legacy from Homer, in whom the definite article rarely occurs as such, Kühner-Gerth. i. 582. The omission gives greater neatness without loss of accuracy. See further Wackernagel, *Vorlesungen über Syntax* ii. 147 sq.

Ἰωλκία γῆ: the district round the modern Volo, a large and busy harbour on the Pagasaeon gulf, where ships may still be seen laden with timber from Pelion. The ancient town of Iolkos probably lay on the low spur of Pelion, which is now the village Ano Volo. Formerly ruled by Jason's father Aison, then by the usurper Pelias.

8. The romantic aspect of the pre-history, later to be made so important in Ap. Rhod., is confined by Eur. within this line. For the phraseology cf. 639 *ἡψα, θυμὸν ἐκπλήξας' ἐτέροις ἐπὶ λέκτροις*: *Hērph.* 38 *κέντροις ἔρωτος ἐκπεληγμένη*: Pseudo-Plato, Epigr. 6. 6 Diehl *ὡ ἐμὸν ἐκμήνας θυμὸν ἔρωτι Δίων*: *Hermesianax* 7 Powell *ἐκ μὲν ἔρωτος | πληγείς . . .*
9. Medea promised the daughters of Pelias that if they slew their father and boiled his limbs, he would be rejuvenated. Pelias died. Medea (ἀ Πελίαο φονός, P. P. iv. 251) and Jason were therefore banished from Iolkos, Apollod. 1. 9. 27. Eur.'s first play, *Peliades* (455 B.C.), was on this subject.
- 11-12. ἀνδάνουσα: she 'pleased' them by stopping a famine; ἐν Κορίνθῳ κατὰ κεί καὶ ἔπαισε Κορινθίους λιμῷ κατεχομένους θύπασα Δήμητρι καὶ νύμφαις Δημνίαις, Schol. on P. O. xiii. 74. For the phrase cf. ἀστοῖς ἀδῶν, P. N. viii. 38: ἀστοῖσιν ἄρρεσκε, Apophth. Bionis: ἀδύπολις, S. OT. 511: Σπαρτιήτησι ἀδήσεις Hdt. v. 39. 2.

ἀνδάνουσα μὲν and αὐτὴ τε are opposed to the understood sentiment *μισουμένη δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀνδρός*. νῦν δὲ in v. 16 is opposed to vv. 14-15: Wecklein compares S. OK. 271 *πῶς ἐγὼ κακὸς φύσιν; | ὅστις παθὼν μὲν ἀντέδρων, ὥστ' εἰ φρονῶν | ἔπρασσον, οὐδ' ἂν ὧδ' ἐγγιγνόμην κακός*. | νῦν δ' οὐδὲν εἰδὼς ἰκόμην ἢ ἰκόμην.

ἀνδάνουσα μὲν κτέ.: as the text stands, *πολιτῶν* stands for *πολίταις* (governed by *ἀνδάνουσα*), being attracted by the following *ὧν* into the genitive case. This is an extremely uncommon idiom in Greek. Elmsley warned us against false parallels in which one clause is sandwiched inside the other, e.g. *Demo. Ol. ii. 2. . . . τόπων, ὧν ἡμὲν ποτε κύριοι, φαίνεσθαι προειμένους*: this may justify *πολιτῶν, ὧν χθόνα ἀφίκετο, ἀνδάνουσα*, but it does not justify the phrase in our text. In other words, though you could say in Latin 'urbem, quam statuo, vestra est', could you say 'vestra est urbem quam statuo'?

The only parallels I have found in Greek are (a) S. *El.* 652 sqq. *φίλοιτί τε ξυνοῦσαν οἷς ξύνειμι νῦν | εὐημεροῦσαν καὶ τέκνων, ὅσων ἐμοί | δύσνοια μὴ πρόσσεστιν* (where it is conceivable, but unlikely, that τέκνων is a partitive genitive, the antecedent to ὅσων being understood), (b) S. *Tr.* 151 sq. *εἰσίδοιτο, τὴν αὐτοῦ σκοπῶν | πράξιν, κακοῖσιν οἷς ἐγὼ βαρύνομαι* (here κακοῖσιν οἷς might possibly = οἷοις κακοῖς, but, as Jebb says, this is much less likely). I believe that in face of these parallels we cannot safely reject the MSS. reading; and indeed that we may accept it with reasonable confidence.

Emendation has failed signally: *πολίταις* *v* and Porson—'error ortus est e scripturae compendiis': but these compendia were not invented in the time of our Scholia's sources, which undoubtedly read *πολιτών*. *ψυχῇ* (Canter) seems too picturesque, *φυλῇ* (Canter: 'potius φύλῃ', Elmsley) too prosaic. Excision of the line is only the counsel of despair. From the suggestions in *Rh. Mus.* lxxiv. 192 (Marx), *Mnemos.* li. 1923, 58 (Hartmann), and *Phil. Woch.* liii. 1933, 877 (Schröder) I have learnt nothing. Wecklein thought that *πολιτών* was only removed from the other side of the *ὦν* clause at the last moment, as it were, for the sake of the antithesis *φυγῇ—πολιτών*: the phrase is thus virtually equivalent to *ἀνδάνουσα, ὧν ἀφίκετο χθόνα, πολιτών*. Others maintain that the avoidance of two consecutive datives *φυγῇ πολιταῖς* enforced a special licence. Neither view is convincing. The first leaves untouched the real problem—is there any parallel for the attraction, on whatever grounds it may have been made? The second unwisely assumes that the two datives are more offensive than an almost unparalleled attraction.

13. *ξυμφέρουσα*: 'complying with', cf. *S. El.* 1465 *συμφέρειν τοῖς κρείσσοσιν*: *Eur. El.* 1052 *πάντα συγχωρεῖν πόσει*. Not (as Elmsley) the same as *ὁμοφρονούσα*, which implies *mutual* agreement.

- 14-15. Such reflections are very uncommon in *Eur.*'s prologues, at least in the first iambic speech, except at the beginning (*Hekd.*, *Or.*, *Stheneboia*) or at the end (*Hek.*, *H.*, *Tro.*, *Ph.*, *Or.*). But cf. *Tro.* 26-7, *Stheneboia* 29-32. For the sentiment cf. ζ' 182 *οὐ μὲν γὰρ τοῦ γε κρείσσον καὶ ἄρειον | ἢ δθ' ὁμοφρονέοντε νοήματιν οἶκον ἔχτην | ἀνὴρ ἡδὲ γυνή*: *fr.* 164 *ἄριστον ἀνδρὶ κτήμα συμπαθὲς γυνή*. Cf. both for form and for content of this γνώμη *Plaut. Cist.* 190-2, *is amore proiecticiam illam deperit . . . et illa hunc contra, qui est amor suauissimus*: from Menander, ultimately after the model of Euripidean prologues.

One would have expected the construction to be *διχοστατοῦσιν ἀνὴρ καὶ γυνή* (cf. *A. Ag.* 323): but here and *Pl. Rep.* 465 b we find *διχοστατεῖ τις πρὸς τινα*.

16. *τὰ φίλτατα*: 'what I love most', rather more abstract and indefinite than usual, as its verb and conjunction with the general *ἐχθρὰ πάντα* shows cf. *A. Eum.* 216 (*Κύπρις*) *ὄθεν βροτοῖσι γίνε-ται τὰ φίλτατα*. Normally *τὰ φίλτατα* refers directly to a person or persons, alive or dead (*Ion* 287 used of a *place*): thus *S. OK.* 1110 *ἔχω τὰ φίλτατα*, 'I have my daughters'; *El.* 1208 *μὴ 'ξέλη τὰ φίλτατα*, 'do not rob me of *Orestes'* ashes'; *Phil.* 434 *πατὴρ ἦ τὰ φίλτατα*, said of *Patroclus*. Cf. *H.* 514, *Ion* 521, 571, *IA.* 458.

19. *αἰσυμνᾶ*: *θ* 258 *αἰσυμνῆται* are stewards of the athletes' course; *αἰσυμνήτεια* is defined as *αἵρετὴ τυραννίς*, *Ar. Pol.* iii. 14. 1285 b; so Pittakos was *αἰσ.* of Mutilene. Word not elsewhere in Tragedy.

20. A Hellenistic inscription found at Delphi (*Bull. Corr. Hell.* xlix, 1925, 88) preserves the beginning of this line: ΜΗΔΕΙΑ-ΔΗΔΥΣΤΗ[.

21. βοᾷ . . . ὄρκοις: "ὄρκοι" is what she actually cries aloud: cf. *S. Ant.* 133 νίκην ἀλαλάσαι, to cry "νίκη", *Ph.* 1154 sq. βοᾷ πῦρ καὶ δικέλλας. βωμός per victimam, ὄρκος per verba, πίστις per dextram, Porson. The contrast of truthful barbarian and lying Greek was a commonplace: v. *Introd.*, pp. xix-xx.

βοᾷ μὲν . . . ἀνακαλεῖ δὲ . . . : anaphora with words of similar meaning, cf. *Hek.* 982 φίλη μὲν . . . προσφιλὲς δὲ . . . : *S. OK.* 1501 σαφὴς μὲν . . . ἐμφανὴς δὲ . . . : *A. Pers.* 27 φοβεροὶ μὲν . . . δεινοὶ δὲ . . . (Wecklein).

Since Eur. uses neither accents nor punctuation, nobody has ever known whether he intended δεξιᾶς, πίστιν or δεξιᾶς πίστιν. *S. OK.* 1632 χερὸς σῆς πίστιν, *Phil.* 813 χερὸς πίστιν suggest that δεξιᾶς πίστιν was the normal phrase. On the meaning of δεξιᾶς πίστιν v. 412 n. *infra*.

24. ἄσιτος: So Penelope in δ 789 κείτ' ἄρ' ἄσιτος, ἄπατος ἐδηγύος ἢ δὲ ποτήτος: Aias in *S. Ai.* 324 ἄσιτος ἀνὴρ, ἄποτος: Phaidra in *Hipp.* 274 sq. τριταίαν γ' οὐδ' ἄσιτος ἡμέραν: Iphis in *Hik.* 1105-6 ἄσιτίαις ἐμὸν δέμας ἀποφθερῶ: Orestes in *Or.* 39-41.

ὑφείσ': *submittere*, surrendering.

ἀλγυδόσι. 'Quo minus refert, eo difficilior est eligere', Elmsley. Ἀλγυδ. occurs plural four times in Eur., once only (v. 56 *infra*, where the plural could hardly stand) singular. The plural is therefore slightly likelier here.

25. συντείνουσα: merely an emendation by some one as puzzled by συντήκουσα as modern edd. Schol. says συντήκουσα here is intransitive, but there is no parallel [συντέτηκα, like many other active perfects, is used intransitively]. Most edd. take σῶμα as object of συντήκ., but the awkwardness of the intervening τὸν πάντα χρόνον is a very serious objection. The true explanation can be derived from the parallel of *IA.* 398 ἐμὲ δὲ συντήξουσιν νύκτες ἡμέραι τε δακρύοις. There 'time wastes me away with tears', here 'I waste time away with tears'. There is no longer much obscurity when we see that τὸν χρόνον here is nearly equivalent to (a part of) *her lifetime*: i.e. there is little significant difference between συντήκει τὸν χρόνον and v. 141 τᾶκει βιοτάν. True, χρόνος usually = time as *opposed to* αἰὼν = lifetime: but τὸν πάντα . . . ἐπεὶ here gives the necessary limitation.

The last vestige of doubt may disappear when we consider the way in which Greek often expresses the relation between a person and the time during which he lives. A man's *time* is regarded as something which is born together with him (*A. Ag.* 107 σύμφυτος αἰὼν, *S. OT.* 1082-3 συγγενεῖς μῆνες), grows up with him (*S. Ai.* 622 παλαιᾷ σύντροφος ἡμέρα), sleeps when he sleeps (*A. Ag.* 894 τοῦ ξυνεύδοντος χρόνου), is always with him (*S. OK.* 7 χρόνος ξυνών), and grows old with him (*S. OT.* 963 μακρῷ συμ-