

Euripides'  
*Alcestis*



Theatron

Orchestra

Parodos

Stoa of Dionysos

Stane  
with  
Epocheion

*With Notes  
and Commentary*

*by C. A. E. Luschnig  
and H. M. Roisman*

Temple of  
Dionysos

OKLAHOMA SERIES IN CLASSICAL CULTURE

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EURIPIDES' *ALCESTIS*

# OKLAHOMA SERIES IN CLASSICAL CULTURE

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# *Euripides' Alcestis*

With Notes and Commentary by C. A. E. Luschnig

and H. M. Roisman

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For

Lance, Yossi, Elad, and Shalev

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## *Preface*

Students reading their first works in Greek need quite a bit of help, not only with vocabulary and new grammatical points, but also with the review of basic material. We have found few texts edited to accommodate these students. Our *Euripides' Alcestis* addresses this problem. The *Alcestis* is an ideal text for use in the third or fourth semester of Greek: it is short and can easily be read in a semester; the grammar is mostly straightforward; the story is easy to follow. Besides, it is a story with universal appeal. While it is true that students at this level of Greek are most in need of help in reading the play, it is also the case that, although they are novices at reading Greek, these same students are likely to be college juniors or seniors. Many will not have an opportunity to take any more Greek courses unless they go to graduate school in classics. For this reason we have included a section of literary "Discussions" in which we discuss some of the many controversies about the *Alcestis*, and in this way, introduce students to some interpretative readings and methods of criticism. This material is provided for classroom discussion and as a starting point for research. We have found that our students are sophisticated and crave an opportunity to look at the texts as their peers in English, comparative literature, or the modern languages do. We have, therefore, deliberately chosen to interpret scenes where our views differ. We believe and hope that our varied perspectives on these scenes will enhance class interaction with the text and spark discussion.

We hope, too, that the glossary, notes, and grammatical reviews will relieve instructors of class time spent on mechanics and that, for the students, these features will ease the frustration of too much time spent in the lexicon for the number of lines translated. In addition to grammatical and lexical glosses (with the symbol † indicating words that will come up frequently in the text), in the commentary we provide charts of the forms that we have found our students have the most trouble remembering, mythological backgrounds to give a context for the particular story being staged, information about scenic conventions, a metrical scheme for each of the odes, and some literary discussion. We have also provided translations of the choral odes. Some of this material can be ignored by more advanced students, but it is there for those who need it. The bibliography is not a complete scholarly list, but an aid to students. Works fully cited in the notes are not repeated in the bibliography.

Students learn to read Greek by reading Greek. We hope that our commentary will help them reach reading readiness, ease their frustration, and enhance their enjoyment. We recommend that on the first day of class, students do a dramatic reading of the whole play in English and then put the translation aside. It would be ideal if, at the end of each scene, the students could stage a dramatic reading in Greek followed by discussion, as time permits. After this the students could read the “Discussions” and either write a response or have another discussion in class or on a discussion page on the Web.

This commentary came about from our mutual interest in Euripides and in the play *Alcestis*. It is a tribute to the humanity of Euripides that two scholars of often differing views on his drama could join forces in interpreting one of his more baffling and elusive plays. Euripides’ text seems to be so amenable to a variety of interpretations and, at the same time, to a stimulating scholarly exchange rather than an academic impasse, that our collaboration has remained an enjoyable experience through the many months it took to prepare this volume.

Our collaboration was conducted entirely over e-mail and via the postal service. Throughout the writing of the manuscript we were nearly a continent apart. Thus our thanks are to separate groups of people who have helped us in different locales. First we would like to thank the generations of students who have studied Greek with us.

Our current and former students at the University of Idaho, Colby College, and Tel Aviv University, through their probing questions and vital interest in the play, not only prompted us to think about a commentary, but also guided us in examining new corners and facets of interpretation. Special thanks go to Van Isaac Anderson, a senior majoring in classics and computer science at the University of Idaho, who spent many hours, enjoyable to him and invaluable to us, improving the Greek font. Both of us also owe thanks to Karen Gillum of Colby College for her meticulous help with editing and immeasurable assistance with the metrics; to Dr. A. L. H. Robkin of Bellevue, Washington, expert in theatrical machinery, for providing illustrations of the theater and its devices; and to the referees and editors at the University of Oklahoma Press for their helpful suggestions. Hanna Roisman extends her great thanks to the Department of Classics at Cornell University for their most generous hospitality and support during the many summers she spent on campus doing her research on the play. She is grateful to John Coleman for making his office available to her summer after summer, to her friend Fred Ahl for the many occasions of discussing this wonderful play, to Toby Mostysson for contributing to the readability of her part of the "Discussions," to her friend and colleague Kerill O'Neill for patient listening, and to Zeev Rubinsohn, Beatrice Rosenberg, and to Yossi, Elad, and Shalev Roisman, for their steady support and unflinching encouragement. Cecelia Luschnig would like to thank friends and colleagues at the University of Idaho for their many kindnesses, especially Sherill Armiger, secretary of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Richard Keenan, department chair, and Louis Perraud, colleague in classics. Many thanks to Lance Luschnig for his constant encouragement, helpful suggestions, energetic support, and patience. Finally, to the Greek students in spring 2002, Van Anderson, Patrick Bree, Annike Christophersen, David Eacker, Robyn Horner, Heather Jones, Matthew McCoy, Nathan Preston, and Travis Puller, heartfelt thanks for so good-naturedly searching for errors in the commentary.

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EURIPIDES' *ALCESTIS*

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## *Introduction*

Greek myths are part of the public domain. For millennia they, along with legends from other cultures and mythologies, have been a rich source for new fiction, drama, and music, and in recent years for much science fiction and fantasy, and even a few mysteries. When we read these stories in mythology handbooks, we are reading literary versions, however early the source. The poets and playwrights of classical Athens, no less than present-day screenwriters and novelists, were free to use these stories for their own inventions, but within limits, of course. Where is the fun if the legend is so changed that it is unrecognizable?

A divine being (or an alien from a more advanced planet) finds himself enslaved to a mortal man. The mortal man is about to die, and the god decides to help him. The man can live if he finds someone to take his place. His wife dies in his place, and everything goes awry. Another semidivine being (or very powerful man) comes along and restores the woman to life. Who are these characters? With a momentary suspension of disbelief, they could be anybody. Euripides sometimes seems to have said to himself, "What if these things happened to real people, people down the street, people we know?" The Greek myths and the changes worked on them through the ages are an invitation to creative writers now, as in the past. How could such things happen in Waterville, Maine, or Moscow, Idaho, in Leavenworth,

Washington, or Norman, Oklahoma? This question is the beginning of a new story. The Greek word for plot is μῦθος (Aristotle, *Poetics* 1450a). When we read the *Alcestis* today, perhaps it will help us make sense of the myths of our neighbors' lives and our own.

### *ALCESTIS*: A CLASSIC?

The *Alcestis* has always attracted attention, not only because it defies classification by genre but also because it blends popular topics that draw in audiences. It includes such themes as life and death, resurrection, and the defiance of death and fate. It presents complex family relationships between husband and wife, father and son, daughter-in-law and parents-in-law. It takes a traditional look at the harm that a stepmother might cause, the fate of orphaned children, the involuntary renegeing on promises, and the law of unintended consequences. All of these topics, at once both particular and universal, are woven into a text of multiple ironic juxtapositions that diminish the monumental emotional effects that such themes might produce and level them, at times, to nonsensical sequences.

The *Alcestis* is an unusual play. It borders on both tragedy and satyr play, and therefore has, over the years, become a battlefield for commentators trying to classify the unclassifiable. It is the way the playwright weaves an unsettling comic relief into the tragic components and conventional tragic form that has both charmed and challenged readers and scholars over the years.

To some extent the *Alcestis* epitomizes its creator. Euripides does not conform to what we learn to expect from Aeschylus and Sophocles, either in his skepticism and general disenchantment, in his special treatments of myths, or in his experimentations with the traditional forms. One does not find cosmic justice, divine order, or triumphant morality of any sort in his plays. Nor can one find any issue that does not lend itself to multiple interpretations. This might in part explain why, even though he wrote between eighty and ninety plays, he won the first prize in the Dionysian contest only four times in his lifetime. In spite of this scanty formal success, his choral odes were unusually

popular, not only in Athens but in Sicily as well (Plutarch, *Nicias* 29). As in Euripides' other poetry, nothing in the *Alcestis* is one-dimensional. Nothing is uncontroversial.

## DATE AND PLACE OF THE *ALCESTIS*

Of the dramatic festivals in ancient Attica, the most famous and important was the Great Dionysia (or City Dionysia), held every year in the early spring. On each of the three days devoted to tragic performances, four plays by the same author were produced, three tragedies followed by a satyr play. In this fourth play the Chorus was made up of satyrs, creatures with tails, pointed ears, and goatlike legs, known for their unrestrained lust and fondness for Bacchic revelry. Perhaps these dramas served as a relief from the seriousness of the tragedies or as a return to more exuberant Dionysiac festivities. The three tragedies, sometimes three parts of a single story but more often three different plays from different legends, are called a *trilogy*; the three tragedies with the satyr play are called a *tetralogy*. Three playwrights, chosen by the archons (administrative officials), entered their plays in competition. One of the most amazing things about Greek drama is that the plays were written for a single performance, the one day of the festival the playwright was allotted for his plays. He had no expectation that these works would ever be performed again. Of the hundreds of plays performed at the tragic festivals in fifth-century Athens, only thirty-three have survived: seven each by Aeschylus and Sophocles and the rest by Euripides. Two of these, *Prometheus*, traditionally attributed to Aeschylus, and *Rhesus*, associated with Euripides, are of disputed authorship, meaning that tragedies by five playwrights may actually have survived.

The *Alcestis* is the earliest of Euripides' extant plays. It was first produced in 438 B.C.E. and is one of its author's most popular plays, frequently anthologized, often adapted and parodied. It offers something to all readers: an appealing and universal story whose wit and folktale elements keep it from overpowering the audience with the grim reality of death, characters who—even when they are less than

attractive—interest us, insights into family relationships, heroic self-sacrifice, charming songs, and many subtleties typical of Euripides' dramaturgy throughout his career.

The *Alcestis* was performed after the three tragedies, in the place of a satyr play. This means that although it is written in tragic diction on a mythological and potentially tragic theme, it is not, strictly speaking, a tragedy. It is sometimes identified by the rather unhelpful term *prosatyr play*. An ancient hypothesis, an abstract that summarizes the plot and gives a little criticism, describes this play as σατυρικώτερον (rather like a satyr play). In the tragic competition of 438, Sophocles won first prize and Euripides came in second. The three tragedies that preceded the *Alcestis* were *The Cretan Women*, *Alcmaeon in Psophis*, and *Telephus*, none of which is extant. (See the Hypotheses [below]; Webster 1967, 37–52; and Collard, Cropp, and Lee 1995, 17–52, for the fragments of *Telephus* with translation and commentary.)

## THE HYPOTHESES

The Hypothesis of *Alcestis* by Dicaearchus, a student of Aristotle:

Apollo implored the Fates to allow Admetus, who was about to die, to provide someone willing to die in his place so that he might live a span of time equal to that person's. And in fact Alcestis, the wife of Admetus, gave herself up, since neither of his parents was willing to die for their child. Not long after this sad event, Heracles arrived and, upon learning from a servant what had happened to Alcestis, he journeyed to the tomb and forced Death to leave. He hid the woman with a garment and asked Admetus to take her and watch over her. For he claimed that he had won her as a prize in a wrestling contest. When Admetus was reluctant [to take her], Heracles revealed to him the woman for whom he was grieving.

Another Hypothesis by an unknown author:

Alcestis, the daughter of Pelias, after undertaking to die for her husband, was saved by Heracles, who happened to be visiting

Thessaly. He overpowered the gods of the Netherworld and snatched the woman away. The story was not treated by either Aeschylus or Sophocles. This is the seventeenth play composed by Euripides. It was performed in the year that Glaukinos served as archon. Sophocles came first in the competition, Euripides second with *The Cretan Women*, *Alcmaeon in Psophis*, *Telephus*, *Alcestis*. . . . [There is a lacuna here; that is, something is missing.] The play has a rather comedic outcome. It is set in Pherai, a city of Thessaly. The Chorus is composed of certain local elders who are there to sympathize with the misfortunes of Alcestis. Helios [or, as other texts read it, Apollo] speaks the prologue. †There are five chorus leaders.† [The symbols †...† signify that the text is uncertain.]

The play is rather satyric, since it moves toward joy and pleasure in its outcome, as opposed to the tragic mode. Both the *Orestes* and the *Alcestis* are removed from the category of tragic poetry, since they start with disaster and end in happiness and joy, which is more characteristic of comedy.

The Greek text of these hypotheses can be found in the editions of Murray, Dale, Garzya, and Diggle, among others.

## ALCESTIS AND THE SATYR PLAY

Some of the characteristics that the *Alcestis* may share with the satyr play are its folktale elements (for example, tricking the fates and the naive view of death; the mechanistic nature of the deal made with death; Death as a physical being and an egalitarian); the riddling language (some of which may be present as early as the prologue, although the best example is in the dialogue between Heracles and Admetus when Admetus deceives his friend about the death of his wife); the willingness of the audience to put up with the conquest of death/Death. The drunk scene may also be a feature of the satyr play—the *Cyclops* has one too. The mixture of tragic and comic elements is another unusual, but not unique, feature of this drama. Unfortunately, we do not have enough extant examples of satyr plays (one complete, Euripides' *Cyclops*, and some substantial fragments) to define the genre.

## THE CHARACTERS

The *Alcestis* is shorter than most Greek tragedies. It was almost certainly performed by two actors. The parts of the children, the attendants, and the possibly veiled and certainly speechless Alcestis at the end would have been played by extras (or supernumeraries). It has been suggested that the child's song, when he hovers over his mother's lips, was actually sung by the actor playing (the now dead) Alcestis. The way to tell how many actors are used in a play is to count how many speaking parts are used in each of the successive scenes. In this play we have only two persons (besides the Chorus) speaking in any scene, aside from the child who sings in the second episode.

## ΤΑ ΤΟΥ ΔΡΑΜΑΤΟΣ ΠΡΟΣΩΠΑ

Ἀπόλλων	Ἄδμητος
Θάνατος	Παῖς Ἀλκήστιδος
Χορός	Ἡρακλῆς
Θεράπεινα Ἀλκήστιδος	Φέρης
Ἀλκηστις	Θεράπων

**Apollo:** god of prophecy and plague, son of Zeus and father of Asclepius (the god of medicine). He has just finished serving as a herdsman (cowhand and shepherd) to Admetus, probably for a year.

**Thanatos or Death in Person:** personified in Homer as the twin brother of Sleep. Though not used as a stage character in any other extant play, he is sometimes called upon (in Sophocles' *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*); this may not be an invocation to Death, but only a suffering character wishing for death. It is hard to tell in Greek, and perhaps the distinction was not always made. Because they used only the capital letters throughout the classical period, the choice to use a small or capital letter often belongs to the editor.

**Chorus** of elders from the town of Pherai: At this time the chorus consisted of fifteen men.

**Alcestis' Slave Woman:** unnamed, as is usual for slaves, and loyal to her mistress, often referred to as "the Maid."

**Alcestis:** daughter of Pelias, wife of Admetus.

**Admetus:** son of Pheres, husband of Alcestis.

**Child of Alcestis:** There are actually two children, a boy and a girl. We know from Homer that the boy was named Eumelus, and Hesiod gives the name Perimele for Admetus' daughter. The boy sings a song after his mother's death. The little girl has no lines and is not listed in the cast of characters that is found in several of the manuscripts.

**Heracles:** friend and guest of Admetus, son of Zeus and Alcmena, performing labors for Eurystheus, son of Sthenelus.

**Pheres:** father of Admetus and former king of Pherai.

**Admetus' Slave:** Unnamed, he is a household slave, assigned to the entertainment of the guest.

**Speaking parts scene by scene** (the prologue is the part before the entrance of the Chorus, episodes are the parts played by the actors and the chorus between the odes, and the exodos is the part that follows the last ode):

Prologue (lines 1–76): Apollo and Death

First Episode (136–212): Chorus and Slave Woman

Second Episode (238–434): Chorus, Alcestis, Admetus [and Children]

Third Episode (476–567): Chorus, Heracles, Admetus

Fourth Episode (606–961): Admetus, Chorus, Pheres (*Exeunt omnes* at line 746; Pheres goes one way and the Chorus with Admetus and the body of Alcestis the other)

Slave, Heracles (*Exit* slave after 835; *exit* Heracles at 860)

Admetus, Chorus (enter after 860)

Exodos (1006–163): Chorus, Heracles, Admetus [and Alcestis (silent)]

All the parts were played by men. The use of masks allowed the same actor to play several roles. Apollo and Death came back as Admetus and Alcestis. The actor playing the slave woman probably also played Alcestis and, after her death, Heracles and Pheres. Admetus and his servant would have been played by the same actor.

Significant developments in dramaturgy during the course of the fifth century are marked by additions to the number of actors. Aeschylus is said to have added a second actor and Sophocles a third (Aristotle, *Poetics* 1449a). No tragedy needs more than three; this is known as “the rule of three actors.” The following use only two: all of Aeschylus’ plays before the *Oresteia*; Euripides’ *Medea*, his satyr play *Cyclops*, and probably *Alcestis*.

## THE CHORUS

The Chorus is made up of fifteen men, most often singing and dancing in unison, though sometimes divided into two (or more) *hemichoroi* (as in the parodos [see below], the first stasimon, and the kommos; a change in singer or group is marked by a dash in the text). They enter by the parodoi (side entrances) and perform their songs and dances in the orchestra. Usually they remain there from their first song until the end of the play, but in the *Alcestis* the Chorus files out with Admetus to attend the funeral and returns again after the scene between Heracles and the slave in the fourth episode. The Chorus is visually central to the play. They witness the action, participate in it, and comment on it in song and dance as well as in speech. When the Chorus takes part in the dialogue, we are not to imagine the whole group speaking together, but the chorus leader (*choregos/choragus* or *coryphaeus*) speaking alone, representing the group. Sometimes the songs (stasima or odes) relate directly to what has just happened or is about to happen, and sometimes they bring a new dimension to the plot. Often they do both by extending their subject matter in time and space; by moving between the divine and mortal worlds, or by putting the particular story in a more general context.

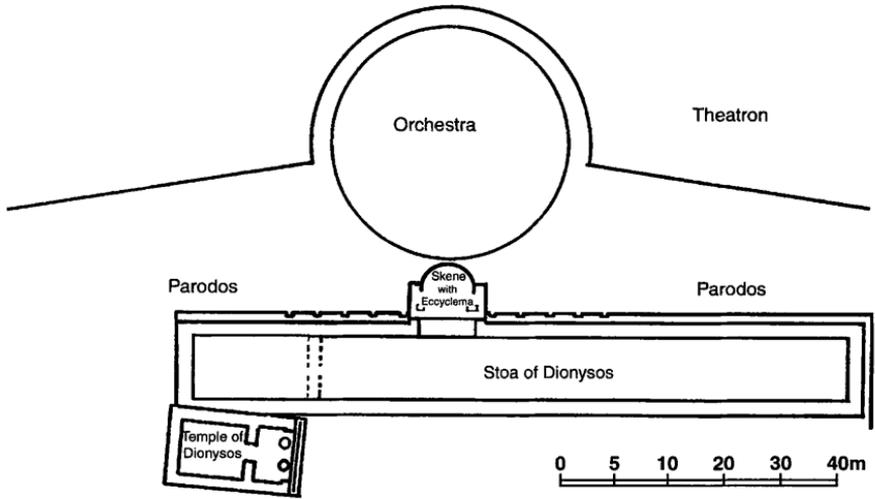
In the *Alcestis* the parodos (entrance song) and the first two stasima relate to the death of Alcestis. The Chorus begins (in the parodos) with the question of whether or not she is dead, connecting the prologue and first episode, both of which emphasize the exact timing of her death. Then in the first stasimon, the Chorus offers what they know is a futile prayer to save Alcestis. By the time they sing again she is dead, and so the second stasimon is a song in praise of their queen.

It is best to think of the Chorus as connecting rather than separating the episodes. The third stasimon, for example, following the scene in which Admetus makes Heracles his guest, begins with a song of praise of the hospitality of the king's house and a lyric picture of Apollo, his other famous guest. The song ends with a description of the vastness of Admetus' estates and a general reflection on nobility, serving as a bridge to the father-son scene in the fourth episode. After the funeral, the Chorus joins in Admetus' lament and then sings one more song about Alcestis as a heroine, picturing her tomb as a site at which wayfarers will pay homage, and finally (without knowing their words are reaching the ears of the live woman) greeting her at the exact moment she walks on stage with Heracles, the wayfarer who has just come from her grave. At the end of the play the Chorus files out to the words and rhythm of the closing choral tag. Although the use of a chorus is no longer a feature in most serious drama and it is sometimes hard for us to understand why they are there, any attempt to appreciate its focal role in the fifth-century theater is well worth the effort.

## STAGING

Greek plays have no stage directions. This makes sense if we realize that the playwrights themselves were the directors and originally also acted in their own plays. We can fill in some stage directions from what is said on the stage, but we must remain uncertain about many others. In staging the piece many decisions must be made about how to play the various scenes. Ultimately the meaning (or meanings) of this elusive play depends in part upon such decisions. The use of masks does not hamper subtlety of acting—emotions are conveyed through the words of the text, by gesture, body language, voice, and song. But acting styles have changed over the centuries. In the ancient world acting was more rhetorical than psychological, given more to broad gestures than minute detail, which would be lost in the large outdoor theater.

The plays take place in front of the scene building (*σκηνή*, *tent* or *hut*, used originally of the temporary quarters of men on the battlefield),



Theater of Dionysos in Athens, mid-fifth century B.C.E. Drawing by A. L. H. Robkin. Redrawn from E. Fiechter, *Das Dionysos-Theater in Athen*, fig. 7.

here representing the house of Admetus and Alcestis in Pherai, a town in Thessaly. All the action, however intimate, takes place outdoors, but there are narrative or lyrical descriptions of offstage spaces. The *skene* has one door facing the audience through which actors make their entrances and exits, and it must have had at least one other door unseen by the audience. Actors enter from the house or from the outside along the *parodoi*. Exits likewise are either into the *skene* or away from the orchestra. It is uncertain whether or not there was a raised stage in front of the scene building. If so, it was not too high for the actors to go down into the orchestra and interact with the Chorus.

## METERS

All the Classical Greek dramas are written in verse. The dialogue parts are spoken, mostly in iambs. The choral odes and some other parts (*Alcestis*' encounter with death—see the note at 244–79 and the child's lament) are sung. There are a few parts in anapests that were chanted. These will be discussed below as they come up in the text.

## SCANNING GREEK IAMBICS

Greek meters are described as the alternations of long and short syllables in regular patterns. The iambic metron is closest to the rhythm of ordinary conversation. Πολλοὶ γοῦν μέτρα ἰαμβικὰ λαλοῦσιν οὐκ εἰδότες (“Many people talk in iambics without realizing it,” Demetrius, *On Style*, 43). A syllable is *long* if it contains a long vowel or diphthong or a short vowel followed by two or more consonants or a double consonant (ψ, ξ, ζ). The two consonants need not be in the same word. (A mute [π, β, φ, κ, γ, χ, τ, ζ, θ] followed by a liquid, that is, λ or ρ, may not cause the preceding vowel to count as long, as in ἔτλην in line 1.) A syllable is *short* if its vowel is short (and is followed by only one consonant or by a mute + liquid). A long vowel or diphthong at the end of a word, followed by a word beginning with a vowel, usually counts as short.

**Iamb** – (short/long: quarter note/half note)

In dramatic verse these are in groups of two (i.e., dipodic units).

The most common line of dialogue consists of six iambs or three such groups (i.e., iambic trimeter in dipodic units).

Substitutions (resolutions) are allowed:

**Spondee** – – (two longs < σπονδή “drink offering”) may be substituted for the first iamb in each unit, that is, the first, third, and fifth foot.

**Tribrach** – – – (three shorts < βραχύς “short”) may be used for the first five iambs.

**Anapest** – – – (short short long < ἀνάπαιστος “struck back,” so called because it is a dactyl turned around) may be used anywhere a spondee can occur.

**Dactyl** – – – (long short short < δάκτυλος “finger”) may be used anywhere a spondee can occur.

A final short in any line is counted as long (*syllaba anceps* ×).

EXAMPLES (*ALCESTIS* LINES 1–4)

ᾠ δώματ' Ἀδμήτει', ἐν οἷς ἔτλην ἐγὼ

– – – – – – – – – –

θῆσαν τράπεζαν αἰνέσαι θεός περ ὄν.

— — — — — — — — — —

Ζεὺς γὰρ κατακτὰς παῖδα τὸν ἐμὸν αἴτιος

— — — — — — — — — — — ×

Ἄσκληπιόν, στέρνοισιν ἐμβαλὼν φλόγα·

— — — — — — — — — — ×

For additional general discussion of the *Alcestis*, its genre, its relation to the *Antigone* (its closest contemporary), and the staging, see the introductory remarks in the “Discussions.”

## THE AUDIENCE

The plays were performed at major festivals supported by the city-state and were attended by the citizen body. The evidence is ambiguous on the question of whether women were permitted in the theater (see Henderson 1991), but we believe they were.

These festivals were grand civic events—social, aesthetic, religious, and political. The playwrights were thought of as teachers of the citizens. The more we can learn about Greek thought and the world of the original audience, the closer we can come to understanding the plays in their contexts. Although, we can never see them as the original audience did, we must remember that these plays have survived not only as documents illustrating ancient practices but as universal, humane works. We too are the audience, and our reactions become part of the play.

## THE TEXT

We have followed the Oxford Classical Text of Gilbert Murray (1902) with a few minor alterations, mostly in matters of punctuation and in the stichometry (line division) of the parodos. We have consulted the texts of Bayfield (first published in 1890), Earle (1899), Garzya (1983) and Diggle (1983). The few places where we differ from the Murray text are noted in the commentary. Anyone interested in more scholarly commentary on the text is directed to Dale’s edition and notes (1954). We have also used italics in the text to indicate direct quotations.

# Alcestis

## PROLOGUE (1-76)

### ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝ

Ἦ δώματ' Ἀδμήτει', ἐν οἷς ἔτλην ἐγὼ  
θῆσαν τράπεζαν αἰνέσαι θεὸς περ ὦν.  
Ζεὺς γὰρ κατακτὰς παῖδα τὸν ἐμὸν αἴτιος  
Ἄσκληπιόν, στέρνοισιν ἐμβαλὼν φλόγα·  
οὐδὲ δὴ χολωθεῖς τέκτονας Δίου πυρὸς 5  
κτείνω Κύκλωπας· καὶ με θητεύειν πατῆρ  
θητηῶ παρ' ἀνδρὶ τῶνδ' ἄποιν' ἠνάγκασεν.  
ἐλθὼν δὲ γαῖαν τήνδ' ἐβουφόρβουν ξένω,  
καὶ τόνδ' ἔσωζον οἶκον ἐς τόδ' ἡμέρας.  
ὅσιου γὰρ ἀνδρὸς ὅσιος ὦν ἐτύγχανον 10  
παιδὸς Φέρητος, ὃν θανεῖν ἐρρυσάμην,  
Μοίρας δολώσας· ἦνεσαν δέ μοι θεαὶ  
Ἄδμητον ἄδην τὸν παραυτίκ' ἐκφυγεῖν,  
ἄλλον διαλλάξαντα τοῖς κάτω νεκρόν.  
πάντας δ' ἐλέγξας καὶ διεξελθὼν φίλους, 15  
πατέρα γεραιάν θ' ἢ σφ' ἔτικτε μητέρα,  
οὐχ ἠῦρε πλὴν γυναικὸς ὅστις ἤθελε  
θανῶν πρὸ κείνου μηκέτ' εἰσορᾶν φάος·  
ἢ νῦν κατ' οἶκους ἐν χεροῖν βαστάζεται  
ψυχορραγοῦσα· τῆδε γὰρ σφ' ἐν ἡμέρα 20  
θανεῖν πέπρωται καὶ μεταστῆναι βίου.  
ἐγὼ δέ, μὴ μίασμά μ' ἐν δόμοις κίχη,

λείπω μελάθρων τῶνδε φιλτάτην στέγην.  
 ἤδη δὲ τόνδε Θάνατον εἰσορῶ πέλας,  
 ἱερῇ θανόντων, ὃς νιν εἰς Ἄιδου δόμους 25  
 μέλλει κατὰξειν· συμμέτρως δ' ἀφίκετο,  
 φρουρῶν τόδ' ἡμαρ ᾧ θανεῖν αὐτὴν χρεῶν.

## ΘΑΝΑΤΟΣ

ἄ ἄ·

τί σὺ πρὸς μελάθροις; τί σὺ τῆδε πολεῖς,  
 Φοῖβ'; ἀδικεῖς αὐτὸν τιμὰς ἐνέρων 30  
 ἀφοριζόμενος καὶ καταπαύων;  
 οὐκ ἤρκεσέ σοι μόρον Ἀδμήτου  
 διακωλύσαι, Μοίρας δολίῳ  
 σφήλαντι τέχνῃ; νῦν δ' ἐπὶ τῆδ' αὐτῷ  
 χέρα τοξήρη φρουρεῖς ὀπλίσας, 35  
 ἢ τόδ' ὑπέστη, πόσιν ἐκλύσασ'  
 αὐτὴ προθανεῖν Πελίου παῖς.

- ΑΠ. θάρσει· δίκην τοι καὶ λόγους κεδνοὺς ἔχω.  
 ΘΑ. τί δῆτα τόξων ἔργον, εἰ δίκην ἔχεις;  
 ΑΠ. σύνηθες αἰεὶ ταῦτα βαστάζειν ἐμοί. 40  
 ΘΑ. καὶ τοῖσδέ γ' οἴκοις ἐκδίκως προσωφελεῖν.  
 ΑΠ. φίλου γὰρ ἀνδρὸς συμφοραῖς βαρύνομαι.  
 ΘΑ. καὶ νοσφιεῖς με τοῦδε δευτέρου νεκροῦ;  
 ΑΠ. ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἐκεῖνον πρὸς βίαν σ' ἀφειλόμην.  
 ΘΑ. πῶς οὖν ὑπὲρ γῆς ἐστι κοῦ κάτω χθονός; 45  
 ΑΠ. δάμαρτ' ἀμείψας, ἦν σὺ νῦν ἤκεις μέτα.  
 ΘΑ. κάπάξομαί γε νερτέρων ὑπὸ χθόνα.  
 ΑΠ. λαβῶν ἴθ'· οὐ γὰρ οἶδ' ἂν εἰ πείσαιμί σε.  
 ΘΑ. κτείνειν γ' ὄν ἂν χρῆ; τοῦτο γὰρ τετάγμαθα.  
 ΑΠ. οὐκ, ἀλλὰ τοῖς μέλλουσι θάνατον ἐμβαλεῖν. 50  
 ΘΑ. ἔχω λόγον δὴ καὶ προθυμίαν σέθεν.  
 ΑΠ. ἔστ' οὖν ὅπως Ἄλκηστις ἐς γῆρας μόλοι;  
 ΘΑ. οὐκ ἔστι· τιμαῖς κάμὲ τέρπεσθαι δόκει.  
 ΑΠ. οὗτοι πλέον γ' ἂν ἢ μίαν ψυχὴν λάβοις.  
 ΘΑ. νέων φθινόντων μεῖζον ἄρνημαι γέρας. 55  
 ΑΠ. κὰν γραῦς ὄληται, πλουσίως ταφήσεται.  
 ΘΑ. πρὸς τῶν ἐχόντων, Φοῖβε, τὸν νόμον τίθης.  
 ΑΠ. πῶς εἴπας; ἀλλ' ἦ καὶ σοφὸς λέληθας ὦν;

- ΘΑ. ὠνοῖντ' ἄν οἷς πάρεστι γηραιούς θανεῖν.  
 ΑΠ. οὐκουν δοκεῖ σοι τήνδε μοι δοῦναι χάριν; 60  
 ΘΑ. οὐ δῆτ'· ἐπίστασαι δὲ τοὺς ἐμούς τροπούς.  
 ΑΠ. ἐχθρούς γε θνητοῖς καὶ θεοῖς στυγουμένους.  
 ΘΑ. οὐκ ἄν δύναιο πάντ' ἔχειν ἂ μὴ σε δεῖ.  
 ΑΠ. ἦ μὴν σὺ παύση καίπερ ὤμος ὦν ἄγαν·  
 τοῖος Φέρητος εἶσι πρὸς δόμους ἀνήρ,  
 Εὐρυσθέως πέμπσαντος ἵππειον μέτα  
 ὄχημα Θρήκης ἐκ τόπων δυσχειμέρων,  
 ὃς δὴ ξενωθείς τοῖσδ' ἐν Ἀδμήτου δόμοις  
 βία γυναικὰ τήνδε σ' ἐξαίρησεται. 65  
 κοῦθ' ἢ παρ' ἡμῶν σοι γενήσεται χάρις  
 δράσεις θ' ὁμοίως ταῦτ', ἀπεχθήσῃ τ' ἐμοί.  
 ΘΑ. πόλλ' ἄν σὺ λέξας οὐδὲν ἄν πλέον λάβοις·  
 ἦ δ' οὖν γυνὴ κάτεισιν εἰς Ἄιδου δόμους.  
 στεῖχω δ' ἐπ' αὐτήν, ὡς κατάρξωμαι ξίφει·  
 ἱερὸς γὰρ οὗτος τῶν κατὰ χθονὸς θεῶν  
 ὅτου τόδ' ἔγχος κρατὸς ἀγνίση τρίχα. 75

## PARODOS (77-135)

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

- τί ποθ' ἠσυχία πρόσθεν μελάθρων;
  - τί σεσίγηται δόμος Ἀδμήτου;
  - ἀλλ' οὐδὲ φίλων πέλας οὐδεῖς,
- ὅστις ἄν εἴποι πότερον φθιμένην 80  
 βασιλείαν πενθεῖν χρῆ <μ> ἢ ζῶσ' ἔτι  
 φῶς τότε λεύσσει Πελίου παῖς  
 Ἄλκηστις, ἐμοὶ πᾶσί τ' ἀρίστη  
 δόξασα γυνὴ  
 πόσιν εἰς αὐτῆς γεγενῆσθαι. 85
- Στρ. α'
- κλύει τις ἢ στεναγμὸν ἢ  
 χειρῶν κτύπον κατὰ στέγας  
 ἢ γόον ὡς πεπραγμένων;
  - οὐ μὰν οὐδέ τις ἀμφιπόλων

- στατίζεται ἀμφὶ πύλας. 90  
 εἰ γὰρ μετακύμιος ἄτας,  
 ὦ Παιῖαν, φανείης.  
 – οὐ τὰν φθιμένης γ' ἐσιώπων.  
 – νέκυς ἤδη.  
 – οὐ δὴ φροῦδος γ' ἐξ οἴκων.  
 – πόθεν; οὐκ ἀνχῶ. τί σε θαρσύνει; 95  
 – πῶς ἂν ἔρημον τάφον Ἄδμητος  
 κεδνῆς ἂν ἐπραξε γυναικός;
- Αντ. α΄  
 – πυλῶν πάροιθε δ' οὐχ ὀρῶ  
 πηγαῖον ὡς νομίζεται  
 χέρνιβ' ἐπὶ φθιτῶν πύλαις. 100  
 – χαίτα τ' οὔτις ἐπὶ προθύροις  
 τομαῖος, ἅ δὴ νεκύων  
 πένθει πίτνει, οὐ νεολαία  
 δουπεῖ χεῖρ γυναικῶν.  
 – καὶ μὴν τόδε κύριον ἦμαρ . . . 105  
 – τί τόδ' ἀυδῶς;  
 – ὦ χρῆ σφε μολεῖν κατὰ γαίας.  
 – ἔθιγες ψυχᾶς, ἔθιγες δὲ φρενῶν.  
 – χρῆ τῶν ἀγαθῶν διακναιομένων  
 πευθεῖν ὅστις 110  
 χρηστός ἀπ' ἀρχῆς νενόμισται.
- Στρ. β΄  
 – ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ναυκληρίαν  
 ἔσθ' ὅποι τις αἴας  
 στείλας, ἧ Λυκίαν 115  
 εἴτ' ἐπὶ τὰς ἀνύδρους  
 Ἄμμωνιάδας [ἔδρας],  
 δυστάνου παραλύσαι  
 ψυχᾶν· μόρος γὰρ ἀπότομος  
 πλάθει. θεῶν δ' ἐπ' ἐσχάrais  
 οὐκ ἔχω ἐπὶ τίνα 120  
 μηλοθύταν πορευθῶ.
- Αντ. β΄  
 – μόνος δ' ἂν, εἰ φῶς τόδ' ἦν

ὄμμασιν δεδορκῶς Φοίβου παῖς, προλιποῦσ' ἦλθεν ἔδρας σκοτίους	125
Ἄϊδα τε πύλας· δμαθέντας γὰρ ἀνίστη, πρὶν αὐτὸν εἶλε διόβολον πλήκτρον πυρὸς κεραυνίου.	130
νῦν δὲ τίν' ἔτι βίου ἐλπίδα προσδέχωμαι; – πάντα γὰρ ἤδη τετέλεσται βασιλεῦσι, πάντων δὲ θεῶν ἐπὶ βωμοῖς αἰμόρραντοι θυσίαι πλήρεις· οὐδ' ἔστι κακῶν ἄκος οὐδέν.	135

## FIRST EPISODE (136-212)

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

ἀλλ' ἦδ' ὀπαδῶν ἐκ δόμων τις ἔρχεται δακρυροῦσα. τίνα τύχην ἀκούσομαι; πενθεῖν μὲν, εἴ τι δεσπότηισι τυγχάνει, συγγνωστόν· εἰ δ' ἔτ' ἔστιν ἔμψυχος γυνή εἶτ' οὖν ὄλωλεν εἰδέναί βουλοίμεθ' ἄν.	140
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## ΘΕΡΑΠΙΑΝΑ

καὶ ζῶσαν εἰπεῖν καὶ θανοῦσαν ἔστι σοι.

ΧΟ. καὶ πῶς ἂν αὐτὸς καθάνοι τε καὶ βλέποι;	
ΘΕ. ἤδη προωπής ἔστι καὶ ψυχορραγεῖ.	
ΧΟ. ᾧ τλήμον, οἷας οἶος ὦν ἀμαρτάνεις.	
ΘΕ. οὐπω τόδ' οἶδε δεσπότης, πρὶν ἂν πάθῃ.	145
ΧΟ. ἐλπίς μὲν οὐκέτ' ἔστι σῶζεσθαι βίον;	
ΘΕ. πεπρωμένη γὰρ ἡμέρα βιάζεται.	
ΧΟ. οὐκουν ἐπ' αὐτῇ πράσσεται τὰ πρόσφορα;	
ΘΕ. κόσμος γ' ἔτοιμος, ᾧ σφε συνθάψει πόσις.	
ΧΟ. ἴστω νυν εὐκλεῆς γε καταθουμένη γυνή τ' ἀρίστη τῶν ὑφ' ἡλίῳ μακρῶ.	150
ΘΕ. πῶς δ' οὐκ ἀρίστη; τίς δ' ἐναντιώσεται; τί χρὴ γενέσθαι τὴν ὑπερβεβλημένην	

- γυναῖκα; πῶς δ' ἂν μᾶλλον ἐνδείξαιτό τις  
 πόσιν προτιμῶσ' ἢ θέλουσ' ὑπερθανεῖν; 155  
 καὶ ταῦτα μὲν δὴ πᾶσ' ἐπίσταται πόλις·  
 ἃ δ' ἐν δόμοις ἔδρασε θαυμάση κλύων.  
 ἐπεὶ γὰρ ἦσθεθ' ἡμέραν τὴν κυρίαν  
 ἤκουσαν, ὕδασι ποταμίοις λευκὸν χροᾶ  
 ἐλούσατ', ἐκ δ' ἐλούσα κεδρίνων δόμων 160  
 ἐσθῆτα κόσμον τ' εὐπρεπῶς ἤσκησατο,  
 καὶ στᾶσα πρόσθεν Ἐστίας κατηύξατο·  
*Δέσποιν', ἐγὼ γὰρ ἔρχομαι κατὰ χθονός,  
 πανύστατόν σε προσπίτνουσ' αἰτήσομαι,  
 τέκν' ὀρφανεῦσαι τάμά· καὶ τῷ μὲν φίλην 165  
 σύζευξον ἄλοχον, τῇ δὲ γενναῖον πόσιν.  
 μηδ' ὥσπερ αὐτῶν ἢ τεκοῦσ' ἀπόλλυμαι  
 θανεῖν ἄωρους παῖδας, ἀλλ' εὐδαίμονας  
 ἐν γῇ πατρώᾳ τερπνὸν ἐκπλήσαι βίον.*  
 πάντα δὲ βωμούς, οἱ κατ' Ἀδμήτου δόμους, 170  
 προσῆλθε κάξέστεψε καὶ προσηύξατο,  
 πτόρθων ἀποσχίζουσα μυρσίνης φόβην,  
 ἄκλαυτος ἀστένακτος, οὐδὲ τοῦπιόν  
 κακὸν μεθίστη χρωτὸς εὐειδῆ φύσιν.  
 κάπειτα θάλαμον ἐσπεσοῦσα καὶ λέχος, 175  
 ἐνταῦθα δὴ δάκρυσε καὶ λέγει τάδε·  
*᾿Ω λέκτρον, ἐνθα παρθένει' ἔλυσ' ἐγὼ  
 κορεύματ' ἐκ τοῦδ' ἀνδρός, οὐ θνήσκω πέρι,  
 χαῖρ'· οὐ γὰρ ἐχθαίρω σ'· ἀπώλεσας δέ με  
 μόνην· προδοῦναι γάρ σ' ὀκνοῦσα καὶ πόσιν 180  
 θνήσκω. σέ δ' ἄλλη τις γυνὴ κεκτῆσεται,  
 σώφρων μὲν οὐκ ἂν μᾶλλον, εὐτυχῆς δ' ἴσως.  
 κυνεῖ δὲ προσπίτνουσα, πᾶν δὲ δέμνιον  
 ὀφθαλμοτέγκτω δεύεται πλημμυρίδι.  
 ἐπεὶ δὲ πολλῶν δακρῶν εἶχεν κόρον, 185  
 στείχει προνωπῆς ἐκπεσοῦσα δεμνίων,  
 καὶ πολλὰ θαλάμων ἐξιοῦσ' ἐπεστράφη  
 κᾶρριπεν αὐτὴν αὐθις ἐς κοίτην πάλιν.  
 παῖδες δὲ πέπλων μητρὸς ἐξηρημένοι  
 ἔκλαιον· ἡ δὲ λαμβάνουσ' ἐς ἀγκάλας 190*

- ἤσπάζετ' ἄλλοτ' ἄλλον ὡς θανουμένη.  
 πάντες δ' ἔκλαιον οἰκέται κατὰ στέγας  
 δέσποιναν οἰκτίροντες, ἡ δὲ δεξιὰν  
 προὔτειν' ἐκάστω, κοῦτις ἦν οὕτω κακὸς  
 ὃν οὐ προσεῖπε καὶ προσερρήθη πάλιν. 195  
 τοιαῦτ' ἐν οἴκοις ἐστὶν Ἀδμήτου κακά.  
 καὶ κατθανῶν τᾶν ὄλετ', ἐκφυγῶν δ' ἔχει  
 τοσοῦτον ἄλγος, οὐ ποτ' οὐ λελήσεται.
- ΧΟ. ἡ που στενάζει τοισίδ' Ἀδμητος κακοῖς,  
 ἐσθλῆς γυναικὸς εἰ στερηθῆναί σφε χρή; 200
- ΘΕ. κλαίει γ' ἄκοιτιν ἐν χερσὶν φίλην ἔχων,  
 καὶ μὴ προδοῦναι λίσσεται, τάμηχανα  
 ζητῶν· φθίνει γὰρ καὶ μαραίνεται νόσω.  
 παρεμμένη δέ, χειρὸς ἄθλιον βάρος. 205  
 ὁμως δέ, καίπερ σμικρὸν, ἐμπνέουσ' ἔτι,  
 βλέψαι πρὸς αὐγὰς βούλεται τὰς ἡλίου  
 ὡς οὐποτ' αὐθις, ἀλλὰ νῦν πανύστατον  
 [ἀκτῖνα κύκλον θ' ἡλίου προσόψεται.]  
 ἀλλ' εἶμι καὶ σὴν ἀγγελῶ παρουσίαν·  
 οὐ γάρ τι πάντες εὖ φρονοῦσι κοιράνοις, 210  
 ὥστ' ἐν κακοῖσιν εὐμενεῖς παρεστάναι·  
 σὺ δ' εἰ παλαιὸς δεσπότηαις ἐμοῖς φίλος.

## FIRST STASIMON (213-237)

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

Στρ. α'

- ἰὼ Ζεῦ, τίς ἂν [πῶς] πᾶ πόρος κακῶν  
 γένοιτο καὶ λύσις τύχας  
 ἃ πάρεστι κοιράνοις;  
 – αἰαῖ· εἴσι τις; ἡ τέμω τρίχα, 215  
 καὶ μέλανα στολμὸν πέπλων  
 ἀμφιβαλώμεθ' ἤδη;  
 – δῆλα μὲν, φίλοι, δῆλὰ γ', ἀλλ' ὁμως  
 θεοῖσιν εὐχώμεσθα· θεῶν  
 γὰρ δύναμις μεγίστα.

- ὦναξ Παιάν, 220  
 ἔξευρε μηχανάν τιν' Ἀδμήτω κακῶν.  
 – πόριζε δὴ πόριζε· καὶ πάρος γὰρ  
 † τοῦδ' ἐφεύρες† καὶ νῦν  
 λυτήριος ἐκ θανάτου γενουῶ,  
 φόνιον δ' ἀπόπαυσον Ἄιδαν. 225
- Αντ. α΄  
 – παπαῖ . . . . .  
 ὦ παῖ Φέρητος, οἱ ἔπρα-  
 ξας δάμαρτος σᾶς στερείς.  
 – αἰαῖ· ἄξια καὶ σφαγᾶς τάδε,  
 καὶ πλέον ἢ βρόχῳ δέρην  
 οὐρανίῳ πελάσσαι; 230  
 – τὰν γὰρ οὐ φίλαν ἀλλὰ φιλτάταν  
 γυναῖκα καθθανοῦσαν ἐν  
 ἄματι τῶδ' ἐπόψη.  
 – ἰδοῦ ἰδοῦ,  
 ἦδ' ἐκ δόμων δὴ καὶ πόσις πορεύεται.  
 – βόασον ὦ στέναξον, ὦ Φεραῖα  
 χθῶν, τὰν ἀρίσταν 235  
 γυναῖκα μαραινομένην νόσω  
 κατὰ γᾶς χθόνιον παρ' Ἄιδαν.

## SECOND EPISODE (238-434)

### ΧΟΡΟΣ

- οὔποτε φήσω γάμον εὐφραίνειν  
 πλέον ἢ λυπεῖν, τοῖς τε πάροιθεν  
 τεκμαιρόμενος καὶ τάσδε τύχας 240  
 λεύσσω βασιλέως, ὅστις ἀρίστης  
 ἀπλακῶν ἀλόχου τῆσδ' ἀβίωτου  
 τὸν ἔπειτα χρόνον βιοτεύσει.

### ΑΛΚΗΣΤΙΣ

- Ἄλιε καὶ φάος ἀμέρας, Στρ.  
 οὐρανιάι τε δῖναι νεφέλας δρομαίου. 245

## ΑΔΜΗΤΟΣ

- ὄρᾱ σὲ κάμῃ, δύο κακῶς πεπραγότας,  
οὐδὲν θεοὺς δρᾶσαντας ἀνθ' ὄτου θανῆ.
- ΑΛ. γαῖᾱ τε καὶ μελάθρων στέγαι Αντ.  
νυμφίδιοι τε κοῖται πατρίας Ἴωλκοῦ.
- ΑΔ. ἔπαιρε σαντήν, ᾧ τάλαινα, μὴ προδῶς· 250  
λίσσου δὲ τοὺς κρατοῦντας οἰκτῖραι θεοὺς.
- ΑΛ. ὄρῳ δίκωπον ὄρῳ σκάφος ἐν λίμνᾳ· Στρ.  
νεκύων δὲ πορθμεὺς  
ἔχων χέρ' ἐπὶ κοντῷ Χάρων  
μ' ἤδη καλεῖ· *Τί μέλλεις;* 255  
*ἐπείγου· σὺ κατείργεις.* τάδε τοί με  
σπερχόμενος ταχύνει.
- ΑΔ. οἴμοι· πικρὰν γε τήνδε μοι ναυκληρίαν  
ἔλεξας. ᾧ δύσδαιμον, οἷα πάσχομεν.
- ΑΛ. ἄγει μ' ἄγει τις· ἄγει μέ τις—οὐχ ὄρᾱς;— Αντ.  
νεκύων ἔς ἀύλᾱν, 260  
ὑπ' ὀφρύσι κυαναυγέσι  
βλέπων, περωτὸς Ἄιδας.  
[μέθες με·] τί βέξεις; ἄφες. οἷαν ὁδὸν ἄ δει-  
λαιοτάτα προβαίνω.
- ΑΔ. οἰκτρὰν φίλοισιν, ἐκ δὲ τῶν μάλιστ' ἔμοι  
καὶ παισίν, οἷς δὴ πένθος ἐν κοινῷ τόδε. 265
- ΑΛ. μέθετε μέθετέ μ' ἤδη·  
κλίνατ', οὐ σθένω ποσίν.  
πλησίον Ἄιδας.  
σκοτία δ' ἐπ' ὄσσοισι νύξ ἐφέρπει.  
τέκνα τέκν', οὐκέτι δὴ 270  
οὐκέτι μάτηρ σφῶν ἔστιν.  
χαίροντες, ᾧ τέκνα, τόδε φάος ὄρῳτον.
- ΑΔ. οἴμοι· τόδ' ἔπος λυπρὸν ἀκούω  
καὶ παντὸς ἔμοι θανάτου μείζον.  
μὴ πρὸς <σε> θεῶν τλῆς με προδοῦναι, 275  
μὴ πρὸς παίδων οὖς ὀρφανειῖς,  
ἀλλ' ἄνα, τόλμα.  
σοῦ γὰρ φθιμένης οὐκέτ' ἂν εἶην·  
ἐν σοὶ δ' ἔσμεν καὶ ζῆν καὶ μῆ·

- σὴν γὰρ φιλίαν σεβόμεσθα.
- ΑΛ. Ἄδμηθ', ὄρας γὰρ τὰμὰ πράγμαθ' ὡς ἔχει, 280  
 λέξαι θέλω σοι πρὶν θανεῖν ἅ βούλομαι.  
 ἐγὼ σε πρεσβεύουσα κἀντὶ τῆς ἐμῆς  
 ψυχῆς καταστήσασα φῶς τόδ' εἰσορᾶν  
 θνήσκω, παρόν μοι μὴ θανεῖν ὑπὲρ σέθεν,  
 ἀλλ' ἄνδρα τε σχεῖν Θεσσαλῶν ὃν ἤθελον 285  
 καὶ δῶμα ναίειν ὄλβιον τυραννίδι.  
 οὐκ ἠθέλησα ζῆν ἀποσπασθεῖσά σου  
 σὺν παισὶν ὀρφανοῖσιν, οὐδ' ἐφείσάμην  
 ἥβης, ἔχουσ' ἐν οἷς ἕτερπόμεν ἐγώ.  
 καίτοι σ' ὁ φύσας χῆ τεκοῦσα προὔδοσαν, 290  
 καλῶς μὲν αὐτοῖς καθθανεῖν ἦκον βίου,  
 καλῶς δὲ σῶσαι παῖδα κεῦκλεῶς θανεῖν.  
 μόνος γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἦσθα, κοῦτις ἐλπίς ἦν  
 σοῦ καθθανόντος ἄλλα φιτύσειν τέκνα.  
 κάγώ τ' ἂν ἔζων καὶ σὺ τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον, 295  
 κούκ ἂν μονωθεὶς σῆς δάμαρτος ἔστενες  
 καὶ παῖδας ὀρφάνευες. ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν  
 θεῶν τις ἐξέπραξεν ὥσθ' οὕτως ἔχειν.  
 εἶεν· σὺ νῦν μοι τῶνδ' ἀπόμνησαι χάριν·  
 αἰτήσομαι γὰρ σ' ἀξίαν μὲν οὔποτε· 300  
 (ψυχῆς γὰρ οὐδέν ἐστι τιμιώτερον)  
 δίκαια δ', ὡς φήσεις σύ· τούσδε γὰρ φιλεῖς  
 οὐχ ἦσσον ἢ ἴγῳ παῖδας, εἶπερ εὖ φρονεῖς·  
 τούτους ἀνάσχου δεσπότης ἐμῶν δόμων  
 καὶ μὴ ἴπιγῆμης τοῖσδε μητρυιᾶν τέκνοις, 305  
 ἦτις κακίων οὔσ' ἐμοῦ γυνὴ φθόνῳ  
 τοῖς σοῖσι κάμοις παισὶ χεῖρα προσβαλεῖ.  
 μὴ δῆτα δράσης ταῦτά γ', αἰτοῦμαι σ' ἐγώ.  
 ἔχθρα γὰρ ἢ ἴπιούσα μητρυιᾶ τέκνοις  
 τοῖς πρόσθ', ἐχίδνης οὐδὲν ἠπιωτέρα. 310  
 καὶ παῖς μὲν ἄρσην πατέρ' ἔχει πύργον μέγαν  
 [ὃν καὶ προσεῖπε καὶ προσερρήθη πάλιν.]  
 σὺ δ', ὧ τέκνον μοι, πῶς κορευθήσῃ καλῶς;  
 ποίας τυχοῦσα συζύγου τῷ σῷ πατρί;  
 μὴ σοὶ τιν' αἰσχρὰν προσβαλοῦσα κληδόνα 315

- ἦβης ἐν ἀκμῇ σοὺς διαφθείρη γάμους.  
 οὐ γάρ σε μήτηρ οὔτε νυμφεύσει ποτὲ  
 οὔτ' ἐν τόκοισι σοῖσι θαρσυνεῖ, τέκνον,  
 παρούσ', ἴν' οὐδὲν μητρός εὐμενέστερον.  
 δεῖ γὰρ θανεῖν με· καὶ τόδ' οὐκ ἐς αὔριον 320  
 οὐδ' ἐς τρίτην μοι μηνὸς ἔρχεται κακόν,  
 ἀλλ' αὐτίκ' ἐν τοῖς οὐκέτ' οὔσι λέξομαι.  
 χαίροντες εὐφραίνοισθε· καὶ σοὶ μὲν, πόσι,  
 γυναῖκ' ἀρίστην ἔστι κομπάσαι λαβεῖν,  
 ὑμῖν δέ, παῖδες, μητρός ἐκπεφυκέναι. 325
- ΧΟ. θάρσει· πρὸ τούτου γὰρ λέγειν οὐχ ἄζομαι·  
 δράσει τάδ', εἶπερ μὴ φρενῶν ἀμαρτάνει.
- ΑΔ. ἔσται τάδ' ἔσται, μὴ τρέσης· ἐπεὶ σ' ἐγὼ  
 καὶ ζῶσαν εἶχον, καὶ θανοῦσ' ἐμὴ γυνὴ  
 μόνη κεκλήση, κοῦτις ἀντὶ σοῦ ποτε 330  
 τόνδ' ἄνδρα νύμφη Θεσσαλὶς προσφθέγγεται.  
 οὐκ ἔστιν οὕτως οὔτε πατρός εὐγενοῦς  
 οὔτ' εἶδος ἄλλως ἐκπρεπεστάτη γυνή.  
 ἄλλῃ δὲ παίδων· τῶνδ' ὄνησιν εὐχομαι  
 θεοῖς γενέσθαι· σοῦ γὰρ οὐκ ὠνήμεθα. 335  
 οἴσω δὲ πένθος οὐκ ἐτήσιον τὸ σόν,  
 ἀλλ' ἔστ' ἂν αἰῶν οὐμὸς ἀντέχη, γύναι,  
 στυγῶν μὲν ἢ μ' ἔτικτεν, ἐχθαίρων δ' ἐμόν  
 πατέρα· λόγῳ γὰρ ἦσαν οὐκ ἔργῳ φίλοι.  
 σὺ δ' ἀντιδοῦσα τῆς ἐμῆς τὰ φίλτατα 340  
 ψυχῆς ἔσωσας. ἄρά μοι στένειν πάρα  
 τοιαῦσδ' ἀμαρτάνονται συζύγου σέθεν;  
 παύσω δὲ κώμους συμποτῶν θ' ὁμιλίας  
 στεφάνους τε μουσάν θ' ἢ κατεῖχ' ἐμοὺς δόμους.  
 οὐ γάρ ποτ' οὔτ' ἂν βαρβίτου θίγοιμ' ἔτι 345  
 οὔτ' ἂν φρέν' ἐξαίροιμι πρὸς Λίβυν λακεῖν  
 αὐλόν· σὺ γὰρ μου τέρψιν ἐξείλου βίου.  
 σοφῇ δὲ χειρὶ τεκτόνων δέμας τὸ σόν  
 εἰκασθὲν ἐν λέκτροισιν ἐκταθήσεται,  
 ᾧ προσπεσοῦμαι καὶ περιπτύσσων χέρας 350  
 ὄνομα καλῶν σόν τὴν φίλην ἐν ἀγκάλαις  
 δόξω γυναῖκα καίπερ οὐκ ἔχων ἔχειν·

- ψυχράν μέν, οἶμαι, τέρψιν, ἀλλ' ὅμως βάρος  
 ψυχῆς ἀπαντλοίην ἄν. ἐν δ' ὄνειρασι  
 φοιτῶσά μ' εὐφραίνοις ἄν· ἡδὺ γὰρ φίλους 355  
 κὰν νυκτὶ λεύσσειν, ὄντιν' ἄν παρῆι χρόνον.  
 εἰ δ' Ὀρφέως μοι γλῶσσα καὶ μέλος παρῆν,  
 ὥστ' ἡ κόρην Δήμητρος ἡ κείνης πόσιν  
 ὕμνοισι κηλήσαντά σ' ἐξ Ἄιδου λαβεῖν,  
 κατῆλθον ἄν, καὶ μ' οὐθ' ὁ Πλούτωνος κύων 360  
 οὐθ' οὐπὶ κώπη ψυχοπομπὸς ἄν Χάρων  
 ἔσχον, πρὶν ἐς φῶς σὸν καταστήσαι βίον.  
 ἀλλ' οὖν ἐκεῖσε προσδόκα μ', ὅταν θάνω,  
 καὶ δῶμ' ἐτοίμαζ', ὡς συνοικήσουσά μοι.  
 ἐν ταῖσιν αὐταῖς γὰρ μ' ἐπισκήψω κέδροις 365  
 σοὶ τούσδε θεῖναι πλευρά τ' ἐκτεῖναι πέλας  
 πλευροῖσι τοῖς σοῖς· μηδὲ γὰρ θανῶν ποτε  
 σοῦ χωρὶς εἶην τῆς μόνης πιστῆς ἐμοί.  
 ΧΟ. καὶ μὴν ἐγὼ σοι πένθος ὡς φίλος φίλω  
 λυπρὸν συνοίσω τῆσδε· καὶ γὰρ ἀξία. 370  
 ΑΛ. ὦ παῖδες, αὐτοὶ δὴ τάδ' εἰσηκούσατε  
 πατρὸς λέγοντος μὴ γαμεῖν ἄλλην ποτὲ  
 γυναῖκ' ἐφ' ὑμῖν μηδ' ἀτιμάσειν ἐμέ.  
 ΑΔ. καὶ νῦν γέ φημι καὶ τελευτήσω τάδε.  
 ΑΛ. ἐπὶ τοῖσδε παῖδας χειρὸς ἐξ ἐμῆς δέχου. 375  
 ΑΔ. δέχομαι, φίλον γε δῶρον ἐκ φίλης χερὸς.  
 ΑΛ. σύ νυν γενοῦ τοῖσδ' ἀντ' ἐμοῦ μήτηρ τέκνοις.  
 ΑΔ. πολλή μ' ἀνάγκη, σοῦ γ' ἀπεστερημένοις.  
 ΑΛ. ὦ τέκν', ὅτε ζῆν χρῆν μ', ἀπέρχομαι κάτω.  
 ΑΔ. οἶμοι, τί δράσω δῆτα σοῦ μονούμενος; 380  
 ΑΛ. χρόνος μαλάξει σ'· οὐδέν ἐσθ' ὁ κατθανῶν.  
 ΑΔ. ἄγου με σὺν σοί, πρὸς θεῶν, ἄγου κάτω.  
 ΑΛ. ἀρκοῦμεν ἡμεῖς οἱ προθνήσκοντες σέθεν.  
 ΑΔ. ὦ δαῖμον, οἴας συζύγου μ' ἀποστερεῖς.  
 ΑΛ. καὶ μὴν σκοτεινὸν ὄμμα μου βαρύνεται. 385  
 ΑΔ. ἀπωλόμην ἄρ', εἴ με δὴ λείψεις, γύναι.  
 ΑΛ. ὡς οὐκέτ' οὔσαν οὐδέν ἄν λέγοις ἐμέ.  
 ΑΔ. ὄρθου πρόσωπον, μὴ λίπης παῖδας σέθεν.  
 ΑΛ. οὐ δῆθ' ἐκοῦσά γ', ἀλλὰ χαίρειτ', ὦ τέκνα.

- ΑΔ. βλέπον πρὸς αὐτούς, βλέπον. ΑΔ. οὐδέν εἴμ' ἔτι. 390
- ΑΔ. τί δρᾶς; προλείπεις; ΑΔ. χαῖρ'. ΑΔ. ἀπωλόμην  
τάλας.
- ΧΟ. βέβηκεν, οὐκέτ' ἔστιν Ἄδμητου γυνή.
- ΠΑΙΣ ἰὼ μοι τύχας. μαῖα δὴ κάτω Στρ.  
βέβακεν, οὐκέτ' ἔστιν, ὦ  
πάτερ, ὑφ' ἀλίω. 395  
προλιποῦσα δ' ἄμὸν  
βίον ὠρφάνισσε τλάμων.  
ἴδε γὰρ ἴδε βλέφαρον καὶ παρατόνους χέρας.  
ὑπάκουσον ἄκουσον, ὦ μάτερ, ἀντιάζω. 400  
ἐγὼ σ' ἐγὼ, μάτερ,  
καλοῦμαί σ' ὁ σὸς ποτὶ σοῖσι πίτ-  
των στόμασιν νεοσσός.
- ΑΔ. τὴν οὐ κλύουσαν οὐδ' ὀρώσαν· ὥστ' ἐγὼ  
καὶ σφῶ βαρεῖα συμφορᾶ πεπλήγμεθα. 405
- ΠΑ. νέος ἐγὼ, πάτερ, λείπομαι φίλας Αντ.  
μονόστολός τε ματρός· ὦ  
σχέτλια δὴ παθῶν  
ἐγὼ ἔργα . . .  
σύ τέ μοι σύγκασι κούρα 410  
συνέτλας . . . ὦ πάτερ,  
ἀνόνατ' ἀνόνατ' ἐνύμφευσας, οὐδὲ γήρωσ  
ἔβας τέλος σὺν τᾶδ'·  
ἔφθιτο γὰρ πάρος· οἰχομένας δὲ σοῦ,  
μάτερ, ὄλωλεν οἶκος. 415
- ΧΟ. Ἄδμητ', ἀνάγκη τάσδε συμφορὰς φέρειν·  
οὐ γὰρ τι πρῶτος οὐδὲ λοίσθιος βροτῶν  
γυναικὸς ἐσθλῆς ἤμπλακες· γίγνωσκε δὲ  
ὡς πᾶσιν ἡμῖν κατθανεῖν ὀφείλεται.
- ΑΔ. ἐπίσταμαί γε, κοῦκ ἄφνω κακὸν τόδε 420  
προσέπτατ'· εἰδὼς δ' αὐτ' ἔτειρόμην πάλαι.  
ἀλλ', ἐκφορὰν γὰρ τοῦδε θήσομαι νεκροῦ,  
πάρεστε καὶ μένοντες ἀντηχήσατε  
παιᾶνα τῷ κάτωθεν ἀσπόνδῳ θεῷ.  
πᾶσιν δὲ Θεσσαλοῖσιν ὧν ἐγὼ κρατῶ 425  
πένθους γυναικὸς τῆσδε κοινοῦσθαι λέγω

κουρᾶ ξυρήκει καὶ μελαμπέπλω στολῆ·  
 τέθριππά θ' οἱ ζεύγυσθε καὶ μονάμπυκας  
 πώλους, σιδήρῳ τέμνετ' αὐχένων φόβην.  
 αὐλῶν δὲ μὴ κατ' ἄστῳ, μὴ λύρας κτύπος 430  
 ἔστω σελήνας δώδεκ' ἐκπληρουμένας.  
 οὐ γάρ τιν' ἄλλον φίλτερον θάψω νεκρὸν  
 τοῦδ' οὐδ' ἀμείνον' εἰς ἔμ'· ἀξία δέ μοι  
 τιμῆς, ἐπεὶ τέθνηκεν ἀντ' ἐμοῦ μόνη.

SECOND STASIMON (435-475)

ΧΟΡΟΣ

Στρ. α'

ὦ Πελίου θύγατερ, 435  
 χαίρουσά μοι εἶν' Αἶδαο δόμοις  
 τὸν ἀνάλιον οἶκον οἰκετεύοις.  
 ἴστω δ' Αἶδας ὁ μελαγχαίτας θεὸς ὃς τ' ἐπὶ κώπῃ  
 πηδαλίῳ τε γέρων 440  
 νεκροπομπὸς ἵζει  
 πολὺ δὴ πολὺ δὴ γυναικ' ἀρίσταν  
 λίμναν Ἀχεροντίαν πορεύ-  
 σας ἐλάτῃ δικώπῳ.

Αντ. α'

πολλά σε μουσοπόλοι 445  
 μέλψουσι καθ' ἐπτάτονόν τ' ὀρεΐαν  
 χέλυν ἔν τ' ἀλύροις κλέοντες ὕμνοις,  
 Σπάρτα κύκλος ἀνίκα Καρνείου περινίσσεται ὥρας  
 μηνός, ἀειρομένας 450  
 παννύχου σελάνας,  
 λιπαράϊσί τ' ἐν ὀλβίαις Ἀθάναις.  
 τοίαν ἔλιπες θανοῦσα μολ-  
 πᾶν μελέων ἀοιδοῖς.

Στρ. β'

εἴθ' ἐπ' ἐμοὶ μὲν εἶη, 455  
 δυνάϊμαν δέ σε πέμψαι  
 φάος ἐξ Αἶδα τεράμνων

καὶ Κωκυτοῖο ρεέθρων  
 ποταμῖα νερτέρᾳ τε κώπα.  
 σὺ γάρ, ὦ μόνα ὦ φίλα γυναικῶν, 460  
 σὺ τὸν αὐτᾶς  
 ἔτλας πόσιν ἀντὶ σᾶς ἀμείψαι  
 ψυχᾶς ἐξ Ἄϊδα. κούφα σοι  
 χθῶν ἐπάνωθε πέσοι, γύνοι. εἰ δέ τι  
 καινὸν ἔλοιτο πόσις λέχος, ἦ μάλ' ἂν ἔμοιγ' ἂν εἶη  
 στυγηθεὶς τέκνοις τε τοῖς σοῖς. 465

Αντ. β'

ματέρος οὐ θελούσας  
 πρὸ παιδὸς χθονὶ κρύψαι  
 δέμας, οὐδὲ πατρὸς γεραίου  
 ὄν ἔτεκον δ', οὐκ ἔτλαν ρύεσθαι,  
 σχετλίῳ, πολιᾶν ἔχοντε χαίταν. 470  
 σὺ δ' ἐν ἤβᾳ  
 νέᾳ προθανοῦσα φωτὸς οἴχη.  
 τοιαύτας εἶη μοι κῦρσαι  
 συνδυσάδος φιλίας ἀλόχου, τοῦτο γὰρ  
 ἐν βιότῳ σπάνιον μέρος· ἦ γὰρ ἂν ἔμοιγ' ἄλυπος  
 δι' αἰῶνος ἂν ξυνεῖη. 475

### THIRD EPISODE (476-567)

ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ

ξένοι, Φεραίας τῆσδε κωμῆται χθονός,  
 Ἄδμητον ἐν δόμοισιν ἄρα κιγχάνω;  
 ΧΟ. ἔστ' ἐν δόμοισι παῖς Φέρητος, Ἡράκλεις.  
 ἀλλ' εἶπέ χρεῖα τίς σε Θεσσαλῶν χθόνα  
 πέμπει, Φεραῖον ἄστυ προσβῆναι τόδε. 480  
 ΗΡ. Τιρυνηθίῳ πράσσω τιν' Εὐρυσθεὶ πόνον.  
 ΧΟ. καὶ ποῖ πορεύῃ; τῷ προσέξευξαι πλάνω;  
 ΗΡ. Θρηγκὸς τέτρωρον ἄρμα Διομήδους μέτα.  
 ΧΟ. πῶς οὖν δυνησῇ; μῶν ἄπειρος εἶ ξένου;  
 ΗΡ. ἄπειρος· οὐπω Βιστόνων ἦλθον χθόνα. 485

- ΧΟ. οὐκ ἔστιν ἵππων δεσπόσαι σ' ἄνευ μάχης.  
 ΗΡ. ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἀπειπεῖν μὴν πόνους οἶόν τ' ἐμοί.  
 ΧΟ. κτανῶν ἄρ' ἤξεις ἢ θανῶν αὐτοῦ μενεῖς.  
 ΗΡ. οὐ τόνδ' ἀγῶνα πρῶτον ἂν δράμοιμ' ἐγώ.  
 ΧΟ. τί δ' ἂν κρατήσας δεσπότην πλέον λάβοις; 490  
 ΗΡ. πῶλους ἀπάξω κοιράνω Τιρυνθίω.  
 ΧΟ. οὐκ εὐμαρὲς χαλινὸν ἐμβαλεῖν γνάθοις.  
 ΗΡ. εἰ μὴ γε πῦρ πνέουσι μυκτῆρων ἄπο.  
 ΧΟ. ἀλλ' ἄνδρας ἀρταμοῦσι λαιψηραῖς γνάθοις.  
 ΗΡ. θηρῶν ὀρειῶν χόρτον, οὐχ ἵππων, λέγεις. 495  
 ΧΟ. φάτνας ἴδοις ἂν αἵμασιν πεφυρμένας.  
 ΗΡ. τίνος δ' ὁ θρέψας παῖς πατρὸς κομπάζεται;  
 ΧΟ. Ἄρεος, ζαχρύσου Θρηκίας πέλτης ἀναξ.  
 ΗΡ. καὶ τόνδε τοῦμοῦ δαίμονος πόνον λέγεις·  
 σκληρὸς γὰρ αἰεὶ καὶ πρὸς αἶπος ἔρχεται, 500  
 εἰ χρὴ με παισὶν οἷς Ἄρης ἐγείνατο  
 μάχην συνάψαι, πρῶτα μὲν Λυκάονι,  
 αὐθις δὲ Κύκνω, τόνδε δ' ἔρχομαι τρίτον  
 ἀγῶνα πῶλοις δεσπότη τε συμβαλῶν.  
 ἀλλ' οὔτις ἔστιν ὃς τὸν Ἀλκμήνης γόνον 505  
 τρέσαντα χεῖρα πολεμίαν ποτ' ὄψεται.  
 ΧΟ. καὶ μὴν ὄδ' αὐτὸς τῆσδε κοίρανος χθονὸς  
 Ἄδμητος ἔξω δωματίων πορεύεται.  
 ΑΔ. χαῖρ', ὦ Διὸς παῖ Περσέως τ' ἀφ' αἵματος.  
 ΗΡ. Ἄδμητε, καὶ σὺ χαῖρε, Θεσσαλῶν ἀναξ. 510  
 ΑΔ. θέλοιμ' ἂν· εὖνον δ' ὄντα σ' ἐξεπίσταμαι.  
 ΗΡ. τί χρῆμα κουρᾷ τῆδε πενθίμῳ πρέπεις;  
 ΑΔ. θάπτειν τιν' ἐν τῆδ' ἡμέρᾳ μέλλω νεκρόν.  
 ΗΡ. ἀπ' οὖν τέκνων σῶν πημονὴν εἶργοι θεός.  
 ΑΔ. ζῶσιν κατ' οἴκους παῖδες οὓς ἔφυσ' ἐγώ. 515  
 ΗΡ. πατήρ γε μὴν ὠραῖος, εἵπερ οἴχεται.  
 ΑΔ. κάκεῖνος ἔστι χῆ τεκοῦσά μ', Ἡράκλεις.  
 ΗΡ. οὐ μὴν γυνή γ' ὄλωλεν Ἄλκηστις σέθεν;  
 ΑΔ. διπλοῦς ἐπ' αὐτῇ μῦθος ἔστι μοι λέγειν.  
 ΗΡ. πότερα θανούσης εἵπας ἢ ζώσης ἔτι; 520  
 ΑΔ. ἔστιν τε κούκέτ' ἔστιν, ἀλγύνει δ' ἐμέ.  
 ΗΡ. οὐδέν τι μᾶλλον οἶδ'· ἄσημα γὰρ λέγεις.

- ΑΔ. οὐκ οἶσθα μοίρας ἧς τυχεῖν αὐτήν χρεών;  
 ΗΡ. οἶδ', ἀντὶ σοῦ γε κατθανεῖν ὑφειμένην.  
 ΑΔ. πῶς οὖν ἔτ' ἔστιν, εἵπερ ἦνεσεν τάδε; 525  
 ΗΡ. ἄ, μὴ πρόκλαι' ἄκοιτιν, ἐς τότ' ἀμβαλοῦ.  
 ΑΔ. τέθνηχ' ὁ μέλλων κούκέτ' ἔσθ' ὁ κατθανών.  
 ΗΡ. χωρὶς τό τ' εἶναι καὶ τὸ μὴ νομίζεται.  
 ΑΔ. σὺ τῆδε κρίνεις, Ἡράκλεις, κείνη δ' ἐγώ.  
 ΗΡ. τί δῆτα κλαίεις; τίς φίλων ὁ κατθανών; 530  
 ΑΔ. γυνή· γυναικὸς ἀρτίως μεμνήμεθα.  
 ΗΡ. ὀθνεῖος ἢ σοὶ συγγενῆς γεγῶσά τις;  
 ΑΔ. ὀθνεῖος, ἄλλως δ' ἦν ἀναγκαῖα δόμοις.  
 ΗΡ. πῶς οὖν ἐν οἴκοις σοῖσιν ὤλεσεν βίον;  
 ΑΔ. πατρὸς θανόντος ἐνθάδ' ὠρφανεύετο. 535  
 ΗΡ. φεῦ.  
 εἶθ' ἠϋρομέν σ', Ἄδμητε, μὴ λυπούμενον.  
 ΑΔ. ὡς δὴ τί δράσων τόνδ' ὑπορράπτεις λόγον;  
 ΗΡ. ξένων πρὸς ἄλλων ἐστίαν πορεύσομαι.  
 ΑΔ. οὐκ ἔστιν, ὦναξ· μὴ τοσόνδ' ἔλθοι κακόν.  
 ΗΡ. λυπούμενοις ὀχληρός, εἰ μόλοι, ξένος. 540  
 ΑΔ. τεθνᾶσιν οἱ θανόντες· ἀλλ' ἴθ' ἐς δόμους.  
 ΗΡ. αἰσχρὸν παρὰ κλαίουσι θοινᾶσθαι ξένους.  
 ΑΔ. χωρὶς ξενῶνές εἰσιν οἱ σ' ἐσάξομεν.  
 ΗΡ. μέθεσ με καὶ σοὶ μυρίαν ἐξω χάριν.  
 ΑΔ. οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλου σ' ἀνδρὸς ἐστίαν μολεῖν. 545  
 ἠγοῦ σὺ τῶδε δωμάτων ἐξωπίους  
 ξενῶνας οἷξας τοῖς τ' ἐφεστῶσιν φράσον  
 σίτων παρεῖναι πλήθος· εὖ δὲ κλήσατε  
 θύρας μεσαύλους· οὐ πρέπει θοινωμένους  
 κλύειν στεναγμῶν οὐδὲ λυπεῖσθαι ξένους. 550  
 ΧΟ. τί δρᾶς; τοιαύτης συμφορᾶς προκειμένης,  
 Ἄδμητε, τολμᾶς ξενοδοκεῖν; τί μῶρος εἶ;  
 ΑΔ. ἀλλ' εἰ δόμων σφε καὶ πόλεως ἀπήλασα  
 ξένον μολόντα, μᾶλλον ἂν μ' ἐπήνεσας;  
 οὐ δῆτ', ἐπεὶ μοι συμφορὰ μὲν οὐδὲν ἂν 555  
 μείων ἐγίγνετ', ἀξενώτερος δ' ἐγώ.  
 καὶ πρὸς κακοῖσιν ἄλλο τοῦτ' ἂν ἦν κακόν,  
 δόμους καλεῖσθαι τοὺς ἐμοὺς ἐχθροξένους.

- αὐτὸς δ' ἀρίστου τοῦδε τυγχάνω ξένου,  
 ὅταν ποτ' Ἄργους διψίαν ἔλθω χθόνα. 560
- ΧΟ. πῶς οὖν ἔκρυπτες τὸν παρόντα δαίμονα,  
 φίλου μολόντος ἀνδρὸς, ὡς αὐτὸς λέγεις;
- ΑΔ. οὐκ ἂν ποτ' ἠθέλησεν εἰσελθεῖν δόμους,  
 εἰ τῶν ἐμῶν τι πημάτων ἐγνώρισε.  
 καὶ τῷ μὲν, οἶμαι, δρῶν τάδ' οὐ φρονεῖν δοκῶ 565  
 οὐδ' αἰνέσει με· τὰμὰ δ' οὐκ ἐπίσταται  
 μέλαθρ' ἀπωθεῖν οὐδ' ἀτιμάζειν ξένους.

### THIRD STASIMON (568-605)

#### ΧΟΡΟΣ

##### Στρ. α'

ὦ πολύξεινος καὶ ἐλεύθερος ἀνδρὸς αἰεὶ ποτ' οἶκος,  
 σέ τοι καὶ ὁ Πύθιος εὐλύρας Ἀπόλλων 570  
 ἠξίωσε ναίειν,  
 ἔτλα δὲ σοῖσι μηλονόμας  
 ἐν δόμοις γενέσθαι,  
 δοχμιᾶν διὰ κλιτύων 575  
 βοσκήμασι σοῖσι συρίζων  
 ποιμνίτας ὑμεναίους.

##### Αντ. α'

σὺν δ' ἐποιμαίνοντο χαρᾷ μελέων βαλῖαι τε λύγκες,  
 ἔβα δὲ λιποῦσ' Ὄθρυος νάπαν λεόντων 580  
 ἃ δαφεινὸς ἴλα·  
 χόρευσε δ' ἀμφὶ σάν κιθάραν,  
 Φοῖβε, ποικιλόθριξ  
 νεβρὸς ὑψικόμων πέραν 585  
 βαίνουσ' ἔλατᾶν σφυρῶ κούφῳ,  
 χαίρουσ' εὐφροني μολπᾶ.

##### Στρ. β'

τοιγὰρ πολυμηλοτάταν  
 ἐστῖαν οἰκειῖς παρὰ καλλίναον  
 Βοιβίαν λίμναν. ἀρότοις δὲ γυνᾶν 590  
 καὶ πεδίων δαπέδοις ὄρον ἀμφὶ μὲν

ἀελίου κνεφαίαν  
 ἵππόστασιν αἰθέρα τὰν Μολοσσῶν . . . τίθεται,  
 πόντιον δ' Αἰγαῖον ἐπ' ἀκτᾶν 595  
 ἀλίμενον Πηλίου κρατύνει.

Αντ. β'

καὶ νῦν δόμον ἀμπετάσας  
 δέξατο ξεῖνον νοτερῶ βλεφάρῳ,  
 τᾶς φίλας κλαίων ἀλόχου νέκυν ἐν  
 δώμασιν ἀρτιθανῆ· τὸ γὰρ εὐγενὲς 600  
 ἐκφέρεται πρὸς αἰδῶ.  
 ἐν τοῖς ἀγαθοῖσι δὲ πάντ' ἐνεστὶν σοφίας. ἄγαμαι.  
 πρὸς δ' ἐμᾶ ψυχᾶ θάρσος ἦσται  
 θεοσεβῆ φῶτα κεδνὰ πράξειν. 605

#### FOURTH EPISODE (606-961)

ΑΔ. ἀνδρῶν Φεραίων εὐμενῆς παρουσία,  
 νέκυν μὲν ἤδη πάντ' ἔχοντα πρόσπολοι  
 φέρουσιν ἄρδην πρὸς τάφον τε καὶ πυράν·  
 ὑμεῖς δὲ τὴν θανοῦσαν, ὡς νομίζεται,  
 προσείπατ' ἐξιούσαν ὑστάτην ὁδόν. 610

ΧΟ. καὶ μὴν ὄρῳ σὸν πατέρα γηραιῶ ποδι  
 στείχοντ', ὀπαδούς τ' ἐν χερσὶν δάμαρτι σῆ  
 κόσμον φέροντας, νερτέρων ἀγάλματα.

ΦΕΡΗΣ

ἦκω κακοῖσι σοῖσι συγκάμνων, τέκνον·  
 ἐσθλῆς γάρ, οὐδεὶς ἀντερεῖ, καὶ σώφρονος 615  
 γυναικὸς ἡμάρτηκας. ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν  
 φέρειν ἀνάγκη καίπερ ὄντα δύσφορα.  
 δέχου δὲ κόσμον τόνδε, καὶ κατὰ χθονὸς  
 ἴτω. τὸ ταύτης σῶμα τιμᾶσθαι χρεῶν,  
 ἥτις γε τῆς σῆς προύθανε ψυχῆς, τέκνον, 620  
 καὶ μ' οὐκ ἄπαιδ' ἔθηκεν οὐδ' εἶασε σοῦ  
 στερέντα γήρα πενθίμῳ καταφθίνειν,  
 πάσαις δ' ἔθηκεν εὐκλεέστερον βίον  
 γυναιξίν, ἔργον τλᾶσα γενναῖον τόδε.

- ὦ τόνδε μὲν σώσασ', ἀναστήσασα δὲ 625  
 ἡμᾶς πίτνοντας, χαῖρε, κὰν Ἄιδου δόμοις  
 εὖ σοι γένοιτο. φημὶ τοιούτους γάμους  
 λύειν βροτοῖσιν ἢ γαμεῖν οὐκ ἄξιον.
- ΑΔ. οὐτ' ἦλθες ἐς τόνδ' ἐξ ἑμοῦ κληθεὶς τάφον  
 οὐτ' ἐν φίλοισι σὴν παρουσίαν λέγω. 630  
 κόσμον δὲ τὸν σὸν οὐποθ' ἦδ' ἐνδύσεται.  
 οὐ γὰρ τι τῶν σῶν ἐνδεῆς ταφήσεται.  
 τότε ξυναλγεῖν χρῆν σ' ὅτ' ὠλλύμην ἐγώ.  
 σὺ δ' ἐκποδῶν στάς καὶ παρεις ἄλλω θανεῖν  
 νέω γέρων ὦν, τόνδ' ἀποιμῶξη νεκρόν; 635  
 οὐκ ἦσθ' ἄρ' ὀρθῶς τοῦδε σώματος πατήρ;  
 οὐδ' ἢ τεκεῖν φάσκουσα καὶ κεκλημένη  
 μήτηρ μ' ἔτικτε; δουλίου δ' ἀφ' αἵματος  
 μαστῶ γυναικὸς σῆς ὑπεβλήθην λάθρα;  
 ἔδειξας εἰς ἔλεγχον ἐξελθὼν ὃς εἶ, 640  
 καὶ μ' οὐ νομίζω παῖδα σὸν πεφυκέναι.  
 ἦ τᾶρα πάντων διαπρέπεις ἀψυχία,  
 ὃς τηλικόσδ' ὦν κάπῃ τέρμ' ἦκων βίου  
 οὐκ ἠθέλησας οὐδ' ἐτόλμησας θανεῖν  
 τοῦ σοῦ πρὸ παιδός, ἀλλὰ τήνδ' εἰάσατε 645  
 γυναικ' ὀθνεῖαν, ἣν ἐγὼ καὶ μητέρα  
 πατέρα τέ γ' ἐνδίκως ἂν ἠγοίμην μόνην.  
 καίτοι καλόν γ' ἂν τόνδ' ἀγῶν' ἠγωνίσω,  
 τοῦ σοῦ πρὸ παιδός καταθανών, βραχὺς δέ σοι  
 πάντως ὁ λοιπὸς ἦν βιώσιμος χρόνος. 650  
 [κάγώ τ' ἂν ἔζων χῆδε τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον,  
 κούκ ἂν μονωθεὶς ἔστενον κακοῖς ἑμοῖς.]  
 καὶ μὴν ὅσ' ἄνδρα χρῆ παθεῖν εὐδαίμονα  
 πέπονθας· ἤβησας μὲν ἐν τυραννίδι,  
 παῖς δ' ἦν ἐγὼ σοι τῶνδε διάδοχος δόμων, 655  
 ὥστ' οὐκ ἄτεκνος καταθανὼν ἄλλοις δόμον  
 λείψειν ἔμελλες ὀρφανὸν διαρπάσαι.  
 οὐ μὴν ἐρεῖς γέ μ' ὡς ἀτιμάζοντα σὸν  
 γῆρας θανεῖν προὔδωκας, ὅστις αἰδόφρων  
 πρὸς σ' ἦ μάλιστα· κἀντὶ τῶνδέ μοι χάριν 660  
 τοιάνδε καὶ σὺ χῆ τεκοῦσ' ἠλλαξάτην.

- τοιγὰρ φυτεύων παῖδας οὐκέτ' ἄν φθάνοις,  
 οἱ γηροβοσκήσουσι καὶ θανόντα σε  
 περιστελοῦσι καὶ προθήσονται νεκρόν.  
 οὐ γὰρ σ' ἔγωγε τῆδ' ἐμῆ θάψω χερί· 665  
 τέθνηκα γὰρ δὴ τοῦπι σέ· εἰ δ' ἄλλου τυχῶν  
 σωτῆρος ἀγῶας εἰσορῶ, κείνου λέγω  
 καὶ παῖδά μ' εἶναι καὶ φίλον γηροτρόφον.  
 μάτην ἄρ' οἱ γέροντες εὐχονται θανεῖν,  
 γῆρας ψέγοντες καὶ μακρὸν χρόνον βίου· 670  
 ἦν δ' ἐγγὺς ἔλθῃ θάνατος, οὐδεὶς βούλεται  
 θνήσκειν, τὸ γῆρας δ' οὐκέτ' ἔστ' αὐτοῖς βαρύ.
- ΧΟ. παύσασθ'· ἄλις γὰρ ἡ παροῦσα συμφορά·  
 ᾧ παῖ, πατὴρ δὲ μὴ παροξύνῃς φρένας.
- ΦΕ. ᾧ παῖ, τίν' αὐχεῖς πότερα Λυδὸν ἢ Φρύγα 675  
 κακοῖς ἐλαύνειν ἀργυρώνητον σέθεν;  
 οὐκ οἶσθα Θεσσαλὸν με κάπὸ Θεσσαλοῦ  
 πατὴρ γεγῶτα γνησίως ἐλεύθερον;  
 ἄγαν ὑβρίζεις, καὶ νεανίας λόγους  
 ῥίπτων ἐς ἡμᾶς οὐ βαλὼν οὕτως ἄπει. 680  
 ἐγὼ δέ σ' οἴκων δεσπότην ἐγεινάμην  
 κάθρεψ', ὀφείλω δ' οὐχ ὑπερθνήσκειν σέθεν·  
 οὐ γὰρ πατῶν τόνδ' ἐδεξάμην νόμον,  
 παίδων προθνήσκειν πατέρα, οὐδ' Ἑλληνικόν.  
 σαυτῶ γὰρ εἶτε δυστυχῆς εἶτ' εὐτυχῆς 685  
 ἔφυς· ἅ δ' ἡμῶν χρῆν σε τυγχάνειν ἔχεις.  
 πολλῶν μὲν ἄρχεις, πολυπλήθρους δέ σοι γῶας  
 λείψω· πατὴρ γὰρ ταῦτ' ἐδεξάμην πάρα.  
 τί δήτά σ' ἠδίκηκα; τοῦ σ' ἀποστερῶ;  
 μὴ θνήσχ' ὑπὲρ τοῦδ' ἀνδρός, οὐδ' ἐγὼ πρὸ σοῦ. 690  
 χαίρεις ὄρων φῶς· πατέρα δ' οὐ χαίρειν δοκεῖς;  
 ἦ μὴν πολὺν γε τὸν κάτω λογίζομαι  
 χρόνον, τὸ δὲ ζῆν μικρὸν ἄλλ' ὅμως γλυκύ.  
 σὺ γοῦν ἀναιδῶς διεμάχου τὸ μὴ θανεῖν  
 καὶ ζῆς παρελθὼν τὴν πεπρωμένην τύχην, 695  
 ταύτην κατακτάς· εἶτ' ἐμὴν ἀψυχίαν  
 λέγεις, γυναικός, ᾧ κάκισθ', ἡσσημένος,  
 ἢ τοῦ καλοῦ σοῦ προὔθανεν νεανίου;

- σοφῶς δ' ἔφηῦρες ὥστε μὴ θανεῖν ποτε,  
εἰ τὴν παροῦσαν κατθανεῖν πείσεις ἀεὶ 700  
γυναῖχ' ὑπὲρ σοῦ· κᾶτ' ὄνειδίζεις φίλοις  
τοῖς μὴ θέλουσι δρᾶν τάδ', αὐτὸς ὦν κακός;  
σίγα. νόμιζε δ', εἰ σὺ τὴν σαυτοῦ φιλεῖς  
ψυχὴν, φιλεῖν ἅπαντας· εἰ δ' ἡμᾶς κακῶς  
ἔρεῖς, ἀκούσῃ πολλὰ κού ψευδῆ κακά. 705
- ΧΟ. πλείω λέλεκται νῦν τε καὶ τὰ πρὶν κακά·  
παῦσαι δέ, πρέσβυ, παῖδα σὸν κακορροθῶν.
- ΑΔ. λέγ', ὡς ἐμοῦ λέξαντος· εἰ δ' ἀλγείς κλύων  
τάληθές, σὺ χρῆν σ' εἰς ἔμ' ἐξαμαρτάνειν.
- ΦΕ. σοῦ δ' ἂν προθνήσκων μᾶλλον ἐξημάρτανον. 710
- ΑΔ. ταῦτόν γάρ ἦβῶντ' ἄνδρα καὶ πρέσβυν θανεῖν;  
ΦΕ. ψυχῆ μιᾶ ζῆν, σὺ δυοῖν, ὀφείλομεν.  
ΑΔ. καὶ μὴν Διός γε μείζονα ζώης χρόνον.  
ΦΕ. ἀρᾶ γονεῦσιν οὐδὲν ἔκδικον παθῶν;  
ΑΔ. μακροῦ βίου γὰρ ἡσθόμην ἐρῶντά σε. 715  
ΦΕ. ἀλλ' οὐ σὺ νεκρὸν ἀντὶ σοῦ τόνδ' ἐκφέρεις;  
ΑΔ. σημεία τῆς σῆς, ὦ κάκιστ', ἀψυχίας.  
ΦΕ. οὔτοι πρὸς ἡμῶν γ' ὄλετ'· οὐκ ἔρεῖς τόδε.  
ΑΔ. φεῦ·  
εἴθ' ἀνδρὸς ἔλθοις τοῦδέ γ' ἐς χρεῖαν ποτέ.
- ΦΕ. μνήστευε πολλάς, ὡς θάνωσι πλείονες. 720  
ΑΔ. σοὶ τοῦτ' ὄνειδος· οὐ γὰρ ἠθελες θανεῖν.  
ΦΕ. φίλον τὸ φέγγος τοῦτο τοῦ θεοῦ, φίλον.  
ΑΔ. κακὸν τὸ λῆμα κούκ ἐν ἀνδράσιν τὸ σόν.  
ΦΕ. οὐκ ἐγγελᾶς γέροντα βαστάζων νεκρόν.  
ΑΔ. θανῆ γε μέντοι δυσκλεθῆς, ὅταν θάνης. 725  
ΦΕ. κακῶς ἀκούειν σὺ μέλει θανόντι μοι.  
ΑΔ. φεῦ φεῦ· τὸ γῆρας ὡς ἀναιδεΐας πλέων.  
ΦΕ. ἦδ' οὐκ ἀναιδῆς· τήνδ' ἔφηῦρες ἀφρονα.  
ΑΔ. ἄπελθε κάμὲ τόνδ' ἕα θάψαι νεκρόν.  
ΦΕ. ἄπειμι· θάψεις δ' αὐτὸς ὦν αὐτῆς φονεύς, 730  
δίκας δὲ δώσεις σοῖσι κηδεσταῖς ἔτι.  
ἦ τᾶρ' Ἄκαστος οὐκέτ' ἔστ' ἐν ἀνδράσιν,  
εἰ μὴ σ' ἀδελφῆς αἷμα τιμωρήσεται.  
ΑΔ. ἔρρων νυν αὐτὸς χῆ ξυνοικήσασά σοι,

- ἄπαιδε παιδὸς ὄντος, ὥσπερ ἄξιοι, 735  
 γηράσκειτ'· οὐ γὰρ τῶδ' ἔτ' ἐς ταύτων στέγος  
 νεῖσθ'· εἰ δ' ἀπειπεῖν χρῆν με κηρύκων ὑπο  
 τήν σήν πατρώαν ἐστίαν, ἀπείπον ἄν.  
 ἡμεῖς δέ, τούν ποσιν γὰρ οἰστέον κακόν,  
 στείχωμεν, ὡς ἄν ἐν πυρᾷ θῶμεν νεκρόν. 740
- XO. ἰὼ ἰώ. σχετλία τόλμης,  
 ὦ γενναία καὶ μέγ' ἀρίστη,  
 χαῖρε· πρόφρων σε χθόνιός θ' Ἑρμῆς  
 Ἄιδης τε δέχοιτ'. εἰ δέ τι κάκει  
 πλέον ἔστ' ἀγαθοῖς, τούτων μετέχουσ'  
 Ἄιδου νύμφη παρεδρεύεις. 745

## ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ

- πολλοὺς μὲν ἤδη κάπο παντοίας χθονὸς  
 ξένους μολόντας οἶδ' ἐς Ἀδμήτου δόμους,  
 οἷς δεῖπνα προὔθηκ'. ἀλλὰ τοῦδ' οὐπω ξένου  
 κακίον' ἐς τήνδ' ἐστίαν ἐδεξάμην. 750
- ὃς πρῶτα μὲν πενθοῦντα δεσπότην ὄρων  
 ἐσῆλθε κάτόλμησ' ἀμείψασθαι πύλας.  
 ἔπειτα δ' οὔτι σωφρόνως ἐδέξατο  
 τὰ προστυχόντα ξένια, συμφορὰν μαθῶν,  
 ἀλλ', εἴ τι μὴ φέροισιν, ὠτρυνεν φέρειν. 755
- ποτήρα δ' ἐν χεῖρεσσι κίσσινον λαβὼν  
 πίνει μελαίνης μητρὸς εὐζωρον μέθυ,  
 ἕως ἐθέρμην' αὐτὸν ἀμφιβᾶσα φλόξ  
 οἴνου. στέφει δὲ κρᾶτα μυρσίνης κλάδοις,  
 ἄμους' ὑλακτῶν· δισσὰ δ' ἦν μέλη κλύειν· 760
- ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἦδε, τῶν ἐν Ἀδμήτου κακῶν  
 οὐδὲν προτιμῶν, οἰκέται δ' ἐκλαίομεν  
 δέσποιναν, ὄμμα δ' οὐκ ἐδείκνυμεν ξένω  
 τέγγοντες· Ἀδμητος γὰρ ὦδ' ἐφίετο.  
 καὶ νῦν ἐγὼ μὲν ἐν δόμοισιν ἐστιῶ 765  
 ξένον, πανοῦργον κλῶπα καὶ ληστήν τινα,  
 ἢ δ' ἐκ δόμων βέβηκεν, οὐδ' ἐφespoμένη  
 οὐδ' ἐξέτεινα χεῖρ' ἀποιμώζων ἐμήν  
 δέσποιναν, ἢ μοὶ πᾶσί τ' οἰκέταισιν ἦν

- μήτηρ· κακῶν γὰρ μυρίων ἔρρύτεο, 770  
 ὄργας μαλάσσοις ἀνδρός. ἄρα τὸν ξένον  
 στυγῶ δικαίως, ἐν κακοῖς ἀφιγμένον;
- HP. οὗτος, τί σεμνὸν καὶ πεφροντικὸς βλέπεις;  
 οὐ χρὴ σκυθρωπὸν τοῖς ξένοις τὸν πρόσπολον  
 εἶναι, δέχεσθαι δ' εὐπροσηγόρῳ φρενί. 775  
 σὺ δ' ἀνδρ' ἐταῖρον δεσπότην παρόνθ' ὄρων  
 στυγνῶ προσώπῳ καὶ συνωφρωμένῳ  
 δέχῃ, θυραίου πῆματος σπουδὴν ἔχων.  
 δεῦρ' ἔλθ', ὅπως ἂν καὶ σοφώτερος γένη.  
 τὰ θνητὰ πράγματ' οἶδας ἢν ἔχει φύσιν; 780  
 οἶμαι μὲν οὐ· πόθεν γάρ; ἀλλ' ἄκουέ μου.  
 βροτοῖς ἅπασιν καταθανεῖν ὀφείλεται,  
 κούκ ἔστι θνητῶν ὅστις ἐξεπίσταται  
 τὴν αὔριον μέλλουσαν εἰ βιώσεται·  
 τὸ τῆς τύχης γὰρ ἀφανὲς οἷ προβήσεται, 785  
 κᾶστ' οὐ διδακτὸν οὐδ' ἀλίσκεται τέχνη.  
 ταῦτ' οὖν ἀκούσας καὶ μαθὼν ἐμοῦ πάρα  
 εὐφραίνε σαυτὸν, πῖνε, τὸν καθ' ἡμέραν  
 βίον λογίζου σόν, τὰ δ' ἄλλα τῆς τύχης.  
 τίμα δὲ καὶ τὴν πλεῖστον ἡδίστην θεῶν 790  
 Κύπριν βροτοῖσιν· εὐμενῆς γὰρ ἡ θεός.  
 τὰ δ' ἄλλ' ἔασον ταῦτα καὶ πιθοῦ λόγοις  
 ἐμοῖσιν, εἶπερ ὀρθά σοι δοκῶ λέγειν;  
 οἶμαι μὲν. οὐκ οὖν τὴν ἄγαν λύπην ἀφείεις  
 πῆ μεθ' ἡμῶν, τάσδ' ὑπερβαλὼν τύχας, 795  
 στεφάνοις πυκασθεῖς; καὶ σάφ' οἶδ' ὀθούνεκα  
 τοῦ νῦν σκυθρωποῦ καὶ ξυνεστῶτος φρενῶν  
 μεθορμιεῖ σε πίτυλος ἐμπροσθῶν σκύφου.  
 ὄντας δὲ θνητοὺς θνητὰ καὶ φρονεῖν χρεῶν·  
 ὡς τοῖς γε σεμνοῖς καὶ συνωφρωμένοις 800  
 ἅπασιν ἔστιν, ὡς γ' ἐμοὶ χρῆσθαι κριτῇ,  
 οὐ βίος ἀληθῶς ὁ βίος ἀλλὰ συμφορά.
- ΘΕ. ἐπιστάμεσθα ταῦτα· νῦν δὲ πράσσομεν  
 οὐχ οἷα κώμου καὶ γέλωτος ἄξια.
- HP. γυνὴ θυραῖος ἡ θανούσα· μὴ λίσαν 805  
 πένθει· δόμων γὰρ ζῶσι τῶνδε δεσπότηαι.

- ΘΕ. τί ζῶσιν; οὐ κάτοισθα τὰν δόμοις κακά;  
 ΗΡ. εἰ μή τι σός με δεσπότης ἐψεύσατο.  
 ΘΕ. ἄγαν ἐκεῖνός ἐστ' ἄγαν φιλόξενος.  
 ΗΡ. οὐ χρῆν μ' ὀθνείου γ' οὔνεκ' εὖ πάσχειν νεκροῦ; 810  
 ΘΕ. ἦ κάρτα μέντοι καὶ λίαν θυραῖος ἦν.  
 ΗΡ. μῶν ξυμφορὰν τιν' οὔσαν οὐκ ἔφραζέ μοι;  
 ΘΕ. χαίρων ἴθ' ἡμῖν δεσποτῶν μέλει κακά.  
 ΗΡ. ὄδ' οὐ θυραίων πημάτων ἄρχει λόγος.  
 ΘΕ. οὐ γάρ τι κωμάζοντ' ἂν ἠχθόμην σ' ὀρών. 815  
 ΗΡ. ἀλλ' ἦ πέπονθα δεῖν ὑπὸ ξένων ἐμῶν;  
 ΘΕ. οὐκ ἦλθες ἐν δέοντι δέξασθαι δόμοις.  
 πένθος γὰρ ἡμῖν ἐστι· καὶ στολμοὺς βλέπεις  
 μελαμπέπλους κουράν τε. ΗΡ. τίς δ' ὁ κατθανών;  
 μῶν ἢ τέκνων τι φροῦδον ἢ γέρων πατήρ; 820  
 ΘΕ. γυνὴ μὲν οὖν ὄλωλεν Ἀδμήτου, ξένη.  
 ΗΡ. τί φῆς; ἔπειτα δῆτά μ' ἐξενίζετε;  
 ΘΕ. ἦδεῖτο γάρ σε τῶνδ' ἀπώσασθαι δόμων.  
 ΗΡ. ὦ σχέτλι', οἴας ἡμπλακες ξυναόρου.  
 ΘΕ. ἀπωλόμεσθα πάντες, οὐ κείνη μόνη. 825  
 ΗΡ. ἀλλ' ἦσθόμην μὲν ὄμμ' ἰδὼν δακρυρροοῦν  
 κουράν τε καὶ πρόσωπον· ἀλλ' ἔπειθέ με  
 λέγων θυραῖον κῆδος ἐς τάφον φέρειν.  
 βία δὲ θυμοῦ τάσδ' ὑπερβαλῶν πύλας  
 ἔπινον ἀνδρὸς ἐν φιλοξένου δόμοις 830  
 πράσσοντος οὕτω. κᾶτ' ἐκώμαζον κάρα  
 στεφάνοις πυκασθείς; ἀλλὰ σοῦ τὸ μὴ φράσαι,  
 κακοῦ τοσοῦτου δώμασιν προκειμένου.  
 ποῦ καὶ σφε θάπτει; ποῦ νιν εὐρήσω μολών;  
 ΘΕ. ὀρθὴν παρ' οἶμον ἢ πῖ Λάρισαν φέρει 835  
 τύμβον κατόψη ξεστὸν ἐκ προαστίου.  
 ΗΡ. ὦ πολλὰ τλᾶσα καρδία καὶ χεῖρ ἐμή,  
 νῦν δεῖξον οἶον παῖδά σ' ἢ Τιρυνθία  
 Ἥλεκτρύωνος γείνατ' Ἀλκμήνη Δί.  
 δεῖ γάρ με σῶσαι τὴν θανούσαν ἀρτίως 840  
 γυνᾶϊκα κὰς τόνδ' αὖθις ἰδρῦσαι δόμον  
 Ἄλκηστιν Ἀδμήτῳ θ' ὑπουργῆσαι χάριν.  
 ἐλθὼν δ' ἀνακτα τὸν μελάμπεπλον νεκρῶν

Θάνατον φυλάξω, καί νιν εὐρήσειν δοκῶ  
 πίνοντα τύμβου πλησίον προσφαγμάτων. 845  
 κᾶνπερ λοχαίας αὐτόν ἐξ ἔδρας συθείς  
 μάρψω, κύκλον δὲ περιβάλω χεροῖν ἐμαῖν,  
 οὐκ ἔστιν ὅστις αὐτόν ἐξαίρησεται  
 μογοῦντα πλευρά, πρὶν γυναῖκ' ἐμοὶ μεθῆ.  
 ἦν δ' οὖν ἀμάρτω τῆσδ' ἄγρας καὶ μὴ μόλη 850  
 πρὸς αἵματηρὸν πέλανον, εἶμι τῶν κάτω  
 Κόρης Ἄνακτός τ' εἰς ἀνηλίους δόμους  
 αἰτήσομαί τε· καὶ πέποιθ' ἄξειν ἄνω  
 Ἄλκηστιν, ὥστε χερσὶν ἐνθεῖναι ξένου,  
 ὅς μ' ἐς δόμους ἐδέξατ' οὐδ' ἀπήλασε, 855  
 καίπερ βαρεῖα συμφορᾶ πεπληγμένος,  
 ἔκρυπτε δ' ὦν γενναῖος, αἶδεσθεὶς ἐμέ.  
 τίς τοῦδε μᾶλλον Θεσσαλῶν φιλόξενος,  
 τίς Ἑλλάδ' οἰκῶν; τοιγὰρ οὐκ ἔρει κακὸν  
 εὐεργετῆσαι φῶτα γενναῖος γεγῶς. 860

ΑΔ. ἰώ, στυγναὶ  
 πρόσοδοι, στυγναὶ δ' ὄψεις χήρων  
 μελάθρων. ἰώ μοί μοι. αἰαῖ.  
 ποῖ βῶ; ποῖ στῶ; τί λέγω; τί δὲ μή;  
 πῶς ἂν ὀλοίμαν;  
 ἦ βαρυδαίμονα μήτηρ μ' ἔτεκεν. 865  
 ζηλῶ φθιμένους, κείνων ἔραμαι,  
 κεῖν' ἐπιθυμῶ δώματα ναίειν.  
 οὔτε γὰρ ἀύγας χαίρω προσορῶν  
 οὔτ' ἐπὶ γαίας πόδα πεζεύων·  
 τοῖον ὀμηρὸν μ' ἀποσυλήσας 870  
 Ἄϊδη Θάνατος παρέδωκεν.

Στρ. α'

ΧΟ.

- πρόβα, πρόβα· βᾶθι κεῦθος οἰκων. ΑΔ. αἰαῖ.
- πέπονθαξ ἄξι' αἰαγμάτων. ΑΔ. ἐ ἔ.
- δι' ὀδύνας ἔβας, σάφ' οἶδα. ΑΔ. φεῦ φεῦ.
- τὰν νέρθε δ' οὐδὲν ὠφελεῖς. ΑΔ. ἰώ μοί μοι. 875
- τὸ μήποτ' εἰσιδεῖν φιλίας ἀλόχου

- πρόσωπον ἄντα λυπρόν.  
 ΑΔ. ἔμνησας ὃ μου φρένας ἤλκωσεν·  
 τί γὰρ ἀνδρὶ κακὸν μείζον ἀμαρτεῖν  
 πιστῆς ἀλόχου; μὴ ποτε γήμας 880  
 ὄφελον οἰκεῖν μετὰ τῆσδε δόμους.  
 ζηλῶ δ' ἀγάμους ἀτέκνους τε βροτῶν·  
 μία γὰρ ψυχὴ, τῆς ὑπεραλγεῖν  
 μέτριον ἄχθος·  
 παίδων δὲ νόσους καὶ νυμφιδίους 885  
 εὐνάς θανάτοις κεραιζομένας  
 οὐ τλητὸν ὄραν, ἐξὸν ἀτέκνους  
 ἀγάμους τ' εἶναι διὰ παντός.
- Αντ. α'  
 ΧΟ. – τύχα τύχα δυσπάλαιστος ἦκει. ΑΔ. αἰαί.  
 – πέρας δέ γ' οὐδὲν ἀλγέων τίθης. ΑΔ. ἔ. ἔ. 890  
 – βαρέα μὲν φέρειν, ὅμως δὲ. . . ΑΔ. φεῦ φεῦ.  
 – τλᾶθ'· οὐ σὺ πρῶτος ὄλεσας. . . ΑΔ. ἰὼ μοί μοι.  
 – γυναικῶν· συμφορὰ δ' ἑτέρους ἑτέρα  
 πιέζει φανείσα θνατῶν.
- ΑΔ. ὦ μακρὰ πένθη λῦπαί τε φίλων 895  
 τῶν ὑπὸ γαῖαν.  
 τί μ' ἐκάλυσας ῥῖψαι τύμβου  
 τάφρον ἐς κοίλην καὶ μετ' ἐκείνης  
 τῆς μέγ' ἀρίστης κείσθαι φθίμενον;  
 δύο δ' ἀντὶ μιᾶς Ἄιδης ψυχᾶς 900  
 τὰς πιστοτάτας σὺν ἄν ἔσχεν, ὁμοῦ  
 χθονίαν λίμνην διαβάντε.
- Στρ. β'  
 ΧΟ. ἐμοί τις ἦν  
 ἐν γένει, ᾧ κόρος ἀξιόθρηνος  
 ὄλετ' ἐν δόμοισιν 905  
 μονόπαις· ἀλλ' ἔμπας  
 ἔφερε κακὸν ἄλις, ἄτεκνος ὢν,  
 πολιὰς ἐπὶ χαίτας  
 ἦδη προπετῆς ὢν  
 βίотου τε πόρσω. 910
- ΑΔ. ὦ σχῆμα δόμων, πῶς εἰσέλθω;

πῶς δ' οἰκήσω, μεταπίπτοντος  
 δαίμονος; οἴμοι. πολὺ γὰρ τὸ μέσον·  
 τότε μὲν πεύκαις σὺν Πηλιάσιν 915  
 σὺν θ' ὑμεναίοις ἔστειχον ἔσω  
 φιλίας ἀλόχου χέρα βαστάζων,  
 πολυάχητος δ' εἶπετο κῶμος  
 τήν τε θανοῦσαν κᾶμ' ὀλβίζων  
 ὡς εὐπατρίδαι καὶ ἀπ' ἀμφοτέρων 920  
 ὄντες ἀρίστων σύζυγες εἴμεν·  
 νῦν δ' ὑμεναίων γόος ἀντίπαλος  
 λευκῶν τε πέπλων μέλανες στολμοὶ  
 πέμπουσί μ' ἔσω  
 λέκτρων κοίτας ἐς ἐρήμους. 925

Αντ. β'

ΧΟ. παρ' εὐτυχῇ  
 σοὶ πότμον ἦλθεν ἀπειροκάκῳ τόδ'  
 ἄλγος· ἀλλ' ἔσωσας  
 βίοτον καὶ ψυχάν.  
 ἔθανε δάμαρ, ἔλιπε φιλίαν· 930  
 τί νέον τόδε; πολλοῖς  
 ἤδη παρέλυσεν  
 θάνατος δάμαρτας.

ΑΔ. φίλοι, γυναικὸς δαίμον' εὐτυχέστερον 935  
 τούμου νομίζω, καίπερ οὐ δοκοῦνθ' ὅμως.  
 τῆς μὲν γὰρ οὐδὲν ἄλγος ἄψεται ποτε,  
 πολλῶν δὲ μόχθων εὐκλεῆς ἐπαύσατο.  
 ἐγὼ δ', ὄν οὐ χρῆν ζῆν, παρὲς τὸ μόρσιμον  
 λυπρὸν διάξω βίοτον· ἄρτι μανθάνω. 940  
 πῶς γὰρ δόμων τῶνδ' εἰσόδους ἀνέξομαι;  
 τίν' ἂν προσειπῶν, τοῦ δὲ προσρηθεὶς ὑπο  
 τερπνῆς τύχοιμ' ἂν εἰσόδου; ποῖ τρέψομαι;  
 ἢ μὲν γὰρ ἐνδον ἐξελαῖ μ' ἐρημία,  
 γυναικὸς εὐνάς εὐτ' ἂν εἰσίδω κενὰς 945  
 θρόνους τ' ἐν οἷσιν ἴξε, καὶ κατὰ στέγας  
 αὐχμηρὸν οὔδας, τέκνα δ' ἀμφὶ γούνασι  
 πίπτοντα κλαίῃ μητέρ', οἱ δὲ δεσπότην  
 στένωσιν οἶαν ἐκ δόμων ἀπώλεσαν.

τὰ μὲν κατ' οἴκους τοιάδ'· ἔξωθεν δέ με 950  
 γάμοι τ' ἐλῶσι Θεσσαλῶν καὶ ξύλλογοι  
 γυναικοπληθεῖς· οὐ γὰρ ἐξανέξομαι  
 λεύσσων δάμαρτος τῆς ἐμῆς ὁμήλικας.  
 ἐρεῖ δέ μ' ὅστις ἐχθρὸς ὦν κυρεῖ τάδε·  
*Ἴδοῦ τὸν αἰσχροῦς ζῶνθ', ὃς οὐκ ἔτλη θανεῖν,* 955  
*ἀλλ' ἦν ἐγγημεν ἀντιδούς ἀψυχία*  
*πέφευγεν Ἄιδην· εἴτ' ἀνὴρ εἶναι δοκεῖ;*  
*στρυγεῖ δέ τοὺς τεκόντας, αὐτὸς οὐ θέλων*  
*θανεῖν.* τοιάνδε πρὸς κακοῖσι κληδόνα  
 ἔξω. τί μοι ζῆν δῆτα κέρδιον, φίλοι, 960  
 κακῶς κλύονται καὶ κακῶς πεπραγότει;

## FOURTH STASIMON (962-1005)

## ΧΟΡΟΣ

Στρ. α'

ἐγὼ καὶ διὰ μούσας  
 καὶ μετάρσιος ἦξα καὶ  
 πλείστων ἀψάμενος λόγων  
 κρεῖσσον οὐδὲν Ἀνάγκας 965  
 ἠῦρον οὐδέ τι φάρμακον  
 Θρήσσαις ἐν σανίσιν, τὰς  
 Ὀρφεῖα κατέγραψεν

γῆρυς, οὐδ' ὄσα Φοῖβος Ἀσκληπιάδαις ἔδωκε 970  
 φάρμακα πολυπόνοις ἀντιτεμῶν βροτοῖσιν.

Αντ. α'

μόνας δ' οὐτ' ἐπὶ βωμοὺς  
 ἔστιν οὔτε βρέτας θεᾶς  
 ἔλθεῖν, οὐ σφαγίων κλύει. 975  
 μή μοι, πότνια, μείζων  
 ἔλθοις ἢ τὸ πρὶν ἐν βίῳ.  
 καὶ γὰρ Ζεὺς ὃ τι νεύσῃ  
 σὺν σοὶ τοῦτο τελευτᾷ.

καὶ τὸν ἐν Χαλύβοις δαμάζεις σὺ βία σίδαρον, 980  
 οὐδέ τις ἀποτόμου λήματός ἐστιν αἰδώς.

Στρ. β'

καὶ σ' ἐν ἀφύκτοισι χερῶν εἶλε θεὰ δεσμοῖς.  
τόλμα δ'· οὐ γὰρ ἀνάξεις ποτ' ἔνερθεν 985  
κλαίων τοὺς φθιμένους ἄνω.

καὶ θεῶν σκότιοι φθίνουσι  
παῖδες ἐν θανάτῳ. 990

φίλα μὲν ὅτ' ἦν μεθ' ἡμῶν,  
φίλα δὲ θανούσ' <ἔτ'> ἔσται,  
γενναιοτάταν δὲ πασᾶν ἐξεύξω κλισίαις ἄκοιτιν.

Αντ. β'

μηδὲ νεκρῶν ὡς φθιμένων χῶμα νομιζέσθω 995  
τύμβος σᾶς ἀλόχου, θεοῖσι δ' ὁμοίως  
τιμάσθω, σέβας ἐμπόρων.

καὶ τις δοχμίαν κέλευθον 1000  
ἐκβαίνων τόδ' ἔρει·

*Αὐτὰ ποτὲ προύθαν' ἀνδρός,*

*νῦν δ' ἐστὶ μάκαιρα δαίμων·*

*χαῖρ', ᾧ πότνι, εὐ δὲ δοίης.* τοῖαί νιν προσερούσι  
φῆμαι. 1005

## ΕΧΟΔΟΣ (1006-1163)

ΧΟ. καὶ μὴν ὄδ', ὡς ἔοικεν, Ἄλκμηνης γόνος,  
Ἄδμητε, πρὸς σὴν ἐστίαν πορεύεται.

ΗΡ. φίλον πρὸς ἄνδρα χρὴ λέγειν ἐλευθέρως,  
Ἄδμητε, μομφὰς δ' οὐχ ὑπὸ σπλάγχνοις ἔχειν 1010  
σιγῶντ'. ἐγὼ δὲ σοῖς κακοῖσιν ἠξίου

ἐγγυὺς παρεστῶς ἐξετάζεσθαι φίλος·

σὺ δ' οὐκ ἔφραζες σῆς προκείμενον νέκυν  
γυναικός, ἀλλὰ μ' ἐξένιζες ἐν δόμοις,  
ὡς δὴ θυραίου πῆματος σπουδὴν ἔχων.

κᾶστεψα κρᾶτα καὶ θεοῖς ἐλειψάμην 1015

σπονδάς ἐν οἴκοις δυστυχοῦσι τοῖσι σοῖς.

καὶ μέμφομαι μὲν, μέμφομαι, παθῶν τάδε,  
οὐ μὴν σε λυπεῖν ἐν κακοῖσι βούλομαι.

ὦν δ' οὐνεχ' ἦκω δεῦρ' ὑποστρέψας πάλιν  
λέξω. γυναικὰ τήνδε μοι σῶσον λαβῶν, 1020

- ἕως ἂν ἵππους δεῦρο Θρηκίας ἄγων  
 ἔλθω, τύραννον Βιστόνων κατακτανών.  
 πράξας δ' ὃ μὴ τύχοιμι—νοστήσασιν γάρ—  
 δίδωμι τήνδε σοῖσι προσπολεῖν δόμοις.  
 πολλῶ δὲ μόχθῳ χεῖρας ἦλθεν εἰς ἐμάς· 1025  
 ἀγῶνα γὰρ πάνδημον εὐρίσκω τινὰς  
 τιθέντας, ἀθληταῖσιν ἄξιον πόνον,  
 ὄθεν κομίζω τήνδε νικητήρια  
 λαβών· τὰ μὲν γὰρ κοῦφα τοῖς νικῶσιν ἦν  
 ἵππους ἄγεσθαι, τοῖσι δ' αὖ τὰ μείζονα 1030  
 νικῶσι, πυγμὴν καὶ πάλην, βουφόρβια·  
 γυνὴ δ' ἐπ' αὐτοῖς εἶπετ'· ἐντυχόντι δὲ  
 αἰσχρὸν παρεῖναι κέρδος ἦν τόδ'· εὐκλεές.  
 ἀλλ', ὥσπερ εἶπον, σοὶ μέλειν γυναικῆς χρῆ·  
 οὐ γὰρ κλοπαίαν ἀλλὰ σὺν πόνῳ λαβών 1035  
 ἦκω· χρόνῳ δὲ καὶ σὺ μ' αἰνέσεις ἴσως.  
 ΑΔ. οὔτοι σ' ἀτίζων οὐδ' ἐν ἐχθροῖσιν τιθεὶς  
 ἔκρυψ' ἐμῆς γυναικὸς ἀθλίου τύχας·  
 ἀλλ' ἄλγος ἄλγει τοῦτ' ἂν ἦν προσκείμενον,  
 εἴ του πρὸς ἄλλου δώμαθ' ὠρμήθης ξένου· 1040  
 ἄλις δὲ κλαίειν τοῦμὸν ἦν ἐμοὶ κακόν.  
 γυναικῆς δ', εἴ πως ἔστιν, αἰτιοῦμαί σ', ἄναξ,  
 ἄλλον τιν' ὅστις μὴ πέπονθεν οἷ' ἐγὼ  
 σῶζειν ἄνωχθι Θεσσαλῶν· πολλοὶ δὲ σοὶ  
 ξένοι Φεραίων· μὴ μ' ἀναμνήσης κακῶν. 1045  
 οὐκ ἂν δυναίμην τήνδ' ὄρων ἐν δώμασιν  
 ἄδακρυς εἶναι· μὴ νοσοῦντί μοι νόσον  
 προσθῆς· ἄλις γὰρ συμφορᾷ βαρύνομαι.  
 ποῦ καὶ τρέφοιτ' ἂν δωμάτων νέα γυνή;  
 νέα γάρ, ὡς ἐσθῆτι καὶ κόσμῳ πρέπει. 1050  
 πότερα κατ' ἀνδρῶν δῆτ' ἐνοικήσει στέγην;  
 καὶ πῶς ἀκραιφνῆς ἐν νέοις στρωφωμένη  
 ἔσται; τὸν ἠβῶνθ', Ἡράκλεις, οὐ ῥάδιον  
 εἶργειν· ἐγὼ δὲ σοῦ προμηθίαν ἔχω.  
 ἢ τῆς θανούσης θάλαμον ἐσβήσας τρέφω; 1055  
 καὶ πῶς ἐπεσφρῶ τήνδε τῷ κείνης λέχει;  
 διπλῆν φοβοῦμαι μέμψιν, ἕκ τε δημοτῶν,

- μή τις μ' ἐλέγξει τὴν ἐμὴν εὐεργέτιν  
 προδόντ' ἐν ἄλλης δεμνίοις πίτνειν νέας,  
 καὶ τῆς θανούσης· ἀξία δέ μοι σέβειν· 1060  
 πολλὴν πρόνοιαν δεῖ μ' ἔχειν. σὺ δ', ὦ γύναι,  
 ἥτις ποτ' εἶ σύ, ταῦτ' ἔχουσ' Ἀλκῆστιδι  
 μορφῆς μέτρ' ἴσθι, καὶ προσήϊξαι δέμας.  
 οἴμοι. κόμιζε πρὸς θεῶν ἐξ ὀμμάτων  
 γυναικὰ τήνδε, μή μ' ἔλῃς ἥρημένον. 1065  
 δοκῶ γὰρ αὐτὴν εἰσορῶν γυναιχ' ὄραν  
 ἐμὴν· θολοῖ δὲ καρδίαν, ἐκ δ' ὀμμάτων  
 πηγαὶ κατερρώγασιν· ὦ τλήμων ἐγώ,  
 ὡς ἄρτι πένθους τοῦδε γεύομαι πικροῦ.
- ΧΟ. ἐγὼ μὲν οὐκ ἔχοιμ' ἂν εὖ λέγειν τύχην· 1070  
 χρῆ δ', ὅστις εἶ σύ, καρτερεῖν θεοῦ δόσιν.
- ΗΡ. εἰ γὰρ τοσαύτην δύναμιν εἶχον ὥστε σὴν  
 ἐς φῶς πορευῆσαι νερτέρων ἐκ δωματίων  
 γυναικὰ καὶ σοὶ τήνδε πορσῦναι χάριν.
- ΑΔ. σάφ' οἶδα βούλεσθαί σ' ἂν. ἀλλὰ ποῦ τόδε; 1075  
 οὐκ ἔστι τοὺς θανόντας ἐς φάος μολεῖν.
- ΗΡ. μή νυν ὑπέρβαλλ' ἀλλ' ἐναισίμως φέρε.
- ΑΔ. ῥᾶον παραινεῖν ἢ παθόντα καρτερεῖν.
- ΗΡ. τί δ' ἂν προκόπτοις, εἰ θέλοις ἀεὶ στένειν;
- ΑΔ. ἔγνωκα καὐτός, ἀλλ' ἔρωσ τις ἐξάγει. 1080
- ΗΡ. τὸ γὰρ φιληῆσαι τὸν θανόντ' ἄγει δάκρυ.
- ΑΔ. ἀπώλεσέν με κάτι μᾶλλον ἢ λέγω.
- ΗΡ. γυναικὸς ἐσθλῆς ἤμπλακες· τίς ἀντερεῖ;  
 ὥστ' ἄνδρα τόνδε μηκέθ' ἤδεσθαι βίω.
- ΗΡ. χρόνος μαλάξει, νῦν δ' ἔθ' ἠβάσκει κακόν. 1085
- ΑΔ. χρόνον λέγοις ἂν, εἰ χρόνος τὸ κατθανεῖν.
- ΗΡ. γυνὴ σε παύσει καὶ νέου γάμου πόθοι.
- ΑΔ. σίγησον· οἶον εἶπας. οὐκ ἂν ὠόμην.
- ΗΡ. τί δ'; οὐ γαμεῖς γὰρ ἀλλὰ χηρεύσῃ λέχος;
- ΑΔ. οὐκ ἔστιν ἥτις τῷδε συγκλιθήσεται. 1090
- ΗΡ. μῶν τὴν θανοῦσαν ὠφελεῖν τι προσδοκᾶς;
- ΑΔ. κεινὴν ὄπουπερ ἔστι τιμᾶσθαι χρεῶν.
- ΗΡ. αἰνῶ μὲν αἰνῶ· μωρίαν δ' ὀφλισκάνεις.
- ΑΔ. ὡς μήποτ' ἄνδρα τόνδε νυμφίον καλῶν.

- HP. ἐπήνεσ' ἀλόχῳ πιστὸς οὔνεκ' εἶ φίλος. 1095  
 ΑΔ. θάνοιμ' ἐκείνην καίπερ οὐκ οὔσαν προδούς.  
 HP. δέχου νυν εἴσω τήνδε γενναίων δόμων.  
 ΑΔ. μή, πρὸς σε τοῦ σπείραντος ἄντομαι Διός.  
 HP. καὶ μὴν ἀμαρτήση γε μὴ δράσας τάδε.  
 ΑΔ. καὶ δρῶν γε λύπη καρδίαν δηχθήσομαι. 1100  
 HP. πιθοῦ· τάχ' ἂν γὰρ ἐς δέον πέσοι χάρις.  
 ΑΔ. φεῦ.  
 εἶθ' ἐξ ἀγῶνος τήνδε μὴ ἴλαβές ποτε.  
 HP. νικῶντι μέντοι καὶ σὺ συννικᾶς ἔμοι.  
 ΑΔ. καλῶς ἔλεξας· ἡ γυνὴ δ' ἀπελθέτω.  
 HP. ἄπεισιν, εἰ χρὴ· πρῶτα δ' εἰ χρεῶν ἄθρει. 1105  
 ΑΔ. χρὴ, σοῦ γε μὴ μέλλοντος ὀργαίνειν ἔμοι.  
 HP. εἰδῶς τι κάγῳ τήνδ' ἔχω προθυμίαν.  
 ΑΔ. νίκα νυν. οὐ μὴν ἀνδάνοντά μοι ποιεῖς.  
 HP. ἀλλ' ἔσθ' ὄθ' ἡμᾶς αἰνέσεις· πιθοῦ μόνον.  
 ΑΔ. κομίζετ', εἰ χρὴ τήνδε δέξασθαι δόμοις. 1110  
 HP. οὐκ ἂν μεθείην τὴν γυναιῖκα προσπόλοις.  
 ΑΔ. σὺ δ' αὐτὸς αὐτὴν εἴσαγ', εἰ δοκεῖ, δόμους.  
 HP. ἐς σὰς μὲν οὖν ἔγωγε θήσομαι χέρας.  
 ΑΔ. οὐκ ἂν θίγοιμι· δῶμα δ' εἰσελθεῖν πάρα.  
 HP. τῇ σῇ πέποιθα χειρὶ δεξιᾷ μόνῃ. 1115  
 ΑΔ. ἄναξ, βιάζῃ μ' οὐ θέλοντα δρᾶν τάδε.  
 HP. τόλμα προτείνειν χεῖρα καὶ θιγεῖν ξένης.  
 ΑΔ. καὶ δὴ προτείνω, Γοργόν' ὡς καρατομῶν.  
 HP. ἔχεις; ΑΔ. ἔχω; ναί. HP. σῶζέ νυν, καὶ τὸν Διὸς  
 φήσεις ποτ' εἶναι παῖδα γενναῖον ξένον. 1120  
 βλέψον πρὸς αὐτήν, εἰ τι σῇ δοκεῖ πρέπειν  
 γυναικί· λύπης δ' εὐτυχῶν μεθίστασο.  
 ΑΔ. ὦ θεοί, τί λέξω; θαῦμ' ἀνέλπιστον τόδε.  
 γυναιῖκα λεύσσω τήνδ' ἔμῃν ἐτητύμως,  
 ἢ κέρτομός με θεοῦ τις ἐκπλήσσει χαρά; 1125  
 HP. οὐκ ἔστιν, ἀλλὰ τήνδ' ὄρᾳς δάμαρτα σῆν.  
 ΑΔ. ὄρα γε μὴ τι φάσμα νερτέρων τόδ' ἦ.  
 HP. οὐ ψυχαγωγὸν τόνδ' ἐποιήσω ξένον.  
 ΑΔ. ἀλλ' ἦν ἔθαπτον εἰσορῶ δάμαρτ' ἔμῃν;  
 HP. σάφ' ἴσθ'· ἀπιστεῖν δ' οὐ σε θαυμάζω τύχην. 1130

- ΑΔ. θίγω, προσείπω ζῶσαν ὡς δάμαρτ' ἔμην;  
 ΗΡ. πρόσσειπ'· ἔχεις γὰρ πᾶν ὄσονπερ ἤθελες.  
 ΑΔ. ᾧ φιλτάτης γυναικὸς ὄμμα καὶ δέμας,  
 ἔχω σ' ἀέλπτως, οὔποτ' ὄψεσθαι δοκῶν.  
 ΗΡ. ἔχεις· φθόνος δὲ μὴ γένοιτό τις θεῶν. 1135  
 ΑΔ. ᾧ τοῦ μεγίστου Ζηνὸς εὐγενὲς τέκνον,  
 εὐδαιμονοίης καὶ σ' ὁ φιτύσας πατήρ  
 σῶζοι· σὺ γὰρ δὴ τᾶμ' ἀνώρθωσας μόνος.  
 πῶς τήνδ' ἔπεμψας νέρθεν ἔς φάος τόδε;  
 ΗΡ. μάχην συνάψας δαιμόνων τῷ κυρίῳ. 1140  
 ΑΔ. ποῦ τόνδε Θανάτῳ φῆς ἀγῶνα συμβαλεῖν;  
 ΗΡ. τύμβον παρ' αὐτόν, ἐκ λόχου μάρψας χερσῖν.  
 ΑΔ. τί γὰρ ποθ' ἦδ' ἀναυδος ἔστηκεν γυνή;  
 ΗΡ. οὔπω θέμις σοι τῆσδε προσφωνημάτων  
 κλύειν, πρὶν ἂν θεοῖσι τοῖσι νερτέροις 1145  
 ἀφαγνίσηται καὶ τρίτον μόλη φάος.  
 ἀλλ' εἴσαγ' εἴσω τήνδε· καὶ δίκαιος ὦν  
 τὸ λοιπόν, Ἄδμητ', εὐσέβει περὶ ξένους.  
 καὶ χαῖρ'· ἐγὼ δὲ τὸν προκείμενον πόνον  
 Σθενέλου τυράννω παιδὶ πορσυνῶ μολῶν. 1150  
 ΑΔ. μείνον παρ' ἡμῖν καὶ ξυνέστιος γενοῦ.  
 ΗΡ. αὐθις τόδ' ἔσται, νῦν δ' ἐπείγεσθαι με δεῖ.  
 ΑΔ. ἀλλ' εὐτυχοίης, νόστιμον δ' ἔλθοις †δόμον †.  
 ἀστοῖς δὲ πάσῃ τ' ἐννέπω τετραρχία  
 χοροὺς ἐπ' ἐσθλαῖς συμφοραῖσιν ἰστάναι 1155  
 βωμούς τε κνισᾶν βουθύτοισι προστροπαῖς.  
 νῦν γὰρ μεθηρμόσμεσθα βελτίῳ βίῳ  
 τοῦ πρόσθεν· οὐ γὰρ εὐτυχῶν ἀρνήσομαι.  
 ΧΟ. πολλὰ μορφαὶ τῶν δαιμονίων,  
 πολλὰ δ' ἀέλπτως κραίνουσι θεοί· 1160  
 καὶ τὰ δοκηθέντ' οὐκ ἐτελέσθη,  
 τῶν δ' ἀδοκῆτων πόρον ἦρε θεός.  
 τοιόνδ' ἀπέβη τόδε πράγμα.

## *Notes and Commentary*

The *Alcestis* is set in Pherai, a town in Thessaly, at a time when the world was still young. Gods still mingled with people, helped them, hindered them, and, as in this story, even served them. Not long before the story of the *Alcestis* begins, Asclepius had cured the dead, and Zeus struck him with lightning for transgressing the laws of nature. Apollo then tried to get even by killing the manufacturers of the thunderbolt, but Zeus retaliated by sentencing his son to a year's exile from the world of the gods in the demeaning role of slave to Admetus. Even as a slave, Apollo continues to practice his divine prerogatives, and following in his son's footsteps, he saves Admetus from impending death. The death of Asclepius meant that the dead stayed dead, but first Apollo and then Heracles are able to find loopholes, Apollo by craft, Heracles by brute force.

It was the generation before the Trojan War. Admetus' son Eumelus is named in the *Iliad* in the catalog of ships (2.713) and in the funeral games for Patroclus, where as a skillful horseman he takes part in the chariot race (23.288). He, like his father, is helped by Apollo (380–84) who strikes the goad from Diomedes' hand as he is about to pass Eumelus' chariot. But Athene shatters the yoke of his team, and Eumelus is thrown from his chariot (388–97). He comes in last but is recognized as the best by Achilles (536) and given a prize.

λοῖσθος ἀνήρ ὄριστος ἐλαύνει μώνυχας ἵππους.

## PROLOGUE (1–76): APOLLO AND DEATH

The prologue is everything that takes place before the entrance of the Chorus. It is part of the play and at the same time provides necessary background information. It tells us precisely where we are in the story that is to be played, hints at what has gone on before the opening of the drama, and sets the story within the context of other connected tales. The prologue of *Alcestis*, for example, alludes to the labors of Heracles, Asclepius' death at the hands of Zeus, and the ensuing vengeance and retribution. A prologue can be in the form of either a monologue or a dialogue. In the *Alcestis*, Euripides combines the two forms in a rather lengthy prologue of seventy-six lines by having Apollo give a monologue before the entrance of Death and then continuing with a dialogue between the two.

Aristotle speaks of four constituent parts as common to all tragedies: prologue, episode, exodos, and choral song, the last being divided into parodos (the entrance song) and stasimon (pl. stasima, the dances and songs between which are the epeisodia, or episodes). In addition there is, in certain plays (including *Alcestis*), the kommos which is a song of lament sung by the actors and the Chorus.

In the opening scene, Apollo, the god of prophecy, enters from the stage building, which represents the house of Admetus where Apollo has served as a herdsman and which he is now leaving, as he says in his first speech, 22–23. We may picture him dressed in his traditional hunting garb because later in the scene, Death demands to know why he is carrying a bow (39). It is also possible that he enters still wearing his herdsman's costume (52–53).

The symbol † marks words and concepts to learn as they come up in the text. In the commentary “Goodwin and Gulick” is William Watson Goodwin and Charles Burton Gulick, *Greek Grammar*, Boston, 1930 (often reprinted).

1 δῶματ' Ἀδμήτει' = δῶματα Ἀδμήτεια. † Elision of short vowels: a short vowel is dropped before a word beginning with a vowel. Line 6 παρ' ἀνδρὶ [for παρὰ: elision is common with prepositions, but περί and πρό do not elide]. Examples: τόνδ' ἔσφζον, line 9 for τόνδε. μ' for με, line

22. τ' or θ' [before a rough breathing] for τε. † Using a plural noun in place of a singular noun is common, especially for words such as "house," or for body parts or pronouns. The house is made prominent from the first words of the play. It is personified through direct address, through actions it is said to perform, and through knowledge or feelings it is said to possess. ἐν οἴῃ: relative pronoun. ἔτλην: fr. † τλάω *dare, endure, have the heart to.*

## HOUSE AND SKENE

Every Greek tragedy (at least after the *Oresteia*) was performed in front of the *skene*, or stage building, a temporary structure necessary for the changing of masks / characters (πρόσωπα) and for setting the scene, which usually represents the palace of a king, though it may be a cave, a temple, a hut, or a hovel. The generic *skene* is identified and particularized from the beginning of the *Alcestis*. In the play the house looms over the action, as it does in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, to which there are many parallels in themes and staging in the *Alcestis*.

"House" can be used in Greek, as in English (at least of noble or commercial houses), to designate not only the physical structure, but also the family and the genealogical line. Indeed this manner of speaking is itself partly responsible for the imbalance in the value systems of some of the members of this house that so nearly turns the story into a tragedy.

2 θῆσσαν τράπεζαν: "the thetes' table." *Thetes* were the lowest class of free citizens. θῆσσα (θῆττα) is the feminine of θής, θητός *serf, laborer* (who works for hire); here it is used as an adjective. τράπεζα, ἥης, ἡ: *table*, especially a *dining table*, also a *counter* or *banking table*. αἰνέσαι: fr. † αἰνέω *praise, honor, accept, put up with*. περ: emphasizes θεός. The participle ὄν is concessive, meaning "although I am."

3 κατακτάς: aorist participle found in epic and tragedy (for -κτείνας) fr. † κατακτείνω = ἀποκτείνω. παῖδα τὸν ἐμόν: on the position of the adjective, see note at 13. † αἴτιος: adjective, *to blame, responsible* (cf. αἰτία *cause, responsibility*). Understand ἐστί(ν), which is often omitted.

4 Asclepius, son of Apollo and Coronis, became a skilled surgeon and was highly successful in prescribing drugs. He raised the art of medicine to new levels by not only preventing some heroes from dying but

also by restoring to life others who had already died. The ancient commentaries (*scholia*, abbreviated Σ, written in the margins of some of the manuscripts) list various characters whom Asclepius was said by different writers to have resurrected, including Hippolytus, Glaucus, Tyndareus, Hymenaeus, Capaneus, Lycurgus, those who died in Delphi, the sons of Phineus, Orion, the daughters of Proetus. Hades complained to Zeus, as some ancient commentators say, that Asclepius was taking away his subjects by restoring them to life, and in response to Hades' complaint, Zeus killed Asclepius with his thunderbolt. Others say that Asclepius accepted a bribe in defiance of divine law, restored the dead to life, and was slain by the thunderbolt of Zeus.

By beginning with this tale, Apollo sets the story of Alcestis within a cosmic myth in which human mortality is defined, as if the world were still young enough that there could be some cracks left in the system, and one more human could escape death. Apollo, however, has not arranged for Admetus to escape death permanently but only to escape immediate death by finding someone to die in his place.

\* -οἰσι = -οις (-αισι = -αις). *στέρνων*, -ου, τό: *breast, chest*. *ἐμβάλων*: review βάλλω and its compounds. *φλόξ*, *φλογός*, ἦ: *flame*.

5 οἷ: = genitive of cause (with a verb of emotion; Goodwin and Gulick, 1121.) Translate "for" or "because of." *χολόω*: aorist passive ἐχολώθην *anger*. *τέκτων*, -ονος, ὁ, ἦ: *carpenter, craftsman, worker*.

οὗτός ἐστιν Ἀγαμέμνων, ἐμὸς  
 πόσις, νεκρὸς δέ, τῆσδε δεξιᾶς χερὸς  
 ἔργον, δικαίας τέκτονος. τάδ' ᾧδ' ἔχει.

Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1404–406

**Δίου**: genitive of the adjective Δίος, of Zeus. The noun Ζεύς is declined Ζεύς, Δίος (Ζηνός), Δί, Δία, voc. Ζεῦ.

6 In Greek mythology the Cyclopes were three sons of Gaea and Uranus: Arges, Brontes, and Steropes. They were giants, each with but one eye that was circular and in the middle of the forehead. They were great builders and also helped Zeus when he waged war against his father Cronus. The Cyclopes gave Zeus the thunderbolt, forged a trident for Poseidon, and made Hades a cap of darkness. It is unclear why Apollo chose to kill them in order to avenge Asclepius. The revenge

must have been because they were the ones who furnished Zeus with the thunderbolt, the weapon used to kill Asclepius. Thus both Asclepius and the Cyclopes lost their lives for the excellence they exhibited in their professional skills. † κτείνω: the historical present, often used in Greek, as in English, for the vivid reliving of a past action (translate either “I kill” or “I killed;” Goodwin and Gulick, 1252). The uncompounded forms of words like ἀποκτείνω and ἀποθνήσκω are common in poetry. θητεύω: *serve* (as a thete, θής, or hired hand).

7 † θνητός: *mortal* (see lines 62, 780, 783, 799 *bis*, 894) with ἀνδρῖ. τῶνδ’ ἄποιν’: “in atonement (as punishment) for this.” ἄποινα, τὰ: *ransom, price, atonement, compensation*. The form is accusative in apposition with the infinitive. ἠνάγκασεν: fr. ἀναγκάζω *compel* (ἀνάγκη).

8 γαῖαν τήνδ’: † the terminal accusative (accusative of place to which) without a preposition is common in poetry, as is the \*use of the demonstrative without the article. † γαῖα = γῆ *land, earth*. βουφορβέω: “tend the flocks and herds.”

9 † σώζω: *save, preserve* (see lines 146, 292, 341, 625, 840, 928, 1020, 1119, 1138). Notice the word order. Apollo puts his verb, as it were, *inside* the house as if he were saving it by his presence in it. τόνδ’ ἔσωζον οἶκον: the imperfect stresses the course of an action rather than simply its occurrence or shows a repeated or attempted action. ἐς τὸδ’ ἡμέρας: an idiom, “up to this point in time,” “until today.”

10 ὅσιος: *holy, sanctioned by divine law, devout, pious*. As Dale comments on line 10, the word ὅσιος is rarely used of gods, and following the scholiast (ancient commentator), she suggests that Apollo is referring to his human manifestation as Admetus’ slave. τυγχάνω: with the genitive, *happen upon, meet up with*. ὄν: circumstantial participle (rather than supplementary, as one might expect with τυγχάνω), that is, translate it with ὅσιος before rather than after the verb.

11 † ῥύομαι: with infinitive, *save, rescue from*.

12 The Moirai are the Fates or Apportioners. In Aeschylus’ *Eumenides*, Apollo is accused of persuading them to make mortals undying in the house of Pheres (lines 723–24):

τοιαῦτ’ ἔδρασας καὶ Φέρητος ἐν δόμοις·

Μοίρας ἐπεισας ἀφθίτους θεῖναι βροτούς.

Note: θεῖναι fr. τίθημι.

Also in that play, Apollo (as a dramatic character and a participant in the trial of Orestes) speaks of benefitting a worshipful man (725):

οὐκ οὖν δίκαιον τὸν σέβοντ' εὐεργετεῖν . . . ;

Cf. *Alcestis* 10 (ὀσίου ἀνδρός). The Furies accuse Apollo of deceiving (παραπατάω) the Moirai with wine (*Eumenides* 727–28):

σύ τοι παλαιὰς διανομὰς καταφθίσας  
οἴνῳ παραπάτησας ἀρχαίας θεάς.

Note: διανομή *distribution, regulation*; καταφθίνω *cause to perish*.

Similar themes occur in both scenes, such as Apollo trampling on the ancient rights of other gods, especially gods of death, as both Thanatos and the Moirai are. **θεαί**: omission of the article is common in poetry. **δολώω**: *trick, beguile*. **ἤνεσαν**: fr. ✚ αἰνέω *accept, put up with* (see line 2). 13 τὸν παραντίκ': attributive to ἕδην (here used as equivalent to θάνατον). Review the three ways of showing the attributive position:

article adjective noun

article noun article adjective

noun article adjective (poetic use, not common in prose)

Death is a universal necessity for men, but the play puts this reality in suspense. Timing makes it particular—it was Admetus' turn to die, but *his* death has become *hers*. The word παραντίκα is a key here. Admetus, though it may not occur to him to think about it, has not escaped the mortal modality. What he has escaped is immediate death, and he does come (in words at least) to long for death and regret that he has postponed it. Alcestis has taken Admetus' immediate death for him ("right now," she says, 322). One of the "givens" has been taken away, if only temporarily.

\*Αἰδης or ἕδης (in tragedy, in lyrics sometimes Αἶδας):

Gen	Ἀίδου	Ἀίδος	Ἀίδα	Ἀίδαο	Ἀίδα
Dat	Ἀίδῃ	Ἀίδι			
Acc	Ἀίδην	Ἀίδαν			

14 **διαλλάξαντα**: fr. † διαλλάττω / διαλλάσσω *exchange, give in exchange*.  
**τοῖς κάτω**: “those below,” i.e., the nether gods and the dead.

15 † **ἐλέγχω**: *question, cross-examine*, in philosophy, *prove, refute*.  
**διεξεληθών**: fr. δι-εξ-έρχομαι.

16 † **τε** (τ', θ' before a rough breathing): *and*. Follows the first word in the second part of the two things being joined, e.g., *πατέρα γεραϊάν τε μητέρα* “his father *and* aged mother.” Apollo’s disgust with Admetus’ parents, especially with his nameless mother, is implied in his use of the word “old” in the feminine, though it ought to apply equally to Pheres (meaning to draw a contrast with the young Admetus and the young Alcestis, who now are in possession of the house) and in the pleonastic “she who bore him, his mother.” It is, then, the mother whose old age is singled out here as particularly disreputable in light of her refusal. Some editors bracket line 16 as spurious, but it helps make sense of Admetus’ dilemma and his anger at his parents if they were, besides Alcestis, the only φίλοι available for the exchange. † **σφε**: Third person personal pronoun (Goodwin and Gulick, 364, 367, 369, 371a). The tragedians use σφε (masculine, feminine accusative plural, but sometimes used as singular) and σφιν (masculine, feminine dative plural, rarely used as a singular). They also use † νιν as a personal pronoun in all genders in both singular and plural accusative. Σφε, σφιν, and νιν are all enclitic. They mean what they have to mean in the text (*him, her, it, them*). † **τίκτω, τέξομαι, ἔτεκον, τέτοκα**: *give birth, beget* (cf. τέκνον, *child*).

17 **ἤδρι**: fr. εὐρίσκω. **πλήν**: preposition + genitive, *except*. † **ὅστις**: *anyone who, whoever, neuter anything which, whatever*.

18 **θανών** = ἀποθανών (see note at 6). † **κείνου** = ἐκείνου (κεῖνος = ἐκείνος). **φῶς** = φῶς *light*. “Seeing the light” is equivalent to “being alive.” The Netherworld is thought of as a shadowy place of insubstantial spirits who spend eternity missing the light of the upper world.

19 **ἤ**: refers to Alcestis. **βαστάζω**: *carry* (see lines 40, 724, 917). **χεροῖν**: fr. † χεῖρ (dative dual “in pairs of hands,” used in lines 201, 612, 847, 1142).

Sg.	χεῖρ	χειρός [χερός]	χειρί [χερί]	χεῖρα [χέρα]
Dual	χεῖρε	χεροῖν	χεροῖν	χεῖρε
Pl.	χεῖρες	χειρῶν [χερῶν]	χερσί[ν] [χεῖρεσσι]	χεῖρας [χέρας]

Pairs of hands and feet are among the few words that retain special dual forms.

20 **ψυχορραγέω**: a technical term for “breathe one’s last,” “let the soul (ψυχή) break loose” (see also line 143). The ψυχή (“spirit” or “life force”) escapes at the moment of death and passes away to Hades where it is thought of as continuing to exist in the shadows. **σφ’**: see note at 16.

21 **πέπρωται**: fr. † πόρω *furnish, give* (the present does not occur; ἔπορον, aorist) (πεπρωμένη *fated, appointed*, see lines 147, 695). **μεταστῆναι**: fr. μεθίστημι + genitive of separation, *depart from*. The prefix μετα- usually indicates change.

22 **μῆ . . .** with **κίχη**: *that not, lest* (Goodwin and Gulick, 1371). **μίασμα**: *pollution*. Gods are polluted by contact with dying mortals—Artemis at the end of *Hippolytus* is a good example. For gods such as Artemis and Apollo who carry the bow and kill living things, this may seem a bit hypocritical, but see Sale 1977, on Artemis as “the goddess who separates.” That is, she is the goddess of chastity but also of the hunt and of childbirth, separating the creature from its life or the infant from the mother. Alcestis, with her insistence on dying in full view, refuses to let Apollo off so easily. **κίχη**: aorist ἔκτεχον fr. κιγγάνω *come upon, find*.

23 † **μέλαθρα, τά**: usually in the plural, *halls, house* (see lines 29, 77, 248, 567, 862). † **στέγη**: *roof, story, room* (see lines 87, 192, 248, 946, 1051).

24 The demonstrative used with a name is often best translated “here.” **πέλας**: adverb, *near, nearby*.

24–37 **θάνατον**: “Death” is neither Hades nor Charon (see lines 252–55), but an ogreish figure not met in extant tragic myth. He appears dressed in black (843), sporting wings (261), and carrying a sword (74). His depiction by Apollo as ἱερῆ θανόντων (25) inserts an interesting parallel from the mythic arsenal.

In the *Iliad*, with which the audience was familiar both from public recitation and study in school, the Homeric Muse tells us how Apollo struck the Achaean troops with his fatal arrows after Agamemnon dishonored Chryses, the priest of Apollo. Chryses came adorned with Apollo’s priestly staff and fillets, bringing ransom to free his daughter whom the Achaeans had given as a booty prize to Agamemnon, who

was keeping her as his concubine. Agamemnon sent the priest away empty-handed, and as a result, a plague came upon the army, described in the text as being caused by the shafts shot by Apollo:

From the peaks of Olympus he (Apollo) came down, angered in  
his heart,  
carrying on his shoulders his bow and covered quiver.  
The arrows rattled on the shoulders of the angry god  
as he was moving. And he came, resembling the night.  
Then he sat down away from the ships, and let an arrow fly.  
Terrible was the noise of the silver bow.

*Iliad* 1.44–49

We learn from the anapests of Death that Apollo is carrying his bow (35) in the *Alcestis*. The scene is cast against Apollo's memorable appearance with his fateful bow at the beginning of Book 1 of the *Iliad*, when he comes to shoot his arrows at the Achaean troops. In the *Iliad* Apollo is a very potent and menacing god, who punishes the entire Achaean army because of their leader Agamemnon's actions. Here the only one for him to shoot at is Thanatos, Death himself, who will shortly arrive to snatch Alcestis. The patent absurdity of threatening Death with a weapon that causes death is compounded by the low-status guise in which Apollo may appear here. By his own admission, he is acting in the role of a mere *thes*, a servant to a mortal, whose standing in Greek society is higher only than that of a slave and whose physical and economic well-being may at times have been worse than a slave's. Furthermore, he has been forced to assume this guise as a punishment from his father for misbehavior. Thus, instead of the powerful, vengeful god of the *Iliad*, the audience is introduced to a buffoon-like figure in a doubly humiliating role, as a *thes* tending Admetus' herds and as a punished child who vainly waves his bow at Death. The play's humorous tone is thus introduced in the first scene with the appearance of Apollo carrying a bow. The tragic tone is introduced as well, for Achilles in the *Odyssey*, in his famous exchange with Odysseus in the Netherworld, has this to say in answer to his visitor's praise of his status in life and after:

Don't you try to console me about death, glorious Odysseus.  
 I would prefer to live on the land and serve (be a *thes* to)  
 another man,  
 one without an allotment whose living is sparse,  
 than to be king over all the wasted dead.

*Odyssey* 11.488–91.

25 **ιερῆ**: fr. *ιερεύς*. Review -εὺς, -εως nouns of the third declension:

-εὺς	-ῆς
-έως	-έων
-εῖ	-εῦσι
-έα or -ῆ	-έας

*viv*: *her, him, them* (see note at 16).

26 † **μέλλω**: + future infinitive, *be about to, be going to, intend to*.  
**συμμέτρως**: *in measure with, exactly*. That is, Death has come precisely  
 on time. † **ἀφικνέομαι**: aorist ἀφικόμην, perfect ἀφίγμαι *arrive*.

27 **φρουρέω**: *keep watch, guard*. **ἡμαρ** [ἄμαρ], **ἡματος τό** = ἡμέρα. **ῥ**: dative  
 of time when. **χρέων** = χρή + ὄν “it is necessary;” with subject accusative,  
 “one must.” \* **χρή**: originally a noun (*need*), it is used as a third person  
 impersonal *it is necessary, one ought*. Imperfect χρῆν or ἐχρῆν.

28 **ἄ** **ἄ**: Death enters with a cry of surprise to find Apollo still haunting  
 the premises. The meter is anapestic dimeter in dipodic units (two sets  
 of two anapests: ~~, but – may be substituted for ~ and ~ may be substi-  
 tuted for –.

28 --

29 ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ 30 ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

31 ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ 32 ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

33 ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ 34 ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

35 ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ 36 ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

37 ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

29 **τῆδε**: *here, in this place*. **πολέω**: *go about, range over*.

30 **Φοῖβ'** (**Φοῖβε**): vocative of *Phoebus*, a name of Apollo. **ἀδικέω**:  
*commit injustice, wrong, infringe upon*. **αὔ**: *again, in turn*. † **ἔνεροι**: *those*  
*below* (*inferi* in Latin), referring to the dead and the gods below.

30–31 **ἀδικέω**: used with the participle to indicate the charges. Cf. the  
 charges against Socrates: ἀδικεῖ Σωκράτης οὐς μὲν ἠ πόλις νομίζει, θεούς οὐ  
 νομίζων, ἕτερα δὲ καινὰ δαίμονια εἰσφέρειν. ἀδικεῖ δὲ καὶ τοὺς νέους  
 διαφθείρων. Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.1; cf. Plato, *Apology* 24b.

31 ἀφορίζω: *limit, curtail*

32 ἤρκεσε: fr. ἀρκέω *be enough for*. οὐκ ἤρκεσε: οὐ in a question implies that the answer is “yes,” e.g., “is it not . . . ?”; μή implies a negative answer—“it isn’t, is it?” † μῦθος: *death, doom*.

33 κωλύω, διακωλύω: *prevent*. δόλιος, -ον: *deceitful, cunning* (with τέχνη, 34).

34 σφήλαντι: with σοί, 32, fr. σφάλλω *trip up*. ἐπί: + dative, *over, for*.

35 χέρα: = χεῖρα fr. χεῖρ *hand*. τοξηρής, -ές: *with a bow, of a bow*. Review -ης -ες adjectives:

-ης	-ες	-εις	-η [-εα]
-ους	-ους	-ων	-ων
-ει	-ει	-εσι	-εσι
-η [-εα]	-ες	-εις	-η [-εα]

φρουρέω: *watch (out for)*. ὀπλίζω: *arm*.

36 ἦ: the antecedent is τῆδε (34). ὑπέστη: fr. ὑφίστημι *undertake*. Review ἴστημι.

37 προθανεῖν: fr. προθνήσκω *die for* (see lines 383, 471, 620, 684, 698, 710, 1002; also ὑπερθνήσκω, lines 155, 682). παῖς: other editors make this a question—παῖς; Πελίου παῖς: “the child of Pelias.” Identification of a woman by her patronymic is conventional, yet it also highlights for the audience Alcestis’ peculiar family history, in which she plays a chilling role in trying to prolong the life of her father Pelias, who, like her husband, was willing to go to great lengths to live beyond his time. According to the Greek myth, Medea capitalizes on Pelias’ greed for long life in order to avenge his murder of Jason’s family and regain the kingdom of Iolkos (Iolcus) for Jason. Using her magic powers, she cuts up a ram, boils it, and restores it to life as a lamb. Seeing this, Pelias convinces his daughters similarly to cut him up and boil him, which they do. (According to Diodorus Siculus, 4.52.2: “All the others killed their father by beating him, but Alcestis alone, because of her great piety refrained from laying hands on her father.”) Medea, however, never told the daughters about the magic herb she had used to restore the ram to life and youth, and Pelias is murdered (Apollodorus, 1.9.27). It clearly takes a good deal of sangfroid to cut up and boil a human being, let alone one’s father. Euripides may make reference to Alcestis’ role in killing her father by keeping Pelias in the audience’s mind. Like Death, the Chorus calls her by her patronymic in their first

reference to her (82). Later, they address her directly as the daughter of Pelias (435). When they describe the wealth of Admetus' estate, they may play on Pelias' name by referring to its easternmost boundary as the inhospitable Mount Pelion (596).

38 **θάρασει**: imperative, "buck up," "don't be afraid." A sarcastic comment. Death is being humanized. That Death is concerned for his safety becomes apparent from line 39. The topsy-turvy strategy thus continues. After all, Death is the ultimate force of which all mortals are afraid, but he is himself afraid of another god equipped with a bow. What can Apollo do to him? **κεδνός, -ή, -όν**: *good*.

39 **τόξα, τὰ**: *bow and arrows*.

40 **συνήθης, -ες**: *customary*. Apollo might be saying that the bow is part of his costume. This also tells us how Apollo is dressed for the play. In a choral song (the third stasimon) he is pictured in one of his other guises, as the lyrist and singer.

41 **γε**: often means "yes" in dialogue. **ἐκδίκως**: *unfairly, unjustly*. **✚** **ὠφελέω, προσωφελέω**: + dative, *help, benefit*. The prefix implies "extra," "besides."

42 **βαρύνω**: *weigh down* (cause to have a heavy heart) fr. **βαρὺς** *heavy*.

43 **νοσφίζω**: future **νοσφιῶ** *rob, deprive, separate* fr. **νόσφι** *apart*. **✚** **νεκρός**: *corpse, dead person* (see lines 14, 422, 432, 513, 635, 664, 716, 724, 729, 740, 810, 843, 995).

44 **πρὸς βίαν**: *by force*. Apollo used guile rather than force (see 33–34), but Heracles will not show such compunction (69). **ἄφ-αιρέω**: *take away* (with two accusatives—one of the person *from* whom something is taken; the other of the object that is taken). **αἰρέω**, aorist **εἶλον**, perfect middle/passive **ἤρημαι** *take, seize, destroy*; middle **choose, take for oneself**.

45 **✚ πῶς**: *how*. **κοῦ** = **καὶ οὐ**. **✚ Crasis** (blending of syllables) is the contraction of a vowel or diphthong at the end of a word with a vowel or diphthong at the beginning of the next word. It is marked with **̣** (called the "coronis"). **καί** commonly undergoes crasis with the following word by dropping the **-αι**. The article is also commonly combined with the next word by crasis. Here are some examples of crasis in the *Alcestis*:

53, 246, 729, 919 **κάμέ** = **καὶ ἐμέ**

56 **κᾶν** = **καὶ ἄν**

- 93, 197 τᾶν = τοὶ ἄν  
 165, 280, 566 τὰμά = τὰ ἐμά  
 175 κάπειτα = καὶ ἔπειτα  
 188 κᾶρριψεν = καὶ ἔρριψεν  
 194, 293, 330 κοῦτις = καὶ οὔτις  
 202 τὰμήχανα = τὰ ἀμήχανα  
 220, 539 ὦναξ = ὦ ἄναξ  
 282 κάντι = καὶ ἀντί  
 290, 517, 661, 734 χῆ = καὶ ἦ  
 295 κάγώ = καὶ ἐγώ  
 296, 420 κοῦκ = \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_  
 307 κάμοις = καὶ ἐμοῖς  
 356, 626 κᾶν = καὶ ἐν  
 361 οὔπί = ὁ ἐπί  
 499 τοῦμοῦ = \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_  
 517 κάκεινος = \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_  
 521, 527 κοῦκέτ' = καὶ οὐκέτι  
 642 τᾶρα = τοὶ ἄρα  
 643 κάπί = \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_

See if you can fill in the blanks.

46 † δάμαρ, δάμαρτος, ἦ: accusative δάμαρτα *wife* (see lines 46, 227, 296, 612, 930, 953, 1126, 1129, 1131). ἀμείβω: aorist ἤμειψα *exchange, give in exchange, hand over, pass on (from one person to another)*. † ἦκω: *have come*. μέτα: goes with ἦν. Notice the accent, which shifts back to the penult when the preposition follows its noun or pronoun. This is called *anastrophe*.

47 κἀπάξομαι = καὶ ἀπ-ἄξομαι (ἄγω). νέρτερος, -α, -ον: *of the lower world*; οἱ νέρτεροι *beings of the lower world*. Diggle reads νεπτέραν for νεπτέρων.

48 λαβών: fr. † λαμβάνω. ἴθι: imperative of εἶμι, *go*. οὐκ οἶδα εἰ: “I don’t know whether” is closer in meaning to “I doubt if.” ἄν with πείσαιμι: review optative.

49 χρῆ: subjunctive of χρεῖ (χρηῖ ἦ). τάσσω / τάττω, τάξω, ἔταξα, τέταχα, τέταγμα, ἐτάχθην: *arrange, appoint*. Death is just doing his job. τοῦτο is the internal object—“I have been assigned this” or “This is my assigned job.”

50 οὐκ, ἀλλὰ τοῖς μέλλουσι θάνατον ἐμβαλεῖν: “No, but to hurl death upon those who linger” or “who are about to [die].” Diggle and

others read ἀμβαλεῖν (i.e., ἀναβαλεῖν) *put off*, but it can hardly be Death's job to put off death. τοῖς μέλλουσι: literally "upon those who intend to/are about to," with the implied meaning of "those who delay their death by living long." The scholiast explains "upon the old ones, for they are lingering in their life" (τοῖς γεγηρακόσι . . . βραδύνουσιν γὰρ ἐν τῇ ζωῇ). There is no need to see here an overt reference to Pheres. Apollo tries to save Alcestis rhetorically and follows whatever lead Death gives him to save her. His claim is that it is the elderly rather than the young that should be of interest to Death.

51 ἔχω: *have*, in the sense of *get, understand*. Dale (at line 51) suggests that Death is just catching on to Apollo's line of argument ("ah, *now* I understand"). προθυμία: *eagerness*. † σέθεν = σοῦ (genitive of σύ).

52 ἔστι ὅπως;: "Is there any way that?" γῆρας, τό: genitive γήρωσ, dative γήρᾳ *old age*. μόλοι: optative of † ἔμολον, aorist of βλώσκω *go, come*. Only the aorist occurs in this play—infinite μολεῖν, participle μολών (see lines 107, 540, 545, 554, 562, 748, 834, 850, 1076, 1146, 1150).

53 κάμέ = καὶ ἐμέ (see note at 45). † τέρω: *delight*. δόκει: present imperative (notice the accent).

54 Potential optative.

55 † φθίνω: *die, perish, waste away*. μείζων, μείζον: comparative of μέγας. ἄρνυμαι: *amass, gain, win*. γέρας, τό: *prize of honor*. Review genitive absolute: a noun/pronoun + a participle in the genitive form a clause that gives the circumstances of the action in the main sentence. In the genitive absolute, the noun is the subject of the participle. It is usually best to translate it as a clause beginning with *when, since, although, if*, etc.

56 γραῦς: (predicate nominative) *old woman*. ὀλλεται: fr. ὀλλυμι *destroy*; middle *perish, die*. θάπτω: aorist passive ἐτάφην, *bury* (cf. τάφος). For a review of conditions, see note at 357–60.

56–58 A possible reference to one of the mythic versions according to which Asclepius was killed by Zeus for resurrecting from Hades only those who could pay. The Greeks were rather keen on sons following their fathers both in looks and character. Apollo is upset by Death's accusation that he is not "democratic" and reacts accordingly.

57 πρὸς: "in favor of," "to the advantage of." οἱ ἔχοντες: attributive participle, "the haves." τίθημι: *put, lay down, arrange*.

58 πῶς εἶπας: "what do you mean by that?" εἶπα (first aorist) = εἶπον. In Attic Greek εἶπας is preferred for the second person singular. λέληθα

ὄν: fr. λανθάνω *escape notice*. Supplementary participle—"you have escaped notice being . . ." means "you have been . . . in secret" or ". . . without anyone noticing."

59 People who could afford it would purchase a long life. Death does not go for the idea that the rich deserve everything. † ὠνέομαι: *buy*. † πάρεστι fr. † πάρεμι *be present*; used impersonally, *it is possible*. γηραιός: *old, elderly*.

60 οὔκουν: *not*; cf. οὐκοῦν *therefore*.

61 † τρόπος: *way, character*.

62 † στυγέω: *hate* (from the same root as *Styx*, a river of Hades by which the gods swore oaths).

64–71 Apollo's prologue prophecy:

Apollo gives the gist of the play, as is often done in the prologue. He claims that Alcestis will be resurrected by Heracles. He fails, however, to address the basic question that the play brings to the fore, namely, can one return from death? The answer is yes, but Death is clear that he needs someone's soul. His power has been compromised by the Moirai in terms of whom he will get, but he has to get someone. According to this logic, if Alcestis is returned to life, Admetus will have to die. Apollo does not seem to think this through in his outburst against Death.

It may be, on the other hand, that logic is suspended along with the Fates. After all, Apollo never promises or even attempts to save anyone from death, only *immediate* death. What happens when Admetus enters the house with his returned bride? Does it mean that he accepts his death, or do they live happily ever after? Is it really Alcestis? It is certainly a different actor (an extra) playing her because this is a two-actor play and both are needed for the two men in the last scene.

64 ἦ μῆν: *truly*. παύση = παύσει fr. παύσομαι fr. παύω. Diggle, following Schmidt, reads πείση for παύση of the manuscripts—"you will go along . . ." ὄμνος: *cruel, savage*. † ἄγαν: adverb, *too, too much* (cf. the famous expression μηδὲν ἄγαν "nothing in excess").

65 τοίος: with ἀνήρ, *such, of such a kind*. Compare with ποίος *of what kind?*; ποιός *of some kind*; τοίος, τοιόσδε, τοιοῦτος *such, of such a kind*; οἷος *of which kind, such as*; ὁποῖος *of whatever kind*. εἶσι: fr. εἶμι *will go, will come*.

εἶμι	ἴμεν	infinitive	ιέναι
εἶ	ἴτε	imperative	ἴθι ἴτε
εἶσι	ἴασι	participle	ιόν, ιούσα, ιόν

66 **Εὐρυσθέως πέμψαντος**: genitive absolute (see note at 55). **μέτα**: see note at 46.

66–67 This is the eighth labor of Heracles. A review of the twelve labors imposed on the hero by Eurystheus at Hera's bidding will help us see where Heracles' actions in the drama fit into his life:

1. **THE NEMEAN LION**: Heracles choked this invulnerable monster in his arms and clothed himself with its skin. In artistic representations he is frequently depicted wearing it, and perhaps it is part of his costume in the play.
2. **THE HYDRA OF LERNA**: The Hydra was a poisonous water snake that lived in the marshes of Lerna, near Argos. She had many heads, and when one was cut off, another grew in its place. Hera also sent a giant crab to help her. Iolaus, Heracles' friend, helped him by searing the stumps of the necks after Heracles cut off the heads. Heracles dipped his arrows in the Hydra's poisonous blood, thus making any wounds the arrows inflicted incurable.
3. **THE ERYMANTHIAN BOAR**: Heracles' assigned task was to catch the boar alive. He drove it into a snowfield, and when it had exhausted itself, snared it in a net.
4. **THE HIND OF CERYNEIA**: Heracles caught it alive, as he was ordered, after pursuing it for an entire year.
5. **THE STYMPHALIAN BIRDS**: These birds infested the woods around Lake Stymphalus. Using a brass rattle, Heracles flushed them from their covert. He killed some with his arrows; the rest fled to the island of Ares.
6. **THE AUGEAN STABLES**: Given the task of cleaning the vast stables of Augeas, king of Elis, in a single day, Heracles diverted two rivers to flow through the stables and wash away the dirt.
7. **THE CRETAN BULL**: It is unclear whether the reference is to the bull with which Pasiphae had fallen in love or that which carried Europa to Crete. In either case, Heracles captured it and brought it back to Eurystheus.

8. **THE HORSES OF DIOMEDES:** Diomedes, son of Ares and king of the Bistonians in Thrace, had horses that ate human flesh. Heracles tamed the horses by feeding Diomedes to them, and then he brought the horses back to Eurystheus.
9. **THE GIRDLE OF THE AMAZON:** Eurystheus' daughter wished to have the girdle of Hippolyte, queen of the Amazons. Heracles secured the girdle either from Hippolyte's dead body or as a prize for releasing Melanippe, Hippolyte's second-in-command.
10. **THE OXEN OF GERYON:** Geryon resided in the extreme west, and Heracles first had to reach him. After obtaining Helios' golden cup, Heracles sailed along the stream of Oceanus until he reached the Straits of Gibraltar. There he set up the Pillars of Heracles and then turned his attention to Geryon's household. First he killed Geryon's dog Orthros, then his herdsman Eurytion, and finally Geryon himself. He brought the cattle of Geryon back with him, taking a circuitous route through much of southwestern Europe, wandering possibly as far as the Black Sea.
11. **THE APPLES OF THE HESPERIDES:** Heracles forced Nereus to show him the way to the Hesperides. There he killed the monstrous snake that guarded the tree of the Hesperides and took the apples from the tree. According to another version, he convinced Atlas to do this by offering to hold up the sky for him in the meanwhile.
12. **CERBERUS:** With the help of Hermes and Athene, Heracles went down to Hades, captured the dog Cerberus, and tied him up. He brought him to Eurystheus and later returned the dog to the Netherworld. Several vase paintings amusingly illustrate the effect the beast had on Eurystheus—he is shown hiding from the three-headed creature in a massive pot.

ἵππειον ὄχημα: *team of horses.*

67 † τόπος: *place, region.* δυσχέιμερος: *wintry, inclement* (δυσ- prefix, opposite to εὖ- + χειμών, *winter, north*).

68 † ξενόω: *entertain, receive (as) a guest.*

69 βίη: *by force* (see line 44, πρὸς βίην). Just as Alcestis' death is portrayed as being effected with force (147), so Alcestis will be taken away from

Thanatos "by force," says Apollo. Euripides is fond of following the pre-Socratic idea of "like to like," which is also found in the *Hippolytus*.  
**ἐξ-αιρέω**: see ἀφαιρέω (line 44) with two accusatives.

70 **κοῦθ'** = καὶ οὔτε (continued by θ' = τε and τ' = τε in line 71). **χάρις**: *favor, gratitude*. The theme of a person being forced eventually to do a requested deed is a *topos* (recurrent theme) in Greek literature. The earliest known example is the story that Phoenix tells Achilles about Meleager in *Iliad* 9.529 ff.

71 **δράω**: *do. ὁμοίως*: *all the same*. **ἀπεχθάνομαι, ἀπεχθήσομαι**: *be hated by, incur the enmity of*.

72 The repetition of ἄν is common. **πλέον λαμβάνω**: *gain an advantage, make progress*.

73 **κάτεισιν** = κατα- + εἶμι (for conjugation see note at 65).

74 † **στείχω**: *go, come*. **ἐπί** + accusative, *for, after* (of the object sought). **κατάρχομαι**: "begin the rites." † **ξίφος, -ους, τό**: *sword*. Review -ος, -ους neuter nouns of the third declension:

-ος	-η
-ους	-ῶν
-ει	-εσι
-ος	-η

75 **ιερός, -ά, -όν**: *sacred, sacrosanct*. The masculine adjective is sometimes used even though the specific subject is feminine. This is known as the generic masculine.

76 **δτου** = οὔτινος fr. ὅστις. Other alternate forms: ᾄτινι = ὄτω; ᾄντινων = ὄτων; οἴστισι = ὄτοις; ᾄτινα = ᾄττα. **ἔγχος, -ους, τό**: *sword*. **κράς, κρατός, ὀ**: *head*. **ἀγνίζω**: *sanctify, consecrate*. **θρίξ, τριχός, ἦ**: *hair*. Thanatos cuts the hair of his victim, dedicating her to death and making her the sacrificial victim. Mourners cut locks of hair in mourning for their loved ones. In this way Alcestis also becomes one of her own mourners. Death's closing words explain the silence of Alcestis at the end of the play, thus making a virtue of necessity. This is a two-actor play, and the role of Alcestis is taken by a nonspeaking supernumerary (κωφόν) in the exodos. In fact, then, she is not the same person (actor) who plays the role of Alcestis in her death scene, but she wears the same mask (πρόσωπον, *character = mask*) and *is* Alcestis (or not as some readers interpret the scene, believing that the woman returned is not really the same one who died in the second episode). Heracles is the one who

feels himself the extra when it is finally straightened out just who is the couple in that final scene.

At the end of the prologue, Apollo and Death make their separate exits. Apollo moves away from the house back to the world of the gods after his excursion into the human arena. Death's exit is an entrance into the house where the real action is taking place. The entrance of Death means that the hidden space (the dead end; see Padel in Winkler and Zeitlin 1990, 343) is to be the site of dark and mysterious rituals. Apollo tells the audience that Alcestis is breathing her last and that he must escape in order to avoid the pollution of the dying breath (20, 22). In the first episode, the Maid will fill in more details about what is going on in the house, but far from heroic feats, these actions turn out to be as mundane as what goes on between the walls of anyone's house.

### IMPORTANT WORDS TO LEARN IN THE PROLOGUE

Words for *house* (often in the plural) and words for relationships:

δῶματα (sg. δῶμα)  
οἶκος  
στέγη (*roof*)  
δόμος  
μέλαθρον  
πόσις, ἀνήρ (*husband*)  
δάμαρ -αρτος, γυνή (*wife*)

Words related to death:

θάνατος  
θνητός (*mortal*)  
κτείνω, κατακτείνω (*kill*)  
θνήσκω  
νεκρός, νέκυς (*body, corpse, dead person*)  
ψυχορραγέω (*breathe one's last*)  
ἔνεροι (*the nether gods*)  
νέρτερος (*of the lower world*) οἱ νέρτεροι = οἱ κατὰ χθονὸς θεοί

μόρος (*death, doom*)

φθίνω (or φθίω) athematic second aorist middle ἐφθίμην (*perish*)

ὄλλυμι, ὄλω, ὄλεσα (second aorist ὄλόμην) ὄλωλα active *destroy, kill, lose, middle perish, die, perfect ὄλωλα be dead, be ruined*

θάπτω, aorist passive ἐτάφην *bury, perform funeral rites*

Ἄιδης or ἄδης, in tragic lyrics sometimes Ἄϊδας (for declension see note at 5)

## PARODOS (77–135)

The entrance song of the Chorus is called the parodos. The path by which the Chorus entered was a passageway also called the parodos (or eisodos). There was a parodos on each side between the audience's seats and the front of the palace (represented by the *skene*). The Chorus enters singing anapestic verses in which they wonder whether Alcestis is still alive or not (77-85). The Chorus traditionally entered to an anapestic meter because it was considered natural for marching. They usually sang the entrance song in unison. In the margins of the manuscripts to this play, however, anonymous ancient scholars (the scholiasts) comment that this particular Chorus is split into two halves, although the manuscripts do not agree in the lines they assign to each of the two halves. The following strophic stanzas seem to be split into even more than two. In fact, a curious phrase in one of the ancient hypotheses has been read "There are five *choregoi* (Chorus leaders)" on which Murray comments "*Et sane videntur quinque choreutarum praeceteris eminere, cl. vv. 86 sqq., 213 sqq., 872 sqq., 888 sqq.*" ("And five of the members of the Chorus clearly seem to stand out from the others.") The passages listed are places where different members of the Chorus interject their comments. In the text, a dash (—) shows a change in singer or speaker.

After the anapestic entrance, the rest of the choral ode is a choreographed dance in the orchestra (dancing area). The usual structure of choral odes consists of strophic pairs. The first stanza is called strophe and is followed by an antistrophe. The strophe and antistrophe correspond metrically, that is, they have the same number

of syllables and a nearly identical arrangement of long and short syllables. (Measuring meter by length of syllables is characteristic of ancient Greek verse, as opposed to alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables as in English and many modern European languages.) It is believed that during the strophe the Chorus sang and danced proceeding in one direction, usually to the right. While singing and dancing the antistrophe, they executed a reverse movement in the opposite direction that would bring them back to their spatial starting point. The meters of the strophic pairs are complex and lyrical, allowing the playwright to create exquisite dances. A noteworthy feature of this ode is the anapestic dialogues in the second half of the first strophic pair (93–97, 105–11). The last four lines of the ode (132–35) are essentially anapestic and thus form a nice closure to the opening anapests.

The question and answer technique gives us needed information, in particular, the information that the citizen body, represented by the Chorus, is aware of what Alcestis has undertaken to do for her husband.

Setting the strophes and antistrophes side by side may help us visualize the possible dance steps and gestures or see correspondences in content.

## PARODOS

- Why this silence at the gates?
- Why is the house of Admetus hushed?
- But no friend is near
  - who might tell whether she is dead,
  - and we must mourn our queen, or living still
  - she sees this day's light, the daughter of Pelias,
  - Alcestis, by me and everyone else
  - judged the *best* a wife
  - could be to her husband.

Strophe A (86–97):

—Does anyone hear sounds of  
mourning  
or the beating of hands within the  
house

Antistrophe A (98–111):

—Beside the gates I do not see  
the spring water that is the custom

or moaning as when the end has  
come?

—No, and there is no attendant  
posted at the gates.

If only, amid the waves of disaster,  
oh Paian, you would appear.

—If she were gone they would not be  
silent.

—She is dead now.

—But not gone from the house.

—Why do you think so? I am not so  
confident. What makes you sure?

—How could Admetus have buried

...

his noble wife without mourners?

Strophe B (112–21):

—But there is no place left on earth

where anyone, by sending  
a ship's voyage, either to Lycia  
or to the waterless

altars of Ammon,  
might save the life  
of the unhappy woman. For the  
untimely end of her

life approaches. By the hearths of the  
gods

there is no priest burning sheep  
I may approach.

—All is over for the royal family;

at the altars of all the gods

full sacrifices are streaming with blood.

But there is no cure for these ills.

at the gates of the dead.

—No cut lock of hair is at the front  
gates

which falls in mourning

for the dead. No young hand  
of women can be heard beating.

—And truly this is the fated day . . .

—What is this you say?

—On which she must go below.

—You have touched my soul, you  
have touched my heart

—When the good are worn with  
misery

all good people

must grieve with them.

Antistrophe B (122–31):

—But he alone . . . if only he were now  
seeing

this day's light with his eyes,  
Phoebus' son, then leaving  
the shadowy places and gates of  
Hades

she might come back.

For he used to raise the dead  
until the Zeus-cast

bolt of blazing thunder took him away.

But now what hope

of life may I entertain?

✚ In the lyrics, long  $\alpha$  commonly, but not without exception, replaces  $\eta$ .

The following are the opening anapests. The best way to understand the meters is to read or sing the songs aloud, paying attention to the longs and shorts and the tones.

77 ~~~~~ - ~~~

78 ~ - - - ~ - - -

79 - ~~~~ - -

80 - ~ - ~ - ~ -

81 ~ - - - - - ~ (counting  $\epsilon\iota\alpha$  of  $\beta\alpha\sigma\acute{\iota}\lambda\epsilon\iota\alpha\nu$  as one syllable)

82 ~ - - ~ - -

83 - ~ - ~ - ~ -

84 - - ~ -

85 ~ - - ~ - -

77 **τί ποθ'**:  $\acute{\tau}\iota$  *why?*  $\acute{\rho}\acute{o}\tau\epsilon$  is common in questions as an intensifier, “why on earth?” or “why in the world?” **πρόσθεν**: adverb and preposition with the genitive, *before, in front of*. Notice how the focus on the house continues ( $\mu\epsilon\lambda\acute{\alpha}\theta\rho\omega\nu$ , 77;  $\delta\acute{o}\mu\omicron\varsigma$ , 78).

78 **σιγάω**: *be silent*. Note the force of the perfect referring to the hushed *state* of the house.

77–78 These first two anapestic lines give important information. The Chorus finds the quiet that seems to attend Alcestis’ dying a disquieting surprise, which indicates that the silence is unusual and that the house is generally quite noisy. That the house was usually a party scene is alluded to by Apollo, who, according to the myth, got the Fates drunk while living under Admetus’ roof (12, cf. 33–34). Admetus’ explicit promise to put an end to the playing of the *barbitos* and singing to the music of the flute (343–46) would hardly be necessary if music and partying were not customary in the house. The Chorus’ assertion that the house was “open to guests and liberal” ( $\pi\omicron\lambda\acute{o}\xi\epsilon\iota\nu\omicron\varsigma$  καὶ  $\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\theta\epsilon\rho\omicron\varsigma$ , 569), their description of Apollo’s lyre-playing while he was living there (569–87), and the fact that Heracles, who was a known reveler, chose to come to Admetus all indicate that Admetus’ house was a well known party scene. In Plato’s *Crito*, the Laws of Athens,

appearing to Socrates, mock him for considering escaping from prison and immigrating to Thessaly, a place characterized by lawlessness and license (53d). Thessaly must have still been known as the party capital. The Laws ask Socrates, *τί ποιῶν ἢ εὐχόμενος (feasting) ἐν Θετταλίᾳ, ὥσπερ ἐπὶ δειπνον ἀποδεδημηκῶς (having made a journey) εἰς Θετταλίαν;* (53e).

What sounds does the Chorus expect to hear now? Perhaps not the sounds of music and drinking, but of mourning. Women traditionally are the mourners, but in this play the Chorus of older men substitutes for female grievers. Men are needed to turn our attention away from Alcestis, the natural focus, to Admetus whose play it becomes at the death of Alcestis, if not before. The *parodos* focuses on Alcestis, especially her liminal status (between life and death) in which she remains throughout the drama. After death people were thought to be in transit between the worlds of the living and the dead for three days. The Chorus anticipates even this, by placing Alcestis already in Hades before she has actually breathed her last. At the end of the drama, her convenient silence suggests that she remains in the shadowy area until the three days are up. Here the silence is disturbing; later the more usual sounds of merrymaking will be equally upsetting in the second Heracles scene, which is almost like a second prologue, played in the absence of the Chorus, with a monologue followed by a dialogue and two exits, one into the house and the other into the country.

79 *πέλας*: see line 24.

80 *πότερον*: introduces a double question. In indirect questions such as this one, translate *whether*. *φθίνω (φθίω)*: see line 55.

82 † *λεύσσω*: see.

85 *εἰς* with *πόσιν*: *toward*.

86–111 The strophe and antistrophe share the same metrical scheme but do not have to correspond thematically. In this ode, however, the first strophic pair consists of eight reflections of which the last five are in dialogue form (93–97, 105–11). It makes good sense that each one of the statements was uttered by a separate group or an individual from the Chorus. They wonder about Alcestis' condition, namely, whether she is dead or alive (86–97):

1. Have the usual sounds of mourning been heard from the house?

2. There is no maid at the gates to give information about the queen's demise.
3. Apollo's help is being invoked.
4. If Alcestis were dead, there would not have been such a silence.
5. No, she is a corpse by now.
6. But her body has not been carried out to be buried.
7. How would you know?
8. Admetus would not have let her burial be carried out without mourners.

The antistrophe (98–111) is composed of eight reflections as well:

1. There is no spring water placed before the gates, as is the custom when a person is dead.
2. Nor shorn hair lying at the doorway as a sign of grief for the dead.
3. No women's breast-beating hands are heard.
4. This is the fated day . . .
5. What fated day?
6. For Alcestis to die.
7. This news touches my heart.
8. When the good are wasting away, all good people must grieve.

#### Strophe and Antistrophe A:

86/98 ~~~~~

87/99 - ~~~~~

88/100 ~~~~~

#### Diggle's stichometry:

οὐ μὲν οὐδέ τις ἀμφιπόλων (89) / χαίτα τ' οὔτις ἐπὶ προθύροις (101)

89/101 - - ~~~~~

στατίζεται ἀμφὶ πύλας (90) / τομαῖος, † ἄ δὴ νεκῶν (102)

90/102 ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ / ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

εἰ γὰρ μετακοίμιος ἄτας (91) / πένθει πίτνει, οὐδὲ νεολαία † (103)

91/103 - ~~~~~

92/104 - - ~~~~~

93/105 - ~~~~~

94M/106 ~~~ (Murray's text)

94 ----- 107 ~~~ ~ ~ ~

95 ~~~ ~ ~ ~ 108 ~~~ ~ ~ ~ ~

96 ~~~ ~ ~ ~ 109 ~~~ ~ ~ ~ ~

110 -----

97 ~~~ ~ ~ ~ 111 ~~~ ~ ~ ~

86 † κλύω: *hear*. στεναγμός: *groaning*.

87 κτύπος: *crash, bang, noise, sound* (made by mourners beating their breasts or heads). See Aeschylus, *Choephoroe* (*Libation Bearers*) 23, ὀξύχειρι σὸν κτύφῳ. For examples of loud scenes of mourning, see the ending of *Persians*, and the parodos of *Choephoroe*, and especially the kommos (306–499) of *Choephoroe*. στέγη: see line 23.

88 γόος: *lament, weeping, wailing* (also a prominent word in *Choephoroe*, 330, 449). ὡς πεπραγμένων: genitive absolute, “as though everything were over.”

89 μάν = μῆν. ἀμφίπολος, -ου, ἡ: *servant, attendant*.

90 στατίζω: *station*. πύλας: *gates* (cf. 98, 100; also 752, 829). The repetitive use of the word *pulai* here is important. The best known gates in ancient Greek culture are the gates of Hades, which, of course, symbolize death. Indeed, already in line 126, the Chorus sings of the gates of Hades. Through the early introduction of Heracles by Apollo, Euripides also suggests an equation between the gates of Admetus' palace and those of Hades, and, by extension, the identification of the house with the murky Netherworld. Other than the demigod Heracles, Theseus (with Heracles' help), and Orpheus, whose mission to rescue his wife failed, no Greek managed to pass through the gates of Hades and come out unscathed. Besides bringing back Alcestis, Heracles on other occasions rescued Theseus from the Netherworld and subdued Cerberus with his bare hands. In the *Heracles* of Euripides, the protagonist, after finishing all his labors, has just relived them in killing his wife and children. Waking up in the scene of slaughter, he believes he has returned to Hades and is only saved from despair by Theseus. We might also think of Achilles' famous remark in *Iliad* 9.312–13:

ἐχθρὸς γάρ μοι κείνος ὁμῶς Ἄϊδαο πύλῃσιν  
ὅς χ' ἕτερον μὲν κεύθη ἐνὶ φρεσίν, ἄλλο δέ εἴπη.

I hate that man as much as the gates of Hades  
who hides one thing in his heart and mind but says another.

91 **εἰ γάρ**: introduces an optative of wish (or optative optative), “If only!” **μετακύμιος**: *between the waves (of)*. **ἄτα** = ἄτη *disaster, misery*; also the *blindness* that causes it or is caused by it.

92 **Παιάν**: Apollo in his function as a Healer is invoked by the term *Paian* (Healer Apollo). The invocation to Apollo whose machinations have brought about Alcestis’ premature fate is laden with irony. (Cf. the Chorus’ call to Artemis, the chaste goddess, to help Phaedra, *Hippolytus* 141–50.) The fact that Apollo shares this title with his son Asclepius connects this invocation intimately with the underlying myth of the plot. **φανείης**: fr. φαίνω.

93 **τᾶν** = τοὶ ἄν. **φθιμένης**: genitive absolute in a condition, “if she were . . .” (The form is an athematic aorist middle/passive participle.) **ἔσιώπων**: fr. σιωπάω, condition contrary to fact (see review of conditions at 357–60).

94 The *ekphora*, the carrying out of the dead, usually takes place in the early morning of the third day after death. The suggestion, therefore, that Alcestis has already been carried out is quite improbable, especially given the fact that the chorus members know that today is the fated day. **φροῦδος**: adjective, *gone*.

95 **αὔχέω**: *boast, pride oneself in*. **θαρσύνω**: *encourage, give confidence* (see 318).

96 **ἔρημος**: *deserted, lonely, solitary*. **τάφος**: *funeral rites, burial, tomb, grave*.

96–97 Murray (following Hartung) notes a one line lacuna between these two lines.

97 **κεδνός**: *noble, cherished*. Review the declension of γυνή:

γυνή	γυναῖκες
γυναϊκός	γυναϊκῶν
γυναϊκί	γυναϊξί
γυναῖκα	γυναῖκας
γύναι	γυναῖκες

98 **πάρριθε**: + genitive, *before, in front of*.

99 **πηγαῖος**: *off/from a spring*. **ὡς νομίζεται**: *as is the custom*.

100 **χέρνιψ**: *water for purifying the hands*. **φθιτός**: *dead*.

101 **χαίτα** = *χαίτη hair*. **πρόθυρον**: *front door* (often in the plural, perhaps because the doors were usually double).

102 **τομαῖος, (-α), -ον**: adjective of two or three terminations, *cut*. Cutting the hair in mourning was a Greek practice. See the opening of Aeschylus' *Choephoroe* where Orestes cuts two locks, one a thank offering to Inachus, the local river god, and the other in grief for his father (6–7):

... πλόκαμον' Ἰνάχω θρεπτήριον  
τὸν δεύτερον δὲ τόνδε πενθητήριον.

The lock he puts on the tomb is soon found by his sister Electra, still unaware of his return, and becomes the focus of a touching scene of recognition (beginning at 167):

ὄρω τομαῖον τόνδε βόστρυχον τάφω.

ǻ = ἦ (referring to *χαίτα*). ✚ **νέκυσ** = ✚ **νεκρός** *corpse, dead person*.

103 ✚ **πένθος**: *mourning, grief*. **πίτνει**: a substitute form for *πίπτει* when the penult is required to be short, because a mute (i.e., a dental τ, δ, θ, labial π, β, φ, or palatal κ, γ, χ) before a liquid (λ, ρ) or nasal (μ, ν) does not necessarily make the syllable long by position. (See the note on scanning iambics in the Introduction.) **νεολαία**: *young*. (In other passages, *νεολαία* is a noun meaning “a band of young people,” but perhaps it is used here as a feminine adjective from an earlier adjective form.)

104 **δουπέω**: *sound, resound*.

105 ✚ **κύριος**: *authoritative, appointed* (see line 158 and note). ✚ **ἦμαρ, ἡματος, τό** = *ἡμέρα*.

106 **αὐδάω**: *say*.

107 **μολεῖν**: fr. ✚ **ἔμολον** (see line 52). **σφε** = *αὐτήν* (see note at 16).

108 **θιγγάνω**: aorist *ἔθιγον*, *touch* (with genitive). ✚ **φρήν, φρενός, ἦ**: *heart, mind, senses* (used both in singular and plural).

109 **τῶν ἀγαθῶν διακναιομένων**: genitive absolute. Literally “when the good are grated to bits.” **διακναίω**: *scrape away, grate through, wear*

*away*. It is striking that Alcestis' demise is depicted as a fading away, her strength drained as if life were being sucked out of her (cf. 19–20). It is interesting that men are sometimes depicted as dying in the bloom of youth without becoming debilitated and withering first. Cf. Cleobis and Biton (Herodotus 1.31) who died in their sleep in the bloom of first youth.

### Strophe and Antistrophe B:

112 - ~ - ~ - 122 ~ - ~ - ~  
 113/123 ~ - ~ - ~  
 114/124 - - ~ - ~  
 115/125 ~ - ~ - ~  
 116 - ~ - ~ - [-] 126 - ~ - ~ -  
 117/127 - - ~ - ~ - ~  
 118/128 - - ~ - ~ - ~ - ~  
 119/129 - - ~ - ~ - ~  
 120/130 ~ - ~ - ~ - / ~  
 121/131 ~ - ~ - ~ - ~  
 132 ~ - ~ - ~ - ~ - ~ - ~  
 133 - - ~ - ~ - ~ - ~  
 134 - - - - ~ - ~ - ~ - ~  
 135 - - ~ - ~ - ~ - ~

112–31 The first stanza (112–21) of the second strophic pair runs thematically from the general to the specific, as is common in choral songs. The Chorus first considers sending a boat out to various oracles to try to save Alcestis. Their extravagant imagination wanders as far off as Lycia and Egypt, but they end the stanza thinking of the possibility of approaching any available priest. Between the farthest and the closest possible helpers they would like to approach in order to save Alcestis, they repeat their certainty that her death is approaching. The antistrophe (122–31) on the one hand advances the assumption that Alcestis' demise is irrevocable, because the only one able to save her would have been Asclepius. On the other hand, the mention of Asclepius links the ode neatly to the prologue and its mythic background. The prominence of Apollo, whether through his oracle or through the

mention of his son, again raises the curiosity of the audience, because of the contradiction between Apollo's proclamation about Alcestis' fate and what the Chorus knows and what Death has announced. The fact that her only savior might have been Asclepius, who as a physician brought back the dead, reasserts the idea that one cannot die "healthy." Death implies illness or wounding.

112 **ναυκληρία**: *a voyage by sea*.

113 **αἶας**: a poetic form for γαῖας, partitive genitive with ὅποι (*whither, to what/which place*).

114–16 The Chorus refers to two oracular sites. The first is Apollo's in Lycia, specifically his oracle in Patara, on the south coast of present-day Turkey. The other is that of Zeus Ammon (Amen-Ra) in Egypt (116). It is noteworthy that the Chorus prefers these distant oracles to those more commonly consulted, Apollo's at Delphi and Zeus' in Dodona, in order to underscore their dashed hope for Alcestis' recovery. Even if one travels to these far away places, no remedy for death can be found.

115 **ἄνυδρος, -ον**: *waterless*.

117 **δυστάνου** = *δυστήνου* fr. *δύστηνος, -ον* *unhappy, unfortunate*.

118 **μόρος**: *death, fate, doom*. **ἀπότομος**: *cut off, unyielding* (perhaps because one of the Moirai, Atropos, cut the thread of life).

119 **πλάθω** = *πελάζω* *approach*. **ἔσχαρα**: *hearth, altar*.

120 **ἔχω**: in the sense of *know*.

121 **μηλοθύτης**: *sacrificer of sheep*. † **πορεύω**: *convey; middle/passive come, go*.

122–27 The particle ἄν, expected in the apodosis, often surfaces in the protasis. This anacoluthon (syntactical inconsistency) between the subject of the protasis, Asclepius, and the subject of the apodosis, Alcestis, conveys the bewilderment of the Chorus, further expressed in the aorist of *προλιποῦσ' ἦλθεν*, a contrary to fact condition, that is, an unattainable possibility: "would she have left the shadowy places and the gates of Hades." The despair of the Chorus is so deep that the aorist implies that not only is Alcestis dead, about which the Chorus was just wondering in the beginning of their ode, but that her soul has already gone to Hades. This illogic dramatizes further the Chorus' uncertainty as to the condition of Alcestis as they move rapidly from confidence to despair with no middle ground.

123 **δέρκομαι**: perfect *δέδορκα*, *see*. *δεδορκῶς ἦν* is a periphrastic pluper-

fect. The perfect is often used of a state of being; here the pluperfect acts as an imperfect in the contrary to fact condition.

125 σκότιος: *dark*.

127 δμαθέντας: fr. δαμάζω *subdued, tamed*. A metaphoric or euphemistic term for “the dead.” It is also a probable play on the name *A-dmetus*, which means “the untamed/uns subdued one.” ἀνίστη: fr. ἀνα + ἵστημι.

128 εἶλε: fr. αἰρέω. διόβολος: *Zeus-cast, hurled by Zeus*.

129 πλῆκτρον: *striker, weapon, bolt*. κεραύνιος: *of a thunderbolt*.

134 αἰμόρραντος: *blood-sprinkled*. πλήρης, -ες: *full, full of*.

135 A palindrome (a line that reads the same backward and forward) in sound and meter. The meter is exactly the same as in the last line of the play. ἄκος, -ους, τό: *cure, remedy*.

## FIRST EPISODE (136–212): CHORUS AND MAID

The Maid (θεράπεινα) is a kind of messenger, called the ἐξάγγελος, who reports activities in the house. Often these are terrible and violent deeds (such as Oedipus’ self-blinding in Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus* or the suicide of Eurydice in *Antigone*), but here the servant reports on the most mundane of happenings—washing, dressing, talking to the family and slaves—made more worthy of drama because Alcestis is doing these things for the last time. Still, the absence of drama in the reported scene may be another instance of the general parody of tragedy in the play. In this way we are introduced to Alcestis before we actually see her and are told what to notice about her in her scene.

136 ὀπαδός: *servant, attendant*.

137 δακρυρροέω: *shed tears, weep*.

138 † πενθέω: *mourn, grieve*.

139 συγγνωστόν: *it is excusable*. ἔμψυχος, -ον: (ψυχή) *alive*.

140 ὄλλυμι: *destroy*; middle *perish, die*, second perfect ὄλωλα *be dead*.

εἰδέναι: fr. † οἶδα.

Forms of οἶδα to be familiar with:

Perfect (with present meaning)

οἶδα	ἴσμεν	infinitive εἰδέναι
οἶσθα or οἶδας	ἴστε	participle εἰδώς
οἶδε	ἴσασι	

Pluperfect (with imperfect meaning)—third sg. ἤδει(ν)

Imperative—second sg. ἴσθι third sg. ἴστω

141–42 Perhaps Euripides pokes fun at all of us. We all hover between life and death, as the Greeks were fond of saying. Alcestis is in a certain way more fortunate than the average person (or some people might say less so), because she knows when she is going to die.

141 ζῶσαν: fr. ζάω (see line 81, ἢ ζῶσ' ἔτι). ζῶσαν καὶ θανούσαν: the liminal status of Alcestis, hovering between life and death, is stressed throughout the play. In her scene (the second episode) she is literally liminal at the house door, where in fact most of the action of Greek plays takes place. ἔστι: accented this way, “it is possible.”

142 αὐτός = ὁ αὐτός. Notice the masculine used in the generic question. Review the uses of αὐτός:

1. In all cases, αὐτός can mean *-self*.

Whose *self* depends on what it agrees with: αὐτὸς / αὐτή βούλει ταῦτα πράττειν; (“Do *you* wish to do these things *yourself*?”) If used with a noun, the intensive αὐτός (meaning *-self*) goes into the predicate position: αὐτή ἢ γυνή “the woman herself” or ἢ γυνή αὐτή “the woman herself.”

αὐτός may also agree with a pronoun or with the unexpressed subject of a verb: αὐτὸς ἔφη “he himself said (it)” (cf. the Latin expression *ipse dixit*).

2. In all cases, after the article (i.e., in the attributive position) αὐτός means *same*: πάντες εἶδομεν τὴν αὐτὴν γυναῖκα. “We all saw the same woman;” ἡ αὐτή (αὐτή) “the same woman;” ὁ αὐτός (αὐτός) “the same man/person;” ταῦτα τὰ αὐτά (often seen as ταῦτα ταῦτά by crasis) “these same things.”
3. In the oblique cases, αὐτοῦ *his*, αὐτῆς *her*, αὐτοῦ *its*, αὐτῶν *their* go into the genitive and are put into the predicate position.

βλέπω: aorist ἔβλεψα, *look, see, be alive*. At least since Homer, the Greeks equated seeing the light with life. The notion of sight and life will recur repeatedly in the play.

143 προνοπής, -ες: *face forward, leaning forward, stooped*. ψυχορραγεῖ: see line 20. Alcestis' physical state shows how close she is to death. The idea

of death being related to feebleness is emphasized once again. When the Maid describes Alcestis' actions, this notion of debility will be strongly negated by Alcestis' acts before she became feeble.

144 οὔαζ οἶος: Play on different forms of the same word was greatly appreciated by the Greeks. It is interesting that the Chorus members do not commit themselves to an explicit praise. While Alcestis is clearly admired for her act, they say of Admetus merely "of what kind" he is, which has yielded many interpretations. ἀμαρτάνω, ἀμαρτήσομαι, ἥμαρτον, ἡμάρτηκα: *miss the mark, make a mistake, lose* (see *Iliad* 6.411, σεῦ ἀφάμαρτούση, "when/if I lose/have lost you"). The verb ἀμαρτάνω seldom means "be bereft" or "lose," but usually intimates a mistake, failure, or fault due to "missing the mark." The Chorus' gently hinted criticism of Admetus is picked up more abruptly by the Maid in her immediate answer. It is noteworthy that this verb occurs nine times in the play. Only the *Hippolytus*, which is longer by 26 percent, has a higher occurrence of the base *hamart-* (fourteen times). What is especially interesting, though, is that the word is used in the *Alcestis* without any moral overtone of guilt or fault. In about half of the cases, it refers to a simple failure or mistake. Pheres' refusal to die for Admetus is indicated by the verb ἀμαρτάνω (709, 710), Admetus' possible remarriage will result from an error of his mind (ἀμαρτάνει, 327), and Heracles uses the word *hamartia* to describe both his possible failure to recover Alcestis from Thanatos and Admetus' refusal to admit the woman he brings to his house (850, 1099). The underlying meaning is thus an error or mistake. The other four uses of the word all refer to Admetus' bereavement of Alcestis (144, 342, 616, 879). Set against the word's other uses, its use here suggests that his loss or bereavement was also a mistake, an error of judgment and failure on Admetus' part in refusing to die. Euripides had several other verbs at his disposal to indicate Admetus' bereavement, and he uses them in the play: στερέω (200, 227; 622 of Pheres), ἀποστερέω (378, 384, 689), ἀμπλακίσκω (242, 418, 824, 1083), and μονώω (296, 380, 652). Still he chose to use ἀμαρτάνω as well. In none of the other extant tragedies is the verb used to indicate the bereavement of a dear one. By using this particular word, Euripides indicates to the spectators that Admetus' loss of Alcestis results from a mistake on his part.

By using ἀμαρτάνειν, Euripides explicitly melds Admetus' error of asking Alcestis (or anyone) to die instead of him with his unconsciousness that this is, in fact, an error. He does this by allowing Admetus himself to use the verb ἀμαρτάνω to mean *losing* his wife. That is, Admetus uses a verb that the audience connects with the commission of an error, without the awareness that he is making a mistake or that in so doing, he casts himself in the role of a hero about to fall. The impact of this doubly "unconscious" use is both provocative and abhorrent. It gives the impression that he admits his culpability in the death of his wife. Yet as his character unfolds it becomes clear that he is unaware of the magnitude of the ethical impropriety of asking another human being to die for him. Euripides thus succeeds in allowing Admetus both to admit and not to admit his responsibility for Alcestis' death. A century later, Aristotle will talk about *hamartia* as the protagonist's "tragic flaw" (*Poetics* 1453a). We have no evidence for the usage of this word as a term in literary criticism in the fifth century B.C.E., but this coincidence and other occurrences of the root in the play do raise the question of whether the term and the idea of tragic flaw were not somehow debated and discussed in the intellectual circles of fifth-century Athens. It is difficult to imagine that Aristotle's terminology came out of nothing.

ὦ τλήμων: refers to Admetus. ❖ τλήμων: *unhappy, suffering, enduring*.  
❖ οἶος: *of what sort, what a . . . !*

145 ❖ οὐπω: *not yet*. οἶδε: The Greek language has a variety of verbs to denote *knowledge* (εἰδέναι, ἐπίστασθαι, γινώσκειν, γνωρίζειν, μονθάνειν). The verb εἰδέναι stands out from all of them by denoting knowledge based on sight. οἶδα (related to εἶδον and Latin *video*) means "I have seen something and therefore I have the knowledge of it." The Maid's choice of verb continues her focus on Alcestis' visible condition in line 143: "The master doesn't know this yet, not until he experiences it." At the same time, she obliquely voices a criticism of Admetus, who cannot grasp what is happening physically to his wife, even though he sees it, and will become aware of her death only when it happens. It is intriguing that Euripides has put this covert criticism of Admetus right after the use of the verb ἀμαρτάνω in line 144. πρὶν ἂν πάθῃ: πρὶν = *until* (with the subjunctive referring to the future after a negative clause, see Goodwin and Gulick, 1486b).

146 † οὐκέτι: *no longer*.

147 πεπρωμένη: see line 21 and note. βιάζω: *force, compel*. βιάζεται: although the subject of the verb is *day*, it is once again the force of inescapable death that is brought out. Indeed, death comes perforce; it is by no means gentle.

148–49 τὰ πρόσφορα: “the offerings.” In her answer, the Maid focuses only on the dress Alcestis “will wear” when her husband will bury her. Since it has been noted in line 145 by the Maid that Admetus is still oblivious to the developing situation, it is likely that Alcestis herself, as macabre as this is, has prepared the clothes in which she will be buried. We may possibly read a note of sarcasm into the Maid’s comment that Admetus will bury his wife in this ready attire. Bringing Admetus to the fore here is part of the tragedian’s strategy. The unique circumstance of Alcestis’ knowing the day, if not the exact hour, of her death, allows her to do for herself the things the family (usually the women) do for a deceased relative—the bathing and dressing of the body.

148 οὔκουν: see line 60 and note. τὰ πρόσφορα: *suitable preparations*. πρᾶσσω = πρᾶττω.

149 † ἔτοιμος: *ready*. συν-θάπτω: *bury (along) with*. It was customary to bury objects along with a person’s body, such as ceramic pots, jewelry, and favorite belongings.

150 ἴστω: third singular imperative, “let her know” (with indirect statement using the participle). See note at line 140 for a review of the forms of οἶδα. Verbs of “knowing” and “showing” often take the participle in indirect statement (see Goodwin and Gulick, 1590–95). † εὐκλεής: *of good fame*. κατα-θνήσκω, καταθανοῦμαι = ἀποθνήσκω.

151 μακρῶ: *by far*.

152–53 ἀρίστη: Alcestis is repeatedly referred to as ἀρίστη (83, 151, 235, 241, 442, 742, Chorus; 152, Maid; 324, Alcestis; 899, Admetus) and κεδνή (97, Chorus). The emphasis on Alcestis’ nobility and glory yields her an almost Homeric *kleos*, the glory that is won by heroes on the battlefield, and only by males. On the other hand, by not awarding these epithets to Admetus, Euripides marks him as a nonhero. The epithet κεδνή, since the Homeric epics, denoted the wife’s concern for her husband’s well-being as reflected in the satisfactory running of his household. The term is applied to a wife who fulfills her domestic duties in an appropriate manner. She oversees the household slaves,

supervises the weaving (which women of all classes, even some goddesses, engaged in and through which they contributed considerably to the domestic economy) and so forth. Cf. H. Roisman 1984, 53–54. The dressing scene may also be reminiscent of epic scenes in which the warrior arming himself is described in detail before he distinguishes himself on the battlefield.

Alcestis' lack of faith in Admetus, manifested explicitly in lines 181 and 314–16, is foreshadowed here. It is the function of one's immediate family or friends to adorn the dead, but Alcestis does it for herself. She picks her garment and dresses herself in befitting fashion. The theme of Alcestis' proper adornment resurfaces when Pheres shows up with finery for her corpse (618–19).

152 ἐναντιόομαι: *oppose*.

153–54 “What would the woman surpassing her have to do [or be]?” ὑπερβάλλω: *surpass*.

155 προ-τιμῶσα: with ἐν-δείξαιτο. Verbs of “knowing” and “showing” usually take the participle in indirect statement. See line 150 and note. ὑπερ-: *on behalf of, for*.

156 † ἐπίσταμαι: deponent athematic verb, *know*.

157 † δράω: *do*. † κλύω: *hear*. Alcestis' personal slave describes her mistress' activities in the house. This description of details from the scene Apollo has just left and mentioned in passing makes the appearance of Alcestis more real to the audience. These activities are more suited to narrative than to the stage—too many things are happening, there is too much movement from place to place, and too many characters are involved for effective staging.

158 ἥσθετο: fr. † αἰσθάνομαι. † κύριος: *having authority, appointed*; as a noun, *lord*. Every woman, at all times of her life, was under the guardianship of a κύριος. From her father, she passed to her husband or a brother; a widow went back to her father or was in the charge of her son or another relative. Her children were *his* and would return to her husband's family if she remarried, unless nobody claimed them.

159 ἤκουσαν: fr. † ἤκω *have come*. ὕδασι: fr. † ὕδωρ. ποτάμιος, (-α), -ον: *of a river*. λευκός: *white*. χρώς, χρωτός, ὄ: accusative χρῶτα or χρώα, *flesh, skin*.

160 λούω: *wash*. ἐκ δ' ἐλοῦσα: tmesis for ἐξελοῦσα (fr. ἐξαίρέω). Tmesis (“cutting”) is the separation of the prefix from the verb. It is common

in epic poetry and may represent a linguistic stage when the prefixes were separable, working as the adverbs they originally were. κέδρινος: of cedar (κέδρινοι δόμοι refer to closets or chests made of cedar).

161 ἐσθής, -ῆτος, ἡ: *clothing*. εὐπρεπῶς: *becomingly*. ἡσκήσατο: fr. ἀσκέω “she adorned herself.”

162 Hestia is the goddess of the hearth, She was of special concern to women, because they were grounded at the family hearth. σῆσα: fr. ἴστημι. πρόσθε(ν): + genitive, *before*. κατ-εύχομαι: fr. ✚ εὐχομαι *pray*.

163 δέσποινα, -ης, ἡ: *mistress, lady of the house*. This is an appropriate term of address to Hestia because the root is *dem-*, the Indo-European root for *home*.

164 πανύστατον: *for the very last time*. προσ-πίτνω: *fall before*; ✚ πίτνω = πίπτω. ✚ αἰτέω: *ask, beg*.

165 ✚ τέκνον: related to ✚ τίκτω *child* (see lines 270, 272, 294, 305, 309, 313, 318, 377, 379, 389, 465, 514, 614, 620, 820, 947, 1136). ὀρφανεύω: *take care of orphans*.

166 συ-ζεύγνυμι: ✚ ζεύγνυμι *yoke, unite*. ✚ ἄλοχος, ἡ: *wife* (see lines 242, 473, 599, 876, 880, 917, 998, 1095). ✚ γένναιος, -α, -ον: *noble*

167 ἡ τεκοῦσα: fr. τίκτω *mother* (see lines 16, 290, 338, 469, 517, 637, 638, 661, 865, 958).

167–68 Alcestis prays to Hestia for her children not to die before their time, as she is about to do. One may wonder whether she fears that Admetus might one day ask his own children to die for him when his time comes up again. She also prays for a loving wife for her son and a well-born husband for her daughter. The children are much on her mind in this imagined scene behind the house door, as they will be in her onstage scene. She does not mention Admetus in her prayer.

168–69 The infinitives depend on δός “grant that” (aorist imperative of δίδωμι, supplied from the context), or on an understood “I ask you (not)” (see line 50).

168 ἄωρος, -ον: ἄ- + ὥρα *untimely, before their time*.

169 τερπνός, -η, -ον: *happy, delightful*. ἐκπλήσαι: fr. ἐκ-πίμπλημι *fill out, complete*.

170 ✚ βωμός, -οῦ, ὁ: *altar* (see lines 133, 973, 1156).

171 κάξέστεψε = καὶ ἐξέστεψε fr. ἐκστέφω *crown, adorn with garlands* (cf. στέφανος *crown, garland* fr. στέφω *to put around*). προσηύξατο: fr. εὐχομαι *pray*. See κατηύξατο (162).

172 “cutting foliage of myrtle branches.” **πτόρθος**: *a young branch*. **ἀποσχίζω**: *cut away, cut off*. **μυρσίνη**: *myrtle*. **φόβη**: *a lock of hair, mane* (line 429), *foliage* (of trees or shrubs). Myrtle, an aromatic evergreen shrub, native to the Mediterranean, was (and still is) a favorite plant for various kinds of ceremonial decoration. It was sacred to Aphrodite. In Euripides' *Electra*, it is mentioned (at line 234), significant by its absence at the tomb of Agamemnon. At 511–12, the aged family retainer tells of coming upon the tomb of Agamemnon and honoring it with wine and myrtle:

σπονδάς τε, λύσας ἀσκὸν ὃν φέρω ξένοις,  
ἔπεισα, τύμβῳ δ' ἀμφέθηκα μυρσίνας.

I opened the wineskin I am bringing for the guests and poured libations, and I covered the tomb with myrtle.

In the same play, Aegisthus cuts myrtle for a crown for his own head (778) in preparation for his sacrifice to the Nymphs, at which he himself will soon be sacrificed.

It may be significant that the slave speaks here of cutting “the hair” (φόβη) of the myrtle, as if the myrtle itself were one of the mourners whose hair is cut at the death of the woman of the house. At 429 the word is used again of the manes of horses that are also to be cut in mourning for Alcestis throughout the land.

173–75 Lack of tears and lamentations on Alcestis' part and her preserving a lovely complexion in spite of death's approach mark Alcestis yet again as a Homeric hero despite her being a woman. In the *Iliad*, the bodies of heroes, even when wounded or killed, neither decay nor remain disfigured.

173 **ἄκλαυ(σ)τος**: of two terminations like most compound adjectives, *without weeping*. **ἀστένακτος**: *without lamenting*. **τοὔπιόν** = τὸ ἐπιόν (fr. ἔπειμι fr. εἶμι) with κακόν (174).

174 **μεθίστη**: imperfect fr. μεθ-ίστημι *change*. **χρωτός**: fr. χρώς (see line 159). **εὐειδής**: *of beautiful form, fair*.

175 ✧ **ἔπειτα**: *then, next, after that* (κᾶπειτα = καὶ ἔπειτα). ✧ **θάλαμος**: *bedroom*. **ἐσπεσοῦσα**: fr. εἰσ-πίπτω. ✧ **λέχος, -ους, τό**: *bed*.

176 **ἐνταῦθα δὴ**: *then at last*. **ἴδακρυσε = ἐδάκρυσε** fr. δακρύω *weep*.

177 † λέκτρον: *bed*. † ἐνθα: *where, there*. παρθένειος: *of a maiden, virgin*.  
παρθένεια κορεύματα: *virginity, girlhood*.

178 πέρι (instead of περί): the accent shifts back when the preposition follows its case.

179 † ἐχθαίρω: *hate*. ἀπόλεσας: fr. † ἀπ-όλλυμι active *destroy, kill, lose*, middle *perish, die*, perfect (- ὄλωλα) *be dead, be ruined*.

180 μόνην: This is the manuscripts' version (some editors emend to μόνον). As Dale points out (at 179–80), these lines are difficult. Alcestis addresses her marriage bed, which symbolizes her marriage to Admetus, and says that she does not hate it. The bed/marriage has brought death only to her. It is possible that she opposes herself to her children, not to Admetus. After all, Admetus' thirst for life could have brought an early demise to the children. † προδίδωμι: *betray, forsake* (see lines 202, 250, 275, 290, 659, 1059, 1096). ὀκνέω: *shrink from, be reluctant to*.

181 Alcestis expects that Admetus will remarry. † κτάομαι: *possess*.

182 † σόφρων: *virtuous, wise, modest, chaste*. ἄν: implies a potential optative. † μᾶλλον: adverb, *more* (with σόφρων and understood with εὐτυχής). ἴσως: *perhaps*. The servant's direct quotation of her mistress brings this scene to life. See Irene J. F. de Jong, "Three Off-Stage Characters in Euripides," *Mnemosyne* 43 (1990): 1–21.

183 κυνέω: *kiss*. † πίτνω = πίπτω *fall*. δέμνιον: *bedding, bed*.

184 "was soaked with a flood of tears."

185 κόρος: *enough*.

186 † στείχω: *go*. προνωπής: see line 143 where the servant described her mistress' physical state as being both dead and alive.

187 πολλά: *many times*. ἐξιῦσ': fr. ἐξ + εἶμι (for conjugation see note at 65). ἐπεστράφη: aorist passive ἐπεστράφην, fr. ἐπι-στρέφω *turn back*.

188 κᾶρριπεν = καὶ ἔρριπεν fr. ῥίπτω *throw, hurl*. † αὐτήν = ἐαυτήν. † αὖθις: *again*. † κοίτη: *bed*. † πάλιν: *back*.

189 ἐξαρτάω: compound verb + genitive, *hang upon*.

190 † κλαίω: *weep* (see line 192). ἀγκάλη: *arm, bend of an arm or leg*.

191 ἀσπάζομαι: *greet, welcome, embrace*. ἄλλοτε ἄλλον: *one after the other*. ὥς: with the participle, here "showing that" (Earle).

192 οἰκέτης, -ου, ὁ: *servant*.

193 οἰκτίρω: *pity*. δεξιᾶ: *right hand*.

194 προ- + τείνω: *stretch forth, stretch out*. κακός: *here, low, base*.

195 προσερρήθη: aorist passive, as if of λέγω; understand “by whom” (Alcestis is the subject of both verbs).

197–200 The tragedy of Admetus, ensuing from his reluctance to die and his allowing Alcestis to die for him, is gradually established in the text. It is noteworthy that the Maid has hardly mentioned Admetus in her lengthy speech, although we are just about to learn that he is holding the dying Alcestis in his arms.

197 τᾶν = τοι ᾶν. ὄλετο: fr. ὄλλυμι.

198 † ἄλγος, -ους, τό: *pain, grief*. † (ἐπι-)λανθάνομαι: *forget*; λελήσεται future perfect fr. λανθάνομαι + genitive *forget*.

199 ἦ που: *surely, I suppose*. Admetus has not been mentioned in the servant’s speech except as master of the house with its sorrows, which surround him in line 196. The Chorus brings him back into the picture with this question. † στενάζω: *groan, bewail, lament*.

200 † στερέω: *deprive*.

201 † ἄκοιτις: *wife*.

202 λίσσομαι: *pray, beseech*. † προδίδωμι: *betray, forsake, leave*. προδοῦναι: Euripides’ use of the verb “to betray” in Alcestis’ address to the bed (179–81), in Admetus’ words here, and in the subsequent echo (250) highlights the theme of betrayal in the play (see W. Smith 1968, 40–41). Προδίδωμι can mean either “to betray” or “to leave.” Even if Admetus uses it in the latter sense, the other meaning is there as well. In choosing it for Admetus, Euripides allows the audience to hear both meanings and decide which better fits him. ἀμήχανος: *impossible, without resource or device*.

203 μαραίνομαι: *waste away*. νόσος, -ου, ἦ: *sickness*. μαραίνεται νόσφ: Alcestis’ death is not a quick one, like that of an epic warrior who is mortally wounded in battle; rather it is described as a slow-moving disease that sucks the life away from her (cf. line 236). While this is happening, her physical ability is affected, but her mind is not.

204 παρειμένη: fr. παρήμι *faint, relax* (used here with the accusative of respect). ἄθλιος: *sad, wretched*. βάρος, -ους, τό: *weight*.

Between 204 and 205 a lacuna (or gap) has been detected. Of recent editors, Diggle and Garzya delete the lacuna, and Kovacs adds a line.

205 σμικρός = μικρός. πνέω: *breathe*.

206 αὐγή: *ray*.

208 ἄκτις: *ray*. The brackets around this line indicate that it is believed to be an interpolation, perhaps a further explanation added by a commentator. Many editors also bracket line 207.

209 παρουσία: *presence*.

210 † τ: adverbial accusative, *at all*. εἶ φρονέω: *be in a good frame of mind toward*. κοίρανος: *king, ruler* (see line 214).

211 εὐμενής: *well-disposed*.

## FIRST STASIMON (213–37)

The focus of this short ode moves gradually from Zeus, the father, to Apollo, his son, and eventually turns to Admetus, a human. The Chorus is certain that both Zeus and Apollo can do something because they have the power and indeed Apollo has already proven he can interfere with Death. At the same time they are sure nothing will happen. It is ironic that they suggest to Admetus a variety of ways to die once he is bereaved of Alcestis, thus nullifying his desire to live at any cost, especially at the cost of Alcestis' life.

### Strophe (213–25):

—Ah Zeus, what way out of evils, how,  
where

might there be a way? And release from  
the fortune

that is upon our rulers?

—Alas! Will anyone come or must I  
cut my hair

and change into

black clothes of mourning?

—It is plain, friends, plain, but still  
let us pray to the gods,

for great is the might of the gods.

—Oh Lord Paian,

find a way out of evils for Admetus.

### Antistrophe (226–37):

—Woe . . . . .

Oh child of Pheres, how badly you  
have fared,

deprived of your wife.

—Alas, are these things not worthy of  
cutting one's throat

and more than enough to put one's  
neck

in a high hung rope?

—For you will see

not a dear, but the dearest wife

die on this day.

—Look, look,

she is coming out and her husband  
with her.

—Grant one, grant it. For even  
before this,  
you discovered a way, even now  
be a savior from death,  
stop bloody *Hades*.

—Cry out! Lament, oh Pheraian  
land,  
for the best of wives,  
wasting away with sickness  
and going beneath the earth to *Hades*.

### Strophe and antistrophe

213 ~- ~- [-] ~- ~- 226 ~- . . . . .  
214/227 ~ / - ~- ~- ~-  
214b/228 ~- ~- / - ~- ~-  
215/229 - - ~- ~- ~- ~- -  
216/229b ~- ~- ~- / ~- ~- ~-  
217/230 ~- ~- ~- ~- -  
218/231 ~- ~- ~- ~- ~-  
219 ~- ~- ~- ~- ~-  
232 ~- ~- ~- ~- ~-  
219b/232b ~- ~- ~- ~- ~-  
220 - - ~- - 233 ~- ~- ~-  
221/233b ~- ~- ~- / - ~- ~- ~- / ~- ~- ~-  
222/234 ~- ~- ~- ~- ~- ~- ~-  
223 † ~- ~- † - 235 - - ~- ~- ~-  
224/236 ~- ~- ~- ~- ~- ~- ~-  
225/237 ~- ~- ~- ~- ~- ~- ~-

Notice long -α- for -η-.

The Chorus sings in despair over the coming death, moved by the Maid's description of Alcestis' courage. They even make the ironic suggestion that Admetus' loss is worthy of suicide.

213 πῆ = πη, *where*. τίς with πόρος: *way, crossing*.

215 τέμω: fr. τέμνω, deliberative subjunctive, *cut*. θρίξ, τριχός ἡ: *hair* (see line 76).

216 μέλας, μέλαινα, μέλαν: genitive μέλανος, *black*. στολμός: *clothing*. πέπλος: *robe* (see line 189).

217 ἀμφιβαλώμεθα: fr. ἀμφι + βάλλω.

218 **δηλα:** fr. δηλος.

219 **✠ εὐχομαι:** *pray*. **-μεσθα:** common in poetry for **-μεθα**.

220 **ᾠναξ** = ᾠ ἄναξ.

221 **έξ + εὐρίσκω:** the form is imperative.

222 **✠ πορίζω:** *provide*. **πάρος:** *before*. It is typical of Greek prayer to remind the god of past favors.

223 The text is corrupt here. Perhaps ἐξεῦρες, καὶ νῦν.

224 **λυτήριος:** fr. λύω *liberating, releasing*. **γενοῦ:** imperative.

225 **φόνιος:** *murderous*.

226 **παπαῖ:** a cry of distress (perhaps used here in a significant juxtaposition to ᾠ παῖ in line 227). Some of the most anguished tragic cries can be found in the second episode (lines 730–826) of Sophocles' *Philoctetes*. Consider especially 745–46, 750:

ἀπόλωλα, τέκνον· βρύκομαι, τεκνον· παπαῖ,  
ἀπαππαπαῖ, παπᾶ παπᾶ παπᾶ παπαῖ.  
ἴθ' ᾠ παῖ. . . .

227 Pheres is Admetus' father. **πράττω:** means both *experience* and *achieve, manage, or do*. (Here it means *fare*, as it often does with an adverb or a neuter plural adjective.) **στερέω:** *deprive, bereave*.

228 **σφαγή:** *cutting the throat*.

229 **βρόχος:** *noose*. **δέρη:** *neck*.

230 **πελάζω:** *bring near*.

232 **ἐπόψη:** fr. -όράω. **ἄματι:** = ἡματι fr. ἡμαρ *day*.

233 **ιδὸν ιδού:** "look, look!"

234 The verbs are first aorist imperatives. **βοάω:** *cry aloud*. **στενάζω:** see 199.

236 **μαραίνομαι:** *waste away* (see line 203).

The Maid ends the first episode with a hint that there may be some who are not friends to the masters (that is, to Admetus, 210–12). The Chorus takes up the theme suggested by the words τὰμήχανα ζητῶν (202–203), which show the fecklessness of Admetus, and turns the Maid's reproach into an expression of hope for salvation, showing clearly their loyalty to the house and king (see especially the prayer to Paian to find a μηχανά, 220–21), for it is Admetus' irrational (or insensitive) refusal to face facts

that the Chorus here imitates. The prayer for salvation keeps hope alive, if only verbally, especially in the prayer to Zeus, whose son will come and save Alcestis. If we have forgotten the prologue prophecy, we are reminded of it here. The prayer to Apollo the healer is, however, ironic, because we already know that Apollo is the cause of the present ἀμχανία and is himself helpless to save this woman. Zeus, too, had his part in the complicated series of events that led to the present ἀμχανία, because it was he who struck down Asclepius, presumably for doing what Heracles will do, that is, raise the dead. Knowledge, in particular the knowledge that this day is the fated day, takes away hope for the Chorus. The troubles spoken or sung of are still those of Admetus, but now the Chorus, for the first time, dwells on the awkwardness of Admetus' position, ironically suggesting that his present grief is worthy of suicide (228–30). After twice calling Alcestis ἀρίστη (235, 241), they suggest that Admetus' life is not worth living (242–43)—his is definitely not the ideal life. It is, then, in the first episode and first stasimon, that a significant contrast between Alcestis and Admetus is established. That she is the “best wife” implies—given the circumstances—that he is a less than perfect husband. Her control is contrasted with his impotence. These differences are sustained in the following scene in which, for the only time, we see and hear the two together. (See Luschnig 1995, 40.)

## SECOND EPISODE (238–434): ALCESTIS, ADMETUS, CHILDREN, CHORUS

The royal family comes out in state. This is a “moving tableau” scene (see Halleran 1985, 11, 14–15). It is likely that the *eccyclema* was used here. This was a scenic device (“thing rolled out” fr. ἐκκύκλημα, a platform on wheels or a revolve) that revealed the result of an action that had taken place offstage. If it is used here, Alcestis would be seen lying on her couch with the family members about her. The device would be rolled or rotated back into the *skene* at the end of the second episode.

At first Alcestis is delirious, feeling the approach of death. Notice how Admetus responds. In several other plays, Euripides introduces his characters in a similar way. Phaedra, in the *Hippolytus*, also sings a



The second episode of *Alceste* showing the *ecyclema*. Drawing by A. L. H. Robkin.

delirious song (whether her delirium is real or feigned is subject to debate) and then speaks rationally. Medea (in *Medea*) is first heard offstage in a rage, but, when she enters from the house and speaks to the Chorus, she delivers a rational and highly political discourse. Alceste recovers from her battle with death long enough to make her last requests and say farewell to her children. Admetus' promises, however bizarre, keep the story going.

238–43 The Chorus seems to mourn for Admetus as much as for Alceste. Their belief that he will live a life not worth living once again invalidates Admetus' quest for survival at any cost, an idea that the playwright subtly plants in the text. Hinting at it through the Chorus has a special force because they usually have no direct involvement in the plot. The Chorus' assumption about Admetus' future emptiness may arise from a belief that marriage is a union of two people who care for each other and are united to such an extent that the departure of one

will make life inconsequential for the other (see lines 472–76). If this is the nature of the bond between Admetus and Alcestis, then the following exchange between them, which involves a high degree of miscommunication, is of great importance for understanding the relationship between the husband and the wife who is dying, presumably for him.

238 **φημί, φήσω**: with indirect statement taking the infinitive construction, *say*. **εὐφραίνω**: *delight, bring pleasure*.

239 **πλέον**: irregular comparative of **πολύς**. **† λυπέω**: *cause grief, pain, distress*; middle *feel grief, sorrow*. **πάροιθεν**: *before*.

240 **τεκμαίρομαι**: *form a conclusion*.

241 **λεύσσω**: *see* (see line 82).

242 **ἀπλακόν**: fr. ἀμπλακίσκω + genitive, *lose*. **ἀβίωτος, -ον**: *untlivable* (cf. the famous words of Socrates: ὁ δὲ ἀνεξέταστος βίος οὐ βιωτὸς ἀνθρώπων, *Apol.* 38a).

243 **ἔπειτα**: here in the sense of *after that*, used as an attributive to **χρόνον** (see line 13 and note). **βιοτεύω**: *live, spend a life*.

244–45, 248–49 Alcestis calls on the elements (cf. Medea's Nurse in *Medea*, line 57), perhaps adding a contemporary reference to Anaxagoras' scientific investigations (see Dale, Conacher ad loc.) in the words οὐράνια δῖναι. Alcestis sings; Admetus answers in the iambs of ordinary dialogue until line 273.

Alcestis' Song:

244/248 ~~~~~

245/249 ~~~~ ~~~~~

252/259 ~~~~~ ~~~ / ~ -

253/260 ~~~~~

254/261 ~~~~~ / ~ ~ -

255 ~~~~~ 262 ~~~~~

256 ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ 263 [~ ~] ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

257/263a ~ ~ ~ -

266 ~~~~~ -

267 ~~~~~

268 ~ ~ -



251 οἰκτίρω: *pity*.

252 ὀρῶ . . . ὀρῶ: an example of pathetic repetition. It is as if Alcestis sees the oars first as they propel the boat toward her. δίκωπον σκάφος: *two-oared boat*. λίμνη: *lake*.

253 νέκυς: *dead person, corpse*, plural *the spirits, the dead* (see lines 102, 260). πορθμεύς: *ferryman*.

254 ἐπὶ κοντῶ: *at the rudder*. κοντός: *pole* (for steering a boat). Charon is the ferryman of the Netherworld who carries the dead across the lake of Acheron.

Charon in his boat is a character in Aristophanes' *Frogs* in a wonderfully comic scene. He enters around line 180 and is hailed by Dionysus (who has gone down under to bring back a tragic poet since they were all dead) with what must have seemed a very funny line (lifted by Aristophanes from the *Aithon*, a satyr play by Achaëus):

χαῖρ' ὦ Χάρων, χαῖρ' ὦ Χάρων, χαῖρ' ὦ Χάρων.

(184)

The greeting is repeated three times in parody of the triple address to the dead, and it makes a play on the likeness of Charon's name to the verb χαίρω. In the comedy, even Charon is a snob, refusing to take on board the slave Xanthias, who accompanied Dionysus on his trip. Dionysus has to do the rowing in time to Charon's:

ὦπ ὄπ ὦπ ὄπ.

(208)

After this imitation of the up and down of oars, the chorus of frogs appears singing their famous cry:

βρεκεκεκὲξ κοᾶξ κοᾶξ  
βρεκεκεκὲξ κοᾶξ κοᾶξ.

(209–10)

255 τί μέλλεις: "Why are you delaying?"

256 ἐπείγου: "Hurry!" σὺ κατείργεις: "You are holding [us] up!" τᾶδε: adverbial accusative or internal object of ταχύνει, "in this way" (see note

at 648). **σπέρχω**: *set in rapid motion*; mostly used in the passive *be in haste, rage*. The participle may be translated “crossly” or “hurriedly.” **ταχύνω**: *speed, hurry*.

257 † **πικρός**: *bitter*. **ναυκληρία**: *voyage*.

260 † **αὐλή**: *hall, court*.

261 ὑπ’ ὀφρύσι κυαναυγέσι: “under his dark brows.”

262 **περωτός**: *winged*. There are several possible readings of this line.

Diggle: βλέπων περωτός Ἴδιδας. Murray/Dale: βλέπων περωτός ταΐιδας†.

Garzya: βλέπων, περωτός—Ἴδιδας.

263 **μέθεε**: imperative of μεθήμι, *let go* (see line 266, μέθετε). **ρέζω**,

**ρέξω**: *do*. **ἄφεε**: fr. ἀφήμι *let go*. **δειλαιος**: *wretched*. **ἄ δειλαιοτάτα**: = ἡ δειλαιοτάτη in agreement with the subject.

264 † **οἰκτρός**: *pitiful*. οἰκτρὰν refers to ὁδόν in line 263 (cf. *Medea*, 1067–68).

265 † **πένθος**, -ους, τό: *grief, mourning, pain*.

267 οὐ σθένω ποσίν: dative of respect, “I have no strength in my feet.”

**ποσίν**: fr. πούς (not to be confused with πόσις *husband*).

268 **πλήσιον**: adverb, *near*.

269 † **σκότιος**, -α, -ον: *dark*. ἐπ’ ὄσσοισι: “upon my eyes.” ἐπι- + ἔρπω: *creeps upon*.

271 σφῶν: second person pronoun, dual genitive.

272 ὀρῶτον: dual second singular present optative of ὀράω used in an optative of wish. Alcestis says all the things we might expect of a dying person. This could be thought of as her first death scene and her first onstage farewell to the children. Admetus tries to rally her, and it works for a while.

Admetus’ “Song”:

273 - ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

274 - ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

275 - ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

276 - ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

277 - ~ ~ ~ ~

278 - ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

279 - ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

279a - ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

273 † λυπρός, -ά, -όν: *sad, distressing, painful, causing grief.*

274 Genitive of comparison.

275 μῆ . . . τλης: fr. τλάω (see line 1). πρὸς with θεῶν: *in the name of the gods.* σε: understand "I beg."

276 ὀρφανίζω: future ὀρφανῶ *orphan.*

277 ἄνα: preposition used as an adverb with shift of accent (anastrophe), *up.* τόλμα: fr. τολμάω *take courage.*

278 φθιμένος: fr. † φθίνω *perish, die* (see lines 55, 80, 93, 203, 278, 414, 866, 899, 986, 989, 995.)

279 σέβομαι: *honor, revere.*

280–325 This is Alcestis' major speech. In the iambs of ordinary speech, she asks her husband to promise not to remarry. Her farewell to her daughter is particularly touching.

Why does Alcestis agree to die? Dyson 1988, 14; Bell 1980, 44; and others think that it is only for Admetus' sake that Alcestis undertakes this supreme sacrifice. On the one hand, the emotional scene in the bedchamber and the words *πρεσβέουσα* (282) and *προτιμῶς* (155) argue for the priority of Admetus. There are, however, compelling arguments for multiple motivations: Apollo speaks of saving the *house* (rather than just the man); Alcestis is mostly concerned with the children and their futures (cf. her prayers for the children); the reason Alcestis gives for not wanting Admetus to remarry concerns the little girl; and finally, the more personal and pathetic part of her last speech is addressed to the children (see Luschnig 1995, n. 104). This may be reminiscent of Antigone's mixed motivations in Sophocles' play that bears her name, or of the way Aeschylus portrays Clytemnestra's multiple motivation for killing Agamemnon: her grief over the sacrifice of her daughter, her infatuation with Aegisthus, her craving for power, and her hatred for her husband.

280 † ὡς ἔχει: *how it is, how they are.*

281 πρίν: + infinitive, *before.*

282 πρεσβεύω: *honor.*

283 καταστήσασα: fr. καθίστημι *having caused (you).*

284 † παρόν: accusative absolute, "it being possible." The accusative absolute is used instead of the genitive absolute when the verb is impersonal.

286 † ναίω: *dwell*. ὀλβιος: *prosperous, wealthy*.

287 ἀποσπάω: *tear away from*.

288 † φείδομαι: + genitive, *spare*.

289 ἦβη: *youth*. Understand ἐκεῖνα as the antecedent of οἷς. † τέρω: *delight*.

290 † ὁ φύσας: fr. φύω (your) *father*. χῆ: = καὶ ἡ. † ἡ τεκοῦσα: fr. τίκτω (your) *mother*.

291 Literally, “It having come [to such a time] of life for them to die honorably.” ἦκον: accusative absolute fr. ἦκω (see Goodwin and Gulick, 1571). βίου: is a partitive genitive with the demonstrative (telling what point of life) omitted.

294 φιτεύω: *produce*.

295 ἔζω: fr. ζάω The imperfect with ἄν in a contrary to fact apodosis (“if one of Admetus’ parents had died . . .”). λοιπός, -ή, -όν: fr. λείπω (cf. λέλοιπα) *remaining, rest of*.

296 μονώ: *leave alone, bereave*. στένω: *groan, lament*.

297 ὀρφανεύω: *take care of orphans, rear orphaned children*.

297–98 Although no specific god is named, it seems that Apollo is criticized here, because the emphasis is on Admetus’ mourning for his wife and taking care of orphaned children.

299 εἶεν: *very well*. ἀπο-μιμνήσκω: *remember*. ἀπόμνησαι: aorist middle imperative. ἀπόμνησαι χάριν: “remember to be grateful.”

300 † αἰτέω: see line 164. ἄξιαν: understand χάριν.

301 τίμιος: *valuable, precious*.

302 δίκαια: object of αἰτήσομαι. τούσδε with παιδάς: see line 303.

303 ἦσων -ον: irregular comparative, *less*.

304 ἄν-έχομαι: *take upon oneself, that is, assume the responsibility*.

305 ἰπιγήμης: = ἐπιγήμης “marry someone [to be] over [them].” μητρυιά: *stepmother*.

306 φθόνος: *envy, ill will*.

309 ἰπιούσα = ἐπιούσα fr. εἶμι (see line 173). The little girl gains prominence at the end of this speech. A daughter needs a mother to be there for her, to arrange her wedding, and to stand by her in childbirth, something no stepmother (in a story) is likely to do. Thus the word μητρυιάν intrudes between τοῖσδε and τέκνοις; the stepmother brings out the distinction between the two children. τέκνοις is used because its root refers to giving birth (cf. τίκτω, aorist stem -τεκ-). The idea of a

stepmother makes Alcestis think of the gender-related differences between the children more closely. In the other passage about the children (165–69) the μέν and δέ clauses had been generic. Now she thinks of the special mother-daughter relationship, the shared experience of women, made more special by the seven lines addressed just to the little girl (313–19; at 320 she begins the transition of address to both the children and Admetus). Admetus, though he promises to be both father and mother to the children, is not to be seen as taking on the special role of the real mother; all he can do is protect the children from a stepmother. His promise, however is also another way of excluding a new wife. For a Euripidean example of the unloving stepmother, there is Glauke's look of disgust (*Medea*, 1147–49) when she sees Jason's children come into her chambers, and those children are boys. Medea had already behaved in a similar fashion when the children were brought into the house by the old *paidagogos* (113–14), turning herself into the stepmother and hating the children. When Alcestis talks about the slur a stepmother might cast upon her little girl, she hints at the special father-daughter relationship (cf. *Iphigenia at Aulis* 1220–30) of which a second wife would be jealous. By the time she gets to the boast that will be the children's inheritance from their mother (324–25), it has taken on a heartrending pathos. Compared to what they have lost, the gain is just an added burden, a frigid delight (cf. 353). It is also noteworthy that she thinks of the new wife first in terms of her relationship to the children rather than to Admetus (cf. Luschnig 1995, 47).

310 ἐχίδνα: *viper*. ἥπιος: *gentle*.

311 ἄρσην: *male*. πύργος: *tower*.

312 Many editors delete this line. See line 195, where nearly the same line is used more meaningfully.

313 κορεύομαι: *grow to young womanhood*. Alcestis, directly addressing her daughter, shows that she is talking at Admetus rather than to him, as though she does not expect him to reply at all.

314 “. . . meeting with what wife of your father?” σύζυγος, -ον: *joined, married, yoked together*; as a noun, *husband, wife*.

315 Understand “I fear” lest . . . κληδών, -όνοσ, ἥ: *reputation, name*. A rare mention of the serious effect rumors could have in impeding young maidens from marrying “well.”

316 ἦβη: *youth* (see line 289). ἀκμή: *prime*. † διαφθείρω: *ruin, destroy*.

317 νυμφεύω: *attend a bride*.

318 † τόκος: *childbirth*. θαρσύνω: *encourage*.

319 ἴνα: *where*. † εὐμενής: *kindly, friendly* (see line 211).

320 † αὔριον: *tomorrow*.

321 † μῆν, μηνός, ὁ: *month*. Perhaps this means “not tomorrow or the day after” (the scholiast glosses with μεταύριον “the day after tomorrow”), or it may contain some reference to the “third of the month” that is obscure to us. One suggestion is that the “appointed day” of her death was the νουμηνία (contraction of νεο-μηνία *new moon, first of the month*), the day on which bills were due. Debtors were allowed a grace period until the third, but Alcestis is not granted the customary postponement. On death as a debt, see lines 419, 782; see also lines 682, 712.

322 † αὐτίκα: *immediately*. λέξομαι: *future middle used in a passive sense*. λέγομαι: *I am said (to be)*.

323 εὐφραίνω: *cheer, middle be cheerful*. πόσι: *vocative of πόσις*.

324 † ἔστι: *it is possible*. κομπάζω: *boast*.

325 Understand ἀρίστης with μητρός. ἐκφύω: *perfect ἐκπέφυκα generate, intransitive, be born of*. The perfect is intransitive.

326–27 The Chorus often speaks between long speeches, if for no other reason than to alert the audience to the change of speakers. Here, besides that functional role, they are showing that they are taking Alcestis’ side.

326 † θαρσέω: *be brave, fear not* (see line 38). ἄζομαι: *fear, shrink from*.

327 † φρήν, φρενός, ἡ: *heart, mind, senses* (see lines 108, 346, 674, 775, 797, 878). εἴπερ μὴ φρενῶν ἀμαρτάνει: “if he does not slip in his mind.” The Chorus seems to emphasize Alcestis’ concern with Admetus’ right thinking (cf. line 303).

328–68 Admetus’ speech sets up the plot for the rest of the drama and anticipates the spectacle at the end of the play.

328 τρέω: *fear, be afraid*.

328–30 Admetus’ first promise corresponds to Alcestis’ claim that she could get married to anyone she wanted in Thessaly (282–86) but preferred to die and shelter her children. Review the independent uses of the subjunctive:

Hortatory: “let us”

Prohibitive: μή + aorist subjunctive, “don’t”

Deliberative: for example, “what are we to do?”

329 Understand γυναῖκα μόνην with ζῶσαν.

330 κεκλήση: fr. ❖ καλέω.

331 “No Thessalian bride shall address me (τόνδ’ ἄνδρα) as husband.” Tragic characters often refer to themselves as “this man.” προσφθέγομαι, προσφθέγξομαι: *speak to, address as*.

332–33 In ancient Athenian culture, the two things desirable in a wife were good birth (two families marry, not just a man and a woman) and good looks. In the catalog of ships in the second book of the *Iliad*, Alcestis is called the “fairest of the daughters of Pelias.”

Οἱ δὲ Φέρας ἐνέμοντο παραὶ Βοιβηίδα λίμνην,  
 Βοίβην καὶ Γλαφύρας καὶ ἔϋκτιμένην Ἴαωλκόν,  
 τῶν ἦρχ’ Ἀδμήτιο φίλος πάϊς ἔνδεκα νηῶν  
 Εὐμηλος, τὸν ὑπ’ Ἀδμήτῳ τέκε δῖα γυναικῶν  
 Ἄλκηστις, Πελίαο θυγατρῶν εἶδος ἀρίστη.

*Iliad* 2.711–15

332 ❖ οὕτως: *so, thus*. πατρὸς εὐγενοῦς: genitive of description.

333 εἶδος: accusative of respect, *in form*. The two constructions in lines 332–33 are not parallel, and line 333 is not strictly logical:

ἄλλως ἐκπρεπεστάτη “otherwise most outstanding”  
 or ἄλλως “from another point of view” or “so beautiful *either*”  
 (Dale)

334–35 ὄνησιν, ὠνήμεθα: Euripides highlights the idea of profit and advantage by having Admetus use the same base for the noun and the verb, while the wordplay adds to the outrageousness of Admetus’ statement. Caught up in his inane propensity for rhetoric without regard for decorum, Admetus is apparently oblivious to the selfishness he is spouting as well as to the falsity of his assertion.

*Logos* and *ergon* reflect a traditional antithesis in Greek thought, and yet again, Admetus exhibits his lack of judgment. His parents are his *philoī* “in fact” (*ergon*) because they gave him his life. Euripides’ wordplay here shows Admetus’ failure to think things through.

334 ἄλις: *enough*. ὄνησις: *enjoyment*.

335 γενέσθαι: understand μοι, dative of possession. θεοῖς: with ❖ εὐχομαι. ὠνήμεθα: fr. ὀνίνημι *profit*; middle *have enjoyment of* (with the genitive).

336 οἷσω: review the principal parts of φέρω. ἐτήσιος: *for a year*. τὸ σόν: objective genitive designating the object of his grief, equivalent to σοῦ “for you.”

337 ἔστ’ = ἔστε *as long as*. αἰών: *age, life*. οὐμός = ὁ ἐμός. ἀντέχω: *resist, hold out, last*.

338 † στυγέω: *hate* (from the same root as Styx; see line 62). † τίκτω: *bear, give birth* (see line 16). † ἐχθαίρω: *hate* (cf. ἐχθρός).

340 ἀντι-δίδωμι: *give* (something in the accusative) *instead of* (something in the genitive).

341 ἔσωσας [με]: fr. † σφίζω (see line 9). ἄρα: emphatic question particle. πάρα = πάρεστιν *it is permitted*.

342 † τοιόσδε: *such as this*. † σύζυγος, ὁ, ἡ: *husband, wife* (one yoked with another). † ἀμαρτάνω: + genitive, *lose, fail, miss the mark* (see note at 144). † σέθεν = σοῦ “as you.”

343–46 The metonymy “garlands of a company” for “garlanded company” is forced by the wish for a parallel between κόμους “revelries” and “garlands,” but the hearers would have to strain to understand the parallelism, only to discover that it is meaningless. The inanity is further reinforced by the rhyme between στεφάνους and ἐμούς δόμους formed by inflection; this is a type of rhyme that the ancients avoided because it was easy to create. In addition, the alliteration of Λίβυν λακεῖν (346) supports the feeling that Admetus’ grief is artificial. All in all, the heaping up of rhetorical peculiarities, unfinished thoughts, and lack of proportion between syntax and meaning yield even more entertainment, to the point that the spectators might suspect that Euripides’ Admetus is not only a man who cannot think straight, but may also be inebriated. The pretentiousness of heaping rhetorical devices of alliteration, Λίβυν λακεῖν (346); προσπεσοῦμαι καὶ περιπτύσσων (350); and ψυχρὰν . . . τέρψιν (353), and of the *figura etymologica*, ἔχων ἔχειν (352), highlight the shallowness of Admetus’ sentiments. Euripides also uses rhetoric to emphasize Jason’s insincerity in the *Medea* (see Lloyd 1992, 42–43, 68).

343 † κῶμος: *revel*. συμποτής: *fellow drinker*. ὁμιλία: *company*.

344 στέφανος: *garland*. μουσα: *song, music*. κατέχω: *occupy, fill*. What tense is κατεῖχεν?

345 βάρβιτος: *lyre*. † θιγγάνω: + genitive, *touch*; potential optative.

346 † ἐξ-αίρω: *raise*. φρένα: fr. φρήν *heart, spirit, sense*. λακεῖν: second aorist infinitive of λάσκω *make a sound, sing*.

346–47 πρὸς Λίβυν αὐλόν: *to the Libyan flute*

347 ἐξείλου: fr. ἐξ-αιρέω. Review the principal parts of αἰρέω: αἰρέω, αἰρήσω, εἶλον, ἤρηκα, ἤρημαι, ἠρέθην. † τέρψις: *delight*.

348 † τέκτων: *craftsman, builder, carpenter*. † δέμας: *body, form*.

349 εἰκάζω: *make like*. ἐκταθήσεται: fr. † ἐκ-τείνω *stretch out, lay out*.

350 προσπεσοῦμαι: fr. † προσ-πίπτω. περιπτύσσω: *fold around*.

351 καλῶν: fr. † καλέω. Review the principal parts: καλέω, καλῶ, ἐκάλεσα, κέκληκα, κέκλημαι, ἐκλήθην. ἀγκάλῃ: *bent arm*.

353 ψυχρός: *cold, frigid*. † ὅμως: *still, nevertheless*. † βάρος -ους, τό: *weight*.

354 ἀπαντλέω: *drain off, bail out the bilgewater*. ὄνειρον or ὄνειρος (with neuter plural forms found in the third declension): *dream*.

355 φοιτάω: *move back and forth*. † εὐφραίνω: see line 238.

356 κὰν = καὶ ἐν. † λεύσσω: see. ὄντινα χρόνον: accusative of extent of time. παρῆ: fr. πάρεμι. Review εἰμί and compounds.

357 † μέλος, -ους, τό: *song melody* (see lines 454, 574, 760). παρῆν: fr. παρα- + εἰμί. For Orpheus' tragic love of Eurydice, see Vergil, *Georgics* 4.453–527, and Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 10.1–63. Eurydice, Orpheus' bride, died of a snakebite, and Orpheus, who was an accomplished singer, descended to Hades to bring her back. He enchanted Hades with his music, winning her conditional release. Orpheus was told not to look back while leading her up, but when they approached the world of the living, Orpheus turned to look at Eurydice, and she vanished forever. This allusion to the myth is one of the earliest found in Greek literature. There is no evidence, however, that Eurydice was returned by the powers of the Netherworld, which Admetus seems to imply.

357–60 What kind of condition is this? Review conditions:

### 1. Contrary to Fact

Present Time:

εἰ + imperfect . . . imperfect + ἄν  
were doing . . . would be doing

Past Time:

εἰ + aorist indicative . . . aorist indicative + ἄν  
had done . . . would have done

## 2. Future Conditions

## More Vivid:

ἐάν + subjunctive . . . future indicative  
(translate as present indicative) . . . will/shall

## Less Vivid:

εἰ + optative . . . optative + ἄν  
should . . . would

## 3. General Conditions

## Present General:

ἐάν + subjunctive . . . present indicative  
if ever, whenever + present . . . present

## Past General:

εἰ + optative . . . imperfect indicative  
if ever, whenever + past . . . past progressive (or “used to”)

358 ὥστε with λαβεῖν: result clause. † κόρη: *daughter*. The daughter of Demeter is Persephone (or Kore), wife of Hades. κείνης: = ἐκείνης (see line 18).

359 σε: object of λαβεῖν. κηλέω: *charm*.

360 κατήλθον: fr. ἔρχομαι. Πλούτων: a name for Hades, which, according to Plato, means “wealth-giver” (from πλοῦτος, *Cratylus* 403a). The idea is that the earth is the source of richness. “Hades,” in line 359, refers to the locale. The dog of Plouton (Pluto) is Cerberus, the monstrous watchdog of Hades, an offspring of Typhon and Echidna, with three (or, according to other sources, fifty) heads.

361 οὐπὶ = ὀ ἐπί. κόπη: *οαρ. ψυχοπομπός: the conductor of souls*.

362 ἔχω: *restrain, hold back*. Review the principal parts. καταστήσαι: fr. καθίστημι. Review the principal parts: ἵστημι, στήσω, ἔστησα, ἔστην, ἔστηκα, [ἔσταμαι], ἐστάθην.

363–64 For the importance to Admetus of being welcome when he comes home, see also lines 941–50.

363 † ἐκεῖσε: *there*. προσδοκάω: *expect, wait for*.

364 † ἐτοιμάζω: *prepare, make ready*. συνοικήσουσα: fr. συν-οικέω *live with*, often used to mean “live in wedlock with.” ὦς: + future participle.

365 ἐπισκήπτω: *enjoin, bid*. article + αὐτός + noun = “the \_\_\_\_\_” (see note at 142). κέδρος, -ου, ἡ: *cedar, cedar coffin* (cf. “pine box”).

366 τούσδε: object of ἐπισκήψω (refers to the children). θεῖναι: fr. τίθημι. What is the form? Review the principal parts: τίθημι, θήσω, ἔθηκα

(ἔθεμεν), τέθηκα, τέθειμαι, ἐτέθην. **πλευρὸν**: *rib*; plural *ribs*, *the side*.

✦ **τείνω**: *stretch*. ✦ **πέλας**: + dative, *near*, *next to*.

368 **χωρίς**: + preceding genitive, *apart*, *separated from*. **εἶην**: review

✦ **εἰμί**. ✦ **πιστός**: *loyal*, *faithful*.

370 **τῆσδε**: objective genitive, “for her.” **ἄξια**: neuter or feminine? How can you tell?

371–76 Alcestis’ call to her children to witness their father’s promise not to remarry, just after Admetus has finished a long peroration in which he promises as much repeatedly, shows that she is not taken in by her husband’s assurances, if she notices them at all. It is noteworthy that except for the one promise she asked for, she ignores them all and does not bother to thank him. Assuming that he cannot be trusted, she tries to make his pledge not to remarry as binding as possible, first by repeating it to her children and then by entrusting her children to his right hand in the same gesture that seals a property transfer. Children are important to a father for various reasons besides love and affection. As Admetus shows in his scene with his own father, having an heir (656–57) is a major consideration. The parents also expect the children to care for them in their old age, as Admetus has done for his own parents until now (658–60). Most important, the children had the duty of tending to the mortal remains and keeping up the funeral rituals and ceremonies for the dead ancestors, which Admetus declares he will not do for his own parents (663–65) but will do for Alcestis, whom he sees as his parent because she has given him life (666–68). In the present transaction, in the second episode (371–76), Admetus receives his own children. This is unusual because children are rarely alienated from a father unless he disowns them (cf. 737–38 where Admetus suggests the possibility of a son disowning his father and 636–41 where he declares himself illegitimate, taken up by Pheres at 675–78). In fifth-century Athens, after a divorce, the children usually stayed with their father. Even in the event of the man’s death, the children would belong to and be brought up by the husband’s family. Alcestis must feel that she has strong moral authority here in order to exact this bargain and to ensure before witnesses, both the children and the Chorus (and, of course, the audience), that it be binding.

372 **μή**: after the verb of (or implying) promising.

375 **ἐπὶ τοῖσδε**: *on these terms*, *on these conditions*. **δέχου**: imperative (see note at 618).

377 **γενοῦ**: what is the form? (see note at 618).

378 **με**: understand **γενέσθαι**. **ἀπεστερημένοις**: perfect passive participle of **ἀποστερέω** *deprive*.

379 **χρῆν**: “it was necessary,” “I should. . . .”

381 **μαλάσσω**: *soften*. In this brief sentence, Alcestis nullifies Admetus’ promise of everlasting grief. Heracles repeats the words **χρόνος μαλάσσει** at line 1085.

383 A woman, when using the plural to refer to herself, uses the masculine. **ἀρκέω**: *be enough, suffice*. (See *Antigone* 546, where Antigone refutes her sister’s confession and says “My death is enough.”)

385 **σκοτεινός**: *dark*. This is an anticipatory or proleptic use of the adjective: “so as to become dark.” **βαρύνω**: *weigh down* (see lines 42, 1048).

386 **ἀπωλόμην**: fr. **ἀπόλλυμι** (see line 179).

388 **ὄρθου**: fr. **ὀρθόω** *straighten, raise upright*. **πρόσωπον**: *face, mask* (see lines 777, 827, 877). **μὴ λίπης**: prohibitive subjunctive (see note at 328–30).

389 **ἐκοῦσα**: feminine of **ἐκών** *willing(ly)*.

390 **βλέψον**: fr. **βλέπω**. What is the form? (See note at 618.)

391 Alcestis dies. The first 390 lines of the *Alcestis* are a postponement of Alcestis’ death. The “one about to die,” far from being dead (527), is kept alive in various ways before she dies (with the occasional lapse, as when the Chorus pictures her already in Hades, but only to wish her out again). Apollo has come out of the house to avoid pollution from her faint dying breaths, and Death has gone in; both establish the theme of transition and the ambiguous status of Alcestis. After her death in the middle of line 391, although there can be no more delays, there are still ways of keeping her alive.

392 Review the principal parts of **βαίνω**: **βαίνω**, **βήσομαι**, **ἔβην**, **βέβηκα**. The child’s song: (Note  $\alpha$  for  $\eta$ .) The child is played by an extra, but his voice is probably the voice of the actor who played Alcestis. Notice that he hovers over her lips for this pathetic song. As often happens in Greek literature and art, the child is like a diminutive adult, expressing the same concerns as his parents. Particularly touching, however, is his inclusion of his little sister.

Alcestis says good-bye to her children (389) and utters only a syllable to Admetus (391) just before she dies. The child then sings a lament

that shows he is a member of this house. The family group makes for a poignant scene, and it is especially moving if the actor who played Alcestis sings the child's words, reminding the audience of Alcestis' special feelings for her children, especially her daughter. The child repeats the theme of the functional relationship of Alcestis to her family (396–97, 406–407). Especially significant are the words “the house is no more” (415), because if the house is in shambles, then her death has been in vain, since she died to save the house. Such words are not said of Admetus. He was not the one who held the house and family together, nor is he deemed vital to its continuation despite his being a man and king. Even in his own son's mind, Admetus' stature is diminished. The stripping of Admetus continues: he has failed as a spouse, as a parent, and as a child. Admetus' son ends his song by saying that his father's marriage was in vain.

393 **τύχας** = τύχης, genitive of cause, translate “for. . .” **μαῖα**: *mama, nurse*.

394 † **βαίνω**: review the principal parts (see note at 392).

396 † **λείπω**: principal parts. **ἄμός** = ἐμός/ἡμέτερος.

397 † **ὀρφανίζω**: *make (one) an orphan*. **τλάμων** = τλήμων (see line 144).

399 **ἴδε**: aorist imperative of † ὀράω. Notice the pathetic repetition.

**βλέφαρον**: *eyelid*. **παράτονος**: *hanging limp, listless*.

400 **ὑπακούω**: *listen, give ear, answer a call* (for the form, see note at 618). **ἀντιάζω**: *I implore*.

402 **ποτί** = πρὸς. **νεοσσός**: *little bird, little one*.

404 “[You call on] her (τήν). . . not hearing or. . .” † **κλύω**: *hear*.

† **ὀράω**: review the principal parts: ὀράω, ὄψομαι, εἶδον.

405 **σφώ**: nominative, “you two.” **πεπλήγμεθα**: fr. πλήσσω *strike*.

406 **φίλας** = φίλης, with **ματρός**.

407 **μονόστολος**: *alone, going alone*.

408 † **σχέτλιος**: with ἔργα, *enduring, cruel, miserable*.

410 **σύγκασις**: *sister*. † **κούρα** = κόρη *girl, daughter*.

412 **ἀνόνατ'**: = ἀνόνατα, adverbial, *in vain*. **νυμφεύω**: *marry*. **γήρωσ**: genitive of γήρας, *old age* (see line 52 and note).

413 **τᾷδε** = τῇδε.

414 **ἔφθιτο**: fr. φθίνω. **οἴχομαι**: *go away, be gone, be departed* (i.e., *be dead*).

The period of mourning begins with clichés from the Chorus and instructions from the bereaved Admetus to his kingdom.

417 **λοίσθιος**: *last*.

418–21 The Chorus' imperative to Admetus telling him to learn that we all must die is ironic in the context of their effort to console him upon Alcestis' death. Were Admetus able to comply with this wisdom, he would not have asked anyone else to die for him. His reply, therefore, that he was and is fully aware of this "evil thing" only indicates once again the extent to which he is unable to perceive that the same rules apply to him. The question, of course, is what reaction this obtuseness of Admetus produces in the audience. Do they sympathize with him? Do they find the irony funny? Are they angry or exasperated with him?

418 **ἀμπλακίσκω**: *lose*.

419 **ὄφειλω**: *owe*. "Death is a debt we all must pay." This sentiment may be well-worn, but it is a theme in the play and the lesson Admetus learns.

420 **ἄφνω**: *suddenly, out of the blue*.

421 **προσέπτατο**: fr. προσπέτομαι *fly at, sweep over*. **εἰδώς**: fr. οἶδα (see note at 140). **αὐτ'** = αὐτό. **τείρω**: *wear away*. **πάλαι**: *long since, all along*.

422 **ἐκφορά**: *carrying forth, funeral*. **θήσομαι**: fr. τίθημι. Review the principal parts (see line 366).

423 **πάρεστε**: fr. πάρεμι, imperative. **ἀντηχέω**: "sing in response."

424 **παιάν**: *paean, hymn*. **κάτωθεν**: *from below, below*. **ἄσπονδος**: *without libations, not accepting libations*.

425 **κρατέω**: *be strong, rule, hold sway*.

426 **πένθους**: what case? (see note at 74). **κοινώω**: + genitive, *share, have a share*. **λέγω**: *pronounce, declare, order*.

427 "with cut hair," a sign of mourning. **κουρά, -ας, ἦ**: *cutting of the hair* (as a sign of mourning). **ξυρήκης, -ες**: *shaved*. See line 216 for the clothing and the words describing it. **μελάμπεπλος, -ον**: *dressed in black, of black robes*. **στολή, -ῆς, ἦ**: *clothing*.

428–29 "You who yoke (fr. ζεύγνυμι) the four-horse chariots [and you who ride] single steeds (**πῶλος** *horse*) with frontlets, cut (imperative of **τέμνω**) with iron the mane of their necks." This refers to racing horses.

430 **αὐλός**: *flute* (perhaps more like an oboe). **κτύπος**: *sound, noise*.

431 ἔστω: third singular imperative of εἰμί, "let there be." σελήνας . . . ἐκπληρουμένας: accusative of extent of time. σελήνη: *moon*. πληρόω: *make full*.

432 θάψω: fr. † θάπτω.

433 Genitive of comparison, "than." ἀμείνων: comparative of ἀγαθός.

## SECOND STASIMON (435–75)

### Strophe A (435–44):

Oh daughter of Pelias,

be happy for me in the halls of  
Hades

where you live in the sunless house.

But Hades, the black-haired god,  
should know,

and the old ferryman of the dead,  
who sits by the oar and rudder, that  
he rows you,

far and away the best of women,  
over the lake of Acheron  
in the two-oared pine boat.

### Antistrophe A (445–54):

Many songs will the servants of the  
Muses

sing of you to the seven-toned moun-  
tain lyre

and celebrate in lyreless hymns

in Sparta when the cycle of the  
season of the month

of Karneios returns,

when the moon is up all night long,

and in shining, happy Athens.

Such hymns of praise did you leave  
to the singers when you died.

### Strophe B (455–65):

If only it were in my power  
and I were able to row you

into the light from Hades' halls  
and across the streams of Cocytus  
with oars over the river under-  
ground.

For you alone, dearest of women,  
had the heart to give your life  
in exchange for your husband's,

### Antistrophe B (466–75):

When his mother refused  
to let her body be buried in the  
ground

for her child and his aged father too

. . . . . (for their son) whom  
they gave life, they hadn't the  
courage to save him,

hard-hearted, gray-headed couple.

But in your early youth,  
dying for your husband, you are  
gone.

saving him from Hades. Light may  
the earth

fall upon you, my queen. But if  
your husband makes a second  
marriage, we will despise him  
and so will your children.

I hope I am lucky enough

to get such a partner—  
for this rarely happens in life—  
without grief she  
would be with me through our  
lives.

The Chorus sings this paean for Alcestis, imagining how she will be celebrated in choral song all over the Greek world. The second stasimon reviews the subjects treated in the previous scene: the *arete* of Alcestis, the condemnation of Admetus' parents (the Chorus, like Apollo earlier, is particularly hard on Admetus' mother, 466), marriage and remarriage, and the longing to save Alcestis. The Orpheus theme, a constant motif, recurs here, with the Chorus casting itself in the futile role of Orpheus (455–59). Admetus had wished for Orpheus' gift of song (357–62), but the effectual Orpheus figure of this story, the one who will actually bring back the woman, is Heracles, who will enter unexpectedly in the next scene, on his way (not irrelevantly) to Orpheus' home, Thrace. Though the Chorus does not explicitly name Orpheus in the present strophe, they do put their wish to be the savior-figure in juxtaposition to a strophe on song. The emphasis of this ode is on the actual death and journey of Alcestis and especially on her future as subject of song in Sparta and Athens. Music was a particular pleasure for Admetus, and it is one of the things he vows to give up forever, because Alcestis has taken away all his pleasure (τέρψιν, 347). He will replace the flesh and blood Alcestis with a likeness on which he will call and which he will hold in his arms, a "cold delight" (τέρψιν, 353). The statue cannot hear, and so song is in vain; speaking her name is a comfort for *his* ears, not the statue's. The effigy in his bed will encourage him to dream of her. His mind races from the sounds of the lyre or flute that will be silenced to the silent statue, to the fleeting dreams, to the futile wish for the magical singing of Orpheus. The reality that he is not Orpheus justifies his asceticism in renouncing music; music is useless now. In the next ode, however, the Chorus finds another use for music (besides pleasure and persuasion)—the praise of heroes and heroines. Admetus' artistry—first in imagining the fabrication of the statue, then

in predicting the dreams in which he will give the carved wood or chiseled marble moving parts, and finally in wishing for Orpheus' skill in song—all these are matched in the second stasimon. There, Alcestis receives a kind of immortality through memory and music, but it is a frigid pleasure like the children's boast of her fame (325). Neither can make up for the loss of companionship and affection.

In the second stasimon, there is a direct address to Alcestis, as there will be in the final ode. In that ode, the Chorus is distanced from her through the insertion of an anonymous, imaginary wayfarer pictured as saluting her. The "hail" here is answered there too. Here, *χαίρουσά μοι* (436) is something of a contradiction, but there (1005), it is a greeting to a powerful spirit. Like Admetus during the previous episode, at the beginning of the ode, the Chorus pictures Alcestis alive in the halls of Hades (436–37), but they are joining in Admetus' artistry or wishful thinking (especially when they give her a dwelling place: *δόμοις, οἶκον . . . οἰκετέοις*, 436–37, and when they wish that they were Orpheus-like). The ode ends with their wish for a wife just like her, a bit chilling considering its juxtaposition to her death.

The direct address in this ode is to Alcestis' departing corpse as it is carried (or wheeled back on the *eccyclema*) into the house for the laying out of the body. In the play's final ode, which ends with the direct address of an interposed traveler, the greeting is addressed to Alcestis as she returns at that moment with Heracles. The Chorus' song laments the uselessness of music in the face of Necessity, although music (through the song of the tragic Chorus and actors) will contribute to Alcestis' resurrection as she is escorted back by the wayfarer who has turned off the road at her memorial. (Cf. Luschnig 1995, 56–57.)

### Strophe and Antistrophe A:

435/445 ~~~~~  
 436/446 - ~~~~~  
 437/447 ~~~~~  
 438–39/448–49 - ~~~~~  
 440/450 ~~~~~  
 441/451 ~~~~~

442/452 ~~~~~ -

443/453 - ~~~~~

444/454 ~~~ -

## Strophe and Antistrophe B:

455/466 ~~~ - -

456/467 ~ - ~ - -

457/468 ~~~ - - -

458 - - - ~ - -

459/469 ~~~ - ~ - -

460/470 ~~~~~ - -

461/471 ~ - - ~~~~~ -

462/472 - - - - -

463 ~~~~~ 473 ~~~~~ [ ~ - ] ~

464/474 ~~~~~ - - -

465/475 ~ - ~ - -

435 For Alcestis as a daughter of Pelias, see note at 37.

436 **χαίρουσα**: cf. *χαίρει εἶν* = *ἐν*. **Ἄϊδαο**: see note at 13.

437 Optative of wish: “may. . .”

438–39 **ἴστω**: imperative of  $\ddagger$  *οἶδα*, “let him know” (see note at 140).**μελαγχαίτας**: *black-haired*. **κόπη**: *oar*.440 **πηδάλιον**: *rudder*.441 **ἴζω**: *sit*.442 **πολύ**: adverbial, *much*, *by far*.443 **πορεύσας**: participle in indirect statement with *ἴστω*, “that he. . .”444 “in the two-oared pine [boat].” **ἐλάτη (ἐλάτα)**: *fir*, *oar*, *boat*. *ἐλάτη* is identified as a variety of silver fir, *Abies cephalonica*, the Greek fir. Theophrastus calls it the strongest wood (5.6.2) and lists it as one of the trees used in shipbuilding (5.7.1).

445–54 Whereas in the first strophe, the Chorus referred to Alcestis’ lyrical description of being taken away by Charon, in the first antistrophe, they react to both Alcestis’ claim to fame and Admetus’ call to his citizens to silence any sound of the flute or lyre. Alcestis’ willingness to die in place of her husband assures her renown not only in songs accompanied by the seven-toned lyre but in lyreless songs as well.

445 πολλὰ: "many times." μουσόπολος: *minstrel, attendant of the Muses.*

446 ♣ μέλω: *sing.*

446–47 "to the seven-toned mountain lyre."

447 χέλυς: *lyre, tortoise shell.* ♣ κλέω: *celebrate.*

448–50 "in Sparta when (ἀνίκα) the circle of the season (ῶρα) of the month Karneia comes around." Karneia was the major Spartan festival of Apollo. Karneios (from κάρνος *ram*) is a title for Apollo in the Peloponnesus. From this comes the festival (τὰ) Κάρνεια and Κάρνειος (μῆν), the month in which the festival was held.

450–51 "when the all-night moon is rising" or "when the moon is up all night long."

452 ♣ λιπαρός: *oily, fat, bright.* ♣ ὄλβιος: *prosperous, happy.*

453 ♣ τοῖος: *such.* ♣ μόλπη: *song.*

454 ♣ μέλος: *tune* (see lines 357, 579, 760). ♣ αἰδός: *singer.*

455–59 Cocytus: Hades is separated from the world of the living by the river Styx, or Acheron. Cocytus, Phlegethon, and Pyriphlegethon are three additional rivers that intersect Hades. Cocytus is the river of wailing, from κωκόω *wail* (used of mourning women). While Admetus carelessly employed the Orphean example, by which he indicated that he had no clear intention of saving Alcestis, the men of the Chorus state their willingness as a fact and negate only their ability to rescue her.

455 εἴθε: with optative of wish, "if only." ἐπ' ἐμοί: "in my power."

457 ♣ φάος = φῶς, terminal accusative, "to," "into." ♣ τέραμνα, τὰ: *halls.*

458 ♣ ῥέεθρον: *stream.*

459 "by the underground river's oar," that is, by rowing across the river down below.

461 αὐτᾶς = ἐαυτῆς, third person reflexive used for second person.

♣ τλάω: *have the heart to* (see lines 1, 275). ἀμείβω: *exchange* (see line 46).

462 κοῦφος, -η/-α, -ον: *light.* This prayer became very popular in epitaphs.

463 ἐπάνωθε: *above.* πέσοι: fr. πίπτω.

463–65 Like Alcestis, the Chorus is not at all sure that Admetus will not remarry, and they are helpless to stop him; all they can do is condemn him if he does.

464 † λέχος: *bed, marriage*. ἔλοιτο: fr. † αἰρέω (for the principal parts, see note at 347).

466–72 The Chorus also supports Alcestis in criticizing Admetus' parents for not agreeing to die for their son.

467 † κρύπτω: *hide*.

468 δέμας: *body*.

470 σχετλίω: dual nominative of σχετλιος (see line 408). † πολιός: *gray*. ἔχοντε: dual nominative participle. † χαίτη: *hair* (see line 101).

471 φώς, φωτός, ὁ: *man, husband*. οἴχομαι: see line 414.

472 κῦρσαι: fr. κυρέω + genitive, *meet with*.

473–75 The Chorus finishes the song, remarking how rarely it happens in life to have a wife like Alcestis. For various types of women, see the satiric poem on women (presented in demeaning animal character) by Semonides of Amorgos.

473 συνδυάς: *paired, wedded*.

474 σπάνιος: *rare*. † μέρος: *part, portion*. ἄλυπος, -ον: *without grief*.

475 ξυνεΐη: fr. † σύν (ξυν-)-εἶμι.

### THIRD EPISODE (476–567): HERACLES AND CHORUS; HERACLES AND ADMETUS

Heracles arrives on the scene. Though he comes as a surprise to the old men of Pherai, members of the audience will remember that Apollo predicted he would come to Pherai, be given hospitality by Admetus, and rescue Alcestis. Heracles may seem to have come too late because Alcestis is already dead. Heracles is between labors (see note at 66), on his way to Thrace for the horses of Diomedes. He and Admetus are friends, and he is recognized by the Chorus, perhaps because he is wearing his lion's skin and carrying club.

Throughout the play, Admetus is described by many negative terms that employ the alpha privative: ἀμήχανος, 202; ἀβίωτος, 242; ἀνόνατος, 412; ἄσημος, 522; ἀναιδῶς, 694; ἀπειρόκακος, 927; and ἀψυχία, 956. He envies the *unmarried* and *childless* (882) and even calls his own parents childless (735); he is said by a slave to be seeking the impossible (202); in the eyes of his subjects, he will live an unlivable life (242); he married in vain (his own child tells him this, 412); according to his good friend,

his communication is meaningless (522); to his father, he acted shamelessly in avoiding death (694); his grief is unendurable because he is inexperienced in suffering (even his former happiness becomes a negative factor, 927); and finally, he accuses himself, seeing himself with an enemy's eyes, of cowardice (956). Even his name is an alpha privative. (See Luschnig 1995, n. 198.)

How does Admetus' denial of his wife's death affect the audience? The value of Alcestis as daughter, wife, mother, and mistress of the house and her bravery in accepting death have been celebrated throughout the first two episodes. In the third episode, Admetus reduces her to the generic woman, her father's daughter who died in the house (534–35), a troubling way of presenting this unique woman. It is likely that many Athenian men held this stereotypical view of women. Perhaps Euripides is asking them to reconsider. As often happens in his plays, Euripides shows the generalization to be inappropriate, considering the prominence he has given Alcestis. For the Athenian male's view of the ideal wife, see Thucydides 2.45.2, where Pericles rounds off his funeral oration (delivered about a decade after the *Alcestis*) with a brief piece of advice to the new widows: "Your reputation will be great if you are not worse than your nature, as will hers of whom there is the least report among men, whether for praise or blame."

476 † **κωμήτης**: fr. κῶμος, κόμη *village*. The suffix -της is used to show the agent (like -er or -or in English; cf. πολίτης, ποιητής, δικαστής).

477 † **κιγγάνω**: *find*.

478 Son of Pheres: Euripides wants the spectators to think of Pheres, who will soon appear. The Chorus has already drawn attention to Admetus' parents in their ode (466–70).

479 † **χρεία**: *use, need*.

480 Review βαίνω and its compounds: ἀμφιβαίνω, ἀποβαίνω, διαβαίνω, εισβαίνω, ἐκβαίνω, ἐμβαίνω, προβαίνω, προσβαίνω.

481 Eurystheus of Tiryns was Heracles' master, for whom he performed the twelve labors (πόντοι) at Hera's instigation.

482 † **ποῖ**: *whither, where*. † **πορεύω**: active *convey*; middle *pass, journey, go*. † **-ζεύγνυμι**: *yoke, join*. What form is προσ-έζευσαι? **πλάνος**: with τῷ = τίνι, *wandering*.

483 Diomedes of Thrace is the owner of the man-eating horses, the objects of Heracles' current labor. † ἄρμα: *chariot*. τέτρωρον: *four-horsed*.

484 μὲν = μή οὐν, interrogative particle that expects a negative answer.

† ἄπειρος: *inexperienced, unacquainted*.

485–506 The outlandish context of Heracles' labors, referred to here, prepares the audience for the upcoming fantastic feat of his battle with and victory over Death.

485 **Bistones:** Diomedes, son of Ares and Cyrene, was king of the Bistones. According to Apollodorus (2.5.8), they were a warlike Thracian people who pursued Heracles after he captured the horses. Heracles killed Diomedes and routed the Bistones. They are mentioned also by Herodotus (7.109–10) as being among the Thracians along Xerxes' route who were enlisted into his army. † οὐπω: *not yet*.

486 † ἔστι: *it is possible*. δεσπόζω: + genitive, *master*. † ἄνευ: + genitive, *without*.

487 ἀπ-εἶπον: *refuse, say no to*. † οἶόν τε [ἔστί]: "it is possible."

488 κτανών = κτείνας. αὐτοῦ: *there*.

489 † ἀγών: *struggle, contest*. δράμοιμι: aorist of τρέχω, *run*; with accusative, "run a course," "run a risk."

490 † κρατέω: *overpower, conquer*. πλέον λαμβάνω: idiom, *profit, advance*, i.e., "What good will it do you?"

491 πῶλος: *horse*.

492 εὐμαρής, -ές: *easy*. χαλινός: *bit*. † γνάθος: *jaw*.

493 πνέω: *breathe*. μυκτήρ: *nose*, plural *nostrils*.

494 ἀρταμέω: *tear to pieces*. λαιψηρός: *swift*.

495 † θήρ, θηρός, ὄ: *wild beast*. ὄρειος: *of the mountains*. χόρτος: *food, fodder*

496 φάτνη: *stall, manger*. πεφυρμένας: fr. φύρω *mix something dry with something wet, smear, defile*.

497 θρέψας: fr. † τρέφω *rear, nourish*. ὁ θρέψας: attributive participle. τίνος: with πατρός. † κομπάζω: *boast*. In a roundabout way, Heracles is asking who this Diomedes is by asking whose son he claims to be.

498 Ἄρεος: genitive of Ἄρης. ζάχρυσος: *all-golden*. πέλιτη: *shield*.

499 τοῦμοῦ δαίμονος: predicate genitive of characteristic, "in keeping with."

500 † σκληρός: *hard*. πρὸς αἶπος: *uphill*.

501 γείνομαι: present and imperfect *be born*; aorist *beget, bring forth*. οἷς: attracted into the case of its antecedent.

502 † μάχη: *battle*. συνάπτω: *join*. μάχην συνάπτω: “join in battle with.”

502–503 Lykaon and Kyknos were two of the sons of Ares whom Heracles killed. Lykaon (Lycaon) is obscure. He may have been the son of Ares and the nymph Pyrene who challenged Heracles to single combat (see Dale on line 502, p. 95). For Kyknos (Cycnus), see Hesiod, *Shield of Heracles* 327ff. and Apollodorus 2.7.7.

504 συμ-βάλλω: *engage in conflict with*. What tense is συμβαλῶν? Review the principal parts: βάλλω, βαλῶ, ἔβαλον, βέβληκα, βέβλημαι, ἐβλήθην.

505 γόνος: *son*.

506 τρέω: *flee, be afraid*.

509 Perseus was the grandfather of Heracles' mother, Alcmene (Alcmene).

511 † εὖνους: *well-intentioned, kindly*.

512 † τί χρῆμα: *why?* πρέπεις: “are you noticeable?” That is, “why do I notice you by your hair that is cut in mourning?” κουρά: *cutting of the hair*. πένθιμος: *in or of mourning*.

513 νεκρόν: Admetus refrains from referring to Alcestis by her name and uses the word “corpse” instead, right after her death (422; see also 635, 729, 740). In fact, he does not use her name again until he is ogling the woman he thinks is *not* Alcestis. It is possible that Euripides makes him use the word “corpse” instead of her name in 422 to prepare the stage for the delicate rhetorical wordplay Admetus will have with Heracles, in which he will conceal the identity of the deceased, or it may indicate his cool-heartedness, or both.

514 † πημονή: *suffering, calamity*. εἴργω: *keep off*. εἴργοι: what use of the optative is this? Review the uses of the optative:

1. POTENTIAL: (*maybe*) with ἄν.
2. WISH: (*if only, would that*) without ἄν. May be introduced by εἴθε or εἰ γάρ.
3. FUTURE LESS VIVID CONDITIONS: (*should . . . would*) εἰ + optative . . . optative + ἄν.

4. PAST GENERAL CONDITIONS: (*whenever*) εἰ + optative ... imperfect indicative.
5. PURPOSE: when the main verb is in the past, with ἵνα or ὅπως.
6. With a verb of FEARING in a past tense, with μή or μή οὐ.
7. With the ὅτι construction in INDIRECT STATEMENT after a verb of thinking or saying in a past tense. Also in INDIRECT QUESTION after a past tense.

516 † ώραῖος: *timely, ripe*. † οἴχομαι: see line 414.

517 ἔστι: *is alive*. χῆ = καὶ ἦ. † τίκτω: review the principal parts (see note at 16).

518 † ὄλλυμι, ὄλω, ὄλεσα, (second aorist ὄλόμην), ὄλωλα: active *destroy, kill, lose*, middle *perish, die*, perfect *be dead, be ruined*.

519 διπλοῦς: *twofold*. The double story, that she both is and is not, keeps Alcestis alive in Heracles' mind.

520 The genitives with εἶπας may be an archaic use (as in Homer) with περί omitted.

521 κοῦκέτ' = καὶ οὐκέτι. ἀλγύνω: *cause pain, grieve*.

522 οἶδ' = οἶδα. ἄσημος: "without mark, without meaning," *obscure*.

523 μοίρας: an antecedent attracted into the case of the relative pronoun. As object of οἶσθα, μοίρας should be in the accusative, but it is drawn into the genitive by its proximity to ἧς, which is genitive with τυχεῖν. μοῖρα: *fate, lot, doom*.

524 ὑφ-ίημι: *submit, undertake*.

525 ἤνεσεν: fr. † αἰνέω *praise, agree to* (see lines 2 and 12, where Apollo puts up with eating at the servants' table, and the Fates agree to let Admetus elude his immediate death).

526 προ-κλαίω: *weep/lament in advance for*. † ἄκοιτις: see lines 201, 994. ἀμβαλοῦ = ἀναβαλοῦ, aorist middle imperative of ἀναβάλλω, *postpone*.

528 † χωρίς: *separate, apart*, i.e., "two different things." τὸ μῆ: understand εἶναι.

529 τῆδε: *in this way*. κείνη = ἐκείνη: *in that way*.

530 † κλαίω: *weep*.

531 ἀρτίως: *just now*. μιμνήσκω: *call to mind, mention*. Admetus deceives Heracles through the ambiguous meaning of γυνή (*woman or wife*). The line can be read in at least four different ways, but Heracles hears it

only to refer to some woman, not the particular woman whose death we have just witnessed.

532–35 ὄθνεῖος: the reference to Alcestis as an outsider brings us back to the circumstances of her coming to Pherai. Admetus tells Heracles that the dead woman came to live in his house after her father had died (535). The daughters of Pelias, according to the myth (see note at 37), were directly involved in their father's death, but this is not the only version in Greek literature of how Admetus and Alcestis came to marry. Another myth tells that when Admetus asked for Alcestis' hand, Pelias declared that he would give his daughter only to the suitor who yoked a lion and a boar to a chariot. Apollo did this task for Admetus (Apollodorus, 1.9.15). Euripides, however, chose not to use this myth. Furthermore, by having the Chorus describe lions dancing to Apollo's lyre without harming Admetus' flocks (579–87), he draws attention to his strategy by reminding us of the version he chose not to use. The version of the marriage that the play emphasizes implies that Alcestis moved from one attempt at revitalization to another. We may wonder whether her second attempt will not end similarly with the death of the person who would cheat his fate.

The analogy between the two cases is drawn tighter by the emphasis on the blood relationship between Alcestis and her husband. The connection is first highlighted in the negative, when Heracles asks Admetus whether the person who died was "Someone outside the family, or someone actually kin to you?" (532), and Admetus answers, "Outside the family but with close ties to this house," (533). The denial is not only an evasion but an obvious lie. Pelias and Pheres were half brothers—Pelias was the son of Tyro and Poseidon, and Pheres was the son of Tyro and her uncle, Cretheus, which makes Alcestis and Admetus cousins. Admetus' denial is jarring and calls attention to what he would suppress. (Apollodorus 1.9.8–11. See also Elferink 1982, 49: "Even in v. 533, in the famous altercation with Heracles, when he denies the death of his wife, it is a downright lie when he calls the dead woman not a συγγενής but an ὄθνεῖος. Not only is she his wife, but she is a συγγενής too.")

Alcestis's blood tie with her husband is further alluded to in the reply the Servant makes to Heracles' complaint that he knows of no good reason for him not to enjoy himself in the house (809–11). Both

the word ὄθνεϊός, which Heracles uses (810), and the Servant's word θυραῖος (811), can be translated as "outsider." While the former denies Alcestis any blood relationship with the family, the latter indicates that she was never truly accepted, without any reference to kinship (see also Buxton 1987, 18). The servant's word choice thus reminds the audience that Alcestis and her husband are kin. This information also raises the question of whether Alcestis will be as involved in bringing death upon her husband as she was upon her father (in some versions of the myth), as well as the question of whether Admetus' attempt to prolong his life will be as unsuccessful as his uncle's. These questions, especially the first, are reinforced by Admetus' use of this term when he accuses his father of letting Alcestis die: "but you let this woman outside the family (ὄθνεῖαν) die" (646). As Conacher points out, the term ὄθνεϊός sometimes connotes hostility toward the person to whom it refers. See Conacher 1967 on lines 532–33.

532 † ὄθνεϊός, -ον: *strange, foreign*, "an outsider" (see lines 533, 646, 810). In a way, because the woman came to live at her husband's house when she married, she was always a stranger in his home and subject to suspicion. συγγενής, -ές: *kin, related by blood*.

533 ἀναγκαῖος: *constraining, necessary, indispensable, connected by natural ties, related by blood*.

535 Mention of Alcestis' father's death might remind the audience of how Pelias died, but the way Admetus expresses the relationship of the dead woman to the house generalizes her beyond recognition. His guest certainly fails to understand the connection.

536 εἴθε: with a secondary tense of the indicative introduces a wish contrary to fact, that is, "If only it were so . . . but it isn't." † λυπέω: *cause grief, pain, distress; middle feel grief, sorrow, grieve* (see lines 239, 540, 550, 1018).

537 ὑπορράπτω: *understitch, attach, patch* (the word is used of putting a patch on a garment).

540 ὀχληρός: *bothersome, burdensome*. † ἔμολον = ἦλθον (see note at 52).

541 ἴθι: imperative of εἶμι (see note at 65).

542 θοινάω: *feast*.

543 χωρίς: *separate, apart* (see line 528). ξενῶνες: *guest rooms*. οἶ: *where*.

544 μέθεξ: fr. μεθίημι (see line 263). μυρῖος: *countless, ten thousandfold*.

546–47 “You lead him in, having opened the outer guest room for him.” ❖ ἡγέομαι: *lead, think*. ἐξώπιος: *out of sight*. Greek private houses often had an entertainment room for men (called the ἀνδρών) that was entered by a separate door from the outside, possibly to prevent unruly guests from intruding into the living quarters, especially those of the women of the house. In Athens, respectable women did not participate in the men’s banquets and parties. It is also possible that behind the double doors, Admetus has a complex of buildings around a courtyard, as in a Homeric house or in some modern Greek country houses.

547 οἴγνυμι: *open*. τοῖς ἐφεστῶσιν: fr. -ῖστημι “those in charge.” ❖ φράζω: *point out, tell*.

548 ❖ σίτος: *food*. παρεῖναι: fr. πάρεμι or παρήμι? παρήμι means *yield, let pass, pass over, relax*. In his notes, Earle suggests that παρεῖναι here is used as equivalent to παραθεῖναι. The scholiast seems to prefer πάρεμι, glossing the word as παρακεῖσθαι *be at hand, be available*. ❖ πλῆθος, -ους, τό: *abundance*. κλήζω: for κλείω *shut*.

549 θύρας μεσαύλους: “the doors of the outer courtyard” (Bayfield). ❖ πρέπει: *it is fitting*.

551 πρόκειμαι: *lie before*.

552 ❖ τολμάω: *be brave, dare, have the heart to* (see lines 277, 644, 752, 985, 1117). ξενοδοκέω: *entertain a guest, receive a guest*. μῶρος: *fool*, “What a foolish thing to do!” Literally, “Why are you a fool?” Both Alcestis and the Chorus have already expressed their doubts about Admetus’ capacity for rational thinking (303, 327). The ease with which he accepts such a known reveler as Heracles into his house, thus not only going back on his promise to mourn himself for eternity but also his order that the entire city mourn for a year (425–31), has been anticipated and foreshadowed. Admetus seems to come to terms with Alcestis’ death very fast. In fact, there seems to be a gap between the depth of grief the Chorus expects of Admetus (416–19), and the swiftness with which he recovers. While the Chorus desperately calls on him to come to his senses, Admetus does not seem to need such an awakening. He says that he has anticipated this tragedy—it has not surprised him—and starts calmly to make the proper arrangements to bring not “Alcestis” but “this corpse” to the grave (420–22).

553–67 Admetus’ calm reasoning as to why it would be more profitable for him to host Heracles in spite of Alcestis’ death, which seems to have

occurred only moments ago, shows us how calculating he can be even in the most trying of times.

553 ἀπ-ελαύνω: *drive*. Review the principal parts: ἐλαύνω, ἐλῶ (-άω), ἤλασα.

554 † μᾶλλον: *more, rather*. ἐπ-αινέω: *praise, approve*.

556 Review contrary to fact conditions (see note at 357). μείων, μείον: *less*.

557 πρὸς: with dative, *besides, on top of*.

559 τυγγάνω: + genitive, *meet with*.

560 Ἄργος -ους: *Argos*. δίψιος: *thirsty*. (Where it is very dry or where a lot of drinking is done or both?) Admetus follows the proverb (quoted by Menander in the *Monostichoi*, or *One-Liners*), ξένους ξένιζε, καὶ σὺ γὰρ ξένος γ' ἔσῃ.

564 † πῆμα: *trouble, woe*. † γνωρίζω: *come to know*.

565 τῷ μὲν: “to this man or that,” “to one man or another.” He does not need to give the second part of the contrast (the τῷ δέ) because that is his own opinion, as his concluding lines show. † φρονέω: *be sensible, be in one’s senses*.

567 ἀπωθέω: *thrust away*.

### THIRD STASIMON (568–605)

Here, the Chorus sings of Admetus’ hospitality to another special guest (Apollo) and celebrates his house. As often happens in the plays of Euripides, the Chorus escapes from the reality they are facing into a calm, idyllic surrounding, here with Apollo assuming an Orphean guise and enchanting both domestic and wild animals with his lyre, while Admetus’ realms prosper. The Chorus holds the almost forcefully assumed belief that the noble (and thus good) must be wise and inclined to do the right thing. In spite of the serene and bucolic content, the Chorus seems to be in a bind. The singers try against all odds to justify Admetus’ decision to entertain Heracles despite the recent death of Alcestis. They attempt to find an example that would justify Admetus’ decision to carry on with hospitality at such a time, but the best they can do is refer to Admetus’ entertainment of Apollo, which indeed was profitable to Admetus, but not inappropriate (see

esp. line 10). The audience realizes that the boon of Apollo has indeed benefitted Admetus, but it has also inadvertently caused Alcestis' premature death. The pretense of Admetus' alleged bliss is mimicked by the portrayal of Apollo, who impersonates Orpheus.

**Strophe A (568–77):**

O house of a hero, hospitable and  
 forever free,  
 in you the Pythian Apollo of the  
 beautiful lyre  
 deigned to dwell,  
 and he endured to be a shepherd  
 in your domain,  
 over the sloping hillsides,  
 piping to your flocks  
 pastoral mating songs.

**Strophe B (588–96):**

For you dwell in a home most rich in  
 sheep  
 beside the fair flowing  
 lake of Boebia. As boundary  
 to his plow lands and level places of  
 his plains,  
 he sets the dark resting place  
 for the sun's horses, the sky of the  
 Molossians;  
 and he rules the Aegean Sea  
 up to the harborless shore of  
 Pelion.

**Antistrophe A (578–87):**

In joy at the melodies, spotted lynxes  
 were herded with them,  
 and the bloodred pride of lions  
 came,  
 leaving the covert of Othrys.  
 And with them danced about your  
 lyre,  
 Phoebus, the dapple-coated fawn  
 coming from beyond the high-  
 needled pines  
 with graceful ankles,  
 rejoicing in the happy tune.

**Antistrophe B (597–605):**

And now having opened his home,  
 he has received a traveler, with tears  
 in his eyes  
 from weeping over the body of his  
 dear wife,  
 just dead in the house. Well-bred  
 people  
 know how to act.  
 Among the good there is every sort  
 of wisdom. I am stunned.  
 But upon my soul confidence sits  
 that a god-fearing man will fare  
 well.

The Chorus, after initially upbraiding Admetus and questioning his sanity in receiving the guest, is finally convinced of the goodness of the



571/ 581 - - - - -  
 572-73/ 582-83 - - - - -  
 574/584 - - - - -  
 575/585 - - - - -  
 576/586 - - - - -  
 577/587 - - - - -

### Strophe and Antistrophe B:

588/597 - - - - -  
 589/598 - - - - -  
 590/599 - - - - -  
 591/600 - - - - -  
 592/601 - - - - -  
 593-94/602-603 - - - - -  
 595/604 - - - - -  
 596/605 - - - - -

568 **πολύξεινος**: ξείνος is used for ξένος for metrical reasons. It is the common form in Epic and Ionic dialects (see line 598). The form is vocative.

570 Pythian Apollo = Apollo of the Delphic oracle. **εὐλύραξ**: *of the beautiful lyre*, an epithet of Apollo. The form is nominative.

571 † **ἀξιόω**: *deem worthy, deign*. † **ναίω**:  *dwell in*.

572 † **τλάω**: *dare, have the heart to*. **μηλονόμαξ**: *herdsman, shepherd*.

575 “over the sloping hills.” **δόχμιος**: *sloping, aslant* (see line 1000). **κλιτύς** (**κλειτύς**), **-υος, ἦ**: *hillside*.

576 **βόσκημα**: *flock*. **συρίζω**: *pipe, play the pipe*.

577 “pastoral wedding songs” (mating tunes for the sheep or other herds). **ποιμνίτης**: *of shepherds, pastoral*. **ὕμέναιος**: *marriage song*.

579 **συμποιμαίνομαι**: *herd with, join the herd*. **σὺν δ' ἐποιμαίνοντο**: *tmesis* (see note at 160). † **χαρά**: *joy*. **βαλιαὶ λύγκεξ**: *spotted lynxes*.

580 **ἔβα** = ἔβη (for the principal parts, see note at 392). Othrys is a mountain range that forms the southern boundary of Thessaly (see Herodotus 7.129). **νάπη**: *wooded glen, bosky dell*.

580-81 “a blood-red (or tawny) troop of lions.”

581 **δαφαινός**: *tawny, blood-reeking* (used of lions, serpents, lynxes, and jackals). **ἴλα (ἴλη)**: *troop*.

583 **χόρευσε** = ἐχόρευσε fr. χορεύω *dance*. The augment is often omitted in poetry. **κιθάρα**: *lyre*.

584 **ποικιλόθριξ**: *spotted, dappled*.

585 **νεβρός**: *fawn*.

585–86 “beyond the high-needled pines (firs).”

586 **σφυρῶ κούφῳ**: “on light-stepping/graceful ankle.”

587 **εὖφρων**: *gladdening the heart*. **μολπή (μολπά)**: *song, dance*.

588 **πολύμηλος**: *rich in sheep, with many flocks*.

589 **καλλίναος**: *fair flowing* (used of rivers and springs).

590–96 This is a difficult and obscure passage. In it the Chorus defines the boundaries of Admetus’ realm, extending from the Molossians in the West (where the sun sets, 594) to the coast off Pelion. One possible translation:

Therefore he makes the air of the Molossians, about the dark resting place of the sun, the boundary of his farmlands and plains and he rules the Aegean sea up to the harborless headland of Pelion.

Note: resting place = ἰππόστασιν *stable* for the Sun’s horses.

The scholiast lists the poleis of Thessaly as “Pherai, Boibe, Glaphurai, and Iolkos.” See Homer, *Iliad* 2.711–13.

590 **ἄροτος**: *plowland*. **γύης, -ου, ὄ**: *land sown with crops* (-ᾶν is genitive plural).

591 **πεδίων δαπέδοις**: “levels of his plains” (Bayfield). **πεδίων**: *plain, fertile land*. **δάπεδον**: *level surface, ground, soil*. The prefix δα- is related to δόμος *house*. **ὄρος**: *boundary*.

593 **ἄελίου** = ἡλίου. **κνεφαῖος, -α, -ον**: *dark*.

594 **αιθήρ, αιθέρος ὀ, ἦ**: *sky, heaven, air, ether, region*.

595 **ἄκτῆ (ἄκτά)**: *promontory, headland*.

596 Pelion is a mountain in eastern Thessaly, famous in various tales. The giants Otus and Ephialtes piled Ossa on Olympus and Pelion on Ossa in their attempt to reach heaven. The Argo was built from the trees of Pelion. It was the site of the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, and

in more recent history, Xerxes' fleet was wrecked in a violent storm off Pelion (Herodotus 8.12).

597 ἀμπετάσας: fr. ἀναπετάννουμι *spread open*.

598 δέξατο = ἐδέξατο, unaugmented aorist. νοτερός: *wet* (with tears).

βλέφαρον: *eyelid, eye*.

600 ἀρτιθανής, -ές: *just dead*.

601 ἐκφέρω: *carry out* (as a corpse for burial), *carry away*; passive *be carried away, be transported* (by emotion), *be carried beyond bounds*.

‡ αἰδώς: *reverence, respect*.

602–603 πάντα σοφίας: “all parts of wisdom” (Hamilton), “all the elements of wisdom” (Bayfield).

603 ἄγαμαι: *I am amazed*.

604 ‡ θάρσος: *confidence, courage*. ἦσται: fr. ‡ ἦμαι *sit*; perfect “is seated.”

605 θεοσεβής, -ες: *god-fearing, reverent*, with φῶτα fr. φώς, not φῶς (see line 471). ‡ κεδνός: *good, sound* (see line 97). κεδνά: neuter plural with πράξειν (see note at 227).

#### FOURTH EPISODE (606–961): ADMETUS; ADMETUS AND PHERES; HERACLES AND THE MALE SLAVE; KOMMOS 861–961: CHORUS AND ADMETUS.

A summary is useful for this long and eventful episode. Admetus is about to begin the funeral when his father arrives with offerings for the dead. The two men argue (the major agon), and Pheres goes away. Admetus and the Chorus go to the funeral, leaving the stage empty, which is an unusual occurrence. Sounds of merriment are heard from within the palace as a servant comes out to complain about Heracles' unseemly behavior and to bemoan his lot in having to serve this man instead of attending Alcestis' funeral. He also gives us new information about Alcestis (769–71). Heracles then enters, somewhat tipsy, and when he finally finds out that Alcestis is dead, he leaves to go to her tomb and rescue her. Admetus and the Chorus return from the funeral to face the empty house.

606ff. The funeral: Admetus expects this to be the *ekphora* (ἐκφορά), or “carrying out of the corpse for burial,” but the arrival of Pheres interrupts his plans. Instead the scene becomes a distorted *prothesis*

(πρόθεσις), or “laying out of the corpse,” with the two men quarreling over the body and how *it* should be buried and honored. Admetus suddenly seems officious and pragmatic, and he acts fast in getting Alcestis’ corpse out of the house. Again he fails to mention Alcestis by name and refers to her by the term “corpse.”

606 † εὐμενής: *kindly, friendly, comforting* (see line 319). παρουσία: *presence*. Can you figure out the etymology?

607 † πρόσπολος: *servant, attendant*.

608 ἄρδην: *adverb, lifted up*. † τάφος: *tomb*. † πυρά: *pyre*.

609 ὡς νομίζεται: *as is the custom* (see line 99).

610 † ἐξ + εἶμι.

612 † στείχω: *come*. ὀπαδός: *servant, attendant* (see line 136).

613 ἄγαλμα: *delight, pleasing gift, statue*.

614 συγκάμνω: *labor with, suffer with, sympathize*.

615 ἀντερῶ: *future with no present, speak against, contradict*.

616 ἡμάρτηκας: see line 144 and note; the word is used in the same sense here (and at 342 and 879). It is used in the more usual sense at 327, where the Chorus suggests that Admetus has taken leave of his senses. At 850 Heracles uses it to describe the possibility of missing his prey, and at 1099 he says that Admetus is making a mistake in not taking the woman, as if in keeping his promise to her, he will lose her again through his errors.

617 δύσφορος: *hard to bear*.

618 δέχου: what is the form? Review imperatives in the second person:

TENSES: present, aorist, perfect

FORMS:

Thematic (present, second aorist)

Active	-ε	-ετε
Middle	-ου	-εσθε
First Aorist		
Active	(σ)-ον	(σ)-ατε
Middle	(σ)-αι	(σ)-ασθε
Perfect		
Active perfect active participle	+ ἴσθι . . . + ἔστε	
Middle	-σο	-σθε
Aorist Passive		
	(θ)-ητι	(θ)-ητε

619 ἴτω: third person imperative of εἶμι, "let it go." † χρεών: *it is necessary*. Unlike Admetus, who refers to Alcestis after her death by the terms νεκρός and νέκος, which are used unambiguously for a dead body, Pheres refers to Alcestis by the term σῶμα, which after Homer refers to either the dead or living body, rendering her memory more poignant. The point is confirmed when Admetus refers to himself by the term σῶμα (636) while designating Alcestis once again as νεκρός in line 635.

621 ἔθηκεν: fr. † τίθημι *put, set, make*. εἶασε: fr. † ἔάω.

622 καταφθίνω: *wither away*. γῆρας: γῆρας, γήρωσ, γηρᾶ, γῆρας, *old age*. πένθιμος: see line 512.

623 † εὐκλεής: *of good fame, glorious*. This is an important word in the play. It is used at line 150 of Alcestis and at 292 of the parents *if* they had died for Admetus. Here Pheres says that Alcestis has given all women the chance for glory, or perhaps that her deed has taken away some of the stigma of being a woman. At 938 it is used of Alcestis in contrast to Admetus and again at 1033 of Heracles' prize, which *is* Alcestis.

624 γενναῖος: *noble*, another important word. at 166 Alcestis prays for a noble husband for her daughter; here it is used of Alcestis' noble deed. Other uses: at 742 of Alcestis, at 857 and 860 of Admetus, at 1097 of the house, and at 1120 of Heracles.

627–28 The profit motif brings us back to the motif of fathers and sons. (See "Fathers and Sons" in the "Discussions," pp. 195–97). One can see how these two men think in terms of utilizing others (cf. 334–35).

628 λύειν: *to be profitable*.

629 κληθείς: fr. καλέω.

631 Even here Admetus does not refer to Alcestis by name. She is merely ἡδε, "this woman." ἐνδύω: *put on*.

632 ἐνδεής: *in need of*.

633 συναλγέω: *grieve along with (somebody)*. ὠλλύμην: fr. ὄλλυμι.

634 ἐκποδών: *away from the feet, out of the way*. παρείς: fr. παρ-ίημι *let fall, leave to (another)*.

635 Notice the generic masculine in νέω. ἀποιμώζω: *lament, bewail, cry* "οἴμοι."

636–39 Many editors delete all or some of these lines as unsuitable. Murray adds the question marks at 636, 638, 639, while Diggle removes them. We prefer to keep the lines without the question marks.

οὐκ ἦσθ' ἄρ' ὀρθῶς τοῦδε σώματος πατήρ,  
οὐδ' ἢ τεκεῖν φάσκουσα καὶ κεκλημένη  
μήτηρ μ' ἔτικτε, δουλίου δ' ἀφ' αἵματος  
μαστῶ γυναικὸς σῆς ὑπεβλήθην λάθρα.

637 **φάσκω**: *claim, say, assert*.

639 **μαστός**: *breast*. **ὑπεβλήθην**: fr. ὑπο-βάλλω (see note at 504 for principal parts). **λάθρα**: *in secret*.

640 **ἔλεγχος**: *cross-examination, test, scrutiny, account* (see line 15).

641 **πεφυκέναι**: fr. φύω. φύω is transitive in the present, future, and first aorist active (ἔφουσα) and means *produce, bring forth, engender*. In the second aorist (ἔφυν) and perfect system, it means *grow*, often the perfect and aorist are used in a present sense to mean *be by nature*.

642 **τᾶρα** = τοὶ ἄρα. **διαπρέπω**: + genitive, *surpass*. **ἀψυχία**: *pusillanimity, weak-spiritedness*.

643 ✧ **τηλικόσδε**: *of such an age*. **τέρμα**: *end, boundary*.

645 ✧ **ἔάω**: *permit, allow*.

646–47 In adopting Alcestis as his stepmother, Admetus turns her, by her own standards, into an *echidna* (“viper;” cf. 310). Disowning parents is a reversal of the more usual disowning of sons by fathers. Cf. the disowning and exile of Hippolytus by Theseus (*Hippolytus* 973–80). As such, it suits the topsy-turvy treatment of death in this play. See also Andromache’s words to Hector at *Iliad* 6.429–30.

646 ✧ **ὄθνεῖος**: *strange, foreign*, “an outsider” (see line 532 and note).

647 ✧ **ἠγέομαι**: *think, believe*.

648 **ἄγών, ἀγῶνος, ὁ**: *contest*. **ἀγωνίζω**: *contest, fight*. **ἀγῶνα ἠγωνίσω**: “to contend in a trial” or “to compete in the games.” This is an example of the cognate accusative, or internal object. It is an object that is already implied in the verb, often (as here) from the same root as the verb (hence *cognate*). The Greeks were fond of the use of several forms of the same root or the same word in close proximity. Examples of this construction in English include “to fight the good fight” and “one life to live.” It is much more common in Greek than in English. A few

examples: ἡδονὰς ἡδεσθαι “enjoy pleasures,” νόσον νοσεῖν “suffer from an illness,” νίκην νικᾶν “win a victory.” The construction is extended to objects not only from the same root as the verb but also of like meaning, as in Ἴσθμια νικᾶν “to win at the Isthmian games.” Neuter adjectives are also common as cognate accusatives, as in μεγάλα ἀμαρτάνειν “to commit great faults.” Cf. ἀμάρτημα ἀμαρτάνειν “to commit an error.” Once again Admetus’ tendency for flowery language surfaces (cf. 352).

Agon is also the technical term for the debate scene, so popular in Greek tragedies, of which this is a typical example. These are the components: introduction; two speeches of about equal length, one from each of the contestants; remarks, mostly clichés, from the chorus, usually separating the two speeches; a shouting match. Here, as usual, nobody wins the agon.

650 βιώσιμος: *for living.*

651–52 See Alcestis’ speech at lines 295–96.

653 † ὅσ’ = ὅσα *as many things as.* Review the principal parts of πάσχω: πάσχω, πείσομαι, ἔπαθον, πέπονθα.

654 ἡβέω: *be young.*

655 διάδοχος: *succeeding*; as a noun, *successor.*

657 δι-αρπάζω: *tear apart.*

658 † ἐρῶ: future of which the present does not occur in Classical Age texts, *will say.*

659–65 The three proverbial commandments of the Greeks were to honor their gods, parents, and city. Admetus’ claim that he respects his father in his old age is immediately undercut by his threat that he will not bury him.

659 προύδωκας: fr. προδίδωμι. αἰδόφρων: *respectful.*

660 ἦ: review εἰμί.

661 ἡλλαξάτην: aorist dual fr. ἀλλάσσω *give in return.*

662 φθάνω: + supplementary participle, *anticipate, be too quick.* Admetus is telling his father to “hurry up and get more children.” This may be an echo of the *Antigone’s* infamous logic (911–12).

663 γηροβοσκέω: *tend in old age.* It was the duty of children to tend to their elderly parents, referred to as “repaying their nurture.”

664 περιστέλλω: *wrap up, lay out (a corpse).* This refers to the dressing of the body and its preparation for the funeral ritual, which Alcestis did for herself as described in her slave’s speech. It began with the

bathing of the body, usually done by the female relatives of the deceased. **προτίθημι**: *set before, lay out* (a dead body). This is the next stage of the funeral, the **πρόθεσις**, often depicted on vase paintings, in which the body is laid out on a bier for mourning.

666 **τέθνηκα**: as often, the perfect is used of a permanent state. **τούπι σέ** = τὸ ἐπὶ σέ “as far as it depends on you.”

667 **σωτήρ**: cf. σῶζω, *savior*. **αὐγή**: *ray* (of the sun). Notice the generic masculine in κείνου.

668 **γηροτρόφος, -ον**: *nursing in old age*; as a noun, *nurse of someone in old age*.

669 † **μάτην**: *in vain*. Admetus' claim that he sees himself as Alcestis' child who will tend her in her old age out of gratitude for her willingness to die young is one of the apparently senseless remarks woven into the plot.

670 † **γῆρας**: *old age* (see lines 52, 412, 622, 659, 672, 727). **ψέγω**: *blame, find fault with*.

671 † **έγγύς**: *near, close*.

673–74 The Chorus addresses both antagonists, ordering them to stop arguing, but then they modify their summons by addressing Admetus in particular, putting him in his place by calling him a “child.” They do not comment, however, on his filial oral violence. Their call is echoed by Pheres, whose first word is also child (675). The members of the Chorus have already committed themselves to criticism of Pheres in supporting both Alcestis and Admetus in their claims, and yet they fail to support Admetus here, whose show of disrespect to his father would have offended or surprised the audience.

673 **ἄλις**: *enough*.

674 **παροξύνω**: *spur on, provoke, irritate*.

675 **αὐχέω**: *boast, pride oneself in*.

675–76 “Do you think you are abusing some Lydian or Phrygian slave bought on the auction block with your money?” This refers to life in the Classical rather than the Heroic Age.

676 **κακοῖς ἐλαύνειν**: *to abuse*. **ἀργυρώνητος**: *bought with silver*.

678 **γνησίως**: *genuinely, legitimately*.

679 † **ἄγαν**: *too much*. **ὕβριζω**: *insult, outrage*. **νεανίας**: as an adjective, *youthful, impetuous, hotheaded*.

680 **ρίπτω**: *hurl, fling*. “You will not get away with having thus cast. . . .”

681 **γείνομαι**: *be born* (this sense only in the present and imperfect); aorist *beget, bear* (see lines 501, 839).

682–705 Scholars (believing, perhaps, that parents should love and sacrifice themselves for their children unconditionally) often see Pheres as an unsympathetic character. What father would choose to bury his son if he could die for him? The same scholars are more forgiving of Admetus, but what child would expect his parents to die in his stead? The two men are equally self-centered and egotistical, but they differ in their logic and ability to see the situation objectively. While Admetus fragments the situation and is unable to see himself as the originator of Alcestis' death, Pheres penetrates the situation's complexity to the point of sardonic humor.

682 **κἄθρεψα**: Children were expected to reciprocate for the their upbringing by taking care of their parents when they got old (cf. Sophocles, *Electra* 1060–62). By using the base *troph-*, Pheres brings up the issue of the gratitude Admetus owes him as his child. **τρέφω, θρέψω**: *rear, bring up* (see lines 497, 1049, 1055). **ὀφείλω**: *owe*.

683 **πατρῷος**: *of or from one's father* (see lines 169, 738).

684 **οὐδ' Ἑλληνικόν**: For a father to outlive his sons seems unnatural and makes brutally clear Death's apolitical egalitarianism, but, it is also unnatural for a son to expect his father to die for him. Pheres fails in several ways, but this is not one of them. He is right about Hellenic custom, his words make his son's request seem ludicrous. He has, however, substituted the generic for the particular, and here, if anywhere, his argument shows that he is not comfortable with his refusal. He has not been asked to die for Hellenic custom, but for one particular man, his son. Next, his disparaging of Alcestis over her body is insufferable; he is not only imputing foolishness to her heroic act, but worse, he is denying the value of a good death. His death is not being required as a precedent, though he is the one to suggest that Alcestis' is. On the other hand, his death has been made to have less value than hers because he is old and because it was expected that he would offer to die. The offer—to be true to the folktale genre—had to come from an unexpected source.

Except for the rather inelegant way in which he expresses this sentiment, denying the concept of a good death, Pheres' comments are

no worse than what the dead Achilles says of death in the *Odyssey* (11.488–91: see note at 24–37) or what Iphigenia will say before her about-face in Euripides' last play (*Iphigenia at Aulis*, especially line 1252, "To live badly is better than honorably to die"). There is nothing noble about Pheres, but also little that is false. There is, on the other hand, the sheer unloving, ungenerous nature revealed in his harshness to his unhappy son; he simply has to have his say. The "rhetoric of the situation" may require Euripides to give him the best defense possible, but it does not force him to make Pheres so unkind. His remarks to Admetus may be a concession to naturalism—in the heat of the moment, people say more than they intend in order to pay back unkindness with equal or greater unkindness. This excess on Pheres' part is the only hint that his son's words have hit home and that he feels at all bad. To hold back repaying like for like is, of course, not Greek either.

687 **πολύπλεθρος**: *of many plethra, extensive*. A *plethron* is one hundred feet. **γῆς**: *a piece of land; plural fields*.

688 **πάρα**: with **πατρός**.

689 **ἡδίκηκα**: fr. **ἀδικέω**.

692 **λογίζομαι**: *reckon, figure, count*. See *Antigone* 74–76 regarding the length of time spent here compared to the time spent in Hades. The contrast makes Pheres want to live.

694 **διαμάχομαι**: *fight eagerly*. As a prefix **δια-** often means "through to the end," "all out."

695 **πεπρωμένος**: *destined, appointed* (see line 21).

696 **κατακτάς** = **κατακτείνας**.

697 **γυναικός**: genitive of comparison ("than") with a verb meaning *get the better of*. **ἥσσημένος**: fr. **ἥσσομαι**, + genitive, *be less than* (someone), *be inferior*. Pheres here is like Creon in *Antigone* (678–80, 745, 756), taunting his son with being surpassed by a woman.

699 **ἐφηῦρες**: fr. **ἐφ-εὐρίσκω**.

701 **καὶ τ'** = **καὶ εἶτα** *and then* (see note on **crasis** at 45). **ὄνειδίζω**: + dative, *reproach*.

703 **σίγα**: imperative of **σιγάω**. Apparently Admetus starts to interrupt at the reproach from his father or perhaps at his claim to be counted among φίλοι.

705 ἀκούειν κακά: “to hear bad things,” meaning “to have bad things said about one.”

706 πλείω = πλείονα *more*.

707 κακορροθῶν: fr. κακορροθέω, supplementary participle with παύσαι (aorist middle imperative), *abuse, bad-mouth*.

708 † ἀλγέω: *feel pain*.

711 ταυτόν = τὸ αὐτόν (understand “is it?”). ἡβῶντα: fr. ἡβέω *be young*. Admetus shifts the focus from asking someone else to die for him, which is a rather outlandish situation, to the more realistic issue of who should be expected to die first, an old or a young man—a sophistic, argumentative trope.

713 ζήης: fr. ζάω, optative.

714 ἀράομαι: *curse*. γονεύς: *parent*.

715–16 Admetus is (as is consistent with his character) unable to see that the argument he uses against his father is applicable to himself as well.

715 ἐρῶντα: fr. ἐράω, + genitive, *be in love with*.

717 σημεῖα: *sign*.

719 † χρεία: *need* (see line 479).

720 μνηστεύω: *woo, court, date*.

722 † φέγγος: *light*.

723 † λῆμα: *spirit, temper*. κοῦκ ἐν ἀνδράσιν: “not to be counted as a man’s.”

724 ἐγγελάω: *laugh*. † βαστάζω: *carry, support* (see lines 19, 40, 917). The scholiast explains this line by paraphrasing, “I will not die for you so that you can laugh at me, while you are carrying away my body.”

725–26 Admetus seems blind to the fact that he himself is no less open to criticism than his father. Pheres’ disinterest in *kleos* after he dies contradicts the Homeric notion of a hero whose sole motivation for a heroic death is the renown that will follow. It also nullifies Alcestis’ self-sacrifice in terms of the renown the Chorus and others expect her to have in return for her heroic sacrifice.

726 κακῶς ἀκούειν: *to be spoken ill of*. † μέλει: *it is a care to*.

727 ἀναίδεια: *shamelessness*. πλέως, -α, -ων: *full of*. Adjectives in -ως are usually of two terminations; πλέως is an exception.

πλέως	πλέα	πλέων
πλέω	πλέας	πλέω

πλέω	πλέα	πλέω
πλέων	πλέαν	πλέων

πλέω	πλέαι/-α	πλέα
πλέων	πλέων	πλέων
πλέως	πλέαις	πλέως
πλέως	πλέας	πλέα

728 ἄφρων: *mindless*.

729 ἔα: imperative of ἐάω.

730 φονεύς: *murderer*.

731 κηδεστής: *in-law*.

732 Acastus is Alcestis' brother. As son of Pelias, he is granted the kingdom of Iolkos by Jason (Diodorus Siculus 4.53.2). He is also the one who buried the remains of his father after his sisters had chopped him up, and he banished Medea and Jason from Iolkos for instigating the killing (Apollodorus 1.9.27). τᾶρα = τοι ἄρα. ἐν ἀνδράσιν: *alive*.

733 αἷμα: *blood*. τιμωρέω: *take vengeance on, avenge*.

734 ἔρρω: *go to destruction*. συνοικέω: *live with, cohabit with*.

735 ἄπαιδε: fr. ἄ-παίς, dual nominative.

736 γηράσκω: *grow old*. τῷδε: see note at 331.

737 νεῖσθε: fr. νέομαι, present with future meaning, *come, go*. ἀπείπον: *renounce* (see line 738). κήρυξ: *herald, public crier*. Admetus refers to the practice of a father publicly disowning a child. It does not happen the other way around, but Admetus wishes he could disinherit his father.

738–39 The formal legal proceeding of ἀποκήρυξις, which is used for the public renunciation of a son by a father, is here reversed.

739 τοῦν = τὸ ἐν (τό goes with κακόν). ἐν ποσίν: *at our feet* (cf. "at hand"). οἰστέον: *it must be borne*.

740 θῶμεν: fr. τίθημι.

741–46 The Chorus sings to Alcestis as they had been asked at line 610.

741 σχετλία τολμῆς: *resolute, enduring for your daring*.

742 μέγα: adverbial.

743 πρόφρων: *gracious*. Nether Hermes conducts the dead between worlds.

744 κάκει = καὶ ἐκεῖ *even there*.

745 μετέχω: *share*.

746 νύμφη: *bride*. παρεδρεύω: *sit beside*. Admetus and the servants carrying Alcestis' remains (607–608) now leave the acting area and

orchestra, accompanied by the Chorus. It is rare for a chorus to leave before the end of a play; it happens only in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, Sophocles' *Ajax*, Euripides' *Helen*, and here. The empty stage and orchestra mark a break in the action.

747 The slave in charge of hospitality in Admetus' house enters to complain about having to entertain on the day of the funeral and about the uncivil behavior of the guest. Perhaps as he comes out of the house we hear raucous noises and singing out of tune. **κάπό:** fr. καὶ ἀπό, + genitive. **πάντοιο:** *of every kind*.

748 ✦ **ἔμολον:** aorist of βλώσκω, = ἦλθον (see lines 52, 107, 540, 545, 554, 562). ✦ **οἶδ':** fr. οἶδα.

749 ✦ **δειπνον:** *dinner*. **πρόθηκα:** fr. προ-τίθημι.

751 **πενθέω:** *mourn*.

752 **κάτόλμησ' =** καὶ ἐτόλμησε fr. τολμάω. **ἀμείβω:** *middle cross, pass.* **πύλη:** *door, gate*.

754 **τὰ προστυχόντα ξένια:** "hospitality that happened [to be there]," that is, a well-bred guest would have taken what was already at hand and not have demanded anything special, considering the circumstances.

755 **ὀτρύνω:** *urge, demand*. Review past general conditions (see note at 514): εἰ + optative . . . imperfect indicative.

756 **ποτήρ:** *drinking cup*. **χείρεςσι =** χερσί. **κίσσινος:** *of ivy*.

757 **μέλαινα μητήρ:** the "black mother" is the grape. **μέλας, μέλαινα, μέλαν:** *black*. **εὖζωρον μέθυ:** *unmixed wine*. The Greeks usually mixed their wine with water in a krater, or mixing bowl (from κεραννῶναι *to mix*). To drink the wine unmixed was uncouth and led to quicker inebriation.

758–59 "The flame of the wine coming round him made him grow hot."

758 **θερμαίνω:** *heat, warm*. **ἀμφι-βαίνω:** review βαίνω (see note at 392). **φλόξ:** *flame*.

759 **οἶνος:** *wine*. **στέφω:** *crown*. **[κράς] κρατός κρατί κρᾶτα:** *head*. **μυρσίνης κλάδοι:** "with branches of myrtle." See lines 171–72, where Alcestis places myrtle garlands on every altar. Is Heracles' behavior a parody of Alcestis' funeral?

760 **ἄ-μουσος:** fr. Μοῦσα, *unmusical*; also *tasteless, incongruous*. **ὕλακτέω:** *wail, howl*. Heracles, the greatest of heroes, called the worst of men and

a criminal by the slave, cannot carry a tune, perhaps from natural inability as much as from the effects of the wine. He did, after all, kill his music teacher, Linus. In Euripides' *Cyclops*, the Cyclops also sings ἄμουσα in the presence of people weeping (this time Odysseus' companions, 425–26, but cf. Theocritus, *Idyll* 11, for a more human Cyclops). The Athenians were accustomed to singing over their cups. There was even a drinking song (*skolion*) about Admetus, attributed to Praxilla. Wine has the effect of giving even the untalented the bravado to belt out a few verses.

761 ἦδε: fr. αἰίδω *sing*.

762 οἰκέτης: *household servant* (cf. line 192 where they are also weeping).

764 τέγγω: *wet* (with tears). ἐφ-ίημι: *send to; middle command*.

765 ἐστιάω: *entertain, feast*.

766 It seems odd or improbable that while the Chorus recognized Heracles immediately (cf. line 478), the slave does not know who the guest is in spite of having waited on him. See also line 823, in which the servant indicates that he is aware of what has been discussed between Admetus and the Chorus. πανοῦργος: *ready to do anything, criminal*.  
 † κλώψ, κλωπός, ὄ: *thief*. ληστής, -ου, ὄ: *robber, bandit*.

767 ἦ δ': *Alcestis*. ἐφ-έπομαι: fr. † ἔπομαι *follow*.

768 ἐκ-τείνω: *stretch out*. The stretching out of hands is a customary gesture of farewell to the dead as they are carried out. Cf. *Libation Bearers* 8–9. The first nine lines of *Libation Bearers* are lost and have been filled in from other sources: the first five from Aristophanes' *Frogs*; 6–7 from the scholia to Pindar; and 8–9 from the scholia to the *Alcestis*, ad 768, given below.

οὐ γὰρ παρὼν ὤμωξά σόν, πάτερ, μόρον  
 οὐδ' ἐξέτεινα χεῖρ' ἐπ' ἐκφορᾶ νέκρου.

† ἀποιμώζω: *bewail*.

770 † ρύομαι: *rescue, save*.

771 ὀργή: *anger, rage*. μαλάσσω: *soften*.

772 † ἀφικνέομαι: *arrive*. With the word "arrived," Heracles enters from the house; he is a figure both of comedy and tragedy. His speech

is typical of tipsy philosophy, full of clichés but warmhearted and humane. The scholiast finds Heracles' "philosophizing" implausible, but it seems appropriately and good-humoredly Dionysiac and egalitarian.

773 οὔτος: "you there," "hey, you." Heracles uses the demonstrative abruptly to call the servant. σεμνός: *solemn*. πεφροντικός: neuter perfect participle of φροντίζω, *thoughtful*. The two adjectives are internal accusatives, "look such and such a way" (see note at 648).

774 σκυθρωπός: *sour-faced, of sullen expression* (cf. *Medea* 271).

✚ πρόσπολος: see line 607.

775 εὐπροσήγορος: *affable, easy to talk to*. φρενί: fr. ✚ φρήν.

776 ✚ ἑταῖρος: *companion*. παρόνθ' = παρόντα fr. πάρεμι.

777 ✚ στυγνός: *hateful*. ✚ πρόσωπον: *face*. συνοφρυόμαι: *knit the brow, scowl*.

778 ✚ θυραῖος: *beyond the doors, outside* (see lines 805, 811, 814, 828, 1014). This word, though it refers to strangers or outsiders, is more ambiguous than the word Admetus had used (ὀθνεῖος, 533) since it means "at the doors" or "just outside the doors." ✚ πῆμα: *trouble*.

✚ σπουδή: + objective genitive, *eagerness, concern for*.

779 ὅπως ἄν: + subjunctive to show purpose. καί: adverbial, *actually, even*.

780 οἶδας = οἶσθα (see note at 140).

781 ✚ πόθεν: *whence, where from*.

782–85 Heracles' words of wisdom fly in the face of the information he has that Admetus knew exactly when he was supposed to die and was even able to forestall the date by sacrificing his wife (e.g., 524). They also contradict Alcestis' deathbed assertion that she will die "at once, not tomorrow, nor on the next day, nor some time this month" (320–22). It might be, however, that this inconsistency in his knowledge or awareness of what is happening around him is an intentional indication on the part of the playwright that Heracles is a bit tipsy.

782–86 Notice the line-end rhyme. At 786 Heracles breaks the pattern by putting the rhyming ἀλίσκεται in the penultimate position in the line. Is his rhyming another indication of his inebriation?

784 αὔριον: *tomorrow*. τὴν αὔριον μέλλουσαν: accusative of extent of time.

785 ἀφανές: predicate adjective, *unclear, obscure*; with τὸ τῆς τύχης, *the way of fortune*. οἱ προβήσεται: "where/whither it will proceed."

786 **κᾶστ'** = καί ἐστι. **διδασκτός**: *to be taught*. **ἀλίσκομαι**: deponent with passive meaning, used as passive of αἰρέω, *be caught*. **τέχνη**: *art, skill, craft* (see line 34).

788 **εὐφραίνω**: *cheer up*. **καθ' ἡμέραν**: *day by day, by the day*.

789 **λογίζομαι**: *reckon, count up*. **τῆς τύχης**: predicate genitive, "belongs to."

790 **τίμα**: fr. τιμάω. **πλεῖστον ἠδίστην**: double superlative for emphasis (cf. "the most unkindest cut of all").

791 ⚡ **Κύπρις**: the goddess Aphrodite, born on Cyprus. ⚡ **εὐμενής**: *kindly*.

792 **ἔασον**: fr. ἔάω. What is the form? (See note at 618). **πιθοῦ**: second aorist imperative fr. πείθω.

793 **ὀρθά**: *straight, correct*.

794 **οἶμαι μὲν**: see line 781. Heracles is giving his opinion of his own words. **ἀφείς**: fr. ἀφίημι.

795 **πίη**: fr. πίνω, future πίομαι. **ὑπερβάλλω**: *pass beyond*.

796–98 "I know well that from the present gloominess and contraction of the spirit, the splash of the wine cup as it [the wine] falls in will unmoor you;" or "I guarantee you that raising a few glasses will carry you away from your gloomy, constricted state of mind," taking πίτυλος as "the rhythmical elbow-lifting and gurgling of the carouse" (Dale).

796 **πυκάζω**: *cover*. **σάφ'** = σάφα, adverb of σαφής, *clearly*. **ὄθούνεκα** = ὅτου ἔνεκα *because, that*.

797 **σκυθρωπός**: see line 774. **ξυνεστῶτος, τό**: fr. συνίστημι, with φρενῶν, *anxiety*.

798 **μεθορμίζω**: *change moorings, move from one anchorage to another*.

**πίτυλος**: literally, *the sweep of oars*. **σκύφος**: *wine cup* (skyphos).

799 "Think mortal thoughts," a recurring theme and an ironic statement that reflects back on Admetus, who seeks to postpone his own death and thus contradict the laws of mortality.

800 ⚡ **σεμνός**: *sober, solemn* (see line 773). **συνωφρυσμένοις**: (see line 777).

801 ⚡ **χράομαι**: + dative, *use*, "To use me as a judge."

804 **κῶμος**: *revelry*. ⚡ **γέλως, -ωτος, ὅ**: *laughter*.

805 **θυραῖος**: see lines 778, 811, 814, 828, 1014. **λίαν**: *too much*.

806 **πένθει**: imperative of πενθέω.

807 **τάν** = τὰ ἐν.

810 † οθνεῖος: see lines 532, 533, 646.

811 ἦ μέντοι: *truly, indeed*. κάρτα: *very much*. If the reading is θυραῖος, it is used sarcastically. The scholia and the better manuscripts have οἰκέος (*belonging to the house*), but this may give the game away too early, since Heracles fails to pick up on it. He continues to use θυραῖος at 814 and does not ask directly who is dead until 819, where he quite forgets that a woman had been the subject (at 805 and earlier at 531–35) and asks about the other members of the family as he had done at 514 and 516.

812 μὼν: interrogative particle showing surprise (see line 484).

ξυμφορά = συμφορά. † φράζω: *tell*.

813 † ἴθι: imperative fr. εἶμι. † μέλει: *is/are a concern*.

815 κωμάζω: *revel*. ἄχθομαι: *be upset, annoyed, or distressed*.

817 ἐν δέοντι: “at the right time.”

818–19 For black robes and cut hair, see lines 427, 512.

818 στολμός: *clothing*.

819 μελάμπεπλος: *robed in black*. κουρά: *cutting of the hair* (as a sign of mourning).

820 προῦδος: *gone*.

822 ξενίζω: *entertain a guest, give hospitality to*.

823 αἰδέομαι: *be ashamed, respect*. ἀπωθέω: *thrust away*.

824 ξυνάσρος: *linked together*; as a noun, *husband, wife*.

825 The text reinforces the extent to which Alcestis was loved by everyone in the house (cf. lines 768–70). There are hardly any endearing terms expressed for Admetus by anyone in the play.

826–34 Put in an awkward situation by Admetus' calculated motivation for gaining future hospitality when he travels through Argos (553–60) or protecting the reputation of his house (556–58), Heracles is cast as a considerate and warm individual who sees only the better side of human nature.

826 ἡσθόμην: fr. αἰσθάνομαι.

828 κῆδος, -ους, τό: *relative*. The basic meaning of κῆδος is *care* about something; from that it can mean *anxiety* or *grief*, *funeral rites*, and *connection by marriage*. The English derivative is *acedia*, “spiritual indifference” or “lack of concern.”

829 βίᾳ θυμοῦ: “in spite of my feelings.”

831–32 See lines 759–60, 796.

835 οἶμος, -ου, ἡ (or ὁ): *road*. φέρει: *bears, leads*. Λάρισα: *Larissa*, a Thessalian town.

836 ξεστός: *hewn of stone, built of cut stone*. ἐκ προαστίου: “outside the outskirts of town.” Tombs are usually built along the road just outside the city. According to Oliver Taplin in Goldhill and Osborne 1999, 45, lines 835–36 refer to a real place: “this instruction precisely locates the major northern cemetery of ancient Pherai . . . which has been partially excavated over the last sixty years, and which seems to have been an important cult-centre for this whole part of Thessaly.”

838 δεῖξον: fr. δείκνυμι (see note at 618 for the form). Heroes frequently address their body parts.

838–39 Heracles is the son of Alcmene of Tiryns, daughter of Electryon, and of Zeus.

839 ἐγείνατο: fr. γείνομαι *bear, beget*.

840 ἀρτίως: *just now* (cf. ἄρτι 531, 940, 1069; ἀρτιθανής 600).

841 ἰδρῶ: *set, establish*.

842 ὑπουργέω: *do service to*. This is the first time since the death of Alcestis that she is mentioned by her name, and her name is nicely juxtaposed to that of Admetus. Heracles names her again at line 854.

844–52 The vivid description of Heracles ambushing Death, encircling him with his mighty arms until Death’s lungs are bursting for breath, is reminiscent of the usual lifelike reports of messengers in Greek tragedy. The difference, of course, is that messengers’ reports are of actions and deeds already accomplished. This premature report suits the unrealistic tale as much as Heracles’ confidence in his might. The only way he might fail to overcome Death is if he does not find him at the grave.

844 φυλάσσω: *guard, watch for*.

845 πλησίον: + genitive of separation (τόμβου), *near, beside*. προσφαγμάτων: partitive genitive with πίνοντα. πρόσφαγμα: *sacrifice, offerings*.

846 λοχαῖος: *of ambush*. ἔδρα: *seat, place*. συθείς: fr. σέδομαι *rush*.

847 μάρπτω: *grab, seize*.

849 μογέω: *struggle, labor*. πλευρά: accusative of the part affected (see lines 366–67).

850 ἄγρα: *prey*.

851 αἱματηρός: *bloody, gory*. πέλανον: *clot, mass of clotted blood* (of the sacrificial offerings).

852 ἀν-ήλιος: see line 437. Kore and the King are Persephone and Hades.

853 ❖ αἰτέω: *beg, ask* (see lines 164, 300, 308).

855–60 Heracles' attribution of Admetus' hospitality to his being a noble man emphasizes to the audience the calculated balance of benefits that motivated Admetus to his house to Heracles.

855 ἀπ-ελαύνω: see line 553.

856 πλήσσω: *strike, smite*.

859 οἰκῶν: fr. οἰκέω (notice the accent).

860 εὐεργετέω: *treat kindly*. φῶτα: fr. φῶς, φωτός, ὁ *man* (see lines 471, 605). At the end of the scene, Heracles rushes off to do what Zeus killed Asclepius for doing, initiating the whole series of events, at least in Apollo's version of the story, that make up the present *kairos*, thus creating a connection among these essentially separate stories.

## KOMMOS (861–961)

A κομμός is a lyrical lament sung by the chorus and actors. Admetus and the Chorus return from the funeral in this scene, and as Admetus stands before the doors of his empty house, he remembers his wedding day.

A Greek bride was brought by her new husband to his home amid the sounds of revelers (the families and friends) singing marriage songs. If it was a second marriage, a friend of the groom brought the bride to her new home. She was veiled, and just before entering the house, she would lift the veil, and the two would join right hands. Here, as often, wedding and funeral are conflated, and many commentators suggest that the actor standing in for Alcestis has his head and mask covered like a bride.

Except for their story of a relative who lost his son, the Chorus sings outworn consolations as they try to generalize this unique event. Alcestis' death, however, refuses to become the same old story. The whole scene dramatizes the difference between then and now. Admetus remembers the day he first came home with his wife, an event so unlike his present approach to the house without her that each aspect of it has its analogue here (clothing, sounds, company in bed). As long as Alcestis was alive, even though she was dying, the house had

a structure; now it is just an empty shell. Alcestis alone gave it substance. Admetus, whose role as the man of the house is to mediate between his house and family and the world outside, is completely at a loss now that the center of his house is gone. How much Admetus learns is debatable, but the breathtaking pain of his return to the empty house means more than any lesson he could put into words. The details he gives of the chaos of the house in Alcestis' absence are as close as we come to an expression of his recognition of Alcestis as a person. (See Luschnig 1995, 70–71.)

861 **στυγνός**: *hateful* (see line 777). Cf. **στυγέω**, *Styx*. **πρόσοδος**: *approach*. **ὄψις**: *sight, spectacle*. **χήρος, -α, -ον**: *widowed*.

863 **βῶ, στῶ**: review the deliberative subjunctive.

865 **βαρυσάμων**: *ill-fated*. Admetus' claim that his mother bore him to an evil fate might be intended to remind us of Achilles or to alert us to Admetus' ever present self-consciousness and his comparisons of himself to characters in other stories.

866 **⚡ ζηλώω**: *envy*. **ἔραμαι**: + genitive, *love, desire, be in love with*.

867 **ἐπιθυμέω**: *long for, set one's heart upon*. **ναίω**:  *dwell in*.

869 **πεζεύω**: *walk, step, go by foot*.

870 **ἄμηρος**: *hostage*. **ἀποσυλάω**: *rob* (with two accusatives).

871 **παραδίδωμι**: aorist *-έδωκα*, *hand over*. Review **δίδωμι** and its compounds: *ἀντιδίδωμι, παραδίδωμι, προδίδωμι*.

872 **οἴκων**: defining genitive, translate “consisting in,” “the hiding place which is the house” (Bayfield). **πρόβα**: fr. *προ-βαίνω*. **βᾶθι**: fr. *βαίνω*. The aorist imperative of *βαίνω* is *βῆθι* (in lyrics, *βᾶθι*); in compounds *-βα* is the imperative, as in *πρόβα, ἔμβα*.

873 **αἶαγμα**: *the cry* “*αἰαῖ*.”

874 **⚡ ὀδύνη**: *pain*.

875 **τὰν (τῆν) νέρθε**: *the one below, the dead woman*. **⚡ ὠφελέω**: *help*.

877 **ἄντα**: adverb, *before, in front of* (you). **λυπρόν**: predicate adjective with *τὸ εἰσιδεῖν* (review the articular infinitive).

878 **⚡ μιμνήσκω**: aorist *ἔμνησα* *remind, mention*. **ἐλκώω**: aorist *ἤλκωσα* *wound*.

881 **ᾧφελον**: fr. *οφείλω* *owe*. Here, used idiomatically, “*would that*.” **δόμους**: object of *οικεῖν*  *dwell in*.

883 **τῆς**: used as a relative pronoun (this is common in Homer).

- 884 μέτριος, -α, -ον: *moderate*. † ἄχθος, -ους, τό: *burden*.
- 885 νόσος, -ου, ἡ: *sickness*.
- 885–86 νυμφίδιοι εὐναί: *bridal beds*.
- 886 κεραΐζω: *ravage*.
- 887 τλητός, -ή, -όν: *endurable, bearable, to be endured*. ἐξόν: *accusative absolute, "it being possible."*
- 888 διὰ παντός: *"through all [one's life]."*
- 889 δυσπάλαιστος, -ον: *hard to wrestle with*.
- 890 πέρασ, -ατος, τό: *with οὐδέν, limit*. τίθησ: *review* τίθημι.
- 892 τλᾶθι = τλῆθι, *imperative of τλάω*.
- 893–94 "Different misfortunes show up to wear down different people." Forms of ἄλλος and ἕτερος are frequently used together as in ἄλλος ἄλλα λέγει, "one man says one thing, one [says] another."
- 894 πιέζω: *crush*. φανείσα: *fr. φαίνω*.
- 897 † κωλύω: + infinitive, *prevent (from)*. † ρίπτω: *throw, fling*. Admetus' words here (897–902) offer the audience a scene from the "offstage elsewhere"; we are to imagine the events at the tomb.
- 898 τάφος, -ου, ἡ: *trench*. κοίλος: *hollow*.
- 901 ὁμοῦ: *together*.
- 902 διαβάντε: *dual aorist active participle of διαβαίνω*.
- 903–904 "I had a kinsman (τις ἐν γένει)." It is unusual for a chorus to give such personal information. This particular story provides little comfort to Admetus, who expected his father to die for him rather than to get on with his life.
- 904 κόρος: *boy, son*. ἀξιόθρηνος: *worthy of lamentation* (cf. English *threnody* "a song of mourning").
- 906 μονόπαις: *only child*. ἔμπας: *on the whole, still, all in all, nevertheless*.
- 907 ἄλις: *enough, in moderation*.
- 908–10 "Though being already headed for gray hair and advanced in life." The Chorus' kinsman might make us think of Pheres.
- 908 πολιός: *grey* (see line 470). χαίτη: *hair* (see lines 101, 470).
- 909 προπετής: *falling forward, inclined to*.
- 910 πόρσω: *onward, advanced*.
- 912 σχῆμα, -ατος, τό: *form, appearance, shape*.
- 913 μεταπίπτω: *fall differently, undergo a change*. Review πίπτω/πίτνω and compounds: εισπίπτω, ἐκπίπτω, ἐμπίπτω, προσπίπτω, προσπίτνω.
- 914 "Much has gone between." That is, "There's a big difference."

915 τότε: *then*, on their wedding day. πεύκη: *pine, pine torches* (used in the wedding ceremony). Πηλιάς, -άδος: *feminine adjective, from Mt. Pelion.*

916 ὑμέναιος: *marriage song* (see line 577). † στείχω: *go* (see lines 74, 186, 612, 740).

917 † βαστάζω: *support, carry* (see lines 19, 40, 724).

918 πολυάχητος = πολυήχητος *noisy*. † ἔπομαι: *imperfect εἰπόμην follow.*

919 ὀλβίζω: *call happy*. An oxymoronic line, but, of course, she was not dead then.

920 εὐπατρίδης: *of noble family*. In Athens, εὐπατρίδαι were the old aristocracy. ἀπ' ἀμφοτέρων: *on both sides.*

921 σύζυξ = σύζυγος *yoked together, united, wed.*

922 γόος: *lament*. ἀντίπαλος: *wrestling against, opposed, instead of.*

923 λευκός, -ή, -όν: *white.*

925 κοιτή: *bed*. † ἔρημος, -ον (or -η, -ον): *desolate, deserted.*

927 πότμος: *fate, fortune*. ἀπειρόκακος: *inexperienced in misfortune.*

930 † δάμαρ, -αρτος, ἡ: *wife* (see lines 46, 227, 296, 612).

932 παραλύω: *separate.*

936 ὁμως: with νομίζω, *still, nevertheless.*

937 ἄπτω: + genitive, *touch* (see line 964).

938 † μόχθος: *trouble.*

939 παρείς: fr. παρήμι *let pass, bypass*. μόρσιμον: *destiny*. Admetus has come close to his father's view of him (see lines 694–95).

940 † ἄρτι: *just now.*

941 ἀνέχομαι: *bear, endure.*

942 See line 195.

943 τρέπω: *turn*. Of the recent editors, Garzya and Diggle read 943 as τερπνῆς τύχοιμ' ἄν εισόδου with the manuscripts and scholia, but because Admetus has already talked about his homecoming in 941, it has been thought that here he should talk about going out. Because, however, he continues to talk about the interior of the house and does not turn to what awaits him outside until line 950, the manuscript reading may well be preferable to the Murray/Dale reading (ἐξόδου).

944 ἔνδον: *within*. ἐξ-ελαύνω: *drive out*. ἔρημία: *emptiness, loneliness, desolation.*

945 † εὐνή: *bed*. εὔτε: *when*. κενός: *empty*.

946 θρόνος: *chair*. οἶσιν = οἶς.

- 947 ἀύχηρός: *squalid, dirty*. οὐδας, -εος, τό: *floor*. γόνυ: dative plural γούνασι, *knee*.
- 948 οἱ δέ: the servants. δεσπότις = δέσποινα.
- 949 στένω: see lines 296, 341, 652, 1079.
- 950 ἔξωθεν: *outside*.
- 951 ἐλώσι: fr. ἐλάυνω. ξύλλογος: *gathering*.
- 952 γυναικοπληθής: *full of women*.
- 953 ὁμηλιξ: *contemporary, person of the same age*.
- 954 † ἐρῶ: *will say*. κυρέω: + participle, *happen, meet with* (see line 472).
- 955 ἰδοῦ: imperative, *look at*.
- 957 † εἶτα: *then*.
- 959 κληδών: *name, reputation*. πρὸς κακοῖσι: “in addition to my troubles.”
- 960 κερδίων, -ον: comparative of an adjective with no positive, derived from κέρδος (*profit, gain*), *more profitable*.
- 961 κακῶς κλύω: *be spoken ill of, have a bad reputation*. κακῶς πράττω: *do badly, fare badly, manage badly*.

#### FOURTH STASIMON (962–1005)

##### Strophe A: (962–72)

Though I have raced on high  
 through  
 the musical gamut  
 and touched on many tales, I have  
 found  
 nothing is stronger than Necessity,  
 not any drug  
 in the Thracian tablets  
 where are written the sayings  
 of Orpheus, not all the cures  
 Phoebus gave  
 to the Asclepiads,  
 providing remedies for mortals of  
 [their] many ills.

##### Antistrophe A: (973–83)

But for this goddess alone it is not  
 possible  
 to go to her altars or images;  
 she heeds no sacrifice.  
 May you not come, Lady,  
 upon me with greater force than  
 before in life.  
 For whatever Zeus assents to,  
 with you he accomplishes it.  
 You subdue even the iron among  
 the Chalybes by force,  
 and have no respect for the stubborn  
 temper.

## Strophe B: (984–94)

You, too, the goddess has taken  
 in the inescapable bonds of her  
 hands.  
 But be brave, for you will not ever  
 bring back the dead  
 from the Netherworld by weeping.  
 Even the shadowy children of the  
 gods  
 perish in death.  
 Dear she was when she was with us,  
 dear will she be in death.  
 You brought to your bed the most  
 perfect wife of all.

## Antistrophe B: (995–1005)

Let the tomb of your wife not be  
 thought of  
 as a mound of the perished dead, but  
 let it be  
 honored like the gods,  
 a holy shrine for travelers.  
 And someone, turning into the road  
 that angles off  
 will say this:  
*She once died for her husband,  
 now she is a Blessed Spirit.*  
*Hail Mistress, grant my prayer.* Such  
 voices will greet her.

## Strophe and Antistrophe A:

962/973 ~ \_ \_ \_ ~ \_ \_ \_  
 963/974 ~ \_ \_ ~ \_ \_ ~ \_ \_  
 964/975 ~ \_ \_ \_ ~ \_ \_ ~ \_ \_  
 965/976 ~ \_ / ~ \_ \_ ~ \_ \_  
 966/977 ~ \_ / ~ \_ \_ ~ \_ \_  
 967/978 ~ \_ \_ ~ \_ \_ ~ \_  
 968/979 ~ \_ \_ ~ \_ \_ ~ \_  
 969–70/980–81 ~ \_ ~ \_ ~ \_ ~ \_ ~ \_ ~ \_ ~ \_  
 971–72/982–83 ~ \_ ~ \_ ~ \_ ~ \_ ~ \_ ~ \_ ~ \_

## Strophe and Antistrophe B:

984/995 ~ \_ \_ ~ \_ \_ ~ \_ \_ ~ \_ \_  
 985/996 ~ \_ \_ ~ \_ \_ ~ \_ \_ ~ \_ \_  
 986–87/997–98 ~ \_ \_ ~ \_ \_ ~ \_ \_  
 988–89/999–1000 ~ \_ \_ / ~ \_ \_ ~ \_ \_  
 990/1001 ~ \_ / ~ \_ \_ ~ \_ \_  
 991/1002 ~ \_ / ~ \_ \_ ~ \_ \_

992/1003 ~/-~--~--~--

993-94/1004-1005 ~--~--~--~--~--~--~--~--~--

In the final ode, the Chorus' words of despair are full of names and images that once suggested hope: Orpheus, Asclepius, and φάρμακα. The ode ends with words addressed to heroes. Alcestis has become a blessed δαίμων, a powerful spirit for the good. Song and spells and drugs fall short in the face of Necessity, but hope must be kept alive, because by the end of their greeting, Alcestis is there in person. The movement of the final ode parallels the movement in the play from the general to the particular (as is common in tragic lyrics). It is not the generic woman who has died, but Alcestis. Thus the ode ends with an address to Alcestis (by an anonymous imaginary wayfarer) just as she arrives in person, but anonymous, with Heracles. Song escorts her back, in particular *this* song, which sees Alcestis as still present (though distant and somewhat abstract) as a benign spirit. Song in the form of the *Alcestis* restores Alcestis to life by art; a great improvement on the way things are. (Cf. Luschnig 1995, 75.)

The first strophe and antistrophe confirm what has already been said in the parodos, namely that there is no escape from death (112-21), a truth that Admetus' current existence seems to contradict. The second pair of stanzas applies the maxim to Alcestis' death and her irrevocable demise; no one can be brought back from the Netherworld, the Chorus claims. This truth is soon contradicted as well, when Heracles brings Alcestis back to life. Again, what is being said is at variance with what the plot presents. Heracles claimed that no one knows when he or she is to die (783-84), but Alcestis knew the appointed day (320-22). From the point of view of the characters, however, the Chorus is confirming something, that at least for Admetus, must be meaningful and foreboding as the plot develops. First, they confirm that Alcestis has died with undeniable *kleos*, a fact that was important to Admetus, as we learned already in 725. This statement implies that Admetus indeed has no chance of earning *kleos*, as he has already realized (954-61). Second, and of more importance for the denouement of the play, is the repeated statement that one cannot avoid death.

Death is overseen by Necessity, which is of an ineluctable quality. The text thus foregrounds the unavoidable ending of the play, which will lead in the immediate future to the death of Admetus.

963 **μετάρσιος**: *soaring, uplifted*. **άίσσω**: aorist ἦξα *rush, speed*.

964 **άψάμενος**: fr. άπτω.

965 **Άνάγκη**: “Necessity” is here metonymic for fate, Moira or Aisa. Necessity is, of course, exemplified by Death.

967–68 One of the central doctrines of Orphism was reincarnation. To consult Orphic writings was therefore the proper action if one wanted to counteract Necessity, which assures death.

967 **σανίς, -ίδος, ἦ**: *tablet*. **τάς**: used as a relative pronoun.

970 **Άσκληπιάδαις**: the “sons of Asclepius” are physicians. **γῆρυς**: *voice*.

971 **άντιτέμνω**: *cut against* (of herbs and roots used as antidotes), *provide cures*.

973–75 “It is possible to go to neither altars nor image of this goddess alone.”

973 **μόνας** = μόνης.

974 **βρέτας, τό**: *image*.

975 **σφάγιον**: *victim, sacrifice*.

976 ✚ **πότνια**: *lady*. The term *πότνια* is usually used when addressing a goddess in a prayer. Because, as the Chorus says, Necessity has no cult or worship, it is odd that she is addressed in this way, yet illogicality is pervasive in this play on more than one level. Prayer to Necessity is futile, but in this instance it works or, in the dramatic illusion, seems to.

978 **νεύω**: *nod (to)*.

979 **τελευτάω**: *accomplish* (see line 374).

980 “among the Chalybes.” The Chalybes (or Chalybi) were a people of Pontus, known for ironworking. See *Seven against Thebes*, 727–30.

**δαμάζω**: *tame*. **σίδαρον**: *iron*.

982–83 **άπότομος**: *stubborn, unyielding, abrupt*. ✚ **λήμα**: *spirit*. ✚ **αιδώς, -ούς, ἦ**: *respect, regard*. Necessity does not regard the intransigent spirit.

984 **άφυκτος**: *inescapable*. **δεσμός**: *bond*. **είλε**: fr. αἰρέω.

988 ✚ **σκότιος**: *dark, secret*.

992 For this line there is variation in the manuscripts. Murray marks the line as corrupt and prints φίλα δὲ †καὶ θανούσ' ἔσται, †. φίλα δὲ

θανοῦσ' ἔτ' ἔσται: Garzya, Diggle, following Prinz, a late nineteenth-century editor. This emendation is accepted by most modern editors.  
 994 † ζεύγνυμι: *yoke, join* (see line 428). κλίσια: *bed*. † ἄκοιτις: *wife* (see lines 201, 526).

995 χῶμα: *mound*.

997–98 σέβας: *object of worship, shrine*. ἔμπορος: *wayfarer, traveler, trader*.

1000 δόχμιος: *turning off the road, angled, aslant, sloping* (see line 575).

κέλευθος, -ου, ἡ: *path*.

1003 μάκαρ, μάκαιρα, μάκαρ: *blessed*.

1004–1005 προσ-ερῶ: *address*. φήμη: *utterance*.

## EXODOS (1006–1163): CHORUS, ADMETUS, HERACLES, AND A SILENT WOMAN

However we interpret this scene and with it, the meaning of the play, much of the enjoyment and irony of the exodos comes from the fact that it is a recognition scene, a type-scene in which the audience took particular delight. Euripides was a master of recognition scenes, working to make them more and more elaborate and, therefore, both thrilling and entertaining to the spectators (as in the *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, in which Orestes' life and Iphigenia's deliverance depend upon their recognizing each other through the device of the unrecognized sister dictating a letter to her unknown brother). The *Alcestis*, of course, includes the earliest extant example of a Euripidean recognition scene. The recognition is drawn out and made in stages, first through physical likeness (in dress and stature, as in the "tokens" of recognition in Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers*—the footprint, the lock of hair, and finally the garment woven by Electra for her brother, a scene parodied by Euripides in his own *Electra*). Finally, after all the teasing, we witness the full recognition, greeted with amazement, whether in joy or horror, by Admetus. The physical recognition has here been anticipated by one of a more ethical kind in the preceding scene, in which Admetus realizes what his loss means and may even come to some recognition of his wife as a person.

1006 γόνος, -ου, ὁ: *son*.

1008–36 Unlike Heracles' speech to the Servant (773–802), which was lucid and well thought out, this speech is elliptical (see, for example, the sudden transition to the woman he leads, 1019–20). Heracles seems to find it awkward that he has to reproach his host. Unlike Admetus' speeches, which all have the same rhetorical ornaments built in, Heracles' speeches change with his mood. His rhetorical clumsiness in this speech is heightened by his misapplications of language: his use of ἔφραζες with the infinitive (which is implied; cf. Dale on line 1012), the unparalleled use of ἐλειψάμην in the middle voice (1015), and the unusual use of πόνον in the accusative in apposition to the sentence, instead of the more common genitive (1027).

1009 **μομφή**: *blame* (cf. μέφομαι). **σπλάγχνα, τὰ**: *guts, heart*.

1010–12 **ἐγὼ . . . σύ**: Heracles emphasizes his way of behavior in contrast to that of Admetus.

1011 **ἐξετάζεσθαι**: *to be considered*.

1012 **φράζω**: see line 812.

1014 **θυραίου**: see lines 778, 805, 811, 814, 828.

1015 **στέφω**: *crown one's head* (κρᾶτα). **λείβω**: *pour libations*.

1016 **σπονδή**: *libation*.

1018 **μήν**: answers μέν (1017), *but*.

1019 **ὧν οὖνεχ'**: "on account of which," i.e., "the reason why . . . [I have come]." **ὑποστρέφω**: *turn back*.

1020 **γυναικα**: the Greek allows a wonderful wordplay. γυνή means both woman and wife. At 1013 Heracles uses the word for Admetus' wife; here Admetus will understand the word to mean "woman," while Heracles and the audience know it is his wife. See lines 531, 1032, and 1061–63.

1021 **ἕως ἄν**: + subjunctive, *until*.

1023 "If I do [suffer] what I hope I don't," i.e., die in carrying out the current labor. Optative of wish.

1024 **προσπολέω**: *be a servant* (πρόσπολος). The unidentified woman is offered as a slave in Admetus' house.

1026–27 It is remarkable that Admetus does not suspect anything. At the end of the second episode (425–31), he commanded all the Thesalians he rules to share his mourning for Alcestis, ordering them to have their hair shorn and dress in black. He proclaimed that even the horses' manes are to be shorn. No sound of flute or lyre is to be heard,

which implies that there is to be no entertainment of any sort. Heracles does not know about this proclamation and thus invents an athletic contest to explain how he got possession of the woman.

1026 † ἀγών: *contest* (see lines 489, 504, 648, 1102, 1141). πάνδημος: *public*.

1027 ἀθλητής: *athlete* (one who competes for a prize).

1028 † κομίζω: *bring, conduct*. νικητήρια: *prize of victory*.

1029–32 “It was [set up] for those winning in the light contests to take away horses, for those winning in the greater, boxing and wrestling, [the prize was] cattle, and a woman came with them.”

1029 τὰ κοῦφα: *the light events* (that is, races).

1029–30 ἦν ἄγεσθαι: “it was [the prize] to take away.”

1031 πυγμή: *boxing*. παλή: *wrestling*. βουφόρβια: *cattle* (see line 8, βουφορβέω).

1032 εἶπετ’: fr. † ἔπομαι.

1032–33 That is, αἰσχρὸν ἦν [ἄν] ἐντυχόντι (“for a person falling in with”) κέρδος τόδ’ εὐκλεές “to pass it by” = παρῆναι.

1033 κέρδος: Knowingly or not, Heracles here speaks the language of Admetus, who seems to weigh almost everything in terms of gain and loss.

1035 κλοπαῖος: *stolen*.

1037–69 Admetus’ speech is replete with rhetorical ornaments as always.

1038 ἄθλιος: *unhappy*.

1039 ἄλγος ἄλγει: *figura etymologica*. It is striking that Admetus equates Heracles’ seeking another host with the death of Alcestis.

1040 ὀρμάω: *set in motion, passive start, set out*. του = τινος.

1043 μή: this negative is used because of the indefinite subject.

1044 ἄνωχθι: imperative of ἄνωγα, *bid, tell, command*.

1045 It is unclear why taking the maid in and putting her in the female servants’ quarters should remind Admetus of his troubles, that is to say, of Alcestis’ death. There are, as we know, other female servants in the household.

1047 νοσοῦντι νόσον: *figura etymologica*.

1049 † τρέφω: *bring up, keep*. δωμάτων: partitive genitive with ποῦ.

1049–50, 1055–56 Admetus’ rhetorical questions as to whether he should put the maid in his wife’s chamber and bed follow abruptly and illogically. Why would a maid be put in his wife’s chambers?

1050 A director might insert some dark humor into this scene by showing Admetus viewing whatever he sees of the woman with more interest than is warranted by the circumstances. † ἐσθής, -ῆτος, ἡ: *clothing*. πρέπει: *is noticeable*, “as she strikes one by her clothing and accessories.” That is, “one can see by her clothing and accessories that she is young.”

1051 πότερα: *whether* (do not translate unless it introduces an indirect question). κατὰ στέγην ἀνδρῶν: “in the men’s quarters.” There must have been in his household other young women who lived in the female servants’ quarters. It is unclear why this particular young woman should be thought to associate with young men any more than other young women of the household. Of course, the master *owned* the bodies of the slaves.

1052 ἀκραιφνής: *pure, chaste*. στρωφάω: *turn about; middle move about among*.

1053 ἡβάω: *be young*.

1054 εἴργω: *restrain*. προμηθία: *consideration*.

1055 † τρέφω: aorist ἔθρεψα *nourish, rear, keep*. The form is subjunctive. εἰσβαίνω: *go into; first aorist cause (someone) to enter*.

1056 ἐπεσφρέω: *let in onto*.

1057 μέμψις: *blame, reproach*. δημότης: *citizen, townsman*.

1058–59 “lest anyone charge me with throwing myself upon. . . .” εὐεργέτιν προδόντ’: Admetus feels obligated to Alcestis only for her sacrifice for him.

1060 † σέβω: *worship, revere*.

1061–63 After talking only about her, Admetus’ sudden direct address to the woman is a surprise. His close scrutiny of her obviously continues.

1061 πρόνοια: *forethought*.

1062–63 ταῦτ’ = τὰ αὐτά, with μέτρα.

1063 μορφή: *shape, form*. ἴσθι: imperative of οἶδα (see note at 140). προσήϊξαι: perfect middle of προσείκω, “you are like her in figure.”

1065 ἔλης and ἡρημένον: fr. αἰρέω (in the sense of *destroy*). A *figura etymologica* from αἰρέω (see also note on the cognate accusative at 648). It seems as if Admetus feels that he loses control over himself by gazing intently at what he can see of Alcestis’ figure.

1067 θολόω: *agitate, make muddy*. θολός is the dark fluid emitted by the cuttlefish to conceal its movements from predators; hence θολόω means

to “make turbid” and, metaphorically, “to perturb.” For the significance of the metaphor of a cuttlefish, see the “Discussions” on the exodos, pp. 212–13.

1068 **πηγή**: *stream, spring* (of tears). **καταρρήγνυμι**: *break forth and run down*.

1069 **† γεύομαι**: *taste*. **πικρός**: *bitter*.

1070–71 The Chorus repeats in yet another way their belief that nothing can be done about fate except to suffer it. The ambiguity is again menacing to Admetus. He was destined to be dead by now.

1070 **ἔχω**: + infinitive, *be able*.

1071 **καρτερέω**: *endure*. **δόσις**: *gift* (of δίδωμι).

1072–74 An echo of Admetus' wish to have the tongue of Orpheus and charm the powers of the Netherworld to let Alcestis come back to the light (357–62). While Orpheus failed in bringing back Eurydice, Heracles has succeeded in bringing back Alcestis. The reality as known to the spectators underscores the Chorus' statements that fate cannot be changed. It was not Alcestis' fate to die today but Admetus'.

1072 **εἰ γάρ**: with secondary tense of the indicative, contrary to fact wish (see line 536).

1074 **πορσύνω**: *perform*.

1077 **ὑπερβάλλω**: *be excessive*. **ἐναισίμως**: *becomingly*.

1078 **παραινέω**: *advise*.

1079 **προκόπτω**: *make progress*.

1080 **ἔγνωκα**: fr. γινώσκω. **ἔρω**: *love, desire* (the only use of this word in the play).

1082 **κάτι** = καὶ ἔτι.

1083 **άντερῶ**: future, *contradict, deny* (at 615 the word is used by Pheres in a similar phrase).

1084 **άνδρα τόνδε**: he points to himself. This is the deictic (pointing) use of the demonstrative. (See line 331 and note; also 565, 1090, 1094.)

**ἠδομαι**: *take delight, enjoy*.

1085 **μαλάσσω [σε]**: *soften*. **ἠβάσκω**: *be in one's youth*. Heracles repeats the exact words of Alcestis in 381, in which she says that time will soften Admetus' feelings of loneliness.

1087 **πόθος**: *desire*.

1088 **σιγάω**: *be silent*. **φόμην**: fr. οἶμαι (οἶομαι).

1089 **χηρεύω**: *be widowed, live in solitude*.

1090 **συγ-κλίνω**: *lie beside*.

1091 † ὠφελέω: *help, benefit*. τι: *in any way*. προσδοκάω: *expect*. A reminder of the “the dead are nothing” motif introduced by Alcestis at 381, followed by Admetus (541) when he attempts to convince Heracles to be his guest in spite of a death in the household, and further taken up by Pheres (726).

1092 ὅπουπερ: *wherever*.

1093 “you incur the charge of folly” (Bayfield). μωρία: *foolishness*. ὀφλισκάνω: *incur*.

1094 ὡς . . . καλῶν: “on condition of [*never, μήποτε*] calling [me, lit. *this man*]” or “as long as.” What is unclear here is exactly what this line is in response to. Perhaps he means “you may charge me with folly, but you will never call me anyone’s husband.” νυμφίος: *bridegroom*. Admetus continues to refer to himself in the third person, which he started doing less explicitly at 1090. Admetus had used the first person at 1088 and will revert to it at 1096. It may be that whenever he makes an explicit statement about marriage, he distances it by referring to himself in the third person.

1095 πιστός: *loyal, faithful* (see line 368). οὐνεκα: *because*.

1097 Heracles’ unceremonious command shows that he thinks Admetus is merely paying lip service.

1098 πρός: with Διός. ἄντομαι: *beg*.

1100 δηχθήσομαι: fr. δάκνω *bite, pain, grieve*.

1101 πιθοῦ: imperative, *trust me, go along*. τάχα: *perhaps*. ἐς δέον: *opportunistly*. “for perhaps the favor may fall opportunistly.”

1105 ἄπεισιν: fr. ἀπό + εἶμι. ἀθρέω: *look*. Heracles still does not show Alcestis in entirety to Admetus.

1106 Genitive absolute, conditional. ὀργαίνω: *make angry*.

1107 προθυμία: *eagerness*. προθυμίαν ἔχω: *be eager*.

1108 ἀνδάνοντα: neuter plural participle fr. ἀνδάνω *please*.

1109 ἔσθ’ ὅθ’ [ἔτε]: “there is a time when,” that is, “one day.”

1111 προσπόλοις: Admetus is again slow to see the ploy. Heracles has told him that he wants Admetus to receive the woman as a servant in his home (προσπολεῖν, 1024). Admetus fails to question why Heracles would now refuse to commit her to servants to lead into the house and insist that he will release her only to Admetus’ right hand.

1112 εἰ δοκεῖ: is the reading of some of the manuscripts, εἰ βούλει of others.

1114 **θιγγάνω**: *touch*. **πάρα** = *πάρεστι she may*.

1116 **βιάζομαι**: *compel*.

1117 **προ-τείνω**: *stretch out*. In these lines there are explicit stage directions.

1118 **καρατομάω**: *behead*. **Gorgon**: According to Hesiod, there were three Gorgons, the daughters of Phorcys and Ceto: Sthenno ("Mighty"), Euryale ("Wandering Widely"), and Medusa ("Ruler" or "Queen"). The three sisters are usually represented with hideous faces, glaring eyes, and serpents in their hair and girdles. Of the three sisters, only Medusa was mortal. She was slain by Perseus, who succeeded in cutting off her head by not looking directly at her. Even after her death, the Gorgon's head retained its power of turning to stone anything that met its gaze. The implication is that Admetus is willing to lead her by his right hand to the house and yet not look at her. (See also the "Discussions" on the exodos, especially "Hide-and-Seek," pp. 208–11.)

1119 **ΑΔ. ἔχω; ναί**. Murray's punctuation. **ΑΔ. ἔχω. ναί**. might be preferable. Diggle, following Nauck, brackets lines 1119–20. Because the taking of right hands is so important as a gesture at a wedding ceremony, we prefer to keep the lines.

1121 **βλέψον**: "Look at her!" Some commentators take these words as an implicit stage direction for the unveiling (Conacher 1988 on 1121). Instead, Heracles might at this point turn completely toward Admetus and allow Admetus to see the woman more fully. † **πρέπω**: *resemble*.

1122 **μεθίστασο**: present middle imperative of **μεθίστημι**, *depart from*.

1123 **θαῦμα**: *wonder, amazing thing*. **ἀνέλπιστος**: *unhoped for, unexpected*.

1123–24 Murray's reading is ὦ θεοί, τί λέξω—θαῦμ' ἀνέλπιστον τόδε— / γυναῖκα λεύσσω τήνδ'; —ἐμὴν ἐτητύμως; It is hard to see how this punctuation and reading would have been immediately understandable on stage.

1124 **ἐτητύμως**: *truly, really*.

1125 **κέρτομος**: *mocking*. There may be a play on the word **καρατομῶν** in 1118. If so, this would imply an admission that Admetus does sense some danger emanating from the reappearing figure of his wife. **χαρά**: *joy*. **ἐκπλήσσω**: *strike out* (of one's wits).

1127 **φάσμα**: *apparition, phantom*.

1128 **ψυχαγωγός**: (one) *leading souls to the Underworld, necromancer*.

1130 **ἀπιστέω**: *disbelieve*.

1131 **θίγω**: aorist subjunctive of **θιγγάνω** (see line 1114).

1135 **φθόνος**: *ill will, envy*.

1138 **ἀνορθόω**: *set up again, restore*.

1140 **μάχην συνάπτω**: *engage in battle*.

1142 See lines 846–47.

1143 **ἄναυδος**: *speechless*.

1144–46 The usual explanation given for having Alcestis returned mute is the number of actors. The *Alcestis* seems to have been performed by only two actors. Heracles and Alcestis are played by the same actor, and therefore the silent figure of Alcestis must be acted by a mute. By 438 B.C.E., however, three-actor plays were quite common, and nothing should have prevented Euripides from inserting a third actor if he needed one. He also could have taken Heracles and the mute woman offstage and had Alcestis reenter for a tête-à-tête with her husband. Because he did not do so, he must have had another reason. Maybe he preferred to have the spectators imagine what Alcestis would say to her husband, once she has resumed her power of speech and realized that so far he has broken every promise he had made to her. Having her remain silent for three days is not an oddity since triplicity is quite common in Greek ritual. Many rituals come in threes: libations, invocations, and greetings to the dead (see note at 254), for example. The dead are thought to be in transit between worlds for three days. See Ahl 1997.

1144 **θέμις [ἔστι]**: *it is permitted, lawful*. **προσφώνημα**: *something addressed to another*.

1146 **ἀφαγνίζω**: *purify, undo her sanctification to the dead*.

1148 **τὸ λοιπόν**: *in the future*. **εὐσεβέω**: *be pious*. The present imperative implies “continue to be. . .”

1150 **πορσύνω**: *perform*. **Son of Sthenelus**: Eurystheus of Tiryns, who sent Heracles on his labors (see line 481).

1151 **ξυνέστιος**: *a guest (sharing the hearth)*.

1152 **ἀῤῥθις**: *again, at another time*. **ἐπείγω**: *hasten, hurry*; active is transitive, middle intransitive.

1153 **†δόμεν†**: perhaps this should be **ὄδον** (one of the manuscript readings), **δρόμον** (Wilamowitz), or **πόδα**. **ὄδον ἐλθεῖν**: accusative of the ground covered (a category of the cognate accusative), *to go on a journey*. **πόδα ἐλθεῖν**: *to take a step*. **νόστιμος, -ον**: *return, returning home*.

1154 **ἄστίς**: *citizen*. **ἐννέπω**: *bid, order*. **τετραρχία**: *tetrarchy*. A tetrarchy, as used here, is a kingdom with four city-states. On the poleis of Thessaly, see the note at 590–96. At lines 425–31, Admetus had commanded all the Thessalians over whom he ruled to go into mourning for a full year.

1155 **χόρος**: *dance*.

1156 **κνισάω**: *cause to smoke*. “with sacrifices of slaughtered cattle.”

1157 **μεθαρμόζω**: *to dispose differently, to correct, change*.

1158 **ἀρνέομαι**: *deny*. With his invitation to celebrate, Admetus returns to the genre in which he belongs, the *skolion* (drinking song):

Drink with me, be young with me, be in love when I am in love,  
wear a crown with me.

Be wild with me when I am wild, be sober with me when I am  
sober.

Page, *Lyrice Graeca Selecta* 456.

His grief had made him forget this, but he remembers now when he has reason to be happy. Of course Heracles has the tact not to stay (Luschnig 1995, 81). Admetus himself is the subject of one *skolion*:

Ἄδμητου λόγον, ὦ ταίρε, μαθὼν τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς φίλει  
τῶν δειλῶν δ' ἀπέχου, γνοὺς ὅτι δειλῶν ὀλίγα χάρις.

The *skolion* is attributed to Praxilla. It is put together from Aristophanes' *Wasps* and the scholia ad *Vespa* 1238.

1159–63 The last five verses also conclude the plays *Andromache*, *Helen*, and *Bacchae*. The last four verses conclude the *Medea*. Critics often deem the verses inappropriate at the end of any of the other plays but consider them fitting at the end of the *Alcestis*. If we think of the jubilation at the end of Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, when there is no resurrection but merely the saving of a life, we can easily imagine the ecstatic chorus the elder playwright would have written at the end of a real resurrection play. Why is there such a low-key song at the end of the *Alcestis*? Can we be sure that the *Alcestis* has a happy ending? The choral song contains no commendation of the gods for restoring Alcestis to



Fragment of a wedding scene (Acropolis Museum, Athens). Photograph by L. J. Luschnig.

life nor any wish for the happiness of the reunited couple. Instead, the song notes the unexpected turn that events have taken. While clearly referring to Alcestis' resurrection, the lines also hint that the future, too, may bring surprises and encourage the audience to wonder what events may yet occur.

1160 **κράνω**: *accomplish, bring to pass.*

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# *Discussions*

## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

In this section we offer some interpretations of the play, not to suggest that one is more legitimate than others, but to stimulate thought and participation. The *Alcestis* is one of the most controversial of Greek plays, and for this reason, we also introduce our readers to some current scholarly issues, fashions, and methods. To set the focus on the topics under consideration, we begin each section with a series of questions. This is an invitation to respond, to ask more questions, and to join in the dialogue.

For the prologue and choral odes, much of the material for discussion is in the commentary itself. In the discussions that follow, after some introductory remarks, we examine the play episode by episode with interpretations of the staging and significance of each. We recommend that these be consulted only after you have read the scene and formed your own ideas about it. Acting it out either in Greek or in translation will help you see it as a whole and understand that any scene can be played in various ways. It is also a good idea to read the play through in translation early and then put the translation aside as you work on reading the Greek.

We have widely differing interpretations of the *Alcestis*, but one thing we agree on is that Admetus is the biggest problem. It is important to

understand that no single reader can see everything that is in the play and that there is no one "answer," but that every question, response, interpretation, or staging is illuminating and may help you see things you might have missed and add your own ideas to the body of thought about the *Alcestis*. The two questions to ask yourself as you interpret the play are "Does it fit the text?" and "Does it make sense on the stage?"

The richness of Greek drama has kept it alive through the centuries. Luckily, there can be no definitive interpretation of any play. One interpretation does not necessarily rule out others, but if you were directing the play, you would have to make some choices that would exclude others in order to present a coherent drama. Even so, every member of the audience would see it differently.

## TWO VIEWS OF ADMETUS

Questions to consider: What kind of man is Admetus? What sort of people get themselves into such a situation? Why is Alcestis returned to him after he breaks all his promises to her?

C. A. E. Luschnig:

My view is that both Alcestis and Admetus represent conventional people. Alcestis is able to rise above the ordinary by undertaking a heroic action to save her husband, but Admetus, who takes everything for granted, does not know what every Greek knew, namely that life is fragile and that he is mortal. Both Admetus and Alcestis have last-minute second thoughts about their deal to cheat death and to cheat Alcestis of her life. I believe that Admetus really does come to a better understanding of what it means to be mortal and what it means to be human as he is stripped of everything he took for granted before: his wife, his enjoyment of life, his parents (whom he disowns), and finally his self-respect and expectation of being respected by others in life and after death. He may not rise to heroic heights, but he does contribute to the resurrection and return of his wife through his own artistry in keeping her alive, in centering his life (and therefore the play) on her, in not letting her be forgotten and go the way of other sacrificial victims, to oblivion in the next scene. In the kommos and in the

exodos, he finally begins to recognize her as a person rather than thinking of her in terms of her relationship to himself. He turns the obscure and anonymous woman brought by Heracles into Alcestis by finally identifying her and wanting her back. The two enter the house again and go on living. Alcestis valued her life and was sorry to have to miss events in her children's lives. However we imagine the first words she will say to Admetus, the household will welcome her. Admetus may not deserve to get his wife back and keep living, but Alcestis, the children, and the slaves do.

H. M. Roisman:

My view is that Alcestis is more than a match for Admetus. Admetus causes tremendous suffering, mainly for Alcestis, but also for himself, because of who he is—an egotistical, self-absorbed, and obtuse man with a limited capacity for understanding anything but his own immediate wants. His perceptions are truncated, and he has no sense of cause and effect or of his own role in his unhappy situation. Thus, he blames Alcestis for betraying him by dying and accuses his father of causing Alcestis' death, without realizing his own responsibility.

Alcestis is a caring mother and dutiful wife as she is also an intelligent woman who has no illusions about the kind of man her husband is. She agreed to die for him not so much out of love as because she had little choice. She saw that when his parents refused to accede to his request that they die in his stead, he hated them. She knew that he would hate her too and make her life a misery if she refused. She might also have been afraid he would substitute one of their children.

In going, though, she made sure to give him his own share of grief, to the extent that she could, by exacting the promise that he never remarry. Her justification was that she did not want her children to suffer under a stepmother, but knowing Admetus as she did, it must have been clear to her that he would find it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to keep such a promise. His taking a woman into his house at the end of the play, before he realizes that it is Alcestis, bears her out. Her real motive in extracting the promise was to make sure that he stayed miserable after her death, plagued either by the strong desire to remarry or by the guilt of having done so.

Alcestis' return does not mean that she and Admetus will live happily ever after. To begin with, her return puts his life in danger once again because Death did not receive a replacement for him and because it is highly unlikely that Alcestis will agree to die for him again. Admetus is unheroic not simply because of his fear of death, but because he clings to life at all costs. Alcestis is heroic not because she seeks death as a respite from the pains of life or because she values it as a higher good, but because she prefers death to a life maintained at any price.

## GENRE

Questions to consider: What kind of play is this—a tragedy, a comedy, a farce? What does the heroine's self-sacrifice mean to her, to her family, and to the audience? How did these people find themselves in such a bizarre situation? How much of the past action that led to the death of Alcestis can we see in the play? What can we learn about the characters' choices in the prologue? Is Alcestis a victim of sacrifice like other young women in other tragedies you have read?

The *Alcestis* is one of the most frequently anthologized, reworked, and parodied ancient Greek plays, but it is not easy to pin down. Most interpreters of the *Alcestis* agree that it is impossible to classify; it is not a tragedy, nor a comedy, nor a satyr play, though it has elements in common with all three. Perhaps we should call it, parodying old Polonius, a "tragical satyrical comical" play. (See Riemer 1990, 1–6 and Seidensticker 1982, 129–30 for the multifarious attempts to define the play's genre.) Like a tragedy, the play is based on mythical material and is written in tragic diction, but like a comedy, it is funny (*how* funny is one of the major difficulties) and seems to some to contain a parody of tragedy (which ancient comedy often does). Furthermore, it is like a satyr play in that it was performed fourth, *after* the tragedies, and it is short, has a drunk scene, and contains a large dose of folktale. Given these disparate elements, there is little agreement among critics about anything other than the play's uniqueness.

Who would think to ask seriously whether a majestic character such as Oedipus or Medea is an attractive person or a likeable character? Such questions are commonly asked about the major characters in the *Alcestis*. (See, for example, Rosenmeyer, who likes the characters, 1963,

247 and Beye, who believes that neither Alcestis nor Admetus is a very attractive person, 1959, 126–27.) Does this indicate at least an unconscious realization that this is not a tragedy, but a domestic drama of another sort? Still, the play is concerned with the serious issues we find in tragedy: the relationship between men and gods; life and death, and equally important, death in life and life in death; living with and facing one's own errors or wrongdoing; the breakdown or perversion of family relationships; and the blurring of distinctions.

Particularly typical of Euripides is the blurring of distinctions, the equating or reversing of polarities held dear by the Hellenes (not to mention other peoples of other ages). Among these are such polarities as male and female, man and god, slave and free, inside and outside, and, most compelling in the *Alcestis*, alive and dead. Perhaps the question is and will remain: Are we to take these serious themes and their resolutions seriously?

#### BEFORE THE PROLOGUE: THE DEATH OF ADMETUS

In the prologue, Apollo narrates a series of past events that have brought about the present crisis, but the playwright does not give us a direct look at the crucial scene in which the agreement is made that Alcestis will die for Admetus. Alcestis, unlike most other candidates for self-sacrifice, is a mature woman and a mother. She displays gravity, passion, and nearly tragic pathos without the heroic idealism of the young victim (such as Antigone, Macaria, Polyxena, and Menoeceus). Though the scene of selfless choice is left out, a play includes more than the text. Thus, in a number of passages, we are invited to think about the making of the agreement. It is first mentioned briefly in Apollo's narrative of refusal and acceptance (15–18) and is considered more fully in the one scene Admetus and Alcestis share, in which she makes clear the conditions of her acceptance. In addition to the original terms, she adds what appears to be a last minute codicil. Later, in the scene between Pheres and Admetus, the father confirms his unwillingness to die, and Admetus announces the consequences of the old man's refusal. In the two scenes that reflect his request, Admetus' dignity suffers some severe shocks. His begging Alcestis *not* to die for him is a darkly humorous reversal of his begging his parents to do so,

and the brutal scene with his father shows him in some confusion about exactly who died for whom.

In his brief narrative, Apollo says that Admetus made the rounds of his φίλοι, trying to find a volunteer. Admetus specifically asked his mother and father, but what about Alcestis? His reaction to his wife's approaching death in the second episode, seen by so many critics as either ironic or in bad taste, could also be viewed as a flashback to the original scene in which her unexpected offer to die was made.<sup>1</sup> One of Euripides' strategies is the displacement of story elements, so that in its new place (well after Alcestis' acceptance), Admetus' carrying on is tasteless. Once Admetus accepts Apollo's condition, which he does when he asks his parents to die for him, it is not clear that he could refuse the sacrifice of his wife. The death of Admetus mechanically becomes the death of Alcestis and cannot be reclaimed. Folktales are often exceedingly mechanistic; this is what gives them their charm, their humor, and their simple moral, as well as the grim predictability that things will turn out according to pattern. The unthinkable act was suggesting that his parents' lives were less valuable than his own. It is possible that the only way he could have refused the bargain was by not asking *anyone* to die for him in the first place. This is enough to characterize him at the beginning of the story, before we know anything of the man behind the mask—it was the unthinking act of an unthinking man. After these decisions his choices become limited, and more so with Alcestis requesting that he not remarry and with his own promises not to have fun. His father is reproached, and both parents are condemned for not agreeing to give their lives for their son.

## STAGING THE PROLOGUE

Questions to consider: How would this opening scene be played? Your answer is crucial because the prologue sets the tone for the whole play. What attitudes toward death are displayed here?

1. Beye 1959, 121, for example, calls Admetus' lament "savagely ironic"; cf. Barnes 1964–65 in Wilson 1968, 28; see Luschnig 1995, n. 69.

## APOLLO'S INITIAL APPEARANCE

HR:

Presenting Apollo as a thete (θής) contributes to the drollness of the play right from the beginning. (A thete is the lowest ranked free person, a laborer who hires himself out.) In addition, here Apollo appears as a shepherd, and he may still be wearing his herdsman's rags when he first emerges from the palace. Nonetheless, at the same time he is carrying his bow on his shoulder—the baneful bow known from the *Iliad* (1.8 ff.). The cross between the rags and his lethal bow would add a strong visual element to his comic comedown. This topsy-turvy inversion is a typical feature of comedy and would at the outset justify the inclusion of this play as the fourth part of a tragic agon. The tragic tones that follow will surprise the audience.

CL:

Apollo enters from the house of Admetus and turns to greet it. There are no stage directions in the texts of Greek plays. They were not needed because in the original performances, the playwrights directed and, at the earliest period, acted in their own plays. We know that Apollo enters from the house from the ancient commentary (*scholia*) and, more cogently, because he says that he has just left the house and briefly describes what is going on inside (23, 19–20). The woman slave, whose part forms the first episode, fills in what he has said with moving details, and in the second episode, we see (with the entrance of the royal family) the result of what she has said. I imagine Apollo to be attired in his traditional costume, as we typically see him in vase paintings, as a handsome young man in a short chiton. He is certainly carrying the bow, which he admits is part of his iconography (40) and which serves no other purpose in the play than to arouse Death's suspicions.

See L. J. Elferink 1982, 43–50 for the interpretation that Apollo's whole speech is delivered sarcastically. He believes that Apollo's entrance begins the moment of his metamorphosis—he enters as a thete (θής), and during lines 1–9 casts off his rags and reveals himself in his godly attributes. Furthermore, according to Elferink, Apollo enters from the left side at a run and shakes his fist at the palace,

because he hates Admetus (47). It is easy to see how something as basic as Apollo's costume can, from the opening of the play, affect what the play is about. Elferink makes a good point in his staging of Apollo's entrance—why would a herdsman have been *in* the house?—but he does not explain Apollo's words at lines 19–20 and 23.

## THEMES AND TONE

### HR:

The themes of the irreversibility of death and of bribery for restoration to life both come up in the play. Apollo, like his son, will learn yet again that one cannot escape death. If Alcestis is restored to life at the end of the play, and if Death needs a life whether Admetus' or someone else's, it follows that Admetus will soon lose his. In the heated conversation between Death and Apollo in the prologue, Death accuses Apollo of trying to make up laws that will shield the rich from death, an echo of the story that Asclepius, Apollo's son, brought the dead back to life for money. Because the Greeks traditionally believed that sons resemble their fathers, putting this belief on its head is not complimentary to Apollo. On the whole, the end of the play undermines and invalidates Apollo's intervention on behalf of Admetus.

### παιδὸς Φέρητος, SON OF PHERES

### HR:

Although presenting a character in terms of his father is an established practice in Greek literature, especially in Homeric epic, it is noteworthy that Apollo refrains from introducing Admetus' name at the outset but embarks on an oblique presentation. He refers to Admetus first by the phrase "mortal man" (θνητῶ παρ' ἀνδρί, 7), which emphasizes Admetus' mortality and at the same time underscores his deviation from it (most mortals do not get to postpone death). Then he calls him ξένῳ, "a friend with whom one has a treaty of hospitality" (8), thus sanctioning a binding relationship between himself and Admetus. *Xenia* in the Greek world is a reciprocal institution in which the roles of guest and host are interchangeable. Both of the participants are referred to as ξένοι. In line 10 Apollo presents both himself and Admetus through

the adjective ὄσιος, which implies an outstanding level of piety toward both gods and man, a notion that is immediately undermined by Apollo himself when he tells us that Admetus has approached everyone, including his aging parents, with the request to die in his stead so that he can live longer (15–16). Only at line 13, after Apollo admits to cheating the Moirai for the sake of this man, do we get to know the name of his beloved friend. Later he calls Admetus φίλος ἀνήρ (42) or just by the pronoun ἐκεῖνος (44).

Apollo's gradual and periphrastic introduction of Admetus, through a variety of definitions, not only elucidates the relationship between himself and Admetus but also attempts to present Admetus in the best light. It is possible that the text here plays on the myth in which Apollo falls in love with Admetus. The distancing and formality achieved through this oblique presentation may aim at to produce laughter in the audience. The later reference to Apollo as being the champion of the wealthy in buying longer life (57–59, see notes at 4 and 56–58) indicates that Euripides might have played on the mythic arsenal without mentioning it explicitly. By mythic arsenal, I mean the stories shared by everyone in the audience from common knowledge of the traditional myth.

## HUMAN AND DIVINE

### CL:

The prologue presents the play from the divine point of view, with Apollo going back to the first causes of this story in a generational conflict among the gods. It is dangerous for mortals to get mixed up with gods on an equal footing. Apollo is the hired hand of Admetus, but he calls him ξένος (“host,” “guest-friend,” 8) rather than “master,” and perhaps in the third stasimon (especially lines 568–87), we get a view of Apollo's duties in the pasture lands of Admetus, piping to the flocks and masquerading as a shepherd. Apollo uses terms of affection for the house and the man, but as an immortal god, he has little understanding of what death means to mortals. Death identifies himself as an egalitarian (57), but is interested in his honors (53, 55)—a young person is a special prize. Apollo's attempt to bribe him (56) is both ineffectual and not factual. Death is not a lighthearted figure, but

neither is he as awesome as he might be. Apollo's time at Admetus' estate has made him more sympathetic to, if not understanding of, the mortal condition. This is not so with Death. He is just doing his job (49). "You know my ways," (61) he says; to which Apollo answers, "Yes, hostile to mortals and by the gods abominated." The word Apollo chooses for his second epithet is *στουγούμενους* (62), a word cognate with Styx, the river in Hades by which the gods swore. Death's ways are the mortal condition—amoral, universal, nondiscriminatory. The play is full of clichés that remind us of the mortal condition: death is owed by all (mortals) (419, 782); we live for one life (712); and being mortal, we must think mortal thoughts (799).

Both enter armed, Apollo with his bow, Death with a sword. Apollo's weapon is only a prop (40), while Death's weapon is effectual but only used ceremonially. Both end with solemn prophecies. Death has the last word in the debate, and, despite Apollo's solemn prophecy, death seems final.

The divinities leave the acting area before the arrival of the Chorus and do not return, but Death's presence in the house is felt throughout the first half of the play. As far as we can discern from the words of the text, he does not exit from the house (though Heracles claims to have fought him at the tomb), a fact that gives support to those readers who believe that he is still there waiting for Admetus at the end. Apollo is called upon in song in the *parodos* (in the form of Paian, the Healer, which may also refer to Asclepius, and in the reference to his Lycian cult site) and in the first *stasimon* (again as lord Paian). He may be on Admetus' mind at lines 246–47. His major festival at Sparta, at which Alcestis will be celebrated, is mentioned in the second *stasimon* (449), and he is the subject of the first half of the third *stasimon*. Once Alcestis is dead and Heracles has come to town, Apollo's part is over. Admetus is left on his own to get on with his life and to face his father and his empty house.

## THE PARODOS

Questions to consider: What do the citizens think of their king's bargain with death? Women are the traditional mourners; why has Euripides used a chorus of men? Why is the house given so much prominence?

## THEMES AND SUMMARY

The Chorus enters, addressing the house with no characters present in front of it, increasing the emphasis on the inanimate building as a thing in itself with or without its family, and as the scene of ominous doings.

One theme of the parodos is knowledge. The Chorus starts with a series of questions about the physical nature of the house, asking about what they do not hear and do not see. Their approach to the house at this time reveals that all the citizens are aware not only of the bargain with the Fates, but also that this is the day (105) on which Alcestis is to die.

The singers alternate between hope and despair. Having seen Death enter the house, we, too, are unsure of whether Alcestis is alive or dead. The Chorus' questions invite us to be witnesses with them. We wait with them for news from the palace. Timing is thus another theme of the parodos.

Though Admetus is not explicitly reproached, Alcestis is almost universally admired by the mortal characters. The Chorus, the two servants, Admetus, Pheres (until he loses his temper), and Alcestis herself are laudatory. Apollo, on the other hand, says not a word in praise of her. Of course Apollo thinks that *he* has saved the house. Heracles, too, has little to say about Alcestis as a hero, although he knows about her promise to die for Admetus. It is, after all, *he* who will repay his host, restore Alcestis, and be the benefactor of Admetus and his house. Domestic heroism, though it may be sung of at various local festivals, is not as widely appreciated as the more public and manly kind of heroism at which Heracles excelled as a Panhellenic hero. Alcestis' story is certainly a domestic one, and the Chorus positions her accordingly within the walls of the house. Alcestis escapes these enclosures only as a corpse.

The parodos is almost a catalog of funeral *nomoi* ("customs"): the beating of women's hands and wailing (86–88); a servant standing at the gates (88–90); stream water for purification (98–100); and a cut lock of hair (101–103).

Often (as in *Agamemnon*, *Hippolytus*, and *Medea*) the Chorus outside the doors interprets sounds from the house or filters them to other characters. In this variation, the Chorus has nothing to hear and nothing to tell. With its questions (perhaps imitating Death's series of

nervous questions), the Chorus activates the witness theme. The sounds *not* heard from within give us information and engage our imaginations on the interior of the house, on people inside, preparing for the entrance of Alcestis' slave. The sounds that should be heard after the death are anticipated here. Later they will be stifled by Admetus so that his guest will not be disturbed (549–50; cf. 760–64; see Luschnig 1995, 28).

Now the Chorus seeks comfort in lands far away—Lycia, Egypt, even as far afield as Hades' halls (which they claim the not-yet-dead Alcestis would be able to leave if only Asclepius were still alive, 122–25)—before returning home to the altars in front of Admetus' house. All the altars are flowing with the blood of sacrifice. Are we being reminded of Clytemnestra's sacrificial fires lit on the altars of all the gods during the *parodos* of the *Agamemnon* (88–91)? The irony is that in the earlier play, Clytemnestra's sacrifices were performed to ensure not the life of her spouse but his death.

## THE FIRST EPISODE

Questions to consider: What do we learn in this scene about Alcestis' life, about the house, and about Admetus? What is Admetus doing all this time? Do we learn anything in this scene about the relationship of Alcestis and Admetus or about why she offered to die for him? How does the Alcestis we hear about in the first episode compare to the onstage Alcestis in the second?

## ALCESTIS REVEALED

We may expect the servant woman, who enters (that is, exits from the house) in tears right after the Chorus' funereal ode, to tell us the sad news that Alcestis is dead, but she postpones the inevitable. Like the herald in the *Agamemnon* who announces the arrival of the king, she prepares the way for the major figure, announcing an entrance and the preparations made for it, very little of which actually takes place in the scene building, in the real space behind that all-important door. Obviously the actor will put on the dress and κόσμος (161), but not until

the Maid has exited (that is, entered the imaginary playing space), because it is likely that she (he) is the actor who will re-enter as Alcestis. A structural difference is that both Alcestis' herald and she herself enter from the house as befits their gender, since women are associated with the interior spaces. The Chorus is present, as it turns out, to serve as a body of witnesses to her death, furnishing proof—when the time comes—that she is indeed dead. Later they will take on an even more vital civic role; as witnesses to her resurrection and to the royal wedding, they will furnish proof that there *is* a bride, that the bride is *alive*. Here in the first episode, Alcestis is being brought to life and kept alive by art, by the artistic description given by the slave.

The interior of the house becomes more intimately known to us, and through detail, it is made even more important now in the first episode. The Maid shows us around the house, going deep within it, into the living quarters, to the inner hearth, and to the marriage chamber itself. Though the description is personalized, the emphasis is still on the house and its furnishings among which Alcestis moves about. Alcestis says farewell to the hearth—the hearth is permanent, she is not. But the hearth is lifeless, impersonal, institutional. Without Alcestis there is no focus (as it were), no one to animate the house's core. This will become clear when Alcestis is no longer moving about; she becomes more real, almost more present, when she is missed. That is, she is no more really there in the slave's narrative than she is after the funeral in Admetus' vision of the empty house that gains its character from the fact that she is not there. Her presence has been the mainstay of the house. This is the kind of thing usually said of men by women or other men.

Alcestis' character is revealed gradually throughout the course of the play. Her stage reality is her death; this is her part as the Alcestis of legend, as the folktale lover, as the sacrificial victim, as the self-sacrificing young (but now not so young) Euripidean character. She achieves the identity of perfect wife and mother by dying for the roles she has played in the *oikos*. By dying she should become immutably perfect, but the resurrection at the end brings back the incompleteness and chaos of life. We are treated to a glimpse of her life and attitudes before she dies. Through the servant's description (157–95) we see her at home, confidently performing her duties as mistress of the house:

praying at all the altars—Hestia's first—for the benefit of her children and their marriages; bidding a tearful farewell to her marriage bed; caressing and comforting her children; and shaking hands with every slave, finding a good word for each. She leaves nothing undone. As for her husband, it is harder to say what her feelings are for him. The bed is a symbol not so much of their love but of their time together as wife and husband and of their roles in life—hers to bear Admetus' children and oversee the household, his to provide an heir to his father's house. Affection comes in later for Admetus in his despair, if at all.

We are told that the approaching evil (death) did not change her fine complexion (173–74), perhaps because her death is still seen as institutionally salutary. As the slave woman describes Alcestis' actions within the house, it is clear that she knows she is describing something beautiful and perfected, a work of art. Alcestis prays to Hestia that her children may marry well (162) and thus continue in the scheme of which she is part and with which she apparently finds no fault. Although it is killing her, the hierarchical domestic arrangement is also completing her, giving her the scope to perfect her role in life, her *arete*. It is this perfect and even more than perfect *arete* that makes her a hero to be an object of cult, song, and story. By her death she becomes central, the leading character in her life, more than can be said of Admetus in his. Her death is treated ambiguously: its approach is like a wasting sickness (that is, a natural death), and yet, at the same time—as is stressed in the words about her fine complexion—there is an un- or preternatural preservation of her body, as there is sometimes of heroes, a fact that we might remember at the finale. That is, we are prepared for her return by being told that there is nothing physically wrong with her that a change in the actor's gait and posture would not cure. Here she must be supported in the arms of Admetus and the servants, but there she walks on (played by a different actor), under her own steam, escorted by Heracles.

Of course there *is* no Alcestis until her entrance at line 244. Like Homeric descriptions of the warrior preparing for battle, the narrative of Alcestis dressing and preparing for death activates our imaginations. With the actor telling the order of events, we create an Alcestis in our mind's eye. *We* see that she has done the things we are told she has

done. *We* participate in making her a woman (cf. Bassi 1989, 25). Later we will share Admetus' creative vision, the commissioning of a statue, his dreams of her, and his projected death and life after death.

In the servant's description, Alcestis' first emotional act is her prayer to Hestia. Though ritually imposed, it is nonetheless heartfelt. She has gone through the rituals, washing herself, choosing her burial dress, and putting it on. She begs Hestia to rear her children, she prays for the children's marriages, and she prays that they may be well-off and long-lived.<sup>2</sup> Unlike such heroic parents as Ajax and Hector, taking leave of their children, or the proverbially laconic Spartan mother (who handed her son his shield with the words "with this or on it"), she does not pray that they be brave or good as well as lucky. Her own goodness will be their boast. In contrast, Phaedra in *Hippolytus* is concerned for her children's reputation, and in *Medea*, the Chorus agonizes over whether all the labor expended on children is for good or bad people (1102–104).

Alcestis keeps turning back to the bed in a scene reminiscent of Andromache's farewell to Hector, only Admetus is not there (or is not said to be there by the Maid, through whose eyes we see this scene, and so we do not see him there). The house and its furnishings, both physical and symbolic, come to replace love, friendship, family, and hospitality. To Alcestis inside the house, death means leaving her matrimonial bed and chamber, and so quite naturally she is disturbed by the idea that someone else will occupy it and thus take over her function as mistress of the house and wife of Admetus. At this point, Alcestis is concerned but resigned to the inevitability of Admetus' remarriage (181–82) as the natural thing and his right. By exacting the promise from him not to remarry, she asserts herself as a more equal partner in the second episode. Only after she has felt the violent presence of Death does she become insistent that she remain unique as the wife of Admetus (305).

2. Alcestis asks for a φίλην wife (165) for her son. Perhaps it is just an unemotional, merely possessive Homeric use, but just possibly it could mean (as Marianne McDonald thinks, "Terms for Happiness in Euripides," Ph.D. diss., University of California-Irvine, 1975, 59–60) that Euripides is suggesting that there is more in a marital relationship than the institutional.

## THE SECOND EPISODE

Questions to consider: What do we learn about the marriage of Alcestis and Admetus? What kind of communication is there between them? Do we find out more about why Alcestis agreed to die? How are we to take Admetus' promises? Are they sincere or merely rhetorical?

CL

### THE DEATH OF ALCESTIS

Alcestis comes outside to see the sun for one last time. It is rare for a character to die on stage; instead, a death is usually reported by a messenger and/or revealed on the *eccyclema*. Alcestis has already said her farewells in the house. The second episode shows us what she has to lose (see Lloyd 1985, 121, 129) from the most general (leaving the daylight) to the most particular (events in her children's lives that she will have to miss).

Alcestis' centrality in her scene gives the lie to her subservient status—she is not only the center of attention but the director of the action, marking out Admetus' role for him as well as the futures of the rest of the family, including her children's weddings and her daughter's suitors and childbirth, even anticipating problems in setting up a good match for the child. These roles (of perceived subservience but actual artistic control), of course, are partly shaped by the story, but they are fleshed out by Euripides, in part to show who Admetus is.

### ALCESTIS' SPEECH AND ADMETUS' PROMISES

Alcestis' speech (282–325), by stating clearly that she had other possibilities open to her, indicates that her choice was freely made. She could have gone on with her life. Her request to Admetus in front of the children and the Chorus takes away his choices, and with his extravagant promises, he limits himself still more. His choices are so limited that his only possibility (provided that he keeps his promises to her) is to wait for death. The life to which he has condemned himself is a life without pleasure to be spent remembering his former existence (remarkably similar to the way Hades is traditionally pictured). Alcestis and Admetus began their married life as equals, with bride and groom

equally noble on both sides (920–21). Alcestis' death has created a chasm between them, almost greater than that between the living and the dead. Their differences are implied throughout (in the Maid's speech, in his father's, and in his own)—her competence and heroism, his ineffectualness and cowardice; her reputation heroic, his bad. Admetus has tried to bridge the gap between the living and the dead in literal, spatial, and temporal ways by making his own life a living death, by planning the construction of her likeness, and by picturing her continued existence in the other world, but he has failed in the competition to be best.<sup>3</sup>

In making his promises never to be happy again and at the same time to keep her with him, Admetus is trying to repay like for like. The attempt to deny the finality of the separation in part explains Admetus' inability to confide to Heracles that his wife has died. In their scene together, he even tries to keep Alcestis bound in time, saying "Wait for me and make a home for me in the other world" (363–64). He begins conventionally but becomes more and more spontaneous and creative in his grief. His hysteria reaches a nearly ludicrous degree when he cries, "Take me with you, by the gods, take me below!" (382). Ludicrous, but pathetic. It is the excess, even generosity, of his suffering and the simple conventionalism of his hospitality in the two stories (of Apollo's servitude and Heracles' labors) surrounding Alcestis' death that save Admetus as a character and that lead to the serial salvation of the family in a more literal sense. Alcestis reminds him, "I am enough, who am dying for you" (384). After all, his death now would render her sacrifice unnecessary, even absurd, and she cannot let that happen. She must be firm on her own behalf, on behalf of the children, and possibly on behalf of Admetus as well.

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### THE FIRST EXCHANGE BETWEEN ALCESTIS AND ADMETUS

The exchange between Alcestis and her husband takes place in the shadow of the Chorus' expression of doubt about the felicity of married

3. As Alcestis is "a woman by art" (in Bassi's suggestive piece, 1989, esp. 23–25, "Alcestis, like a statue, is only a woman by art," and Bell 1980, 66, "The veiled woman is the promised statue brought to life"), Admetus (and Euripides) keep her alive by art.

life (238–43). The very mention of marital unhappiness is jarring at this point in the play. The audience has not yet seen the main protagonists, but they have heard the Chorus acclaim Alcestis' bravery and wifely sacrifice and bewail the loneliness and misery that Admetus will face with her loss. They expect to see a warm and loving couple come on stage—Admetus, grateful for his wife's readiness to sacrifice her life for him, and Alcestis, exuding love for the husband for whom she has agreed to die. Instead, the Chorus' ominous hint is developed in the couple's exchange in lines 244–79. We hear Alcestis uttering almost delirious cries on her deathbed, calling upon the sun and her native land of Iolkos, and maintaining that she can see Charon, his boat, and Hades himself. Admetus, on the other hand, urges her to continue living, demands that she not leave him, and bids her pray to the gods for deliverance, ignoring totally his responsibility for her plight. Alcestis, for the most part, does not acknowledge her husband's pleading and talks at him rather than to him. Her disregard reaches its peak in her heartrending farewell, which is addressed only to her children, with not a word for Admetus.<sup>4</sup>

Euripides uses the meter in this exchange to emphasize the couple's lack of communication. While Alcestis sings in a variety of emotive lyrical meters, Admetus' brief contributions, inserted in the midst of her songs, are spoken in unemotional iambic trimeter (246–47, 250–51, 257–58, 264–65). Then, when Admetus finally abandons his iambs after Alcestis' farewell to her children, he turns to recitative anapests (273–79), midway between unemotional trimeter and lyric verse. Accentuating Almetus' cold and unemotional character, Euripides does not allow him to sing.

In no other dialogue in the play does meter so clearly mark the cross-communication between characters. The pattern is set from the beginning, when Alcestis invokes the sun, daylight, and racing clouds in lyric dactyls, also known as Doric dactyls, using a mixture of prosodiacs (244–45; see Rosenmeyer, Ostwald, and Halporn 1980, 20–21;

4. The following is part of a detailed discussion, Roisman 2000, 182–90. For a markedly different view, see W. Smith in Wilson 1968, 47: "There is no indication in the play that Alcestis is disappointed in her husband in her final moments. Alcestis is not cold. . . Alcestis perhaps has a reason to be disappointed, but the text gives no indication that Euripides intended her to show it."

Conacher 1988 on lines 244–79; and Barlow 1971, 57). Tragedians use iambic trimeter, the meter that Aristotle notes most closely approximates ordinary speech, when they do not want poetic elevation. Euripides has given this meter to Admetus in the emotionally charged scene of his wife's dying. Moreover, Admetus' iambs aim at minimum resolution (that is, with two shorts substituting for a long only once, in line 246), thus further reinforcing the conversational quality of his words.

Alcestis' lyric dactyls are evocative and symbolic, with the sun and daylight symbolizing life in the Greek mind as early as Homer and the racing clouds emblematic of Alcestis' imminent death, skirting pre-Socratic echoes. Admetus' iambic reply is couched in what Dale describes as the "matter-of-fact manner of the healthy earth-bound individual" (on lines 246–47). The difference in meter reinforces the discontinuity in content. Picking up the image of the sun, Admetus, instead of answering Alcestis' anguished cry for life, takes the opportunity to exculpate himself from her death and complain that the gods are unfair. His iambs highlight his egotism and insensitivity.

The cross-communication continues through the next three repartees. Alcestis' pain, isolation, and desperation are emphasized by the alteration in the structure and meter of her lines. Yet despite changes in the tone, substance, and rhythm of Alcestis' song, Admetus' responses remain as tuneless and prosaic as ever. The persistent uniformity of his stichic, iambic lines, contrasting as it does with the metrical variety of Alcestis' sung words, emphasizes his failure to be moved by her pain and his continued concentration on himself. Moreover, the likelihood that Alcestis' singing was accompanied by a musical instrument, while Admetus' statements were not, further reinforces the discrepancy between her emotion-filled farewell and his pragmatic self-concern.

A similar dynamic is created in the scene between Admetus and his son in lines 393–415, in which the bereaved boy laments his mother's departure in poignant song. His lament is singularly powerful. No other of the thirty-two surviving Greek tragedies contains a song or monologue by a child (Dyson 1988, 13–23) and within the play, no other character sings a song and then disappears. The assumption is that the song has been sung behind the scenes and overheard (see Dale on lines 393–415). Euripides sets the song apart by its wild and

unusual rhythm (a mixture of long dochmiacs, anacreontics, ionic dimeter, etc.). The childish content is heartbreaking, and the sentences are touching, short, and clear, as a child would have constructed them.<sup>5</sup> To this emotional song, Admetus replies in the same pedestrian and unemotional iambic trimeter that he used to respond to Alcestis' lyrics. Although his young son addresses him directly three times (395, 406, 411), Admetus makes little response. He addresses only two lines to his son (404–405) in his usual iambic trimeter, and then only to confirm briefly that Alcestis no longer hears or sees them and to lament the heavy burden that he and the boy bear now that they are on their own. In the middle of his second strophe, the son makes explicit the Chorus' earlier hint that the marriage between Alcestis and Admetus has not been very happy, telling Admetus, "Father, your marriage was an empty, empty one" (411–12). Not even this direct observation moves Admetus to engage in a genuine exchange. At the end of his song, the Chorus reminds Admetus that death claims everyone. It is only to this that Admetus responds at any length. In retrospect from this speech, his two iambic trimeter lines in the middle of the boy's moving song stick out as intrusions into feelings he does not share or even understand and attest to his lack of natural emotion, for all that he protests.

### ALCESTIS' REVIVAL (280–325)

Before actually dying, Alcestis briefly recovers to deliver a lengthy speech aimed at getting Admetus to promise never to remarry. The sudden revival is unnatural and comes unexpectedly. Alcestis was brought onstage unable to sit up straight, and her maid reported that she fell forward when not supported. Her imminent death is heralded by Admetus' presence at her side, as her maid earlier reported that he would attend his wife only when she was on the verge of death (145).

5. Verrall 1967 (originally published 1895), 1–128, interprets the child's song to support his efforts to prove that Euripides did not mean for the more sophisticated in the audience to believe that Alcestis really died and was resurrected. Arguing that Alcestis did not really die, Verrall asserts that "the child and his terrors are the true source from which the rest, prepared as they are by their prejudices, receive the conviction that all is really over . . . Admetus and the visitors being predisposed as they are, the child's belief and his loud expression of it just give to their belief the opportunity of settling into assurance" (118).

After Alcestis bids farewell to her children and Admetus gives his recitative, we expect her to die. That she does not die but suddenly revives in full strength to deliver a well-thought-out, calm, lucid, and coherent speech is surprising but characteristic of Euripides' penchant for baffling the audience and having the characters do the opposite of what one would expect. The sudden non sequitur in both her manner of speaking and her physical ability might be seen as somewhat comical even if the content of the speech is rather grim.<sup>6</sup> We can fully realize the drollness when we ponder the possibility of reversing the sequence of the two episodes. That is to say, if Alcestis' farewell to life had followed her contractual speech, the natural development of the two episodes would have been smooth. It is the proleptic sequence that effects the humor.

The meter underscores the abruptness of the recovery. Alcestis delivers her speech in plain iambic trimeter, which is totally out of accord both with the metrically complicated epodes in which she has just bid her moving farewell to life and with the recitative anapests of Admetus' reply. The audience probably expects the heightened emotional charge that was conveyed through those epodes either to be resolved in Alcestis' death or to be sustained somewhat longer by Alcestis singing an antistrophe in the same meters as her last stanza. Her launching into spoken iambic trimeter brings the mood that has been built up to an abrupt end.

This revival scene has drawn considerable scholarly attention as critics from Schadewaldt to Dale have sought parallels in Greek dramatic custom and convention. Dale suggests that the convention is one in which a situation is first rendered in its lyric aspect, or emotional mode, and then in its iambic aspect, or reasoned mode.<sup>7</sup> Justina

6. Beye 1974, 7, also considers comical the contradiction inherent in Alcestis' forbidding Admetus to remarry after, in her speech to her bed, she has accepted the inevitability of his taking another wife (181–82).

7. Schadewaldt 1926, 141–47; Dale on lines 280 ff.; Rosenmeyer 1963, 225: "The Greek method, sanctioned and appreciated, it appears, by the Greek audiences, was to savor each mode by itself, to feature the response of the passions first and the commentary of the intellect second." The usual parallel that is suggested is from the *Hippolytus*, where Phaedra first utters delirious longings to be in the vicinity of Hippolytus' hunting (215–22, 228–31) and later, in a lengthy speech, expounds her view of life and her decision to starve herself to death when she realized she was in love with her stepson (373–430) (cf. Dale). However, not

Gregory claims that the duplication stems from the dramatic need for an illness scene prior to death, and a scene that would fit what is assumed to be a "sacrifice" drama (1979, 264). Most plausibly, D. J. Conacher suggests that the duplication represents one of Euripides' early attempts to create "psychic realism" and his wish to introduce the heroine to the audience both as a courageous woman who faces death voluntarily and as a wife and mother. Whatever the merits of these explanations, the double death and resurrection (at the beginning and the end) can also be seen as complementary scenes, with the first foreshadowing and providing insight into the second.

Alcestis seems poised between life and death. At the beginning of the play, although she sounds energetic and revitalized, we know and she knows that she is about to die. At the end she is neither dead nor alive. As Heracles tells Admetus, she will not be able to speak for three days until she is deconsecrated to the gods of the Netherworld (1144–46). We leave her thus as we met her, between life and death. Still, her remarkable stamina, demonstrated in her ability to formulate a coherent speech with clear demands, attests to her high survival capacity. The audience would probably have been impressed by this capacity. At the same time, aware of the mythic outcome, they would also have understood it as prophetic of her literal restoration to life.

Given this foreshadowing, it is reasonable to conjecture that the content of Alcestis' resurrection speech points to the attitude she will take at the end of her three days' silence. The speech is not that of a loving, generous-hearted woman. It opens bluntly with her telling

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only is the iambic portion of Phaedra's speech a development of her former utterance and a clarification of her so-called delirium, but her delirium, which supposedly corresponds to Alcestis' lyrical expression, is not in a lyric form, but rather in nonlyric anapest. See also W. S. Barrett, Euripides, *Hippolytos* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), on lines 208 ff.: "Violent excitement in a character is often marked by his using lyric meters (cf. on 565–600). Here Ph. continues to use ordinary non-lyric anapaests, but her excitement is marked by her use of lyric long alpha in place of Attic secondary eta (does this point to some kind of quasi-lyric delivery? we can only guess)." See also the discussion of Roisman 1999a, 47–73. The other passage Dale cites to support her claim of tragic convention is from *Trojan Women* (308–510), where Cassandra first broaches her sacrifice and encourages her mother to take part in the revel in lyrics and then clarifies her song in iambs. But here again, the content of the iambic trimeter develops integrally from the lyrics. Cassandra first explains her stand to her mother in a lyric and then explains it again to Talthybius in iambs. In contrast, Alcestis' demand speech is unexpected in both content and form. It does not clarify anything she has sung.

Admetus in no uncertain terms not only that she is sacrificing her life for him, but also that had she wanted to, she could have had her pick of men after his death and lived on royally in their home. (The only other wife who could choose any man she wanted to marry was Penelope, assuming Odysseus was dead. Alcestis is well aware of the fame that accompanies her death [324–25]). She goes on to let him know that her motive was not love or concern for him but rather her reluctance to make her children fatherless (288).<sup>8</sup> Then, for over eight lines, she bitterly inveighs against Admetus' parents for refusing to die for their only son despite their old age, pointing out that the consequences of their refusal are her own premature death, Admetus' widowhood, and her children's orphanhood (290–98). It is not difficult to imagine a more noble Alcestis who would, if not forgive the old parents their wish to continue living, at least pass over their refusal in silence. After all, she has little to gain by this criticism, unless, of course, her intention is to sow strife. Admetus' tirade against his father points to the success of her undertaking.

There is also a good deal of spite in her demand that Admetus promise not to remarry, the immediate purpose of the speech. Her previous comments were essentially the buildup, which now enables her to present the demand as a fair though insufficient *quid pro quo* (299–301). Her rather lengthy expatiation on the malice of stepmothers (305–10, 314–16) comes to reinforce further the reasonableness of her expectation, yet it is an expectation that she well knows Admetus will not fulfill. In her earlier speech to her bed, she indicated that she expected another woman to take her place in Admetus' arms. Here, she indicates in an aside, "if you are of sound mind" (εἴπερ εὖ φρονεῖς, 303), that she is aware that Admetus does not have the capacity to keep his word, however much he promises. In fact, Alcestis addresses her daughter though it is certain she will have a stepmother (314 ff.). Her imposing on her husband a pledge that she knows he will violate raises serious doubts about the prevalent scholarly assumption that her sacrifice was motivated by love.<sup>9</sup> Beye 1959, 124–25, in fact, notes that

8. Dale 1954, xxv–xxvi, notes that Alcestis dies out of love for Admetus. Indeed, one can imagine a dying queen who says that she chooses to die out of love for her husband, and yet Euripides is careful not to put anything of the sort in Alcestis' words.

9. E.g., Dale 1954, xxvi: "Of course she loves Admetus—what else made her die for him?"

Alcestis' demand "doomed him to empty existence" and that "his future welfare does not interest her."

Alcestis' resurrection speech thus suggests that if an additional scene were to follow at the end, in which Alcestis were reempowered with speech, Admetus might have found that living with a woman who had died for his sake and then seen him break his promise to her would be less than idyllic (cf. also Ahl 1997, 24). The chances of Admetus and Alcestis living happily ever after are slim, even if Thanatos further obliges Apollo and does not claim a body for the one just snatched from him.

I would go even further and say that Alcestis' demand, along with the rest of her speech, presages Admetus' demise. The lethal implications are conveyed symbolically in her equation of a stepmother with an *echidna*, a viper (310). Not long afterward, we hear Admetus disowning his parents and declaring Alcestis to be his mother and father (646–47). In her role as his stepparents, she can be expected to be lethal to him, doubly so, since she fills in not for one parent, but two. Toward the end of the play, Euripides reminds the audience of this *echidna* by having Admetus call the woman he will lead through the gates of his house a "Gorgon" (1118), thus intimating also the menace of the gates. This might remind the audience of the gates of Hades, through which only Heracles managed to pass and come back alive, by playing on the word *pylai* (gates) when he has Heracles tell Admetus, using a word that is homophonic of *pylai*, that he wants the woman he won to *προσπολεῖν* ("be a maid") for Admetus until he comes back from the Bistonians (1024).<sup>10</sup>

### ADMETUS' PROMISES (328–68)

Admetus' response is made just after the Chorus have expressed their doubts about his mental competence (327). This skepticism colors everything that Admetus says in the following speech. It tells the audi-

10. Obviously, Admetus is not looking at the woman yet. Heracles must specifically instruct him to take a look at her (*βλέψων*, 1121), and Admetus specifically acknowledges that he "sees" his wife (*λεύσσω*, 1124). The theme of sight is closely connected with the Gorgon; Perseus could decapitate her only by not looking at her directly and using a mirror for the reflection of her gaze. See also below, "Through the Gates," pp. 222–24.

ence that they should not take his fervent assertions too seriously, but rather as the dilations of someone who might not act out of sound judgment. His speech is a lengthy one, forty-one lines to Alcestis' forty-six, and scholars have long been troubled by its protraction, for in contrast to Alcestis' speech, it seems to have no obvious dramatic reason for being so long. The demand that Admetus not remarry could only be made, explained, and justified in a speech of some length. The fact that this demand is the fulcrum on which the plot swings would in itself call for a lengthy and well thought out exposition. It has also been advanced that the formal tragic pattern requires that Admetus speak at roughly the same length that was allowed to Alcestis (Dale 1954 on 365–66). Whatever the reasons, however, the speech's length exemplifies Admetus' tendency to expatiate, and at the same time, it exposes the shallowness of his feelings and insincerity of his promises.

There is hyperbole in both the content and the style of the speech. In content, it is found in the succession of promises, each more far-fetched than the previous one, and each unlikely to be kept, with which Admetus responds to Alcestis' single demand that he not remarry. In style, it emerges in the repetitiveness of his language and inflation of his figures. The clumsiness of Admetus' phrasing is capped by the utter obtuseness and insensitivity of the statement with which he closes his promise not to remarry in lines 334–35. While Alcestis insisted that he not remarry so that their children would not suffer under the thumb of a stepmother (305–10), Admetus lets it be known that he agrees to the request for the selfish reason that he already has enough children to perpetuate himself and his *oikos* and does not need any more. Although this consideration would not have been foreign to a fifth-century male Athenian, in thus announcing it, Admetus pits his self-centered calculations against his wife's wrenching concern for her children. The statement thus becomes yet another instance of inadvertent self-revelation and marital cross-communication. Needless to say, Admetus' confession that he hopes to profit from his children and his complaint that he has not profited from his wife are epitomes of selfishness. The complaint is also baseless; because Alcestis has agreed to sacrifice her life for his, he has certainly profited from her.

Admetus' second promise is that he will mourn Alcestis the rest of his life (336–47), which is a serious undertaking. Ceremonial mourning

in Athens ended with ritual observances on the thirtieth day, and then yearly offerings were made at the tomb. Admetus promises never again to listen to music or to play it and never to join with his friends in banquets and other pleasures. But such a life would set him apart from normal pursuits and cut him off from his community. Not being garlanded and not joining in with the wine drinkers would exclude him from some religious festivals and community celebrations, make it impossible for him to perform his civic duty, and render his life as close to a living death as possible. The Athenian audience, who looked no more kindly than their modern counterparts on lone wolves who isolated themselves from their fellows, were bound to ask what Alcestis' sacrifice accomplished and why Admetus bothered to accept it if he planned to spend his days with neither pleasure nor purpose.

The likelihood that Admetus will keep this promise is slim. By the time he makes it, the audience has already heard numerous indications of his riotous lifestyle. Apollo alludes to the fact that he got the Fates drunk while living under Admetus' roof (12, cf. 33–34), and the Chorus finds the quiet that attended Alcestis' dying a surprise (77–78), which indicates that the house is generally quite noisy.<sup>11</sup> Admetus' explicit avowal to put an end to the playing of the *barbitos* and singing to the tune of the flute (343–47) would hardly have been necessary if music and partying were not customary in the house. That they were is further reinforced later in the play by the visit of Heracles, himself a known reveler, by the Chorus' assertion that the house was "open to guests" and "liberal" (569), and by their description of Apollo's lyre playing while he was living there (569–87). The odds that Admetus would have been staged as tipsy increase if one accepts Elferink's claim that in Euripides' time, Thessaly was considered a lawless and intemperate place (1982, 44–45). In short, Admetus' hyperbolic declaration that he will forever ban all merriment from his home is wildly improbable.

Admetus' third promise, that he will order a statue in Alcestis' image and embrace it at night (348–56), is a piece of dark humor. It does not take much perspicacity to doubt seriously that any woman, never mind

11. The quiet is surprising because there are no bowls of water for purification outside to indicate that Alcestis is dead (98–100). For the ritual purification of all who came into contact with the corpse by means of water at the entrance to the house, see M. Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 5.

one about to die, would be flattered, consoled, reassured, or in any way pleased to know that her husband would so readily replace her with an inanimate piece of stone. Admetus' promise to honor his wife in this way is so insensitive and so inappropriate that it cannot but evoke horrified derision, all the more because it smacks of the ribald as well.<sup>12</sup> One can certainly imagine Alcestis recoiling on stage while the audience snickers at the sexual innuendo.

The fourth promise, implicit in the surface meaning of the conditional statement that if Admetus had Orpheus' musical gift, he would rescue Alcestis from Hades (357–62), clinches the farce. Admetus' words not only negate the possibility that he has Orpheus' musical skill, but also that he could have rescued Alcestis. The spectators well know that Orpheus failed to bring Eurydice back.<sup>13</sup> What the audience sees is a sentimental, self-absorbed tippler who draws on the myth of Orpheus to make himself appear fervently and passionately in love with his wife, while revealing his apathy and confusion of mind in every line.

In this long peroration, Admetus shows himself to be the indifferent and callous person that he is. To move the plot along, it would have been enough for Euripides to have had him simply agree to Alcestis' simple request so that Alcestis could die with a clear mind. But Euripides had

12. For a variety of views, see Ahl 1997, "it is difficult to believe that a fifth-century audience would not have found the idea ludicrous or disgusting" (12). Beye 1959, 114, n. 10, suggests that "Such an action, I should imagine, would seem to a fifth century Greek audience either ludicrous in the extreme, or disgusting, which would emphasize all the more how great an obligation of mourning Admetus assumes" (114–15) and, citing Dindorf's judgment that the statue motif is an *inventum valde absurdum*, calls the substitution "ludicrous." Drew 1931, 295–319, takes Admetus' predilection for lifeless objects further when he suggests that Heracles returns a dead Alcestis to him, at which he rejoices nonetheless. Barnes in Wilson 1968, 28, observes that Admetus' declaration has "a ridiculous quality." For interpreting the statue in terms of Platonic mimetics see, Gounaridou 1998, 27–37.

13. The scholiast on Alcestis 357 believes that Orpheus succeeded: 'Ορφέως γυνὴ Εὐριδίκη, ἥς ἀποθανούσης ὑπὸ ὄφεως κατελθὼν καὶ τῆ μουσικῆ θέλξας τὸν Πλούτωνα καὶ τὴν Κόρην, αὐτὴν ἀνήγαγεν ἐξ Ἄιδου. "Eurydice, the wife of Orpheus, after she died from a snakebite, having gone down and charmed Pluto and Kore with music, he brought her back from Hades." I cannot, however, find support for a version of the Orphean myth in the fifth century B.C.E. in which Orpheus succeeds in bringing Eurydice back from death. C. M. Bowra in "Orpheus and Eurydice," *CQ*, n.s. 2 (1952):113–26, 117–19, raises the possibility that there may have been a version in which Eurydice was brought back to life, but his earliest hint of such a version is in Pausanias, who is by no means explicit about it. In any event, Bowra doubts that this was the version Euripides used. Segal 1989, 17–19, 155 ff., and 1991, 218, 227–28, n. 15, follows Bowra in assuming that there must have been such a version but does not give evidence for its existence as early as Euripides.

Admetus exaggerate his intentions to the point of absurdity so that both the inner and the outer audience would understand how little substance his words, or the feelings purportedly behind them, really had.<sup>14</sup>

## THE THIRD EPISODE

Questions to consider: What is the point of all the talk about Heracles' labors? Why does Admetus fail to tell his friend about his wife's death? Why does he insist that Heracles stay at his house?

### DENYING DEATH

While funeral arrangements are being made, along comes Heracles. His arrival reactivates Apollo's prophecy, which, though perhaps not forgotten, may not have been wholly believed. Death heard it as an idle, bullying threat and went about his business, which we now assume (having witnessed the death scene) cannot be undone.

This scene and the Pheres scene that follows it display most clearly who Admetus is, showing him possibly at his best and certainly at his worst. Admetus in these scenes presents aspects of a self that has some continuity. Part of that continuity is to react to the *other* person (the various characters played by the other actor, whether protagonist or deuteragonist), a feature of all dramatic characters, although some—Hippolytus and Philoctetes, for example—are less malleable than others.

When Heracles arrives, he is immediately recognized by the Chorus who, without hesitation, welcome him and temporarily forget their grief. In tragedy things are often forgotten in the heat of the moment, but this scene is an extreme example. Admetus is not the only one who fails to tell Heracles of the disaster. The Chorus has ample opportu-

14. Scully 1986, 140–42, attempts to excuse Admetus' hyperbolic promises on the grounds that they are based on the exchange of *charis*, which, by definition of convention, requires not an equal return but must be superior to "the kindness or injury received" (142). Indeed, there is a tendency toward the overreturn of *charis*. See Walter Donlan, "The Unequal Exchange between Glaucus and Diomedes in Light of the Homeric Gift Economy," *Phoenix* 43 (1989): 1–15. However, this usually happens in cases where the return is not specified, as it is in Alcestis' demand, but left for the one who owes the favor to determine.

nity before their ruler returns, but from 476 to 506, the troubles of the house are forgotten. At the hero's entrance there is, if only briefly, a complete change of mood and subject from the familial life and death scene that has been going on to the world of fantasy and mythology. By having the Chorus question Heracles at length about his exploits, Euripides situates the present story within the life and labors of Heracles and keeps the issues of death and loss from becoming too oppressive. (A similar device is used in the Euripides' *Heracles*.) Heracles' boasting to the Chorus (499–506) makes his later boast more plausible, and it confirms Apollo's prophecy by letting us know that this man can conquer death (or at least would not be afraid to try) if anyone can. Here another story within the story is being presented, the story of a man who labors and suffers, but who also enjoys himself in small things. In short, Heracles is a man who lives life fully all the time and by doing so makes life fuller for those around him (though not in the overbearing tragic mode of an Electra, an Oedipus, or a Clytemnestra). He is on his way to a wilder, more barbaric place, and the present events have but a minor part (that is, a *parergon*, not a full-fledged *labor*) within *his* story, though they are everything to Admetus and his family. Heracles' adventures at this time are a kind of rehearsal for adventures yet to come (the bloody mangers, the descent to the Netherworld, the return with the prize, this time a woman rather than man-eating horses or the hound of hell).<sup>15</sup>

Criticism of Admetus so far has been kept to a minimum but is not entirely absent. Heracles boasts (and not idly) that no one will see his hand tremble before an enemy, to which the Chorus announces, "And

15. The Chorus sings of Asclepius, the dead (and therefore mortal but made divine) son of Phoebus Apollo who alone could have saved Alcestis, but it is not to be Apollo's son nor the ineffectual Apollo himself who will save Alcestis. This Apollo who kills from afar, at one remove and without really needing the bow he carries out of habit or for easy identification, is what has become of Homer's magnificent far-shooter. Neither will it be the *φάρμακα* of Asclepius nor the spells of Orpheus, but the brute strength (mixed with strategy) of the world's strongest man, his perceptions altered by wine so that he thinks he can conquer Death and does. Still, the Chorus in the third stasimon keeps alive the hope that the house will fare well. The scene of Heracles' arrival parallels the prologue in its fantastical subject and also in its reference to Necessity; Apollo and Heracles, two sons of Zeus, are both subjected to men, by nature their inferiors. Heracles cannot refuse the commands of Eurystheus. Apollo's period of servitude is the subject of the next choral ode, where it is put in a romantic mode rather than in the athletic mode of Heracles' life of labors in service to his master.

here's Admetus" (507–508), an effective juxtaposition. With this latest arrival, the focus shifts from Heracles to Admetus. There is a second set of questions, again drawn out by stichomythia, this time of Admetus by Heracles. The scene in some ways is like the Aigeus scene in the *Medea*: the sudden entrance of a new character (who is known to but not expected by the protagonist), the questioning to find out what he is doing here, and then the shift to the problems of the character who is at home. Under the circumstances, the questioning of Heracles would be intolerable coming from Admetus, and so it is left to the Chorus. Admetus is less candid about his spouse than Medea is about hers, so that Heracles' promise to help Admetus out of his difficulty is postponed to a later scene.

In the second discussion between Heracles and Admetus, the distinction between life and death is blurred. Alcestis is dead in the house, but Admetus manages to prolong her situation between the two worlds for yet another scene. The ambiguous status of wives as both kin and strangers is also brought into play. Both discussions together form a delaying action. Heracles has to be kept in the dark so that the funeral can take place without him, so that Admetus can return to the empty house, and so that Heracles can be duped by drink into thinking he can trounce Death.

We know Heracles is here for a purpose and so we are impatient with the delay. To make things worse, Admetus even tells the servants not to let Heracles find out. Now how is Heracles going to learn the truth?

Admetus takes this man's friendship for granted.<sup>16</sup> His explanation that he is always well received (559-60) when he travels to thirsty Argos does not at all explain why he deceived his friend nor even why he insisted upon Heracles' staying at his home when he might have been more comfortable somewhere else. Admetus is caught in a dilemma, and to turn away his friend without telling him why would only make matters worse. Furthermore, Admetus does try (if only halfheartedly) to tell Heracles perhaps not the whole truth, but at least a little more than Heracles comes away with. He finds he cannot tell Heracles straight out, and Heracles also prevents his telling: that is, the two work

16. Rosenmeyer 1963, 232, "Admetus took himself for granted," and, in general, on the modal madness of Admetus, Arrowsmith 1974, 11–22.

together as partners in the deception. Admetus is reluctant to speak fully; Heracles is reluctant to understand accurately. This may be an aspect of Heracles' generosity because he does not want to see his friend suffer and cannot, therefore, come to terms with the obvious. Again and again in the play, Admetus is stripped of his human dignity, but the one thing he does have is his reputation for hospitality. As a host Admetus is, if not a hero, at least above average. The honor of the house is the argument that carries the day and forms the subject of the next song. There is a comic touch to Admetus' ushering Heracles into the house (though elsewhere such an action may be sinister: one need only think of Aegisthus, especially in Sophocles' *Electra*). Heracles has to be gotten rid of before the death plot can continue.

Admetus does what any wealthy, well-bred aristocrat would do, considering that hospitality looms large in the Greek aristocratic value system and in folktales that reflect it to people.<sup>17</sup> Admetus is a naturally generous man. Otherwise, how could he have expected anyone to die for him or accepted the generosity of Alcestis in agreeing to do so? As Hesiod says, "No one gives to the stingy" (*Works and Days* 354–60). The other possibility, of his rejecting a guest who has come to *him* (and this is important), is saved for the final scene when he is in such utter confusion that nothing is any longer what it used to be.

"She is and she is not," Admetus says to Heracles (521). Alcestis is still very much present, so recently alive—she is, at this very moment, in the house—that he cannot bring himself to say "my wife is dead" and to share this terrible knowledge with someone who was not an actual witness to her dying. To do so would mean realizing it for himself and forcing himself to accept the truth (which he begins to do in his tantrum with his father and finally achieves at the graveside, as he and the Chorus will recount). For now he is keeping his wife's death to himself. Another aspect of this odd behavior is his undefeated hope and desire that she is not really dead, as manifested in his promise to have the statue made and see her in his dreams, and in his belief in her sensate presence, even when reason would tell him that she is no longer sensible. In the third episode, then, Admetus is keeping his wife alive,

17. We might think of the farmer-husband in Euripides' *Electra*, who thinks wealth of little value other than for paying doctors and entertaining guests; probably only a poor man would think these things worth mentioning.

at least to Heracles. He is creating a second possibility, the other story, that she is not dead. In fact, when he says these words (519), there is only one story—Alcestis is dead. When he calls her a stranger-woman (533), it is an equivocation but not a lie because it was as a stranger that he received her into his house the first time and as a stranger that he will receive her from the hands of his guest. (See Lloyd 1985, 128 and Halleran 1982, 51–53; Elferink 1982, 49 traces the blood connection between Admetus and Alcestis.) She is both of the house and not of the house. Admetus tries not only to deny her death, but by calling her ὀθνεῖος, he even denies the connection of the dead woman to himself.

Why does Admetus receive the guest? Without the arrival of this outsider, there could be no rescue—that is obvious enough. If Admetus had done what the Chorus wants him to do, if he had done what Heracles begs him to do, then the second far-fetched story could not have overpowered the true story that Alcestis is dead. (For Euripides' fondness for this kind of reference to the story he is changing, see McDermott 1989, 19 on *Medea*.) Admetus has managed to keep his wife alive in the mind of his friend, and although he separates her death from her, he has achieved this without diminishing her heroism. To Apollo, acts of hospitality frame this year in the life of Admetus and his family. The first stranger received with kindness and piety turns out to be a god in disguise, as in the various folktales about gods paying visits disguised as mortals, which confirm the necessity of being decent to strangers. At the very least, the stranger is a person like oneself (as Admetus explains to the Chorus when he compares the reception of Heracles now to his own visits to Argos, 559–60). Somewhat paradoxically, since for neither the god nor the man can Admetus' hospitality have been an unmixed pleasure, both Apollo and Heracles feel compelled to repay their host with preterhuman favors.

In the heroization of Alcestis, she is immortalized as a kindly spirit (1002–1005). Usually when a young woman or man is sacrificed early in a play, little is said of that person afterwards, often to the distress of critics. In the *Hecabe*, attention is paid to the death and funeral of Polyxena primarily because she is important as a link to the next crisis in the plot, the finding of Polydorus' corpse. In the *Antigone*, it is Haemon's body that is carried back from the tragedy at the cave, and Antigone herself is almost forgotten as the emphasis shifts to the ruin

of Creon and his branch of the house. Often the sacrificial victim is not even to be mourned, as in the *Iphigenia at Aulis* and in the *Heraclidae*, where Macaria's death is reported almost too laconically. There are several false starts in that direction in the *Alcestis*, but finally, during the most hymnic ode to her, Alcestis walks back from the tragic scene, from the tomb where her husband had tried to join her in a mystic wedding in death such as Haemon had achieved with his beloved in the *Antigone*. In the *Alcestis*, the death of Alcestis is never far from anyone's lips. Mourning for her is to be Admetus' life's work. The resurrection of any of the victims in other plays would be unthinkable, in part because the plots move on to something else and other characters become focal. Even in this scene with Heracles, in which Admetus is less than forthright about his wife's death, he still talks about her and makes it clear that she is the center of his attention. Thus the plot keeps her alive and makes possible her return in this, as in no other of the sacrifice plays. Admetus' lie (his second story, 519) about her departure is his major contribution to her return. For practical reasons the lie cannot be allowed to prevail.

## THE FOURTH EPISODE

Questions to consider: Do you find any similarities between Admetus and his father? How does the second interior scene compare with the earlier one (narrated by the slave woman)? What do you find in the lament of Admetus: sincere grief or more empty posing?

HR

## FATHERS AND SONS

Manhood in archaic and classical Greece, as in modern times, is generally manifested not so much in relationships with women as in relationships with other men, especially in the relationship between father and son.<sup>18</sup> The Greek male is supposed to produce sons who will continue his *oikos* (e.g., Sophocles, *Antigone* 641–47; Euripides, *Alcestis*

18. Even nowadays in Greece, the intense male rivalry to prove oneself takes place among men alone; women and flocks serve as the object of this rivalry. Social division separates the

621–22, 654–57). Greek presumptions about what was required are fairly clear. As Hesiod defines the rudimentary expectations, sons should resemble their fathers both in looks and in conduct, especially the latter (*Works and Days* 182, 235; cf. Homer, *Iliad* 6. 476–81 and Sophocles, *Ajax* 434–40, 545–57). Such resemblance earns the father public esteem and proves his manliness, while the lack of it may be cause for disparagement and call his manliness into question. Tragedy often expounds on this idea. Sophocles follows the Hesiodic tradition according to which sons were expected to be like their fathers both in their natures and their accomplishments, as we learn from the *Ajax* and the *Philoctetes*. Ajax, on the one hand, sees himself as an unworthy son, having lost Achilles' arms to Odysseus. He prefers to commit suicide rather than face his father, Telamon, who took part in the expedition of Heracles against Troy and received Hesione, the best part of the booty, as a reward (*Ajax* 430–40, 462–65, 470–72, 1300–303; Diodorus Siculus 4.32.5). On the other hand, Ajax expects his son, Eurysaces, to be like himself in nature, valor, and in everything else (τὰ δ' ἄλλ' ὅμοιος, *Ajax* 545–51). Euripides also touches on this subject in his depiction of the father and son in the *Alcestis*, but turns it on its head.

The *Alcestis* presents to us, among other issues, the relationship between a father and a son. The son, upon being granted an extension of his lifespan, provided he can find a substitute to die for him, turns to his parents, asking either one of them to die instead of him. Both his mother and father refuse, and this refusal is taken up by Admetus when the father comes bearing robes to adorn Alcestis upon her death (614 ff.). In his tirade against his father, Admetus reverses the usual process of a father renouncing his son, as we witness in the *Hippolytus*, for example. Admetus does not welcome him to his house, rejects the robes, and eventually announces that he does not see his mother and father as his parents anymore, adopting instead Alcestis for this role. He also vows not to take part in the burial of his father when he dies, as is the duty of a son. Admetus' tirade is marked by a

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lives of men and women, and their intermingling in public is mostly for communal and ritualistic events. See M. Herzfeld, *The Poetics of Manhood: Contest and Identity in a Cretan Mountain Village* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 51–67. For manhood as a social construct of which the relationship between fathers and sons will be only one facet, see V. J. Seidler, *Unreasonable Men: Masculinity and Social Theory* (London: Routledge, 1994), 109–20.

remarkable illogicality. He blames his father for wishing to live longer in spite of his old age, even while he, too, wishes for a longer life than he was allotted. His claim that his father should have died for him out of gratitude for the respect he showed him all his years is a reversal of the usual expectation. Children were expected to take care of their older parents out of gratitude for the *trophē*, the nurture their parents accorded them in their childhood.

Pheres' biting and sarcastic response, in which he blatantly accuses Admetus of causing the death of Alcestis and of any other future wives his son may have, reveals the hard core in the old man. He is not ashamed to agree that he likes to live as much as Admetus does and sees no obligation to sacrifice his life for his son. Both men's tirades, however, give the impression that both individuals are highly egotistic and read each other fairly well. Indeed, the son is very much like his father. Euripides seems to tap into the accepted Hesiodic and Homeric perception that there is a blessing in the resemblance of a son to his father and presents it in an unsettling form—both Admetus and his father love to live. There is nothing wrong with this, but one might have expected a father to sacrifice himself for the sake of his son, whether there was such a law or not (683–84). Parents do many things for their children because their love is unconditional, but at the same time, Admetus' demand of his parents to die instead of him is utterly repulsive and unheard of. Both characters excel in their egotism. One may ask, therefore, whether resemblance to one's father is indeed always a feature parents should pray for, not to mention society as a whole. By touching on the theme of "like father, like son," the play engages in the discussion of *physis* versus *nomos*, nature versus nurture, a hot topic at that period. Is one's character decided genetically or rather by convention and training?

CL

### THE GIFTS OF PHERES

The Chorus mixes the hospitality theme with the theme of property (the gifts, in fact, of the hated Pheres to his son) in singing of the vast stretches of Admetus' realm. By doing so, they look forward to the Pheres scene where the discussion of property and inheritance figures prominently, as befits the rustic setting.

The two processions come face to face; Pheres, perhaps with his wife, accompanied by servants bringing κόσμος, meets the funeral cortege. The consigning of Alcestis' remains to the ground or the tomb is delayed again by this ugly scene.

The values expressed in this scene are not unlike the traditional values of Hesiod (see especially *Works and Days* 334–82). The old man may not be likeable, but he expresses a reasonable and unpretentious point of view—that he owes his life to no one but himself, a point of view that needs to be stated. (Cf. Nielsen's refreshing reassessment of Pheres, 1976, 98.) Not all parents give unconditional love to their children. Pheres begins with a general speech. He, like the Chorus, has come to offer consolation to Admetus and praise and gratitude to Alcestis. He is the same "type" as the Chorus, the old citizen of Pherai, and he mouths the same sentiments as everybody else, but because he is Pheres, the particular elderly φίλος of Admetus who did not save his son's life, he is hated and verbally abused for expressing them.

This scene offers another possibility, an alternative to the story we have—the death of Pheres instead of that of Admetus or Alcestis. Here is the man who refused to die for his son, a man ripe for death (cf. 16, 290–92, 466–68, 516). The father's answer to his son's charges is to list what he has given his son. All that he received from his own father, he has passed on to his heir, but he is not obligated to give Admetus life a second time at such a cost. There is no such custom; "it is not Greek" (684). Pheres makes himself the upholder of tradition. This may be a little uncomfortable for the members of the audience, who are made in this way to identify with the "villain" and who are, perhaps, being asked to reflect on Hellenic tradition and to supply what is missing from Pheres' list of the things a father passes on to his son. It can be said that Pheres sees even his most intimate relationships as business arrangements. He did not love his son enough to die for him. Such an un-Greek thing is almost unthinkable for him, but he has given it enough thought to produce a winning argument against it. Pheres does, however, appreciate what Alcestis did for *him* (621–22).

Euripides is not entirely unsympathetic to Pheres and gives him a convincing argument for the value of life. When his dying wife asked for one last favor, Admetus had wanted to reciprocate. He had promised to give up pleasure, to make his life *not* life and even to deny

the distinction between life and death. But Pheres makes the argument that life itself, seeing the light of day, has value. Here is a man with few years and few pleasures left, and he will not be shamed into giving them up. This attitude, in fact, restores to Alcestis' sacrifice some of its value (a small favor in return for hers to him). In Pheres' speech, life, not death, becomes the great equalizer.

Admetus tried to map out his father's life, past and future, for him. In his youth he had been king. He had fathered a son so that he would not leave his estate orphaned for strangers to plunder (654–57). In their scene, the men reveal such similarities in character as well as in blood and biography that what one says could often just as well be said by or about the other (cf. 696–97, 708–709). An aspect of the consistency or continuity of Admetus is seen in his reaction to others. When he interacts with Alcestis and Heracles, we see the giving side of him. With his father, he is like his father. Admetus, too, is a ruler in his youth, and he has an only son (and a daughter besides) to whom he would have left his estate and kingdom had he died. Their lives are parallel. Most to the point, neither sees his life's fulfillment in the production of an heir. Both see their lives as continuing to a timely end. What is *timely* is not for fellow mortals to decide. In fact, it was Admetus' time to die. It was he who fought not to die.

This part of the fourth episode is disturbing (cf. the Chorus' reaction, 673–74, 706–707), but it is fairly typical of father-son scenes in drama, an exception being the scene between Creon and Menoecus in the *Phoenissae*, and there the son deceives his father to avoid such a scene. Here we have a son wishing his father were dead and a father accusing his son of murder. The story is on the verge of disintegrating into one a little closer to patricide. The scene is acrimonious and uncomfortable for the audience, vulgar even, but no more so than that between Creon and Haemon in Sophocles' *Antigone*, which is not considered unsuitable to tragedy. After all this the Chorus sings briefly to Alcestis, praising her courage, as if nothing had happened.

HERACLES: χάρις χάριν τίκτει

The servant comes from inside the stage-building and describes for us another interior scene. Again, it is not really a dramatic scene;

however irksome to the people inside, it is too busy with small activities and not wordy enough for drama. Even here, the point is to praise Alcestis. This scene is set up in contrast to the interior action narrated by the Maid, in the first episode. Then Alcestis was pictured moving about to the altars, from room to room and person to person, with quiet dignity and confidence. Now Heracles keeps the servants running to and fro, while he himself is drinking and singing raucously. Compared with the silence noticed by the Chorus earlier, the house is now said to be emitting the incompatible noises of both merrymaking and mourning. There is here (as in the earlier episodes) a movement from description to the actual physical presence of the person whose activities in the house have been narrated. The servant's words alert us to Heracles' vinous condition. This could explain his treatment of the slave as an equal (after his initial rebuke) in inviting him to share a cup. Apollo shared the thetes' table, but it is unlikely that Admetus drinks with his slaves. For Heracles, drink is a great leveler. His attempt at generalization is cliché-ridden, boozy philosophy, and to all of Heracles' words of wisdom, the servant says disgustedly, "I know all that."

It is, finally, Heracles who offers another perspective on life and death. He takes the athletic view of life (Arrowsmith 1974, 15): we win life, and having won it, it is shameful not to enjoy the prize; not to go for the prize is all the more disgraceful. Admetus is depicted as singularly unathletic. Everything has been given to him, happened to him, or come to him by chance through the design of others or as his heritage. Omitted from the present telling of the legend is any reference to the tradition of Admetus' winning of his bride, though the reference to Heracles' victory may be an oblique and displaced allusion to that part of the story, as Beye suggests (1974, 110). True, Admetus drives away Pheres, who has become the bogeyman, and wins the right to be his wife's sole mourner from the household, but it is a bleak victory. He cannot, however, be said to have won the debate with his father, who has the last word and the better case. It is Phere's words that stay behind and come back to haunt Admetus after he has buried his wife.

Heracles' message is that the life we get is what we have won, and part of this is enjoying it day by day. Admetus' family, by obscuring the proper and natural way of death, have unbalanced all their relationships. Heracles faces the possibility of his own death and is able to enjoy

his life between labors. The two Heracles scenes make an effective setting for the Pheres scene that comes in their midst and an effective juxtaposition of the heroic and unheroic in the education of Admetus. His advice, “being mortal, think mortal,” is more a commentary on the scene immediately preceding than on the ending of the play, which invites us for the one festival day (of the resurrection, the wedding, the Greater Dionysia) to cast aside mortal thoughts and to live as if there could really be victory over the grave. Mortal thoughts are very much on Admetus’ mind when he returns to his desolate house. What are “mortal thoughts”? In part they are what has been said again and again—death is an obligation that everyone owes, and one should calculate life day by day, because nothing beyond that can be known. In the past, Admetus had failed to think mortal thoughts. His life has lost its meaning because he has given his own death to another. Without his death to define it, his life is no longer his own.

Pheres said it is not Greek for a father to die for his son. Indeed it is not. It is more likely for a son to die for his father and win immemorial honor, as Antilochus does in saving his father, Nestor (Pindar, *Pythian* 6.28–42), and as countless young warriors do who fight while the elders watch from the walls or speak at the funeral. Heracles does not use such paltry excuses to avoid being brave. His bravery also includes doing something un-Greek—he decides not to repay like for like in a mechanical way. Instead he finds the good in Admetus’ deception (855–60) and repays it with a greater kindness. Even sobered, he tempers his rebuke (1018) out of fellow feeling. (For a full consideration of *charis* in the play, see Padilla 2000.)

## WHOSE DEATH?

“O hateful approach,  
hateful sight of my widowed halls. . .”

(861–62).

The stage is empty again until Admetus returns with the Chorus. Attention once more is concentrated on the outside of the house. As Alcestis substitutes the *bed* for the man, so Admetus substitutes the halls for himself. Admetus is in love with the dead and wants to dwell in *that*

house, not in this empty one. The sacrifice has failed (as sacrifice is bound to do, Guepin 1968, 177–78.). We might ask ourselves whether he has survived his death. With the fantastic return of Alcestis, reason wins out. Of course the audience knows that one person cannot die for another. Reason situated in the audience (and only there) helps to effect the resurrection, which is also impossible.

As Admetus remembers their wedding day, he realizes that now everything is changed into its opposite and Admetus begins at last to see Alcestis as a person in this third description of the inside of the house: she was his equal socially (920), she now has a glorious reputation (938), she kept the house together (cf. 946–47), the children cry for their mother (947–48), the servants miss their mistress (948–49), and the house was really hers. When he goes out to social gatherings he will see the women as if he were looking for his wife among them. At Greek parties the men and women entertained themselves separately. Now he notices that women were there, too.

Ἄρτι μανθάνω “just now I understand” (940). With these words, Admetus finally realizes what his wife’s death means to him. Admetus comes to see himself playing his own part in his own story, realizing at last that he, not his father, bears the greater responsibility for Alcestis’ death. When he pictures an enemy seeing him and saying “he hates his parents,” it shows that he knows he is wrong to blame them. He anachronistically casts himself as Protesilaus’ wife (when he speaks of keeping the statue in his bed, Dale on lines 348–54) and Hector’s wife (when he says that Alcestis is his parents, 646–47 and 667–68, where he uses the masculine pronoun to refer to her). The gender confusion may be part of this variation of the story pattern because the manly hero should be the one to die for his beloved rather than the other way around.<sup>19</sup> Admetus is a man out of his element, hunting for a mythic archetype to explain his suffering to him (or perhaps just to share it) and more than that, a hero he could become in order to save his beloved. The hero he explicitly wishes to be is the artist Orpheus, but Admetus does not fit into any of the other,

19. On the versions of the folktale in other cultures, see Albin Lesky, *Alkestis, der Mythos und das Drama* (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1925), 20–42; also Robert S. P. Beekes, “You Can Get New Children. . .”: Turkish and Other Parallels to Ancient Greek Ideas in Herodotus, Thucydides, Sophocles and Euripides,” *Mnemosyne* 39 (1986):225–39. For a good summary and bibliography, see Conacher 1967, 327–33.

grander story patterns he tries on. He is not a warrior or a murderer or a grieving widow or a loving sister. He is neither a parricide nor a poet. He is a rich Thessalian who likes to entertain on a grand scale and to enjoy himself, welcoming to all.

He rounds off his speech with a direct quotation from an anonymous but ill-disposed third party, looking at Admetus' life. He himself has just been looking at his life, realizing that his reputation is bad and that he has fared badly. His wife is better off because she is free of suffering and has good repute. What could make the difference between Admetus and Alcestis more clear than the ode that follows the kommos and ends with a similar direct address, also by an anonymous third party? In the Chorus' vision, the address to Alcestis as a blessed spirit will come from a friendly and worshipful stranger.

HR

#### KOMMOS (861–934)

In spite of setting the scene as a kommos, the playwright once again prevents Admetus from singing but awards him four recitative anapestic systems of varied lengths, which Admetus declaims (see the note at lines 245–79 in the commentary and the Second Episode Discussions). This is unusual; in a typical kommos, the character sings. As the lament proceeds, Alcestis becomes identified with the household. Without her the house is empty in Admetus' eyes in spite of the other occupants, including his children. When taken out of context, Admetus' anguished cry is heartwrenching. He is a widowed husband whose life ceases to have a meaning without Alcestis at his side. But if any of the spectators can even slightly detach himself from the expressed agony and distress, it is impossible not to notice the illogicality of the situation. One cannot help but wonder, if not smile, at Admetus' claim that he envies the dead, wishes to be dead, and had to be prevented from jumping into the open grave. After all, the opportunity to die was given to him, and his wife is dead because he asked her to die for him. It seems that unlike Pheres, Admetus can see only fragments of a situation and never the entire picture. His late awareness of the situation contradicts his claim in 420–21, where he assures the Chorus that the tragedy of losing Alcestis has not dawned on him by

surprise, that he was expecting it all along. One wonders to what extent it is safe to take such admissions by Admetus seriously (see also 940) or to what extent he truly understands the situation beyond his personal immediate gain of life.

The illogicality mounts as Admetus expresses the wish never to have married. One immediately thinks that if indeed Admetus had never married Alcestis, he would be dead now. Admetus might indeed feel great sorrow, but his grief concerns only himself and the loss he has suffered. He obviously would like to continue living and having Alcestis. As it happens, he had to sacrifice one of these wishes, and he chose to sacrifice Alcestis rather than his own life. His reference to the sorrow that comes from having children is unclear. He might be rehearsing a well-known wisdom that claims going through life unmarried and childless lessens one's potential for getting hurt. If so, however, his candor is suspect, or, if he is candid, his capacity for understanding is suspect. The leitmotiv of Admetus' inability to see clearly his situation resurfaces even before the arrival of Pheres, when he tells his dying wife that he had not profited from her (335). It is interesting that he ignores the Chorus' example of an older man who became childless and bore his grief well, as the example makes one think of Pheres' situation had Admetus died. There is no question that Pheres would have borne his sorrow well.

Admetus' insistence on keeping his distance from the palace after Alcestis' funeral (861–63, 912–14, 941) despite the Chorus' urging him to go inside (872), and his later protracting his reentry with the "prize woman" despite Heracles' urging, may suggest that he has some intimation of the danger. The house has already become the house of death in the first half of the play when Admetus accompanies Alcestis' dead body indoors to have it prepared for the *ekphora*.<sup>20</sup>

### ADMETUS' "REALIZATIONS" (935–61)

Admetus continues in a self-pitying mode. So far his sorrow for Alcestis centers solely on the effect her death has on him. The only

20. For the transformation of Admetus's house into a house of death, see Luschnig 1995, 55–56. For further insight into the function of the 'house' in the play as a place of death, hospitality, mourning, and marriage, see Buxton 1987, 17–19.

time he grieves for Alcestis as a young life taken is when his words could hurt Pheres as he accuses his father of wishing to live in spite of his old age and letting a younger person die (634–35). That the same applies to himself, he either ignores or never notices. Until this point, there is no regret on his part that he has allowed Alcestis to die or mourning for what Alcestis has lost by dying for him. Even now, when he seems to regret having her die for him, it is not because it has hurt Alcestis (in fact, he claims she is better off) but because his letting her die has marred his own life. The unintentional irony on Admetus' part reaches its peak when he concludes that Alcestis is better off dead than he is alive because she is immune to pain and has attained *kleos*. He then moves painfully to the loneliness he will experience when he comes back home and has no one to greet him, keep the house clean, and keep the children happy—in short, to render his life pleasant and keep him happy. The suffering outside of the house also focuses on him alone. One might expect, for example, that he would enumerate what is there outside the house that Alcestis will be missing, but instead we find that he will not be able to tolerate watching the marriages of other Thessalians and that he is now finally aware that, unlike Alcestis', his name is tarnished. It is significant that this climactic speech ends with the recurring theme of profit and, in a loose ring composition, comes back to the lot of Alcestis, who, according to her husband, gained more by dying for him. She has escaped the troubles of life and has gained a name for herself, while he is burdened by misery and his reputation is tainted. Admetus weighs everything in terms of personal loss and profit.

Neither his famous words ἄρτι μανθάνω (940) nor lines 960–61 bring Admetus any closer to a moral recognition that he was wrong to ask someone else, whether his parents or his wife, to die in his place. Rather, what he has just learned is that as things have turned out for him, because of his own request, his life is no longer worth living. He is faring badly without Alcestis and does not have a good name even while still alive, and as his father noted, it is while one is alive that one's name matters. The words οὐ χρῆν (939) do not intimate any lack of moral judgment on Admetus' part but merely indicate that he shunned his appointed time of death (see also Conacher 1988 on 939). Nevertheless, Admetus' confession of his belated understanding (940)

is often taken as the turning point (peripeteia) of the play from which the "happy ending" of Alcestis' return from the dead as a reward for Admetus' recognition originates (e.g., Dale 1954 on 835 ff.). Still, one should note that Admetus' recognition is not of his wrongdoing but of his misery. His inability to grasp the entirety of the situation haunts his perception, and he is yet again capable only of a fragmented conclusion that splits the cause from its effect.

## THE EXODOS

Questions to consider: What really happens in the final scene? Is Alcestis returned to Admetus and the house with no strings attached, or does her return mean that Admetus must face his own death?

CL

### BACK FROM THE GRAVE

In the exodos, the play's various themes are reexamined, but the many confusions and distortions remain forever ambiguous. Admetus treated his heroic guest unworthily. Heracles, however, is a generous man and is able to accept the generosity of Admetus as outweighing the tactlessness of his deception and the untimeliness of his invitation. For the first time, Admetus refuses to accommodate a guest when he refuses to receive the young woman into his house. He fears blame from Alcestis as though she were alive and watching him, as she is. As usual, his timing is off, but he could not know this (see Jones 1948, 52–55, on the technique of delayed reaction in the education of Admetus).

Heracles teaches Admetus what friendship is at its best (1103). Earlier, Admetus refused to share his grief, and now he refuses to share enjoyment of the victory, but here Heracles is pretending to be as tactless and insensitive as Admetus was earlier. When at last Admetus agrees to let the woman stay (1108), Heracles makes sure that Admetus knows what he is doing—that he is taking this woman as his wife (1111–17; cf. 917; on the wedding, see Halleran 1988; Buxton 1987, 17–19; Luschnig 1990, 36–39). At the end, Admetus possibly recognizes a change in himself and his life (1157–58); he will live better from now on.

Such reconciliations are not a consistent or even a usual feature of tragedy, though the sense of closure or completeness is. This is partly because tragedies always start near what is known to be the end or an end of a story (a serious story, treated seriously) and *something* happens. In this play—tragedy or not—we begin at the end of Apollo's servitude, which by accident or design coincides with the end of Alcestis' life. Something happens that makes this a complete action. Admetus takes his wife by the hand and enters the house with her (with Halleran 1988, 123–29, I would keep 1119–20, which Diggle brackets).

Heracles: Time will soften it, but now the wound is still new.

Admetus: You would be right in saying 'time' if time is to die.

(1085–86)

One of the ways Admetus refuses to face the separation, that is, the death of Alcestis, is by thinking of her as still bound by time. One obvious characteristic of the dead is that they are no longer bound by time and change, but Admetus refuses to accept the finality of death. He says, "You were my only wife alive, you will be my only wife dead." She is imagined as alive, keeping house for him in the Netherworld.

Admetus sees himself as stuck in a state of timeless nonbeing similar to existence in Hades. He has given up all happiness. He is dead to his parents, renouncing them and their imperfect love. The numerous negative words used of Admetus go far in eliminating not only his pleasures, but all that gives him being. This is especially apparent when he says that his father is childless and that it is better to be unwed (if he had been unwed, he would now be dead). The house has become an oppressive presence (861); it is hated as death is hated. He prefers the halls of Hades to his own house and has condemned himself to mourn always. Admetus finally does see that Alcestis is gone from the house. He finally does recognize, if not accept, the separation as he gasps his way to the house that is in shambles. Not only will Alcestis' place be empty, but the floor will be dirty, for Alcestis is busy in the Netherworld preparing a home for him where he will be with her. She will wait for him, but waiting implies time. In his mind, where she has her only continued existence, she is still in time.

The house of Admetus, the institution for which Alcestis died, has become a replica of the house of Hades. It is at this low point, at which

Admetus has lost even the right to be called *philoxenos*, when he has been diminished by all and can see himself only as an enemy would see him, that everything is reversed and he can become happy and ordinary again. Alcestis calls upon the sun and light and clouds. Admetus replies,

He sees you and me, both suffering terribly,  
though we have done nothing to the gods for which you will die.

(246–47)

It is a commonplace remark, but like so many of the other commonplace remarks in this and other plays, it is inept. It is, in fact, the *favor* of the god that is causing all the grief for Admetus more than anything Admetus has done, to gain this favor. Admetus had been living in a fairy-tale world. Events in the play teach him that human beings cannot afford to have their fantasies come true by—and here is the irony—granting him one last wish.

HR

#### HIDE-AND-SEEK

Once Heracles returns from Alcestis' grave, Euripides proceeds to present a quasi-comical interchange between him and his host. The interchange is something of a game of hide-and-seek, in which Heracles tries to persuade Admetus to take Alcestis into his home while hiding her identity, and Admetus fails to recognize his own wife even as he tries to get a better look at the enticing woman his friend has brought.

The episode begins with Heracles' clumsy lie (1008–36) about how he came by the woman he has brought. He tells Admetus that he won βουφόρβια / γυνή δ' ἐπ' αὐτοῖς ἔπειτ' ("a herd of oxen; and a woman followed in addition to the herds" 1031–32), in wrestling and boxing matches. As the audience will have recognized, the story is based on the incident in *Iliad* 23, where Diomedes, winner of the chariot race in the games in honor of Patroclus, receives a prestigious double prize: "a woman and an eared tripod" (23.262–65, 512–13).<sup>21</sup> The Homeric

21. Further on in *Iliad* 23, we are told about the prizes for the wrestling between Telamonian Ajax and Odysseus. As a prize for the winner, Achilles sets a special great tripod, which was initially appraised at twelve oxen. The second prize is a woman skilled in handiwork,

passage reflects the relative importance of the woman by mentioning her before the tripod, but Heracles seems to add the woman as an afterthought, suggesting that he considers her less important than the herd of oxen. This reversal deflates Heracles' effort to make his account respectable by anchoring it in tradition and shows him as clumsy and confused.

The impression of his tripping over his tongue is reinforced by his failure to mention what he did with the oxen he supposedly won and by his labored claim that the woman was not stolen but acquired with great effort (1035), which is odd, coming as it does only a little while after the audience has heard him declare his intention to rob Death of Alcestis (840–49). The fact that Admetus so readily falls for the clumsy deception shows him as more unable to think straight than he has appeared thus far. Although he has just banned all entertainment in Pherai, he never inquires how Heracles could have found a competition so nearby. Instead of probing his guest's story, he replies (1037–69), as he earlier had to Alcestis, with a plethora of *figurae etymologicae* that follow each other in close succession: ἄλγος ἄλγει (1039); τοῦ μὸν . . . ἐμοί (1041); νοσοῦντι . . . νόσον (1047); ἔλης ἠρημένον (1065); εἰσορῶν . . . ὄρῶν (1066). Thus closely packed, they are self-conscious and excessive and turn his protestations of grief into bathos. What really makes this dialogue a piece of dark humor is that it is conducted in the presence of Alcestis, who is visible to the audience and at least partially visible to Admetus and the Chorus. A basic source of the scene's possible funniness lies in Admetus' failure to recognize the wife for whom he has professed so much love.

Many scholars assume that Alcestis is in full view but veiled at this point in the play. The assumption goes back to the scholiast's interpretation of Admetus' words "She is young, to judge from her clothing and accessories" (1050) to mean that Admetus infers her youth from her clothing rather than her face.<sup>22</sup> There is, however, no textual

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appraised at four oxen (23.700–705). As neither of the participants seems to win, Achilles tells them to stop wrestling and divide the prizes equally, which would be quite a trick considering the prizes. What transpires thus is that despite the high assessment of the special great tripod, the woman is not that far behind in worth.

22. The assumption that she is veiled is so entrenched that one finds scholarly interpretation of the play based on the symbolic meaning of the veiling; see Buxton 1987, 20–23. For veiling and unveiling in the play as symbols of wedding and marriage, see Wiles 1997,

evidence for this view. The summary at the beginning of the play says nothing about veiling, but rather "Heracles, having made Death stand away, hid the woman in robes" (ἔσθητι καλύπτει τὴν γυναῖκα). Interestingly, in the relief of Heracles' returning Alcestis on the Velletri sarcophagus, Alcestis is not veiled, though Admetus, whose view is blocked by the door through which Heracles leads her, cannot see her either.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, even if she were veiled, Admetus should have been able to recognize her by her clothing. In all likelihood, she would still be wearing the magnificent clothes in which she was dressed at her funeral (1050). A great deal is made of that clothing. The Maid says that Admetus will bury Alcestis with all the expected luxury (149), and Admetus pointedly refuses to bury her in the clothing that Pheres brings for that purpose (631–32). It is also clear that Admetus can gauge that she is young by whatever he can notice of her clothing and general appearance. Thus his failure to recognize his own wife, even if she is not fully visible, brings the obtuseness he has already demonstrated to new heights.

The scene may well have been staged to play up a slapstick routine of Heracles trying to hide Alcestis from her inquisitive but dense husband. It is likely that Heracles hides her with his large body when he brings her on stage, while Admetus, drawn by curiosity and desire, struggles to get a peek at her even as he protests Heracles' having brought her. Then, when Heracles tells Admetus to take a better look at her before turning her away (1105), he may teasingly reveal some part of her, only to play hide-and-seek again as he probably does when Admetus addresses her directly (1061–63) in an effort to make her come forward.<sup>24</sup> That Heracles might be thus playing with his host is suggested by his use of two different verbs to indicate the act of looking. The first time he urges Admetus to look at the woman, he uses the verb ἄθρει (1105), a relatively noncommittal verb that means both

159–60. Rabinowitz 1993, 87, accepts that she may not have been veiled but argues that she wore some headgear that prevented recognition.

23. M. Lawrence, "The Velletri Sarcophagus," *AJA* 69 (1965):207–22, esp. 210–11. The reason for the unveiled face may be that the artist wanted to depict the woman who was buried in it. There are, however, other sarcophagi depictions of the death of Alcestis which do veil, at least partially, Alcestis' face. See M. Wood, "Alcestis on Roman Sarcophagi," *AJA* 82 (1978):499–510.

24. If Drew 1931, 303, is right and Heracles is actually carrying Alcestis (alive, *pace* Drew), he may even more conveniently hide her face, turning the front of her toward his chest.

“to look” and “to ponder.” Then, when he ceremonially hands her over, he uses the unambiguous βλέπον (1121, “Look!”). Rabinowitz sees the entire incident as a joke at the expense of the silent woman, who is objectified and fetishized as Heracles dangles her in front of Admetus while she cannot speak on her own behalf (Rabinowitz 1993, 88–99).

### A PLETHORA OF PROTEST

There is also some dark humor in Admetus’ persistent self-deception, as he pretends not to want the strange woman while proceeding to convince himself that he has no choice but to take her into his home. Although he begins properly enough by urging Heracles to take her to some other house, he is clearly thinking about welcoming her into his own. Heracles tells him that he brought her to work as a servant (προσπολεῖν, 1024). Thus there are no apparent grounds for Admetus to get emotional about the idea of putting her up and no reason to wonder where he will lodge her; the female servants’ quarters is the obvious place. The only reason for concern would be if he were thinking of taking her in not as a servant, but as a mistress or new wife.

The sexual turn of his thoughts, itself a source of humor, is clear from the way that, even without seeing her in full, he quickly ascertains and focuses on her youth; he is concerned that she is in danger of being raped if she is lodged in the men’s quarters, and he suggests immediately that the only alternative is to take her to his wife’s bed. Both possibilities—that the woman be lodged in the men’s quarters and that she be taken to his wife’s bed—are raised as rhetorical questions in a manner supposedly meant to rule them out and are followed by self-evident, inflated, and self-righteous counterarguments, which are rendered even funnier by their superfluousness. For not only is it obvious that neither alternative is even remotely acceptable, but the audience well knows that these are not the only alternatives and that Admetus is studiously avoiding any mention of the place, the female servants’ quarters, where the woman he desires could stay safely and with no suggestion of impropriety.

The more he protests, the more the audience sees him twist and turn to attain his aims while trying to hide them from both Heracles and himself. Looking at the woman, he addresses her directly in the vocative γύναι, which signifies both “woman” and “wife”:

But you, woman [γύναι],  
 Whoever you are, you have the exact dimensions  
 of Alcestis' figure and you resemble her in your body.

(1061–63)

The text plays nicely on the ambiguity, echoing the wordplay in the *Odyssey*, where Odysseus and Penelope address each other, each knowing who the other person is but refraining from a formal recognition.<sup>25</sup> Here, Admetus does not know that the woman is a γυνή in the other sense, but Heracles and the spectators know that she is his wife. The coupling of self-deception and self-revelation in the matter of his remarriage continues in the next two lines:

O me! take this woman away out of my sight, for gods' sake!  
 Do not overpower me, already overpowered.

(1064–65)

Why must he get the woman out of his sight, one wonders, unless he is discomfited by the thought of bringing her to his wife's bed? That this is his thought is strongly hinted at in the wordplay on ἔλῃς ἡρημένον (1065), which the audience would recognize as inflections of the same verb, αἰρέω, "to seize" or "to overpower." The wordplay might also suggest that Admetus' emotional outburst is not motivated by genuine suffering—a person in real pain does not think of complicated figures of speech—while his emphasis on seizing and overpowering points accurately to what he actually has in mind regarding this woman.

One may claim that his motives are made crystal clear in the image of the cuttlefish that follows:

For I think when I look at her I am seeing my  
 own wife; she makes turbid /perturbs [θολοῖ] my heart,  
 springs gush out from my eyes.

(1066–68)

Admetus uses the verb θολόω, which does not appear anywhere else in extant Greek tragedy, to describe the agitation that the woman's resem-

25. See Roisman 1990; Ahl and Roisman 1996, 225–34; see also Luschnig 1995, 60–62, for the possible readings of line 531. Cf. Rabinowitz 1993, 73.

blance to Alcestis causes him. *Tholos* is the dark fluid emitted by the cuttlefish to conceal its movements from predators; hence *θολώω* means “to make turbid” and, metaphorically, “to perturb.” Because the cuttlefish churns up only water, the statement that the woman makes his heart turbid is a bit artificial, and like Admetus’ other contrived figures, raises questions about the sincerity of his feelings. The impropriety of language would be easily picked up by the audience, many of whom were fishermen familiar with the trick of the cuttlefish. More pointedly, in comparing the young woman to the cuttlefish, Admetus implicitly identifies himself as a predator who will catch her and make her his own.

Although the image is inadvertently cynical, the lines can be played with some humor at this point. They immediately follow Admetus’ address to the woman (1061–63) and may continue to include her.<sup>26</sup> One can easily imagine a production of the play in which Admetus speaks to the woman and tries to get a closer look at her at the same time that, referring to her in the third person, he beseeches Heracles to take her away.

By this point, Admetus’ readiness to replace Alcestis with another woman is clear and evokes dark humor. In his next statement, in reply to Heracles’ declaration that he would rescue Alcestis from the clutches of Death if he could (1072–74), the audience can hear the complacency of a husband who believes that his wife’s death has cleared the field for him to start a new romance:

Admetus: Surely I know you would have wished it. But what kind of a wish is that? It is impossible for the dead to come to light again.

(1075-76)<sup>27</sup>

26. As if to emphasize that Admetus is no longer talking only to Heracles but also to Alcestis, the Chorus echoes his *ἥτις ποτ’ εἶ σύ* “whoever you happen to be” (1062) in their address to him, which ends with *ὅστις εἶ σύ* “whoever you are” (1071). The oddity has been noticed. Dale 1954 comments on 1070–71: “These lines are doubtless intentionally ambiguous, but in any case *ὅστις εἶ σύ* [‘whoever you are’] is meaningless. If this is a generalized warning (‘whatever your station,’ ‘even a king’) the emphatic *σύ* [you] (omitted by L) is quite out of place.”

27. Onstage an actor could insert a sigh of relief in Admetus’ statement that no one can come back from the dead.

No one can have any illusions now about Admetus' grief for Alcestis. The disenchantment in the next twenty lines of rapid stichomythia derives from the predictable fashion in which Admetus' avowals of grief and devotion almost all follow upon Heracles' prompting rather than being expressed of his own volition. His statement that it is easier to comfort than to suffer comes in response to Heracles' exhortation against excessive mourning (1077–80); his exaggerated complaint that his love for his wife has destroyed him follows Heracles' affirmation that love is a good enough cause for grieving (1081–82); his gloomy prediction that he will never be happy again is brought out by Heracles' acknowledgment that he has lost a fine wife (ἐσθλή, 1083–84); and his fervent protestation that he would rather die than remarry and break his promise to Alcestis is ushered in by Heracles' broaching the notion of remarriage (1087, 1094–96). The mechanical regularity of the pattern becomes noticeable and leaves the impression that without his friend's promptings, Admetus would have had nothing to say.

Finally wise to him, Heracles ignores Admetus' declarations and swiftly deflates his protests in one sharp line: "Then take this woman inside to your noble house" (1097). The line indicates that Heracles has no intention of participating any further in the rhetorical charade that has been going on. Most commentators regard Heracles' sudden coldness as ironic.<sup>28</sup> This may be true, but in case there is any doubt about Heracles' understanding of his friend, Euripides has him add, several lines on, "She will go away if she must, but first make sure, see if she should" (1105). Heracles is well aware that once Admetus actually sees her, he will not be able to withstand the lures of the attractive young woman.<sup>29</sup>

## ROLE REVERSALS

The exchange between Heracles and Admetus is marked by role reversal, which takes us back to Admetus' decision to host Heracles in

28. For example, Hadley 1901 writes on line 1097, "Notice the irony, of the connection: 'you say you would die rather than desert Alcestis: well, then receive this lady.'" The search for hidden irony reveals the oddity of the abrupt sequence of messages.

29. On Admetus' lust see: Rabinowitz 1993, 85; Burnett 1965, 245; Beye 1959, 118. Drew (1931): 301, n. 25, maintains that one of the reasons Admetus is so hostile to his father in the

spite of Alcestis' death to the chagrin of the Chorus and his house slaves. In that scene it was Admetus who was the deceiver and argued his best to convince Heracles to be his guest in spite of "a death" in the house. In their final agon, Heracles is the deceiver and the persuader, but even within this last scene there is a minute role reversal (see also Ahl 1997, 21–24). It is initially Heracles who tries to persuade Admetus to take the young woman and Admetus who must be persuaded (1101). As the scene proceeds, Admetus agrees and Heracles must be persuaded to give the woman away. The process takes several lines, with Heracles refusing either to permit Admetus' servants to lead her inside or to lead her inside himself, finally insisting that Admetus lead her in by his right hand (1115). The sudden shift in roles has potential humor if executed at some speed, but need not be.

Some funniness or dark humor can also be found in the lines that follow, deriving from the combined effect of the role reversal and the awkwardness stemming from Heracles' continuing to hide Alcestis from her husband:

He. Dare to stretch out your hand and touch the foreign woman.

Ad. Fine, I'm extending my hand, as if to a beheaded Gorgon.

He. Are you holding? Ad. Am I holding? Yes, I am.

(1117–19)

Admetus' comparison of the woman to a beheaded Gorgon indicates that he does not yet see her head, even if she is in full view of some of the audience.<sup>30</sup> She is still hidden behind Heracles' broad back, or in his

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agon is that he hears Heracles' revelry in his house and is tormented not only by the realization that he may not participate under the circumstances, but also by the knowledge that the vow of celibacy he took—a vow he would not have had to make had his father agreed to die for him—bars him from enjoying himself in the future; cf. Michelini 1987, 326.

30. The word *καρπατόμῳ* has been a source of much scholarly debate. Although the manuscript has the Gorgon beheaded, most scholars follow Lobeck's emendation *καρποτομῶν*, which would take an accusative (*Γοργόνα*) and read: "Fine, I extend my hand as if beheading a Gorgon." The emendation has been prompted by the fact that *iota* (*Γοργόνι*) is not commonly elided and by the notion that Admetus has no reason to regard the woman as a danger if she is already beheaded. See Dale 1954 on the line. The idea of Admetus' words, however, is that the woman poses a threat to him, not that he poses a threat to her. Neither the tone nor content of the nonchalant "Fine, I'm extending my hand" fits well with the

chest, and all Admetus can see is her outstretched hand and side. Line 1119 conveys the groping and awkwardness with which Admetus takes hold of Alcestis. The *ναί* in Admetus' "Yes, I do!" is not redundant, as Dale suspects (on line 1119), but emphasizes the effort Admetus must make to take hold of Alcestis without fully seeing her. Only when Heracles is assured that Admetus is holding her hand does he move away and *tell* Admetus to take a good look (*βλέψον*, 1121) at her and see if he recognizes his wife, upon which a recognition follows (1123-25).<sup>31</sup> There is some clumsiness and awkwardness in this partial transmittal of Alcestis. Lines 1133-35 contain two reversals of earlier events:

Ad. Oh, eyes and body of my dearest wife, I am holding you

[ἔχω]

now beyond all hope, I never thought of seeing you again.

He. You are holding her [ἔχεις]. May there be no jealousy from gods [upon you].

The most striking reversal is that of the Heracles-Admetus exchange in line 1119. Here it is Admetus who begins with ἔχω ("I am holding") and Heracles who answers ἔχεις ("you are holding"). Good actors can make a lot out of the reversed repetition, especially if Heracles plays on the question tone that he used in line 1119. More substantially, even though Admetus talks directly to Alcestis, Heracles answers him as if the words were addressed to himself. This cross-communication might strike one as funny in and of itself and also because it echoes the exchange in which Admetus tried to address the hidden woman and lure her out from behind Heracles (1061-63), while telling Heracles in the third person imperative that "the woman" should go away (1104).

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notion of beheading someone, let alone a Gorgon, nor would there be any point in Admetus' agreeing to look after the woman for Heracles if he intended to kill her and said as much. Admetus compares her to a Gorgon because he has not yet seen her head, which is hidden by Heracles. Admetus simply protests that he would rather not have her and shuns her as one would shun a Gorgon, even when beheaded.

31. Line 1119, which is broken into the words of Heracles, Admetus, and Heracles again (He. "Are you holding?" Ad. "Am I holding? Yes, I am." He. "Keep her safe"), mirrors line 391 where Admetus had two parts in a broken line versus one part of Alcestis. Because Alcestis and Heracles are played by the same actor, there is a reversal of roles between the actor that plays Alcestis and Heracles and the one who plays Admetus. Much can be done out of it

## THE TRAGIC ENDING

Questions to consider: What happens in the final scene? Is this a happy ending to a simple fairy tale, a tragic denouement to a more sinister story, or a doubtful conclusion that leaves us still wondering?

HR

The view that the *Alcestis* has a happy ending is based on Alcestis' resurrection from death and reunion with her husband in the final scene. The possibility that their marriage might turn rocky as a result of Admetus' earlier behavior would probably be answered with the claim, quoted from Aristotle, that "this is beyond the scope of the play" (*Poetics* 1454b, cf. 1453b).<sup>32</sup> Although I agree with Beye (1959:111–27) that spectators do not have the time to mull over what happened before the play started, I believe that endings are another matter. Contemplating what might happen to the characters after the play is over seems to me part and parcel of viewing a dramatic performance. One may recall in this connection George Bernard Shaw's detailed futurology in his preface to *Pygmalion*. There, he carefully informs us that Eliza Doolittle did not marry Professor Higgins, she married Freddy Hill, who was unsuccessful in business, and they were constantly hard up for money. His reason for giving this information was presumably to avert an overly romantic staging of the play, but the very fact of his account implies his recognition that it is natural for spectators to try to imagine what happens to the characters after the curtain falls. It is true that not every play encourages such speculations, but the *Alcestis* does.

My contention is that the text of *Alcestis* guides us carefully as to what Euripides would have liked us to imagine happens after the final scene. The following discussion will thus disregard the scholarly warnings and

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onstage if the actors use the same intonation and arm gestures. The first two parts are given to Heracles and Admetus respectively, and they seem to be funny.

32. For Alcestis' silence as a predictor of emptiness, absurdity, awkwardness, and estrangement in her future relationship with her husband, see Kurt von Fritz, "Euripides' *Alkestis* und ihre modernen Nachahmer und Kritiker," in *Antiker und Moderne Tragödie* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1962), 256–321, esp. 312–16. For the view that any such interpretation goes beyond the scope of the tragedy, see Schein 1988, 202, n. 71.

go "beyond the scope of the play."<sup>33</sup> It argues that although many scholars regard the final scene, in which Admetus leads Alcestis into their home, as the epitome of the couple's happiness, the text provides good grounds for wondering whether the denouement is indeed so blissful.

### ALL MEN MUST DIE: APOLLO'S DEAL WITH THE FATES

As those who see the play as a tragedy note, its theme, the human struggle against inevitable death, is inherently a tragic one. For all its humor, Death's confrontation with Apollo in no way undermines the ultimate reality of death. On the contrary, it shows the perpetual human battle against death as a poor, ridiculous effort to threaten and outwit the one force in the universe which ultimately cannot be overcome. The very appearance onstage of death's personification, which occurs in no other known Greek play, reinforces *Alcestis*' tragic mode.

The inevitability of death is one of the major themes of the *Alcestis*. Already in the second strophe of the parodos (112–21), the Chorus reflects that Alcestis' death cannot be averted. Neither oracles nor burnt offerings can avail, they sing, and Asclepius, who might have saved her, is dead. Heracles makes a more general statement of death's inevitability to Admetus' grieving servant (782): "All men must die." Yet just before Heracles appears with Alcestis, the Chorus sings of the power of Necessity, as exemplified by death (961–1005). This Necess-

33. Cf. also Roisman 1999a, 23–35. Dale, ("The Creation of Dramatic Characters," in *Collected Papers of A. M. Dale*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1969, 272–80, esp. 275–76) inveighs against considerations outside of the play itself, especially conjectures about what might have happened next, as a distortion of ancient Greek drama. She is adamant that such extratextual interpretations were not meant by the ancient drama. But can we be sure? And even if the playwright did not mean us to, are we prevented from contemplating? Here, mention of the upcoming three days (1146) particularly invites us to. See F. M. Dunn, *Tragedy's End: Closure and Innovation in Euripidean Drama* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 6–7, 23–25, 64–83, for the extent to which Euripides, unlike Sophocles, for example, tends to place the tragic plot he has just presented within a mythic continuum through some kind of a prophetic announcement toward the end of the tragedy. The Euripidean ending episodes are not a real ending to the characters' endeavors, "but one more episode in a long career that will continue in new and uncharted directions once the play is over" (Dunn 1996, 6–7). These prophetic epilogues indicate Euripides' awareness that the audience does keep wondering about what is going to happen to the characters. Sometimes he takes the initiative to shape the audience's expectations explicitly, sometimes he lets their imagination wander.

sity, they sing, cannot be overcome by prayers, by sacrifice, or by any Orphic or Asclepian lore. Even Zeus must accept its power and govern in harmony with it, and Admetus must bear his grief, because he will not bring back the dead by weeping. It is at the end of this song that Heracles appears with Alcestis, who will prove the Chorus' statement true.<sup>34</sup> More will be said of her role below. Here what must be emphasized is that, as Gregory has pointed out, Alcestis' resurrection and restoration to her home means that Apollo's deal with the Fates is off, and Admetus' death can no longer be postponed.<sup>35</sup> Logically, once the three days pass that it will take for Alcestis to be cleansed of her obligations to the Netherworld, Admetus must die, because Apollo's bargain means that just as Admetus can live only if Alcestis dies, Alcestis can live only if Admetus dies. It is unlikely that Alcestis will agree to die for him again. As noted earlier, Admetus shows no understanding of the trade-off. His lack of comprehension was apparent in his urging the dying Alcestis not to leave him and to fight for her life. It is also evident in his wish, voiced at Alcestis' funeral, that he had never married (880–82). This rash wish represents one of his many (comic) attempts to convey a grief he does not feel and one of his many failures to grasp the implications of his statements.

## MARITAL DISCORD

In terms of the play's plot, the expectation that Admetus will meet a tragic end rests on the assumption that his conduct will so anger and alienate Alcestis that, when his time comes in three days, she will let his fate take its course, for, in rapid succession, Admetus breaks all the promises he has made. In lavishly hosting Heracles, he fails even to mourn the regulation month, let alone the lifetime he has vowed. In the end, he leads into his chambers not a mere statue but a warm, breathing woman, and his promise never to remarry dissipates as soon as he takes her hand. His betrayal of Alcestis' memory gains in horror

34. For Heracles as the champion of Necessity, see Gregory 1979, 267.

35. Gregory 1979, 268–69. Cf. also V. Phelan, *Two Ways of Life and Death: Alcestis and the Cocktail Party* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990), 193. Phelan refers to line 1127 for the view that the “returned Alcestis” is, according to Admetus' own words, the very “image of death.”

in proportion to the length at which he has declared his abiding regard.

The first sign that husband and wife will not be reconciled at the end of the play is perhaps in the couple's "exchange" (244–92) in the second episode. The exchange plays the theme of marital discord and is a vehicle for revealing Admetus' character and the couple's estrangement. From between the lines, a rather sinister and not at all noble persona emerges. This persona reveals the utter egocentricity and obtuseness of a son who can ask his parents to die for him and a husband who can watch his wife's life ebbing away so that he can live. The decrying of his wife's death as though he had nothing to do with it, his making promise after promise that will do nobody any good and that he breaks with breathtaking alacrity, his repeatedly saying and unsaying things in the same breath, and his tripping over himself in mannered and artificial tropes all highlight the shallowness of his feelings, the hollowness of his words, and the sinister quality of his selfishness and lack of self-awareness.

At various points in the speech, these sinister notes are fairly explicit. One is taken aback at Admetus' concern that his children bring him profit, contrasting it with Alcestis's deep feelings for them. As one hears Admetus declare that he will hate his mother and father because they refused to die for him (338–39), one realizes that had Alcestis refused to die for him, he would have hated her, too. His haste to replace his wife with a cold statue recalls the indifference manifested by another Greek hero, Menelaus, to his wife.<sup>36</sup> In the *Odyssey*, Homer presents Menelaus as a husband whose sole care for his wife was that his marriage to her made him Zeus' son-in-law, thus assuring him a place in the Elysian Fields. In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, produced some twenty years earlier in the same theater as the *Alcestis*, Menelaus is said to have erected statues to the abducted Helen in his palace in a futile effort to assuage his grief for her loss. In 412, Euripides will stage his tragedy *Helen*, in which he shows Menelaus as an indifferent

36. For contrasting views, see Segal 1993, 223, who regards the statue motif as part of the role of art in the play: "The *Alcestis* uses the statue-motif primarily as a rhetorical expression of love-in-absence." Similarly Burnett 1965, 240–55, calls Admetus' suggestion "positive, delicately stated, and filled with a powerful meaning" (261); cf. Burnett 1971, 36–37.

husband who did not care whether Helen or only her image (*eidolon*) was in Troy.<sup>37</sup>

The tragic potential of the couple's cross-communication is brought home by the contrasting meters they use in their exchange, as well as elsewhere in the play.<sup>38</sup> While Alcestis sings in lyrical meters, containing lagaoedic dactylic clauses or mixtures of glyconics, etc., Admetus' brief contributions, inserted in the midst of her songs, are spoken in unemotional iambic trimeter (246–47, 250–51, 258–59, 264–65).<sup>39</sup> When Admetus finally abandons his iambs after Alcestis' farewell to her children, he turns to chanting in lyric anapests (273–79). Euripides never allows him to sing. Even in his kommos after Alcestis' burial, in which he bitterly bemoans her loss, he uses the same anapestic systems, while the Chorus responds in song.

Alcestis, for her part, seems to have as little regard for her husband as he does for her. She does not acknowledge his pleading and talks at him rather than to him. Her poignant farewell is addressed only to her children, with not a word for Admetus (270–72), nor is she taken in by her husband's promises. Other than the one promise she asked for, she ignores them all and does not bother to thank him. Assuming that he cannot be trusted, she tries to make his promise not to remarry as binding as possible, first by repeating it to her children and then by entrusting her children to his right hand, in the same gesture that seals a property transfer (371–76).

Why she agreed to die for him is something of a mystery. Some critics suggest love or altruism.<sup>40</sup> It may also be argued that she simply felt she had no choice. A feeling of entrapment comes through in her statement that were she to allow Admetus to die, she would be left to rear fatherless children (287–89). While she will still be left to raise

37. See Ahl and Roisman 1996, 33–42. For comparison between Helen and Penelope, see Roisman 1985, 116–25. See also Roisman 1984, 174–76.

38. See also Barlow 1971, 57: "It is the exploitation of the different meters here and the language permitted them which is itself a way of pointing the difference in situation and emotional level between the two main characters."

39. Cf. Roisman 2000 and the section "The First Exchange between Alcestis and Admetus" in the "Discussions" on the second episode above, pp. 179–82.

40. Beye 1959, 119, points out that while Pheres alludes to the practical gains that Alcestis' death brought Admetus (not to mention himself), Alcestis never tells what gains she expected to confer.

fatherless children if she lets Admetus die in three days' time, this fact is now offset by her certainty that if she dies, her children will soon have a stepmother, a fate she wants for them even less.

### THROUGH THE GATES

Admetus accepts the strange woman after losing an agon with Heracles. This is reminiscent of the persuasion scene in the *Agamemnon*, in which that king also loses a rhetorical struggle, giving in to Clytemnestra and walking on the purple tapestries into his palace and to his death. The scene between Heracles and Admetus seems to parallel the earlier play. Clytemnestra insists that Agamemnon tread on the expensive purple carpet; Heracles insists that Admetus, and only Admetus, take the silent woman by the hand and lead her into the house. Both Agamemnon and Admetus vigorously refuse at first, then accede against their better judgment. There are grounds for arguing that the final scene of the *Alcestis* strongly hints that Admetus' entry into his home will result in his death as surely as Agamemnon's did.

An important clue is contained in the verbal and visual imagery of Admetus' passing through the gates of the house.<sup>41</sup> The best known gates in ancient Greek culture are the gates of Hades, which symbolize death. Through Heracles, Euripides suggests an equation between the gates of Admetus' palace and those of Hades. Very few heroes, like the demigod Heracles, manage to pass through the gates of Hades and come out unscathed. Heracles, however, has a history of doing this. The most famous occasions are his rescue of Theseus from the Netherworld and his twelfth labor, in which he subdues Cerberus with his bare hands (Seneca, *Phaedra* 842–49; Apollodorus, *Bib.* 2.5.12; Ep. 1.24).

The play puts considerable emphasis on Heracles' passage through the gates of Admetus' home. The servant describes his encroaching on Admetus' hospitality during the mourning period as a forced breach of the gates of the house (751–52). Heracles repeats the image after he is told about Alcestis' premature death:

41. For Alcestis' rescue movement proceeding from the east (the audience's left), the side of the rising sun, the side that symbolizes light and life, and her ultimate exit to her house in the west, which symbolizes death, see Wiles 1997, 158–60.

In spite of my strong wish I passed beyond [ὑπερβάλλω] the  
 gates  
 and drank here in the house of this hospitable man  
 while her fared miserably.

(829–31)

Heracles' use of the verb ὑπερβάλλω, which means "to go beyond the mark" or "to overshoot," emphasizes not only the intrusive nature of his entrance but also the idea that in forcing himself through the gates of Admetus' palace, he crossed a forbidden barrier, much as the gates of the Netherworld are. In Greek myth, Heracles is licensed to breach the boundary between life and death. However, once Admetus crosses the gates of his palace with Alcestis, we do not know for sure that he will come out alive. Agamemnon, the only other male character in Greek tragedy who entered the doors of his palace with his wife, did not. Nor did Clytemnestra, whom Orestes compels to enter the palace and die at the side of her lover, Aegisthus (in *Choephoroe*). Quite early in the play, Euripides draws attention to the potentially lethal nature of Admetus' entering the palace. After Alcestis' death, Admetus accompanies her corpse indoors, making the palace a house of death (cf. n. 21 above). His insistence on not reentering the palace after Alcestis' funeral (861–63, 912–13, 941) despite the Chorus' urging him to "plunge into the deep of the house" (872), and his reluctance to go in with the "prize woman," may suggest that he intuitively feels some danger.

The interior of his house is dangerous to Admetus, just as the exterior is to Alcestis. The inner space of households is usually the female domain, the only sphere where the ancient Greek female was in charge and felt autonomous.<sup>42</sup> As if to emphasize this, Euripides has Alcestis prepare for her death inside the house by sacrificing to Hestia and donning the proper garments, but die outside the house, a dramatic rarity in antiquity (cf. Beye 1959, 114). Yet Alcestis' rule of the inside of the house means that the place might become harmful to Admetus.<sup>43</sup>

42. For discussion of the inner and outer space and the sexuality involved in the myth of Alcestis and Admetus, see Rabinowitz 1993, 69–73; Luschnig 1995, 32–38.

43. For the gender-assigned spheres of activity in Athens, see also Scully 1986, 138, and bibliography.

She has reason to be unhappy with him over his broken promises, as was Clytemnestra over Agamemnon's larger betrayals. Despite Apollo's bargain with the Fates, once she is led through the gates of the palace, Alcestis, the proverbial substitute, becomes the embodiment of death.<sup>44</sup>

#### THE RULES OF MOURNING AND THE RULES OF HOSPITALITY

In hosting Heracles during the official thirty-day mourning period, Admetus flagrantly violates both the code of mourning and his promise to Alcestis to forswear revelry. He not only fails to observe the restrictions of mourning for a lifetime, as he promised, but he also fails to observe them for the single month required by custom and decency. As the Servant complains, Admetus compels him to entertain Heracles with music and drink, as though Alcestis has not died, and to withhold the fact of her death from his guest so that the latter can enjoy himself without hindrance. The Servant's anger is a measure of the gross impropriety of Admetus' behavior. The impropriety is compounded by the egotism of the action; Admetus lets it be known that he hosts Heracles so as to ensure himself reciprocal treatment when he travels through the Argolid as well as to ensure for his house a hospitable name (553–60). The question of the happy ending is tied up with Heracles' caution to Admetus to show respect to strangers (εὐσέβει περὶ ξένου, 1148). This caution, offered just before Admetus leads Alcestis offstage, suggests that Heracles still resents Admetus for having allowed him to carouse during the mourning period.

Ordinarily, hospitality is commendable in Greek culture and should be rewarded, but this is not quite what happens in the *Alcestis*. Apollo rewards Admetus for hosting him by getting the Fates to postpone his death, but this guerdon causes Admetus a multitude of troubles. He quarrels with his parents, loses his wife, and seems to reach the point of wishing he were dead.<sup>45</sup> This reversal of expectations makes one

44. Rabinowitz 1993, 83: "Replacements proliferate. Alcestis was first a substitute for Admetos, taking his place with death and enabling him to live; then he made her a replacement for his parents, the statute has now replaced her." For Alcestis' uncanniness upon her return, see 84–85.

45. This recompense is consistent with Elferink's suggestion that Apollo hates Admetus (1982, 47).

wonder whether Heracles' reward will not similarly bear a sting. For all ostensible purposes, Admetus is repaid with grief for his fitting hospitality to Apollo but with good for improperly hosting Heracles.<sup>46</sup> Alcestis is restored to life, which would not have happened had he refused Heracles entry during his mourning, and nothing bad happens to him before the curtain falls. In Euripides' dramas, however, what seems to be a boon is rarely propitious (cf. Roisman 1984, 166–68, 186–88). One has only to recall his *Orestes*. Orestes intends to murder Hermione but becomes her bridegroom at the end of the play; how happy will this couple be? Heracles' displeasure with Admetus' hospitality may thus hint that all will not end well for Admetus either.

## THE HAPPY ENDING?

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Yes, Death demands a body, but he has been beaten and the body stolen. In a story that defies logic, must we look for a logical ending? No one can die for another any more than she can eat or sleep for him.

Admetus thought the world owed him living, but he finds he was mistaken. He is flawed, but all his foibles are human. The play resurrects him as well as his wife. He will be a better man because he will not expect so much. Alcestis also will be a better woman because she will not give so much.

Alcestis' heroism, which assured her immortal fame, is undone in the action that restores her to life. The play by this time, however, has made her act of heroism far from unambiguously beneficial, so that whatever loss there is in her status of heroine or blessed *δαίμων* (1003) is more than compensated for in her restoration to the life which she prized. One conclusion is that in truth, the *Monostichoi* of Menander notwithstanding, it is better to marry a wife than to bury one. Alcestis is a better woman living than dead.

46. Lloyd's view (1985, 127), that Admetus' hospitality to Heracles is a prerequisite for the happy reunion with Alcestis implies that it had an intentional cast. If Admetus did offer his hospitality in order to get his wife back, more attention should be given to Elferink's view (1982, 44–45), of Thessalian hospitality. According to Elferink, the Thessalians were known for their hospitality, but only for the kind of hospitality that pays.

What will their lives be like? Alcestis will see her children grow up and will attend the parties of the Thessalians. She will oversee the household and make sure the floor is swept. Admetus, if he lives, will go on entertaining friends, enjoying music, and riding his horses across his estates. From time to time, perhaps, he will feel grateful to his parents, his friend, and his wife. The play makes this interpretation possible by allowing Alcestis and Admetus to tell us what they have lost.

Death is there, hovering in the wings, as it always is, but it will come when it comes. In the meantime is the interlude that is life. Euripides has offered us a humane retelling of a strange and cruel story.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AClass</i>	<i>Acta Classica</i>
<i>AJA</i>	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>AJP</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>ArchN</i>	<i>Archaeological News</i>
<i>CA</i>	<i>Classical Antiquity</i>
<i>CP</i>	<i>Classical Philology</i>
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>CR</i>	<i>Classical Review</i>
<i>G&amp;R</i>	<i>Greece and Rome</i>
<i>GRBS</i>	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i>
<i>HSCP</i>	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
<i>ICS</i>	<i>Illinois Classical Studies</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>NECJ</i>	<i>New England Classical Journal</i>
<i>RFIC</i>	<i>Revista di Filologia e di Istruzione Classica</i>
<i>TAPA</i>	<i>Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association</i>

For a fuller bibliography that will be updated from time to time see:

[http://www.class.uidaho.edu/luschnig/Alcestis/alcestis\\_bibliography.htm](http://www.class.uidaho.edu/luschnig/Alcestis/alcestis_bibliography.htm)

\* Especially recommended (for both content and availability) for undergraduate reading.

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## USEFUL LINKS

- The Perseus Project*: a source for Greek texts, translations, lexica, reference grammars, archaeological sites, maps, art, and much more. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/>
- Diotima*: a source for the study of women in antiquity. <http://www.stoa.org/diotima/>
- Didaskalia*: ancient theater and the production of Greek plays. <http://didaskalia.net>
- All sites cited 1 July 2002.

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## Vocabulary

Words in bold are used five or more times in the *Alcestis*. For words that occur only once in the play, the line number is given. Principal parts that are used in the text are provided in the entries for irregular verbs. This word list is based on Marianne McDonald's Concordance (1977) and M. A. Bayfield's school edition (1890).

**ἀ** *ah!* (usually doubled)

ἀβίωτος, -ον *unlivable, not worth living* (242)

ἀγαθός, -ή, -όν *good, noble*

ἄγαλμα, -ματος, τό *honor, gift for the dead or the gods* (including a poem or a statue) (613)

ἄγαμαι *wonder, admire, be delighted* (603)

ἄγαμος, -ον *unmarried*

**ἄγαν** *very much, too much, too*

ἀγγέλλω, ἀγγελῶ *announce, be a messenger of* (209)

ἀγκάλη, -ης, ἡ *arm*

ἀγνίζω *make pure, consecrate* (76)

ἄγρα, -ας, ἡ *prey* (850)

**ἄγω**, ἄξω *bring, lead*

**ἀγών**, ἀγῶνος, ὁ *contest, struggle, race* (the *debate scene* in a tragedy)

ἀγωνίζομαι *contest, struggle, contend, engage in a struggle* (fr. ἀγών) (648)

ἄδακρυς, -υ *tearless, without tears* (1047)

ἀδελφή, -ῆς, ἡ *sister* (733)

Ἅιδης, -ου, ὁ *Hades, death*

ἀδικέω, -ήσω, ἠδίκησα, ἠδίκηκα *do wrong (to), commit injustice*

Ἀδμήτειος, -α, -ον *of/belonging to Admetus* (1)

Ἄδμητος, -ου, ὁ *Admetus*

ἀδόκητος, -ον *unexpected* (1162)

ἀεὶ *forever, always*

αἰρώ *raise* (450)

ἀέλπτως *unexpectedly*

ἄζομαι *shrink from, fear* (326)

Ἀθῆναι (Ἀθῶναι), -ῶν, αἱ *Athens, Attica* (452)

ἀθλητής, -οῦ, ὁ *athlete, contestant* (1027)

ἄθλιος, -α, -ον *unhappy*

ἀθρέω *look, gaze upon* (1105)

αἶ, αἰαἶ *a cry of distress, alas*

αἶα, -ας, ἡ *land, earth* (113)

αἶγμα, -ματος, τό *the cry "αἰαἶ"* (873)

Αἰγαῖος, -α, -ον *Aegean* (Αἰγαῖος πόντος *the Aegean Sea*, 595)

Αἰγαίον, -ῶνος, ὁ *the Aegean Sea* (595 in the Murray/Dale text)

αἰδέομαι *be ashamed*

αἰδόφρων, -ον *reverent* (659)

αἰδώς, -οῦς, ἡ *regard, shame, respect*

αἰθήρ, -έρος, ἡ *air, climate* (594)

αἶμα, -ματος, τό *blood*

αἱματηρός, -ά, -όν *bloody* (851)

αἰμόρραντος, -ον *sprinkled with blood* (134)

αἰνέω, αἰνέσω, ἤνεσα *praise, go along with, agree to*

αἶπος, -ους, τό *height* πρὸς αἶπος *uphill* (500)

αἰρέω, *αορ. εἶλον, perf. mid./pass. ἦρημαι* *take, seize, destroy; mid. choose*

αἰσθάνομαι, *αορ. ἦσθόμην* *perceive, feel*

αἰσσω, *αορ. ἦξα* *dart, shoot up* (963)

αἰσχρός, -ά, -όν *shameful, ugly*

αἰσχρῶς *shamefully*

αἰτέω, αἰτήσω *pray, beg*

αἴτιος, -α, -ον *causing, to blame, responsible* (3)

αἶων, -ωνος, ὁ *life, lifetime*

Ἄκαστος *Acastus, Alcestis' brother* (732)

- ἄκλαιτος [ἄκλαιστος], -ον *tearless, not weeping* (173)  
 ἀκμή, -ῆς, ἡ *prime, peak, flower* (316)  
 ἄκοιτις, -ιος, ἡ (acc. ἄκοιτιν) *wife*  
 ἄκος, -ους, τό *cure, remedy* (135)  
**ἀκούω**, ἀκούσομαι, ἤκουσα *hear*  
 ἀκραιφνής, -ές *pure, untouched* (1052)  
 ἀκτή, -ῆς, ἡ (ἀκτά, -ᾶς, ἡ in lyric) *shore, headland, promontory* (595)  
 ἀκτίς, -ῖνος, ἡ *ray* (208)  
 ἀλγέω *feel pain* (708)  
**ἄλγος**, -ους, τό *pain, grief*  
 ἀλγύνω *cause pain to, grieve* (521)  
 ἀληθής, -ές *true*  
 ἀληθῶς *truly*  
 ἀλίμενος, -ον *harborless* (596)  
**ἄλις** (adv.) *enough, with moderation*  
 ἀλίσκομαι (as if passive of αἰρέω) *be caught, be grasped* (786)  
**Ἄλκηστις**, -ιδος, ἡ (acc. Ἄλκηστιν) *Alcestis/Alkestis*  
 Ἄλκμήνη, -ης, ἡ *Alcmene, mother of Heracles*  
**ἀλλά** *but*  
 ἀλλάσσω, aor. ἠλλαξα *give in return, exchange* (661)  
**ἄλλος**, -η, -ον *another, other*  
 ἄλλοτε *at another time* (191)  
 ἄλλως *besides, otherwise*  
 ἄλοχος, -ου, ἡ *wife*  
 ἄλυπος, -ον *without pain (free from pain or without causing pain)* (474)  
 ἄλυρος, -ον *unaccompanied by the lyre* (447)  
**ἄμαρτάνω**, ἄμαρτήσομαι, ἤμαρτον, ἡμάρτηκα (+ gen.) *err, miss the mark, fail; lose*  
 ἀμείβω, aor. ἤμειψα *exchange (give or take in exchange), pass through*  
 ἀμείνων, ἄμεινον (comp. of ἀγαθός) *better* (433)  
 ἀμήχανος, -ον *impossible* (202)  
 Ἄμμωνιάς, -άδος *of Ammon* (116)  
 ἀμός = ἐμός and ἡμέτερος  
 ἄμουσος, -ον *without the Muses, unmusical, discordant* (760)  
 ἀμπλακίσκω, aor. ἤμπλακον (ἤπλακον) *lose*  
 ἀμφί (+ gen., dat., acc.) *around, near, about*  
 ἀμφιβαίνω *go around, surround* (758)

- ἀμφιβάλλω *throw around, put on* (217)  
 ἀμφίτολος, -ου, ἢ *servant, attendant* (89)  
 ἀμφοτέρως, -α, -ον *both* (920)  
 ἄν = ἕάν *if*  
 ἄν *conditional particle*  
 ἄνα (adv.) *up!* (277)  
 ἀναβάλλω *postpone* (526)  
 ἀναγκάζω, aor. ἠνάγκασα *compel, put ἀνάγκη upon* (7)  
 ἀναγκαῖος, -α, -ον *constrained by force, indispensable, connected by blood* (533)  
 ἀνάγκη, -ης, ἢ *necessity ἀνάγκη [ἔστί] + infinitive: it is necessary*  
 ἀνάγω (-άξω) *bring up, bring back (from the dead)* (985)  
 ἀναιδεια, -ας, ἢ *shamelessness* (727)  
 ἀναιδής, -ές *shameless* (728)  
 ἀναιδῶς *shamelessly* (694)  
 ἀναμνήσκω *remind* (1045)  
**ἄναξ**, ἄνακτος, ὁ *king, lord*  
 ἀναπετάννυμι, aor. ἀνεπέτασα *fling open* (597)  
 ἄναυδος, -ον *without speaking, speechless* (1143)  
 ἀνδάνω *please, gratify* (1108)  
 ἀνέλπιστος, -ον *unexpected, unhopd for* (1123)  
 ἄνευ (+ gen.) *without* (486)  
 ἀνέχω, ἀνέξω, ἀνέσχον *hold up; mid. hold up what is one's own, hold oneself up, bear up*  
 ἀνήλιος, -ον *sunless, where the sun does not shine (used of Hades)*  
**ἀνὴρ**, ἀνδρός, ὁ *husband, man*  
 ἀνίκα = ἠνίκα *when*  
 ἀνίστημι, aor. ἀνέστησα, ἀνέστην *cause to stand up, raise up (from death or sleep)*  
 ἀνόνητος, -ον *without profit, in vain*  
 ἀνορθόω, aor. ἀνώρθωσα *set upright again, restore (to health)* (1138)  
 ἀντερῶ fut. (no pres.) *will deny*  
 ἀντέχω *hold against, hold out, endure* (337)  
 ἀντηχέω, aor. ἀντήχησα *sing in response* (423)  
**ἀντί** (+ gen.) *instead of, at the price of*  
 ἀντιάζω *meet face to face, approach as a suppliant, entreat* (400)  
 ἀντιδίδωμι, aor. ἀντέδωκα (ἀντέδομεν) *give in return, give instead of*  
 ἀντίπαλος, -ον *wrestling against, balanced against, corresponding to* (922)

ἀντιτέμνω, aor. ἀντέτεμον *cut against* (of herbs or drugs as antidotes)  
(971)

ἄντομαι *beseech, beg, implore* (1098)

ἄνυδρος, -ον *waterless* (115)

ἄνω *up*

ἄνωγα (perf. with pres. meaning) imper. ἄνωγθι *bid, ask* (1044)

ἄξενος, -ον *inhospitable* (556)

ἄξιόθρηνος, -ον *worthy of lamentation* (904)

ἄξιος, -α, -ον *worthy, deserved* ἄξιόν ἐστι *it is worthwhile*

ἄξιόω, aor. ἠξίωσα *think worthy, expect*

ἰοιδός, -οῦ, ὁ *singer* (454)

ἀπάγω, fut. ἀπάξω *lead away*

ἄπαις, gen. ἄπαιδος (adj.) *childless*

ἀπαντλέω *bail out the bilgewater, draw off, lighten* (354)

ἄπας (see πᾶς) *all*

ἄπειμι (εἶμι) *go away, depart*

ἀπεῖπον *denounce*

ἀπειρόκακος, -ον *inexperienced in evil or misfortune* (927)

ἄπειρος, -ον *unacquainted with*

ἀπελαύνω, aor. ἀπήλασα *drive away*

ἀπέρχομαι, aor. ἀπήλθον *go away*

ἀπεχθάνομαι, fut. ἀπεχθήσομαι (+ dat.) *be hated (by)*

ἀπιστέω *distrust, mistrust* (1130)

ἀπό (+ gen.) *away from*

ἀποβαίνω, aor. ἀπέβην *go away, result from, turn out* (1163)

ἀποιμώζω, fut. ἀποιμώξομαι *lament, cry* “οἶμοι”

ἄποινα, τά *punishment* (7)

ἀπόλλυμι, 1 aor. ἀπόλεσα; 2 aor. mid. ἀπολόμην *destroy*; mid. *die, perish*

Ἄπόλλων, -ωνος, ὁ *Apollo* (570)

ἀπομιμνήσκω *remind*; mid. *remember* (299)

ἀποπαύω *stop* (225)

ἀποσπάω *pull away from* (287)

ἀποστερέω *deprive*

ἀποσυλάω *rob* (870)

ἀποσχίζω *cut off* (172)

ἀπότομος, -ον *cutoff, abrupt*

ἄπτω, ἄψω, ἦψα *fasten to*; mid. *grasp, undertake, touch upon*

ἀπωθέω *thrust off*

**ἄρα** *then, therefore*

ἄρα question particle

ἄράομαι (+ dat.) *curse* (714)

Ἄργος, -ους, τό *Argos* (560)

ἀργυρώνητος, -ον *bought with money* (676)

ἄρδην *lifted up, raised high* (608)

Ἄρης, Ἄρεος, ὁ *Ares*

**ἄριστος**, -η, -ον *best*

ἀρκέω, αογ. ἤρκεσα *be enough*

ἄρμα, -ατος, τό *chariot* (483)

ἀρνέομαι *deny* (1158)

ἄρνευμαι *win, gain* (55)

ἄροτος, -ου, ὁ *field, plowland* (590)

ἄρσην, -εν *male* (311)

ἀρταμέω *tear to pieces, butcher* (494)

ἄρτι/ἄρτίως *just now*

ἀρτιθανής, -ές *just dead* (600)

ἀρχή, -ῆς, ἡ *beginning* (111)

ἄρχω (+ gen.) *begin, rule over*

ἄσημος, -ον *without mark, obscure* (522)

ἀσκέω, αογ. ἤσκησα *work, form by art, dress up* (161)

Ἄσκληπιάδης, -ου, ὁ *son of Asclepius, physician* (970)

Ἄσκληπιός, -οῦ, ὁ *Asclepius* (4)

ἀσπάζομαι *greet, bid farewell* (191)

ἄσπονδος, -ον *without libation, receiving no libations* (424)

ἀστένακτος, -ον *without a sigh, without groaning* (173)

ἄστός, -οῦ, ὁ *citizen* (1154)

ἄστν, ἄστεως, τό *city, town*

ἄτεκνος, -ον *childless*

ἄτη, -ης, ἡ *ruin, delusion* (91)

ἀτίζω *slight, dishonor* (1037)

ἀτιμάζω, fut. ἀτιμάσω *bring dishonor on, disenfranchise*

ἄν *again*

ἀλύγῃ, -ῆς, ἡ *beam of sunlight, ray*

αὐδάω *say, utter* (106)

**ἄθις** *again, after this*

- αὐλή, -ῆς, ἡ *hall* (260)  
 αὐλός, -οῦ, ὁ *pipe, flute* (a double pipered instrument like an *oboe*)  
 αὔριον *tomorrow*  
 αὐτίκα *at once, immediately* (322)  
 αὐτός, -ή, -ό *-self; with article: same; in oblique cases: him, her, it etc.*  
 αὐτοῦ *there* (488)  
 αὐτοῦ, αὐτῆς (ἑαυτοῦ, ἑαυτῆς) (*of*) *himself, herself*  
 αὐχέω *boast, claim*  
 αὐχὴν, -ένος, ὁ *neck* (429)  
 αὐχμηρός, -ά, -ού *dry, rough, squalid* (947)  
 ἀφαγνίζω *consecrate, remove oneself from consecration* (1146)  
 ἀφαιρέω, αογ. ἀφείλον *take away*  
 ἀφανής, -ές *unclear* (785)  
 ἀφήμι *let go, dismiss*  
 ἀφικνέομαι, αογ. ἀφικόμην, perf. ἀφίγμαι *arrive*  
 ἄφνω *suddenly* (420)  
 ἀφορίζω *limit, bound* (31)  
 ἄφρων, -ον *senseless, foolish* (728)  
 ἄφυκτος, -ον *inescapable* (984)  
 Ἄχερόντιος, -α, -ον *of Acheron* (the river of sorrow in the Netherworld)  
 (443)  
 ἄχθομαι *be weighed down, be in distress, be grieved* (815)  
 ἄχθος, -ους, τό *burden* (884)  
 ἀψυχία, -ας, ἡ *cowardice*  
 ἄωρος, -ον *untimely* (168)
- βαίνω**, βήσομαι, ἔβην, βέβηκα *step, go*  
 βαλιός, -ά, -όν *spotted* (579)  
 βάλλω, βαλῶ, ἔβαλον *throw, fling* (680)  
 βάρβιτος, -ου, ἡ/ὁ *lyre, stringed instrument* (345)  
 βάρος, -ους, τό *burden, weight*  
 βαρυδαίμων, -ον *oppressed by fate* (865)  
 βαρύνω *weigh down*  
 βαρύς, βαρεῖα, βαρὺ *heavy*  
 βασίλεια (βασίλεια), -ας, ἡ *queen* (81)  
 βασιλεύς, -εως, ὁ *king*  
 βαστάζω *carry, support*

- βελτίων, -ον *better* (1157)  
 βία, -ας, ἡ *force*  
 βιάζω *constrain*; mid. *bring force upon*  
 βίος, -ου, ὁ *life*  
 βιοτεύω *live* (243)  
 βίωτος, -ου, ὁ *life*  
 βιώω, fut. βιώσομαι *live* (784)  
 Βίστονες *the Bistones*, a people of Thrace  
 βιώσιμος, -ον *for living* (650)  
 βλέπω, aor. ἔβλεψα *look, see, be alive*  
 βλέφαρον, -ου, τό *eyelid, eye*  
 βοάω *cry out* (234)  
 Βοιβία (unique form in the fem., used with λίμνη) *of Boibia* (590)  
 βόσκημα, -ατος, τό *flock* (576)  
 βούθυτος, -ον *of sacrificed cattle* (1156)  
 βούλομαι *wish*  
 βουφορβέω *be a herdsman* (8)  
 βουφόρβια *a herd of cattle* (1031)  
 βραχύς, -εῖα, -ύ *short* (649)  
 βρέτας, -εος, τό *image* (974)  
 βροτός, -οῦ, ὁ *mortal, human being*  
 βρόχος, -ου, ὁ *noose* (229)  
 βωμός, -οῦ, ὁ *altar*
- γαῖα, -ας, ἡ *earth, land*  
 γαμέω, aor. ἔγημα *marry*  
 γάμος, -ου, ὁ *marriage*  
 γάρ *for, yes*  
 γε *at least, yes*  
 γείνομαι *give birth, bear, father*  
 γέλως, -ωτος, ὁ *laughter* (804)  
 γενναῖος, -α, -ον *high-born, noble, true to one's birth*  
 γένος, -ους, τό *birth, kinship* (904)  
 γεραιός, -ά, -όν *elderly, old*  
 γέρας, -αος, τό *prize of honor* (55)  
 γέρων, -οντος, ὁ *old man; as adj. elderly*  
 γεύομαι *taste* (1069)

γῆ, γῆς, ἡ *earth, land*

γηραιός, -α, -ον *elderly, old*

**γῆρας**, -αος, τό *old age*

γηράσκω *grow old* (736)

γηροβοσκέω *tend an elderly person* (663)

γηροτρόφος, -ον *tending the elderly* (668)

γῆρυς, -υος, ἡ *voice* (970)

**γίγνομαι**, γενήσομαι, ἐγενόμην, γέγονα (ptc. γεγώς), γεγένημαι *come into being, become, prove to be*

γιγνώσκω, perf. ἔγνωκα *know*

γλυκύς, -εῖα, -ύ *sweet* (693)

γλῶσσα, -ης, ἡ *tongue* (357)

γνάθος, ου, ἡ *jaw*

γησιώς *genuinely, legitimately* (678)

γνωρίζω *make known, come to know* (564)

γονεύς, -έως, ὁ *parent* (714)

γόνος, -ου, ὁ *offspring, child*

γόνυ, γόνατος, τό (dat. pl. γούνασι) *knee* (947)

γόος, -ου, ὁ *wailing, sound of grief*

Γοργώ, Γοργόνος, ἡ *Gorgon* (1118)

γοῦν *at least* (694)

γραῦς *old woman* (56)

γῆρας, -ου, ὁ *measure of land for plowing, field*

γυναικοπληθής, -ές *full of women* (952)

**γυνή**, γυναικός, ἡ *woman, wife*

δαίμωνιος, -α, -ον *belonging to the δαίμονες, miraculous; τὰ δαιμόνια visitations from the gods* (1159)

**δαίμων**, -ονος, ὁ/ἡ *spirit, fortune*

δάκνω, aor. pass. ἐδήχθην *bite, sting* (1100)

δάκρυ, -υος, τό *tear* (185)

δακρυρροέω *weep, shed tears*

δακρύω *weep* (176)

δαμάζω *subdue, tame*

**δάμαρ**, δάμαρτος, ἡ *wife*

δάπεδον, -ου, τό *plain, flatland* (591)

δαφοινός, -όν *tawny, blood-reeking* (581)

**δέ** *and, but*

**δεῖ**, ptc. δέον *it is necessary*

δείκνυμι, aor. ἔδειξα *show*

δείλαιος, -α, -ον *sorry, wretched* (263)

δεινός, -ή, -όν *terrible* (816)

δεῖπνον, -ου, τό *dinner, meal* (749)

δέμας, τό (only nom. and acc.) *body, form*

δέμνιον, -ου, τό *bed*

δεξιός, -α, -ον *right* (χείρ) δεξιὰ *right hand*

δέρη, -ης, ἡ *neck* (229)

δέρκομαι, perf. δέδορκα *see* (123)

δεσμός, -οῦ, ὁ *bond, chain* (984)

δεσπόζω, aor. ἐδέσποσα (+ gen.) *master* (486)

δέσποινα, -ης, ἡ *mistress, lady of the house*

**δεσπότης**, -οῦ, ὁ *master*

δεσπότις, -ιδος, ἡ *mistress* (948)

δεῦρο *here, to this place*

δεύτερος, -α, -ον *second* (43)

δέυω *soak, wet* (184)

**δέχομαι**, δεξομαι, ἐδεξάμην *accept, receive*

δέω (see δεῖ)

**δή** *indeed*

δῆλος, -η, -ον *plain, clear*

Δημήτηρ, -τρος, ἡ *Demeter* (358)

δημότης, -ου, ὁ *townsman* (1057)

**δῆτα** *then*

**διά** (+ gen) *through; (+ acc.) through, on account of*

διαβαίνω *go over, go across* (902)

διάγω *pass through, lead* (940)

διάδοχος, -ου, ὁ *successor* (655)

διακναίω *wear away* (109)

διακωλέω *prevent* (33)

διαλλάσσω *give in exchange* (14)

διαμάχομαι *fight against* (694)

διαπρέπω (+ gen. of comparison) *surpass* (642)

διαρπάζω *tear apart* (657)

διαφθείρω *ruin* (316)

- διδακτός, -όν *be taught* (786)  
**δίδωμι**, δώσω, ἔδωκα (ἔδομεν) *give*  
 διεξέρχομαι *go through* (15)  
 δίκαιος, -α, -ον *just*  
 δίκη, -ης, ἡ *justice, penalty*  
 δίκωπος, -ον *two-oared*  
 δίνη, -ης, ἡ *swirl, eddy* (245)  
 διόβολος, -ον *hurled by Zeus* (128)  
 Διομήδης, -ους, ὁ *Diomedes* (483)  
 Δίος, -α, -ον *of Zeus* (5)  
 διπλοῦς, -ῆ, -οῦν *double, twofold*  
 δισσός, -ή, -όν *double, twofold* (760)  
 δίψιος, -α, -ον *thirsty, parched* (560)  
**δοκέω**, δόξω, ἔδοξα *think, seem* (aor. pass. ptc. δοκηθέντα *what is expected*)  
 δόλιος, -α, -ον *deceitful* (33)  
 δολόω, aor. ἐδόλωσα *deceive, trick* (12)  
**δόμος**, -ου, ὁ *home, house*  
 δόσις, -εως, ἡ *gift* (1071)  
 δούλιος, -α, -ον *of a slave* (638)  
 δουπέω *sound* (with a heavy sound), *thud* (104)  
 δόχμιος, -α, -ον *sloping, aslant*  
**δράω**, δράσω, ἔδρασα *do*  
 δρομαῖος, -α, -ον *running* (245)  
 δύναμαι, δυνήσομαι *be able, can*  
 δύναμις, -εως, ἡ *power, ability*  
 δύο (gen. and dat. δυοῖν) *two*  
 δυσδαίμων, -ον *unfortunate, ill-starred* (258)  
 δυσκλεής, -ές *infamous, of ill repute, disgraced* (725)  
 δυσπάλαιστος, -ον *hard to wrestle with* (889)  
 δύστηνος, -ον (δύστανος) *unhappy* (117)  
 δυστυχέω *be unfortunate* (1016)  
 δυστυχής, -ές *unhappy, unfortunate* (685)  
 δύσφορος, -ον *hard to endure* (617)  
 δυσχείμερος, -ον *stormy, wintry* (67)  
 δώδεκα *twelve* (431)  
**δῶμα**, δώματος, τό *house*  
 δῶρον, -ου, τό *gift* (376)

ἔ a cry of distress: *ah, alas*

ἔάν (ἦν) (used in future less vivid and present general conditions) *if*

ἔάνπερ *if indeed* (846)

ἑαυτοῦ, ἑαυτῆς (αὐτοῦ, αὐτῆς) (*of*) *himself, herself*

ἔάω aor. εἶασα (aor. imper. ἔασον) *permit, let go*

ἐγγελάω *laugh at* (724)

ἐγγύς *near*

ἔγχος, -ους, τό *sword* (76)

ἐγώ, ἐμοῦ (μου), ἐμοί (μοι), ἐμέ (με) *I, my, me*

ἔδρα, -ας, ἡ *seat, place, dwelling*

ἐθέλω, aor. ἠθέλησα *wish, be willing*

**εἰ** *if*

εἰδέναι (fr. οἶδα) *know*

εἶδος, -ους, τό *form, appearance* (333)

εἶδον (fr. ὀράω) *I saw*

εἶεν *very well, okay* (299)

εἴθε (introduces a wish) *if only!*

εἰκάζω *make like, fabricate* (349)

εἶμι 2 imper. ἴθι, 3 imper. ἴτω (as future of ἔρχομαι) *go*

εἰμί, ἔσομαι *be*

εἴπερ *if in fact*

εἶπον/εἶπας *said*

εἴργω *keep off, restrain*

εἰς/ές (+ acc.) *into, to, toward, against*

εἷς, μία, ἓν *one*

εἰσάγω *lead in*

εἰσακούω *hear, listen to, give ear to* (371)

εἰσβαίνω *go in or on; aor. put into, cause to go in* (1055)

εἰσέρχομαι *go into*

εἴσοδος, -ου, ἡ *entrance* (941)

εἰσοράω, aor. εἰσεῖδον *look upon*

εἰσπίπτω, aor. εἰσέπεσον *fall upon, throw oneself upon* (175)

εἴσω *inside, within*

εἴτα *after that, next, then*

εἴτε *whether* εἴτε . . . εἴτε *whether . . . or*

ἐκ (έξ) (+ gen.) *from, out of, by*

ἕκαστος, -η, -ον *each, everyone* (194)

- ἐκβαίνω *go off* (1001)  
 ἔκδικος, -ον *unfair, unjust* (714)  
 ἐκδίκως *lawlessly, unfairly* (41)  
 ἐκεῖ *there* (744)  
 ἐκεῖνος, -η, -ο *that, he, she, it*  
 ἐκεῖσε *there, to that place* (363)  
 ἐκλύω *release* (36)  
 ἐκτίμπλημι, aor. inf. ἐκπλήσσει *complete* (169)  
 ἐκτίπτω *throw oneself out of, jump up from* (186)  
 ἐκπληρώω *complete* (431)  
 ἐκπλήσσω *amaze, strike with astonishment or desire or love* (1125)  
 ἐκποδών *out of the way* (634)  
 ἐκπράσσω *bring about, do* (298)  
 ἐκστέφω *wreathe, deck with garlands* (171)  
 ἐκτείνω, aor. ἐξέτεινα, fut. pass. ἐκταθήσομαι *stretch out, lay out*  
 ἐκφέρω *carry out* (for burial); mid. (+ πρός) *bear toward, tend to*  
 ἐκφεύγω *escape*  
 ἐκφορά, -ᾶς, ἡ *burial, the carrying out of the body* (422)  
 ἐκφύω, perf. ἐκπέφυκα *generate, intrans. be born of* (325)  
 ἐκών, ἐκούσα *willing, willingly* (389)  
 ἐλάτη, -ης, ἡ *pine, boat made of pine*  
 ἐλαύνω, fut. ἐλώ *drive, harass*  
 ἔλεγχος, -ους, τό *test* (640)  
 ἐλέγχω *question, test, reproach*  
 ἐλεύθερος, -α, -ον *free*  
 ἐλευθέρως *freely* (1008)  
 ἐλκόω, aor. ἤλκωσα *wound* (878)  
 Ἑλλάς, -άδος, ἡ *Hellas, Greece* (859)  
 Ἑλληνικός, -ή, -όν *Hellenic, Greek* (684)  
 ἐλπίς, -ίδος, ἡ *hope, expectation*  
 ἐμβαίνω *step on*  
 ἐμβάλλω *put upon, put in, strike with*  
 ἔμολον (aor. of βλώσκω) *went, came*  
 ἐμός, -ή, όν *my, mine*  
 ἔμπαρ *nevertheless* (906)  
 ἐμπίπτω, aor. ptc. ἐμπεσόν *fall into* (798)  
 ἐμπνέω *breathe* (205)

- ἔμπορος, -ου, ὁ traveler (999)  
 ἔμψυχος, -ον *alive* (139)  
 ἐν (εἰν) (+ dat.) *in, on, among*  
 ἐναισίμως *properly, becomingly* (1077)  
 ἐναντιόομαι *oppose, contradict* (152)  
 ἐνδεής, -ές (+ gen.) *lacking, in need of* (632)  
 ἐνδείκνυμι *show* (154)  
 ἐνδίκως *justly* (647)  
 ἔνδον *inside* (944)  
 ἐνδύω *put on* (631)  
 ἔνειμι *be in* (603)  
 ἔνερθεν *from below* (985)  
 ἔνεροι *those below* (30)  
 ἔνθα *where, there* (177)  
 ἐνθάδε *here* (535)  
 ἐννέπω *tell, speak, bid* (1154)  
 ἐνοικέω *live in* (1051)  
 ἐνταῦθα *there, then* (176)  
 ἐντίθημι *put in* (854)  
 ἐντυγχάνω *come upon, fall in with* (1032)  
 ἐξάγω *lead on, lead out* (1080)  
 ἐξαιρέω, aor. ἐξείλον *take away*  
 ἐξαίρω *lift up (out of oneself)* (346)  
 ἐξαμαρτάνω *do wrong*  
 ἐξανέχομαι *bear up, endure* (952)  
 ἐξαρτάω *cling to* (189)  
 ἔξειμι *come out*  
 ἐξελαύνω *drive out* (944)  
 ἐξεπίσταμαι *know thoroughly*  
 ἐξέρχομαι *come out* (640)  
 ἔξεστι *it is possible* (887)  
 ἐξετάζω *examine well, prove (by examination)* (1011)  
 ἐξευρίσκω *discover, find* (221)  
 ἔξοδος, -ου, ἡ *going out, exit* (943)  
 ἔξω (+ gen.) *out of* (508)  
 ἔξωθεν *outside* (950)  
 ἐξώπιος *out of sight* (546)

- ἔοικα *be like, seem* (1006)  
 ἐπαινέω, αογ. ἐπήνεσα *praise*  
 ἐπαίρω *raise, lift up* (250)  
 ἐπάνωθε *above, from above* (463)  
 ἐπεὶ *when, since*  
 ἐπείγω *hurry*  
 ἔπειμι *come, approach, come on*  
 ἔπειτα *then, after that*  
 ἐπεσφρέω *let in onto* (1056)  
 ἐπί (+ gen.) *upon, over; (+ dat.) in, on, for, over, on the condition of, depending on; (+ acc.) to, against*  
 ἐπιγαμέω *marry in addition* (305)  
 ἐπιθυμέω *set one's heart upon, desire* (867)  
 ἐπισκήπτω *tell, command* (365)  
 ἐπίσταμαι *understand, know*  
 ἐπιστρέφω *turn back* (187)  
 ἔπομαι, impf. εἰλόμην *follow*  
 ἔπος, -ους, τό *word* (273)  
 ἐπτάτονος, -ον *seven-toned, having seven strings* (446)  
 ἔραμαι (+ gen.) *love, desire*  
 ἐράω (+ gen.) *love*  
 ἔργον, -ου, τό *deed, work, function*  
 ἐρημία, -ας, ἡ *desolation* (944)  
 ἔρημος, (-η), -ον *deserted, unattended*  
 Ἑρμῆς, -ου, ὁ *Hermes* (743)  
 ἔρρω *go (to hell)* (734)  
 ἔρχομαι, αογ. ἦλθον *come, go*  
 ἐρῶ *will say*  
 ἔρως, -ωτος, ὁ *love, desire* (1080)  
 ἐς = εἰς (+ acc.) *into, to, toward, against*  
 ἐσάγω = εἰσάγω  
 ἐσβαίνω = εἰσβαίνω  
 ἐσθής, -ῆτος, ἡ *clothing*  
 ἐσθλός, -ή, -όν *noble, good*  
 ἔστε *until*  
 ἔστια, -ας, ἡ *hearth; the goddess Hestia*  
 ἐστιάω *entertain (guests in one's home)* (765)

ἑσχάρα, -ας, ἡ *hearth, altar* (119)

ἔσω = εἴσω *inside*

ἑταῖρος, -ου, ὁ *companion* (776)

ἕτερος, -α, -ον *other, different*

ἐτήσιος, -ον *for a year* (336)

ἐτητύμως *truly* (1124)

ἔτι *still, yet*

ἐτοιμάζω *get ready, prepare* (364)

ἔτοιμος, -η, -ον *ready* (149)

εὖ *well*

εὐγενής, -ές *noble, well-born*

εὐδαιμονέω *be happy* (1137)

εὐδαίμων, -ον *happy, fortunate*

εὐειδής, -ές *of fine appearance* (174)

εὐεργετέω *do good to* (860)

εὐεργέτις, -ιδος, ἡ *benefactress* (1058)

εὐζωρος, -ον *unmixed* (757)

εὐκλής, -ές *glorious, famous*

εὐκλεῶς *gloriously, famously*

εὐλύρης (-ας) *of the lovely lyre* (570)

εὐμαρής, -ές *easy* (492)

εὐμενής, -ές *well-disposed, friendly*

εὐνή, -ῆς, ἡ *bed*

εὐνους, -ουν *well-disposed, friendly* (511)

εὐπατρίδης, -ου *of good family, noble* (920)

εὐπρεπῶς *becomingly* (161)

εὐπροσήγορος, -ον *easy to talk to, affable* (775)

εὐρίσκω, εὐρήσω, ἦδρον *find*

Εὐρύσθεύς, -εως, ὁ *Eurystheus, Heracles' taskmaster*

εὐσεβέω *be reverent* (1148)

εὖτε *when* (945)

εὐτυχέω *be lucky*

εὐτυχής, -ές *lucky*

εὐφραίνω *cheer, mid. be cheerful*

εὐφρων, -ον *cheerful* (587)

εὐχομαι *pray*

ἐφέπομαι *follow after* (767)

ἐφέρπω *creep over* (269)

ἐφευρίσκω *find out, discover*

ἐφίημι *permit, mid. command* (764)

ἐπίστημι *stand over; perf. act. be in charge of* (547)

ἐφοράω, -οφομαι *look upon* (232)

ἐχθαίρω *hate*

ἐχθρόξενος, -ον *hating strangers* (558)

ἐχθρός, -ά, -ον *hostile; as noun enemy, hater*

ἔχιδνα, -ης, ἡ *viper* (310)

ἔχω (impf. εἶχον), ἔξω, ἔσχω *have, hold, hold back; with adv. be (in such a condition)*

ἕως *until*

ζάχρυσος, -ον *all-golden* (498)

ζάω (impf. ἔζων) *live*

ζεύγνυμι *yoke*

Ζεύς, gen. Διός (Ζηνός), dat. Δί *Zeus*

ζηλώω *envy*

ζητέω *seek* (203)

ἢ or ἢ . . . ἢ *either . . . or*

ἦ *surely*

ἡβάσκω *be young, begin to grow to young man- or womanhood* (1085)

ἡβάω *be in the prime of youth*

ἡβη, -ης, ἡ *youth, prime*

ἡγέομαι *think, consider*

ἦδη *now, already*

ἡδομαι *enjoy oneself*

ἡδύς, -εῖα, -ύ (super. ἡδιστος) *sweet*

ἦκω, ἦξω *have come*

Ἥλεκτρώων, -ονος, ὁ *Electryon, father of Alcmene, Heracles' mother* (839)

ἦλθον ( fr. ἔρχομαι)

ἥλιος, -ου, ὁ *sun*

ἦμαι *sit* (604)

ἦμαρ, -ατος, τό *day*

ἡμέρα, -ας, ἡ *day*

ήνικά (άνικά) *when* (449)

ήπιος, -α, -ον *gentle* (310)

Ἡρακλῆς, -έους, ὁ (voc. Ἡράκλεις) *Heracles, son of Alcmena and Zeus*

ήσσομαι, perf. ήσσημαι *beat, worst, defeat* (697)

ήσσω, ήσσον *worse* (303)

ήσυχία, -ας, ή *silence* (77)

θάλαμος, -ου, ὁ *chamber, bedroom*

θάνατος, -ου, ὁ *death*

θάπτω, θάψω, ἔθαψα, fut. pass. ταφήσομαι *bury*

θαρσέω *be brave*

θάρσος, -ους, τό *courage, confidence* (604)

θαρσύνω *encourage*

θαῦμα, -ατος, τό *marvel, wonder* (1123)

θαυμάζω, θαυμάσομαι *wonder at, be surprised*

θεά, -ᾶς, ή *goddess*

θέλω = ἐθέλω

θέμις, ή *right* (1144)

θεός, -οῦ, ὁ/ή *god*

θεοσεβής, -ές *god-fearing* (605)

θεράπεινα, -ας, ή *servicing woman, female slave*

θεράπων, -οντος, ὁ *slave, attendant*

θερμαίνω, aor. ἐθέρμηνα *heat, cause to grow hot* (758)

Θεσσαλίας, -ίδος, (fem. adj.) *Thessalian* (331)

Θεσσαλός (masc. adj.) *Thessalian*

θήρ, -ός, ὁ *wild animal* (495)

θήσσα (fem. of θής) *worker, laborer* (the lowest order of free men); as adj.  
*belonging to the hired hands*

θητεύω *work for hire, serve as a menial* (6)

θιγγάνω, aor. ἔθιγον *touch*

θνήσκω, θανοῦμαι, ἔθανον, τέθνηκα *die, be killed*

θνητός, (-ή), -όν *mortal*

θοινάω *feast*

θολώω *make muddy*

Θρήκη, -ης, ή *Thrace* (67)

Θρήκιος, -α, -ον *Thracian*

Θρηξ, Θρηκός, ὁ *Thracian* (483)

θρίξ, τριχός, ἡ *hair*

θρόνος, -ου, ὁ *armchair, seat* (946)

θυγάτηρ, -τρός, ἡ *daughter* (435)

θυμός, -οῦ, ὁ *spirit* (829)

θύρα, -ας, ἡ *door* (549)

**θυραῖος**, (-α), -ον *beyond the doors, outside*

θυσία, -ας, ἡ *sacrifice* (134)

ιδ- aor. stem of ὀράω

ἰδοῦ *behold! look!*

ἰδρύω *put, set, establish* (841)

ἱερεύς, -εως, ὁ *priest* (25)

ἱερός, -ά, -όν *sacred* (75)

ἵζω *sit*

ἴλη, -ης, ἡ (ἴλα) *troop* (581)

ἴνα *where* (319)

ἵππειος, -α, -ον *of or with horses* (66)

ἵππος, -ου, ὁ *horse*

ἵππόστασις, -εως, ἡ *stable* (594)

**ἵστημι**, στήσω, ἔστησα / ἔστην, ἔστηκα *set up; stand*

ἴσως *perhaps*

**ἰὼ** a cry that may be used to express grief or call on the gods, *yo, ah, alas*

Ἴωλκός, -οῦ, ἡ *Iolkos (Iolcus)* (249)

καθίστημι *put, set, cause*

καθοράω *see, look down on* (836)

**καί** *and, also, too, even* καὶ . . . καὶ ἢ . . . καὶ *both . . . and*

καινός, -ή, -όν *new* (464)

**καίπερ** *although*

καίτοι *and yet*

κακορροθέω *bad-mouth, abuse verbally* (707)

**κακός**, -ή, -όν *bad, cowardly* τὰ κακὰ *troubles, ills, abuse*

**κακῶς** *badly, ill*

**καλέω**, fut. καλῶ, perf. mid./pass. κέκλημαι, aor. pass. ἐκλήθην *call, call on*

καλλίνας, -ον *of beautiful streams, fair flowing* (589)

καλός, -ή, -όν *fine, noble, handsome*

καλῶς *well, nobly*

- κᾶν = καὶ ἐν  
 κᾶν = καὶ ἐάν  
 κάρα, τό *head* (831)  
 काराτομέω *behead* (1118)  
 καρδιά, -ας, ἡ *heart*  
 Κάρνειος *Karneian, of the month of Karneia* (449)  
 κάρτα *very, very much* (811)  
 καρτερέω *endure*  
 κατὰ (+ gen.) *below, in, to καθ' ἡμέραν day by day* (788)  
 καταγράφω *write down* (968)  
 κατάγω *lead down* (26)  
 καταθνήσκω, -θανοῦμαι, -έθανον *die*  
 κατακτείνω, aor. ptc. -κτανών and -κτάς *kill*  
 καταπαύω *put an end to* (31)  
 καταρρήγνυμι, perf. κατέρρωγα *break forth* (1068)  
 κατάρχω *begin* (a ritual) (74)  
 καταφθίνω *die away, perish* (622)  
 κατείργω *delay* (256)  
 κατέρχομαι, aor. -ἦλθον *go down*  
 κατεύχομαι, aor. -ἠξάμην *pray* (162)  
 κατέχω, impf. -εἶχον *fill* (344)  
 κάτοιδα *know* (807)  
 κάτω (+ gen.) *below*  
 κάτωθεν *below, from below* (424)  
 κεδνός, -ή, -όν *good*  
 κέδρινος, -η, -ον *of cedar* (160)  
 κέδρος, -ου, ἡ *cedar, coffin of cedar* (365)  
 κείμει, κείσομαι *lie* (899)  
 κέλευθος, -ου, ἡ *path* (1000)  
 κενός, -ή, -όν *empty* (945)  
 κεραίζω *lay waste* (886)  
 κεραύνιος, -α, -ον *of the thunderbolt* (129)  
 κερδίων, κέρδιον (comp. with no pos. fr. κέρδος) *more profitable* (960)  
 κέρδος, -ους, τό *gain, profit* (1033)  
 κέρτομος, -ον *taunting, mocking* (1125)  
 κεύθος, -ους, τό *hiding place* (872)  
 κηδεστής, -οῦ ὁ *relative by marriage, in-law* (731)

κῆδος, -ους, τό *care, grief, object of care, relative by marriage, funeral* (828)

κηλέω *charm* (359)

κῆρυξ, -υκος, ὁ *herald* (737)

κιγχάνω, αογ. ἔκιχον *find*

κιθάρα, -ας, ἡ *lyre, cithara* (582)

κίσσινος, -η, -ον *made of ivy* (756)

κλάδος, -ου, ὁ *branch* (759)

**κλαίω** *weep, cry for*

κλέω *celebrate (in song)* (447)

κληδών, -ονος, ἡ *reputation, name*

κλήω (κλείω), ἔκλησα *shut* (548)

κλίνω *lay down* (267)

κλισία, -ας, ἡ *bed* (994)

κλιτύς, -ύος, ἡ *slope* (575)

κλοπαῖος, -α, -ον *stolen* (1035)

**κλύω** *hear*

κλώψ, κλωπός, ὁ *thief, robber* (766)

κνεφαῖος, -α, -ον *dark* (592)

κνισάω *smoke (with the fumes of sacrifices)* (1156)

κοῖλος, -η, -ον *hollow* (898)

κοινός, -ή, -όν *common, shared* (265)

κοινώω *make common; mid. share in* (426)

κοίρανος, -ου, ὁ *king, ruler*

κοίτη, -ης, ἡ *bed, lying*

κομίζω *carry, bring*

κομπάζω *boast*

κοντός, -οῦ, ὁ *pole (for propelling a boat)* (254)

κόρευμα, -ατος, τό *maidenhood, girlhood* (178)

κορεύομαι *spend one's maidenhood, pass one's girlhood* (313)

κόρη, -ης, ἡ (κούρα) *girl, daughter; Kore (Persephone)*

κόρος, -ου, ὁ *enough, satiety* (185)

κόρος, -ου, ὁ *boy, young man* (904)

**κόσμος**, -ου, ὁ *adornment, accessories*

κούρα = κόρη

κουρά, -ας, ἡ *cutting of the hair (as a sign of mourning)*

κοῦφος, -η, -ον *light*

κραίνω *bring about* (1160)

- κράς, κρατός, ὁ (poetic form of κάρα) *head*  
 κρατέω *have or get power over, rule*  
 κρατύνω *rule, hold dominion* (596)  
 κρείσσων, -ον (used as a comp. of ἀγαθός) *better, stronger* (965)  
 κρίνω *judge* (529)  
 κριτής, -ου, ὁ *judge* (801)  
 κρύπτω, κρύψω, ἔκρυψα *hide*  
 κτάομαι, fut. perf. mid. κεκτήσομαι *possess, win* (181)  
 κτείνω, aor. ἔκτανον *kill*  
 κτύπος, -ου, ὁ *noise*  
 κυναναυγής, -ές *dark flashing* (used of Hades' eyebrows and of the sea)  
 (261)  
 κύκλος, -ου, ὁ *circle, cycle*  
 Κύκλωψ, -ωπος, ὁ *Cyclops* (6)  
 Κύκνος, -ου, ὁ *Cycnus* (503)  
 κυνέω *kiss* (183)  
 Κύπρις, -ιδος, ἡ *Cypris, the Cyprian, a name for Aphrodite from her birth-  
 place on Cyprus* (791)  
 κυρέω (κύρω), aor. ἔκυρσα (+ gen.) *happen, meet with*  
 κύριος, -α, -ον *having authority, authoritative, decisive*  
 κύων, κυνός, ὁ/ἡ *dog* (360)  
 Κωκυτός, -οῦ, ὁ *Kokytyos/Cocytus, a river in Hades, the River of Wailing*  
 (458)  
 κωλύω *prevent* (897)  
 κωμάζω *revel, party*  
 κωμήτης, -ου, ὁ *villager* (476)  
 κῶμος, -ου, ὁ *revel, band of revelers*  
 κώπη, -ης, ἡ *oar*  
  
 λάθρα *in secret* (639)  
 λαιμηρός, -ά, -όν *swift* (494)  
 λαμβάνω, aor. ἔλαβον *take, get, receive*  
 λανθάνω, perf. ἔλεσθα *escape notice, go unnoticed; pass. forget*  
 Λάρισα, -ης, ἡ *Larisa, a city in Thessaly* (835)  
 λάσκω, aor. ἔλακον *sing* (346)  
 λέγω, λέξω, ἔλεξα *speak (of), tell, talk of*  
 λείβω, aor. ἔλειψα *pour a libation*

- λείπω**, λείψω, ἔλιπον *leave*, mid. (+ gen.) *be bereft of*  
 λέκτρον, -ου, τό *bed*  
 λευκός, -ή, -όν *white*  
**λεύσσω** *see*  
 λέχος, -ους, τό *bed, marriage*  
 λέων, -οντος, ὁ *lion* (580)  
 λῆμα, -ατος, τό *spirit, temper*  
 ληστής, -οῦ, ὁ *robber* (766)  
 λίαν *in excess, too much*  
 Λίβυς (acc. Λίβυν) *Libyan* (346)  
 λίμνη, -ης, ἡ (λίμνα) *lake*  
 λιπαρός, -α, -ον *oily, shining, rich* (452)  
 λίσσομαι *pray, beg*  
 λογίζομαι *reason, calculate*  
**λόγος**, -ου, ὁ *word, saying, argument, story, study*  
 λοιπός, -ή, -όν *left, remaining; τὸ λοιπὸν for the future*  
 λοισθιος, -α, -ον *last* (417)  
 λούω, aor. ἔλουσα *wash* (160)  
 λοχαίος, -α, -ον *of ambush* (846)  
 λόχος, -ου, ὁ *ambush* (1142)  
 λύγξ, λυγκός, ὁ *lynx* (579)  
 Λυδός, -οῦ, ὁ *Lydian* (675)  
 Λυκάων, -ονος, ὁ *Lykaon/Lycaon, a son of Ares defeated by Heracles* (502)  
 Λυκία, -ας, ἡ *Lycia, Lycian* (114)  
**λυπέω** *cause pain or grief; mid. feel pain or grief*  
 λύπη, -ης, ἡ *grief*  
 λυπρός, -ά, -όν *causing grief, painful*  
 λύρα, -ας, ἡ *lyre* (430)  
 λύσις, -εως, ἡ *release* (214)  
 λυτήριος, -α, -ον *bringing release, liberating* (224)  
 λύω *release, undo, loose, pay, profit* (628)
- μαῖα *mother, foster mother, midwife* (393)  
 μάκαρ, μάκαιρα, μάκαρ *blessed* (1003)  
 μακρός, -ά, -όν *long*  
 μάλα *very* (464)  
 μαλάσσω *soften*

μάλιστα *most, especially*

μᾶλλον *more*

μανθάνω, αογ. ἔμαθον *understand, learn*

μαραίνω *quench, wither*

μάρπτω, μάρψω, ἔμαρψα *grab, seize*

μαστός, -οῦ, ὁ *breast* (639)

μάτην *in vain* (669)

μάχη, -ης, ἡ *battle*

μέγας, μεγάλη, μέγα *big, great μέγα by far*

μεθαρμόζω, perf. mid./pass. μεθήρμωσμαι *change* (1157)

μεθίημι *let go, hand over*

μεθίστημι *remove, mid. and intrans. (+ gen.) leave*

μεθορμίζω, μεθορμιῶ *unmoor* (798)

μέθυ, μέθυος, τό *wine* (757)

μείζων, μείζον (comp. of μέγας) *bigger, greater*

μείων, μείον (comp. of μικρός or ὀλίγος) *less* (556)

μελαγχαίτας *black-haired* (438)

μέλαθρον, -ου, τό *hall, palace*

μελάμπελος, -ον *dressed in black, of black robes*

μέλας, μέλαινα, μέλαν *black*

μέλει (impersonal + dat.) *it is a care to*

μέλλω *be about to, intend, delay*

μέλος, -ους, τό *song*

μέλπω, μέλψω *sing* (446)

μέμφομαι *blame*

μέμψις, -εως, ἡ *blame* (1057)

μέν *postpositive particle used to emphasize the first of two words, phrases, or clauses in contrast*

μέντοι *however*

μένω, αογ. ἔμεινα *stay, remain*

μέρος, -ους, τό *part, share, lot* (474)

μέσαυλος, -ον *inner, inside the courtyard* (549)

μέσος, -η, -ον *middle τὸ μέσον (the time) in between, the difference* (914)

μετά (+ gen) *with, among, (+ acc.) after*

μετακύμιος, -ον *amid the waves* (91)

μεταπίπτω *fall differently, undergo a change* (913)

μετάρσιος, -ον *uplifted* (963)

- μετέχω (+ gen.) *share* (745)  
 μέτριος, -α, -ον *moderate* (884)  
 μέτρον, -ου, τό *measure* (1063)  
 μή *not, lest*  
 μηδέ *and not, but not, not even*  
 μηκέτι *no longer*  
 μηλοθύτης, -ου, ὁ *sheep sacrificer* (121)  
 μηλονόμας, -ου, ὁ *shepherd* (572)  
 μήν, μηνός, ὁ *month*  
 μήν *surely, indeed*  
 μήποτε *never*  
 μήτηρ, μητρός, ἡ *mother*  
 μητρυιά, -ᾶς, ἡ *step-mother*  
 μηχανή, -ῆς, ἡ *device, means* (221)  
 μία (see εἷς, μία, ἕν)  
 μίασμα, -ατος, τό *pollution* (22)  
 μικρός, -ά, -όν (σμικρός) *small, short*  
 μιμνήσκω, aor. ἔμνησα; perf. μέμνημαι act. *remind*; mid./pass. *remember*  
 μνηστεύω *court, woo* (720)  
 μογέω *toil* (849)  
 μοῖρα, -ας, ἡ *share, lot, Fate*  
 μολ- (see ἔμολον)  
 Μολοσσοί *Molossians* (594)  
 μολπή, -ῆς, ἡ *music, song*  
 μομφή, ῆς, ἡ *blame* (1009)  
 μονάμπυξ, -υκος *having one frontlet, running alone* (428)  
 μονόπαις, -παιδος *having only one child; being an only child* (906)  
 μόνος, -η, -ον *only, alone*  
 μονόστολος, -ον *going alone* (407)  
 μονόω, aor. pass. ἐμονώθην *leave alone*  
 μόρος, -ου, ὁ *doom, death*  
 μόρσιμος, -ον *destined, fated* (939)  
 μορφή, -ῆς, ἡ *form*  
 μοῦσα, -ης, ἡ *Muse, music*  
 μουσόπολος, -ον *servicing the Muses* (445)  
 μόχθος, ου, ὁ *trouble*  
 μῦθος, -ου, ὁ *story* (519)

- μυκτῆρ, μυκτῆρος, ὁ *nose*, pl. *nostrils* (493)  
 μυρίος, -α, -ον *countless*  
 μυρσίνη, -ης, ἡ *myrtle*  
 μῶν *question particle that expects the answer "no" fr. μὴ οὐδ*  
 μωρία, -ας, ἡ *foolishness, folly* (1093)  
 μῶρος, -α, -ον *foolish* (552)
- ναί *yes* (1119)  
 ναίω  *dwell in*  
 νάπη, -ης, ἡ (νάπα) *glen, woodland valley* (580)  
 ναυκληρία, -ας, ἡ *ship's voyage*  
 νεανίας, -ου, ὁ *young man; as adj. young*  
 νεβρός, -οῦ, ὁ *fawn* (585)  
 νεκροπομπός, -όν *escorting the dead* (441)  
 νεκρός, -οῦ, ὁ *body, dead person, corpse*  
 νέκυς, -υος, ὁ *body, dead person, corpse*  
 νεολαία (fem adj.) *young* (103)  
 νέομαι *come, go* (737)  
 νέος, -α, -ον *new, young*  
 νεοσσός, -οῦ, ὁ *young one* (403)  
 νέρθε (ν) *from below, in the Netherworld*  
 νέρτερος, -α, -ον *in or of the Netherworld*  
 νεύω, aor. ἔνευσα *nod (to)* (978)  
 νεφέλη, -ης, ἡ *cloud* (245)  
 νικάω *win*  
 νικητήριον, -ου, τό *prize of victory* (1028)  
 νιν *her, him, them*  
 νομίζω *think; pass. be customary*  
 νόμος, -ου, ὁ *law, custom*  
 νοσέω *be sick* (1047)  
 νόσος, -ου, ἡ *sickness*  
 νοστέω *return, come home* (1023)  
 νόστιμος, -ον *of returning home* (1153)  
 νοσφίζω, νοσφιῶ *rob* (43)  
 νοτερός, -ά, -όν *wet* (598)  
 νυμφεύω *marry, attend the bride*  
 νύμφη, -ης, ἡ *bride*

νυμφίδιος, -α, -ον *bridal*

νυν (enclitic particle) *then*

νῦν *now*

νύξ, νυκτός, ἡ *night*

ξενίζω *entertain* (a guest/guests)

ξένιος, -α, -ον *of guests*; τὰ ξένια *gifts of hospitality* (given by the host to the guest) (754)

ξενοδοκέω *receive guests* (into one's home) (552)

ξένος (ξείνος), -ου, ὁ and ξένη, -ης, ἡ *stranger, guest-friend*; also used as an adjective

ξενόω *entertain, receive as a guest* (68)

ξενών, -ῶνος, ὁ *room or suite for entertaining guests*

ξεστός, -ή, -όν *of cut stone* (836)

ξίφος, -ους, τό *sword* (74)

ξυν- (see συν-)

ξυρήκης, -ες *shaved*

ὁ, ἡ, τό *the ὁ μὲν . . . ὁ δέ the one . . . the other*

ὅδε, ἧδε, τόδε *this τῆδε thus, in this way, here*

ὁδός, -οῦ, ἡ *road, way, journey*

ὀδύνη, -ης, ἡ *pain, suffering* (874)

ὅθεν *whence, from which* (1028)

ὀθνεῖος, (-α), -ον *strange, foreign*

ὀθούνεκα *that, because* (796)

Ὀθρυς, -υος, ὁ *Othrys, a mountain range in Thessaly* (580)

οἷ *where, to which*

οἶγω (οἶγνυμι), aor. ptc. οἶξας *open*

οἶδα, inf. εἰδέναι; ptc. εἰδώς; imperatives. ἴσθι, ἴστω; plpf. ἦδεν (perfect form with present meaning) *know*

οἰκεῖος, -α, -ον *of the house* (811, mss. reading)

οἰκετεύω *live in* (437)

οἰκέτης, -ου, ὁ *servant, slave of the household*

οἰκέω, οἰκήσω *live (in)*

οἶκος, -ου, ὁ *house*

οἰκτίρω *pity*

οἰκτρός, -ά, -ον *pitiful* (264)

**οἶμαι** = οἴομαι

οἴμοι *alas, ah me!*

οἶμος, -ου, ὁ *road* (835)

οἶνος, -ου, ὁ *wine* (759)

οἴομαι = οἶμαι, impf. φόμην *think*

**οἶος**, -α, -ον *of what sort, such as, what a; οἶόν τε [ἔστί] it is possible*

οἰστέος fr. οἴσω (fut. of φέρω) *of that which must be endured* (739)

οἴχομαι *be gone*

ὀκνέω *shrink from, hesitate* (180)

ὀλβίζω *bless, call happy* (919)

ὄλβιος, -α, -ον *happy, prosperous*

**ὄλλυμι**, ὀλῶ, ὄλεσα, 2 aor. ὄλομην, 2 perf. ὄλωλα *destroy, lose, mid. and intrans. 2 aor. and 2 perf. perish ὄλωλα I am dead*

ὀμῆλιξ, -ικος, ὁ/ἡ *companion of the same age* (953)

ὄμηρος, -ου, ὁ *hostage* (870)

ὀμιλία, -ας, ἡ *company* (343)

**ὄμμα**, -ατος, τό *eye, face*

ὀμοίως *alike*

ὀμοῦ *together* (901)

**ὄμως** *all the same, nevertheless*

ὀνειδίζω *blame, reproach* (701)

ὄνειδος, -ους, τό *reproach* (721)

ὄνειρον, -ου, τό (pl. in 3 decl. ὀνείρατα) *dream* (354)

ὄνησις, -εως, ἡ *enjoyment, profit* (334)

ὀνίνημι, perf. mid. ὄνημαι *profit; mid. get enjoyment from* (335)

ὄνομα, -ατος, τό *name* (351)

ὄπαδός, -οῦ, ὁ *attendant*

ὀπλίζω, aor. ὄπλισα *arm* (35)

ὅποι *where, to which* (113)

ὅπουπερ *wherever* (1092)

ὅπως *how, that, so that*

**ὄραω**, ὄψομαι, εἶδον (ιδ-) *see*

ὀργαίνω *anger, enrage* (1106)

ὀργή, -ῆς, ἡ *temper, natural impulse, anger* (771)

ὄρειος, -α, -ον *of the mountains*

ὀρθός, -ή, -όν *straight, right*

ὀρθόω *make straight, lift up* (388)

ὀρθῶς *truly, rightly*

ὀρμάω, aor. pass. ὀρμήθην *set in motion, start; mid./pass. set out for* (1040)

ὄρος, -ου, ὄ *border, boundary*

ὀρφανεύω, aor. ὀρφάνευσα *take care of orphans*

ὀρφανίζω, aor. ὀρφάνισα/ὀρφάνισσα *make someone an orphan, bereave*

ὀρφανός, -όν *orphan, bereaved*

Ὀρφεῖος, -α, -ον *Orphic, of Orpheus* (968)

Ὀρφεύς, -έως, ὄ *Orpheus* (357)

ὄς, ἥ, ὅ *who, which*

ὄσιος, -α, ον *pious, holy*

ὄσος, -η, -ον *as great as, as many as, as much as*

ὄσσε (dat. ὄσσοισι, dual) *eyes* (269)

ὅστις, ἥτις, ὅ τι *anyone who, anything which, whoever, whatever*

ὅταν *whenever, when*

ὅτε *when*

ὀτρύνω *urge* (755)

οὐ, οὐκ, οὐχ *not*

οὐδας, -εος, τό *floor* (947)

οὐδέ *and not, but not, not even, nor*

οὐδεῖς, οὐδεμία, οὐδέν *no one, nothing*

οὐκέτι *no longer*

οὐκουν *then . . . not*

οὖν *then, therefore*

οὐνεκα (+ gen.) *because, because of*

οὐποτε *never*

οὐπω *not yet*

οὐράνιος, -α, -ον *in the sky*

οὔτε *nor* οὔτε . . . οὔτε *neither . . . nor*

οὔτι *in no way*

οὔτις *no one*

οὔτοι *not, not indeed*

οὗτος, αὐτή, τοῦτο *this*

οὕτως, οὕτω *so, thus*

ὀφείλω, 2 aor. ὄφελον *owe, ought*

ὀφθαλμότεγκτος, -ον *welling up with tears* (184)

ὀφλισκάνω *incur* (1093)

ὀφρύς, -ύος, ἡ *eyebrow* (261)

ὄχημα, -ατος, τό *chariot* (67)

ὄχληρός, -ά, -όν *annoying, troublesome*

ὄψις, -εως, ἡ *sight* (861)

πᾶ = πῆ *where* (213)

παθ- aorist stem of πάσχω

Παιάν, -ᾶνος, ὁ *Paian*, a name of Apollo as healer

παιάν, -ᾶνος, ὁ *paian*, *hymn* (to Apollo the healer) (424)

παῖς, παιδός, ὁ/ἡ *child, son, daughter*

πάλαι *long ago* (421)

παλαιός, -ά, -όν *old* (212)

πάλιν *again*

πάνδημος, -ον *public, of the whole people* (1026)

πάννυχος, -ον *all-night* (451)

πανοῦργος, -ον *criminal, ready to do anything* (766)

παντοῖος, -α, -ον *of every kind* (747)

πάντως *in any case* (650)

πανύστατον *for the very last time*

παπαῖ a cry of distress or surprise (226)

παρά (+ gen.) *from*; (+ dat.) *at, with, near*; (+ acc.) *to, by near, at*

πᾶρα (for πάρεστι) *it is possible*

παραδίδωμι, aor. -έδωκα *hand over* (871)

παραινέω *give advice* (1078)

παραλύω *release, undo*

παράτονος, -ον *listless* (399)

παραυτίκα *at once, immediately* (13)

παρεδρεύω *sit beside* (746)

πᾶρειμι *be present* πάρεστι *it is possible*

παρέρχομαι, aor. -ῆλθον *bypass, go beyond* (695)

παρθένειος, -ον *maidenly, of an unmarried young woman* (177)

παρήμι, aor. ptc. παρείς, perf. mid./pass. παρῆμαι *pass by, relax, be weakened*

παρίστημι, perf. παρέστηκα *stand beside*; intrans. *be present*

πᾶροιθε(ν) (+ gen.) *before*

παροξύνω *stimulate, provoke* (674)

πᾶρος (+ gen.) *before*

παρουσία, -ας, ἡ *presence*

πᾶς, πᾶσα, πᾶν (πάντ-) *all, every, the whole*

- πάσχω**, πείσομαι, ἔπαθον, πέπονθα *suffer, be treated*  
**πατήρ**, πατρός, ὁ *father*  
 πάτριος, -α, -ον *of or belonging to one's father* (249)  
 πατρῶος, -α, -ον *of or from one's fathers*  
**παύω** *stop; mid. cease (from)*  
 πεδίον, -ου, τό *plain* (591)  
 πεζεύω *go on foot, walk* (869)  
**πείθω**, πείσω, ἔπεισα/ἔπιθον, πέποιθα *persuade, mid. obey, yield, heed; 2 perf. be confident*  
 πελάζω, aor. inf. πελάσσαι *draw near, approach* (230)  
 πέλανος, -ου, ὁ *a thick liquid substance (offered to the gods and the dead)* (851)  
 Πελίας, -ου, ὁ *Pelias, father of Alcestis*  
 πέλη, -ης, ἡ *shield* (498)  
**πέμπω**, πέμψω, ἔπεμψα *send, conduct*  
**πενθέω** *mourn (for)*  
 πένθιμος, -ον *in mourning*  
**πένθος**, -ους, τό *grief, mourning*  
 πέπλος, -ου, ὁ *robe; pl. robes, clothing*  
 πέπρωται (perf. pass. of πόρω; see ἔπορον) *it is fated πεπρωμένος destined, fated*  
 περ enclitic particle used for emphasis (2)  
 πέραν (+ gen.) *beyond* (585)  
 περί (+ gen.) *about, for; (+ acc.) regarding, about*  
 περιβάλλω, aor. -έβαλον *throw around* (847)  
 περινίσσομαι *come around, revolve* (449)  
 περιπτύσσω *fold around* (350)  
 περιτέλλω *dress, wrap up, lay out (a corpse)* (664)  
 Περσεύς, -έως, ὁ *Perseus* (509)  
 πύκη, -ης, ἡ *pine, pine torch* (915)  
 πῆ = πᾶ *where?* (213)  
 πηγαῖος, (-α), -ον *of a spring* (99)  
 πηγή, -ῆς, ἡ *spring* (1068)  
 πηδάλιον, -ου, ὁ *rudder, steering paddle* (440)  
 Πηλίας *of Mount Pelion* (915)  
 Πήλιον, -ου, τό *Pelion* (596)  
 πῆμα, -ατος, τό *trouble, misery*

- πημονή, -ης, ἡ *misery, calamity* (514)  
 πιέζω *crush* (894)  
 πικρός, -ά, -όν *bitter*  
 πίνω, πίομαι, ἔπιον *drink*  
 πίπτω, πεσοῦμαι, ἔπεσον, πέπτωκα *fall*  
 πιστός, -ή, -όν *faithful, loyal*  
 πίτνω (used for πίπτω) *fall*  
 πίτυλος, -ου, ὁ *the sweep of oars, shower* (798)  
 πλάθω *approach* (119)  
 πλεῖστος, -η, -ον (super. of πολὺς) *most*  
 πλείων, πλέον (comp. of πολὺς) *more*  
 πλευρόν, -οῦ, τό *side*  
 πλέως, -α, -ων *full* (727)  
 πλήθος, -ους, τό *fullness, abundance* (548)  
 πληκτρον, -ου, τό *something to strike with, bolt, weapon* (129)  
 πλημμυρίς, -ίδος, ἡ *flood* (184)  
 πλὴν (+ gen.) *except* (17)  
 πλήρης, -ες *full* (134)  
 πλησίον (+ gen.) *near*  
 πλήσσω *strike*  
 πλουσίως *richly* (56)  
 Πλούτων, -ωνος, ὁ *Pluto* (360)  
 πνέω *breathe* (493)  
 πόθεν *from what place?, from where?*  
 πόθος, -ου, ὁ *longing* (1087)  
 ποῖ *where?, to what place?*  
 ποιέω, ποιήσω, ἐποίησα *make, do*  
 ποικιλόθριξ, -ικος *with spotted hide* (584)  
 ποιμαίνω *herd sheep, flocks* (579)  
 ποιμνίτης, -ου *of shepherds* (577)  
 ποῖος, -α, -ον *of what kind?* (314)  
 πολέμιος, -α, -ον *hostile, as noun enemy* (506)  
 πολέω *move about* (29)  
 πολίος, -ά, -όν *gray*  
 πολυάχητος, -ον = πολυήχητος *noisy* (918)  
 πολύμηλος, -ον *having many sheep* (588)  
 πολύξεινος, -ον *hospitable, receiving many guests* (569)

- πολύπονος, -ον *full of toil* (971)  
 πολύς, πολλή, πολύ *much, many*  
 πόνος, -ου, ὁ *toil, labor*  
 πόντιος, (-α), -ον *of the sea* (595)  
 πορεύω act. *carry, convey*; mid./pass. *go, travel*  
 πορθμεύς, -έως, ὁ *ferryman* (253)  
 πορίζω *provide* (a means)  
 πόρος, -ου, ὁ *passage, way, means*  
 πορσύνω, πορσυνῶ, ἐπόρσυνα *perform*  
 πόρσω *onward* (910)  
 πόσις, ὁ (no gen., voc. πόσι, acc. πόσιν) *husband*  
 ποτάμιος, (-α), -ον *of a river*  
 ποτέ *ever*  
 πότερον, πότερα *whether*  
 ποτήρ, ποτήρος, ὁ *drinking cup* (756)  
 ποτί = πρόσ  
 πότμος, -ου, ὁ *fate* (927)  
 πότνια, ἡ *lady*, a term of address to women and goddesses  
 που *anywhere* (199)  
 ποῦ *where?*  
 πούς, ποδός, ὁ *foot*  
 πράγμα, -ατος, τό *affair*  
 πράσσω, πράζω, ἔπραξα, πέπραγα, πέπραγμα, ἐπραχθην *do, make, fare*  
 πρέπω *appear, be conspicuous* πρέπει *it is fitting*  
 πρεσβεύω *honor, put ahead* (282)  
 πρέσβυς, -υος, ὁ (acc. πρέσβυν, voc. πρέσβυ) *old man*  
 πρίν *before*  
 πρό (+ gen.) *for, on behalf of*  
 προάστιον, -ου, τό *suburb* (836)  
 προβαίνω, -βήσομαι, -έβην *go forward, lead*  
 προδίδωμι, -έδωκα, -έδομεν *betray, forsake*  
 προθνήσκω, -έθανον *die for*  
 προθυμία, -ας, ἡ *zeal, eagerness*  
 πρόθυρον, -ου, τό *front door, porch* (101)  
 πρόκειμαι *lie before, lie in front* (of one)  
 προκλαίω *weep in advance* (526)  
 προκόπτω *cut down in front, advance* (1079)

προλείπω *leave*

προμηθία, -ας, ἡ *forethought* (1054)

πρόνοια, -ας, ἡ *foresight, forethought* (1061)

προνωπής, -ές *leaning forward, with face down*

προπετής, -ές *leaning toward, inclined to* (909)

**πρός** (+ gen.) *by, at the hands of, for, in favor of*; (+ dat.) *at, besides, near*;  
(+acc.) *to, against*

προσβαίνω *come to* (480)

προσβάλλω *cast upon, lay upon*

προσδέχομαι *look for* (131)

προσδοκάω *expect*

προσεῖπον *speak to*

προσείκα, perf. mid./pass. προσήγμαι *resemble*

προσερρήθη, aor. pass. *be spoken to*

προσέρχομαι, aor. -ἤλθον *go to, approach*

προσερῶ, fut. *will speak to*

προσεύχομαι, aor. -ἠξάμην *pray (to)* (171)

προσζεύγνυμι, perf. mid./pass. προσέζευγμα *yoke to* (482)

πρόσθε(ν) *before*

πρόσκειμαι *be added to* (1039)

πρόσοδος, -ου, ἡ *approach* (861)

προσοράω, -όψομαι *look upon*

προσπέτομαι, aor. προσεπτάμην *fly toward, sweep over* (421)

προσπίπτω, -πεσοῦμαι *fall upon* (350)

προσπίτνω *fall upon*

προσπολέω *serve, be a servant* (1024)

πρόσπολος, -ον *attending, as noun servant, attendant*

προστίθημι, aor. -έθηκα, -έθεμεν *put upon, add* (1048)

προστροπή, -ῆς, ἡ *supplication* (1156)

προστυγχάνω, aor. -έτυχον *meet with, happen upon* (754)

πρόσφαγμα, -ατος, τό *sacrifice* (845)

προσφθέγγομαι, προσφθέγγομαι *speak to, address as* (331)

πρόσφορος, -ον *appropriate* (148)

προσφώνημα, -ατος, τό *speech* (1144)

πρόσωπον, -ου, τό *face, mask*

προσωφελέω *give added help to* (41)

προτείνω, προύτεινα *stretch out*

προτίθημι, -θήσω, -έθηκα *put out, lay out*

προτιμάω *honor*

πρόφρων, -ονος *eager, kindly*

**πρῶτος**, -η, -ον *first*

πτερωτός, -ή, -όν *winged* (261)

πτόρθος, -ου, ὁ *branch* (172)

πυγμή, -ῆς, ἡ *boxing* (1031)

Πύθιος, -α, -ον *Pythian*, referring to Apollo's oracle at Delphi (570)

πυκάζω, aor. pass. ἐπυκάσθην *cover*

**πύλα**, -ης, ἡ *gate*

πῦρ, πυρός, τό *fire*

πυρά, -ᾶς, ἡ *pyre*

πύργος, -ου, ὁ *tower* (311)

πῶλος, -ου, ὁ *horse*

πως *somehow, in any way* (1042)

πῶς *how?, why?*

ράδιος, -α, -ον (comp. ῥάων, ῥᾶον) *easy*

ρέεθρον, -ου, τό *stream* (458)

ρέζω, ῥέξω *do* (262)

ρίπτω, aor. ἔρριψα *fling*

ρύομαι, aor. ἐρρυσάμην *save, deliver*

σανίς, -ίδος, ἡ *tablet* (967)

σαυτοῦ, -ῆς *yourself*

σάφα *clearly, well*

σέβας, τό *object of reverence* (999)

σέβω/σέβομαι *revere*

σελήνη, -ης, ἡ *moon*

σεμνός, -ή, -όν *solemn*

σεύομαι, aor. pass. ἐσύθην *rush* (846)

σημεῖον, -ου, τό *sign* (717)

Σθένελος, -ου, ὁ *Sthenelos*, father of Eurystheus, Heracles' taskmaster (1150)

σθένω *have strength* (267)

σιγάω, aor. ἐσίγησα; perf. mid./pass. σεσίγημαι *be silent*

σίδηρος, -ου, ὁ *iron*

- σῖτος, ου, ὁ *food* (548)  
 σιωπάω *be silent* (93)  
 σκάφος, -ους, τό *boat* (252)  
 σκληρός, -ά, -όν *hard* (500)  
 σκοτεινός, -ή, -όν *dark* (385)  
 σκότιος, -α, -ον *dark, shadowy*  
 σκυθρωπός, -όν *of gloomy expression*  
 σκύφος, -ου, ὁ *cup, winecup*  
 μικρός = μικρός (205)  
**σός**, σή, σόν (singular) *your*  
 σοφία, -ας, ἡ *wisdom* (603)  
 σοφός, -ή, -όν *wise, clever*  
 σπάνιος, -α, -ον *scarce, rare* (474)  
 Σπάρτη, -ης, ἡ *Sparta* (449)  
 ὁ σπείρας, *father* (1098)  
 σπείρω, αογ. ἔσπειρα *sow, beget*  
 σπέρχω *hurry* (256)  
 σπλάγχνα, -ων, τά *guts, heart* (the seat of emotions) (1009)  
 σπονδή, -ῆς, ἡ *libation* (1016)  
 σπουδή, -ῆς, ἡ *eagerness*  
 στατίζω *post, place* (89)  
**στέγη**, -ης, ἡ *roof, house*, often in the plural of a single house  
 στέγος, -ους, τό = στέγη (736)  
**στείχω** *come, go*  
 στέλλω, αογ. ἔστειλα *send* (114)  
 στεναγμός, -οῦ, ὁ *keening, groaning, lamentation*  
 στενάζω, αογ. ἐστενάξα *lament, bewail*  
**στένω** *mourn (for), groan*  
 στερέω, αογ. pass. ἐστερήθην *deprive*  
 στέρνον, -ου, τό *breast, chest* (4)  
 στέφανος, -οῦ, ὁ *wreath, garland*  
 στέφω, αογ. ἔστεψα *crown*  
 στολή, -ῆς, ἡ *clothing* (427)  
 στολμός, -ου, ὁ *clothes*  
 στόμα, -ατος, τό *mouth* (403)  
 στρωφάω *turn about; mid. move about, move freely* (1052)  
**στιγέω**, αογ. pass. ἐστιγήθην *hate*

στηγνός, -ή, -όν *hateful*

σύ, gen. σου, σου, σέθεν; dat. σοί, σοι; acc. σέ, σε (singular) *you*

συγγενής, -ές *related by blood* (532)

συγγνωστός, -όν *forgivable* (139)

συγκάμνω *sympathize* (614)

σύγκασις, -ιος, ὀή *brother, sister* (410)

συγκλίνω, fut. pass. συγκλιθήσομαι *lie beside* (1090)

συζεύγνυμι, aor. imper. σύζευξον *yoke together*

σύζυγος, -ον (σύζυξ, -υγος) *joined, married, as a noun husband, wife* (921)

σύλλογος (ξύλλογος), -ον *assembly* (951)

συμβάλλω, -βαλῶ, -έβαλον *bring together, engage in*

συμμέτρως *opportunistly, at the right time* (26)

συμπότης, -ου, ὁ *fellow drinker* (343)

συμφέρω, -οισω *bear along with* (370)

συμφορά, -ᾶς, ἡ *misfortune*

σύν (+ dat.) *with*

συναλγέω *grieve with* (633)

συνάπτω, aor. συνήψω *join, join in battle with*

συνδυάς, -άδος *wedded (spouse)* (473)

σύνειμι *be with* (475)

συνέστιος, -ον *sharing one's home and hearth, guest* (1151)

συνήθης, -ες *customary* (40)

συνάορος, -ον *joined together; husband, wife* (824)

συνθάπτω, -θάψω *bury with* (149)

συνεστός (ξυν-), τό (fr. συνίστημι) *anxiety, contraction (of the brow)* (797)

συννικάω *win along with* (1103)

συνοικέω *live with*

συνοφρυόομαι *knit the eyebrows*

συντλάω *suffer with, endure with* (411)

συρίζω *play the pipe* (576)

σφαγή, -ῆς, ἡ *cutting the throat* (228)

σφάγιον, -ου, ὁ *sacrificial victim* (975)

σφάλλω, aor. ἔσφηλα *trip up, deceive* (34)

σφε *her, him, them*

σφυρόν, -οῦ, τό *ankle* (586)

σφῶν (dat. dual) *you two*

σχέτλιος, -α, -ον *suffering, miserable, cruel*

σχῆμα, -ατος, τό *shape, form* (912)

σῶζω, σώσω, ἔσωσα *save*

σῶμα, -ατος, τό *body, person*

σωτήρ, σωτήρος, ὁ *savior* (667)

σώφρων, -ον *modest, virtuous*

τάλας, τάλαινα, τάλαν *unhappy, miserable*

τάσσω, perf. mid./pass. τέταγμα *appoint, assign* (49)

τάφος, -ου, ὁ *grave, tomb, burial*

τάφρος, -ου, ὁ *trench* (898)

τάχα *perhaps, soon* (1101)

ταχύνω *hurry, speed* (256)

τε postpositive enclitic *and*

τέγγω *wet, moisten* (764)

τέθριππος, -ον *with four horses* (428)

τείρω *wear away* (421)

τεκμαίρομαι *conclude* (240)

τέκνον, -ου, τό *child*

τέκτων, -ονος, ὁ *craftsman*

τελευτάω, τελευτήσω *accomplish*

τελέω, perf. mid./pass. τετέλεσμαι, aor. pass. ἐτέλεσθην *end, bring to an end*

τέλος, -ους, τό *end* (413)

τέμνω, τεμῶ, ἔτεμον *cut*

τέραμνα, -ων, τά *halls* (457)

τέρμα, -ατος, τό *end* (643)

τερπνός, -ή, -όν *pleasant, enjoyable*

τέρπω *enjoy, take delight*

τέρψις, -εως, ἡ *delight, enjoyment*

τετραρχία, -ας, ἡ *tetrarchy* (1154)

τετρώρος, -ον *with four horses* (483)

τέχνη, -ης, ἡ *skill, art*

τηλικόσδε, -ήδε, -όνδε *of such an age* (643)

τίθημι, θήσω, ἔθηκα *put, make*

τίκτω, aor. ἔτεκον *bear, be mother or father*

τιμάω *honor*

τιμή, -ῆς, ἡ *honor*

τίμιος, -α, -ον *valued* (301)

τιμωρέω *take vengeance on* (733)

Τιρύνθιος, -α, -ον *Tyrinthian, of Tiryns*

τι *at all*

τις, τι *some, any, someone, something*

τίς, τί *who?, what?*

τλάω, αογ. ἔτλην *endure, have the heart to do*

τλήμων (τλάμων) *enduring, suffering*

τλητός, -ή, -όν *to be endured* (887)

τοι *surely, you know*

τοιγάρ *therefore*

τοῖος, -α, -ον *such*

τοιόσδε, -άδε, ὄνδε *such*

τοιοῦτος, τοιαύτη, τοιοῦτο *of such a kind*

τόκος, -ου, ὁ *childbirth, bringing forth of children* (318)

τολμάω, αογ. ἐτόλμησα *dare, be brave, have the heart to*

τόλμη, -ης, ἡ *daring* (741)

τομαῖος, (-α), -ον *cut* (101)

τοξήρης, -ες *armed with a bow* (35)

τόξον, -ου, τό *bow, pl. bow and arrows* (39)

τόπος, -ου, ὁ *place* (67)

τοσόσδε, τοσήδε, τοσόνδε *so great* (539)

τοσοῦτος, τοσαύτη, τοσοῦτο *so great*

τότε *then, at that time*

τράπεζα, -ης, ἡ *table* (2)

τρέπω, τρέψω *turn* (943)

τρέφω, αογ. ἔθρεψα *nourish, rear, keep*

τρέχω, αογ. ἔδραμον *run* (489)

τρέω, αογ. ἔτρεσα *fear, be afraid, flee*

τρίτος, -η, -ον *third*

τρόπος, -ου, ὁ *way* (61)

τυγχάνω, αογ. ἔτυχον (+ ptc.) *happen; (+ gen.) meet with, get*

τύμβος, -ου, ὁ *tomb*

τυραννίς, -ίδος, ἡ *royal power*

τύραννος, -ου, ὁ *king, tyrant; as adj. royal*

τύχη, -ης, ἡ *luck, fortune*

ὕβριζω *insult* (679)

- ὕδωρ, ὕδατος, τό *water* (159)  
 ὕλακτέω *howl, wail* (760)  
 ὑμέναιος, -ου, ὁ *wedding song*  
 ὕμνος, -ου, ὁ *song*  
 ὑπακούω, αογ. ὑπήκουσα *hear, answer* (when called)  
 ὑπέρ (+ gen.) *above, for*; (+ acc.) *over*  
 ὑπεραλγέω *grieve for* (883)  
 ὑπερβάλλω, αογ. ὑπερέβαλον; perf. mid./pass. ὑπερβέβλημαι *pass beyond, exceed, surpass*  
 ὑπερθνήσκω, αογ. ὑπερέθανον (+ gen.) *die for*  
 ὑπό (+ gen.) *by*; (+ dat.) *under, from under*; (+ acc.) *under, down to*  
 ὑποβάλλω, αογ. pass. ὑπεβλήθην *put under in secret* (639)  
 ὑπορράπτω *stitch under, add, patch on* (537)  
 ὑποστρέφω, αογ. ὑπέστρεψα *return* (1019)  
 ὑπουργέω, αογ. ὑπούργησα *do a service for* (842)  
 ὕστατος, -η, -ον *last* (610)  
 ὑφίημι, perf. mid. ptc. ὑφειμένος *send down*; mid. *undertake* (524)  
 ὑφίστημι, αογ. ὑπέστην *place under*; intrans. *undertake*  
 ὑψίκομος, -ον *with high foliage*
- φαίνω, αογ. pass. ἐφάνην *show*; mid./pass. *appear*  
**φᾶος** (φῶς), τό *light*  
 φάρμακον, -ου, τό *drug*  
 φάσκω *say, assert* (637)  
 φάσμα, -ατος, τό *phantom* (1127)  
 φάτνη, -ης, ἡ *manger* (496)  
 φέγγος, -ους, τό *light* (722)  
 φείδομαι, αογ. ἐφεισάμην *spare* (288)  
**Φεραῖος**, -α, -ον *of Pherai/Pherae, the city and land of which Admetus is king*  
 Φέρης, Φέρητος, ὁ *Pheres, Admetus' father*  
 φέρω, οἴσω, ἤνεγκον *carry, bear*  
 φεῦδ exclamation of astonishment, grief, anger, admiration, *ah!, oh!, alas!*  
 φεύγω, perf. πέφευγα *flee, escape* (957)  
 φήμη, -ης, ἡ *utterance* (1005)  
 φημί, φήσω *say*  
 φθάνω *get before*; (+ ptc.) *hurry and do something* (662)

- φθίνω**, plpf. mid. used as aor. ἔφθιτο *wither, perish, die*  
 φθιτός, -ή, ὄν *dead, deceased* (100)  
 φθόνος, -ου, ὁ *envy*  
 φιλέω, aor. ἐφίλησα *love*  
 φιλία, -ας, ἡ *love*  
 φίλιος, (-α), -ον *loving*  
 φιλόξενος, -ον *hospitable*  
 φίλος, -η, -ον (comp. φίλτερος, superl. φίλτατος) *dear, loved as noun, friend, loved one*  
 φιτύω, φιτύσω, ἐφίτευσα *produce, beget*  
 φλόξ, φλογός, ἡ *flame*  
 φοβέω *frighten*; mid. *fear* (1057)  
 φόβη, -ης, ἡ *hair, mane, foliage*  
**Φοῖβος**, -ου, ὁ *Phoibos/Phoebus, Apollo*  
 φοιτάω *visit, move to and fro* (355)  
 φονεύς, -εως, ὁ *killer, murderer* (730)  
 φόνιος, (-α), -ον *bloody, murderous* (225)  
 φράζω, aor. ἔφρασα *tell (of)*  
**φρήν**, φρενός, ἡ *heart, spirit, sense*  
 φρονέω *think, be disposed*; (+ adv.) *be in such and such frame of mind*  
 φροντίζω *think, consider* perf. ptc. πεφροντικός *thoughtful, worried*  
 φροῦδος, -η, -ον *gone*  
 φρουρέω *watch (out for)*  
 Φρύξ, Φρυγός, ὁ *Phrygian* (675)  
 φυλάσσω, φυλάξω *guard, watch for* (844)  
 φύρω, perf. pass. ptc. πεφυρμένος *mix (something dry with something wet), defile*  
 φύσις, -εως, ἡ *nature*  
 φυτεύω *beget, father* (662)  
 φύω, 1 aor. ἔφυσα *produce*; ὁ φύσας *father*; 2 aor. ἔφυν *be born*; perf. πέφυκα *be by nature*  
 φώς, φωτός, ὁ *man*  
 φῶς (φάος), τό *light*  
 χαῖρε *hello, farewell*  
**χαίρω** *rejoice*  
 χαίτη, -ης, ἡ *hair*  
 χαλινός, -οῦ, ὁ *bit*

- Χάλυβος, -ου, ὁ *Chalybian*, a people famous for ironwork  
 χάρα, -ας, ἡ *joy*  
 χάρις, χάριτος, ἡ *thanks, favor, gratitude*  
 Χάρων, -ωνος, ὁ *Charon*, the ferryman of the dead  
 χεῖρ, χειρός, ἡ (spelled χερ- and χειρ-) *hand*  
 χέλυς, -υος, ἡ *tortoise, lyre* (447)  
 χέρνιψ, -ιβος, ἡ *special water* (for ritual purification of the hands) (100)  
 χηρεύω *be without, be a widow or widower* (1089)  
 χῆρος, -α, -ον *widowed*  
 χθόνιος, (-α), -ον *of the Netherworld*  
 χθών, χθονός, ἡ *earth*  
 χολόω, aor. pass. ἐχολώθην *anger* (5)  
 χορεύω, χορευσω, ἐχόρευσα *dance* (582)  
 χορός, -οῦ, ὁ *dance, chorus* (1155)  
 χόρτος, -ου, ὁ *food* (495)  
 χράομαι (+ dat.) *use (as)* (801)  
 χρεία, -ας, ἡ *need*  
 χρέων *it is necessary*  
 χρή, impf. χρῆν *it is necessary, (one ought)*  
 χρῆμα, -ατος, τό *thing*; τι χρῆμα *why?* (512)  
 χρηστός, -ή, -όν *good* (111)  
 χρόνος, -ου, ὁ *time*  
 χρώς, χρωτός, ὁ *skin, flesh*  
 χῶμα, -ατος, τό *mound* (for burial) (997)  
 χωρίς (+ gen.) *without, apart from*
- ψέγω *blame, find fault with* (670)  
 ψευδής, -ές *false* (705)  
 ψεύδομαι, aor. ἐψευσάμην *lie*  
 ψυχαγωγός, -οῦ, ὁ *one bringing back souls from the dead, conjurer, necromancer*  
 (1128)  
 ψυχή, -ῆς, ἡ *soul, breath of life*  
 ψυχοπομπός, -όν *escorting the dead* (361)  
 ψυχορραγέω *breathe one's last, let the soul break forth*  
 ψυχρός, -ά, -όν *cold*

ὦ *oh!*

ὧδε *in this way, thus* (764)

ὦμοι *ah me!*

ὠμός, -ή, -όν *cruel* (64)

ὠνέομαι *buy* (59)

ῶρα, -ας, ἡ *hour, time, season* (449)

ὠραῖος, -α, -ον *timely, ripe* (516)

ὥς *so, thus, as though, so that, because*

ὥσπερ *as, just as*

ὥστε *so that, so as to*

ὠφελέω *benefit, help*

## SUMMARY OF GREEK PREFIXES

ἀ-, ἀν- *not, un-, -less*

ἀμφι- *around*

ἀνα-, ἀν- *up, off*

ἀντι- *against*

ἀπο-, ἀπ-, ἀφ- *from, away, utterly*

δια- *across, beyond, completely*

δυσ- *bad, ill, hard*

εἰς-, εἰς- *into, upon*

ἐκ-, ἐξ- *out, from, un-, completely*

ἐπι-, ἐπ-, ἐφ- *in addition, on, upon, back*

εὖ- *good, well*

ζα- *all, very*

κατα-, κατ-, καθ- *down, utterly*

μετα-, μετ-, μεθ- *re-, amid, differently; also shows change, sharing*

ξυν-, συν- *with, sharing, together*

παρα- *beyond, by, beside, over*

περι- *around*

προ- *forward, for, in front of*

προσ- *to, on, for, at*

ὑπερ- *for, beyond*

ὑπο-, ὑφ- *under, back, secretly*

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