

Medea 1079: (My) Thumos is Greater

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MEDEA 1079: [MY] THUMOS IS GREATER

...καινὰ προσφέρων σοφὰ,
δόξεις ἀχρεῖος κοῦ σοφὸς πεφυκέναι:
τῶν δ' αὖ δοκούντων εἰδέναι τι ποικίλον
κρείσσων νομισθεῖς ἐν πόλει λυπρὸς φανῆ.

θυμὸς δὲ κρείσσων τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων (E. Med. 1079)

Few problems have so long and vexed a history as the question of the meaning of *Medea* 1079. In his 2002 edition of the play, Mastronarde dedicates an appendix to the line summarizing the issues with the long prevailing Platonistic reading that pits passion, as *thumos*, against reason, in the form of Medea's *bouleumata*.¹ He points out the problem with taking *bouleumata* as "reason" or "better judgment" arguing that they must refer rather to, "specific plans or resolutions,"² specifically, Medea's plans to kill the children. I would, moreover, simply ask whether it ever made sense to suppose that should Euripides have wanted to establish Medea's passion as overwhelming her reason he would have had a self-possessed *Medea* state the notion in such a sober declaration.³ Would it not have made more sense to hand off such a task to the

¹ Mastronarde 2002. In addition to Segal's reference (1996, 24 n. 27) in which he summarizes the approaches of Reeve, Lloyd-Jones, Kovacs, Michelini, Foley, and Gilbert, the reader may also consult Diller's comprehensive listing of the modern scholarship on the question (in Lesky 1983, 227). For a useful overview of the Antique philosophical readings, see Dillon (in Clauss & Johnston, 1997) who presents an overview of the Platonistic and Stoic readings of the line, and Gill (1983). I concur with Mastronarde's criticisms of Dihle's approach (1977), followed by Burnett (1998) and will not be considering it further.

² Mastronarde 2002, 393.

³ We may consider in this regard that the Neophron fragment (Stobaeus, *Anthology* 3.20.33 [= *TrGF* 15 F 2] *On Anger*), has his Medea, in addressing her *thumos* moving toward the threshold of the infanticide, distraught as she struggles to fend off the force of *thumos* and the onset of madness, λύσσα. In relinquishing her agency and voluntarism in the deed, she is to be contrasted with Euripides' more chillingly sober and self-possessed characterization. Mastronarde's comment on how not only Creon, and Jason, but also, "the chorus, too, finds it more comforting to fall back on conventional beliefs and ascribe Medea's violence to divine possession and madness rather than contemplate too closely the intentionality of her acts" (2002, 18), gives us a sense of how Euripides' handling of the threat of madness may be seen in contrast to, and as answering, Neophron's. I will return below to a more developed consideration of what we may glean from Neophron, particularly in light of Michelini's argument 1989: 115-35 for the historical priority of his version.

chorus? Mastronarde reviews the range of problems that led Diller⁴ to propose “my angry passion controls my (revenge-) plans,” taking κρείσσων “in the sense ‘master of’, ‘in control of’, (so that the gen. is virtually objective) rather than simply ‘stronger than’ with a more obvious use of the gen. of comparison.” Although Diller’s hypothesis does make better sense of the *bouleumata*, it does so at the expense of what Mastronarde and others concede to be an arguably strained usage of *kreissōn* that is “hard to establish by parallels,” leading him to conclude that an extension of the meaning in “a new direction” by Euripides would have to be admitted to “encompass ruling and guiding without the connotation of suppression and coercion.”⁵ In light of this problem and the full array of approaches, it strikes me as plainly evident that a truly satisfactory solution is as yet wanting. And 1079 is, of course, embedded in the minefield of other problematic issues peppered throughout Medea’s great speech.

While Diller’s reading is advantageous in allowing for a consistent handling of the *bouleumata*, and this problem with the antique readings is definitely begging a solution, and while it is helpful that he has helped to open up the terms of the debate, I would suggest that in addition to the demand for broader parallels for the proposed usage of *kreissōn* we should also scrutinize the fact that such usage would not rhyme with the other instances of the term within the play. I would like to propose that a more systematic consideration of the use of not only *kreissōn*, but also the other elements in the line, *thumos*⁶ and *bouleumata*,⁷ one that reads 1079 in

⁴ Diller (1966).

⁵ Mastronarde 2002, 393.

⁶ Bongie notes what she refers to as the “expanded significance” (1977, 28 n. 5) of the term that accrues through the course of the play, and discusses the heroic tenor of the term in specific instances in more detail at (33-34). See also Foley’s thoroughgoing analysis (1989, 69-70) of Euripides’ use of the term elsewhere.

⁷ I find Mossman’s discussion of the prior instances of *bouleumata* (2010, 329 lines 1078-80 #2) in support of deleting the lines not adequately developed, and rather concur with Mastronarde that they cannot refer to Medea’s plans to save the children. As will be evident, I am, pace Mossman et al., entirely confident of the originality of the lines based on my decidedly literary critical methodology. See Michelini (1989, 117-18) on textual vs. literary critical approaches to the problem. I concur with her argument for the ineluctability of the “heroic mood and tone” (118) established early in the speech. Dyson (1987, 32) provides a useful overview of various approaches attending

a more tightly conceived narrative structure in line with earlier instances associated with not only Medea's, but also Creon's and Jason's, usages of these terms, can be adduced in support of an even more fundamentally novel reading that takes τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων as a *subjective* genitive modifying θυμὸς.⁸ The reading I propose diverges from the full range of extant hypotheses, and will no doubt be met, fittingly, with skepticism. However, to appreciate the merits of this reading, the line must be read as aligned with the prior instances of the relevant terms, and we must look at this full complex with literary critical eyes unprejudiced by the established assumptions.⁹ What is more, I present my reading of 1079 as the culmination of an interpretation of the great speech that will ensue from one simple and equally novel contention: as of 1020 the children are not present on stage as Medea addresses instead her imaginary vision of them *as if* they were present. To facilitate an unbiased assessment of both aspects of my argument, I present first my reading of 1079 and the speech followed by the supporting argumentation in a separate section.

I. THE READING

Allow me to propose that we put aside provisionally the presumption, inherited from the deeply sedimented tradition, that we must rely upon a simple, or singular, reading of the genitive of

to the use of the term earlier in the play. As will be seen, however, I do not concur with his inclination to read the *bouleumata* here as plans to save the children.

⁸ Foley flatly asserts that, "the grammar of these lines [i.e., 1079] is not in question" (1989: 67 n. 22). While it is not clear to me whether she means by this that she is not questioning the grammar, or that it cannot be questioned, such is precisely what I propose to do here.

⁹ Despite whatever particular virtues of Reeve's influential survey (1972) of arguments for athetizations of various combinations of lines in the modern reception of the great speech, and if for nothing else than its utility in exhibiting the remarkable array of implications of the passages taken under consideration, I will join Michelini in arguing against his methodology of local line-by-line textual criticism: "It is easy enough to raise a number of more-or-less persuasive objections to a difficult passage; and any defense of the received text is clearly weakened, if opponents are barred from showing the interconnections that make 'sense' out of a passage" (1989, 118). It is from just such interconnections with earlier instances of all the terms in play in 1079 that the sense I find arises.

bouleumatōn as governed by *kreissōn*, be it as the object of the comparative as in the antique reading: X (*thumos*) is greater than Y (*bouleumatōn*); or, as essentially an objective genitive, as in Diller’s modern reading: X is the master of Y. What if the deeply stratified debate has arisen from a vain pursuit of an interpretation of X and Y incorrectly limited to one or the other of these readings of the genitive? What if the inadequacy of this simple prejudice itself accounts for what are, in effect, ungrounded, chimerical attempts to determine the significations of *thumos* and *bouleumata*, and the force of *kreissōn*, and the resultant meaning of the line?

I propose that we begin anew, provisionally taking τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων not simply as governed by the common comparative of X (*thumos*) is greater than Y (*bouleumatōn*), but rather as a subjective genitive modifying *thumos* in the sense of “the *thumos* of my *bouleumatōn*.” The full line would then read: “the *thumos* of my *bouleumatōn* is *kreissōn*...”, “the heroic warrior spirit¹⁰ of my plans is stronger...”. But stronger than what? What would be the object of the comparative? Stronger than what is left implied, namely the *thumos* of Jason’s *bouleumatōn*: the X of Y is stronger [than Z]; Medea is stronger than Jason. (I say “provisionally” now, as below I will introduce a further wrinkle on this interpretation that actually bends back to a dual reading actually that reclaims as well the sense of the comparative genitive read on a higher level, but that must wait. I ask as well my reader’s patience for my consideration of possible comparanda in support of this proposed grammar to be presented in the appendix at the end of the study.)

¹⁰ I would point to the sort of stubborn and rancorous heroic *thumos* that Nestor attributes to Agamemnon at *Il.* 9.109, μεγάλῃτορι θυμῷ, as quite close to the inflection on *thumos* I am reading here. I will return below to consider the heroic sense of *thumos* for which I am arguing. Cf. Rickert on the “heroic principles of harming enemies, helping friends, not submitting to dishonor, injustice, insults, or the mockery of one’s enemies” (1987, 99). I concur with her position that the reduction of *thumos* to passion, particularly as colored as “evil and in conflict with reason, which is good, is at the center of many unsatisfactory interpretations of this drama” (1987, 100). Her discussion, moreover, of problematic applications of Plato’s conception of *thumos* is worth consulting, in particular her reference to Lloyd-Jones (1980, 54) on the question, “The address to one’s θυμός is of course Homeric; but as often in tragedy the θυμός is not merely one of several more or less vague terms for the seat of the intelligence but connotes pride, spirit, anger, something like what Plato means by τὸ θυμοειδές” (1987, 100).

Medea's *thumos* is stronger than Jason's *thumos*; Medea's *bouleumata* to murder Creon, Creusa, and, thereupon, the children, supplant Jason's *bouleumata* for the new marriage and Creon's to exile Medea. That it is specifically the female warrior's *thumos* that prevails over the males' has not so long ago been shown in studies of Medea qua hero.¹¹ To fully appreciate the ironic force of the *thumos* effected in Medea's plans to kill the children we must appreciate how her plans arise in response to the prior context of the unfolding of not only Jason's, but also Creon's, plans for her and the children and how, thereby, 1079 is to be read as integrated into the overall unfolding complex of her *agōn* with them.

The Nurse forebodes the threat of Medea's scheming at the outset:

For she abhors the children and takes no pleasure in looking at them.

I fear that she may devise some new plan [τι βουλεύση νέον]. (36-37)

And notes her rising *thumos*, notes, that is, that her *thumos*, which had once been filled with passion for Jason, ἔρωτι θυμὸν (8), but has turned bitter, δυσθυμουμένη (91), is on an arc to becoming *greater*, μείζονι θυμῷ (108)—this θυμὸς, I contend, when *greater*, μείζων, will be *stronger*, κρείσσων—in immediate connection with her conjecture as to the risk to the children: τί ποτ' ἐργάσεται, “what will she do?” (108).

Before turning in a moment to the substance of Medea's “new” planning, I pause over this reference as foreshadowing what is generally taken, especially by T. V. Buttrey,¹² to have been new in Euripides' *Medea*, namely the infanticide; this Medea's *new* scheming will prove at once to be the defining element on the metanarrational level of *Euripides'* new dramatic plan. I

¹¹ See Knox (1977) and Bongie (1977). I am, however, more sympathetic to Foley's recognition of how Medea's gender reversal amounts to “an implicit attack on the typical Sophoclean hero” (1989, 82). For discussion and bibliography on the question see also Boedekker (1991, 109 n. 56).

¹² Buttrey (1958).

pause here to note that while I am actually inclined to concur with Michelini's renewed argument for the historical priority of Neophron's *Medea*, and therefore the precedent of his Medea's infanticide, and I will return to explain why I suspect this is correct below, I do nonetheless read Euripides' treatment of Medea's progression beyond the plot against Jason, Creon, and Creusa, as representing a distinct, second-stage of the drama, very much in the spirit of what Buttrey finds, that the audience would, despite whatever knowledge they might have of Neophron's precedent, not necessarily anticipate. For despite the precedent of one infanticide Medea, this precedent would be vying with the full range of the other inflections of Medea's tale in myth. Thus the audience would need not assume that even were Euripides' hearkening in some measure to Neophron in these early hints of threats to the children he would necessarily follow through on what was presumably still sensed as an outlying version of her tale. Therefore, I do still, along with Buttrey, read the play as essentially divided in two between Medea's original plans to be supplemented by the extended plans to kill the children in a second stage. It will be clear below why I put it this way. Medea's plan to kill the children is the new plan that will overpower Jason's plans, but is also Euripides' plan to take his infanticide Medea to the new level of tragedy beyond the Medea of Argonautic epic myth, to exalt a hero of *tragedy*, champion of a new ironic critique of the paradigmatic *kleos* of the hero of epic.

So, in line with Buttrey's interpretation of *Medea* as comprising "two plays"—the first operating within the framework of what the audience would have been expecting from the Argonautic tradition, the second pushing out into the new horror of the infanticide—Medea's planning is formulated in two stages. The first stage is marked by her open expression of her intention to kill Creon, Creusa, and Jason (364-409) to the chorus of Corinthian women after Creon's exit. This section opens with Creon noting the threat posed by Medea's, as he puts it,

“raging against her husband,” πόσει θυμουμένην, in the first line of his entrance speech at 271. Medea is the subject of the verb derived from *thumos*; Jason is the object who runs the risk of being harmed by Medea’s raging *thumos*, emphasized as Creon’s first concern. If the risk were to be realized it would take the form of Medea’s *thumos*, X, prevailing over Jason, Z, (along with the threat of collateral damage to Creon and his daughter) and would thus be consistent with my X of Y is greater (than Z) reading of 1079. Moreover, it is precisely in anticipation of such a risk that Creon has come with an “announcement of [his] new (prophylactic) plans,” καινῶν ἄγγελον βουλευμάτων (270), plans for Medea’s exile as an addendum to the original inciting plans for Jason’s second marriage. Creon’s new plans will, however, not succeed in forestalling Medea’s plans, or her μηχανή (260), to which Medea had just persuaded the chorus to assent.

From 271-315 the two exchange extended speeches in which Creon sticks by his edict of exile for Medea who makes her case against Jason in response. In the last of these speeches Creon is still resisting Medea for fear of what she might be planning:

The words you speak sound soft, but within your mind
I fear you are planning [βουλεύσης] some evil,
Indeed, I trust you less now than before
For a woman with a sharp *thumos* [ὄξύθυμος], or likewise a man,
Is easier to guard against than a clever one who is silent. (316-320)

The evil plans that he fears at this point are such as the audience expects of their Medea of myth and which she openly announces in her speech following Creon’s partial acquiescence and exit, namely the ordeals of her “three enemies” (374), Creon, Creusa, and Jason—the *boulemata* (372) that Medea declares Creon could have forestalled had he not succumbed to her request to postpone her exile one day.

Creon's words bring *bouleumata* and *thumos* together for the first time in the framework of Medea's first-stage (or "old," i.e., mythic) planning. Creon fears a clever, feminine plan that will play out silently, that will *not openly exhibit thumos*, at least not the sort of sharp—let's call it openly heroic—*thumos* we will see in action at 1079. Moreover, while we will see this relationship modified with Medea's new, second-stage plans, here *bouleumata* and *thumos* are out of alignment with the common readings of 1079 in that *thumos* is already being considered in terms of belonging to *bouleumata*, although here noted in its seeming absence. We can see how Medea would take umbrage here in being characterized as but a guileful, secretive woman *lacking thumos*, as later she will exult, as I contend, in the greater *thumos* of *her* plans. Here the first-stage (mythic) *bouleumata* lack *thumos* (or at least an openly heroic *thumos*)—there is no X in these Y; at 1079 the second-stage (tragic) *bouleumata* will have come to possess *thumos*, that is, a greater, heroic, *thumos*—the X of Y is greater. The character of the first-stage planning is evident as Medea exhorts herself—or perhaps we could say, *her person*—*not*, as later, to open action, but rather to guileful *technē*: "Medea, as you plan [βουλεύουσα] and scheme [τεχνωμένη], go forward to the awesome deed" (402-03). In the second-stage plans it will be *thumos*—I balk at saying "her" *thumos* for reasons that will be presented below—that Medea will resist as *an other*, as a force that would, that will, overcome her person: "But no, oh [my] *thumos* [θυμέ], do not do these things" (1057).

If first we see *bouleumata* and *thumos* lining up in Creon's reference to Medea's first-stage planning, four lines into Jason's first speech we find *bouleumata* lined up with *kreissōn*, the other critical element of 1079, in what will amount to the incitement for Medea to recast her first-stage plans in their second-stage (tragi-) heroic form. Jason goads her in suggesting that everything would have worked out fine if only "she had born lightly the *bouleumata* of her

betters,” κούφως φερούση κρεισσόνων βουλεύματα (449). And this line is no better aligned with the common reading of *kreissōn* as comparative at 1079 than was Creon’s juxtaposition of *thumos* and *bouleumata*. Instead, we learn here precisely what it is that will make the *thumos* of Medea’s *bouleumatōn kreissōn*, namely that she will specifically overcome the βουλεύματα of those who only seem, for the moment, to be κρεισσόνων.

As Buttrey argues, the Aigeus episode marks the transition to the “second play.” This is confirmed in what has changed for Medea. For, having found a safe harbor for her premeditated plans, her *bouleumata*, τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων (769), she—and Euripides—is now prepared to divulge “all her *bouleumata*” (772-73), that is, report how she has *recast* her plans—and how Euripides has recast myth—*anew* to recall the overtones of the nurse’s early foreboding, μή τι βουλεύση νέον¹³ (37), “lest she will cast some new plan.” This transition from the first-stage plan to the new, second-stage is also marked metatextually as *Euripides* announces that *he too* is done with the mythic account: ἐνταῦθα μέντοι τόνδ’ ἀπαλλάσσω λόγον (790), “and so I will leave behind this account for another,” as I would opt to paraphrase how he conveys the key point of transition in the modification of Medea’s tale in her concluding gesture to the “old” plan. It will be the new plan that will ensure, as we learn in the closing words of this speech, that Medea will win the eternal *kleos* of the warrior, εὐκλέεστατος βίος (810) to be secured in her open display of a greater *thumos*. The section closes, however, with the chorus wondering how Medea will ever find the courage, θράσος (856),¹⁴ how she will manage with a suffering *thumos*, τλάμονι θυμῷ (865).

¹³ LSJ νέος III. *anew, afresh*.

¹⁴ Here the chorus makes explicit the inflection of *thumos* as heroic courage, or “daring passion,” as Pucci (1980, 224 n. 15) puts it. Again, see Foley (1989, 69-70) for a discussion of the various possible inflections of *thumos*.

To supplant Jason’s planning—as he explicitly described it in their first exchange: “Have I really planned [βεβούλευμαι] so badly?” (567)—with her own, Medea must undertake a two-step process. First, feigning compliance,¹⁵ she stages a mock conversation with herself: “Oh wretched woman, why do I rage and bear such rancor for those who are planning [βουλεύουσιν] best” (873-74). This mock address recalls her exhortation to rally herself to devise her first-stage plans. But now, instead of rallying herself to devise secretive plans, she secretively pretends to be acquiescing to the plans of others, the plans of her “betters.” Indeed, it is as if she must go back and erase, in a sense, her earlier plans—as Euripides goes back to efface prior myth—to accede to her second-stage plans. She must clear the register of the earlier disposition of *thumos*: οὐκ ἀπαλλαχθήσομαι θυμοῦ (878-79), “why should I not transform that *thumos*?” Indeed, allowing for a little license in translation, we might wonder whether Medea is not suggesting that it must be virtually as if *there had been no earlier plan*: ἠσθόμην ἀβουλίαν πολλὴν ἔχουσα καὶ μάτην θυμουμένη (882-83), “I perceived the glaring ‘*lack of a plan*’ and the folly of that ‘*disposition of thumos*’.” So, in this juxtaposition we have an invented, vain θυμὸς of ἀβουλία. Renouncing this ἀβουλία, Medea purports to have concluded that she “should have participated in [Jason’s] *bouleumata*,” ἢ χρῆν μετεῖναι τῶνδε τῶν βουλευμάτων (885)—those *bouleumata* of his, τῶνδε τῶν βουλευμάτων, that she will echo in line end collocation with her new *bouleumata* in the monologue, τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων (1079).

Indeed, stepping back for a moment, we may now see how the three such line end instances of the term articulate the “second play” framework around the new plans:

¹⁵ On Medea’s stratagem here see Barlow (1989, 163-64). We may appreciate the irony Barlow identifies in Medea’s dissembling all the more when these lines are viewed, as I am arguing, as preparing and intimately connected with the reading I am proposing for 1079. The perspective my reading adds to these passages serves to heighten all the more the pathos and irony of the reversal Barlow shows as pending in Medea’s great speech.

1. 769: τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων, naming for the first time Medea’s new plans now made possible by virtue of Aegisthus’ offer of sanctuary.
2. 886: μετεῖναι τῶνδε τῶν βουλευμάτων, where the slight variance indicates that it is Jason’s plans that are being named as Medea puts her new plans to overturn his plans into play. In implementing her new plans Medea will most precisely not be opting to join together—μετεῖναι, from μέτειμι—with Jason as she disingenuously purports to be doing. No, in this middle term of the three instances, she will not bring her plans into alignment with his; instead, their plans will be at odds as she will abandon—μετεῖναι, from μεθήμι—his plans.
3. 1079: τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων Medea reasserts her plans as her own, definitively.¹⁶

Returning now to Medea’s mock acquiescence, we see how, having cleared the register, so to speak, of her first-stage plans, and having feigned acquiescence to her “betters,” she is “now ready to plan [βεβούλευμαι] these things again, better [ἄμεινον]” (893). The comparative ἄμεινον, albeit with adverbial force, here prefigures Medea’s reassertion of the *thumos* of her *bouleumata* as *kreissōn* at 1079. What has been “now,” νῦν (893), newly refigured, both by Medea, and in Euripides’ dramatic revision, is precisely confirmed through the audience’s horror at that for which they had not been prepared by the Argonautic tradition: “Oh Children,” ὦ τέκνα τέκνα (894).¹⁷ Moreover, the cledonomatic irony of Jason’s acknowledgment of

¹⁶ It is worth comparing in this connection Euripides’ use of line end references to *bouleumata* in *Hecuba* to frame speeches between Hecuba and Odysseus in which each accuses the other of evil *bouleumata*. Hecuba opens her speech, where she pleads with Odysseus for her daughter’s, Polyxena’s life: οὔκουν κακὴν τοῖσδε τοῖς βουλεύμασιν (251) and Odysseus ends his speech stating that Troy got what it deserved: ὑμεῖς δ’ ἔχηθ’ ὅμοια τοῖς βουλεύμασιν (331). While framed negatively here as the rejection of the opponent’s *bouleumata*, the contest between them parallels the competition of *bouleumata* between Jason and Medea I read in 1079.

¹⁷ A couple decades later in *Electra* Euripides would turn to another famous infanticide. At 1011 Clytemnestra addresses Agamemnon’s *bouleumata* for the sacrifice of Iphigeneia, and reinforces the term with the verbal form that follows: τοιαῦτα μέντοι σὸς πατὴρ βουλεύματα ἐς οὓς ἐχρῆν ἤκιστ’ ἐβούλευσεν φίλων. Moreover, her revenge takes the shape of excessively vengeful counter *bouleumata* in a line end formulation identical to *Medea* 1079: οἴμοι τάλαινα τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων (1109-10). That Clytemnestra goes on to suggest that perhaps her revenge was excessive, along with the fact that Euripides’ Clytemnestra indicates that it was less on account of the sacrifice

Medea's acquiescence in his stating that she has now "found the *boulê* [βουλήν] that will in time be victorious [νικῶσαν]" (912-13), reminds us that we are dealing with a battle between the competing *bouleumata* of two warriors.¹⁸ The *bouleumata* of one will vanquish those of the other.

So on to the monologue: the opening refrain, ὦ τέκνα τέκνα (1021), as it echoes 894, confirms that we are coming to the new and improved, ἄμεινον (893), plan. Certainly the speech transitions to Medea's tortured consideration of her new plans to kill the children; however, actually, I will, in a moment, be arguing that we should reconsider our assumptions about the precise terms of the inception of the new plans. Moreover, as I announced in the opening, I believe we can negotiate the tangle of apparent problems with the speech with one simple determination: the children are, in fact, dismissed along with the tutor at 1020 and in the following moments that have been universally read as Medea actually addressing the children present (or at least at differing stages accordingly with differing readings) with her on stage, instead she is picturing them in her imagination and addressing them in absentia.¹⁹ The obvious comparandum for this contention is Cassandra's real-time *manteia* on the threshold of the palace of the horrific murder of Agamemnon by Clytemnestra, to whom, of course, Medea is often compared in broader terms (and as in the notes above here).

So, at 1020 the children are dismissed. That the central concern for Medea regarding her new plans is the fate of her children is evident from the start in her idealized address to them, in

than Agamemnon's having taken a second woman, Cassandra, that she took her revenge upon him, suggests that Euripides is perhaps still thinking through the problems of Medea's avenging *bouleumata*.

¹⁸ Compare Fragment 200.3-4: σοφὸν γὰρ ἔν βούλευμα τὰς πολλὰς χέρας νικᾷ, 'one wise *βούλευμα* vanquishes many hands.'

¹⁹ See Reeve (1972, 54-55) on the problems associated with the assumption that the children are physically present.

absentia now, ὧ τέκνα τέκνα (1021). Yet although the fate of the children is the thread that runs through and organizes the speech, we must *forget* what we know of what Medea's decision will be and its outcome. The audience in this moment, along with Medea, have not yet advanced to certain knowledge that she will follow through on the horrific deed. This point is not merely critical for the drama of the speech, but also needs to be held in mind in order that we may correctly interpret Medea's words through the monologue. For it is first and foremost not the question of whether Medea will kill the children but rather whether she will follow through on the entirety of her plan, that is, first the plan to kill *Creusa and Creon* that is at issue. In other words, although the speech will, on the other end, bring us out with Medea's new plans formulated and the *thumos* it unleashes ascendant, going in here at the beginning of the speech Medea is not first weighing the question of killing the children but rather the first part of the plan, the part she has already launched, the core of her old plan, the part that entails killing *Creusa and Creon*.

As things stand now, as yet prior to the old-plan-element having been fully effected, the children "have a city and a home," σφῶν μὲν ἔστι δὴ πόλις καὶ δῶμ' (1021-22). If Medea were to interrupt her murderous plan before it would be too late, the children would remain in Corinth and move to Jason's new home with *Creusa*. Such is how matters stand for them, μὲν ἔστι δὴ, in the present moment. But it is not so simple, for while first I read this line as a statement of what is the case at the present moment, it must also be read as framing the two alternatives dependent upon whether or not Medea opts to allow her old plan to play out, for in the words that follow, "in which [i.e., in the house] leaving suffering me behind you will dwell forever bereft of your mother," ἐν ᾧ λιπόντες ἀθλίαν ἐμὲ οἰκήσεται αἰεὶ μητρὸς ἔστερημένοι (1022-23), we must

grapple with the problem of the active voice of the participle λιπόντες.²⁰ For it is Medea who is leaving to go into exile, and leaving the children behind. While we could possibly overcome this apparent discrepancy in saying that it describes the children leaving the house Medea shared with Jason to go to Creusa's, we should also hear the more sinister implication of the first reference to the new plan as we would imagine that the choice when parsed out across the prospect of Medea cancelling the old plan *or* letting it play out for the children is either for there to be a city, Corinth, for them *or* for *them* to go to another house altogether, the house of *Hades*.²¹ Going to dwell in the house of Hades, they will be bereft of their mother forever. We will hear this first allusion to the house of Hades affirmed in the next below at 1053 where Medea commands the children to go “into the house.” This is not a command, as has caused so much confusion and occasioned the various proposed athetization schemes,²² to the present children to go into the physical house in front of which Medea stands, but rather a command to the children in absentia, already in the physical house, to go off to the house of Hades, to go off to death. I will address this below.

Medea will leave before she could attend to their weddings, “Oh how wretched am I for my willfulness,” (1024-28). Woe for all that I have lost... for bereft of you, grievous my life (1029-37). “No longer will you see your mother with your dear eyes, passing off to another state [σχήμ'] of life” (1038-39). The lines clearly indicate, as Mastronarde explains, their unhappy fate: “the surface meaning for the boys themselves is another form of life (that is, one with Jason

²⁰ On this issue Mastronarde says only, “λιπόντες... is not strictly appropriate to those who are staying while Medea departs” (2002, 334).

²¹ Mossman notes that, “the ancient commentator is clear about these lines: ‘She secretly speaks of Hades’” (2011, 319). My reading does resolve the issue she raises, “The house of Hades is a very common image; the idea of a city of Hades is hard to parallel” (319), as I argue that the city and the house (of Hades) are opposed as potential variant outcomes. Later the chorus describe Creusa as having gone to the “house of Hades,” Ἄιδου δόμους, although the lines are suspected by many. The notion of the house of Hades is clearly attested elsewhere, e.g., *Alcestis* 25, 73; *Hippolytus* 895; *Ion* 1274. For a contrasting reading of the relationship of Corinth and death see Pucci (1980, 136).

²² See Kovacs (1986, 344-45).

and a stepmother and without Medea), but the phrase is again easily understood as a euphemism for death,”²³ hearkening back, as I argue, to the reference to the house of death at 1022.

The hypothetical reference to the children’s eyes triggers what has always been taken as a reference to the literal eyes of the children before Medea. I contend, however, that as Medea moves toward her new plans, moves toward the threshold of contemplating the actual deed her new plans will require, she “sees” the eyes of the children in an ecstatic vision: φεῦ φεῦ:²⁴ τί προσδέρκεσθέ μ’ ὄμμασιν, τέκνα, “Ai, Ai, why do you cast your gaze upon me with your eyes, children?” (1040). “Why do you smile that last smile, laughing...,” as she recalls in her mind’s eye their happiness... Although we can only lament the limitations that working solely with the written text present in this most dramatic moment, I contend that we can nonetheless see really quite clearly from the next lines that the children are not physically present:

Ai! What shall I do? My heart leaves me,

Women, as I saw [ὡς εἶδον] the shining eyes of my children.

I cannot do it. (1042-44)

Would it not be actually quite odd for Medea to say, “as I saw the eyes,”²⁵ if she had *just* seen them standing right there in plain view of the chorus too? No, they are not there. Medea tells the chorus that she has just seen the eyes of the children because they are not there and she has seen the eyes only in her ecstatic vision and the chorus have not.

²³ Mastronarde 2002, 336.

²⁴ Compare Cassandra’s outcry at Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 1307: φεῦ φεῦ, as she experiences the house, δόμοι, reeking of blood (1309).

²⁵ It is interesting to note that Pucci opts to translate this in the present tense, “when I *see* [emphasis added] the bright eyes of my children” (1980, 137) presumably reading only for the simple aspect of the aorist. Is this a more or less conscious reflection of the awkwardness of εἶδον with the children supposedly still present? Pucci asserts: “During most of this inner debate the children are absent from the stage. Certainly they leave at 1053 and reenter at 1069” (1980, 223 n. 11).

And so she bids her *bouleumata* be gone, *χαίρω βουλεύματα* (1044). But which plans? “Those from before,” *τὰ πρόσθεν* (1045), that is, the first-stage plans. She contemplates cancelling the attack underway before it is too late, and leaving with her children, taking them with her into exile. If she stops the attack before it’s too late, she imagines she could leave without any risk to the children. No, why hurt Jason and hurt herself two times over. She will dismiss the plans, *χαίρω βουλεύματα* (1048).

But next, as she turns back to the plan, Medea steels her resolve and faces the true brunt of the consequences of her first-stage plans in the requirement for her new, second-stage plans:

But what am I doing? Do I wish [βούλομαι] to be a cause for laughter

Allowing my enemies to go free?

Must I not venture to do these things? Ah how base of me

To even allow such soft words to enter my mind.

Go [χωρεῖτε] children into the house... (1049-1053)

So whereas in her moment of weakness Medea contemplates dismissing her plans from before, her old plans, *χαίρω βουλεύματα* (1044; 1048), now she must reconsider what she wants, *βούλομαι* (1049), instead to opt to dismiss her children, *χωρεῖτε* (1053), from this world to enter the next, *not* the house before which she has been standing *already bereft of the children*, but rather the house of death as she *now* accedes to her new plans.

Medea balks momentarily attempting twice to dismiss the *bouleumata* (1044 & 1048) to kill Creusa and Creon, but then summons the necessary courage, “the audacity to do these things,” *τολμητέον τάδ’* (1051). However, she wavers again, as she addresses [her] *thumos* as an other, as mentioned above: “No, *thumos* [θυμέ], no, don’t you [σύ]²⁶ do these things” (1056).

²⁶ While I appreciate Foley’s attention to the emphasis that *γε* lends to the phrasing, I am not sure I am reading it quite as it seems does she judging by her translation, “Do not... *thume*, do not you of all people [*me su ge*] do these

This further reversal has led to assumptions of interpolation, but in light of my reading we see a crucial shift at this juncture that triggers it. Up until this point Medea has been pondering the consequences of either allowing her first-stage plans to play out or reversing them before it is too late. This has involved her in considering the consequences of either course of action *hypothetically*. If she intercedes, the children will have a city and home; if she allows the plans to play out, then the children's home in Corinth will be supplanted by the house of death, (be it their death at the hands of the Corinthians or her own). As she sees their eyes in her ecstatic vision, she weakens and contemplates interceding to dismiss, *χαίρέτω*, her first-stage plans. But she cannot suffer the affront of her enemies and so she reverses her position and must rather *usher*, *χωρεῖτε*, the children into the house of death. But it is this thought, or vision, now of the children crossing over the threshold of death, in contrast to the earlier vision of them outside the house with shining eyes as she had imagined them, that redoubles her horror, her ecstasy. And it is now that she is exposed to what her second-stage plans, as the inevitable consequence of allowing her first-stage plans to play out, will unleash, exposed to what it will take to actually accomplish the deed: *θυμέ* (1056), "No *thumos*, do not you do these things."

Here is the point to turn to Neophron, Stobaeus, Anthology 3.20.33 (= TrGF 15 f 2), picking up at this specific conjunction: *τι δράσεις, θυμέ*. The simple fact that of the little that remains of the tragedy we have this key fragment is itself remarkable. The conjunction is clear, but already there is a subtle difference between the two. For in Neophron at this point *thumos*

things" (1989: 70). I see in the particle a special emphasis on the distinction between Medea's self and the *thumos* she addresses, that *otherness* of what we cannot thus quite aptly or simply refer to as "her" *thumos*. This otherness of *thumos* is what is reflected in my bracketing of [my] in my title and throughout. Just the same Foley does certainly also read the play of this otherness: "A *thumos* that can impel Medea either to kill or to spare, and to hear the reasons on both sides for so doing, is apparently capable, like the Homeric *thumos*, of some sort of deliberate choice, even if, by 1079, the *thumos* is finally set (and was probably from the start irrevocably set) on doing things to Medea's harm (*kaka*)" (70). I do concur with her characterization of *thumos*, "as a capacity located in Medea that directs her to act" (70), with some equivocation on the 'location' of this *thumos*.

has already gotten out beyond Medea's control as she asks "what, *thumos*, will you do." *Thumos* is already conceived as a fully independent agent, whereas Euripides' Medea still appears to exhibit some hope for control of *thumos* in imagining she may issue it a command. The difference is subtle, perhaps at this juncture even negligible though given that Neophron's Medea's next words have her instructing *thumos* to "consider [βουλεῦσαι] it well before you make a mistake," as Mastronarde translates.²⁷

I point out here, incidentally, that this instance of *thumos* being taken as possessed of the capacity to formulate plans, βουλεῦσαι,²⁸ would represent a critically important comparandum for my X of Y is greater reading of 1079 where we must imagine Medea's *bouleumata* as charged with *thumos*, as here I suggest that we can move to seeing them as the product of the action of *thumos*. Either Neophron's attribution of the capacity of βουλεῦσαι to *thumos* may be presented as a potential comparandum ante quem of a Euripides reading Neophron, or post quem of a Neophron reading 1079 as do I. I do not actually incline to the latter. Whichever way the history dictates, however, this comparandum unequivocally connects *thumos* and βουλεῦσαι and is directly apposite to 1079 in a way that is not reflected in any of the other readings of the line.

My argument that the children are not on stage from 1020ff. may, moreover, inform the historical relationship between the two *Medeas*. For in Neophron it is precisely at the point at which *thumos* has thoroughly taken hold of Medea and has been fully given over to madness, λύσσα, that the children are dismissed from Medea's eyes, ἐκτὸς ὀμμάτων ἀπέλθεται', which

²⁷ Mastronarde (2002, 59).

²⁸ I would thus pose this indication of *thumos* exhibiting the agency of formulating plans in response to Gill: "But it is uncommon, I think, to find the θυμός treated quite so much as an agent, that is, as one who performs, or refrains from, deliberate actions (μη... ἐργάση... ἔασον... φεῖσαι)" (in Bramble, Whitby, Hardie, and Whitby 1987, 28). Gill reads Neophron as later, following Euripides. Reeve 1972: 55 sees Medea's *earlier bouleumata*—not those at 1079—as produced by *thumos*: "Medea has mentioned βουλευμάτα before (769, 772, 1044, 1048): she had planned to kill her children. These βουλευμάτα are evidently the product of her θυμός which at one point she commands to spare her children (1056-7)."

Mastronarde translates, paraphrastically, as: “Children, go into the house.”²⁹ Whatever is in play with the staging of the children, clearly the two versions are apposite in this regard as well. I find it far more likely to imagine a Euripides starting from Neophron’s version with the children literally present and modifying it as I argue he has than the reverse scenario. This relationship, I would contend, would also be all the more likely should Neophron’s *Medea* have antedated *The Oresteia* as the accounts, however sketchy, suggest. The *manteia*, if I may somewhat loosely call it such, of Euripides’ *Medea* might be thought of thus as a ‘Cassandrized’ version of Neophron’s *Medea* at the physical threshold of the house and the definitive threshold that separates sanity from the outright loss of personal agency in madness.

In addition to the changed situation of the children, the key modification of Euripides’ *Medea* is the terms of her negotiation of her agency in the face of ascendant *thumos*. Assuming Neophron’s play as prior, Euripides has complicated, or doubled, the situation of the children. Under the doubled figure of the house, as referring equivocally to the physical house and the house of Hades, the children are doubled in being physically within the physical house, on the one hand, and present to *Medea* in her ecstatic vision in which she mantically sees them crossing over as she foresees herself ushering them into the house of death. Neophron’s presentation of *Medea*’s agency is, from what we can see, also simple; she approaches the threshold at which *thumos*, possessed by madness, takes over the planning. In light of this contrast, it is worth focusing on the two poets’ use of the term *τάλας*. Neophron uses the term simply to qualify *thumos*: ‘to what extreme have your rushed, wretched heart [*τάλας*].’ Euripides’ use strikes me as more complex, articulating, as I read it, *Medea* the person, the maternal figure, in contrast to *thumos* along the lines of the basic division of her character such as Foley asserts:

²⁹ Mastronarde (2002, 52).

No do not, *thumos*, do not you do these things,
Leave them be, oh wretched one [τάλαν], spare the children
Living there with us they will give you cheer. (1056-58)

I am not entirely certain of how to read this,³⁰ particularly as the first person plural ἡμῶν strikes me as, well, schizophrenic! Speaking loosely. Perhaps that's exactly the point. But I suspect that we should read a separation here between *thumos*³¹ and *talas* as a mark of Medea's divided self, to hearken to Foley's phrasing, by way of contrast to Neophron: "No [impersonal, abstract] *thumos* don't you [σύ marking the divide of *thumos* as other, and other than *talas*] do this; oh wretched one, [maternal *talas* Medea herself, that is, in contrasted to impersonal *thumos*] let them be, living with us ['schizophrenic' Medea, maternal *talas cum* impersonal *thumos*?] there in Athens they will give you [*talas* Medea? σε, in something of a ring with σύ, marking the contrasting selves] cheer ..."³²

Again, it is important to recall what I introduced above regarding the opening of the speech. Medea is not directly contemplating the murder of the children; rather, she is still considering the necessity to murder the children as the consequence of not stopping the first-stage plan of killing Creusa and Creon. So the alternative of taking the children with her to Athens, with no threat of Corinthian retribution, is still being considered by her as a possibility. However, I would also ask whether what would thus be Medea's notion that she could bring the

³⁰ Nor, of course, am I alone. See Kovacs (1986, 343-52).

³¹ While my reading for *talas* Medea and *thumos* as opposed adds another wrinkle to the equation here, I do appreciate Pucci's characterization of *thumos* as Medea's "imperious master" (1980, 139).

³² I incline toward Erbse (1981), quoted in Kovacs, as regards the ultimate prospects for the children: "Erbse (pp. 69-73) has argued that once Medea has sent the children with the poisoned robe and crown, it is no longer possible to conceive of a version of the revenge that does not involve their death. The revenge-plan is an 'unteilbare Einheit', and in order to kill her rival, 'setzt Medea ihr Kinder aufs Spiel, und sie weiss genau, das diese nach Gelingen des Anschalges der Rache der Korinther nicht entgehen werden'" (1986, 344). However, again I emphasize that I see Medea still considering at this juncture whether or not to allow the children to follow through with the plan; even though they have already delivered the gifts there is still time forestall the attack.

children with her, either as innocents, or as complicit in the murders, was ever a true prospect. It strikes me as no accident that Medea neither requested, nor did Aegeus grant, sanctuary to *Jason's* children, and this leads me to ask as well whether this particular question may be useful in thinking further on Aegeus' childlessness. And would it not seem probable that even as Medea fantasizes of the possibility of bringing the children with her to Athens, *living*, she knows this cannot be, and knew not even to request sanctuary for them.³³ Now bringing them there *dead* is another story, the one that does play out—hence the irony of ἐκεῖ μεθ' ἡμῶν ζῶντες.

Returning to the speech, the last whimper of *talas* Medea, however, shall not sway *thumos*, “by Hades' avenging furies” (1059), “it shall never be thus that I—*thumos* talking now—shall abide my children subjected to the insolence of my hated foes” (1060-61).³⁴ And now the die is cast, for Medea sees, again mantically, σάφ' οἶδ' ἐγώ, the death of her foes (1064-66).

Now she, *τάλας* Medea, must go on the most miserable, *τλημονεστάτην*, road and send her children on that even more miserable road, to Hades of course. Queuing up again for the last time the phonetic play between βούλομαι and *bouleumata*, she says: “I wish [βούλομαι] to speak to the children” (1069), again a phrase that really wouldn't make much sense were they present there with her. And I would argue that the dramatic impact of Medea's request to her imaginary children in absentia for their most beloved hands, their most beloved lips, is just all that much more piqued than would be the case in the living presence of the children à la Neophron. The two of them will be truly happy only there, ἐκεῖ, not, that is, as above at 1058 in exile in fantasy

³³ It strikes me that Medea's precise plans regarding the children is directly apposed to her acceptance of her exile and left unclear in her pleas to Creon at 340-56.

³⁴ I see no problem concurring with the common consensus for athetization of 1062-63.

Athens, but there in real Hades.³⁵ Oh sweet (imaginary image) of soft skin and sweet breath, *χωρεῖτε χωρεῖτ'* (1076), go now, ushered off to the house of death.³⁶ “For no longer can I look upon this image of them, vanquished [*νικῶμαι*] as I am by these evils, for I learn now what evils I must suffer/dare to undertake...” (1076-78).

And thus we arrive at that *thumos*, *θυμὸς δὲ κρείσσων*, that brings Medea beyond herself; in this *thumos* she experiences the heroic transcendence that will, ironically, win an eternal *kleos*, however infamous, this *thumos*, Euripides', at the crux of the problem of 1079.

To read the line now I backtrack to pick up again two key moments that brought us to this point across the full scope of the play. First, I recall those crucial opening lines in Jason's first speech that would raise the *agōn* (announced by Medea at 403 in the framework of her first-stage planning) to the level at which Medea would be a contender for an immortal *kleos*, namely the *agōn* provoked by Jason's statement that Medea should have “born lightly the plans of her betters,” *κούφως φερούση κρεισσόνων βουλευματα* (449). I have yet to note that in Medea's first-stage planning she already duped Creon into believing that she had done just this when at 315 she states that she will “stay silent...”—while this is also to be read ironically as an indication that she is confining herself for the moment to the sort of silent guile that characterizes her first-stage tactics—“...having already been *vanquished* by my betters”: *σιγησόμεσθα, κρεισσόνων νικώμενοι*. Medea is alright with stating, disingenuously that is, that she has, and even should have, succumbed to her betters, as part of her first-stage guile. When *Jason*,

³⁵ Reeve (1972, 54-55) concurs with the consensus that the reference is to Hades and presents a detailed discussion of the problems that I argue are obviated by understanding Medea's address to the children in absentia.

³⁶ That the reference to the house here is not the physical house before which Medea stands, but rather the house of Hades, is further reinforced in the sacrificial allusion that follows immediately: *ὅτφ δὲ μὴ θέμις παρεῖναι τοῖς ἐμοῖσι θύμασιν, αὐτῶ μελήσει* (1053-55). On the sacrificial context see Pucci (1980, 131), citing Burkert (1966, 118-19) who does not, however, note the reference to the house of Hades.

however, states that she should succumb to her betters Medea thinks “You want to see better? I’ll show you better!” It’s time for a new plan, a *better*, ἄμεινον, plan that will raise the stakes. So whereas at 315 Medea disingenuously states that she has been vanquished, νικώμενοι, by her betters, Jason *ironically* indicates, despite himself, in their second exchange—and this is the second point—exactly how he will be vanquished by the plan, Medea’s, that will get the better of him, for she will have “found the plan [βουλήν] that will in time be victorious [νικῶσαν]” (912-13), the plan that will prevail come line 1079: θυμὸς δὲ κρείσσων τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων.

Thus it is the warrior *thumos* of Medea’s new plan, by which she will openly pick up the sword, that prevails, that is stronger... But, stronger than what? Stronger than Jason’s plan? Yes. It is the newly found βουλή that will vanquish, νικῶσαν, yes, Jason, but... is this all of it? What if I were to admit that I am almost tempted now to turn back to the common reading? Why? Because it is not Jason alone who is vanquished, but *Medea too*:

But *I* am vanquished [νικῶμαι] by these evils.

And I am learning the nature of these evils that I am about to commit

But the *thumos* of my plans is stronger...

That *thumos* that is the greatest *tragic cause* [αἴτιος]³⁷ of evils for mankind. (1077-80)

What if I were to admit that I have learned a new way to reread the common comparative construction just as Medea comes to learn of the nature of the evil she has been driven to, the evil to which [~~her~~] *thumos* has driven her?

No, I am not yet quite back to the common comparative reading. It is not best here to think that Medea’s *thumos* is greater than her plans. Not yet. For this *thumos*, which cannot really be said to be in Medea’s possession, was nonetheless born *from* her *bouleumata*, arises as

³⁷ See my hypothesis regarding a tragic inflection of Anaximander’s use of αἴτιος (2005), and Hesiod’s in my work-in-progress book length study of Homer’s epic, *Iliad ad Nihilum: Psyche, Conscience, Wonder*, available online.

the open, masculine, second-stage, warrior *thumos* from the recasting of her mythical, first-stage *bouleumata*. However, once this *thumos* has been unleashed it will not merely vanquish those who once dared to measure themselves as better, κρείσσόνων, than Medea—Creon, Jason—it will also overreach the one who, in her first-stage plans, resisted as a human, that is, mortal, *talas*, agent, but who then, in her *new* plans, overreached hubristically to transcend her mortal condition. For as she is compelled to destroy her own person and became divine,³⁸ to win an immortal, peculiarly tragic, *kleos*, she also serves Euripides in laying bare an unprecedented dimension of evil for mankind, the unprecedented dimension of *tragedy*. It is Medea who has come to be possessed, and overwrought, by this *thumos*.

In this light we may appreciate the irony of how, when she sought to lead Creon to believe that she can only be judged better by those who only seem canny, Medea is forecasting how she will have proved to be even too ποικίλος for *her* own good, and how she is herself not canny enough to escape outwitting herself, her own person: “for if you are judged better than those who seem to know something subtle you will appear wretched in the polis,” τῶν δ’ ἄῶ δοκούντων εἰδέναι τι ποικίλον κρείσσων νομισθεῖς ἐν πόλει λυπρὸς φανῆ (300-01). The difference between her vanquished foes, Creon, Creusa, Jason, and Medea, and the difference between Euripides’ Medea and Neophron’s who merely goes over for lost in madness, is that Medea proceeds to her own destruction—destruction as human in her *dæmonization*—soberly, consciously, voluntaristically.

³⁸ See Knox for a thoroughgoing treatment of Medea’s divine status according to the paradigm of the *deus ex machina*: “Medea is presented to us not only as a hero, but also, at the end of the play, by her language, action and situation, as a *theos* or at least something more than human” (1977, 208), and, “her rage is fiercer than the rage of Achilles, even of Ajax: it has in the end made her something more, and less, than human, something inhuman, a *theos*” (224). See also Barlow who argues that the climax of the play comes with the great speech and that her exultation at the ending is nothing more than “apparent triumph [that] only serves to highlight the loss of humanity that underlies it” (1989, 167-68).

For now, in the end, I am learning along with Medea how to contradict my own first-stage thesis and *affirm*, according to the comparative grammar now raised to a second order, that, θυμὸς δὲ κρείσσων τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων, that is, that this *thumos*, the *thumos* that has now been unleashed, has finally proven to be *greater than* Medea’s plans in the measure to which it matters any longer that these plans were hers. For this *thumos* ultimately effaces whatever we may still remember of her human agency—however petty, vindictive, proud; however *hubristic*—as the one who insisted on contriving plans of her own; this *thumos* has indeed proven both to vanquish Jason while at once *transcending Medea herself*.

II. ARGUMENT

Although I return in the final movements of the reading offered above to a rendering of *kreissōn* that conforms grammatically with the common comparative construction, the path that leads to this reading is not simple. I present the novel reading above as expediently as possible so as not to impede the dynamic ascendancy of Medea’s mortal agency from first-stage feminine guile to second-stage warrior *thumos* through the willful assertion of her *bouleumata*. Nonetheless, I hope that this presentation has clearly established that these specific narrative connections not only all build in a direct line to my new X of Y is greater (than Z) reading of 1079, but also that they shift beyond it to this new, complex reckoning of the comparative X is greater than Y construction as well. The momentum of Medea’s ascendancy pushes her to the point at which her willful command of her own words—in which she touts the force, or *thumos*, of the *bouleumata* she herself masterfully contrived in proclaiming her supremacy, *kreissōn*, over those Jason had deemed her “betters,” κρείσσόνων—is pushed to the limit beyond which she is swept

away, with the shift in syntax, by the baleful hypostasis of a *thumos* that transcends the human agency of the *bouleumatōn* whence it arises.

I contend that the prospect that Medea's *bouleumata*, and the rhetoric she employs here to present them, outstrips her own human agency constitutes something akin to a κληδών, "a presage contained in a chance utterance,"³⁹ that is, an instance in which secondary implications of words, or in this case rhetorical structures, uttered by a speaker work against, and usually to the detriment of, the speaker's intention.⁴⁰ And in this the cledonomantic force of her utterance raises what I argued in passing above to be the cledonomantic force of Jason's statement that Medea had 'found the *boulē* that will in time be victorious' (912-13) to a higher order. Her *boulē*, once unleashed, will prove uncontrollable, will outstrip her own agency, 'heroically' conceived or otherwise. Unlike instances of cledonomancy in which, however, the speaker is oblivious to the unintended implications until it is too late, I would contend that Medea is all-too-aware, tragically, of precisely how she is being possessed by this *thumos*, 'the tragic cause of the greatest evils for mankind' (1080), which she has just directly addressed. Thus we might call her utterance an act of conscious cledonomancy and her deed one of conscious self-sacrifice.⁴¹ How better may we account for the fact that the words of the chorus that follow Medea's great speech

³⁹ LSJ.

⁴⁰ The role of cledonomancy was discussed by Peradotto with respect to Aeschylus, citing Halliday (1913):

A κληδών in this sense is an apparently casual utterance heard by a man when he is deeply preoccupied with some plan, project, or hope, and understood by him as an omen of the outcome of his preoccupation. It was felt that such an utterance might have the power of bringing about an effect, "not indeed irrespective of its meaning, but other than the meaning or intention of the person who carelessly uttered it." (1969, 2)

Goldhill draws out these further implications: "Cledonomancy indicates the dangers of an inability to control language, which in eluding the speaker can lead him to an unwished end" (1986, 20). See also my discussion of what I refer to as 'cledonographia' in my treatment of Calchas' manteia and Iphigeneia's sacrifice in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (2001) expanding the notion into the register of writing.

⁴¹ On the Corinthian cultic parallels to Medea's sacrifice of her children see Pucci (1980, 132-33) citing Burkert (1966, 118-19).

are preoccupied with rhetorical subtlety and the ‘muse’ of women than in recognizing that the key to 1079 involves just such complexity, the play of just such finely wrought words:

Many times already [πολλάκις],
Have I made my way through words more finely wrought [λεπτοτέρων],
And come upon trials greater
Than the race of women should be obliged to track out.
But there is a muse for us women
Who consorts with us for the sake of cleverness.
It is not so with all of us, but just the same
You would find some among the race of women
Who do not lack the inspiration of the Muse. (1081-89)

That Medea is one such woman and that we must recognize that the finely wrought words in question are those she has just uttered is confirmed first in that Jason described her in his first speech as possessing a “subtle mind,” νοῦς λεπτός (529) and that the weapon that complements her devious *logoi*⁴² is the “finely wrought robe,” λεπτόν τε πέπλον (786, 949, 1188,⁴³ & 1214). So then what other words in her speech could be seen to be ‘finely wrought’ if not those of 1079 that have demanded so much attention and may be argued to constitute the rhetorical climax of the play? But while the new X of Y is greater reading I propose is consistent with a Medea who has prevailed over her opponent through subtle words, once the construction shifts to the X is greater than Y construction, Medea has lost control of what her speech, as the means of executing her *bouleumata*, has unleashed. Thus the question is whether the words of the chorus

⁴² For a full treatment of the contest of *logoi* between Medea and Jason see Boedekker (1991).

⁴³ I leave aside the question of λεπτήν σάρκα in the following line 1189, although if this was actually Euripides’ word choice here it would seem to further emphasize the term.

can be seen to cast Medea's λεπτοτέρων μύθων as at once successful *and* ruinous. In the reading above I began to explore how her speech to Creon at 292ff. prefigured how Medea's bid for supremacy, her bid to be *kreissōn*, would reveal that she would prove too tricky, ποικίλος, for her own good.

It is not surprising to find that the robes are also described as ποικίλους (1159), "complex," as this term is commonly used both of complexly embroidered patterns and subtly woven rhetoric and thus also parallels the way the *leptos* terms connect Medea's rhetorical craft with the poisoned robes. Let's return for a second look at the one other use of the term in Medea's reference to those who only seem ποικίλος:

Not the first time, Creon, but on several occasions [πολλάκις],

Has opinion harmed me and worked great evils.

A man of sound mind should never

Teach his children to be exceedingly clever.

For apart from the idleness that comes from this

They will incur the hostile envy of fellow citizens.

For, on the one hand,

in presenting fools with new tricks

You will be judged useless and anything but clever.

While, on the other hand,

in the case of those who merely seem to know something subtle,

Judged superior [κρείσσων], you will be judged wretched by the polis.

And I share in just such a lot

For being clever, I am envied by some,

[to some I am gentle, to others of the opposite disposition,]

To those I am hostile. But I am not too clever. (292-305)

First, let me emphasize the point made in the first section, namely that this speech is key in setting up κρείσσων at 1079, first in Medea's disingenuous indication that she has been wrongly judged as κρείσσων at 301, and then again in the last line of the speech where Medea disingenuously states that she "has been vanquished by those who are superior to her," κρεισσόνων νικώμενοι (315). To more fully appreciate the ποικίλος complexity of Medea's ironic rhetoric, her words must be read on several levels, that is, reread several times. It strikes me that this requirement is signaled in Euripides' use of πολλάκις not just here at 292, but again in Jason's opening words,

Not the first time, but rather repeatedly [πολλάκις] have I looked upon

How harsh anger leads to intractable evil. (446-47)

which are clearly tied to Medea's speech in his insistence that she should have born "lightly the *bouleumata* of those superior to her," κούφως φερούση κρεισσόνων βουλεύματα (449). It might be admitted that even if Jason will be utterly vanquished in the end, he does—however unwittingly—have a point here. For if my X is greater than Y reading holds, the next in Medea's long πολλάκις line of harsh actions, in her bid to overcome those Jason dubs her superiors, will lead to not merely an "anger," ὀργήν, but rather a *thumos* that will prove indeed an evil "unmanageable," ἀμήχανον (447), *even for Medea*.

And from this perspective I find my way back into the opening of the chorus' words following 1079, "many times [πολλάκις] already, have I made my way through words more finely wrought [λεπτοτέρων]" (1081-82), for the chorus has "read" Medea's (/Euripides') wordplay, as now have we, on *kreissōn* and *bouleumata* a couple times over already. What is

more, in a moment I will attempt to show how the momentum of these *πολλάκις* occurrences may serve to illuminate a problem as yet unspecified, namely, why do the chorus here refer to *subtler* words, *λεπτοτέρων* μύθων? Why comparative? What is subtler about these words? Subtler than, more threshed out than, what?

But back again to 292ff. Again, I am working here on the complex of terms that play into 1079, *thumos*, *kreissōn*, and *bouleumata*, all of which figure into this context. At 270 the chorus indicates that Creon has arrived to announce ‘his new plans,’ *καινῶν ἄγγελον βουλευμάτων*, setting up his exchange with Medea. Creon’s first words point to the disposition of Medea’s *thumos* against Jason, and *thumos* reappears in Medea’s speech at 310, while *kreissōn* appears first in Creon’s closing words before Medea’s speech, and then is reiterated twice in carefully structured terms in her speech, first at 301, *κρείσσων νομισθεῖς*, “judged superior,” and then as the concluding gesture at 315, *κρεισσόνων νικώμενοι*, “vanquished by my betters.”

I begin from two solid foundations: first, we must remember that Medea’s words constitute a disingenuous ploy throughout; second, I join in with those⁴⁴ who see in Medea’s words ironic overtones of Euripides’ reflections on his own status as poet. I turn first to the latter.

At 302 Euripides’ voice comes into its closest alignment with Medea’s: “for I have shared [*κοινωνῶ*] in just such a fortune.” For just as Medea shares the fate of the figure she has just been presenting in a hypothetical second person address, so are we led to identify Euripides as sharing with Medea in her fate. For why else would Euripides have contrived to use *κοινωνῶ*? Indeed, can we preclude the possibility of any among the audience *hearing* the consonance quite literally intoned as *ἐγὼ δὲ καὶτ-η τῆσδε κοινωνῶ τύχης*, “And I (Euripides)

⁴⁴ See Reckford (1968, 349-50 and at 350 n. 40) for references to other scholars holding this view.

share *with her* this fate”? And can we really imagine in this moment of pointed self-reflection that Euripides would not be “hearing” it thus too? This conclusion leads me backward into the lines immediately preceding where the other scholars I refer to above have read self-referential allusions. With the conjunction of Euripides and Medea more firmly in place, I note that Medea’s (/Euripides’) adoption of the second person hypothetical provides for the adoption of the masculine participles such that we can retroject Euripides himself metanarratively as masculine subject all the way back from ἐγὼ at 302 to the beginning of the μὲν\δὲ construction commencing at 298. In other words, without the shift to the hypothetical constructions in the masculine, we would otherwise have to imagine feminine constructions in which these would have been directly and exclusively associated with Medea. The shift to the hypothetical eliminates a construction that would have precluded assigning masculine gender to ἐγὼ at 302. But this then also leads me to conclude that Euripides has hereby contrived—and this all would amount to something of a ποικίλος trick indeed—a means whereby we can more positively apply the content of 298-301 to Euripides himself.

And so where do I find myself now? In the uncomfortable position of suspecting that I, as perhaps one of those who δοκούντων εἰδέναι τι ποικίλον, “perhaps only seems to know,” have perhaps only imperfectly, at least for the moment, deciphered “the trick.” What is more this trick would appear to devolve precisely upon the term that constitutes what I propose to be at the crux of the complexity I see at 1079: κρείσσων.

I am again thrown right back upon the problem in interpreting lines 300-301 that I see on the most obvious level of the text, that is, when we *simply* seek to determine what Medea could actually be saying here apart from any metanarrational implications. For what does it mean when she says that she is being judged to be *kreissōn incorrectly*—for her point to Creon is that

she is *not* a threat, not, that is, the threat that my X of Y is greater (than Z) reading realizes—by those to whom, however, she *is* superior? If she is in a position to see that they are mistaken in judging her as superior, to see that they fail to see that she is actually *not* superior, “not so clever,” οὐκ ἄγαν σοφή (305), then is she not *eo ipso* superior, *kreissōn*, is she not actually “clever indeed,” σοφή γὰρ οὕσα (303)? Has not Euripides contrived a Medea—a *new* superior Medea—who here contrives a means to demonstrate that she *is kreissōn* by proving her superiority over Creon in being able to persuade him that she is *not kreissōn*? And isn’t it suggestive that this equivocation on whether or not Medea is *kreissōn* comes at this very moment of Euripides’ own deftly ποικίλος exposition of his own poesy in aligning himself with Medea’s purported lack of her own cleverness? And finally, does not this ποικίλος tangle around *kreissōn* prove all the more deft in that it *may be seen to prefigure* the crux of the 1079 complex wherein the X of Y is greater reading is hinged with the X is greater than Y reading precisely on the question of whether *Medea* is *kreissōn* or not? Whether the *thumos* of Medea’s ποικίλος agency is superior, or whether that *thumos* surpasses her own agency?

So now to a more detailed analysis of the μὲν\δὲ construction of 298-301:

σκαιοῖσι μὲν γὰρ καινὰ προσφέρων σοφὰ

δόξεις ἀχρεῖος κού σοφὸς πεφυκέναι:

τῶν δ’ αὖ δοκούντων εἰδέναι τι ποικίλον 300

κρείσσων νομισθεὶς ἐν πόλει λυπρὸς φανῆ. 301

The commonly accepted reading of the lines that takes κρείσσων as governing 300-301 in an X is greater than Y construction, where X is understood to be “you” and Y those “who seem to know something ποικίλος,” is certainly sound. I suggest we should go further, however, in recognizing the sense of this reading as ironically prefiguring the sense of the X of Y is greater

reading of 1079. For while Medea here is purporting that she is wrongly perceived as superior to those who set themselves up as opponents to her, in saying so disingenuously she is actually saying the opposite: while I will lead you, Creon, to believe that I merely seem erroneously to be superior, I *am* in fact superior.

But the lines can also be spun differently. For it may be that Euripides has contrived a syntactical precursor here to the rhetorical shift between the two constructions I propose for 1079 if κρείσσων at line 301 may be detached from the comparative construction by reading 300 as a genitive absolute. Beginning from the commonly accepted reading of the line as an X is greater than Y construction, where X, “you”(/Medea), is, however, unstated, I note that something of the way in which κρείσσων νομισθεῖς reflects back upon the preceding line, τῶν δ’ αὖ δοκούντων εἰδέναι, could be applied to the relationship of line 299 to 298. For δόξεις ἀχρεῖος can be seen as referring back to σκαιοῖσι. So we can compare “to those who seem to know, judged superior” to “to fools, you will seem to be useless.” I am not advocating this reading of 298-99 so much as trying to make a certain point. There is a certain internal parallelism between these respective pairs of lines that I sense from reflecting upon an equivocation of the commonly accepted and, as with 1079, more obvious reading of lines 300-01. For here we have X (“you”/Medea) being judged to be κρείσσων than Y (those who seem to know), but those who are thus being judged as those whom Medea is better than are at once those who are judging her thus. Moreover, they are at once wrong in their judgment of Medea and themselves (or rather would be if Medea were not speaking disingenuously). Similarly, in 298-99 the fools, σκαιοῖσι, who are presented with καινὰ σοφὰ—I will call them “new tricks” for expediency’s sake—are also those to whom the hypothetical “you” will seem useless, δόξεις ἀχρεῖος. My point, however, is that we do *not* read

lines 298-99 this way. Instead, we isolate 298 as a unit unto itself—an “absolute” in force—and then move on to 299 as a separate unit of sense.

I realize that the explanation of this argument is convoluted, and even that the logic of the argument, as I am about to present it, may seem a bit tortured. But it may be worth noting that if we take the μὲν\δὲ construction as more tightly structuring the two pairs, that is, not just as structuring the sense as compared in the common reading, but more rigorously structuring the syntax, we could consider the possibility of 300 being detached from 301 similarly to how 298 is detached from 299, 298 μὲν / 299 vs. 300 δὲ / 301:

σκαιοῖσι μὲν γὰρ καινὰ προσφέρων σοφὰ

δόξεις ἀχρεῖος κού σοφὸς πεφυκέναι:

For proffering new tricks to fools, μὲν

You will seem useless and in no way clever.

vs.

τῶν δ' αὖ δοκούντων εἰδέναι τι ποικίλον

κρείσσων νομισθεὶς ἐν πόλει λυπρὸς φανῆ.

While in the case, δὲ, of those who only seem to know something ποικίλος,

Judged κρείσσων, in the polis you will appear wretched.

While I am not intent upon pushing this reading too hard, and I do not want to suggest that it is in any way indispensable to my X of Y is greater reading of 1079, there are a couple points to commend it. First, there is a certain charge of enjambment on κρείσσων in the common X is greater than Y reading. We may imagine that following the 298 μὲν / 299 sequence, an audience might first be inclined to construe 300 δὲ as a genitive absolute, only to feel a shift to the comparative charge on κρείσσων in the enjambed position. Second, the similarity in sense of

νομισθεῖς and δόξεις, amplified by the phonetic echoing of the εἰς endings, may serve to reinforce the sequencing of detached pairs, 298 μὲν / 299; 300 δὲ / 301, made possible by 300 δὲ as genitive absolute, in the face of the charge that an enjambed κρείσσων effects in the shift to the common comparative reading. I will leave off with this analysis here in saying only that were this along the lines of what Euripides is actually doing it would all indeed be something ποικίλος: τι ποικίλον. Or, let me rephrase this as a question: Is Euripides being *this* clever? Would such an analysis of Medea's, of Euripides' words be *too clever*, ἄγαν σοφή?

Yet I'm afraid that this is not all. For in addition to what I see as Euripides' metanarrational presence in the speech, and the question of whether Euripides is previewing the syntactical shift of 1079, I also cannot help but note what seems to be another pattern in the broader movements. Medea opens her speech by declaring, in the first person, how she has been harmed by false opinions, δόξα 293; next, she shifts to a hypothetical someone, a man, ἀνὴρ (294); from this Medea shifts to a hypothetical second person in the masculine (298-301), and we have just seen how this shift facilitated reading Euripides more deeply into the speech metanarrationally; next, Medea indicates that she shares the fate of this hypothetical second person; following this, we have the symmetrically framed complex of lines that hinge around Medea either being clever, σοφή γὰρ οὐσα (303), or not so clever, οὐκ ἄγαν σοφή (305); and then to a *direct, emphasized*, second person address to her *actual* interlocutor: σὺ δ' αὖ φοβῆῃ με (306); and finally, jumping to the end of the speech, a shift from Medea pleading in first person singular to be allowed to continue "to live in the land," τήνδε δὲ χθόνα ἐᾶτέ μ' οἰκεῖν (313-14), to her concluding statement in the first person plural that plays directly against line 1079, καὶ γὰρ ἠδίκημένοι σιγησόμεσθα, κρεισσόνων νικώμενοι (314-15), "for although wronged *we* will keep silent, having been defeated by *our* betters."

I am struck by the subtlety with which Medea shifts from speaking of herself, through a *putatively* hypothetical second person (whose fate she shares), to an actual second person address to Creon, to conclude with first person plural. What if the *putatively* hypothetical second person is *not* hypothetical? What if Medea is *already* addressing Creon, albeit in a fashioned disguised through her distinctly ποικίλος rhetoric? What if the juncture where her concealed “hypothetical” attack—and here we should recall that Euripides has Creon openly state that his “words (to Medea) need not be cloaked,” οὐδὲν δεῖ παραμπύσχειν λόγους (282)—shifts into the open, direct second person address, an address that moreover pointedly, programmatically, opposes the two pronouns, σὺ ↔ με (306), is mediated by her statement that she *shares* the fate of this other second person, namely the fate she will visit upon Creon? And what if they *both*, in the plural, will be wronged, silenced, and vanquished by those who prove κρείσσωνων?

However challenging this ποικίλος rhetoric may prove to be, there are certain prospects worth considering. First, we may hear an echo of the chorus’ reference to Creon’s “*new plans*,” *καινῶν βουλευμάτων* (270), in the “*new tricks*,” as I am branding them for this purpose, at 298, *καινὰ σοφὰ*. In response to Creon’s *bouleumata* I would also point to the references to *bouleumata* that come toward the close of the full section (defined as running from 269-409 and following into the first paired odes of the first stasimon 410-430), first as Medea exhorts herself in her first-stage feminine scheming, *Μήδεια, βουλεύουσα καὶ τεχνωμένη* (402), and then, in a passage to which I will return below, in the chorus’ characterization of the “deceitful plans of men” (Jason *and* Creon in league) at 412: *ἀνδράσι μὲν δόλια βουλαί*. Just as the confrontation between Medea and Creon opens with a reference to *bouleumata*, so does it close.

Second, while Medea’s ploy in her phrasing of κρείσσων νομισθεῖς at 301 serves to allay Creon’s anxieties by suggesting that is she is not *kreissōn*, it is actually *Creon* who will in

retrospect be judged as having merely *seemed* superior at this juncture, that is, later when the wretched outcome for the polis in the death of *Creon* has been revealed, λυπρὸς φανῆ (301). And whose status is of greater significance for the *polis* than the King's? Yet while here the ironic implication is that *Creon* will prove to have been wrongly judged *kreissōn* in a fashion that aligns with my X of Y is greater reading of 1079, by the close of the speech, after Medea reveals that she realizes she too will share in this fate, we find that *both* Medea and Creon may be seen to have been reciprocally vanquished by one another—however, at once the one by one who *truly will be kreissōn* to the other, i.e., (a masculinized) Medea vis-à-vis Creon, and the other by one who will have merely *seemed* to have been *kreissōn* to the other in retrospect, Creon vis-à-vis Medea: κρείσσόνων νικώμενοι (315).

Looking even more closely we can see how Medea/(Euripides) balances the grammatical genders in the lines that apply reciprocally to both; at 299, where the shift to the second person is immediately followed by the first adjective, ἀχρεῖος, that can be read as feminine, as it would pertain to Medea's case, only then with the next adjective, σοφὸς, to be decided as masculine, whether as Medea being conceived here *as if* masculine in being referred to as a merely hypothetical case, or as both now decidedly masculine adjectives are applied directly to the actual case of Creon. And again, the undecidability of the gender of κρείσσων at 301 reflects not only the undecidability of the referent, be it feminine Medea or/and masculine Creon, *but also* accurately provides for the shift from feminine *talas* Medea to masculine ascendant Medea qua *Thumos* precisely in that it is *Thumos* that will prove *kreissōn*.

While below I will want to look at how at 1079 we come to a point wherein Medea will have openly “sung” this ascendancy, at this juncture we find Euripides having contrived for her a means of presaging how she will at once vanquish and be vanquished, all the while for himself

contriving a call for us to redouble our attention to his own ποικίλος poesy. At this first-stage juncture in which Medea, as yet lacking the refuge Aegeus will later supply, must resort to feminine *technê*—and Euripides takes his reference to these guiles as his opportunity to remind us of her eponymous mythical reputation as “planning and scheming Medea,” Μήδεια, βουλεύουσα καὶ τεχνωμένη (402)—we must conclude that she foresees herself vanquished *qua Medea* by her foes, even if nonetheless victorious over them, and that thus Euripides is as yet only *prefiguring* the reversal of X of Y is greater to X is greater than Y. This shift from first-stage to second-stage plans, from *talas* human agent to dæmon *thumos*, from feminine to masculine is, moreover, prefigured in the curious way that whereas Medea’s suggestions of common parental sympathies is marked by the shift from the progression of first person singular to first person *feminine* plural, οὐχ ᾧδ’ ἔχει μοι, μὴ τρέσης ἡμᾶς (307), ‘there is no cause from me, you needn’t dread us,’ to the concluding movement that serves to prefigure the shift of 1079 in the progression from first person (feminine), ἐᾶτέ μ’οικεῖν (314), “Oh let *me* stay,” to first person plural *masculine*: καὶ γὰρ ἠδικημένοι σιγησόμεσθα, κρεισσόνων νικώμενοι (314-15), “for although wronged *we* will keep silent, having been defeated by *our* betters.” They will *both* be victims, *both vying equally as male or masculine at least*, νικώμενοι, of the *bouleumata* of “the husband she hates”: ἀλλ’ ἐμὸν πόσιν μισῶ (310-11). Moreover, that this shift points forward to the shift at 1079 away from the sway of humanly contrived *bouleumata* to the baleful hypostasis of *thumos*, by which the human agency of those plans is overwrought, is hinted at in the way that Medea’s indication that Creon is merely ‘following where [his] *thumos* led him,’ ὅτῳ σε θυμὸς ἦγεν (310), that is, following his *thumos* to his own ruin, evokes the question: *where will [Medea’s] thumos lead her?*⁴⁵

⁴⁵ The notion that Medea’s reference to Creon’s *thumos* prefigures the role of her *thumos* at 1079 occurred to me from reading Cowherd (1983, 132 n. 11). I cannot, however, as is clear from my argument, concur with her

In concluding my argument, I will now turn to the two choral odes that cap respectively Medea’s first- and then second-stage exhortations to herself: first, as exhortation to Μήδεια, qua person, agent of feminine scheming action, βουλεύουσα (402); second, as failed exhortation to *bar* the dread action, “do not do these things,” μὴ σύ γ’ ἐργάσῃ τάδε, to which *Thumos*, capitalized here to indicate the hypostatization, is leading her, “no *Thumos*,” μὴ δῆτα, *Θυμέ* (1056).⁴⁶

That Medea’s second-stage *thumos* and *bouleumata* are as yet only forecast in her speech to Creon is plainly evident as she indicates, in her speech following Creon’s exit, that he could have foiled her first-stage *bouleumata* (372) and prevented the anticipated outcome: three corpses (374). The choral ode that follows describes the reversal of the stereotypical gender roles—as should come now as no surprise given what was shown above regarding the fine-grained handling of gender attributions—and an overturning of tradition. Rivers flow back to their sources and men behave as deceitfully as women, spinning their own “guileful plans,” δόλια βουλαί (412). The result is an *abrogation* of the misogyny of traditional epic as the “legends of the life of women are now turned to a good *kleos*,” τὰν δ’ ἐμὴν εὐκλειαν ἔχειν βιοτὰν στρέψουσι φᾶμαι (418) and “no longer will malicious legends hold sway over women,” οὐκέτι δυσκέλαδος φάμα γυναικᾶς ἔξει (419-20). The traditional Muses of the singers of old will *desist* (421)—and let’s be listening carefully now for *Euripides’ critical, arguably sophistic, response to epic mythos*, that is, for *his* “new tricks,” καινὰ σοφὰ—from “singing the distrust of women,” τὰν ἐμὴν ὑμεῦσαι ἀπιστοσύναν (422).

conclusion that τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων at 1079 have become “plans to spare the children and carry them away with her.” She does, however, rightly note the ‘excessive’ nature of Medea’s *thumos* and that “θυμὸς κρείσσων applies well to Medea” (132).

⁴⁶ I refer the reader here to my novel argument that it is *θυμὸς*, and not *ψυχὴ*, that is the aspect of the hero that is immortalized along with the conferral of *κλέος* in *Iliad ad Nihilum: Psyche, Conscience, Wonder*.

This first-stage juncture is marked so far only by the abrogation of the epic authority, the *thespis*, of the traditional Muse by the forfeiture of the scheming men. There is as yet no Muse of women:

Phoibos, leader of songs,
did not grant to our disposition
The sanctioned inspiration [θέσπιν ἀοιδὸν] of the lyre,
Or I would have opposed a song in praise
Of the race of women. (423-29)

However, as Medea leaves behind her first-stage scheming, βουλεύουσα 402), to accede to the second-stage in which her “X of Y is greater” agency over her *bouleumata* will, however, then cede to the “X is greater than Y” hypostasis of warrior *Thumos*, she will win the *kleos* that only a Muse of *women* can rightly confer. What is it that galled Medea so that she would not be satisfied with her first-stage feminine *bouleumata* if not those first words of Jason’s, that unwittingly *mocked* Medea’s own vexed, ποικίλος words to Creon, as he suggests that “things would have gone *lightly*—softly, in a feminine way—had she only submitted to the *bouleumata* of her betters,” *κούφως* φερούση κρεισσόνων βουλεύματα (449 cf. 315)? These words that come directly after the choral ode just above trigger Medea’s aspiration for a greater *thumos* and the greater *kleos* that it will win. The “*kleos* will be *supreme*,” εὐκλεέστατος 810),⁴⁷ that she will win once she has succeeded in the new—tragic—plan for the infanticide (803). *Medea’s kleos* will be the best as the *thumos* of her plans is greater: “Let none dare judge, νομιζέτω (807 [cf. 301]), her slight, nor weak, nor mild.” For if a woman would rather stand three times behind a

⁴⁷ Similarly, Boedekker frames Medea’s epic heroic status in light of her attention to the play of *logoi* as the focus of her competition with Jason: “This plot, Medea declares, will give her heroic, virtually epic status (807-10): ‘Let no one consider me shiftless and weak, or easygoing, but of the other sort, harsh to enemies and to friends kind. For the life of such people is best-famed (εὐκλεέστατος)’” (1991, 107).

shield than bear one child, how much greater is the pain, and the *courage*, the *thumos*, required to kill two? In other words, how much greater is the *kleos* conferred by the Muse of women, how much greater Euripides' ironic "*kleos*" of tragedy than that of epic?⁴⁸

Medea's decision to kill the children instead of Jason is perhaps governed less by the prospect that the death of the children might bring greater suffering to Jason than his own death itself, than it is by Medea's (*Euripides*' goal to define a supreme *kleos* unarguably greater—albeit however ethically vitiated—than any hero of old, any old epic hero. It is, moreover, her accession to her second-stage *bouleumata* and warrior *thumos* that leads from the mere abrogation of the *thespis* of the Muse of old to the advent of a new Muse of women. And so I return, *again*, to the chorus' words that follows 1079:

Several times over now [πολλάκις],
Have I gone through *mythoi* more finely wrought [λεπτοτέρων],
And come to a greater contest [ἀμίλλας...μείζους] than
The race of women should have to engage.
But now indeed there is a Muse for us women,

⁴⁸ In line with Knox's and Bongie's studies of the heroic framework referenced above, Segal states, "Euripides' presentation of the heroic ethos in such a figure (a woman and a mother) and with such a deed (the killing of the children) calls the heroic ethos itself into question" (1996, 18). Although working within the limits of the classical readings of 1079, Segal does read for the way in which Medea is as well a victim of her *thumos*: "she sees herself, finally, as helpless before the power of passion or emotion, which she here objectifies and virtually personifies as θυμὸς. She even entreats θυμὸς, in the vocative, not to do the deed" (24). I would hope I would not be quibbling to respond, however, that it is in this moment that the *thumos*, or, *Thumos*, in question, as specifically that of a warrior aspiring for *kleos*, albeit ironically, *transcends* passion and emotion. See also Boedekker: "the story of Jason's great adventures—his epic-like λόγος and its intended sequel—has been turned into a tragedy by Medea," what she terms a "triumph of tragedy over epic" (1991, 108-09). Although she doesn't quite call this inflection of tragedy ironic, she does appreciate the meta-narrational play of Euripides' art as vying with the tradition of epic: "in this triumph of tragedy over epic, Medea retains the upper hand not least in her authorial role, her collusion with Euripides in creating her own new λόγος" (109). I not only concur with her characterization of Euripides' critical relationship to epic, and mythic "truth," but I have also explicated a comparably explicit critique of epic in my treatment of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (2001). But that is not an end, or rather beginning, to it, for I have also argued that such a critical relationship to myth and the oral tradition already defined *Homer's* re-interpretation of traditional epic writ large in *Iliad ad Nihilum: Psyche, Conscience, Wonder*. See also Barlow (1989, 165).

Who consorts with us by force of cleverness
It is not so with all of us, but just the same
You would find some among the race of women
Who is not without her Muse. (1081-89)

So what would these authoritative words, these new *mythoi*, be that are *more* finely wrought, λεπτοτέρων? What would they be greater than? Are these not the stuff of Medea's *bouleumata* as they outdo Jason's, *bouleumata* that have been recast, reworked, "several times over," πολλάκις—in the process of Euripides' reworking of the Medea of *myth*, not to mention Neophron's—from their first- to second-stage? Is the chorus here not referring to the *bouleumata* that, in the "X of Y is greater" construction prove greater than those, Jason's, that remain implied? Are these not the more finely wrought schemes, *bouleumata*, that—having been worked over from Creon, to Medea, to Jason, to Medea again disingenuously, to Jason again, and finally to the "Medea" who is on the brink of no longer being in command of her own words nor deeds—both Medea and, vicariously the chorus, must go through to reach the threshold of that superior, *kreissōn*, "X is greater than Y" *Thumos* that will take Medea, and with her, the race of women to that contest no woman should ever have had to brave and the *kleos* that is at once beyond all that has gone before, and that will retire once and for all the ethos and naïvely celebrated *kleos* of epic?

Such, I submit, are the new "*mythoi*" of a "Muse" who holds sway no longer through the enchantments, the θέσπις, of old, but rather in the name of *sophia*.

APPENDIX

The shape of my reading requires a transit, if I may put it that way, through the reading of the genitive *bouleumatōn* as subjective governed by *kreissōn* in my proposed X of my Y is greater grammar to return to the familiar comparative grammar of *thumos* is greater than my *bouleumata*. The grammar of the comparative reading is of course such as is commonly assumed, and for good reason, and in the end I am arguing that we return to it, albeit with a new charge on the relationship between *thumos* and *bouleumata* that is only available by admitting as well the alternate grammar. It is worth trying to articulate how the combination of these two parsings could be felt at once through a pointed focus on the force of *δὲ* in the line. With the genitive as subjective the phrase *τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων* comes as a qualifying afterthought. In this reading—the *thumos* (of my *bouleumatōn*) is greater—the phrase as a subjective genitive is thus essentially parenthetical. The essence of the statement is that *Thumos* is greater, that is, [Medea's] *Thumos* is greater, where I bracket [Medea] to express the equivocation on the notion of this hypostasized *Thumos* as no longer properly possessed by Medea qua person. What has emerged through what has been unleashed through Medea's *bouleumata* is this dæmonic *Thumos*, emphasized at the line opening with the *δὲ* in combination with *κρείσσων*. That *θυμὸς δὲ κρείσσων* is the essence of the statement is established with the postpositive placement of the *δὲ*; the remainder of the line, *τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων*, is thus an optional and subordinated qualifying phrase. Now in the novel reading I propose the fact that the *thumos* in question is the *thumos* associated with Medea's as opposed to Jason's (and Creon's) *bouleumata* is critical; the emphasis of the statement, however, is on *thumos* as opposed to *bouleumata* because the notion of Medea as a female agent is what represents the shocking impact: it is remarkable that Medea

as a woman could exhibit a *thumos* that could vie with that of men, a θυμὸς *that is indeed* (δὲ) κρείσσων.

But the emphasis remains on *Thumos* even as we shift to the grammar of the comparative reading taken in the sense I read it. It is *Thumos* that is greater, greater that is *than my bouleumata* which, in being quite thoroughly recast from their original expression of personal agency, are, again, little more than an afterthought. It is *Thumos*, δὲ, that is greater.

In both parsings though, there is also a secondary emphasis that falls on ἐμῶν. In the novel reading it is the *thumos* of *my* plans that is greater, greater than what is left unstated, that is, the *thumos* of *another*, of Jason's (and Creon's). In the revalued comparative reading, *Thumos* is greater than *my* plans, that is, what were *my* plans, but are really no longer relevant as such. *Thumos* is entirely eclipsing what was what Medea only once could have called "*my*" agency.

So when it comes now to the question of possible comparanda for my proposed reading, when working from the received assumptions we are faced with two challenges to consider. First, there is the question of suspending at first the assumption of the apparently self-evident comparative reading; second, there is the challenge of supposing the complex force of the dual reading that I finally arrive at, which does at least, happily, reclaim the comparative grammar. I will not attempt to downplay the fact that I have been able to find precious little by way of obvious comparanda for my X of Y is greater reading; however, I would ask how likely it would be to find comparanda for that grammar *in combination* with the commonly accepted comparative grammar? I contend that Euripides has construed this dual construction for the peculiar, the quite unique, circumstances of Medea's case with all that is so essentially divided

about her, a Medea, moreover, recast from Neophron's where *thumos* and *bouleusai* are unequivocally connected. So I suggest that we would need to be mindful of what we can reasonably expect to find by way of comparanda. Moreover, it strikes me that the stickler's demand that we must necessarily find definite comparanda for the phrasing that X is greater [than Z], where Z is left unstated, would be an overly stringent expectation. Is there really any less reason to suppose that a sophisticated poet such as Euripides would be any less likely or able to abbreviate the fully expressed comparative construction than any poet in any Indo-European language, ancient or modern? Would guarding against the possible risk of admitting this possibility on the basis of a basic sense for linguistical logic warrant foreclosing on the possible advancement? And if Euripides' poesy is indeed this deft, would we not fall short of *his* measure should we preclude due consideration of this possibility?

Is it not a simple matter linguistically to effect this construction? Indeed, we can find instances in which we can see something of the means by which the suppression of the second of the comparands of the comparative can be felt as possible. So at *Hippolytus* 960 the phrase, *ποῖοι γὰρ ὄρκοι κρείσσονες*, would be construed, "for what sort of oaths could be stronger..." while we wait for the comparand, as the compound subject of the comparison, *τίνες λόγοι*, "what arguments," is compiled to lead to the comparand, "τῆσδ'," referring to Phaedra's letter. As we read the line, or even more pointedly, as we would imagine hearing the line performed, would we not transit through just such a construction as I propose for 1079, "What sort of oaths could be stronger," indeed, we keep going with this construction, "what arguments," until completing the comparative with "than the letter"?

In a spoken elliptical phrase such as, *πότερος ὁ κρείσσων*; (*Helen* 139) we can see that the notion of the two comparands is there, while literally the phrasing gives us *ὁ κρείσσων* as

referring to the stronger in the absence of the comparand. Similarly, κρείσσων γὰρ εἶ (*Electra* 227) which would literally mean “you are stronger,” or “you are the stronger one,” the one whom Orestes is stronger than is left unstated.

In another similar instances at *Hippolytus* 500-03, αἴσχρο', ἀλλ' ἀμείνω τῶν καλῶν τάδ' ἐστί σοι: | κρεῖσσον δὲ τοῦργον, εἴπερ ἐκσώσει γέ σε, | ἢ τοῦνομ', we see a fully stated comparative construction with ἀμείνω; with κρεῖσσον we see the comparand, ἢ τοῦνομ', again deferred by the interceding phrase. But I also point to this example to segue to another instance at *Suppliants* 1101-03 in which we find a proper comparandum for the grammar of my reading with, however, admittedly not *kreissōn* but rather its near synonym *meizōn*: πατρὶ δ' οὐδὲν †ἥδιον† | γέροντι θυγατρός: ἀρσένων δὲ μείζονες | ψυχαί, “For nothing is sweeter for an old father than a daughter; while the *psychæ* of boys are greater.” In this instance we see first the full comparative construction followed immediately by the construction in which the comparand is unstated along with a modifying subjective genitive, ἀρσένων:

The *psychæ* of boys are greater

The *thumos* of my plans is stronger

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