but as the impersonation of one of the blind and irrational forces in human nature, we begin to find that catharsis for which we looked in vain in the messenger-speech. It is this transformation that finally explains the 'revolting' and deepens a dramatic story into tragedy. Had Euripides been content with a 'logical' ending, with the play remaining on the mundane, Corinthian level, the 'revolting' would indeed have needed justification. This makes demands on our tolerance which cannot be met if the only profit is the news that barbarian magicians who are passionate and are villainously treated do villainous things. There is in the *Medea* more than this, and to express that Euripides resorts to a manipulation of the plot, an artificial ending which, like Aegeus, would have been ruinous to Sophocles. This imaginative and necessary climax is not the logical ending to the story of Medea the ill-used wife of Corinth, but it is the climax to Euripides' underlying tragic conception.

This is a conception which does indeed call for and receive purely dramatic imagery; we need not be silly and call the *Medea* an illustration of a theme. Nevertheless the conception is not so immediately and completely transfused into drama as is Sophocles' tragic conception; Medea is not quite to Euripides what Oedipus is to Sophocles, completely and utterly the focus and vehicle of his tragic thinking. Euripides remains a little detached. We can go beneath his Medea – for criticism we must, in appreciation we do unconsciously – to the greater conception underlying her; and in the last resort it is this, not the imagined character of Medea in these imagined circumstances, that moulds the play.

As Euripides develops his method, in particular as the war forced his thoughts more on the social aspects of tragedy, we shall find this gap between the stage-drama and the tragic conception, non-existent in Sophocles but perceptible in the *Medea*, growing much wider. Already the strict logic of plot, the Aristotelian doctrines of the tragic hero, the Sophoclean tradition of characterization and the use of the chorus are receding, and they will recede much further. Unity of interest, that is of tragic conception, remains; but how far that conception is to be presented through one hero and one action, how far through a diversity of heroes and a multiplicity of actions, is a matter to be decided privately between Euripides the tragic poet and Euripides the playwright.

3. The 'Hippolytus'

This play was produced three years after the *Medea*, and in several respects it differs widely from it. Its structure is much more regular, for we have no Aegeus scene or magic chariot to explain away, and the characterization is more normal. In Phaedra we have a rounded character who is by a long way the most complete and the most tragic character in any of this series of plays, and though the Nurse has parallels in Euripides' later plays, in the tragedies she stands alone. While Phaedra is on the stage the drama is quite Sophoclean. Her desperate struggle between her passion and her virtue, her tragic realization whence her passion comes (vv. 337–43), the complete contrast between her and the revolting but very natural old Nurse, the Nurse's well meant and cunning desire to help, the tragic but inevitable outcome of this, and Phaedra's resolve to save her honour by leaving the lying letter to Theseus, make an absorbing drama which Sophocles could never have written but which, as a dramatist, he must have admired.

But at this point a number of questions begin to arise. Why is Hippolytus so chilly a figure? As a recoil from Phaedra he was very dramatic, and the romantic atmosphere he brought with him from the hunt was very picturesque, but as the chief actor in the second part of the play is he not rather a disappointing character? Is he not too negative, protesting his pre-eminent purity a little too much? And why is Phaedra forgotten? The dramatic motif of the opposition between his nature and Phaedra's disappears. There is no suggestion that her personality, so prominent in the first part, remains active in the second; no suggestion that her death works at all in his mind; no pity or remorse or hatred is seen in him. In fact, Phaedra's letter seems to be no more than a mechanical link between her tragedy and his. Having in Phaedra so tragic a subject, why did not Euripides base his whole play on it? As it is, not only does the *Hippolytus* lack real unity, but its rhythm goes the wrong way, from the very dramatic Phaedra to the less dramatic Hippolytus; and even that useful body the chorus, by saying nothing about Phaedra in the second part, does nothing to conceal the division of interest. Finally, what are the goddesses for? Is Euripides taking all this trouble only to tell the Athenians that in his opinion Aphrodite and Artemis are not worth worshipping?

It is quite evident once more that this is no tragedy of character. It was never Euripides' idea to make the tragedy out of the opposition between Hippolytus' nature and Phaedra's; if it had been the play would have been closer knit, and there would have been no room for the goddesses. We have, perhaps a little rashly, attacked the dramatic character of Hippolytus. In fact he is extremely successful as a figure in the play – but because the drama is one of tragic victims rather than of tragic actors, at least as far as Hippolytus is concerned. Again Euripides shows a certain detachment from his hero. He is not for the time being lost within him, but uses him in the interests of a further tragedy, and this time that further tragedy is made explicit. We have here a play within a play. The prologue is not a confession by Euripides that he finds the task of properly expounding a dramatic situation beyond his power; it is the dramatic embodiment of his real tragic idea. In the *Medea* we had to infer this from the treatment and in particular from the 'irrational' ending; in the *Hippolytus* the two dramatic planes of thought are made formally distinct. On the one plane Aphrodite is the tragic agent. What she is we have known perfectly well since Aeschylus wrote the Danaid-trilogy, even if we did not know before. She is not a mythical being whose existence Euripides is trying to disprove, not a cult whose observance he is trying to discredit; she is one of the elemental powers in nature, to Euripides as to Aeschylus. To both poets she and Artemis are complementary forces which have to be reverenced. Aphrodite says here explicitly that she has no quarrel with Hippolytus for his devotion to Artemis, but 'I destroy those who are haughty towards me'. Hippolytus therefore is introduced to us not as a tragic actor but as a tragic victim; his part is not to have in his soul a tragic contradiction or complexity, but a tragic singleness. Like Aeschylus' Suppliants, he is to be one-sided, utterly denying Aphrodite, and like them, to pay for this one-sidedness. To Aeschylus the law of Zeus does not tolerate partial adherence; Euripides puts the same idea into psychological rather than moral terms and will show us that there are laws of nature that demand obedience as well as laws of morality.

Aphrodite goes on to destroy all possibility of dramatic surprise in the play by telling us exactly what is to happen; she will inspire with a fatal passion the virtuous Phaedra. Phaedra will die; that, Aphrodite calmly says, cannot be helped and is immaterial; and in her death she will destroy Hippolytus. Now we know exactly where we are. The fate of Phaedra and Hippolytus will be seen by us always in the tragic frame that Aphrodite has made. It will not be in their own hands, as is the fate of the Sophoclean hero, and it will not arise from any complexity of their own characters, but from their singleness. They will be drawn as extreme characters – like Medea – for in Hippolytus at least nothing matters but the fanaticism of his virginality. Hence the complete contrast between Hippolytus and the Suppliants. The Suppliants are from first to last passionate and exciting dramatic characters – which no one would claim for Hippolytus. This does not mean that there were certain things in drama that Aeschylus could do and Euripides could not; the reason is that the one-sidedness of the Suppliants was only part of Aeschylus' tragedy. He thinks first of people of a certain kind who between them make a tragic situation; of incompatible claims which result in violence and involve others in mischief. Wrong-doing, and a resistance that goes too far, are of the essence of his thought; the opposition between Artemis and Aphrodite is the expression but not the substance of his thought. Therefore, to put it crudely, in Aeschylus it is tragic characters who grapple, in Euripides it is tragic specimens of humanity who come to shipwreck.

But have we not said that Phaedra is a rounded character, not a specimen or an extreme? She is indeed, and it is interesting to see why. Phaedra is tragic because virtuous; a struggle takes place within her such as Hippolytus can never know. She is made virtuous because if she is not, the theme will inevitably become something other than what Euripides has in mind. His theme is, obviously, that an unbalanced mind or temperament like Hippolytus' is unsafe; if Aphrodite attacks, Artemis cannot defend, only promise to destroy one of Aphrodite's darlings in return (1420–2). By implication, too much Aphrodite is as unsafe as too little, but unless Phaedra, too, is virtuous, the parallel between her and Hippolytus will not exist, and the point will be destroyed that Aphrodite is a natural force, quite indifferent to human morality, one with which we have to make terms. Moreover, if Phaedra were a follower of Aphrodite as Hippolytus is of Artemis, she would necessarily become a passionate and a wicked woman, a Medea, and Hippolytus we should feel to be simply her victim, not Aphrodite's. This, apparently, had been the theme of the first *Hippolytus*. Phaedra there was a woman who,

like Medea, Stheneboea, and Phthia in the *Phoenix*, was prepared to do anything to gratify her passion, a direct example of the terrible power of human unreason; Hippolytus was simply her victim, as Glauce and the others were Medea's. In such a play Phaedra's passion was inevitably the dominant motif, and Phaedra the dominant character. In such a situation Hippolytus' own one-sidedness would have little scope. In making Phaedra virtuous here, therefore, Euripides was not revising his first play to placate the stupid,[1] but taking a step which the difference in outlook demanded.

There is an interesting refinement in Euripides' treatment of Phaedra. His basic drama demands, and states, only that Phaedra is to be made a victim and tool of Aphrodite, a monument to the irresponsibility of these cosmic forces; but when the outer drama is played through, we find Phaedra herself giving a new and tragic interpretation of her passion, for she recognizes in it a hereditary taint (337–43). This in no way conflicts with that; it is the same fact as it appears on the different plane, a pointer to what Euripides means by his Aphrodite: not a member of the Pantheon of whom Euripides disapproves, but a potentially disastrous element in our nature.[2]

But although Phaedra is so Sophoclean a figure, we see behind her the shadow of Aphrodite. This shows very clearly the difference between the tragedians; there are no shadows standing behind Oedipus or Electra. Sophocles puts all his thought into these; Euripides uses his creations to bring on to the stage a tragedy that is being played behind the scenes. We said that an inner tragedy was the real controlling element in the *Medea*, in spite of Medea's tragic will; now that inner drama is brought into the open. Even so tragic a character as Phaedra is but a figure in it, not a heroine who in her own right claims all our attention.

It is therefore no real violation of unity when Phaedra disappears and leaves us with Hippolytus. But for the prologue we should be at a loss, for we should necessarily expect her character and personality still to count for something; as it is, we know that the real unity lies not in her fate but in what Aphrodite is doing, and in fact the

[1] At least, if he was, the fact is of biographical, not critical, interest. The assertion, in the second Argument, that he was doing this is not a statement of fact but a critical inference – possibly a silly one.

[2] It is, of course, because Aphrodite is this, an internal not an external tyrant, that the *Hippolytus* is tragedy. She is not a 'goddess' who torments us for her sport.

last thing that we look for is to see her passion and death prolonging itself in Hippolytus' mind. The logic of the plot and the unity of the action obviously reside in the underlying conception and not in the tragic mind of either Phaedra or Hippolytus. So it was in the *Medea*, only there we had no Aphrodite and Artemis to help us. We had indeed a unity derived from Medea's own will, but since this was not the real centre of the tragedy, the unity it gave was incomplete.

But even with the goddesses to show us how to look at the action of the *Hippolytus*, Euripides does not seem to be entirely at his ease. He has reconciled his un-Sophoclean conception of tragedy more nearly with the Sophoclean form of drama, but if we look attentively at the second part of the play we shall perhaps see signs of strain, and these may explain why Euripides did not again use this regularity of structure until he gave up writing tragedy.

First, from the purely dramatic point of view, Phaedra's tragedy has a quality which makes Hippolytus' something of an anticlimax. We should not insist on this overmuch, for the less absorbing Hippolytus is as a tragic character, the more do we feel the unseen presence of Aphrodite. Nevertheless, however much he is a tragic victim driven before the storm, we can hardly be oblivious of the fact that he addresses Theseus as if Theseus were a public meeting,[1] and can state quite objectively that he is the most virtuous man alive. This is not untragic; on the contrary, it is the whole point; but it is awkward that the point must be made in this way[2] – especially after the perfect drama of the first part. We have to keep our minds on the tragedy and leave the drama a little out of focus; to weigh the tragic fact that Hippolytus, though virtuous, is being destroyed, and to overlook the dramatic inconvenience that it is Hippolytus himself who tells us of his virtue. Above all do we have to refrain from asking why the chorus, despite its oath, allows Hippolytus to be destroyed when a hint of the truth would at least make Theseus pause a while.

Secondly, the messenger-speech is not really dramatic, as Greek

[1] Putting into Greek verse the formula 'Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking'.

[2] In suggesting here and elsewhere that there were logical reasons for Euripides' handling of the tragic form I am not suggesting that their existence automatically turns bad drama into good. Every art has formal principles which cannot be successfully defied, and sometimes no doubt Euripides went too far. But we can understand his methods without having to approve of all their results, and the critic's mere approval or disapproval is not a matter of public interest.

Tragedy understands the word. Hitherto the great messenger-speeches have noticeably quickened the pace of the drama by introducing some new factor of tragic importance; if the messenger has not had this function to perform he has been brief. We recall the Herald in the *Agamemnon*, how his announcements increase our sense of forboding; the terrible irony of the Corinthian's news in the *Tyrannus*; the swift reversal of our hopes and the unexpected blow of Haemon's death in the *Antigone*; the poignant situation in the *Electra* (with which we may compare the illumination of what Orestes is that we get from the brilliant messenger-speech in Euripides' *Electra*); the horror of the *Medea*. The two messenger-scenes in the *Septem* are interesting. In the long scene, in which the messenger has a lot to say, his part goes with the movement of the whole play, and is very dramatic; when he returns to announce the death of Eteocles and Polyneices he is reporting a single fact, which has been half-foreseen; accordingly he is brief, for long description of the manner of the event (highly impressive in the *Antigone*, where it shows the hatred with which Creon has inspired his own son) would have been irrelevant.

The death of Hippolytus is even more inevitable than that of Eteocles and Polyneices. We doubt neither the efficacy of Theseus' curse nor the power of Poseidon to destroy. All that the drama demands is this destruction, and the speech adds nothing to this simple demand. Sheer horror, effective in the *Medea*, where it illuminates Medea, is not wanted here, where it can only advertise the power of a god; a long and complicated narrative, effective in the *Electra*, where it serves half a dozen dramatic ends, would here be false. As pure narrative the speech is very good, but as drama it is something less than the best. It really marks time.

Thirdly, is there not a slightly artificial ring in the ending? Artemis is necessary and very dramatic, but the treatment of Theseus is perhaps in one respect what the play needs rather than what the tragic idea demands. Artemis balances Aphrodite, structurally and morally, and she was also the only plausible way of informing Theseus of the truth. She completes the revelation of the inner tragedy – in a rather obvious way, one would think, had it not been so often misunderstood.[1] She points out to the unhappy

[1] As surely by M. Méridier, when he speaks of 'un rayonnement de transfiguration', 'une sérénité céleste'.

Theseus that he has fallen, a supplementary victim, into Aphrodite's trap, and she paints Olympus as a place of moral chaos – which can indicate only that what these deities represent, instinctive passions, is independent of reason and morality. She says, 'We gods destroy the wicked, with their children and all', but Theseus is not ruined because he is wicked, and Hippolytus is presently borne in protesting his complete innocence. Artemis is powerless to help; she cannot even shed a tear. She can, however, promise to destroy someone else, to annoy Aphrodite, and she can promise Hippolytus that honour of perpetual worship which he enjoys in common with several other of Euripides' broken heroes. Hippolytus has his *Aufklärung*: *εἴθ' ἦν ἀραῖον δαίμοσιν βροτῶν γένος*[1] and we breathe a little more freely when this sub-human goddess has taken herself off, leaving the stage to the reconciliation between father and son.

All this is fine; but how genuine is the *ἁμαρτία* on which Artemis insists? She blames Theseus bitterly for his haste in calling down the curse on Hippolytus (*ὦ κάκιστε σύ*), and this has to bear the weight of the ending. Is this fair? It is not a mere matter of dramatic realism, whether Theseus was not in fact bound to believe the lying letter in face of Hippolytus' not very convincing defence and the general conspiracy of silence; though certainly we ourselves should not have raised the question of Theseus' guilt if Artemis had not. Beyond this there is the question of tragic relevance. Theseus' part in the tragedy is quite clear, and is indeed described accurately by Artemis. He is one of those tragic figures who stand at the cross-roads of disaster and get overwhelmed with the rest. That is the essence of his position, and any *ἁμαρτία* he may show is purely instrumental. When we see him confronting and cursing Hippolytus we do not feel him as a man who is doing something foolishly or wickedly wrong, but as one who can do no other; when we see him being railed at by Artemis and brokenly confessing error we are surely justified in assuming that this is being done to tighten the construction of the last scene and to give a weightier tone to the reconciliation. For this is an ending that needs some contrivance. The end of the tragedy is the destruction, by Aphrodite, of Hippolytus; the tragedy demands nothing more. But the play within the play does not end there very easily: Theseus has been involved, a third victim. To end simply with the second and third victims looking at

[1] 'Would that mortals could bring mischief on the gods!' (v. 1415).

each other and talking it over would have been weak; to have made Hippolytus die 'off', the prosaically logical course, and to end with the third victim alone, was a sacrifice of form to logic which Euripides was not yet (or at any rate not here) prepared to make. Hippolytus (unlike Andromache later) is brought back, and the ἁμαρτία, which even if justifiable is not logical, is introduced in order to stiffen the scene between the two.

The *Hippolytus* is justly renowned for its tragic beauty and power, and it is not suggested that the inconveniences just discussed are as prominent in reading or performance as they are in analysis. There is, however, the question why this play is strict in form while the later tragedies are not, and in these few discrepancies between the logic of the tragic idea and the demands of plot and symmetry of form we may see the answer to the question. A consideration of the *Troades* and *Hecuba* will suggest that later Euripides might have been content with presenting to us his three victims in bare juxtaposition with the minimum of logical connexion and formal unity. At all events, from now on, until he turned from tragedy to melodrama and tragi-comedy, Euripides sacrifices this external tidiness to directness of expression, being in this truly Greek; for surely the greatness of all Greek art lies not in its ability to achieve beauty of form (never the first aim of the great artist), but in its absolute sincerity to the underlying idea. We have to wait a century or more to see the rise of 'classicism'.

4. The 'Troades'

When the plays of Euripides are considered one by one, without distinction of kind or purpose, it is impossible not to be baffled by the vagaries of form and style in the tragedies which we now approach. Plot becomes chaotic, characterization uncertain, the use of the chorus unsteady, and undramatic speech-making endemic. When we find Euripides flouting our conception of dramatic form and yet being 'the most tragic of the poets', we tend to take refuge in general ideas about the clash, the *Spannung*, between Euripides' intellectualism and the religious background of his art, or we cleverly discover an *ad hoc* explanation of each problem. But as soon as we do distinguish kind and purpose the problem becomes simpler – or at least very different.

Euripides wrote tragedy, and he wrote several kinds of non-tragic drama. They must be kept distinct. In this chapter and the next we will consider the remaining tragedies (all but the *Bacchae*), first inquiring what kind of dramatic idea underlies them and how that moulds the dramatic form, then trying to see the logical connexion between the dramatic idea and the dramatic style of the plays. If we were making a critical study of Euripides himself, of his poetic and dramatic personality and the development of his views, we should have to take the plays in chronological order; but as we are considering his structural methods, and as these are the same in the whole group of war-tragedies but clearest in the last, we may begin with the last.

There is no need to assert that the *Troades* is a tragic unity; we feel it or we do not, and no analysis will make us feel it more; but in order to criticize we must see where the unity is. To appreciate this, we have first to remember that the play is unique in the later drama in being part of a genuine trilogy. The first play, the *Alexandros*, dealt with Paris. His parents, warned that the child would be the ruin of his country if he reached manhood, shrank from killing him, as did Laius and Iocasta, and Paris did reach manhood. We know the plot; what Euripides put into it we do not know. The point of the second play, the *Palamedes*, is clear. It dealt with the judicial murder of Palamedes by his own Greek leaders before Troy – the act of treachery which Nauplius his father was to avenge by lighting beacons to wreck the Greek ships on Euboea as they sailed home. In these two plays the tragedy of two nations is started; in the third it is consummated.

In the prologue, shared by Athena and Poseidon, the capture of Troy is announced, and Athena asks Poseidon to destroy the Greek fleet on its way home; she had been their champion, but their ὕβρις, both to Cassandra and to the temples of Troy, has made her their enemy. A reference to the coasts of Euboea reminds us of the *Palamedes*, and the gods retire, leaving the stage to the prostrate Hecuba, to whom is presently added a chorus of captive Trojan women awaiting their captors' pleasure.

The action that follows consists of four scenes. Talthybius the Herald comes for Cassandra, the virgin-priestess, whom Agamemnon is taking; as Andromache with her infant son Astyanax is being borne away to the Greek ships Talthybius comes again to announce