The Third Stasimon of Euripides' *Alcestis*

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The Third Stasimon of Euripides' *Alcestis* (569-605) has no lack of admirers. D.J. Conacher calls it 'the prettiest ode in the play'.[1] C.A.E. Luschnig labels it a 'beautiful, healing song'.[2] Despite the stasimon's beauty, modern scholarship on this ode has remained relatively silent in comparison with the scholarship generated on the rest of the play.[3] Given the lack of attention paid to these verses, this paper attempts to advance the literary analysis of the ode, and suggests that the Third Stasimon reinforces and calls attention to the play's themes of guest-friendship and substitution, as well as the disruption and restoration of harmony in the horizontal (δόμος Ἀδμήτου and πόλις) and vertical (οὐρανός and δόμος Ἄιδου) axes along which the Greek cosmos is ordered and with which the *Alcestis* as a whole is greatly concerned.[4]

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1 D.J. Conacher, *Euripides: Alcestis* (Warminster, 1988), 179.

2 C.A.E. Luschnig, *The Gorgon's Severed Head* (New York, 1995), 62.

3 See also Shirley A. Barlow, *The Imagery of Euripides* (London, 1971), 19; Charles Rowan Beye, *Alcestis by Euripides: A Translation with Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1974), 90-2; A.M. Dale, *Euripides: Alcestis* (Oxford, 1954), 99-102; Paul Decharme, *Euripides and the Spirit of his Dramas*, trans. by James Loeb (Port Washington, N.Y., 1968 [orig. 1906]), 297; Mortimer L. Earle, *Euripides' Alcestis* (London, 1908), 140-3; H.W. Hayley, *The Alcestis of Euripides* (Boston, 1898), 122-5; Lavinia Lorch, 'The Lyrics of the *Alcestis*: Dramatic Survival in a Drama of Ambiguity', *Helikon* 28 (1988), 69-127 (pages 116-22 give a text, translation, and discussion of Stasimon 3); Luschnig (n. 2), 62-4; Hugh Parry, *The Lyric Poems of Greek Tragedy* (Toronto and Sarasota, 1978), 157; D.F.W. Van Lennep, *Euripides: The Alkestis* (Leiden, 1949), 102-5.

4 For more on guest-friendship in the play, see Anne P. Burnett, 'The Virtues of Admetus', *CP* 60 (1965), 242, 247, 249, 250; *Catastrophe Survived* (Oxford, 1971), 38-40, 45; D.J. Conacher, *Euripidean Drama* (Toronto, 1967), 338; Karl Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme* (Totowa, N.J., 1972), 68; Leon Golden, 'Euripides' *Alcestis*: Structure and Theme', *CJ* 66 (1970-71), 122-3; D.M. Jones,

First, let us consider the stasimon's placement in the play's larger context, as well as the ode's basic content. The Third Stasimon occurs at the midpoint of the *Alcestis*, subsequent to Admetus' deception of Heracles about Alcestis' death and the hero's entrance into Admetus' house, and prior to Admetus' *agon* with his father Pheres, which results in the alienation of father and son. As for the stasimon's content, while one scholar has summarized the verses as a 'Praise of Admetus', the ode is more complex, moving from the mythical past of Admetus' guest-friendship with Apollo to the tear-filled present in which Alcestis has recently died, and in which Admetus has welcomed another guest, Heracles, into his home.[5]

While Stasimon 3 does touch upon Alcestis' death, on the whole the ode has a soothing and optimistic tone, which achieves, on one hand, a calming effect from the Chorus' previous astonishment at Admetus for taking Heracles into his home at such an inappropriate time. Some thirty lines earlier, the Chorus had asked their king, 'What are you doing? Facing such great misfortune, / Admetus, can you house a guest? Are you crazy?' (τί δρᾷς; τοιαύτης συμφορᾶς προκειμένης, / Ἄδμητε, τολμᾷς ξενοδοκεῖν; τί μῶρος εἶ; 551-2). After Admetus explains his reasons for welcoming Heracles, though, the Chorus open the Third Stasimon by praising the hospitality of his house. Thus, from the standpoint of immediate retrospective, the

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'Euripides' *Alcestis*', *CR* 62 (1948), 55; Herbert Musurillo, *'Alcestis*: The Pageant of Life and Death', *Studi Classici in Onore di Quintino Cataudella* 1 (1972), 280; Nancy S. Rabinowitz, *Anxiety Veiled* (Ithaca and London, 1993), 90-92; Rush Rehm, *Marriage to Death* (Princeton, 1994), 93-5; Thomas Rosenmeyer, *The Masks of Tragedy* (Austin, 1963), 236-7; Ruth Scodel, '*Admetou Logos* and the *Alcestis*', *HSCP* 83 (1979), 51-62; Wesley Smith, 'The Ironic Structure in *Alcestis*', *Phoenix* 14 (1960), 135; Henri Weil, *Alceste* (Paris, 1891), 4. For the disruption and restoration of the house, see especially Synnøve des Bouvrie, *Women in Greek Tragedy. Symbolae Osloenses* Supplement 27 (Oxford, 1990), 201; Rehm (see above), 85, 90. My analysis of the *Alcestis* in terms of its horizontal and vertical axes is, of course, indebted to Segal's work on the *Bacchae*. See Charles Segal, *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae* (Princeton, 1982), 78-157.

5 Z. Ritook, 'Euripides: *Alcestis*', *Acta Litteraria Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 19 (1991), 172; See also Kiki Gounaridou, *Euripides and Alcestis* (Lanham, 1998), 45; Justina Gregory, *Euripides and the Instruction of the Athenians* (Ann Arbor, 1991), 37; Parry (n. 3), 154, 157; Charles Segal, *Euripides and the Poetics of Sorrow* (Durham and London, 1993), 79. See also Parry (n. 3), 157: 'This ode is an echo in the real present of Apollo's "beautiful song" (*euphroni molpai*, 587), in the mythical past. The past here takes us thematically back into the fairy tale, poetically back into the lyric imagination'.

stasimon mollifies the Chorus' brief flare of emotion at Admetus' action. On the other hand, when we consider the bitter argument between Pheres and Admetus that follows this stasimon, the stasimon appears on one level to serve as a structural diversion by which the audience is lulled briefly into a sense of contentment and optimism.[6] In the mythical fantasy of the stasimon, Apollo's music not only induces Admetus' flocks to propagate, but also causes lynxes, lions, and deer to live in harmony. In the real world portrayed in the subsequent episode, though, civil coexistence between father and son will be shattered.

In addition to creating a sense of calm and optimism after the Chorus' astonishment at Admetus' welcome of Heracles and prior to the argument between Pheres and Admetus, the Third Stasimon, when compared with the play's other choral passages, calls attention to the variety of emotions that attend Alcestis' death. In the Parodos, the Chorus expressed uncertainty as to whether Alcestis was dead or alive (77-111) and uncertainty as to what action they should take amid the current crisis (112-35). By the First Stasimon, the Chorus begin to despair and lament (212-19), they pray to Apollo Paian to deliver Alcestis from death (220-25), and worry that Alcestis' loss might drive Admetus to suicide (226-33). The Second Stasimon (435-75), sung after Alcestis' death, praises Alcestis and the sacrifice she has made for her husband. After Stasimon 3, which concludes with the hope that Admetus' affairs will turn out prosperously, the play's Fourth Stasimon (962-1005) shows the Chorus as having given up all hope that death can be avoided. Thus, in the course of these five choral passages we see the common person react to death with uncertainty, despair, admiration for the dead, a lingering belief that things will turn out well, and finally acceptance of death's necessity.

The range of emotions expressed in the choral passages is matched by the variety of musical styles employed or alluded to in them. Prior to Alcestis' death, the Chorus use song to pray to Apollo to rescue Alcestis. The death of Alcestis, however, results in the death of music and harmony in Admetus' life. At 343-47, Admetus recalls the festive music that he himself played when Alcestis was alive. After Alcestis dies, however, Admetus vows he will never play his lyre or sing again (345-46) and bans music in his kingdom for a year (430-31). Immediately after Admetus' ban on music, in the Second Stasimon the Chorus predict that Alcestis will be immortalized in song (πολλά σε μουσοπόλοι / μέλψουσι κ.τ.λ., 445 f.). In the Third

6 Compare Rosenmeyer (n. 4), 237: 'The ode ... is designed to create an impression of security and contentment'.

Stasimon, the Chorus continue to think of music as they recall the pastoral tunes that filled Admetus' kingdom. They recall that Apollo's music inspired Admetus' flocks to propagate and induced wild animals to cast aside their savage nature. The play's final stasimon opens with an allusion to music (ἐγὼ καὶ διὰ μούσας / καὶ μετάρσιος ἦξα, 962-63) and concludes that music, among other things, cannot reverse the necessity and inevitability of death. Thus, the tragic irony of the *Alcestis* is that while music may inspire the creation of life, calm a savage spirit, or immortalize a person, music cannot literally overcome death. The comic irony of the *Alcestis*, though, lies in the fact that in the face of Admetus' ban on festive music after Alcestis' death, it is the unmusical (ἄμουσ', *Alc.* 760) Heracles who, eventually by employing force, will rescue Alcestis from Thanatos. Upon Alcestis' restoration to Admetus' house, Admetus ends his earlier moratorium on music and decrees that his kingdom begin a celebration (1154-55).

Not only does the Third Stasimon call attention to themes advanced in the play's other choral passages, the stasimon also echoes themes and topics treated in the drama's prologue. While some scholars have identified the speech of the slave who serves Heracles as the play's second prologue (and the form of the slave's speech certainly resembles a prologue),[7] the Third Stasimon's content also has similarities to the prologue. The play's opening apostrophe to Admetus' house of Admetus (Ὦ δώματ' Ἀδμήτει', 1) is echoed in the Third Stasimon's opening line (ὦ πολύξεινος καὶ ἐλεύθερος ἀνδρὸς ἀεί ποτ' οἶκος, 569).[8] Additionally, both the prologue (ἐλθὼν δὲ γαῖαν τήνδ' ἐβουφόρβουν ξένῳ, 8) and the stasimon open by alluding to the hospitality of Admetus (πολύξεινος, 569). Furthermore, both prologue (ἐβουφόρβουν, 8) and stasimon (μηλονόμας, 573) refer to Apollo's shepherding activities. Apollo's statement in the play's opening lines about the house 'in which I brought myself / to be content with the slave's table' (ἐν οἷς ἔτλην ἐγὼ / θῆσσαν τράπεζαν αἰνέσαι, 1-2) is echoed in the Chorus' reference to Apollo who 'brought himself to become a shepherd / on your estate' (ἔτλα δὲ σοῖσι μηλονόμας / ἐν δόμοις γενέσθαι, 573-74).

Just as the play and the Third Stasimon begin by apostrophizing Admetus' house and recalling Apollo's guest-friendship with Admetus, the play's prologue and Third Stasimon echo the play's and the stasimon's beginning with another reference to Admetus' house (καὶ νῦν δόμον ἀμπετάσας, 597) and an allusion to Apollo's guest-friendship with Admetus. Guest-friendship

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7 See Victor Castellani, 'Notes on the Structure of Euripides' *Alcestis*', *AJPh* 100 (1979), 488-9.

8 This parallel is also noticed by Earle (n. 3), 141.

between Admetus and Heracles, as well as a prediction regarding Heracles' benefit to Admetus, also conclude both the prologue and the Third Stasimon. Apollo's closing speech in the prologue predicted that a man entertained in Admetus' halls (ὃς δὴ ξενωθεὶς τοῖσδ' ἐν 'Αδμήτου δόμοις, 68) would force Thanatos to give up Alcestis.[9] Similarly, the Third Stasimon concludes by referring to Admetus' guest-friendship with Heracles (δέξατο ξεῖνον, 598). Additionally, the Chorus' belief that Admetus' reverence for the gods will result in his affairs turning out prosperously (θεοσεβῆ φῶτα κεδνὰ πράξειν, 605) recalls Apollo's departing prophecy in the prologue that Alcestis will be rescued. The Chorus' characterization of Admetus as one who reveres the gods also recalls Apollo's statement in the prologue that Admetus was a *hosios* person (ὁσίου γὰρ ἀνδρὸς ὅσιος ὢν ἐτύγχανον, 10).

While the content of the Third Stasimon does correspond in several places to the play's prologue, the stasimon's tone is lighter than the prologue. Unlike Apollo's opening monologue, which contains four lines (3-6) detailing the violence between Zeus and Apollo, the stasimon makes no reference to this. In the Third Stasimon, we find no references to fire (φλόγα, 4; πυρός, 5), striking (ἐμβαλών 4), anger (χολωθείς, 5), or killing (κατακτάς, 3; κτείνω, 6) as we do in Apollo's monologue. Lines 598-600 do mention Admetus' tears over his wife's death, but the Chorus' belief that things will turn out well for Admetus balances this sadness. While Apollo calls attention to the violence that resulted in his servitude to Admetus, the Chorus remembers the peace and prosperity that Apollo's presence brought to Admetus' kingdom. Apollo's language at lines 3-6 is filled with terms appropriate to the tragic genre, the Chorus' language in the Third Stasimon seems out of place in a play that has to this point dealt almost exclusively with death.

As Charles Segal has shown, the *Alcestis* is a play of, about, and consisting of substitutions.[10] The *Alcestis*, a drama of perhaps indeterminate genre, occupies the position usually held by a satyr play. The *Alcestis*' plot is propelled by substitutions. Apollo arranges for Admetus to avoid death, provided that he can find someone to die in his place. When Alcestis gives up her life for her husband, Admetus will have to become both father and mother to his children. Heracles, who rescues Alcestis from Thanatos, has been called a substitute for Apollo.[11] Besides these substitutions, the Third Stasimon calls attention to the play's other substitutions, especially those of tone, character, and diction. While the *Alcestis*' first half is tragic, the Third

9 Castellani (n. 7, 489) compares this line to 864 f.

10 Compare Charles Segal (n. 5), 38-9.

11 Gail Smith, 'The *Alcestis* of Euripides: An Interpretation', *Rivista di filologia e di istruzione classica* 111 (1983), 142.

Stasimon unexpectedly interrupts this tragic tone with the spritely, playful lyrics of pastoral comedy.[12] In the Third Stasimon, Euripides has (to a large extent) replaced the vocabulary of death with the language of life.[13]

For example, the Apollo of the prologue differs from the Apollo of the Third Stasimon. In the play's pre-history, the enraged Apollo destroyed the Cyclopes. In the Third Stasimon, though, the servant/god is described as εὐλύρας (570) and as piping tunes by which Admetus' cattle will mate (βοσκήμασι σοῖσι συρίζων / ποιμνίτας ὑμεναίους, 576-77). His music evokes joy (χαρᾷ, 579) among wild animals and causes deer to dance (χόρευσε, 583). While both the prologue and Stasimon 3 mention Apollo's shepherding activities, when Apollo tells the audience that he was a shepherd (ἐβουφόρβουν, 8), it is in the context of the punishment that Zeus gives Apollo. In Stasimon 3, no mention of the punishment is made, although the Chorus' term for Apollo's shepherding (μηλονόμας, 573) is no more dignified than Apollo's term in the prologue. The verb put in Apollo's mouth, βουφορβέω, does not occur elsewhere in extant Euripides, although its noun cognate appears in Euripides' *Electra* when Orestes says that a ditch-digger or a herder of cattle (σκαφεύς τις ἢ βουφορβὸς ἄξιος δόμων, 252) are worthy of the house in which his sister lives. Similarly, the noun μηλονόμας from Stasimon 3 occurs only here in extant Euripides, although its variant μηλονόμος appears at *Cyc.* 660, where it is applied to Cyclops. Thus, the ironic humor of Apollo's punishment may be that Zeus compels him to take up an occupation fit for a Cyclops.[14] Unlike the Euripidean Cyclops, though,

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12 Compare Segal (n. 5, 42): 'The magic of song ... transforms a constricted place of grief and death into an open, sunny landscape of joy and hope'. See also Burnett (n. 4, 'The Virtues'), 243.

13 Compare Lorch (n. 3), 119.

14 Of course, Hesiod and others make the Cyclopes creators of lightning bolts and children of Gaia and Ouranos. The scholiast on the *Alcestis* says that according to Pherecydes, Apollo killed the children of Brontes, Steropes, and Arges. These Cyclopes, according to Hesiod, were the children of Gaia and Ouranos (*Theo.* 139-46) and gave Zeus thunder and lightning (*Theo.* 501-6). While it may be that Euripides has this lightning-making tribe of Cyclopes in mind, nowhere in extant Euripides does the playwright make the Cyclopes the children of Gaia and Ouranos or mention them as makers of thunder, lightning, or lightning bolts. The only place Euripides mentions the lineage of the Cyclopes as a whole is at *Cyc.* 21, where it is implied they are Poseidon's children (ποντίου παῖδες θεοῦ). Excepting Euripides' *Cyclops* — where the Cyclopes are cave-dwelling shepherds (118-20) and cannibals (92-3, 126-8; for the latter cf. the flesh-eating, mountain-ranging, ὠμοβρώς τ' ὀρειβάτης, Cyclopes of *Tro.* 436-7) — other Euripidean Cyclopes are linked with the building of Mycenae

Apollo is a skilled musician. In Euripides' *Cyclops*, the poet describes the drunken Cyclops' singing as unmusical (ἄμουσ', *Cyc.* 426), which is the same term applied to the drunken Heracles' songs in the *Alcestis* (760).

While part of the humor of the *Alcestis* is having Apollo perform menial tasks, the Third Stasimon casts Apollo in other roles as well. The fact that Apollo's music attracts wild animals and appears to create harmony among them has reminded several scholars of Orpheus.[15] This obvious parallel is reinforced by the fact that earlier in the play Orpheus' name has been invoked by Admetus (357-62), who laments that if he had Orpheus' power, he would go to the underworld and rescue Alcestis.

While the similarity between Apollo and Orpheus immediately comes to mind, the Third Stasimon's combination of music, shepherding, and sexuality also makes Apollo a substitute for Pan. Apollo's piping of tunes by which Admetus' sheep would mate (ποιμνίτας ὑμεναίους, 577) recalls the sexual and comic power of Pan in Menander's *Dyscolos*, where the rustic god causes Sostratos to fall in love with Knemon's daughter. The Third Stasimon's verb συρίζω, used to refer to Apollo's piping, also hints at Pan. This verb, which occurs four other times in extant Euripides, appears twice in reference to Pan's piping (cf. *Ion* 501, *IT* 1125; see also the shepherd Paris at *IA* 576; *IT* 431). The syrinx, the instrument to which this verb points, is often said to have been invented by Pan (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.688-711; Pausanias 8.38.11). While by the stasimon's second stanza Apollo plucks the kithara (583), in the stasimon's opening the god's piping hints at the rustic, as well as comic nature of the occupation in which the god is employed. Furthermore, the linking of Apollo and συρίζω may also point toward the servitude forced upon the god, as he is connected with an instrument with which he is not usually associated.

Additionally, the music of both Pan and Apollo has the ability to evoke and inspire joy and dance. In the *Homeric Hymn to Pan*, Pan's 'heart revels to shrill tunes' (λιγυρῇσιν ἀγαλλόμενος φρένα μολπαῖς, 19.24), while in Stasimon 3 Apollo's merry songs gladden the hearts of the approaching deer (χαίρουσ' εὐφρονι μολπᾷ, 587).[16] In the *Homeric Hymn*, nymphs dance to

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or Argos. See *Her.* 15, 944, 948; *Tro.* 1088, *El.* 1158-59, *IT* 845, *Or.* 965; *IA* 152, 265, 534, 1501.

15 Compare Barlow (n. 3), 19; Lorch (n. 3), 121; Luschnig (n. 2), 62-3; Rosenmeyer (n. 4), 237; Segal (n. 5), 42.

16 Several striking verbal and thematic similarities exist between the *Homeric Hymn to Pan* and the Third Stasimon of the *Alcestis*. Since, however, the date of this hymn is unknown, we must resist the temptation to assert firmly that Euripides had this hymn in mind. Halliday and Sikes suggest that the hymn may

Pan's music (πυκνὰ ποσσίν, 20), while in the Third Stasimon deer approach 'with spritely step' (σφυρῷ κούφῳ, 586) and dance (χόρευσε, 583) to Apollo's music. In addition to the dance-inspiring songs played by Pan and Apollo, both divinities sing tunes concerned with sexual reproduction. While Apollo pipes hymeneal songs that induce Admetus' livestock to propagate (578), in the *Homeric Hymn* Pan sings of his own birth, and how his father Hermes mingled in love with Dryope. Hermes, who like Pan and Apollo in the *Alcestis* is both a musician and a shepherd, also shares another striking similarity with Apollo. According to Pan's song, Hermes, in order to woo Dryope, served as a shepherd for Dryope's father. Thus, both Hermes and Apollo serve as shepherds for mortal men.

Not only does the Third Stasimon cast Apollo in a role better suited for Pan or Hermes, Stasimon 3 and the *Alcestis* have replaced the typical, active Greek hero with the passive Admetus. In the *Alcestis*, Admetus is not given the heroic résumé that commonly accompanies Euripidean heroes.[17] Ancient sources record that Admetus sailed with the *Argo*, yet the *Alcestis* does not mention this, unlike Admetus' fellow Thessalian Peleus, whose participation in this voyage and other adventures is admired by the Chorus of Euripides' *Andromache* (790-801). In the *Alcestis*, Heracles spends some twenty lines discussing his impending encounter with Diomedes, as well as the victories he has achieved over other sons of Ares (481-504). Admetus' own wife receives Heracles-like praise in Stasimon 2 as the Chorus predict she will be immortalized in song by poets (445-54) and hail her as her husband's savior. In contrast, the Chorus' praise of Admetus takes quite a different form. As study of the Third Stasimon reveals, Admetus is given an attribute possessed by no other Euripidean character — he is 'very hospitable' (πολύξεινος, 569); and other than one pious cowherd in *Iphigenia in Tauris* (268), Admetus is the only Euripidean character called θεοσεβής (605), 'he who reveres the gods'.[18] While hospitality and reverence for the gods are qualities possessed by the Homeric heroes (compare especially Menelaus and Nestor

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belong to the fifth century, but whether it came before or after *Alcestis* is unknown. See W.R. Halliday and E.E. Sikes (T.W. Allen, ed.), *The Homeric Hymns* (Oxford, 1936), 403.

17 For more on Admetus' inability to fit in with 'the world of myth', compare C.A.E. Luschnig, 'Playing the Others: The Mythological Confusions of Admetus', *Scholia: Natal Studies in Classical Antiquity* 1 (1992), 12-27. Rosenmeyer (n. 4), 223, calls Admetus 'the unheroic hero of the people'.

18 Of course, other Euripidean characters (e.g., Theseus in *Her.*) may reverence the gods, but only Admetus and the cowherd are specifically given this epithet.

in the *Odyssey*), Admetus is not given the war record or physical prowess that also accompanies the Homeric hero.

Just as the genre of the *Alcestis* falls somewhere between comedy and tragedy, Admetus himself occupies a position somewhere between the hero and the common man. Admetus aspires to cross into the realm of the hero, but Euripides will not allow him to make that transition. While Burnett believed that Admetus could have wrestled Thanatos, and that 'Euripides emphasizes this ... by making Admetus himself touch on the possibility of a journey to the underworld',[19] I would stress the conditional aspect of Admetus' longing for the powers of Orpheus: 'But if I had Orpheus' tongue and melodies' (εἰ δ' Ὀρφέως μοι γλῶσσα καὶ μέλος παρῆν, 357). Indeed, Admetus only aspires to have Orpheus' power. Therefore, an outside agent is necessary. Unlike the play's other main characters who bring themselves to perform deeds which are unseemly or dangerous, Admetus only *wishes* to engage in such activities. Apollo brought himself (ἔτλην, 1; ἔτλα, 572) both to be content with the slave's table and to serve Admetus as a shepherd. Alcestis' willingness to act (ἔτλας, 462) distinguishes her from Admetus' parents who could not bring themselves to save (οὐκ ἔτλαν ῥύεσθαι, 469) Admetus from death, as well as Admetus himself, who realized he will be perceived as someone who could not bring himself (ὃς οὐκ ἔτλη θανεῖν, 955) to die.

Indeed, Admetus is a noble man, but not an heroic one. Accordingly, in Stasimon 3 a description of Admetus' kingdom replaces the catalogue of labors and adventures that often accompanies heroes like Peleus in the *Andromache*, Heracles, or even Alcestis. Moreover, the Third Stasimon's lofty (often epic) diction exaggerates humorously the grandeur of Admetus' kingdom. If we consider Admetus' realm in light of Aeschylus' *Persians* (864-906), where the Chorus spends some forty lines describing the extent of the Persian empire, Euripides' humor becomes more evident. While the historical Darius ruled territory on both sides of the Aegean and even the Aegean isles themselves, the mythical Admetus' territory 'stretches' from Lake Boebe in the north to Mt. Pelion in the east, both of which are no more than twenty kilometers away from Pherae.

Another exaggerated feature of Admetus' kingdom is that it is 'very rich in sheep' (πολυμηλοτάταν, 588). Euripides' use of the epithet πολύμηλος is probably a deliberate echo of Homer, who thrice employs this adjective's positive degree (*Il.* 2.605, 705, 14.490). The passage at *Il.* 2.705 occurs just eight lines prior to the name of Admetus. Euripides, though, magnifies the

19 Burnett (n. 4), 246.

Homeric epithet. The superlative form of πολύμηλος is unattested elsewhere, thus giving Admetus the most extensive flocks in Greek literature.

Euripides' description of Lake Boebe also resonates with an epic (and perhaps mock-epic) tone. Euripides labels the lake καλλίναον (589), an epithet that occurs only once more in extant Euripides (τοῦ καλλινάου τ' ἐπὶ Κηφισοῦ ῥοαῖς, *Med.* 835), where Athens' own river Cephisus is described. This epithet has troubled some scholars since Lake Boebe may have been stagnant in ancient times (cf. Strabo 9.5.20). Arrowsmith suggests that Apollo's presence miraculously transformed this 'marsh' into a 'limpid lake'.[20] What is evident, though, is that the καλλίναον / Βοιβίαν λίμναν that borders Admetus' kingdom is also intended to echo and embellish Homer's description of the same locale (Βοιβηΐδα λίμνην, *Il.* 2.711), thus giving Admetus' kingdom a further epic quality. Additionally, the Βοιβίαν λίμναν is meant to echo and contrast with Euripides' own λίμναν Ἀχεροντίαν, which Alcestis will cross in the underworld (mentioned by the Chorus in Stasimon 2 at line 443).[21] In Stasimon 3 Euripides has replaced the bleak landscape of the underworld, in which Alcestis will soon arrive, with the scenic upper world in which Admetus will remain. The irony, however, is that Alcestis, though dead, will be hymned by poets, while Admetus, though alive, has tears in his eyes (νοτερῷ βλεφάρῳ, 598) and weeps over the corpse of his dear wife (τᾶς φίλας κλαίων ἀλόχου νέκυν, 599).

Besides reinforcing the play's theme of substitution, the Third Stasimon also highlights the disruption and restoration of order in the horizontal and vertical axes along which the Greek cosmos is arranged and with which the *Alcestis* as a whole is greatly concerned. As des Bouvrie points out, the *Alcestis* 'presents the disruption of the basic institution of the [home], and its restoration'.[22] As many scholars have noticed, the home is one of the focal points for the action and theme of this drama. Words for 'house' (δῶμα, δόμος, ἑστία, μέλαθρον, οἶκος, στέγη, στέγος) occur 13, 48, 6, 6, 14, and 7

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20 William Arrowsmith, *Euripides: Alcestis* (New York and London, 1974), 110. See also Earle (n. 3), 141; Hayley (n. 3), 124; Dale (n. 3), 101: 'a conventional epithet hardly applicable to a stagnant piece of water'. Contrast Van Lennep (n. 3, 104), who thinks that the epithet 'contains the notion of limpidness'.

21 For the contrast between Acheron and Boebe, see Lorch (n. 3), 120.

22 Des Bouvrie (n. 4), 201. Compare also Segal (n. 5, 77), who says that the play 'look[s] toward the resolution of conflict and the reunification of the house'; Karelisa V. Hartigan, *Ambiguity and Self-Deception: The Apollo and Artemis Plays of Euripides* (Frankfurt am Main, 1991), 19: 'In the *Alkestis* the playwright displays the disruption caused in the lives of those touched by the god's deed'.

times (94 times in total) respectively in the *Alcestis*. With one of these words occurring in the *Alcestis* an average of every 12.4 lines (compare *Andr.* at 1/12.5 lines, *El.* at 1/13.7 lines, *Or.* at 1/17.1 lines), this play ranks first among extant Euripidean dramas in such references. The Third Stasimon continues the focus on Admetus' house by apostrophizing its hospitality and liberality in line 569 (ὦ πολύξεινος καὶ ἐλεύθερος ἀνδρὸς ἀεί ποτ' οἶκος), mentioning that Apollo dwelled within its walls (δόμοις, 574) and increased its wealth (πολυμηλοτάταν / ἑστίαν, 588-89), and noting that Admetus has opened it wide to another guest (δόμον ἀμπετάσας, 597), despite the fact that Admetus' wife has recently died in the house (ἐν / δώμασιν ἀρτιθανῆ, 599-600). Luschnig states that Admetus' and Alcestis' house 'is treated almost as if it were one of the characters',[23] and this is certainly evident in Stasimon 3.

The difficulty of the referent for the epithets πολύξεινος and ἐλεύθερος in the ode's opening line calls attention to the house's characterization. Some scholars have wanted to emend the text to make the epithets agree with ἀνδρός.[24] Greek, however, does allow these epithets to remain nominative, but be understood with an accompanying genitive.[25] Be that as it may, the ambiguity created by the text as it stands calls attention to Euripides' animation of the house. Additionally, Stasimon 3 shows in a panoramic sweep how Admetus' house became very prosperous, but also lost its beloved mistress. These changes in Admetus' *domos*, however, need to be understood in the larger context of the play and the Greek cosmos, both of which are arranged along a horizontal and vertical axis. At the pinnacle of the vertical axis is 'heaven' (οὐρανός), at its lowest point the underworld (δόμος Ἄιδου). The extremes of the horizontal axis are the home (δόμος

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23 Luschnig (n. 2), 15-16. See also J.M. Bell, 'Euripides *Alkestis*: A Reading', *Emerita* 48 (1980), 47; R.G.A. Buxton, 'Euripides' *Alkestis*: five aspects of an interpretation', in *Papers given at a Colloquium on Greek Drama in honour of R.P. Winnington-Ingram*, ed. Lyn Rodley (London, 1987), 17-19; G.M.A. Grube, *The Drama of Euripides* (London, 1941), 129 ff.; Jan Kott, *The Eating of the Gods: An Interpretation of Greek Tragedy* (New York, 1970), 80; Beye (n. 3), *ad loc.*; S.E. Scully, 'Issues in the Second Episode of Euripides' *Alcestis*', in *Greek Tragedy and Its Legacy: Essays Presented to D.J. Conacher,* eds. Martin Cropp, Elaine Fantham, S.E. Scully (Calgary, 1986), 137.

24 Compare Dale (n. 3), 100. Haley (n. 3, 122) leaves πολύξεινος with οἶκος, but changes ἐλεύθερος to agree with ἀνδρός.

25 Compare, for example, Sophocles, *Ant.* 793-94 (νεῖκος ἀνδρῶν / ξύναιμον), where 'kindred strife of men' is best translated the 'strife of kindred men'. See also Thucydides 2.61.2 (ἐν τῷ ὑμετέρῳ ἀσθενεῖ τῆς γνώμης), where 'in your weakness of opinion' is best translated 'in the weakness of your opinion'.

'Αδμήτου) and the city (πόλις). As Stasimon 3 indicates, Apollo, whose proper place is the apex of the vertical axis, has entered the horizontal axis along which Admetus' kingdom rests. Apollo's presence in the horizontal axis is a result of disruptions along the vertical and horizontal axes.

These disruptions originated when Asclepius violated the order of the vertical axis by raising the dead. Zeus, in an effort to restore order to the cosmos, causes Asclepius to descend the vertical axis by striking him with a lightning bolt. Apollo, retaliating against Zeus for killing his son, causes the Cyclopes to descend the vertical axis. Zeus responds to Apollo's anger by banishing him temporarily from the pinnacle of the vertical axis to the midpoint of the axes, the earth. Admetus, acting in accordance with the customs of the horizontal axis, receives the divine stranger into his *domos*.

As the Third Stasimon's first three stanzas show, Apollo's stay in the horizontal axis brought peace and prosperity to Admetus' realm. Despite this prosperity, though, Stasimon 3 indicates that Apollo's activities as a shepherd caused subtle, albeit humorous disruptions in the necessary rhythm of the horizontal axis, namely the humanization of the animals. The Chorus sing that Apollo played tunes (ὑμεναίους, 578) by which animals would mate. The word ὑμεναίους is typically found in the context of human marriages, such as lines 916 (σύν θ' ὑμεναίοις ἔστειχον ἔσω) and 922 (νῦν δ' ὑμεναίων γόος ἀντίπαλος) when Admetus recalls the 'wedding songs' that accompanied his marriage to Alcestis. The Chorus' reference to the 'troop' of lions that come to hear Apollo's music reveals a similar humanization. The word for 'troop' (ἴλα, 581) is unexpected, since ἴλα usually refers to a group of humans, particularly military divisions (cf. Herodotus 1.73.3, 1.202.2; Sophocles, *Aj.* 1407; Xenophon, *Anabasis* 1.2.16, *Cyropaedia* 6.2.36, *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians* 2.11). Euripides' choice of ἴλα highlights the humanizing effect Apollo's music has on the animals. A pride of savage lions has now become organized into a military platoon. Similar humanization is found in the reference to the dancing (χόρευσε, 583) deer that 'approached with spritely step' (βαίνουσ' ... σφυρῷ κούφῳ, 586).[26] The phrase βαίνουσ' ... σφυρῷ κούφῳ may echo Homer's description of Deiphobus' stride (κοῦφα ποσὶ προβιβάς, *Il.* 13.158); Pindar's description of the Grace Thalias' movement (κοῦφα βιβῶντα, *Oly.* 14.17); or Hesiod's description of Heracles leaping into his chariot (κοῦφα βιβάς, *Shield* 323). Given Heracles' presence in the *Alcestis*, the latter seems most likely. What is most important to note here, though, is that Euripides has endowed the

26 Compare also the deer at *El.* 860-61; Bacchylides 13.86-90.

deer with human or even divine movement, which again highlights the transformative effect Apollo's music has upon the space he occupies.

While Apollo's presence in Admetus' realm may have caused the king's flocks to increase, deer to dance, and savage beasts to live together in harmony, the stasimon's final stanza transports us from this land of fairies and sprites to the real world, and reminds us that Admetus now has tears in his eyes (νοτερῷ βλεφάρῳ, 598; κλαίων, 599) and that his wife Alcestis has died (νέκυν, 599; ἀρτιθανῆ, 600). In the space of a few lines, Euripides manipulates narrative time in such a way as to show Admetus move from the height of mythical prosperity to the depths of real despair. The music of the divine guest that graced Admetus' fields and flocks has deteriorated into a cacophony of groans and lamentation. When Alcestis was alive, music and song filled Admetus' kingdom. Alcestis' death, though, prompts Admetus to declare a year-long moratorium on music (430-31). Apollo and Alcestis, who both brought music to the horizontal axis, have now left Admetus' δόμος, the former for οὐρανός, the latter for the δόμος Ἄιδου.

Alcestis' death is a further violation of the axes that comprise this drama's world. As Alcestis herself says, 'Children, when I should be alive, I am going below' (ὦ τέκν', ὅτε ζῆν χρῆν μ', ἀπέρχομαι κάτω, 379). Alcestis' life could have been spared were it not for the attempts of others to control or avoid descent along the vertical axis. The origin of the crisis rests with Apollo, whose deception of the Fates (11-12) allows Admetus to avoid descending the vertical axis. The Fates, however, stipulate that Admetus must find someone to die in his place. Alcestis becomes Admetus' substitute since neither of Admetus' parents is willing to die for him, despite the fact that, as Alcestis later laments, 'for them the time had come to pass from life' (καλῶς μὲν αὐτοῖς κατθανεῖν ἦκον βίου, 291). Both the avoidance of death by Admetus' parents and Apollo's deception of the Fates represent efforts to control or manipulate the descent along the vertical axis. For Admetus' parents, avoiding imminent death represents the typical human effort to control the necessity of the vertical axis. Apollo's friendship with Admetus prompts the god to arrange for the king to avoid his obligation to descend the vertical axis to the underworld.

While I shall not speculate as to why Admetus made this choice or whether Admetus had the opportunity to decline Apollo's offer, I do want to suggest that Stasimon 3 may reveal the conditions under which Apollo's offer was made to Admetus. Given the 'Golden Age'-like peace and prosperity that existed in Admetus' kingdom, it would not be surprising if Admetus had been lulled into believing that he could have been completely immune from death's pain and hardship. This, however, is speculation and

need not be pursued further. What is clear, though, is that Admetus was not prepared for the consequences and emotions brought on by avoiding his descent along the vertical axis.

While Admetus does not descend the vertical axis as necessity and nature dictate, his continued existence in the horizontal axis allows him no freedom. Apollo's offer of avoiding death allowed Admetus to remain in the horizontal axis. Alcestis, though, with her dying breath, imposes new constraints upon Admetus in the horizontal axis. By having Admetus promise that he will not remarry, Alcestis, even in death, gains some measure of control over her husband and contributes to Admetus' immobilization in the horizontal axis. While it is expected that Alcestis' soul will descend to the δόμος Ἄιδου, the fame of her sacrifice will approach that of those who dwell in οὐρανός. In contrast, Admetus does not descend the vertical axis, yet becomes immobilized in the horizontal axis. At lines 935-61, Admetus realizes his immobility. Sorrow and disorder inside the *domos* will drive Admetus to the *polis*, while in the *polis* the sight of other Thessalian women, whisperings of cowardice, and estrangement from his parents will cause Admetus to return to the *domos*. Thus, Admetus ultimately learns that he has nowhere left to go. He did not descend the vertical axis as he should have done, and his life in the horizontal axis is destroyed. Admetus has alienated himself from both *domos* and *polis*.[27]

Admetus' immobility in the horizontal axis will be remedied, though, by his hospitality. Admetus' ability to receive strangers into his *domos* ultimately allows him to become socially mobile again. As Stasimon 3 shows, Admetus' guest-friendship with Apollo led to Admetus' prosperity. At this point in the play, though, we also know that Admetus' guest-friendship with Apollo has brought emotional and social hardship upon Admetus. Apollo's 'gift' to Admetus leads to the death of Alcestis and fears of social condemnation for Admetus. While the departure of Apollo and Alcestis from the house renders Admetus inert, the Third Stasimon's concluding stanza expresses optimism that Admetus' affairs will turn out prosperously. As Stasimon 3 hints, it will be another of Admetus' guests (597-98) who will restore order to the horizontal and vertical axes.

Heracles is the perfect character to remedy Admetus' immobility. Unlike his half-brother Apollo who leaves Admetus' house to avoid death's taint (μὴ μίασμά μ' ἐν δόμοις κίχῃ, 22), Euripides gives Heracles the ability to place his hands upon Death. Aeschylus describes the underworld as a place 'untrodden by Apollo' (τὰν ἀστιβῆ Ἀπόλλωνι, *Septem* 859), which could

27 Compare Rehm (n. 4), 88: '[Admetus] is now an outsider in his own *oikos*'.

explain why Apollo himself does not rescue Alcestis from Thanatos.[28] This task will be accomplished by Heracles, who can both descend the vertical axis and return to the horizontal axis. After Heracles rescues Alcestis from Death, though, Heracles must overcome the constraints imposed upon Admetus by Alcestis to restore order to the horizontal and vertical axes.

Accordingly, Heracles finds a loophole in Alcestis' wish that Admetus not remarry by appealing to Admetus' respect for the customs of *xenia*. By transforming Alcestis into a guest (τόλμα προτεῖναι χεῖρα καὶ θιγεῖν ξένης, 1117), Heracles avails Admetus of one of the few powers the king has left in the horizontal axis — the power of the host. Thus, as foreshadowed by the Third Stasimon, Admetus' upholding of the customs of *xenia* will ultimately ensure that his affairs turn out prosperously. The disruptions of the horizontal and vertical axes that resulted from Apollo's guest-friendship with Admetus are rectified by Heracles' guest-friendship with Admetus.

In Plato's *Symposium* (223d), Socrates advanced the idea that one person could write both tragedy and comedy. In the *Alcestis*, Euripides has compelled these two genres to coexist within the same drama and within the Third Stasimon. The contrasting styles of these two genres are represented by Apollo and Heracles. Apollo's taming of animals by music contrasts with the 'muse-less' Heracles' ability to subdue animals by force. Heracles will subdue the mares of Diomedes using his strength. Apollo causes lions and deer to live peacefully through his music. In some ways, Apollo and Heracles, these two sons of Zeus, resemble another pair of Zeus' sons, Zethus and Amphion, who built walls for Thebes, the former using brute strength, the latter moving stones into place with music from his lyre. Similarly, in the *Alcestis*, Apollo and Heracles, the former a representative of music, the latter an advocate of force, coexist and complement one another in achieving a balance between these two opposites in the Third Stasimon.[29]

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28 Contrast Burnett (n. 3, 246), who believes that 'the god could save Alcestis at once'.

29 Thanks to the editors and anonymous referees of *Scripta Classica Israelica* for their helpful comments and suggestions. Any errors that remain are, of course, my own.