

INTRODUCTION

This is no place for a close analysis of the diction of the various works of Euripides; but taking one rough test, just for what it is worth, we may try to count the number of words in each play which are not found elsewhere in Euripides. The *Medea*, a central sort of play, has in its 1419 lines 103 such words. The *Alcestis*, with 1163 lines, has 122; the *Rhesus*, with less than 1000 lines, has 177; the *Cyclops*, with only 701 lines, has actually 220. This calculation is doubtless slightly inexact: in any case it is worth very little until it is carefully analysed. But on the whole it accords with my general impression that the *Rhesus* in its variation from the Euripidean norm goes further than the *Alcestis*, and not so far as the *Cyclops*, and goes in very much the same direction. I feel in the *Rhesus* a good deal of that curious atmosphere, not exactly comic, but wild and extravagant, which the Greeks felt to be suited to the Satyr horde; the atmosphere normally breathed by the one-eyed Giant of the cavern on volcanic Aetna, or the drunken and garlanded Heracles who wrestles with Death and cracks his ribs for him at midnight among the tombs. The whole scene and setting of the *Rhesus*; the man-wolf crawling away into the darkness and his two enemies presently crawling in out of the same darkness with his bloody spoils; the divine Thracian king with his round targe that shines by night and his horses whiter than the snow; the panic of the watch, the vaunting of the doomed chieftain, the goddess disguised as another goddess, the thrilling half-farcical scene where the spy Odysseus is actually caught and befools his captors: these things are not of course comic, like some incidents in the *Cyclops*. They