

INTRODUCTION

accepting the external evidence as true. The famous critic, Crates, of the second century B.C., happens to mention—in excuse of what he took to be a slip in the poet's astronomy—that the *Rhesus* of Euripides was a youthful work. Now the earliest dated tragedy of Euripides that we possess is the *Alcestis*, B.C. 438, written when he was about forty-six. His style may well have been considerably different fifteen or twenty years earlier, and must certainly have been much under the influence of Aeschylus. So far, so good. Then what of the other difficulties, the three different opening scenes and the few passages of late phrasing or technique? One obvious explanation suits both. The three different openings pretty clearly imply that the play was reproduced more than once after the poet's death and adapted by the producer for each occasion. This happened to many plays of Euripides, and in one case we even know the name of the producer; he was Euripides the Younger, son of the poet. Among other things we have reason to believe that he wrote some parts of the *Iphigenia in Aulis*. And in this connexion we can hardly help noticing that the *Iphigenia in Aulis*, like the *Rhesus* and like no other Greek tragedy, has two alternative openings, one a dull prologue and one a lyrical scene in anapaests under the stars. The general style of the two plays is utterly different; the *Iphigenia* is most typically late Euripidean; but one would not be surprised to learn that they had both passed at some time through the same revising hand.

This hypothesis seems to work well. But one difficulty remains.

We have so far gone on the supposition that