

The Function of Polymestor's Crime in the "Hecuba" of Euripides

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Nothing is known about the Thracian king Polymestor from either literary sources or the visual arts before his appearance in the "Hecuba" of Euripides.¹ There he is the treacherous host and murderer of the Trojan prince Polydorus, cruelly punished for his crime by the victim's mother; all later references to him seem to derive from this play.² We do not know either whether Polymestor is a Euripidean invention³ or was adapted by the

¹ Literary sources: e.g. H. Grégoire, *L'antiquité classique* 2 (1933) p. 129: "Avant lui (= Euripides) ... aucune trace dans aucun poète". Later: A. Lesky, *Die tragische Dichtung der Hellenen*,³ Göttingen, 1972, p. 330: "Keinerlei Anhalt für eine voreuripideische Fassung".—The references are usually to Polymestor's deed and its consequences rather than to Polymestor himself, but any existence of Polymestor outside of the context of his crime does not seem to be considered. Visual arts: see the last paragraph of "Polymestor" (J. Zwicker) in *RE* (1952). Polymestor's name is also absent from F. Brommer, *Vasenlisten zur griechischen Heldensage*,³ Marburg, 1973.

Polymestor is not the only barbarian king unattested in sources prior to the Euripidean play in which he appears, on his own soil, far from Greece, in the midst of characters well established in Greek mythology: cf. Theoclymenos in the "Helen" and Thoas in the "Iphigenia Taurica".

² See *Ov. Metam.* 13.429 sqq., 549 sqq.; without the name of the Thracian king. *Verg. Aen.* 3.41 sqq. The different version of *Hyg. fab.* 109—there Polymestor is also the husband of Priam's daughter Iliona and father of her son whom he kills mistaking him for his wife's young brother; consequently he is blinded and killed by his wife—which is generally considered to follow Pacuvius' Iliona, is evidently a later development (from a lost post-Euripidean play? See W. Beare, *The Roman Stage*,³ London, 1968 p. 80, Zwicker in *RE* (n. 1)).—The earliest attested post-"Hecuba" mention of Polymestor in Greek literature is in 'Plut'. *Parall.* 24, the author of which explicitly states that he follows Euripides (ὡς Εὐριπίδης ὁ τραγωδοποιός); however, he defines Polymestor as Priam's son-in-law (and not his *έτερος*) and thereby introduces into his summary of the Euripidean plot an element from the Hyginus-Pacuvius version alien to (and meaningless in) it.

³ E.g. G. Kaibel, *Hermes* 30 (1895), p. 85: "... eine Schöpfung des Dichters, der den Namen durch Angleichung an die Namen der Priamoskinder Polydorus und Polyxene erfand"; Grégoire (n. 1): "tout ce rôle est de l'invention d'Euripide". See also n. 1, end.

poet from local lore⁴ or a lost literary source.⁵ Howsoever, it is generally agreed that there is a more than accidental relation between the unique background of Polydorus in this play, where contrary to tradition he is a son of Hecuba and survives the battle for Troy in Thracian hiding,⁶ and his death at the hands of his Thracian host after the victory of the Greeks.⁷ Accepted, too, is the connection between the aftermath of this murder and the fact that Polyxena's sacrifice at the tomb of Achilles is transferred to Thrace from its traditional place in the Troad.⁸ While the location of the plot in the Chersonnese and the cruel perfidy of Polymestor are often assumed to reflect Greek or Athenian political interests,⁹ the discussion of the play pivots mainly on the character of Hecuba and her revenge,¹⁰ and it is on these that the interpretation of the whole tragedy is made to depend.

This view may, however, be too narrow: the exclusive concentration on Hecuba's reaction to the crime of Polymestor ignores the reaction of

⁴ L. Méridier, *Euripide, Hécube*, Paris, 1965, p. 173. Of late D. J. Conacher, *Euripidean Drama*, London/Toronto, 1967, p. 150, following M. Pohlenz, *Die griechische Tragödie*, Göttingen, 1954, I, p. 277 + II, p. 116. Considered as no more than a possibility by Lesky (n. 1) n. 78.

⁵ A play by Aeschylus is suggested by Th. Zielinski, *Tragodumenon Libri Tres*, Kraków, 1925, p. 55.

⁶ In Homer Polydorus is Priam's son by Laothoe (Il. 21, 84-91, 22, 46-8) and he is killed by Achilles in the battle after Patroclus' death (Il. 20, 407-18, 21, 90-1).

⁷ E.g. RE (n. 1) p. 1769: "... bat Euripides in seiner Hekabe unter Niechtachtung des bei Homer erzählten Schicksals des Polydorus diesen zum Träger einer Erzählung gemacht, die nur im Verhältnis des Polydorus zu thrakischen König Polymestor besteht".

⁸ See Méridier (n. 4), p. 174-5, Conacher (n. 4), p. 151, n. 15. For the traditional location of the tomb see Od. 24, 82 in its context of 36 sqq.; Achilles was, of course, buried where the Greeks were when he was killed = on Trojan soil. An Achilleum close to Sigeum is mentioned by Hdt. 5, 94.2 and may have been known to Euripides' audience. The transfer did not outlast the play for which it was made: in the "Troades", produced some ten years after the "Hecuba", the sacrifice takes place in Troy, prior to the departure of the Greeks from the conquered city.

⁹ Greek, e.g. Conacher (n. 4), following Pohlenz-Weil: "this particularly barbarous murder belonged to a legend arising from the hatred of Greek settlers for their Thracian neighbours in the Chersonnese". Athenian, e.g. Zielinski (n. 5), p. 34: "huc igitur temporā (= the reconquest of the Chersonnese by Athens, 476-459) ... tragœdiam nostram (= the conjectured Aeschylean play about the end of Polydorus; see n. 5) assignabimus". Grégoire (n. 1), p. 128: "Polymestor est le type de l'allié infidèle et perfide", p. 129: "tout l'épisode de Polymestor, dans la forme qu'Euripide lui a donnée, est en fonction de la rancune et du mépris qu'en 424 les Athéniens avaient pour leur barbares alliés thraces". See also Schmid-Stählin, I, 3, 1 (1940), p. 466 and Pohlenz (n. 4), II, pp. 116-7.

However, no specific emotional involvement seems to have been needed for this characterization of the Thracians. The statement of Thuc. 7, 29, 4 "τὸ γὰρ γένος τῶν Θρακῶν ὁμοῖα τοῖς μέγιστα τοῦ βαββαροῦ, ἐν ᾧ ἂν φασίτησι φωνικωτάτων ἐστίη" (à propos the wholesale murder of the population of a city, including schoolchildren in their school; see there paragraphs 4-5), does not sound like a novel revelation.

¹⁰ See W. Steidle, *Zur Hekabe des Euripides*, W.S. 79 (1966), pp. 133-42, with his presentation and bibliography on p. 134.

Agamemnon to the same crime. Unduly so, as appears from Agamemnon's important rôle in the play and his stressed involvement in Polymestor's punishment: but for Hecuba, Agamemnon is the only Persona Dramatis on stage in more than one scene¹¹ and he is the one who has the final say before the perfunctory exit anapaests of the chorus. Moreover, his first appearance in 1.726, anticipated already in the parodos,¹² follows immediately upon the finding of Polydorus' body and Hecuba's statement as to the identity of the murderer.¹³ Her pathetic πῶς δόξα ξένων,¹⁴ expresses the old queen's realisation that with the loss of the body-politic¹⁵ she and hers have lost all protection against offence. Agamemnon's appearance at this stage of the action supplies Hecuba with both a social framework¹⁶ and the responsible authority.¹⁷ As such she appeals to him to punish the murderer of her child.

It stands to reason that the Athenian audience sided with Hecuba when she made this appeal: here was a Mater Dolorosa to whose already seemingly unsurpassable sufferings another most terrible blow had been added by foul villainy. Moreover, in Athens it was the duty of the family of a murdered person to obtain retribution for the injury he had suffered;¹⁸ the relatives who were entitled to proceed against the murderer were bound to do so; those who were not, had to obtain the vengeance through the aid of somebody entitled to take legal action.¹⁹ Hecuba was evidently trying to do her duty by her murdered son. When she referred to herself as Agamemnon's slave,²⁰ the audience probably inferred that he was obliged to protect her: Athens at the time of the performance was famous for her humane treatment of slaves²¹ and prided herself on her enlightened legislation.²² In

¹¹ 726 sqq., 1109 sqq.; in each scene Agamemnon participates to the end and, moreover, closes it effectively (898-904, 1284-1292).

¹² 120-122: ἦν δ' ὁ τὸ μὲν σὺν σπαρτῶν ἀγαθὸν/τῆς μαντιπύλου Βάκχης ἀνέχων/λέκτρον Ἀγαμέμνον. Whatever his reason, it is clear from the beginning that Agamemnon cares for Hecuba and wishes to help her.

¹³ 710.

¹⁴ 715.

¹⁵ ἄπολις, 669, 811.

¹⁶ 798: ἡμεῖς . . . δοῦλοι. 809: νῦν δοῦλη. Even a slave "belongs"; see also n. 20.

¹⁷ 798-806.

¹⁸ D. M. MacDowell, *Athenian Homicide Law in the Age of the Orators*, Manchester, 1963, p. 1.

¹⁹ MacDowell (n. 18), pp. 15-20.

²⁰ 809: τύραννος ἢ ποτ', ἀλλὰ νῦν δοῦλη σθέν. As ἢ ποτ' is balanced by νῦν, τύραννος by δοῦλη, σθέν is not necessitated by the construction and therefore stressed.

²¹ X. Ath. 1, 10-12.

²² Lines 291-2 of this play (νόμος δ' ἐν ἡμῖν τοῖς τ' ἐλευθέρους ἴσος/καὶ τοῖσι δοῦλοῖσι αἵματος κείται πᾶσι) are generally explained as referring to Athenian contemporary law, see, e.g., Méridier ad loc. See esp. D. 21, 48-50 (ἀκούει; ᾧ ἀνθρώποις Ἀθηναίοι, τοῦ νόμου τῆς φιλαπέρθεως, ὅς οὐδὲ τοῖς δοῦλοῖς ὑβρίζεσθαι ἀξιοῖ κτλ.). See also the laws in the following notes.

interest over that of the state.³² And yet he considered Hecuba's plea just.³³ In order to solve his dilemma Agamemnon accepts³⁴ Hecuba's alternate offer³⁵ to act on her own. He does not make any stipulations as to the form of the punishment which she may exact³⁶ and grants her the aid necessary to get hold of Polymestor and his sons.³⁷ By doing this Agamemnon not only allows private revenge to replace judicial proceedings: he also becomes Hecuba's silent partner and accomplice. And when all is over, he officially sanctions her deed.³⁸

Thus conceived, the situation seems to be more complex than is generally assumed, and the play may deal not solely with Hecuba and her revenge, but rather with the interrelated reactions of both Agamemnon and Hecuba to the impious act of Polymestor; in other words, the function of Polymestor's crime in the "Hecuba" may be to show what the evil deed of one wicked man can do to ordinarily good and essentially decent persons who suddenly find themselves involved and are obliged to respond to it.

The implications of this observation for the interpretation of the "Hecuba"³⁹ are beyond the scope of this paper. However, it may be interesting

³² 855-863. This conclusion of the army was to be expected; compare the opinion expressed by the sons of Theseus in the general assembly of the Greek army which discussed the request of Achilles' ghost, after Agamemnon tried to save Polyxena (see n. 12): "... τὰ δὲ Κασσάνδρου/λέκτρ' οὐκ ἐπόρτην τῆς Ἀχαιέας/πρόσθεν θήσοιεν ποτὲ λόγῳ (127-9).

³³ 852-3: "... βούλομαι θεῶν ἢ οὐνεκ' ἀνόσιον ξένον/καὶ τοῦ δικαίου τήνδε σοὶ δοῦναι δίκην.

³⁴ That Agamemnon consents to this and all the other requests which Hecuba puts to him, as an alternative to his acting on her behalf (868 sqq.), is not explicit but arises from the context (e.g. his lack of objection, his inquiry after details in her plans and his doubts about its practicability; see also n. 37) and his general endorsement 898 sqq. From E. Fränkel, *Beobachtungen zu Aristophanes*, Roma, 1962, p. 79 it seems that Fränkel took Agamemnon's εἶσαι τὰδ' οὐκω in 898 to express his consent to Hecuba's last request (concerning the burial of the children, 894-7) only. But from 902-4 it is clear that the consent is to the whole plan: τὸν μὲν κακὸν κακῶν τι πάσχαιεν has nothing to do with the burial of Polyxena and Polydorus, and everything with the punishment of Polymestor.

³⁵ 868-871.

³⁶ Agamemnon thinks that Hecuba is going to kill Polymestor in some "womanly" way (876: φάσαντων. 878: φαρμάκοισιν) but is not deterred from backing her by the examples she brings in order to convince him that women are able to overcome men (886-7: γυναῖκες ἔλον Αἰγύπτου τέκνα/καὶ Λήμιον ἄρθῶν ἄρσένων ἐξώπισαν). See also the next note.

³⁷ This is evident from the context of 889-94 (πέμπων δὲ μοι τήνδ' ἄσφαλῶς διὰ στρατοῦ/γυναικα. —καὶ σὺ Θρηκί πλάθεισα ξένο/λέξον· καλεῖ σ'... Ἐκάβη, ... καὶ παῖδας ...) + 965-7 (... μοι/... ἦδε συμπιπται ὁμοῦς σθένε/λέγουσα μύθους, ὃν κλύων ἀπικλύμην). Note that Agamemnon does not object to Hecuba's explicit invitation to the sons of Polymestor to come together with their father.

³⁸ 1240-51, Agamemnon's sentence after the ἀγὼν λόγου. But see his feigned surprise already in 1116-8 (τίς σ' ἀπώλεσεν;/ τίς ὄμ' ἔθρησε τυφλὸν... /παῖδας τε τοσοῦθ' ἔκτενεν)—he knows very well who it was—and the as-good-as-justifying reason for it in 1118-9 (μῆλον χόλον/σοὶ καὶ τέκνοισιν εἶχεν ὄστις ἦν).

³⁹ It may, e.g., be pointed out that the reluctance of the man and ruler to act drives the woman and slave to action. Or that both Agamemnon and Hecuba do what under the

terms of Athenian law, it would probably have been the duty of Agamemnon, had he been the master of Polydorus, to see to the punishment of the murderer.²³ As the free son of his slave, the case may have been one to which the γράφαί ὑβρεως could be applied,²⁴ and Hecuba's master is likely to have been considered morally bound to do for Hecuba what any βουλόμενος was entitled to do for whoever had suffered a serious wrong.²⁵ It may also be that the wording of Hecuba's final appeal, when she prays for voice in her limbs, head and hair so that πάνθ' ὁμαρτήσῶν (= Agamemnon's) ἔχοντο γυνάτων κλαίων' ἐπισκήπτοντα ... παρὰσχευς χεῖρα ... τυμωρόν,²⁶ was chosen to guide the audience: ἐπισκήπτειν, besides expressing most serious entreaty,²⁷ serves also as a term for a dying man's last instructions²⁸ and especially of one dying an unnatural death and urging his family to obtain retribution (τυμωρεῖν/τυμωρήσασθαι) for him.²⁹ ἐπισκήπτειν is also used for what the relatives of a murdered slave are bound to do towards the same end, namely to urge his master to take legal action against the killer.³⁰ In one way or another, the audience will have expected Agamemnon to heed Hecuba's supplication and deal with the punishment of Polymestor.³¹ Had he done the expected, there would have been no "Hecuba".

But Agamemnon had his reasons for refraining from overt interference: the army considered Polymestor their friend, Polydorus their enemy; they might think that he wished to please Cassandra and preferred his personal

²³ D. 47.70: οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν ἐν γένει σοὶ ἡ ἀνθρωπος, οὐδὲ θεράπεινα, ... οἱ δὲ νόμοι τούτων κλειύουσιν τὴν διαίτην εἶναι. MacDowell (n. 18), p. 20: "From the answer given by the exegetai ... it appears that if the nurse had been his slave it would have been right and proper for him to take legal action against her killers ..."

²⁴ D. 21.47: ἔάν τις ὑβρίσῃ εἰς τινα, ἢ παῖδα ἢ γυναῖκα ἢ ἄνδρα, τὸν ἐλευθέρων ἦν δοῦλας, ἢ παρόνομον τι ποιήσῃ εἰς τούτων τινά, γραφέσθω πρὸς τοὺς θεσμοθέτας ὁ βουλόμενος Ἀθηναίων οἷς ἔσονται.

²⁵ A. R. Harrison, *The Law of Athens I*, Oxford, 1968, p. 168, n. 1 (in a different context): "it seems a priori likely that a master should have had a right—or duty—towards his slave parallel to the right of ὁ βουλόμενος".

²⁶ 839-843.

²⁷ With ἔχοντο γυνάτων κλαίων' ἐπισκήπτοντα here cf. Aeschin. 3.157: κλαίοντας, ἰκετεύοντας ... ἐπισκήπτοντας.

²⁸ E.g. Hdt. 3.73.2 (ἐπεσκήψε ... τέλειτων τὸν βίον), D. 28.15; 36.32.

²⁹ MacDowell (n. 18), p. 20; with ἐπισκήπτοντα ... παρὰσχευς χεῖρα ... τυμωρόν here cf. Ant. 1.29-30 (ἐπισκήπτουσι τυμωρήσασθαι), Lys. 13.41-2 (ἐπέσκηπτεν ... τυμωρεῖν), Lys. 13.92 (ἀποθνήσκοντες ... ἐπέσκηψαν ... τυμωρεῖν) in their contexts.

³⁰ D. 47.72: κλεῦται ... ὁ νόμος, ὃ ἄνδρες δικασταί, τοὺς προσήκοντας ἐξεῖναι μέχοι ἀνεπιδοῦν ... κἀν οὐκ ἔστις ἢ τούτων τὰς ἐπισκήψεις εἶναι. MacDowell, p. 20: "ἐπισκήπτειν is the verb used of a dying man who urges his family to obtain vengeance for him ... So, I suggest, the duty of the relatives of a killed slave was simply to urge his master to obtain vengeance for him by taking legal action against the killer".

³¹ In Athens such punishment would probably have been less than death, whether Polydorus be viewed as slave or as free foreigner; see Harrison (n. 25), p. 170, MacDowell, pp. 126-7.

in this context to point to a certain resemblance between the situation outlined above and what Herodotus tells about the crime of Artayctes and his punishment:⁴⁰ when Xerxes marched against Athens, the Persian governor of Sestos, Artayctes, got possession of the treasure of Protesilaus at Elaeus in the Chersonnese and desecrated his shrine. After the Persian defeat the Athenian force which reconquered the Chersonnese took Artayctes and his son prisoner. Artayctes offered to pay a great sum of money, partly in compensation for the treasure he had taken from the shrine, partly to save his life and that of his son, "but Xanthippus, the Athenian commander, refused to accept it. The people of Elaeus wanted their revenge (τυμωρόντες) for Protesilaus, and urged his death; moreover, Xanthippus' own feelings were in sympathy with them. So Artayctes was taken away . . . and . . . they nailed him to a plank and hung him up. His son was stoned to death before his eyes. This done, the fleet set sail for Greece".⁴¹

It seems that basically in both the "Hecuba" and the incident recorded by Herodotus a most unholy deed was perpetrated by a barbarian far from Greece, and an eminent Greek, who happens to be temporarily the highest authority on the spot and is appealed to as such, prefers to grant freedom of action to the emotionally involved party bound to obtain retribution for the victim of the crime, well knowing that this retribution will be far more cruel than the punishment he himself would have inflicted. Moreover, the action of the "Hecuba" takes place in the Chersonnese⁴² in closest proximity to the sanctuary of Protesilaus⁴³ which was desecrated by Artayctes; both Herodotus' Athenians and Euripides' Greeks arrive there on their way from their victory on the coast of Asia Minor, and they set sail for Greece immediately afterwards;⁴⁴ in both cases the offender is savagely

circumstances seems pragmatically best for each of them to do, although, of course, neither compromise with one's conscience nor revenge even when it is obligatory are ideal or even "nice" solutions, and it may be just this lack of any good solution which Euripides wanted to show. It seems significant that Euripides does not grant Agamemnon, in order to "save face", the argument that it was his duty to lead the army safely home and that he could not, therefore, risk any rift between himself and them while still overseas and on foreign soil. For the presentation in this play of Hecuba's revenge as the both required and appropriate punishment of Polymestor see AJP 99 (1978) 28-35. As most offence is taken at the killing of the children, it may be well to remember the very Greek αὐτόνη/οὐς καὶ γένος/παῖδας.

⁴⁰ Hdt. 7.33; 9.116-120.

⁴¹ Hdt. 9.120.4-121. A. de Sélincourt's translation.

⁴² It cannot have been far from the Cynossema promontory (Hec. 1271-3) for the location of which see the following note. See above + note 8 for the temporary transfer of the sacrifice of Polyxena at Achilles' tomb from the Troad to this neighbourhood.

⁴³ The two places are mentioned together in Pliny's description of Thrace. Plin. Nat. Hist. 4.11(18): *Dein promontorium Cherronesi Mastusia aduersum Sigeo; cuius in fronte obliqua Cynossema, ita appellatur Hecubae tumulus, statio Achaeorum. Turris et delubrum Protesilai. Et in extremo Cherronesi fronte . . . oppidum Elaeus.*

⁴⁴ Hec. 1289-92; Hdt. 9.121.

punished both physically and by the killing of his offspring before his eyes.⁴⁵ Considering these similarities it seems not too far-fetched to surmise that the dilemma of Agamemnon and his solution were suggested to Euripides by the story of Artayctes. Crucifixion was not a punishment easily resorted to by Greeks,⁴⁶ and killing children for the crimes of their parents is revolting, all the more so to their parents' face. However heinous Artayctes' crime was and however justified his punishment—the retribution was nonetheless horrible, and it was sanctioned by the Athenian commander who was the father of Pericles.⁴⁷

A passage in the play itself may indicate that the situation in the "Hecuba" as presented above was suggested to Euripides by the Herodotean story of the crime and punishment⁴⁸ of Artayctes and the part played by Xanthippus in the latter: when Hecuba tries to persuade Agamemnon to undertake the revenge for her murdered son with the argument that it is his duty to uphold justice in society,⁴⁹ she maintains that εἰ . . . μὴ δίκην δώσουσι οἴτινες ξένους/κτείνουσι ἢ φεῶν λερὰ τοῖσιν φέρειν, / οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν τῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἰσού⁵⁰ and adds to the crime of ξενικονία (which Polymestor committed against her son) that of τεροσυλία (which Artayctes committed against Protesilaus). The addition may be a kind of pleonasm,⁵¹ "in illustration".⁵² Still, the choice of the "pleonastic",

⁴⁵ Hec. 1160-71; Hdt. 9.120.4.

⁴⁶ With the Persians crucifixion was not infrequent, but Greeks crucified very rarely, never free Greeks, and only for especially hideous offences, mostly in remote regions where this punishment was used by their neighbours (K. Latte, *Todesstrafe*, RE Suppl. 7, 1940, p. 1606; P. Ducrey, *La Traite des Prisonniers de Guerre dans la Grèce antique*, Paris, 1968, pp. 212-4); see, however, also the following note.

⁴⁷ The father's part in the crucifixion of Artayctes may have reminded Euripides of the son's treatment of the Samians some fifteen years before the production of the "Hecuba", if the evidence of Duri of Samos is to be trusted. Plut. Per. 28: ἐνάτω δὲ μὴν τῶν Σαμίων πορασάντων ὁ Περικλῆς τὰ τεῖχη καθέειλε καὶ τὰς ναῦς παφέλαβε . . . Δούρις δ' ὁ Σάμιος τούτους ἐπετραγῶδει κολλῆν ὁμήτερα τῶν Ἀθηναίων καὶ τοῦ Πελοπόννησου κατοχοῦν, . . . ὡς ἄρα τοὺς τριηράρχους καὶ τοὺς ἐπαβάτας τῶν Σαμίων εἰς τὴν Μιλήσιον ἄρορὸν ἔραγον καὶ σκάνθη προσθήρας ἐφ' ἡμέρας δέκα κακῶς ἤδη διακειμένους προσέταξεν ἀνελεῖν, ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀφελῶς σπυράφιστας, εἴτα προβαλεῖν ἀνέδρατα τὰ σώματα.

⁴⁸ Of course Euripides had to exchange the crucifixion for an equivalent punishment, the effects of which could be shown on stage. The blinded Polymestor may have been suggested by Oedipus, if the O.R. was produced shortly before the "Hecuba", as is generally believed. It was common knowledge that "barbarians" punished by blinding (e.g. X. An. 1.9.13); but so did Greeks, at least some of those who did not live in the centres of culture, see Hdt. 9.93.3-4 (3: . . . ἀκαγαγόντες νιν ὑπὸ δικαστηρίου κατέκριναν . . . τῆς ὀμῆος στερεθῆναι . . . 4: . . . ἀδίκως . . . τῆς ὀμῆος ἐστέρησαν, . . . γὰρ . . . It is clear that but for the " . . . γὰρ . . ." the blinding would have been ἐνδίκως); the incident took place in Apollonia in the Ionian gulf not long before the Persian wars: the son of the victim was with the Greek fleet at Mycale.

⁴⁹ 788 sqq.

⁵⁰ 802-5.

⁵¹ F. A. Paley (London, 1856) remarks ad loc.: ". . . the Greeks, in describing a complicated wickedness that is sure to meet with its reward here or hereafter, are fond of uniting in one

"illustrative" detail seems significant and may reflect the impact which Herodotus' description had on Euripides rather than, as is usually assumed, that of an event directly experienced by the poet.⁵³

If indeed this is the case, Euripides read the "History" of Herodotus before 425/424 when the "Hecuba" is believed to have been produced.⁵⁴ An alleged "direct quotation" from Herodotus in the "Cresphontes" of 426/425⁵⁵ points to the same conclusion. The "Hecuba" may thus strengthen the case for the publication of the "History" before 425.⁵⁶ It may also indicate that literary influence on Euripides need not to have worked one way only.

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category injury to strangers, impiety to the gods, undutifulness to parents. Under the second head the present allusion to sacrifice manifestly comes."

⁵³ J. Diggle, *Euripides*, Phaeithon, Cambridge, 1970, p. 130, n. 2 ad Pha. 160-2 (ἐν τοῖσι λόγοις τοῦτ' ἐγὼ κέλευθ' ἴδον, / ὄρις παρὰ τοῖα παύει μὴ φρονέον εἶ / ἢ καὶ πολλὰ τὰς παρὰ δόξου' ἔχουσί ταν): "... the real point ... resides in the second line, ... the third line is introduced ... in illustration (more suited to fifth century Athenian politics than to Aethiopia)".

⁵⁴ For this case see G. Hermann (quoted by Paley, n. 51) ad loc.: "Quod dicit, ἢ θεῶν ἰσχύ τοῦ λυθῶν φέγειν, quum non quadret in Polymestoris facinus, haud dubie ad aliquid referitur, quod eo tempore, quo haec fabula scripta est, indignationem commoverat Atheniensium"; generally see, e.g., the end of n. 52.

⁵⁵ E. B. Ceadel, *CQ* 35 (1941), p. 75.

⁵⁶ R. Browning, "Herodotus, V.5 and Euripides, Cresphontes fr. 449 N.", *CR* 75 (N.S. 11), 1961, pp. 21-2.

⁵⁷ The introduction of Herodotus' History is claimed to have been parodied by Aristophanes in the "Acharnians", produced in 425 BCE, see e.g. J. E. Powell, *The History of Herodotus*, Amsterdam, 1967 (London, 1939), p. 77. This view was lately attacked by Ch. W. Fornara, "Evidence for the Date of Herodotus' Publication", *JHS* 91, 1971, pp. 25-34, and defended by J. Cobet, "Wann wurde Herodots Darstellung der Perserkriege publiziert?", *Hermes* 105 (1977), pp. 2-27.

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The Structure of Catullus 62

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"The music of a wedding procession always reminds me of the music of soldiers going into battle." (Heine)

Critics attending to Catullus' sixty-second poem have been generally beguiled by two principal problems: whether the setting be primarily Greek or Roman, and whether or not Catullus was imitating some Greek original. As to the first, we may, as so often, be grateful to Eduard Fraenkel for his exposition of the poem's mingling and transcendence of geographical detail: "a wedding such as this could not be celebrated anywhere in the ancient world ... neither in Greece nor in Rome but in a poetic sphere of its own".¹ The second question, that of Catullus' imitation of some Greek original, is unresolved, and likely to remain so, since the works—mainly Sappho's—that Catullus may be supposed to have imitated, or even translated, are no longer extant, save in the most fragmentary form.² The unsurprising consensus is that Catullus, while he may have levied upon previous epithalamia for details, is unlikely to have used any single poem as a model.

These are large questions, centrifugal ones that move us from the poem itself to a consideration of Greek and Roman marriage ceremonies, or to the consideration of a whole literary genre. A more modest inquiry might direct itself to the intrinsic properties of the poem, and to its agonistic structure in particular—something of an anomaly in an epithalamium, but with precedent elsewhere, chiefly in Theocritus.³ The antagonists are the young men, friends of the bridegroom, and the young women, friends of the bride. The former uphold marriage as an honorable, and necessary, estate; the latter argue that it is little more than legalized rape. But if the ideological strategy of the antagonists is clear, their verbal tactics are less obvious. The poem

¹ E. Fraenkel, *JRS* 45 (1955), 7. See also, G. Williams, *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry* (Oxford, 1968), 201-02; D. A. Kidd, *Latomus* 33 (1974), 30-31.

² For the discussion of Catullus' sources, see G. Lafaye, *Catulle et ses Modelés* (Paris, 1884), 74 ff.; P. Maas, *P-W* 9, 132-3, s. v. "Hymenaios"; Wilamowitz, *Hellenistische Dichtung* (Berlin, 1924), II, 277 ff.; A. L. Wheeler, *Catullus and the Traditions of Ancient Poetry* (Berkeley, 1934), 215 ff.; L. Perelli, *Riv. di fil. class.* 28 (1950), 289 ff.; L. Ferrero, *Interpretazione di Catullo* (Torino, 1955), 324 ff.

³ See G. Williams, *op. cit.*, 211; A. L. Wheeler, *AJP* 51 (1930), 205 ff.