4

Rhetoric and Characterization

Greek tragedy as a genre is essentially rhetorical; but even among tragedies *Hecuba* is remarkable for its interest in words and persuasion, their use and abuse, their powers and their limitations. In this chapter we must concern ourselves not only with this vital intellectual theme of the play, but also with the dramatic ways in which Euripides uses rhetoric as a characterizing force, which defines and motivates the people of his play; whether, and how, he uses their own rhetoric to undercut their moral standing; and what significance the presence of 'sophistic' ideas has in the mouths of these Homeric characters.[1]

As a preliminary, it will be necessary to discuss the vexed question of characterization in Greek tragedy.[2] My reference to 'rhetoric as a characterizing force' has already begged this question. Many, since Tycho von Wilamowitz, have felt that any form of characterization which we would designate as such is qualified not only by the very rhetoric of tragedy, and the stylization and formalization of speech which it entails,[3] but also by the paramount requirements of plot and the constricting force of tradition, which determines both the lines on which the story of a play must develop and the formal structural

[1] On rhetoric in tragedy in general see e.g. Schadewaldt (1926); Kennedy (1963), 3–51; Solmsen (1975) and (1931); Heath (1987*b*), esp. 37–89; Kitto (1961), esp. 265–72; Buxton (1982); Goldhill (1986), esp. 222–43; the index to Collard, *Supplices*, s.v. 'Rhetoric'; Conacher (1981), 3–25; M. Lloyd (1992), 19–36. On general reflections see Friis Johansen 1959 *passim*; on formal debates see Duchemin (1968), Collard (1975), 58–71, and M. Lloyd (1992), esp. 94–9 and 32–5 on *Hec.* I have also derived much benefit from R. B. Rutherford, 'The Use and Abuse of *Logos*', and 'Euripidean Anachronism', two unpublished papers kindly made available to me by the author. On Eur. and the sophists see e.g. Reinhardt (1960), 223–56; Winnington-Ingram (1969), 127–42.

[2] A subject with an extensive bibliography. I have found most useful: Conacher (1981), 3–25; Garton (1957), 247–53; Dale (1969), ch. 24; Zürcher (1947); Easterling (1973), 3–19, and (1977), 121–9; Gould (1978), 43–67; de Mourgues (1967); and Pelling (1990), esp. the contributions of Halliwell, Easterling, Griffin, Russell, and Pelling.

[3] e.g. Zürcher (1947), Gould (1978), in many passages, and Dale (1969), ch. 24.

framework within which a playwright must work; that characterization is limited in tragedy is guaranteed by almost all tragedy's distinguishing features.

I feel that this view tends to overcompensate for the excesses of those critics who have attempted to assimilate Greek tragedy too closely to modern ways of thinking. No one would dispute that the ways in which we comprehend and explain to ourselves characters in a Greek play are very different from the ways in which we comprehend and explain characters in life (for dramatic art must represent a refraction, not an exact reflection of life), or indeed in modern novels (for the novel form affords ampler time and a more suitable medium to offer a more complete and 'lifelike' portrait of a character), or even in modern drama (though this is, I feel, a more contentious example[4]). That is not to say, though, that a Greek tragedian has expended less effort on his portrayal of character, or that he did not expect his audience to appreciate that effort. We should not be lured into perceiving the characterization in tragedy as somehow inferior (when a fairer view might be that it has different aims from, and is harder to grasp than its descendant), because it is easier to define the differences between the styles of thought by pointing to features of modern (post-Romantic, post-Freudian) characterization which appear not to have their counterparts in ancient literature than by isolating distinctive features of ancient thought on the subject and examining the plays themselves.

It will be objected that Aristotle, the author of the most intelligent ancient discussion of the subject and the nearest to being contemporary with the tragedians, is the origin of the view that characterization is of minor importance in tragedy. I shall argue at the end of

[4] This is Gould's contention (1978: 44–5). It is worth noticing, though, that the example he takes from Eugene O'Neill to exemplify his profoundly different view of characterization is in fact a passage of stage directions. This sort of descriptive stage direction has no parallel in the ancient world, nor for that matter in Shakespeare; and clearly that is an important difference between styles of drama: but the most significant point of difference is that such stage directions suggest that O'Neill, like Shaw, expects his play to be read as well as performed; for no actor will really be able to convey all the character-information in the stage direction in the space of the few moves given. As Gould says, this is a novelist's technique; put another way, these are director's notes to his actors masquerading as stage directions. In this O'Neill is quite as different from Shakespeare, Corneille, Racine, or even Sheridan as he is from Eur. Gould's example therefore implies that only contemporary drama, and not most modern drama, is out of step with the ancients in this respect (though even this is not universal: Brecht hardly fits this view); and indeed he himself goes on to apply Racinian criticism (de Mourgues (1967)) most effectively to ancient drama.

this chapter that this is the result of a misunderstanding of Aristotle. If this were his view, it would not, of course, inevitably follow that it was so for the tragedians, but it would be a serious problem for those wishing to stress the importance of characterization. But the relationship of character to plot sketched by Aristotle is more complex than simple subordination, and it is arguable that the tragedians attached more importance to character than he did.[5]

I would suggest that it is standard practice for a tragedian to use characterization to fuel and inform his plot, even to make a plot hinge on *the sort of person* at the centre of the action. This is not only the case with central characters: everyone can think of minor figures characterized beyond what can be thought necessary to achieve a dramatic effect (for example, the watchman in *Agamemnon*, the guard in *Antigone*, Teiresias in *Bacchae*). Gellie remarked that 'these people are different because their stories are different':[6] but there is good evidence from the plays to suggest that the tragedians were interested in explaining why the stories of their plays were different in terms of the distinctive characteristics of the people involved: witness the intense interest in tragedy in the motives and causes of the events of the plays,[7] which not infrequently have part at least of their root in the characters of the *personae* involved, and in the reasons for the decisions taken by the characters. Oedipus falls because it was so ordained: but the play *Oedipus Tyrannus* shows us not his fall but his realization that he has fallen, and that is made comprehensible and

[5] See the excursus attached to this chapter. Garton (1957: 250) has some remarks on the relationship between action, character, and language which I would think sensible and descriptive of the realities of the plays: 'The complex of a tragic drama is a trinity of language, character and action; and by action is meant both the events and the import of the drama ... in tragedy these three phenomena are interdependent or ... interconstituted, and none of them can be completely abstracted from the others. In so far as there is an order of priority the genesis of the action tends to precede the genesis of characterisation, which is attuned to it; and the language comes third and is attuned to both.' This goes somewhat beyond the view of the *Poetics* for which I argue in the excursus, but I think it is not inconsistent with it.

[6] (1972), 209.

[7] Heath (1987*b*: 120) applies Easterling's concept of 'human intelligibility' here (Easterling 1973: 3–19): Heath interprets it, sensibly, as 'rest(ing) on the availability of an implicit assimilation of a character's behaviour to some ready generalisation about the way people (or people of such-and-such a kind) act (or would act in such-and-such a situation)'; I think his statement that it 'conveys a dramatic conviction that discourages speculative exploration and analysis of motive and character' needs modification. Certainly it prohibits us from looking beyond the text—if no motive is given we must not supply it unless it is very easy to infer—but actions and decisions in tragedy for which no motive is given are not nearly as numerous as those for which the motive is tracked down, stated, indeed almost dissected by the poets.

dramatically convincing by the character which the poet gives to Oedipus: determined, capable, generous, curious.

The tragedians were undoubtedly enabled to create such variety of characterization within a mythic framework by the flexibility of the tales with which they dealt: the traditional stories were rich enough to support a wide variety of interpretations, and characters could be changed accordingly (for example the two very different Phaedras created by Euripides or the contrasting views of Odysseus in Sophocles' *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*); the practice of using mythological plots did not necessarily constitute an impediment to characterization. Clearly, though, this applies more closely to some mythological characters than others, and some traits seem inseparable from some characters while others are not; it does not seem likely that a poet could have created a cowardly Achilles, because Achilles is *essentially* brave. But Odysseus can be wily and wicked or wily and good, and even wily and unsuccessful: his essential characteristic is a more flexible one. Phaedra is an interesting example because it is her central characteristic—her purity or lack of it—which is altered.[8]

A. M. Dale has raised the Aristotelian question of consistency. Her view of the poet as a conscientious speechwriter, penning for the dramatis personae speeches which make up for a lack of appropriate characterization with rhetorical adroitness (as if they were his clients rather than the creations of his poetic imagination), has been rightly modified by Conacher.[9] Clearly allowance must be made in assessing the consistency of a tragic character for the formal stylization of tragedy, and the different conventions of trimeters and lyrics, stichomythia and rhesis, which encourage the poet to make his character stress one feature of a situation when singing in lyric metre, and then to turn to an entirely different facet of the situation when discoursing in trimeters: for example Orestes in *Choephoroi* stresses his material motives for revenge not in the lyrics of the great *kommos*, for that would be inappropriate, but in his trimeters at 269 ff. Dale is right to acknowledge these differences, but I think it would be wrong to see them as resulting in inconsistency: the same character presents itself through the different filters in turn, but none the less can be

[8] This again is consistent with Aristotle's recommendations at $1453^{b}22$ ff., and similar ideas are expressed by Horace in the *Ars Poetica*. For the vicissitudes of Odysseus' character see Stanford (1954), *passim*.

[9] (1981), 5 ff.; compare Dale, *Alcestis*, pp. xxvii ff. and (1969), ch. 24 and 139–55. Her fundamental mistake is to make Aristotle's *dianoia* equivalent to 'the rhetoric of the situation'.

seen as a consistent entity. The poet can choose which medium of expression he gives to his character and when, and this can do much to change our perceptions of the speaker. Stylization, I shall argue, is a tool of characterization, not an enemy of it; though it will mean that we shall have to be careful as to which 'markers' we treat as significant for the shaping of a character. Here subjectivism will unavoidably enter in, and each case will have to be treated on its own merits. I would like to stress the point[10] that nothing can be disbarred from being used as a pointer to character on the grounds of being a set rhetorical phrase: it will be a most important tenet in what follows that the poets make use of convention and its disruption in delineating character. I also believe that Garton's point (1957: 251) is valid: 'Action calls up language.... Character calls up language.... But sometimes the words or imagery come first, and help either to shape the character ... or to swell the action to an infinite reach.'

Similarly, we should not be too quick to accuse a dramatist of inconsistency when we find him making use of anachronism, since in skilled hands this too can become a means of characterization. Apparent lack of appropriateness may well serve an important dramatic purpose.[11]

The poet is not a mere speechwriter, but a link between rhetoric and characterization (and one which also relates to an intellectual interest in persuasion) is provided by the inevitable bond which bound persuasion with personality in Greek rhetorical theory. As has been well said:

> [the orator] has to deal with *ethos* in three different ways: he has to project his own personality acceptably, study the personal traits of his audience so as to please and not offend, and represent the qualities of his opponents or other persons who appear in the course of his narrative.... He has to make himself out to be a good, reliable person: there is no place for confession or self-analysis, unless it can be seen to produce sympathy. He has to treat his audience with respect: if he plays upon their weaknesses, he must not alienate them. And all the other characters must be unambiguously good or bad. If the good have failings, they are venial; if the bad have virtues, they are trivial.[12]

[10] Made by Rutherford in his unpublished paper 'The Use and Abuse of *Logos*' (see n. 1).

[11] For anachronism in Greek tragedy see R. B. Rutherford's sensitive paper (unpublished: see n. 1) and Easterling (1985), 1–10. Note also the scholium on *Hec.* 254.

[12] D. A. Russell, '*Ethos* in Oratory and Rhetoric', in Pelling (1990), 198.

I would argue that all this is also descriptive of the ways in which people persuade, or attempt to persuade, in tragedy, and clearly there is an overwhelming interest in character present, even though it is not at all the same kind of interest that we would expect to find in modern writing. That persuasion depends not only on what the persuader says but on his identity is a commonplace of Greek rhetorical thought,[13] and therefore in the course of an act of persuasion we may expect to be given information about the speaker's qualifications to persuade both on the level of his discourse (how well he speaks) and in terms of his status, situation, and personality. *Who* he is will be important, as well as how he argues. On the other hand, in the course of characterizing the other persons involved in the question, the speaker must display a certain understanding of *likely, probable* psychology, in order to present a convincing scenario to his audience: arguments from probability may well be the mainstay of his case, therefore he must be able to show that X (or a person of X's type) was likely to do Y (or something similar) in a given situation.[14] A speaker may, and very often will, simplify, distort, misrepresent, or malign the character of another in order to make his point: I would argue that these very departures from the reality of the characters involved and the situation portrayed can be telling, not only with regard to the characterization of the subject of the misrepresentation, but also to that of the speaker and sometimes of the (stage) audience.

Of course 'or a person of X's type' is an extremely important qualification, and it has often been maintained[15] that there are only types in tragedy, and no individuals. This argument might appear to be strengthened by the stylized nature of tragic diction. Characters in tragedy, it is true, do not have tricks of speech which mark them out as distinctive: but they may well have obsessions which leave their mark on their speeches, like Medea's fear of being laughed at,

[13] For the importance of ἦθος τοῦ λέγοντος cf. e.g. Russell in Pelling (1990), 197–200; Rutherford, 'The Use and Abuse of *Logos*' (n. 1 above); in Homeric oratory and its literary descendants, Kennedy (1963), 37.

[14] See Russell in Pelling (1990); Kennedy (1963), 30 ff. It is important to bear in mind that the kind of psychological insight needed for this purpose is of a *general* kind; but the instances in tragedy of arguments from probability being used to *mislead* thus become interesting: people do *not* always run true to type or do what is in their best interest. Of course Antiphon's *Tetralogies* make use of the same kind of contradictions.

[15] e.g. by J. Jones (1962: 41–2), over-simplifying Aristotle's criterion of 'appropriateness'. For a better treatment cf. Halliwell (1986), 159.

or Oedipus' intellectual pride. Tragedy by definition[16] concerns itself with exceptional people whose characters may combine features proper to one or more 'types' (and indeed the combination will not in general be a very unexpected one[17]); but the tragedy will revolve not around what is typical but around what is extraordinary about them—and even if that feature is in fact the situation they are in, that will still have its effect on their characterization.

It is the limited number of features which are combined in the characters that accounts best for the different nature of individuality in Greek tragedy. It has been shown how necessary a similar decrease in the number of individualizing traits in Racine is for the tragic effect:

> 'Psychology' in Racine is entirely subservient to the essential aim of tragedy: to provoke terror and pity in the audience by showing with the greatest possible intensity the full destructive effect of love and ambition. For this purpose selection is not enough. Racine's art rests on a careful stylisation of passion. The first and most obvious aspect of this stylisation is the discarding of everyday life. We may note immediately that, although this discarding represents a drastic simplification of the reality we know, it conforms admirably to a deeper kind of reality.[18]

The 'stylisation of passion' is a concept very applicable to Greek tragedy, and it can be linked with the concept of 'human intelligibility': the important, large features of a character are present in the heroes of tragedy and are instantly comprehensible. Because the smaller features are omitted, and because these are in real life very often the most noticeable characteristics of an individual, it is tempting to mistake the simplified tragic individuals for types. But in many cases, and perhaps particularly in the greatest tragedies, this is a serious error. It has been well said that individuality is important for increasing the feelings of sympathy for the hero among the spectators. It need not violate Aristotle or displace the primacy of action:

> This individualisation of the characters is not a quality superimposed upon them but remains strictly functional and depends very much on the place the character occupies in the whole structure of the play. Each distinctive feature is part of a whole complex of relations and does not exist for its own sake, although the result is to give the audience the impression of the complete distinct personality of the hero.[19]

[16] Cf. Arist. 1453ª7 ff.
[17] Pelling (1990: 247) makes this important point well.
[18] De Mourgues (1967), 34.

The idea that the hero's characteristics are defined via a 'complex of relations' is obviously a useful one for Greek tragedy also, as it, like classic French tragedy, is a very public genre—a feature which is sometimes said to inhibit characterization,[20] and which certainly transforms it. Describing the hero by revealing the nature of his external relations with those who surround him is a method of characterization particularly suited to the dramatic medium. It is different from the novelist's internal dissection of a character's thoughts and feelings, but skilfully done, it can be very subtle. The same point has been made about Shakespeare:

> (of Hamlet) In his isolation and self-consciousness he is the prototype of modern man. But nevertheless he remains a character in a play: he is defined in terms of his relations with his father, his mother, his uncle, Ophelia, Horatio and the rest. At every turn he is contrasted with the world he inhabits, so that he is not conceivable apart from that world.[21]

Nothing which has been said so far is inconsistent with Aristotle's preoccupations in his four points on character at 1454ª16 ff., though it is clear that he could have said a great deal more had he wished.

To sum up, then, I would wish to see rhetoric and the other formal elements of tragedy (diction, metre, lyric, structure), with all their 'stylisation of reality',[22] as advantages for, rather than constraints on, the poets. With skilful manipulation they can delineate a portrait of a character which not only convinces on a psychological level, or, to use Easterling's term,[23] satisfies us in terms of 'human intelligibility', but which also appeals to our intellects because it is expressed with a clarity of articulation rarely achieved in real life but necessary in the theatre to avoid obscurity, boredom, and waste of valuable dramatic time.[24] This portrait is of paramount importance to the working of the plot because it helps to explain, clearly and at length, *why* things

[19] Ibid. 92–4. The quotation is from p. 93.
[20] See e.g. Gould (1978), 49.
[21] Bradbrook (1951), 86–9, 100; the quotation is from 86–7.
[22] De Mourgues (1967), 34.
[23] (1973), 3–19.
[24] On the appeal of rhetoric to the intellect, see Heath (1987*b*), 135. De Mourgues (1967: 40) has some interesting remarks on the role of time (or rather lack of it) as a stylizing and therefore intensifying factor in Racinian tragedy. Aristotle clearly saw the force of this.

happen as they do. In achieving this the poet will utilize, rather than be bound by, the stylization of speech and the formal structural framework of tragedy.[25] I hope to show in the following discussion that this is exemplified by *Hecuba*.

Hecuba herself, indeed, is something of a test case, as attempts have frequently been made to see the entire play as a tragedy of her character. Pohlenz indeed asserted that Hecuba was 'die erste Gestalt der Tragödie, die eine innere Wandlung durchmacht'.[26] I will discuss the problems of this position with regard to dramatic technique in Chapter 6; from the point of view of tragic methods of characterization, also, it seems that Pohlenz's position requires considerable qualification. What is he claiming that Hecuba is the first character to do? Aristotle, if he conceded that any change had taken place in her at all, would want to insist that such a change was intimately connected with the action, and would therefore have rejected the idea that she is the first character in Greek tragedy to change. All characters undergo great changes because of the necessary reversal in their fortunes: the first tragic character to change in this way was the first tragic character. But it seems to me very doubtful that Aristotle, or indeed any other Greek, would have said that any change in Hecuba's *character, inside* Hecuba, takes place at all. It follows from what we have been saying that the Greeks described changing responses, not changing characters.[27] Aristotle would hold, I think, that to describe a changing character would be to attach too much independence to *ēthos*. The character-shaping which we have been describing concerns itself with delineating successive emotions which arise in response to successive situations. This delineation can certainly attain great subtlety, and may have the effect (rather like an optical illusion) of suggesting movement within the character; but Pohlenz cannot have meant this, for plainly Hecuba is not the first character of whom this can be said: Antigone, at least, preceded her in this. I think it will become clear that any apparent change in Hecuba's character can be explained best in terms of a change of

[25] Formality of diction, of expression, and of structure are all clearly part of the same almost ritualizing tendency in tragedy.

[26] (1954), 281.

[27] This is another feature of ancient characterization which leads people to talk about 'types' in Greek tragedy; in fact it is not very far away from the Elizabethan phenomenon (typical more of Jonson than of Shakespeare, it is true) described by Bradbrook (1951: 97), 'John in a passion and Tom in a passion were more alike than John in a passion and John out of it'.

emphasis from one strand which makes up Hecuba's personality to another. These strands are always present, but sometimes one is to the fore, and sometimes another.

Whatever we think of Pohlenz's claim, though, the character of Hecuba is an extremely interesting study, not least because she is the great orator of the play, as the first debate between her and Odysseus reveals. The scene is set for this debate by the chorus's account of the proceedings of the Achaean assembly, which, as we have seen, has much in common with an Athenian assembly. Odysseus' powers of persuasion are dwelt on, in an unflattering manner, by the chorus, and confirmed by their semi-verbatim reporting (131–140).[28] We are thus primed for Odysseus' appearance, and the theme of rhetoric as an intellectual force is set up. The theme will be explored not only in a theoretical way, by discussion amongst the characters, but also in practical terms, through the speeches Euripides gives them.

When Odysseus himself appears the impression we have received from the chorus is refined: he is not merely a noisy rabble-rouser, but a wily politician playing now to a smaller audience than the one he has just beguiled. He begins by announcing the decision of the assembly in carefully official language (see further in Ch. 5 p. 151). He goes on to exhort Hecuba to take her misfortune gracefully (225 ff.), and concludes with a *gnomē*: σοφόν τοι κἀν κακοῖς ἃ δεῖ φρονεῖν ('It is wise to think as one ought even in misfortune'). Hecuba's reply paves the way for the ensuing *agōn*. She actually plays upon the ambiguity of that word when she says, at 229, αἰαῖ· παρέστηχ', ὡς ἔοικ', ἀγὼν μέγας ('Alas: it seems that a great struggle is at hand'), persuading Odysseus will indeed be a great struggle, and it will also be an *agōn* in the technical sense.[29] The following lines emphasize the wretchedness of Hecuba's situation and remind us of the implications of the debate, in which some of the arguments already rehearsed by the Achaeans will be presented to the audience in more detail. At the same time they introduce some ethical colour through her request to be allowed to speak (234), which adds pathos

[28] It is interesting to compare the reporting of the decision to grant refuge to the Danaids at Aesch. *Supp.* 600–24, where impressively (and extremely anachronistic) democratic language invests the nobility of the decision with extra glory (601 δέδοκται, 'it has been decided'; 605 ἔδοξεν ... οὐ διχορρόπως, '(they) decided without dissent'). The messenger speech of *Or.* 866 ff. is another, longer and more elaborate example of such reporting.

[29] For ἀγών, ἀγωνίζειν in this sense as a headline to a rhetorical show-piece cf. *Supp.* 427, 465, and Collard ad locc.; *And.* 234; *Hcld.* 116; *Pho.* 588; and now M. Lloyd (1992), 4–5, 13.

when put into the mouth of the former queen. It stands in the place of the kind of προδιόρθωσις, or justification of one's right to argue, which we find at *Supp.* 297 ff., and at the beginning of many other Euripidean speeches. This 'juridical and rhetorical *topos*'[30] implies some hesitation and even trepidation on the part of the speaker; but Hecuba's request reveals even less confidence in her reception. This request is balanced by her longer and more fearful debate with herself just before she appeals to Agamemnon at 736 ff. Hecuba does not end her request to be heard with a *gnomē*, which might blunt the urgency of her plea.

In the exchange which results we hear of Odysseus' obligation to Hecuba. The theme of χάρις ('gratitude'), which will be important in the ensuing scene, is introduced by this means, a central train of argument is set up, and at the same time the information helps to create a picture of the contrasting characters of Odysseus and Hecuba by describing a situation where Odysseus' position was analogous to Hecuba's present one, and by briefly sketching how both parties behaved in it. The similarity of the situations is emphasized by 249, τί δῆτ' ἔλεξας δοῦλος ὢν ἐμὸς τότε; ('And what did you say then when you were my slave?'), which is in fact not particularly appropriate to Odysseus' actual circumstances at the time but is there to stress the analogy.

Collard (1975: 61) points out that the preparation for formal debates is the most important element in their success as scenes, and this is no exception. It is an effective introduction: a great deal of information useful for fleshing out what follows is imparted, not least by the invented obligation and Odysseus' ἀναίδεια ('shamelessness') in the stichomythia, which gives Hecuba an effective cue to launch into the first speech of the *agōn*.

She begins with an impassioned question, marked by οὔκουν.[31] It is interesting that of four occurrences of this particle in this play (251, 311, 592, 1254), Hecuba speaks three, Odysseus one (311). This must not be pressed too far as an indication of individuality, but it is intriguing if only as a measure of how much more rhetorically

[30] Collard on *Supp.* 297 ff.; see also Duchemin (1968), 169, and M. Lloyd (1992), 25 ff.

[31] On οὔκουν see Denniston, *GP* 431: 'Often, the logical starting-point is, not what the speaker has said, but the fact that he has said it.' See also Barrett on *Hipp.* 331–2: 'questions with οὐκ οὖν (οὔκουν) are often asked when the speaker himself is in no doubt and is merely calling, or affecting to call, for another's concurrence.' But see also Willink on *Or.* 780 for the question of accentuation.

exciting Hecuba's speeches are than the other characters'.[32] Its use here is a development of the common use of οὔκουν in stichomythia; Hecuba's first three lines thus proceed naturally from the cut-and-thrust of the previous exchanges, and the impression is given that Odysseus might reply to Hecuba's charge if there were any reply that he could make. But instead of the argument continuing in stichomythia, Hecuba follows her angry denunciation with a well-argued and rhetorically polished speech begging for her daughter's life.

Balanced antitheses emphasize the reciprocal nature of the relationship which should have existed between Hecuba and Odysseus, and the inequality which he in fact is imposing upon it. The repetition ἔπαθες ... παθεῖν ('you were treated ... were treated'), made antithetical to δρᾷς ('what you are doing'), the use of μὲν ... δέ ('on the one hand ... on the other hand'), the juxtaposition of εὖ ('well'), κακῶς ('badly'), and the antithesis οὐδὲν ... ὅσον δύναι ('nothing ... as much as you can') make an intricate pattern of denunciation. The complaint against demagoguery looks back to the similar allegations of the chorus at 131 ff., and is not an uncommon Euripidean theme and a regular objection to Odysseus.[33] Here it is couched in terms particularly appropriate to the situation. It stresses ingratitude rather than the demagogue's propensity for stirring up trouble, which he may do either for his own advantage or merely out of disaffection, as in *Suppliants* and *Orestes*, where that trait is more appropriate to the context. This variation of emphasis is not exactly characterization as we would define it, but while its primary function (if it has a function, and is not merely automatic) is obviously to ensure that the rhetoric is fitting to the situation and thus more effective, it may not be too fanciful to suggest that the slant Euripides has chosen here (not without some contrivance) also contributes to

[32] Eur. only here uses this method of opening an outraged speech at the beginning of an *agōn*; the nearest examples are *IA* 528 (if it is to be accented οὔκουν and not οὐκ οὖν) and *Cyc.* 179, but these are not really comparable: they both begin much shorter speeches which are less integral to the argument in that they provide a coda to what has gone before (*IA* 528 ff. conclude the scene between Agamemnon and Menelaus during which Iphigeneia's arrival is announced with a despairing comment from Agamemnon, and *Cyc.* 179 is the chorus's criticism of Helen just before the Cyclops' arrival is announced).

[33] For demagoguery in general see *Supp.* 243, 412 ff., 421 ff., and Collard ad locc. (note that Theseus objects to it, not only the unpleasant Herald); *Or.* 903 and Willink's note on 902–16; and Eur. frs. 597 (*Peirithous*) and 1029. 3. Compare also Thuc. 2. 65. 7. Compare *IA* 1362 ff. for Odysseus in a similar light in a similar situation.

our view of Hecuba as one who sets a great value on friendship and on returning the proper χάρις ('gratitude') due to her φίλοι ('friends, dear ones'). Her words are also invested with irony because we know that an even greater betrayal, by one whom she considered far more her friend, has taken place and will shortly be discovered.

There is in general an anachronistic feeling about these lines. δημηγόρους ('demagogic'), σόφισμα ('cleverness'), and ψῆφος ('vote'), all give the speech a fifth-century flavour at odds with Hecuba's status as a Homeric queen.[34] The effects of such anachronism can be various, as has been demonstrated by Easterling and Rutherford, and there is frequently real doubt whether an anachronism is deliberate at all.[35] This case I think is a doubtful one on that score, more doubtful than the *parodos*, where the system of Athenian fifth-century terms seems too extensive to be unconscious. It is notable that in this play most of the anachronisms concern the condemning of Polyxena: this reflects the contrast between the orderly yet horrible way in which she is put to death and the more primitive violence of the death of Polydorus and the blinding of Polymestor, which are more appropriately described in less democratic language.

The structure of 258–64 is simple but effective. After marking the change of subject from her bitter comment on Odysseus' perfidy to her attack on the decision of the Greeks as a whole with ἀτὰρ τί δή ('but what ... then'),[36] Hecuba proceeds with a series of three two-line rhetorical questions (260–1 and 262–3 constituting alternative answers to the question at 259–60) answered by a single line stressing Polyxena's innocence. A comparison with other passages of rhetorical questions is interesting: *Med.* 499 ff. give a more agitated and angry effect because of their more irregular arrangement and conversational tone (499, ironic introduction; 500, one-line question answered by 501; 502, half-line question; 502–3, one-and-a-half-line question; 504, half-line question; 504–5, one-and-a-half-line ironic answer). *And.* 192 ff., on the other hand, has more frequent, shorter questions, which are more appropriate than longer, more elaborate

[34] σόφισμα is found in Pindar (*Ol.* 13. 17), but not before Eur. and Thuc. in this bad sense; ψῆφος refers back to the more extended anachronisms in the *parodos*.

[35] Rutherford has some apposite remarks on what should count as an anachronism: 'Anachronism is not simply a matter of mixing customs and confusing periods ...; what matters is when such a confusion strikes a false note, when an incongruity disturbs the coherence and believability of the world which the poet presents'; see also Easterling (1985), 1–2.

[36] See Denniston, *GP* 52.

ones would be in Andromache's reply to Hermione's furious tirade: they are less reasoned than our passage because Andromache's opponent is less reasonable than Odysseus. *And.* 387 ff., too, show a barrage of very quick, staccato questions (five in three lines at 388–90), which reflect Andromache's distress. Here Hecuba is fighting an intellectual battle, as she has stressed at 229 and will stress again (see below): she needs to use, and does use, a more reasoned and cerebral approach. Andromache, on the other hand, is preparing for a death which seems inevitable if her son is to be saved, and is correspondingly less rational and more emotional. That said, I would suggest that this difference is not due entirely to the difference in their circumstances, and that it would not be going too far to suggest that by making Hecuba respond in this superbly rational way, Euripides is laying down one of her fundamental character traits, and one which he will develop further later on.

Lines 262–3 begin a larger theme in the speech and in this play as a whole, and one which Euripides also treats elsewhere: that of guilt for the Trojan War and its effects.[37] Here its place in the argument is to act as a bridge between two sections of the speech: (*a*) are you killing Polyxena from motives of revenge? (*b*) but she is innocent; (*c*) you should take revenge on the guilty person instead (Helen). Then a further reason is found why Helen is more suitable as a sacrifice than Polyxena: her superior beauty, as well as her greater responsibility.[38] It is interesting that Hecuba is made to use this motif. It is true that attack is often seen as the best method of defence in Greek rhetoric,[39] but it is not, I think, unreasonable to suggest that coupled with her words at 441 ff. these lines are beginning to sketch

[37] This is most notable elsewhere in the *agōn* of *Tro.*, where Helen attempts to shuffle responsibility for the war on to Hecuba, as the mother of Paris (cf. *Hec.* 387 below); an attempt which I think deprives her of the audience's sympathy. See also *Or.*, where Helen is seen as the root of all evil, especially at 1132 ff. In *Hec.* cf. 387, 441 ff., 629 ff., 943 ff., etc.

[38] West (1980: 12) wishes to excise 267–70 on the grounds that the logic of the lines is faulty; Kovacs (1988: 129–30) would excise 265–6. I do not think that their objections are fatal to the lines: it is a reasonable thing to say given that Polyxena is seen as a γέρας ('prize') whose value, in good Homeric style, is increased in proportion to her beauty. Helen is necessarily the most beautiful of the captives, and this is another, quite logical reason for putting her forward as a more suitable sacrifice. It is also an implied compliment to Achilles: he deserves nothing but the best.

[39] For a famous tragic example one need look no further than the *agōn* of *Tro.*, where Helen not only claims that Hecuba is the author of all the sorrows of the war, as Paris' mother, but also blames Priam for not having killed Paris. For similar trenchancy in a private speech, cf. Lysias 24. 2: the examples could be multiplied almost *ad infinitum*.

another character-trait, which will dominate the second part of the play: Hecuba's aggression and desire for revenge on those who have injured her. Euripides might have made her elaborate on Polyxena's innocence, or suggest her own death here instead of later in the scene (though that would have robbed him of a moving climax later on): instead she tries to divert the danger on to Helen. Helen in the *Troades* arouses our indignation by trying to do the same thing to Hecuba, claiming that she is responsible as the mother of Paris. Here, on the other hand, because our sympathy has been built up for Hecuba already and because this tactic is employed on Polyxena's behalf, not her own, we do not find it culpable; but touches like this help to make the later events of the play less incongruous with the first scenes.[40]

This argument concludes the strictly intellectual portion of the speech, the *reasons* why Polyxena should not be killed. The metaphor in 271 (which looks back to that in 229 and picks up ironically Odysseus' literal use of ἄμιλλα, 'contest', in 226), as Wilamowitz noted (on *HF* 1255), is a rhetorical marker found only in Euripides and Gorgias' *Helen* (Ch. 13). ἄμιλλα and its cognates are found used in this way in a number of other passages, either, as here, marking a new departure within a speech, or acting as a statement of theme at the beginning.[41] Here ἀμιλλῶμαι ('I contend') and the antithesis μὲν ... δ' ('on the one hand ... on the other hand') in 271–2 strongly mark the end of the argumentative part of the speech and the beginning of the supplicatory section in a very impressive manner. *Hipp.* 971 is an interesting passage to compare: there too this metaphor marks the end of reason (Theseus' counter-arguments to Hippolytus' hypothetical lines of defence) and the beginning of emotion (his reliance on the corpse's testimony and the sentence of banishment).

Hecuba speaks solemnly: note ἄκουσον ('hear') emphatically placed at the beginning of 273. She suits her actions to her words (see Ch. 2 pp. 55–6), and stresses all the time Odysseus' former supplication of her, as she supplicates him in the formal manner,

[40] Collard also makes this point on *Hec.* 216–443: 'Yet Hec. shows already an inner determination and capacity for argument, 229–37, which after the further shock of Polydorus' death will secure her, first, the complicity of Agamemnon in punishing his murderer Polymestor, 736 ff., and, second, her triumph against Polym.'s accusation, 1120 ff.'

[41] Compare *HF* 1255, *Supp.* 195, 428 (see Collard ad locc.), *Med.* 546 (= *Supp.* 428), *Hipp.* 971, *IA* 309, and fr. 334. 3. Compare also *Med.* 1081 ff.

concluding with the moving lines at 277–81.[42] There is great pathos in the detail at 277 (μή μου τὸ τέκνον ἐκ χερῶν ἀποσπάσῃς, 'do not tear my child from my arms'), which is almost made reality at 398 ff., when it looks as though Odysseus will indeed have to tear Polyxena from her grasp,[43] and in the simplicity of τῶν τεθνηκότων ἅλις ('there are enough dead'). Here the pathos is very much a rhetorical instrument, though it is no less moving for the audience for that: Hecuba first expresses, simply and poignantly, just what it will mean to her if Polyxena is taken from her, then appeals briefly but no less poignantly to the sense of pity of the war-weary (she might suppose) Odysseus, before returning to stress how much Polyxena means to her in her present wretchedness.[44]

The metaphors she uses are striking and original: this is the first occurrence in extant Greek literature of παραψυχή ('consolation'), a word which Euripides later reused in a similar context (see n. 44) and which, interestingly, was taken up by the orators.[45] She also calls Polyxena her πόλις ('city'), which is highly resonant in this context: the destruction of the city has dominated the play's opening; it is at the core of all Hecuba's unhappiness; its smoking ruins can just be glimpsed in the background; and yet while Polyxena lives she represents for Hecuba all the advantages of a city: order, protection, companionship, and support.[46] These are the ideas which are

[42] Note the expressions stressing the reciprocity of her request: 272 ἀντιδοῦναι ... ἀπαιτούσης ἐμοῦ ('give *back* ... as I ask *back*'), 275 ἀνθάπτομαί σου τῶνδε τῶν αὐτῶν ἐγώ ('I clasp *in return* these same parts of you'), and 276 χάριν τ' ἀπαιτῶ τὴν τόθ' ('and I ask *back* the favour from that time').

[43] Odysseus had feared that he would have to do this in 225–6. Note that he and Hecuba both use ἀποσπάω ('I tear away'): cf. 225 and 277 and see on l. 290 below (p. 111). Hecuba's insistence on the word almost flings Odysseus' use of it back at him as a reproach. This is less fanciful than might at first appear: outside this play Eur. only uses the word eight times, of which three are in *Hcld.*, of the removal of the children from the altar.

[44] Eur. himself was obviously pleased with this passage: there are several reminiscences of it in *Or.*: cf. 62 παραψυχήν, 66 ταύτῃ γέγηθε κἀπιλήθεται κακῶν, in the context of a mother drawing comfort from her child (Helen and Hermione); *Or.* 1280 also seems to be a reuse of *Hec.* 748: cf. Willink ad locc. On this argument see also Tarkow (1984), 129.

[45] Cf. Isaeus 2. 13, Aristides 44. 12, Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* 20, all in this same metaphorical sense; we should note particularly Dem. *Epitaphios* (60) 32: καὶ γονεῖς [of those who have died in the war] περίβλεπτοι γηροτροφήσονται, παραψυχὴν τῶι πενθεῖ τὴν τούτων εὔκλειαν ἔχοντες, 'and their parents will be nurtured in their old age admired by all, having these men's fine reputation as a consolation for their sorrow'. It is also interesting to compare S. *Ichneutae* 317.

[46] For an excellent study of Athenian civic ideology and tragedy see Goldhill (1987), 58–76, and (1986), ch. 3.

emphasized by the other epithets which follow: τιθήνη ('nurse'), used of the daughter by the mother in a striking reversal,[47] βάκτρον ('staff'), especially appropriate for Hecuba, who has entered supported by Trojan women and leaning on a stick (59–67),[48] and ἡγεμὼν ὁδοῦ ('leader on my way'), a phrase which conveys the idea of a guide with special knowledge and (often) a protective instinct towards the person guided.[49] These are not merely conventional phrases for any suffering mother to speak—Andromache, for instance, both in *Andromache* and in *Troades*, uses quite different terms, concentrating on the frustrated hopes and injustice involved in the child's death. Of course this is partly a function of their different ages and situations—Hecuba has no hopes left for Polyxena by this time, and Andromache in one case imagines that she is about to die and in the other that she will bear other children to be props for her old age—but the effect is none the less to individualize each of the two.

From this plea Hecuba turns to the unwisdom of acting as if fortune were not mutable. The warning has obvious relevance to the victorious Greeks, and perhaps deepens the awareness of their impending doom which develops gradually through the play, but that Hecuba should refer to herself as a paradigm, almost as she might to a mythological example,[50] is more extraordinary. The notion of Hecuba as an archetype of misery and the mutability of fortune is one reiterated in the play and much beloved of later writers: Talthybios' reflections at 492 are central to this idea, and perhaps Hecuba's reply to Agamemnon at 785–6 is also relevant:

> φεῦ φεῦ· τίς οὕτω δυστυχὴς ἔφυ γυνή;
> οὐκ ἔστιν, εἰ μὴ τὴν Τύχην αὐτὴν λέγοις

[47] This reversal has no real parallel, but one might compare S. *Phil.* 703, where Philoctetes is compared to a child without his nurse.

[48] βάκτρον is used metaphorically here as σκῆπτρον is at S. *OC* 848–9 and 1109, of Antigone and Ismene.

[49] For the idea of specialized knowledge compare Hdt. 7. 31, the Thessalians guide the Persians to Doris; for the protective quality see Xen. *Mem.* 1. 3. 4, and Eur. *Pho.* 1616: τίς ἡγεμών μοι ποδὸς ὁμαρτήσει τυφλοῦ; ('Who will accompany my blind steps as a guide?').

[50] See Friis-Johansen (1959), 142. This is more than the usual type of self-reference with ἐμοὶ δέ or ἡμῖν δέ ('but for me/us'): the more emphatic introduction with κἀγὼ γὰρ ... ἀλλὰ νῦν ('but I too ... but now'), with its strong antithesis between the past and the present, and the stress on the suddenness and completeness of the change in 285 make this a more impressive and less conventional example.

> Alas, alas: what woman was born so unfortunate?
> None, unless you mean Fortune herself.[51]

Particularly important are her own words at 619 ff. and 806 ff., where she compares herself to a portrait of unhappiness. It is remarkable, though, that the origin of the archetype idea is Hecuba herself. The emphasis on former wealth is not only pathetic, but the connotation here of over-confidence and arrogance contributes to the important theme of the destructive nature of the wealth of Troy which runs through the play. In particular it is seen as the cause of Polydorus' death.

Hecuba recapitulates her plea in 286–90: she draws attention once more to her suppliant posture, reaching up to Odysseus' chin, at 286, and in αἰδέσθητί με, οἴκτιρον ('Respect me, pity me') she sums up her argument in two verbs: she deserves respect because of Odysseus' obligation to her and pity because of her situation. She urges him to repersuade the Greeks, at once acknowledging his ability to sway them and stressing his responsibility for having done so. She also slips in the argument that it is wrong (φθόνος has that force here) to kill in cold blood women who were spared in the heat of the sack (τὸ πρῶτον, 'at first'). βωμῶν ἀποσπάσαντες ('when you tore them away from the altars') is ironic in this context: ἀποσπάω ('I tear away') is the verb used of the removal of Polyxena, but Hecuba is afraid now that her daughter will be removed *to* an altar, not *from* one. This neat slipping in of a new argument towards the end of a speech is characteristic of Hecuba, as we shall see, and though it is not confined to her across the spectrum of Euripides' plays (just one example is Adrastus' speech at *Supp.* 162 ff., especially

[51] It is just possible that there is an allusion here to a statue of a particular type. There are a number of statues described by Pausanias depicting Tyche in the sense of the guiding spirit of a city, the earliest being the Tyche of Smyrna made by Bupalos in the 6th cent. (if we are to identify this Bupalos with the sculptor abused by Hipponax, on which see Rumpf (1936)), and the most famous being that of Eutychides at Antioch. The ancient identifications and dating might be completely wrong; if they are not, Hecuba could possibly be comparing herself to a representation of the Fortune of Troy, once happy, now utterly cast down. If this is possible, then this would be another instance of the poet reminding us that the root cause of all Hecuba's troubles is the fall of the city. However, although we may rely to an extent on Pausanias to be right when he says that a statue is old, it is much less certain that a statue of a tutelary Olympian deity (perhaps Demeter or Amalthea at Smyrna: the statue held a horn of plenty, and cf. Anacreon fr. 361) would not be misinterpreted by later writers used to the Hellenistic ethos as the Tyche popular in later art. For a discussion of the history of the type and its significance in the Hellenistic world see Pollitt (1986), 3, 55; and Dohrn (1960), esp. 41, on Eutychides' predecessors.

187, where his closing arguments not only explain his presence but are also designed as compliments to Theseus and Athens), it is unique to her in her own drama. This last argument is reinforced by an appeal to Greek law, couched in suitably (for a barbarian queen) vague terms, but reflecting the actual law of Athens against the murder of slaves (described by [Xenophon], *De Rep. Ath.* 1. 10 and Demosthenes 21. 46), which sets off the discussion in Plato's *Euthyphro*.

The last three lines of her speech enunciate the rhetorical principle we mentioned above, that the character of the persuader is as important as the arguments by which he persuades and the skill with which he uses them. By reminding Odysseus of his obligation to her, Hecuba has herself brought this principle to bear on him; she now wants him to apply it to the Greeks. This conciliatory, even flattering ending to the speech should be compared with her burst of anger at its beginning, and to the arguments which she is prepared to use to convince Agamemnon to take vengeance on Polymestor in the second part of the play. It is often said (see below) that her willingness to use Cassandra's relationship with Agamemnon to persuade him to take revenge on Polymestor is an indication of her moral degradation; what of her willingness here to flatter the most hated of the Greeks? It seems to me preferable in both passages to see her without prejudice as using an *ad hominem* argument to reinforce her earlier, more general points. In choosing the personal arguments to apply in each case she makes implied judgements about the characters of Odysseus and Agamemnon which fit in with what we already know about them and which therefore not only illuminate their characters further but also impress us with the insight shown by Hecuba: of course, if anything could appeal to Odysseus it would be admiration of his standing among the Greeks and his cleverness, and a challenge to exercise them both, and if anything could appeal to Agamemnon it would be his weakness for women (the cause of the quarrel in *Iliad* 1; and see e.g. *Ag.* 1438 ff.). In both cases the received tradition might fill out the indications given in the play, but it is not necessary to suppose that it did: the chorus have already confirmed that we are to expect a lustful Agamemnon and a wily and unscrupulous Odysseus (120–2, 127–9, 131 ff.).

Such special pleading seems disconcertingly undignified and in some contexts (though surely not here) even morally wrong to us, but the combination of such arguments with (to us) more acceptable

ones from probability and natural justice is an integral, and not necessarily discreditable, part of Greek rhetorical theory.[52] Nor is such a technique by any means unknown in tragedy. It seems probable that Apollo is making just such a personal appeal to the judge Athena when he uses his argument that the mother is not truly the parent of the child at *Eum.* 657 ff.: he uses her as an example at 664, and she acknowledges the acceptability (if not the validity) of his gambit at 735 ff. In Euripides there are many examples: one need look no further than *Supp.* 316 ff. It is quite legitimate in rhetorical terms to attempt persuasion in this way, and it is a mark of Hecuba's rhetorical skill that she judges the *ēthos* of her interlocutor so well in each case.[53]

After the brief, sympathetic comment from the chorus leader, Odysseus replies. His speech has a formal elegance which confirms his reputation as a rhetorician, but it lacks the fire and conviction of Hecuba's. Again, this is partly the product of the difference in their situations—Hecuba pleading for something vitally important, Odysseus merely justifying a decision already taken—but the playwright still uses what can only be called characterization to bring this out.[54]

Odysseus begins by urging her in rather bland general terms (in striking contrast with Hecuba's fiery opening) not to give way to anger and imagine hostility. At 301–2 he assures her that he is willing to assist *her*, and acknowledges his debt to her (*ὑφ' οὗπερ εὐτύχουν*, 'at whose hands I received good fortune'). Our hopes might temporarily

[52] This prompts Aristotle to include in the *Rhetoric* an analysis of different types of characters (chs. 12–17). Note especially 1390ª25–7: *ἐπεὶ ἀποδέχονται πάντες τοὺς τῶι σφετέρωι ἤθει λεγομένους λόγους καὶ τοὺς ὁμοίους, οὐκ ἄδηλον πῶς χρώμενοι τοῖς λόγοις τοιοῦτοι φανοῦνται καὶ αὐτοὶ καὶ οἱ λόγοι* ('since everyone accepts arguments directed at their own character and at those like them, it is clear by what use of arguments men themselves and their arguments will appear appropriate'). Just one other example is Pl. *Phdr.* 271a4 ff. esp. c10–d2 (see 228a5 and Gorgias' idea of the orator as *ψυχαγωγός* ('conjurer of souls'); see also Kennedy (1963), 63 and n. 16. Of course Plato is speaking here of an ideal rhetoric, but he does strongly imply that this is what ordinary rhetoric tries and fails to do. It is only ambivalent in so far as rhetoric as a whole is ambivalent.

[53] Of course rhetorical skill can in itself be problematic (see below; Kennedy (1963), 14–16, and also Vickers (1988), chs. 1–3); but to be so it must be exercised in an unworthy cause: not the case here at all.

[54] Eur. has after all contrived that this should be the case, just as Shakespeare contrives that Brutus should speak in prose and Antony in verse in *Julius Caesar* III. ii. Critics have usually taken a very harsh line on Odysseus: see e.g. Reckford and Lembke (1991), 15. As will become clear, I think Eur.'s condemnation of his position is more subtle than this. Collard on *Hec.* 395 rightly points to Odysseus' fleeting compassion there (so also Kovacs (1987), 94): he is not 'sadistic' (Gregory (1991), 115 n. 11), so much as ruthlessly determined.

have been raised by this section, in which he seeks to counter the charge of ingratitude in the corresponding part of Hecuba's speech, but μέν ('on the one hand', 301) indicates that this will not be for long, and in the next three lines he affirms solemnly his determination that Polyxena be sacrificed. He shuffles off his debt to Hecuba while trying to appear not to do so; but his offer of saving her life is worse than useless to her (231–2, 385–7, 391 ff.). εἰς ἅπαντας ('to all') in 303 strikes a keynote of this speech: what Odysseus has said in public must apply in private too, and private obligations must be subordinated to the public good, as he will go on to argue in 306 ff. Lines 304–5 stress the reasons for his opinion at the same time as stating that opinion with an economy comparable to that with which Hecuba packs pathos into 277–8; the Sack of Troy is given its due causal status. Achilles' prowess, his claim to such a prize, is insisted upon, and we are reminded that he has demanded the sacrifice (ἐξαιτουμένωι, 305), which hints at his preventing the fleet from sailing.

It is interesting, however, that Odysseus, unlike Agamemnon, is not permitted by the poet to use an argument from necessity. It would have been very easy to make Odysseus explain that it was necessary that Polyxena should die in order that the fleet should go home, but he never does so. The public good he has in mind is a more tortuous and more controversial one than simple expediency. This subordination of private concerns to the public good is also the argument which is put forward by the Theseids at 127–9, and elaborated by Odysseus (according to the chorus) at 131 ff.; it is thus not exclusively characteristic of him, but certainly chimes in well with the picture of the wily logic-chopper given by the chorus (131).

The argument is elaborated further at 306 ff. As Friis Johansen notes, the development of the argument here is comparable to that in (for example) *Hel.* 903–12, in that the 'descriptive application' (his slightly misleading term for an example of a principle expressed in general terms) is used as a subordinate argument closely connected with an argument concerning the future (here 311 ff., cf. *Hel.* 912 ff.).[55] As in very many passages, the general principle is then applied to the particular with ἡμῖν δέ ('but for us', 309); these words and the mention of Achilles exemplify the city and the deserving subject from 306–7. In many ways Odysseus' argument seems

[55] Friis Johansen (1959), 140–1. I do not understand why he also quotes *Hipp.* 403–5 as an example: *Hipp.* 467 ff. is far more comparable.

reasonable: the *Iliad* gives us a graphic picture of ungrateful powers suffering for their failure to reward those who do good service.[56] But 311–12 ring hollow: although Odysseus is anxious to keep faith with Achilles, Hecuba's claims on him have been more easily shaken off. He is operating a double standard. The antithetical expression of these lines (μὲν ... δέ, 'on the one hand ... on the other hand', χρώμεσθ' ... χρώμεσθ', 'we treat him ... we treat him') again underlines the reciprocal nature of the relationship described, and they are perhaps comparable to 252–3 in this.

Odysseus then goes on to imagine the consequences of neglecting the brave.[57] This kind of recourse to imagined public opinion has the effect of generalizing the *illustrandum* while still retaining a lively and personal style: it is frequent in Euripides, especially in contexts where the reason for a decision is being explained, if it has already been taken, or is being advised or warned against if it is still potential.[58] φιλοψυχήσομεν ('hold our lives dear') is quite an unusual word: it and its cognates occur elsewhere in Euripides only four times. It is picked up by Polyxena at 348.

Odysseus again passes from the general to his own particular case, speaking of the importance to him of an honourable grave: the effect is perhaps ironic in view of the Homeric background.[59] There is perhaps some tension here with 284 ff. (see above): Hecuba's use of herself as an example is motivated by insight born of bitter experience, whereas Odysseus' involves an ironic reference to his future which stresses his ignorance of what is to come. Perhaps 317–18 should also be seen in the light of 282–5: at the point where Hecuba in her speech spoke of her vanished good fortune and wealth, Odysseus sententiously claims that his needs in life are modest and that posthumous glory is more important to him.[60] διὰ μακροῦ γὰρ ἡ χάρις ('for that favour lasts a long time'), although its primary significance

[56] See e.g. *Il.* 9. 323 ff., and for a similar sentiment conversely expressed cf. *Supp.* 423–5; *And.* 693 ff. also owe more to Homer than to contemporary allusions, *pace* Stevens ad loc.

[57] For the colloquial εἶἐν see Stevens (1976), 34. The sense is 'introducing a transition to a fresh point by a backward glance at what has been established'.

[58] See e.g. *Alc.* 954, *Pho.* 580 (both with ἐρεῖ, 'will say'); more generally, cf. *HF* 1287 ff., *Hcld.* 515 ff., and compare S. *Aj.* 500 ff.

[59] See also in Ch. 1 pp. 39–40.

[60] For the idea of making do with a modest livelihood cf. (perhaps) Anacreon fr. 361, Eur. fr. 54; for that of honourable burial acting as a spur in a civic context cf. Lysias 2, *passim*, esp. 79–81 (in particular 80, ζηλωταὶ δὲ ὑπὸ πάντων ἀνθρώπων αἱ τιμαί· ... καὶ γάρ τοι θάπτονται δημοσίαι ..., 'their honours are enviable for all men. ... they are buried at the public expense').

is plainly to refer to the importance of having an honoured tomb, strikes an ironic note by virtue of the fact that the mention of the χάρις ('gratitude, favour') which should have bound Odysseus and Hecuba together, and which has not lasted very long at all, acts as the connection between this section and the next one, where Odysseus returns to Hecuba and her troubles.[61]

In good rhetorical fashion he sets himself to debunk the pathos which has hitherto been working for his opponent and to transfer it to his own side.[62] The compound ἀντάκουέ ('listen *in your turn*') marks the combative line he is taking. But despite the good rhetorical technique he is following, and despite the fact that his argument is actually rather a good one, in that the Greek bereaved do indeed have, and are perceived in the play to have, as much claim to be unhappy as Hecuba and the Trojan women, his ploy does not work. We do not feel that the pathos of Hecuba's situation is lessened in any way by what Odysseus says, although he puts it well and emphatically; on the contrary, as is later brought out by the chorus at 650 ff., because his words open up a further tremendous vista of suffering against which to set Hecuba and Polyxena, they actually increase the pathos. His attempt to abuse the idea of community of feeling between enemies (discussed in Ch. 1 pp. 28–9), and appropriate it for his argument, recoils on him.

The next lines represent a slight change of tack: Odysseus tries, as Theseus in the *Suppliants* (195 ff.) does for Adrastus, to lay the blame for the Trojans' lack of success on their own stupidity. But, unlike Theseus, he has no real grounds for making his accusation. He makes invidious comparisons between his state and that of his less fortunate interlocutor, and he does not subsequently temper his judgement with mercy; with the result that where Theseus appears reasonable Odysseus appears arrogant and unjust. Lines 326–7 neatly cover up the fact that in this case τιμᾶν τὸν ἐσθλόν ('honouring the good man') entails incurring a worse charge than ἀμαθία ('folly'), since it involves Polyxena's death. The use of the semi-technical term ὀφλήσομεν ('we will be charged with')[63] is ironic: this is no law-suit, as there is no real possibility of defence and the verdict has already been reached. His final four lines are insulting: the barbarians are to

[61] His use of the word χάρις ('favour') is unexpected, I think; we would rather have expected γέρας ('prize').

[62] Cf. e.g. Arist. *Rhet.* 1356ᵃ14 ff.; *Rhet. ad Alex.* 1442ᵇ2 ff.; Russell in Pelling (1990), 198; Kennedy (1963), 93 ff.

[63] Cf. Stevens on *And.* 184 ff.

go on behaving in the same way to oblige the Greeks.[64]

The chorus's comment shows that they have appreciated his arrogance for what it is: the attitude of the master towards the slave. The show of reasonableness at the start of his speech is not maintained throughout it, and Euripides ruthlessly undercuts his moral standing by clever manipulation of the standard rhetorical ploys he gives him to speak.

Hecuba responds to his intransigence by telling Polyxena to supplicate him. Her opening couplet merits careful attention. The metaphor λόγους ῥίπτω is quite common in tragedy meaning 'to hurl out angry or hasty words', but rather less so meaning, as it does here, 'to waste' them.[65] There is a good deal of bitterness in the way she uses this expression. It should also be seen in connection with the archery metaphor at 603. The metaphors are linked, and as they are both combined with μάτην ('in vain'), there may be a similarity between the two passages which is more than coincidental: Hecuba's attempts to understand Polyxena's death are as futile as her attempts to save her. The metaphor with which she urges Polyxena to supplicate Odysseus, that of the nightingale, is not a hopeful one, filled as it is with the associations of the Tereus-myth with unhappy motherhood.[66] In assigning the nightingale's song to Polyxena, Hecuba is again reversing their roles, as we saw her doing at 281 in τιθήνη ('nurse'). At 340–1 she again slips in a new argument at the end of her speech, this time actually in parenthesis. The argument that Odysseus should pity her because he has children of his own is not one she has used before, but it is one in accordance with rhetorical theory and practice; Priam's appeal to Achilles at *Il.* 24. 486 ff. is based on a similar argument.

Polyxena, however, refuses to supplicate him. We will discuss this speech in some detail in Chapter 5, and it will be sufficient here to remark that Polyxena changes the whole tone of the scene with

[64] For the idea of faring according to one's counsels, see e.g. Isocrates 7. 11. Megabyzus, arguing for oligarchy in the debate on government in Hdt. 3. 81, wishes that Persia's enemies may be governed by the people (δήμωι μέν νυν, οἳ Πέρσῃσι κακὸν νοέουσι, οὗτοι χράσθων); but democratic Athens will defeat the Persians.

[65] 'Hurl angry words': cf. Aesch. *PV* 312, 932, Eur. *Alc.* 680, *Hipp.* 214, 232. 'Waste words': cf. Aesch. *Ag.* 1068, Eur. *Med.* 1404, and S. *Aj.* 1271 of Ajax' deeds. It is noticeable that here there are three expressions describing the futility of Hecuba's words, πρὸς αἰθέρα φροῦδοι μάτην ('gone in vain to the air'), whereas there is no such expression in the *Ag.* passage, and only one, μάτην, at *Med.* 1404.

[66] See *Od.* 19. 518 ff. The Thracian setting of the play reinforces the grimness of the myth.

these lines. The speech is beautifully and carefully composed, and certainly picks up ideas and words from what precedes it (342–4, 348 φιλόψυχος 'holding life dear', for which see above), but it is not a piece of rhetoric in the sense in which Hecuba's and Odysseus' speeches are. Polyxena is not using any of the tricks of the trade for any purpose, good or bad. There is no special pleading and no sleight of hand, no undercutting and no irony of the sort we observed in the speech of Odysseus. Her straightforward nobility is not the product of rhetoric.[67]

After her intervention the scene moves into a different, swifter register. Hecuba still tries to save her, insisting that she herself, as the mother of Paris, should be sacrificed in Polyxena's stead. It is worth noting that after briefly admiring her daughter's bravery she makes no attempt to argue further from it, or from any premiss acknowledged in her child's speech, but returns to the premisses laid down by Odysseus, summing up his principal argument in one and a half scathing lines and offering a practical alternative. She and Odysseus inhabit the same world, though they are very different creatures; Polyxena is set apart. The stress on the parent/child relationship is maintained, as Hecuba's claim to be sacrificed is based on motherhood; Achilles is described once by name and once as the son of each of his parents. As she cannot be sacrificed alone, Hecuba tries to be sacrificed with her daughter; when that suggestion fails she abandons logical reasoning and resorts to clinging to her. It is remarkable that at 396 she uses πολλή γ' ἀνάγκη ('there is a strong necessity') to introduce one of the most emotional and emotive moves in the play: this phrase, like similar phrases, is used in tragedy in answers and arguments, and it is in character essentially logical and rational.[68] The only reasoning she has left is her love for her daughter and its unreasoning physical expression; yet even when she has no arguments left she does not abandon the trappings of logic. She withstands Odysseus' bluster but yields to Polyxena's persuasion and admonishment.

After the choral ode Talthybios enters and asks for Hecuba. When

[67] This is not so say that Eur. has not given Polyxena a speech rhetorically organized to arouse sympathy in the audience: note the rhetorical question at 349, and the complex antithesis between Polyxena's previous status and future misery. But the rhetoric characterizes Polyxena not as rhetorically skilled, but as pitiable.

[68] Cf. e.g. *Med.* 1013, and S. *Tr.* 295, *OT* 986, and *El.* 1497, with which compare Hdt. 2. 22, and Pl. *Rep.* 441d7, *Phd.* 67a4, etc. On this passage see also Tarkow (1984), 129–30.

the chorus point her out to him he reflects upon the mutability of fortune and points to Hecuba as a supreme example of its vicissitudes, echoing what she has said of herself at 284–5. This is an example of a general reflection used to inspire pathos; there are numerous other examples in Euripides.[69] The question with asyndeton introducing the *paradeigma* is paralleled by *And.* 324. The reflection is firmly separated from the following dialogue by Talthybios' reference to himself, which echoes Polyxena's words at 374 ff. This opening contrasts with Talthybios' words to Cassandra in *Troades*, where his more frequent and brusquer addresses to her and the briefer general statement create a different, less sympathetic, character for him. The very length of the reflection here makes his address to Hecuba more gentle. He says nothing of Hecuba that someone has not said before, that she has lost royalty, wealth, husband, and city, but this is the first time that we have heard a Greek reflect at length on her losses, and the moment is given extra poignancy by the fact that he has come to tell her of Polyxena's death.

We will discuss the messenger speech in the next chapter; let us now consider Hecuba's reaction to it. She begins her reflective speech by addressing her dead daughter and describing the multitude of troubles which beset her: ironically, since she does not yet know of the death of Polydorus. The address to Polyxena roots what follows more firmly in its context: as the cause of the latest grief, it is natural that Polyxena should be addressed. It is not surprising that a reflective rhesis rather than a lament is found here: she and Polyxena lamented together when they parted, at 414 ff., and her posture from 438 to 505 constituted a striking visual expression of her grief. We know well enough what she feels; now we want to know what she thinks. Hecuba half-personifies her woes as they claim her attention in turn (587: cf. Hadley ad loc.), until 589 brings Polyxena to the fore (καὶ νῦν ..., 'and now ...'). Here Hecuba, movingly, is in two minds: she is torn between irrepressible grief (τὸ μὲν σὸν ... πάθος, 'your suffering'), despite Polyxena's argument that she is better off dead, and pride in her nobility (591 τὸ δ' αὖ λίαν παρεῖλες, 'but you have relieved me of excessive grief'). This pride motivates the long passage of general reflection which follows.[70]

[69] See Friis Johansen (1959), 83 ff., Schadewaldt (1926), 156 ff., and Collard on *Supp.* 1080 ff.; *Supp.* 1080 ff. and *And.* 319 ff. are good examples of this; *Hipp.* 936 ff. (though it has a rather different effect) is also relevant.

[70] Cf. Schadewaldt (1926), 138 ff. Collard on *Hec.* 585–628 remarks that the speech

I cannot agree with Friis Johansen that the pathos disappears as the question of the origin of virtue is discussed.[71] Hecuba's words reflect what Polyxena has said at various points, which ties the reflection in to this particular example, and her words are shot through besides with irony and ambiguity which provide a pathos of their own. It is interesting to compare this passage with *Supp.* 911 ff., where the sentiment is similar to *Hec.* 600 ff. This passage is spoken with pride by a mother of her own child who has died nobly: the *Suppliants* passage is deeply ironic,[72] not only in the light of what has gone before in the play but also in the light of what the mothers of the leaders referred to say immediately after this general reflection (919–20):

> ἰὼὼ τέκνον, δυστυχῆ
> σ' ἔτρεφον ἔφερον ὑφ' ἥπατος ...
>
> Alas, my child, for misfortune
> I nursed you and bore you in my womb ...

It is important not to succumb to the notion that such passages are there for their own sake, or are irrelevant or represent 'the poet's view': for exactly the opposite view of the relationship between birth and virtue see *El.* 367 ff. Euripides will allow his characters to express any view if he thinks it appropriate that they should do so.

Why then does Hecuba speak as she does? She begins with a metaphor of earth and the fruit it bears.[73] It is appropriate for Hecuba to talk in terms of earth, corn, and fruit because this nexus of imagery is one particularly associated with motherhood: the idea of the earth as mother is a very ancient one, and needs no illustration here, and both στάχυς ('crop') and καρπός ('fruit') are used by Euripides to mean 'offspring'.[74] Even if these instances did not exist, other and more common agricultural imagery would point the way and would

'is spaced by rhetorical illustrations each beginning at a half-line and so giving a sense of both cohesion and impetus'. For material on the parentage/training debate in general see Collard on *Supp.* 911 f. and Collard on *Hec.* 592–602.

[71] Friis Johansen (1959), 85 ff.

[72] So Conacher (1967), 107.

[73] Nussbaum (1986: 399–400, 402, 407) wants to see this image in the context of Polydorus' comparison of himself to a plant at l. 20, but she reads far too much into a rather conventional image at 20 (admittedly πτόρθος, 'shoot', is a very unusual word in this metaphorical sense, but ἔρνος, 'young shoot', is very common and the metaphor remains the same). She also misses the point here.

[74] στάχυς at fr. 50. 22 Austin (*Erechtheus*), a usage taken up by later poets; καρπός at *Ion* 922: Kirchhoff's κάποις is ingenious but unnecessary.

be well known to the audience: there are numerous instances of it in tragedy, and it was incorporated into the betrothal formula, as we know from Menander.[75] I do not mean to imply that Hecuba is speaking only of herself as Polyxena's progenitor: clearly the whole family is meant. But if 599 ff. are genuine, then 'parents' are uppermost in her mind as those who influence the course of their children's lives, and the reference becomes primarily to herself and Priam, who is in her mind again at 620 ff. (and it is interesting that she calls him there what Talthybios has just called her: εὐτεκνώτατος, 'most blessed with children'). Far from being ornamental or irrelevant, then, the metaphor establishes the passage as being important for our view of Hecuba and Polyxena and their relationship.

The passage is a little compressed, because it moves from the initial idea implicit in the metaphor and in τεκόντες ('parents') in 599—that the quality of the parents makes a difference to the character of the children (see also the words of the chorus at 379–81)—to the second idea that suffering makes no difference to a noble character, and then into the related question of whether the creation of such noble characters is due to parentage or training. Nussbaum[76] and others have taken this introduction of the idea that noble characters are immutable to refer not only to Polyxena but also, ironically, to Hecuba, and the moral eclipse which they see her as undergoing in the second half of the play. This view as a whole will be questioned in Chapter 6. As to this passage, I believe that its primary reference is to Polyxena and her triumph over adversity, and that the secondary, ironic, reference is to Polymestor and his faithlessness. Although there may be a third reference, to Hecuba, it need not be ironic; there

[75] The best-known instances in tragedy are Aesch. *Sept.* 753, S. *Tr.* 31 ff., *OT* 1211–12, 1256–7, 1485, 1497, and *Ant.* 569. The betrothal formula contained the words ἐπ' ἀρότωι γνησίων παίδων ('for the procreation [lit. 'ploughing'] of legitimate children'): see e.g. Men. *Pk.* 1010 with Gomme and Sandbach ad loc.

[76] Nussbaum (1986: 399–405) sees this speech as 'crucial for our study of Hecuba's decline' (p. 400) because 'it reveals features of Hecuba's conception of excellence that will help to explain her later instability'. These seem to boil down to Hecuba's anthropocentricity, to her placing 'ethical standards ... entirely within the human world'. Hecuba does seem to allow for divine intervention to a certain extent, though: θεόθεν, 'from the gods', 593. There is nothing in the words of this speech in context that can reasonably be held to point to any moral degeneration at this stage. If we decide that Hecuba has frustrated her own words, has proved herself wrong, that will be a dramatic irony; it will not reflect any discredit on her words here. She will have failed to live up to an ideal; the ideal will not have been proved false. On the contrary, Polyxena will remain as an example of one who has lived up to it. There is nothing here to alienate the audience.

could well be a straightforwardly pathetic allusion here to Hecuba's maternal devotion, which has led her to offer to be sacrificed in her daughter's place.[77] Everything in the play so far has prepared us to see her as a mother, most recently the important metaphor we discussed above, and it is easy to see Hecuba and Polyxena as together proving the truth of what Hecuba has just said. We do not yet know anything about the revenge at all (Polydorus does not mention it). Irony would have to be read back into this passage by the audience. Audiences are certainly capable of doing that, but I think it unlikely that they are meant to do so here, when there are so many other more obvious applications for Hecuba's words.

The debate on the respective importance of parentage and training is introduced masquerading as a side-issue, but does in fact contribute to the passage's effect in an important way. Line 600 echoes Polyxena's words at 351 *ἐθρέφθην ἐλπίδων καλῶν ὕπο* ('I was reared in fine hopes') and 601–2 paraphrase what she says at 375–8 in more general terms. In this apparent digression, Hecuba comes far closer to understanding Polyxena's position than she has ever done before, closer than she was at 589–90. It has made a real difference to her: from now on she refers to Polyxena in a far more practical spirit, and organizes her funeral. It may also be the case that these lines are ironic in that Hecuba, having been accustomed to deal with noble characters like Polyxena, is about to be hideously disillusioned by her discovery of Polymestor's wickedness, which perhaps seems all the worse as a result: but I think that this would be a secondary reference.

Hecuba pulls herself up short using a metaphor from archery (see above on 334–5). There are comparable metaphors at Aeschylus, *Supp.* 446 ff. and *Eum.* 676, Sophocles, *Ant.* 1084 ff., and Euripides, *Supp.* 456: it is interesting that the use of the metaphor in all four contexts implies an adversarial, combative approach, and yet here Hecuba is not using the weapon of her rhetoric against anyone in particular. We are given the impression of a hostile world against which it is vain to fight. It is tempting to see *καὶ ταῦτα* ('these things too') as looking back to the last time she made a similar remark, at 334–5: both her attempted defence of Polyxena and her reflections on her death are in the end futile. She turns to making arrangements

[77] Gnomic statements can be pathetic in context: see Schadewaldt (1926), 138 ff., esp. 139, and 178 ff., esp. 182.

for the poor funeral of the former princess of Troy, and ends her speech with another general reflection (619 ff.) on her vanished wealth and good fortune, which is motivated by her lack of resources to bury Polyxena properly (see Ch. 1 p. 25).

The reflection is very much along the same lines as Talthybios' words at 488 ff., and rounds off the speech, the scene, and the first half of the play.[78] It reinforces the picture of Hecuba as an archetype of the mutability of Fate, and creates pathetic irony: Hecuba does not yet know the worst.[79]

After the discovery of Polydorus' body, Agamemnon enters. Hecuba, in an extended passage of asides, makes up her mind to supplicate him and ask for vengeance on Polymestor. The use of stichomythia here is finely calculated (see also in Ch. 2 pp. 61–2): Hecuba argues with herself, proceeding from doubt and fear to hope and decision; Agamemnon is made to keep guessing, first what the matter is, then who the corpse is, then how one of Hecuba's sons comes to be there, then by whom he was murdered, then by whom, and how, the corpse was discovered. Euripides both enables Hecuba to present the information emotively to Agamemnon (for example 760, 762) and at the same time creates an exciting scene for the audience, despite the fact that no new information is given to them. With great skill they are made to feel involved with Agamemnon's discovery, and this is achieved through the characterization of Agamemnon's response. From mounting irritation, at its height at 747–8, he becomes more and more intrigued and sympathetic, and even respectful, from the moment he knows that the body is one of her children: he calls her *ὦ τλῆμον* ('unhappy one') at 763, *γύναι* ('lady') at 765, *ὦ τλῆμον* again at 775, and he also begins to guess at what she is going to say next (771, 775, 781), which gives a strong impression of engagement and sympathy on his part. This culminates in Agamemnon's words at 783 and 785. That Agamemnon is characterized in this way is important for the manipulation of the audience's emotions in the scene which follows: we have no preconceived ideas as to what is going to happen next, so this encouraging response raises the audience's hopes that Hecuba

[78] Within the scene this reflection creates a semi-formal symmetry: Reflection on the mutability of Fortune/Death of Polyxena/Reflection on the Death of Polyxena/Reflection on the mutability of Fortune.

[79] Friis Johansen (1959: 155) cites numerous examples of a general reflection concluding a lamentation speech, but few are so long (even counting from 623 rather than 619), or so elaborate.

may be more fortunate in the second part of the play than in the first.

It is in response to Agamemnon's sympathetic comment at 785 that Hecuba begins her great speech to persuade him to take vengeance on Polymestor. Just as with her speech to Odysseus at 251 ff., she begins with a line that seems to continue the stichomythia (though naturally here it is sorrowing, not furious), but then expands her theme into a rhesis. But there are also significant differences between this speech and her words to Odysseus, which further characterize Agamemnon's response to her and again indicate her orator's flexibility of approach, notably that she begins the speech by referring to her suppliant posture assumed at 752, rather than working up to it as a climax. This indicates her greater confidence in Agamemnon (note 745–6, ironically reflecting Odysseus' advice to her at 299–300), which his relatively benevolent errand has inspired; with Odysseus she does not play her trump card so early.[80] Here again, however, she is prepared to envisage the possibility of defeat, and not merely as a rhetorical flourish: 751, which is spoken aside, seems to indicate that 788–9, though certainly said in the firm belief that he *ought* to help her, should not be read as mere posturing. But whereas in the scene with Odysseus lines 229–30 seemed almost to presuppose failure, here failure and success are more evenly balanced alternatives: note 751 *κἂν τύχω κἂν μὴ τύχω* ('whether or not I succeed') and 788–9 *εἰ μὲν ... εἰ δὲ τοὔμπαλιν* ('if on the one hand ... but if on the contrary'). Here, as in her speech to Odysseus, she loads every word with as much argumentative force as it will bear in her indictment of Polymestor, stressing again and again the salient feature of his crime: its impiousness (788 *ὅσια*, 'holy things'; 790 *ἀνοσιωτάτου ξένου*, 'my most unholy ally'; 792 *ἀνοσιώτατον*, 'most unholy'; 791 *οὔτε τοὺς γῆς νέρθεν οὔτε τοὺς ἄνω δείσας*, 'fearing neither those under the earth nor those above it'[81]).

Hecuba goes straight on from the impiousness of the crime to stress the moral arguments for punishing Polymestor. As in the scene with Odysseus at 234 ff., she mentions her slavery, but, significantly, she does so not in justifying her right to speak. On the contrary, she goes on to name powers which are capable of obtaining justice even

[80] See Ch. 2 pp. 62–3 on the longer delay before the supplication in the scene with Odysseus.

[81] See also l. 49. Here the infernal gods seem to be meant, but I think *τοὺς ἄνω* are the living rather than the Olympians; she will go on to stress the power and obligation of men to punish such deeds.

if she, a weak slave, is not. This should also be compared with 291–2. There the *νόμος* ('law') in question is a specific, Hellenic, law: here it has been almost personified and is said to rule even over the gods. We will discuss the implications of this idea for Hecuba's moral standing in Chapter 6 pp. 182–3.[82] Here it will suffice to note the pathetic fact that she appealed to *νόμος* ('law') the last time she supplicated a Greek general; then she was repulsed. But as this is a different *νόμος* (and different too from *τῆς ἀνάγκης οἱ νόμοι*, 'the laws of necessity', at 846–7, or the restrictive, written laws, the *νόμων γραφαί*, at 866[83]) so it makes it more plausible that the result of her appeal may be different.

She then makes it clear that she regards Agamemnon as responsible for the enforcing of this all-important *νόμος* (802 ff.), and because she has exalted it to such an extent and has stressed so heavily the horror of Polymestor's crime in 803–4, she is able to draw the conclusion that, unless he acts, *οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν τῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποισι σῶν* ('there is nothing secure in the affairs of men', 805). This generalizing argument is used elsewhere by Euripides but with very different effect: as in *Hipp.* 976 ff., where Theseus feels his personal honour is at stake if he fails to punish Hippolytus; or *HF* 841–2, where Iris fears for the prestige of the gods if Heracles is not brought low. It is clearly important in *Eumenides*, too, and is frequent in Attic oratory,[84] but it is very impressive here because of the pathetic skill with which Hecuba leads up to it and the sublimity of the concept of *νόμος* which she puts forward. Whereas in the two Euripidean passages mentioned above the argument has an unpleasant flavour because both speakers anticipate terrible consequences for *themselves*, Hecuba is allowed to sound more high-minded because the consequences she fears are for society as a whole as well as for herself, like the Furies in *Eumenides* when they warn of the chaos of society without *τὸ δεινόν* ('the fearful') at e.g. 517 ff.

Returning to herself, she makes a pathetic appeal for pity, using

[82] I cannot agree with Ostwald (1969), 29, 38, on this point, nor with Heinimann (1945), 121–2. See also Oliver (1960), 91–102, with bibliography; Segal (1989*a*), 13–14 and (1989*b*), *passim*; and now Gregory (1991), 98–102, on *nomos* throughout the play, though I doubt that Odysseus' rejection of Hecuba's attempt to claim the protection of Athenian law for herself would 'inspire them [the audience] to question the double standard of justice prevailing in fifth-century Athens' (p. 100). For the idea of *Νόμος* ruling the gods cf. Pindar fr. 169 Snell: *νόμος ὁ παντῶν βασιλεὺς | θνατῶν τε καὶ ἀθανάτων* ('law, king of all mortals and immortals').

[83] *Pace* Ostwald (1969), 38 ff.

[84] See de Romilly (1979), 121 ff.

the same words as she did to Odysseus at 286–7, *αἰδέσθητί με, οἴκτιρον* ('respect me, pity me'), continuing to encourage comparisons between the situations: will she be more successful this time? There follows the famous comparison to a painting which we have already mentioned. I think its place in the argument here is subtly to place Agamemnon even more firmly in a position of responsibility: the implication is that he has created this picture of misery, now let him alleviate part of her distress. She reinforces this appeal with a further description of her ills which corresponds in function to 279 ff.

Much has been made[85] of the fact that initially she appeals to Agamemnon on the grounds of natural justice and of his responsibility as general of the Greeks for her present misery; but then, when she perceives that she is making no headway, and he makes a move to disengage himself at 812–13, she reflects on the importance of Peitho and proceeds to use arguments which are found less respectable. But Hecuba does actually return to the argument from pity and the argument from justice (note the chiastic order) in 841–5. Many points in this speech, among them the move away from Hecuba, which recalls Odysseus' move away from Polyxena at 342, reflect ideas and expressions in the previous scene where Hecuba tries to persuade a Greek to grant her a concession (see Ch. 2 pp. 62–3). This section, however, with effective irony, contrasts with Hecuba's remarks at 293 ff., because the idea that a person's standing is more important than his skill in speaking is being proved bitterly true by Hecuba's failure to persuade Agamemnon; and it also jars with what she says at 334–5, because there a speech which showed great rhetorical skill was unable to prevail against expediency. Indeed, when Agamemnon replies to this speech it will become apparent that Peitho has failed yet again to secure the desired result.

In the structure of the speech as a whole, this section, with its typically Euripidean antithetical question,[86] is to be understood as an expression of despair: Hecuba sees Agamemnon backing away and feels her advantage slipping, and she passionately regrets her imperfect ability to persuade. The point of 817–18 is that even paying money will not secure that priceless ability. The implication is that one must *μοχθεῖν* and *ματεύειν* ('labour and strive') to obtain success, and that is ironic because Hecuba has been doing just that without

[85] e.g. by Kirkwood (1947), 61–8.

[86] See *Med.* 516 ff., *Hipp.* 916 ff., and Friis Johansen (1959), 82 and n. 94.

result (so she describes the debate with Odysseus as an *ἀγὼν μέγας*, 'a great struggle'). Colin Macleod comments: 'The dramatist thus makes more acutely clear the limits of human ingenuity.'[87] Hecuba is not selling her soul to Peitho, but seeking desperately for an answer where answer there is none. Peitho is her last hope: she has no other resource: that is made clear in 821 ff.

On this reading the jump from 819–20 is less difficult to account for. Hecuba returns again to her own sufferings and the mutability of Fortune via her desperation over the problems of persuasion which she is experiencing. The reflection on the vicissitudes of life is not meant to apply to Hecuba alone, I think; just as at 282 ff. she warns Odysseus against over-confidence, so here Agamemnon is supposed to take note of her words. It is interesting, though, and reflects the more diffident tone she takes with him in the second part of this speech, that she leaves him to draw his own conclusions instead of pointing them out as she does to Odysseus.

The mention of the smoking city in the background seems to suggest the notorious argument from Cassandra's position as Agamemnon's concubine.[88] This is no accident, as the sack of the city is directly responsible for the state of affairs. *καὶ μήν* ('and yet') introduces the new argument, and is followed by an embarrassed parenthesis, which is in keeping with Hecuba's demure vocabulary.[89] As we noted above, this argument is not a sign of Hecuba's depravity,

[87] (1983), 156.

[88] The scholium on *Aj.* 520 certainly disapproves violently (*μαστροπικώτατα εἰσάγει τὴν Ἑκάβην λέγουσαν*, 'he brings Hecuba on speaking exactly like a pimp'); but that on *Hec.* 825 is in the right of it, I think: *οὐ μαστροπώδεις οἱ λόγοι, ἀλλ' ἀφαιρεθεῖσα τὸν τῆς τύχης ὄγκον εἰς πᾶν ὁτιοῦν καταβαίνει καθομιλοῦσα τοῖς καιροῖς καὶ λέγουσα ταῦτα δι' ὧν ἔμελλε θηρᾶσθαι βοήθειαν* ('the words are not like a pandar's, but as she has been deprived of the pride which goes with good fortune she descends to any argument, adapting herself to her situation, and saying the things with which she had a prospect of securing assistance.'). One must bear in mind that Hecuba has not created the situation. Modern critics have been very indignant about this argument: Segal (1990*a*: 123) links Cassandra closely with Polyxena and concludes: 'because Cassandra's victimage so closely parallels Polyxena's, Hecuba's use of Cassandra deepens her own degradation'. Reckford and Lembke (1991: 13) think, quite wrongly, that Agamemnon's position in the trial scene is undermined by it ('We know what he was bribed with'). But this argument is no more successful than anything else Hecuba tries; indeed, it is almost self-defeating, because Agamemnon is afraid of public opinion. For a fuller survey and counter-attack see Gregory (1991), 106–7. Zeitlin (1991: 77–8) rightly links the argument with the theme of *χάρις* ('gratitude').

[89] For the particle see Denniston, *GP* 352. *ἄσπασμα* ('embrace') is used elsewhere by Eur. at *IT* 376 and *El.* 596, of greetings exchanged between brother and sister, and at *Tro.* 1187 of the cuddling of grandmother and grandson.

but an *ad hominem* argument paralleled by her appeal to Odysseus' vanity in the earlier scene. Unlike that appeal it is carefully apologized for,[90] partly because it is of a far more intimate nature, and partly because in general Hecuba treats Agamemnon with more respect than she does Odysseus, unsurprisingly given the clear difference in their social and moral status and the fact that Hecuba is Agamemnon's slave. Paley sums up well: 'Thus much at least is to be said for Hecuba, that she was hardly likely to reject any appeal that might influence the king: and that this of all others was the most likely, who will deny?' The *parodos* and 855 ff. confirm the likely effectiveness of the approach.

The case that it is Agamemnon's duty to do something is forcibly put, as is characteristic of Hecuba: 826 adds a touch of intimacy, then at 828 ff. a one-line question expanded in a two-line question at 829–30 makes the point inescapably explicit. The pithy ἄκουε δή νυν ('Listen now') and a further question make the impact of the conclusion, that Agamemnon is in some way related to Polydorus, all the stronger. Indeed the attempt to make a case for Polydorus' being Agamemnon's κηδεστής ('relative') is not as spurious as is sometimes claimed. At Athens, as we know from Lysias 1. 31, adultery with someone's παλλακή ('concubine') was punished on the same basis as adultery with a wife, which suggests that some such relationships could be viewed as something more than simply casual liaisons.[91]

At line 835, ἑνός μοι μῦθος ἐνδεὴς ἔτι ('my speech lacks one more thing') must refer not to the passage which immediately follows it, and which is not an argument, but to the final appeal and the last argument which Hecuba again slips in at the end of the speech. In the intervening passage Hecuba builds up to her rhetorical climax in an extraordinary manner with her wish for a voice in every part of her body. This has suggested to some scholars that she wishes to become a grotesque creature somewhat similar to Fama at *Aeneid* 4. 181 ff. I find this difficult to accept; the reference to Daedalus suggests another interpretation. There is a most interesting scholium on these lines which points out that the works of Daedalus were so lifelike that they either appeared to, or really did, open their eyes and move. We might also compare the automata in Homer, the work of

[90] For the use of ξένον cf. perhaps Aesch. *PV* 688–9, of the narration of Io, and see Collard on *Hec.* 824–7.

[91] See Thompson (1971: 110) on the possible meanings of κηδεστής.

Hephaestus. If this is to be preferred to the idea that Daedalus is somehow to wreak an actual change on Hecuba herself, as I think it is (since Daedalus was never envisaged as being able to transform living people but was the archetypal sculptor and artist), then Hecuba is comparing herself to a work of art again—not to some grotesque statue of a multi-tongued creature, but rather to one of the statues for which Daedalus was famous, the first which had open eyes, walked, and had arms which were not attached to their sides. She is thus praying not to be transformed into some strange beast, but that she might undergo a similar kind of liberation of energy to that which Daedalus and the god are envisaged as granting to the statue, affecting every part of her body, which she may then use to its utmost in persuading Agamemnon (πάνθ' ὁμαρτῇι, 'all together').[92]

This makes much more sense in context: a reference to the use of gesture is implied. The use made of the body was very important in ancient persuasion, and this has been demonstrated in this play in both supplication scenes, where the gestures are carefully described. The science of gesture in rhetoric was not developed until later, by Aristotle and then Theophrastus, but even in Homer there are hints that gestures are important in a rhetorical context: Telemachus' hurling down the staff in *Odyssey* 2, for instance, and Achilles making the same gesture in *Iliad* 1, have very different effects in their contexts and add very different voices to the arguments concerned. We should also notice *Il.* 3. 216 ff., where Odysseus is impressive despite, rather than because of, his lack of gesture. If this interpretation is right, then

[92] For the view that this passage is grotesque see e.g. Michelini (1987: 152), who thinks that the reference to Daedalus makes Hecuba's words more repellent: 'It might just be possible to tolerate the bizarreness of Hekabe's speaking anatomy, and to repress the picture of an eloquent foot embracing Agamemnon's knee, if the reference to Daidalos' arts did not suggest some actual grotesque realisation of what otherwise could be mere wordplay.' See also Nussbaum (1986: 415), who calls it 'a ghastly moment ... like Cassandra's body, her own is a mere tool of the new plan'. On Daedalus and his statues cf. Eur. fr. 372, from *Eurystheus*, and Suidas s.v. Δαιδάλου ποιήματα; for other ancient sources cf. Overbeck (1868), 118–42 (119); cf. also Frontisi-Ducroux (1975), *passim*. Kassel (1983: 5–6) interprets this passage as showing that the 5th cent. subscribed to the later belief that Daedalic statues could speak as well as move; but as he goes on to point out, the three passages adduced by the scholium to illustrate this belief do not in fact necessarily imply it. Plato Comicus fr. 204 KA is the only other evidence for such a belief so early, and Kassel's suggestion that the claim made in the passage to be a talking Daedalic statue is comic invention rather than a reflection of a current idea is convincing. The interpretation of the *Hecuba*-passage adopted here in fact might suit Kassel's general argument better. On this reading one might be tempted to read κόραισι for κόμαισι. But there is in fact no need: the reference in κόμαισι is to her hair, disarrayed in mourning (cf. 496).

there is an important contrast to be made between the passiveness expressed by the 'picture of misery' simile and this active one. The change epitomizes the gathering pace of the revenge-plot as well as the change in Hecuba from sufferer to doer; it characterizes the action as well as the individual. ἐπισκήπτω ('I adjure') is an important and solemn word, appropriate for Hecuba's emotional climax: it is frequently used of the last commands of the dying.[93]

She calls on Agamemnon as her master and the light of Greece. The expression ὦ μέγιστον Ἕλλησιν φάος ('O greatest light shining on the Greeks') is an adaptation of an Homeric address. It stresses by implication her dependence on Agamemnon as well as complimenting him.[94] The final couplet slips in another compliment at the same time as implying that it is Agamemnon's duty to help her. This is clearly linked to her earlier remarks at 802 ff., but there she was stressing the practical aspect of bringing Polymestor to justice, and here 844 strikes a purely moral, almost admonitory, note by virtue of its gnomic quality.

Agamemnon, after the chorus's comment, is unable to grant her request. His first three lines acknowledge the justice of her arguments, to which he gives a sort of reprise by enumerating them before giving the reason why he cannot help her; this at once increases the pathos of Hecuba's situation and characterizes Agamemnon further, greatly to his disadvantage: with all this pressing on Hecuba's side, expediency still prevents him. By a supreme irony the very argument which Hecuba hesitated to introduce, but which we know was likely to succeed from 120 ff., is the main reason why he must remain neutral: Cassandra must not be seen to influence him. It is interesting that both he and Odysseus, in their different ways, should be so constrained by public opinion: cf. ll. 255–7, 313.

His decision prompts Hecuba's general reflection at 864 ff. The play she makes on slavery and freedom here is very remarkable (see also Ch. 1 n. 11, Ch. 2 pp. 49–50, and Ch. 6 pp. 181–2). It is by introducing this vocabulary that Euripides marks the turning-point in the interaction of the two characters: from now on Hecuba takes

[93] So in S. *Tr.* 1221, Hdt. 3. 73, etc. We should note especially Aeschines 3. 157: κλαίοντας, ἱκετεύοντας ... ἐπισκήπτοντας μηδενὶ τρόπωι τὸν ἀλιτήριον στεφανοῦν ('weeping, supplicating ... adjuring [you] by no means to crown the accursed creature').

[94] Cf. *Od.* 16. 23; this form of address was then taken up by the lyric poets (cf. Anacreon fr. 124, Pind. *Isth.* 2. 17) See perhaps also S. *El.* 1354, though Jebb does not think so, but *not* 1224 (*pace* LSJ). Compare also *Il.* 16. 39, etc.

charge, and becomes even rather contemptuous of Agamemnon, whom as recently as 841 she addressed as ὦ δέσποτ' ('master'): cf. 868; θάρσει ('courage') 875; τί δ'; ('well?') 886; 888–9 τόνδε μὲν μέθες λόγον, πέμψον δέ μοι ... ('Leave this argument, and please send ...'). The brevity of the (ominous) mythological examples is due less to the fact of their being connected with stichomythia (so Friis Johansen (1959), 51) than to this impatience: Agamemnon has doubted her abilities once too often, and must be set right by this means. Agamemnon on the other hand is diminished: his repeated questions as to how she will do it (876 ff.) are of course designed to set off the plan for the audience's benefit; but by making him suggest a number of alternatives instead of simply asking her what she proposes Euripides makes him seem hesitant and weak by comparison with the old queen. He ends the scene with a *gnomē* echoing Hecuba's at 844–5, but with an interesting difference: Hecuba says that it is proper for a good man τοὺς κακοὺς δρᾶν πανταχοῦ κακῶς ἀεί ('always and everywhere to do down the bad'); Agamemnon that it is a common principle τὸν μὲν κακὸν κακόν τι πάσχειν, τὸν δὲ χρηστὸν εὐτυχεῖν ('that the bad man should suffer in some way, and that the good man should prosper'). Hecuba speaks actively, which is fitting, since she is trying to urge Agamemnon to act; Agamemnon passively, also appropriately, since he is avoiding action and leaving everything to Hecuba. The difference in attitude expressed in these two very similar general statements, epitomizes the difference in their response to the situation and gives us more information about their characters.

Polymestor enters, weeping, as he says, for Hecuba's catastrophe. He too indulges in a general reflection on the mutability of Fortune, but again with an interesting individualizing feature: he says at 956, οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν πιστόν ('there is nothing faithful, secure'), an ironic turn of phrase both in the sense that he has turned out to be anything but faithful, and in the sense that his situation is far from πιστόν ('secure'). He uses the word again at 1017: τἄνδον δὲ πιστὰ κἀρσένων ἐρημία; ('Is it secure inside and empty of men?'), and Hecuba hurls it back in his face again at 1234–5. There is another ironic echo: Hecuba has said that we believe in the gods νόμωι ('by the law', 800); according to Polymestor here the gods arrange matters so that we believe in them ἀγνωσίαι ('in ignorance', 959). Ignorance will be the keynote of Polymestor's responses in what follows; a harsh νόμος ('law') will be that of Hecuba's. There will be little difficulty for

Hecuba in overcoming him, despite her initial hesitation;[95] and his lying responses to her questions about Polydorus (989, 993, 995) and his response when Hecuba warns him against greed (996–7) confirm his wickedness for the audience (see further in Ch. 6 pp. 186–7). The deception is conducted by the usual question-and-answer method; and Hecuba at 1019 sends him into the tent. This final ironic comment is a characteristic feature of the Euripidean deception scene (cf. e.g. *HF* 726 ff., *El.* 1139).

Hearing Polymestor's cries, Agamemnon re-enters. How are we to take 1116 ff. and 1122 ff.? Are they genuine horror at Hecuba's action, or Agamemnon dissembling in accordance with his instructions at 874 ff.? I am inclined to think that they represent a mixture of the two, and that they are made credible by Agamemnon's earlier disbelief that Hecuba would be able to achieve anything: Agamemnon cannot really suppose that anyone else is responsible, but he can be incredulous that Hecuba should have managed and dared to do such a thing, and this I think is the meaning of 1122–3 (note τοὔργον εἴργασαι τόδ' ... τόλμαν ... τήνδ' ἔτλης, 'you have done this deed ... you have dared to do this bold act'). But he is less than sympathetic to Polymestor, as is marked by the rough colloquialism of 1127.[96] It will be important that he tells Polymestor to give an account of himself ἐκβαλὼν δὲ καρδίας τὸ βάρβαρον ('casting out savagery from your heart'). He also makes it clear that what follows will be a trial (κρίνω δικαίως, 'I shall judge justly'), and both participants respond to that. It is noteworthy that both speeches take up exactly fifty lines.[97]

Polymestor begins with a forensic expression, λέγοιμ' ἄν ('I will speak'),[98] and relates his version of the story from the beginning: but

[95] I think that Hecuba is genuinely hesitating here, because Polymestor's betrayal is so complete that she can hardly bear to look at him (see also in Ch. 6 pp. 178, 186–7). This is very different from Nussbaum's view (1986: 410 ff.) but I prefer it, as this, and the questions which follow, in which she almost seems to be giving Polymestor chance after chance to prove himself true, and indeed 1254 ff., all point the same way: Hecuba cannot quite forget the guest-friendship to which she constantly refers. If this is right, then it is another respect in which Hecuba is more subtly characterized than, for example, Medea. Stahl (1977: 159–76) sensitively remarks of Polymestor's opening words: (pp. 161–2) 'His lament over the fact that in life there is nothing reliable seems to mark him out of all as the trustworthy man *par excellence*. How could anyone see through him or even unmask him?'

[96] See Stevens (1976), 37, 41.

[97] Cf. *El.* 1011, 1060 ff.; *Hel.* 894 ff. and M. Lloyd (1992), 5–6.

[98] Cf. Fraenkel on *Ag.* 838, Barrett on *Hipp.* 336, Collard on *Supp.* 465, and M. Lloyd (1992), 25 and n. 27.

his arguments, though not in themselves unreasonable (the Greeks in *Troades* have similar fears about Astyanax), have been undercut by Polydorus' ghost, and they are not entirely self-consistent: at 1140–4 he seems in fact (despite 1138–9) to be acting mostly from selfish motives, because he does not want another war, which does not argue a very friendly attitude to Agamemnon (note 1143–4 and the deprecatory ἄναξ, 'lord') but at 1175 he claims to have acted σπεύδων χάριν ... τὴν σήν ('promoting your interest'), and even the addition of πολέμιόν γε σὸν κτανών ('by killing your enemy') does not remove the inconcinnity.[99] His narrative intervenes, and employs all the art of the messenger speech which it replaces to give a vivid account of his sufferings and thus arouse the sympathy of his audience. After this account he stresses that it was all gone through in some sense on Agamemnon's behalf, and comes to a close, stressing that he is being brief: a rhetorician's formula.[100] His closing remarks on women as a breed are not irrelevant: they make an important point in the light of the stress on the co-operation of the women in his downfall in 884–7, and of his own narrative, which emphasizes that they act as a team. Line 1181 is reminiscent of *Il.* 16. 34–5, but goes further: the women are a breed apart, and act with the unity which their separateness gives them. Polymestor's view of them as a cohesive group is part of his attempt to create a parallel fellowship between himself and Agamemnon by contrast with the women (hence his stress on their being 'always the same' at 1178–80 and 1182), which in turn is an extension of his attempt to create a bond of obligation between them. On this reading the chorus's defensive comment also becomes more integral.

Hecuba begins her reply with some general remarks on the dangers of rhetoric when used for the wrong purposes. This is a topos also employed by Medea when responding to Jason at *Med.* 580 ff., though without the *Weltverbesserung* found here.[101] Many have found this speech unsatisfactory: Grube thinks that '... her pleading has not the same vigour and power as her earlier appeal; most of it is rhetorical rather than eloquent, and there is a touch of artificiality

[99] I take the force of the γέ to be determinative.

[100] Cf. Aesch. *Ag.* 916, 1296, and Fraenkel ad locc.; S. *Aj.* 1040; *Hel.* 1017, *Med.* 1351, *Or.* 850, *IA* 420; but see M. Lloyd (1992), 97 on the gnomic conclusion. As Kennedy notes (1963: 121), brevity is characteristically seen as a virtue of rhetorical narrative by later rhetoricians.

[101] Cf. also S. *Ant.* 1045–7; *Hipp.* 487, 505, *Tro.* 966–8; and see Buxton (1982), 48 ff. On this speech see now M. Lloyd (1992), 97–9.

about the exordium . . .'.[102] Conacher sees 1187 ff. as '. . . an ironic comment on her own case, and on the fate which lies in store for her'.[103] But the exordium should be seen in the context of the other references to rhetoric in the play. We have seen the Greek host swayed by Odysseus' rhetoric to sacrifice Polyxena; we have seen Hecuba's rhetoric fail to save her (334–5):

> ὦ θύγατερ, οὐμοὶ μὲν λόγοι πρὸς αἰθέρα
> φροῦδοι μάτην ῥιφθέντες ἀμφὶ σοῦ φόνου.
>
> My daughter, my words concerning your death
> Are gone, tossed in vain to the air.

We have heard Hecuba speak of the omnipotence of rhetoric only to see it all but fail (814 ff.). Polymestor has just been using it to gain influence over Agamemnon. These words conflict with nothing Hecuba has said on the subject; she believes that rhetoric is powerful and believes that it should only be used in a good cause, and believes that her cause is good and Polymestor's is bad; she is entirely self-consistent. In what way are the words 'cynical' (Conacher 1967: 164)? Hecuba gives us no reason to think that she does not subscribe to what she says here. In what way are they 'an ironic comment on her own case'? They can only be read as such if we view the revenge as unequivocally unjust—and that is still *sub judice*: Hecuba's speech has only just begun. They are extremely appropriate to Polymestor's previous speech, however. It is perfectly true that there are more formal rhetorician's usages in this speech than in either of the supplication speeches or the reflective speech after Polyxena's death, but then one has from the beginning of the scene been led to expect that that will be the case. Formality is the keynote here, and no conclusions about Hecuba's character should be drawn from her rhetorical tone.[104] Far from proving herself a slave to Peitho she here modifies the Gorgianic position she adopted at 814 ff.[105] to include a broader and more critical view which contains an extended moral. Her words are thoughtful, in contrast to Polymestor's last remarks, and make an effective beginning to her rhesis. They are marked off from the main body of the speech by 1195–6. At *El.* 1060, too, προοίμιον ('beginning') refers to a more generalized opening (in that case an

[102] (1941), 227.
[103] (1967), 164.
[104] See also Heath (1987*b*), 130 ff.
[105] Cf. Gorgias, *Helen* 8, and Pl. *Phlb.* 58ab.

unflattering comparison between Helen and Clytemnestra) which precedes the actual argumentation. Here the contrast is more explicit (τὸ μὲν σὸν . . . φροιμίοις . . . πρὸς τόνδε δὲ . . . λόγοις ἀμείψομαι, 'my address to you is in my opening words . . . I shall answer this man with arguments'). Lines 1195–6 constitute the sort of headline which is more usually found at the beginning of a speech.[106]

Hecuba's cool method contrasts with Polymestor's more fluid and discursive speech; she plays upon argument, he on emotion. This is a reversal from the earlier scenes of the play, where the Greeks had arguments from expediency and pragmatism and power on their side, and Hecuba had only pathos on hers; but I would want to stress that it is not a straightforward reversal, because Hecuba's arguments here are based not on expediency or strength, both of which are as much against her as they were in the previous scene, but on justice—harsh, but in many ways appropriate to Polymestor's crime. Polymestor, on the other hand, if he is a pitiable figure, is so only because of what he has just suffered, not because of any additional virtue or any lack of guilt, as Hecuba was.

At 1199 she begins her attack on Polymestor's account of his motive in killing Polydorus by declaring that he must be lying, because:

> οὔποτ' ἂν φίλον
> τὸ βάρβαρον γένοιτ' ἂν Ἕλλησιν γένος
> οὐδ' ἂν δύναιτο.
>
> The barbarian race would not and could
> Not ever become the Greeks' friends.

Agamemnon seems to confirm her words here by implication at 1129 and then again at 1247. Barbarian characteristics, at least, find no favour among Greeks. This argument is often pointed to as another example of Hecuba's moral deterioration; it is compared to Odysseus' words at 328 ff., another passage drawing a contrast between barbarian and Greek. But Hecuba's words here, unlike Odysseus', have to a great extent been proved true by the action of the play; Hecuba, indeed, tries to argue that thanks to Cassandra, Agamemnon is some sort of a φίλος ('friend, dear one'); but she does so with very limited success, and has no real cause to regard the Greeks as her friends. The contrast lies in Hecuba's attitude to Greeks rather

[106] Cf. e.g. *Supp.* 426–8 and Collard ad loc.

than in her conduct to barbarians: at this stage in the play bitter experience has taught her the sad truth that Greeks and barbarians cannot be friends. There is no question of her 'siding' with the Greeks against the barbarians; she has not alienated herself from the chorus.

She throws his phrase *σπεύδων χάριν* ('promoting interest', 1175) back in his face as a finishing touch to the scornful questions at 1201–3. Cleverly, she says least on the point where her argument is weakest and which might gain some sympathy for Polymestor: his concern for his kingdom (1204–5, cf. 1142–4). She is not very successful in combating this, but then other passages in the play have undercut the argument in any case: Polydorus' ghost has stated quite clearly at line 25 that he was killed for gold, and his reference at lines 8–9 to the fertility of Thrace might suggest that the Greeks have not done so much damage as Polymestor would like us to think.[107] In any case, as we have seen, it is an awkward argument for him to use in conjunction with trying to argue that he did the deed for Agamemnon's sake. This awkwardness is reflected in Hecuba's transition at 1206, where she flatly contradicts him and asserts that it was gold which killed Polydorus: 1206 ff. and the proof which follows are really far more suited to countering the proposition that he was killed to please Agamemnon than the idea that Polymestor wanted to protect his kingdom. This sleight of hand, besides reflecting Polymestor's own priorities in his speech, also shows that Hecuba, like Polymestor, realizes that the relationship between the two kings is Polymestor's best hope of victory: it is this idea therefore that she must attack.

The long question, from 1208 to 1213, completes the argument that Polymestor must have killed Polydorus for gain and is unanswerable. Line 1216 emphasizes the iniquity of the crime with the same economy and power that Hecuba's speeches have shown from the beginning. Lines 1217 ff. are also unanswerable and are particularly effective because they at once specify an instance in which Polymestor's actions were inconsistent with his protestations and express tacit sympathy with the Greeks (1220–1), thus identifying them with her as sufferers from Polymestor's perfidy; and also stress his obsession with the gold, thus establishing greed more firmly in our

[107] Hecuba in *Tro.* really does no more than deny the truth of all Helen's statements, but we feel no need or inclination to doubt that Hecuba's version of events is nearer the truth than Helen's.

minds as a motive (again, 1223 we know to be true from Polymestor's own words at 995).

At 1224 the tone of the speech becomes more emotional as Hecuba stresses the futility of the crime, and we remember the guest-friendship which Polymestor has so cruelly trampled underfoot. The practical purpose of this section seems to be to alienate us still further from Polymestor on the grounds of his ingratitude and infidelity, but it is interesting that Euripides chose this sad and regretful tone for Hecuba to achieve this: there were many other possibilities. Lines 1254–8 should perhaps be linked with this passage (and the beginning of the deception scene; see n. 95 above and Ch. 6 pp. 186–7): Hecuba is not merely exulting in a Medea-like fashion over the fallen (though she certainly does so at the moment of victory at 1044 ff.): her questions emphasize again the justice of her actions. Polymestor has lost everything: Agamemnon's respect (1230: this is the means by which the transition is made at 1225, eased by the general reflection at 1226–7), the gold (cf. 1228–9), and his children and his sight. Hecuba refrains from pointing a moral here, but we may think back to 1192 ff. and draw our own conclusions: Polymestor has been too clever for his own good.

Finally she turns to Agamemnon, still maintaining her brusque tone from their previous encounter (1233), and uses the pressure of public opinion to clinch her argument. Odysseus had used it against her, now she uses it to sway Agamemnon, emphasizing at the same time the wickedness of the crime in question in the same terms she used earlier. She roundly says that Agamemnon will be *κακός* ('bad') if he favours Polymestor. Then she pulls herself up short. The speech which began so rhetorically must end with a reminder of her situation: even her rhetoric is subject to her slavery.

The chorus leader approves, and Agamemnon delivers his verdict (*κρίνειν*, 'judge', 1240) in her favour, and shows himself convinced by all her arguments, which he again echoes (1241–2 and 1249–50, public censure; 1243–5, not for Agamemnon's sake but for the gold; 1250–1, it was your own fault). Again, he is rather diminished by this parroting, though it is more excusable in a judge's summing-up. The play comes to its dismal close in rapid-fire stichomythia.

Thus the uses and abuses of argument and words are used in counterpoint with other issues to create an extremely rich and complicated texture throughout this play. Above all the character of Hecuba, her arguments, and reflections are made to dominate our

thoughts, and it is through rhetoric that many of the complicated and ambivalent currents which surround her are created. The important issue of what we are to think of Hecuba's revenge on Polymestor has arisen; some of the readings of Hecuba's speeches suggested here conflict with the prevailing view that in the second half of the play her moral status falls victim to the monstrous savagery of that act. We must discuss this more fully in Chapter 6, but before we do so we should consider in more detail the death of Polyxena.

EXCURSUS: ARISTOTLE ON CHARACTER

As has recently been emphasized by Jones, Halliwell, and Heath,[108] Aristotle insists, not that characterization is unimportant in tragedy, but that it is of *secondary* importance. This emerges clearly from *Poetics* 1449^{b}36–1450^{a}7:

> ἐπεὶ δὲ πράξεώς ἐστι μίμησις, πράττεται δὲ ὑπὸ τινῶν πραττόντων, οὓς ἀνάγκη ποιούς τινας εἶναι κατά τε τὸ ἦθος καὶ τὴν διάνοιαν, διὰ γὰρ τούτων καὶ τὰς πράξεις (1450^{a}1) εἶναί φαμεν ποιάς τινας, πέφυκεν αἴτια δύο τῶν πράξεων εἶναι, διάνοιαν καὶ ἦθος, καὶ κατὰ ταύτας καὶ τυγχάνουσι καὶ ἀποτυγχάνουσι πάντες. ἔστιν δὲ τῆς μὲν πράξεως ὁ μῦθος ἡ μίμησις· λέγω γὰρ μῦθον τοῦτον, τὴν σύνθεσιν τῶν πραγμάτων, τὰ δὲ ἤθη, καθ' ὃ ποιούς τινας εἶναί φαμεν τοὺς πράττοντας, διάνοιαν δέ, ἐν ὅσοις λέγοντες ἀποδεικνύασίν τι ἢ καὶ ἀποφαίνονται γνώμην.
>
> Since a tragedy is a *mimēsis* of an action, and is enacted by agents, these agents must have some traits both in their characters (*ēthos*) and in their thought (*dianoia*), for it is by means of these that we say someone's actions (1450^{a}1) are of such and such a kind, it naturally follows that there are two causes of actions, thought (*dianoia*) and character (*ēthos*), and it is with regard to their actions that all either succeed or fail. We have, therefore, the plot, the *mimēsis* of the action—for by 'plot' I mean the ordering of the events—and the characters, the criterion by which we say that the agents are of such and such a kind, and thought (*dianoia*), in those passages where they speak and demonstrate something or reveal their opinion.

This statement of priorities must be kept in mind: it implies as plainly as anything is made plain in the *Poetics* that while plot is indispensable, character

[108] J. Jones (1962), 29–46; Halliwell (1986), 138–67, (1987), esp. 139–43; Heath (1987*b*), 115–23. See also Whitlock Blundell (1989), 16–25. In general, I think the role of character rather more important than Jones does, and would broadly agree with Halliwell's and Heath's analyses. Specific areas of disagreement will become clear.

is scarcely less so if the plot is to be intelligible. This is not inconsistent with the sections which follow, stressing further the importance of plot and exploring and evaluating its possibilities, nor with the famous statement at 1450^{a}38–9:

> ἀρχὴ μὲν οὖν καὶ οἷον ψυχὴ ὁ μῦθος τῆς τραγωιδίας, δεύτερον δὲ τὰ ἤθη ... [the famous metaphor from painting]. ἔστιν τε μίμησις πράξεως καὶ διὰ ταύτην μάλιστα τῶν πραττόντων ...
>
> And so the first principle and as it were the soul of tragedy is plot, and the characters are second.... The *mimēsis* is of the action and for that reason above all of the agents ...

though here Aristotle, in accordance with the passage's place in his argument, concentrates on the other side of what he sees as a reciprocal relationship: character can explain action, but action alone defines character, and character is made conformable to plot, not vice versa. Thus Aristotle can recognize that tragedy without character is possible (though it should be noted that he does not recommend such tragedy, and the context suggests that he mentions the possibility as a paradox) but tragedy without plot is not.

This insistence on the primacy of plot, the dramatic equivalent of action, should be seen in the context of Aristotle's emphasis elsewhere on the vital nature of action in human life.[109] Halliwell points out that 'this contrast in scale and care of analysis is a symptom of Aristotle's priorities'.[110] It seems at least possible, though, that the difference in length in the treatments of action and character is due not to Aristotle's lack of interest in the latter, but to his desire to emphasize an aspect of tragedy which he thought both essential and neglected. This is borne out by his earlier stress on *mimēsis*, an essential feature of which is described as follows: μιμοῦνται οἱ μιμούμενοι πράττοντας ('the objects of this *mimēsis* are portrayed *as doing things*', 1448^{a}1). The account which follows of the various forms of *mimēsis*, including the mode of presentation in which all the participants in the *mimēsis* actually perform the action, and his etymological digression connecting δρᾶμα ('drama') with δρῶ ('I do'), would dovetail with this: and clearly action *is* the distinctive feature of the tragic medium. We should also note 1450^{a}35 ff., where he says that young dramatists, and early dramatists (*οἱ πρῶτοι ποιηταί*) are much better at characterization than at plotting; this conceivably might suggest that Aristotle's priorities were not universal. However this may be, Aristotle does go some way to explain why he prefers to concentrate on action at the expense of character at 1454^{b}17–18 and 1456^{a}34–5, where he simply refers us to other works; that he thought it worth stressing elsewhere as well might also support the idea that there is a corrective aspect to his choice of emphasis.

[109] Cf. e.g. *EN* 1178^{b}20 ff. and Halliwell (1986), 140, with his n. 4, 157.
[110] (1986), 158.

Perhaps the effect of this choice most to be regretted is that it caused him to omit an explanation of the relationship between *ēthos* and *dianoia* hinted at in the passage above. The difference between them is expressed at 1449^{b}36 ff., where it is said that *ēthos* characterizes an action in moral terms, *dianoia* in an intellectual framework. Later, at 1450^{a}9–12, Aristotle says:

> ταῦτα [the parts of tragedy] δ' ἐστὶ μῦθος καὶ ἤθη καὶ λέξις καὶ διάνοια καὶ ὄψις καὶ μελοποιία. οἷς μὲν γὰρ μιμοῦνται δύο μέρη ἐστίν, ὡς δὲ μιμοῦνται, ἕν, ἃ δὲ μιμοῦνται, τρία, καὶ παρὰ ταῦτα οὐδέν.
>
> These are plot and characters and style and thought (*dianoia*) and spectacle and song. Two of these parts are the media, one the mode and three the objects of the *mimēsis*, and this covers everything.

The context makes it reasonably clear that the media of *mimēsis* are λέξις ('style') and μελοποιία ('song'), the mode ὄψις ('spectacle'), and the objects μῦθος ('plot'), ἤθη ('characters'), and διάνοια ('thought, *dianoia*').[111] Both at 1449^{b}36 ff. and at 1456^{a}33 ff. *dianoia* is defined so as to make it more or less identical with rhetoric and rhetorical argument. In the former passage it is said, like *ēthos*, to be one of the ways by which actions can be described or comprehended; in the latter the description is fuller, including not only rational argument and statement of intention, but also persuasion and the creation of pity and fear (though clearly Aristotle thinks that the major burden of creating these emotions must fall upon the action). Aristotle does not examine how *dianoia* relates to *ēthos*, and he fails to explore at all the idea that *ēthos* might affect our reaction to a display of *dianoia*—unless we suppose that his criterion of consistency includes the notion that the *ēthos* of a speech will have an effect on the sort of *dianoia* which is necessary and/or desirable in the context.

In some respects his stress on the rhetorical nature of *dianoia* might lead us to regard it as more of a medium than an object of *mimēsis* (*dianoia* is often what a character uses to express his *ēthos*); but Aristotle is quite clear on this point: because of its role in explaining and defining actions and choices and presenting them to the audience, *dianoia* is accorded its higher status. The implications of the separation of moral and intellectual action-description and of the deliberative quality implied in the concept of *dianoia* in the later passage seem, Halliwell says, to rule out the *unconscious* intimation of character beloved of modern psychologizing characterization.[112] This is supported by Aristotle's treatment of λέξις ('style'), and is important. However, I do not think that Aristotle meant this to rule out the possibility of rhetoric being adapted to a particular character and his situation even down to the diction, so that, within limits, character is intimated by speech.

[111] Cf. 1449^{b}31 ff.
[112] Halliwell (1986), 155.

This is implied by 1450^{a}6–7 quoted above, by 1456^{b}5–7, and by the principle that character should be appropriate.[113] I do not think that his opposition of 'ethical' and 'rhetorical' composition militates against this: elsewhere he acknowledges that *dianoia* is by nature rhetorical—it is a question of degree rather than qualitative difference.

[113] See 1454^{a}22; cf. Halliwell (1986), 159.

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Wild Justice

A STUDY OF EURIPIDES' *HECUBA*

Judith Mossman

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