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Euripides and Aeschylus: The Case of the *Hekabe*

HAMM: I love the old questions. (*With fervour*) Ah the old questions, the old answers, there's nothing like them!

—Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*

No one needs to be told that in certain of his plays Euripides alludes to Aeschylus, and sometimes all but explicitly cites him. Except for scattered comments in studies of individual plays and three general surveys,[1] however, attention to this matter has arisen in connection with those plays that treat the same myths as Aeschylus did, such as *Electra*, *Orestes*, and *Phoenissae*. In fact, reminiscences of Aeschylus occur, in some plays sporadically but often in what seems systematic deployment, throughout Euripides' plays, and not just in those texts

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1. Otto Krausse, "De Euripide Aeschyli Instauratore" (diss. Jena, 1905); Rachel Aélion, *Euripide héritier d'Eschyle*, 2 vols. (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1983); and Richard Garner, *From Homer to Tragedy: The Art of Allusion in Greek Poetry* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990). The first contains valuable information and conclusions but is incomplete at least as regards the *Hekabe*. The second contains much fuller discussions, but its approach is, in my view, excessively positivistic. Garner pays considerable attention to Euripides' allusions to Aeschylus but gives only cursory treatment of the *Hekabe*.

where we would expect to find them. The work most frequently recalled is the *Oresteia*, and the number and nature of the allusions suggest that the trilogy, and especially the parodos of the *Agamemnon* with its narrative of the events at Aulis, was a deeply but creatively problematical text for Euripides.[2]

For example, consider the *Hekabe*. With its dramatization of events set in Thrace in the days after the sack of Troy, this play would seem at first to have little to do with the *Oresteia*. But here again a young girl is sacrificed for military interests, a mother treacherously and fiercely takes revenge on a man for the death of her child, and winds—or their absence—keep the Greeks from sailing. Evidently, through an unrelated myth complex and a series of substitutions of characters, Euripides "replayed" the *Oresteia*, as though he needed to work through something in the trilogy that profoundly disturbed him. Much the same could be said of a significant number of his other plays as well, and the *Hekabe* can serve as an example of an important aspect of Euripidean drama.

The *Oresteia* is, to be sure, not the only surviving text behind the *Hekabe*. Katherine King has shown how important echoes of the *Iliad* are in this play, and how they structure an implicit criticism of the male-centered warrior ethic that, through Homer's influence, had become a principal "myth" (in Barthes' sense) of Greek culture.[3] Allusions to Aeschylus can also be viewed in this way, and in this sense this paper may be taken as complementary to her article. (I shall suggest other perspectives on allusions as well.) In the blinding of Polymestor and its aftermath the influence of the Cyclops episode in *Odyssey* 9 has been detected, and the blinded Polymestor's entrance has been compared to the entrance not only of the Pythia in Aeschylus's *Eumenides* but also of Sophocles' blinded Oedipus.[4] It has also been suggested that a narrative in Herodotus lies behind the Polymestor episode; Euripides would then presumably be using the antithesis between Greek and barbarian prominent in the Herodotean passage.[5]

2. Cf. Krausse (above, n. 1) 172–73, who concludes that the *Agamemnon* exerted the most influence on Euripides. On p. 171 he lists the *Hekabe* as among those plays that "non ita insignes sunt Aeschyli vestigiis impressis"; he misses a number of allusions in that play. On the *Oresteia*'s importance to Euripides, see also Aélion's brief comment (above, n. 1) I, 161. Obviously the *Oresteia* was not the only influential Aeschylean text for Euripides (cf. the case of the *Phoinissae* and the *Seven Against Thebes*, interestingly studied by Suzanne Saïd, "Euripide ou l'attente déçue: L'exemple des *Phéniciennes*," *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore de Pisa* 15 [1985] 501–27), but I would claim that it was especially important.

3. Katherine Callen King, "The Politics of Imitation: Euripides' *Hekabe* and the Homeric Achilles," *Arethusa* 18 (1985) 47–66. Cf. the earlier and less nuanced treatment by Tito Tosi, "Il sacrifizio di Polissena," *Atene e Roma* 17 (1914) 19–38, esp. 32–33.

4. Cyclops: Charles Segal, "Violence and the Other: Greek, Female, and Barbarian in Euripides' *Hecuba*," *TAPA* 119 (1990) 18. Pythia: Krausse (above, n. 1) 228–29. Oedipus: Wolf H. Friedrich, *Euripides und Diphilos*, Zetemata 5 (Munich: Beck, 1953) 31; Ann N. Michelini, *Euripides and the Tragic Tradition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987) 171; and Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 417.

5. Hdt. 7.33, 9.116–20. See R. Meridor, "The Function of Polymestor's Crime in the 'Hecuba' of Euripides," *Eranos* 81 (1983) 13–20, esp. 18–20.

The *Hekabe* is a "palimpsestic" text, as Zeitlin has characterized the *Orestes*.[6] Still, although this wider context of allusions is important, this play bears a particularly strong relation to Aeschylus that deserves to be singled out for study.

What can such a study tell us? The question is especially pertinent because critics have often been too easily content to put Euripides' allusions down to sophisticated game playing and leave the matter there.[7] Nor is the issue simply to discern where Euripides is and is not original, at least as that question is usually posed.[8] Allusions to Aeschylus are part of the fabric of Euripides' plays, and recognizing them and their significance in context will obviously help us with individual texts. But whatever insights into the *Hekabe* can be gained in this way, the real interest of pursuing this topic is to raise the general question of why Euripides recurs so often—almost obsessively—to Aeschylus and above all to the *Oresteia* and its myths. These echoes and allusions, taken together, imply a reading of Aeschylus's text that may be a misreading but that suggests the nature of Euripides' relation to his tradition (importantly though not exclusively represented for him by Aeschylus), or more broadly, as I prefer, to his culture in the last quarter of the fifth century B.C.[9]

To discuss allusions is to encounter difficult problems, but these should not be immobilizing. First, our knowledge of Greek tragedy is so fragmentary that we may be led to exaggerate the *Hekabe*'s relation to the *Oresteia*. Because we have only the title and one utterly uninformative fragment of Aeschylus's *Iphigeneia*, we have no way of knowing whether that play, as well as the *Agamemnon*, influenced Euripides' treatment of the sacrifice of Polyxena. And even if we must ignore the *Iphigeneia*, there is still a third term in the relationship, Sophocles' *Polyxena*, in which a ghost (of Achilles) appeared, as does Polydoros's ghost in the *Hekabe*, and which evidently, like the *Hekabe* (1277–81), contained a prophecy of Agamemnon's death in markedly Aeschylean diction.[10] The date of this play is unknown; but if it preceded the *Hekabe* Euripides may have been reacting to it as well as to the *Oresteia*.[11] Whatever the chronology may have been, however, if we had the whole play we might well find that Sophocles was responding in his own way to the *Oresteia*, and that the two plays were more significantly related to the trilogy than to each other, as the example of the two *Elektra*s suggests. At any rate, we shall find positive evidence below of the *Hekabe*'s direct relationship with the *Oresteia*.

A more essential problem is how one recognizes or proves an allusion. In critical discourse, allusions occupy an oddly indefinite place. On the one hand, everyone knows what they are and recognizes their pervasiveness and their importance at least some of the time. On the other hand, no two readers would find the same allusions in any given text, or would agree on what is needed to connect that text with a prior one. One reason for the uncertainty is the variety of effects that might be covered by the term: from the reappearance of a distinctive word or phrase used memorably in an earlier text to the construction of a scene (including visual effects) and beyond that to the manipulation of myths and characters to create parallels or contrasts with the treatment of the same or similar stories in earlier texts. Context will be of some help: when the *Hekabe* recalls the *Oresteia* through these larger effects, we can be fairly confident of finding verbal reminiscences that work with structure and story pattern to play one text off against another in a reader's or audience's mind. But allusions also differ qualitatively. Some are glaring, and any audience that misses them will lose much of a text's richness of associations and suggestiveness, though it is doubtful that its essential meanings ever depend on allusions. Others are scarcely allusions at all, but more like unconscious or partly conscious echoes, with little or no effect on an audience's interpretation. Even these are significant, however. A turn of phrase, a way of conceiving a situation or story, even if neither poet nor original audience may have been aware of their association with a prior text, can tell us something about the poet's approach and how that was shaped by his predecessors, and about the new text's relation to types of discourse prevalent in its society and incorporated in earlier works.

This last point—that texts are particular realizations of kinds of discourse—may help clarify a particular form of the problem of identifying allusions. How can we know that a phrase or a scenic device or a way of shaping action that resembles an element in another text is an allusion to that text and not just a convention of the genre, especially given the highly stylized nature of Greek

6. Froma I. Zeitlin, "The Closet of Masks: Role-Playing and Myth-Making in the *Orestes* of Euripides," *Ramus* 9 (1980) 54.

7. Cf. R. P. Winnington-Ingram, "Euripides: *Poiētēs Sophos*," *Arethusa* 2 (1969) 127–42, esp. 129–30, 136; Godfrey W. Bond, "Euripides' Parody of Aeschylus," *Hermathena* 118 (1974) 1–14, esp. 7, 11–12; N. G. L. Hammond, "Spectacle and Parody in Euripides' *Electra*," *GRBS* 25 (1984) 373–87; and, most pertinent to this paper, George Gellie, "*Hecuba* and Tragedy," *Antichthon* 14 (1980) 30–44. It would be equally a mistake to ignore the Euripidean wit that these critics have so well described; but there is more to the matter than that. For examples of what can be gained from taking as significant connections between Euripidean and other texts, see Richard Caldwell, "Tragedy Romanticized: The *Iphigeneia Taurica*," *CJ* 70 (1974) 23–40; and Zeitlin (above, n. 6) 51–77.

8. This is the emphasis of Aélion (above, n. 1): e.g., I, 18, 116–17, 326–28; II, 85.

9. And there is disagreement on this relation. Two recent books have described Euripides, respectively, as traditionalist and as antitraditional ironist: David Kovacs, *The Heroic Muse: Studies in the Hippolytus and Hecuba of Euripides*, AJP Monographs in Classical Philology 2 (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987); and Michelini (above, n. 4). I tend toward Michelini's position. For her, however, Sophocles represents the tradition for comparison with Euripides, whereas I would emphasize Aeschylus, and think that Aristophanes showed acute judgment in opposing him to Aeschylus in the *Frogs*. Michelini also seems to consider the issues in Euripides' relation to his tradition primarily aesthetic; I consider them profoundly political, or rather, I would not want to separate the "aesthetic" and the "political."

10. Soph. fr. 526P. On this play see William M. Calder III, "A Reconstruction of Sophocles' *Polyxena*," *GRBS* 7 (1966) 31–56.

11. For arguments for the *Polyxena*'s priority, see Calder (above, n. 10) 53–56 and bibliography there. They are not such as to justify his confidence in his conclusion, and the question cannot be resolved.

tragedy? We shall encounter this question at several points in the discussion of the *Hekabe*. It assumes a mutually exclusive opposition between convention and a significant effect in a particular context, in this case allusion. But is that correct? Conventions are a kind of discourse and as such carry meaning. If—to take an example that will concern us below—tragedians structured scenes of offstage murder in a similar way, those scenes carried with them associations with questions that typically surrounded such murders, questions of guilt and the moral ambivalence of revenge, and these issues bore implications for the values of contemporary society. At a very minimum, then, relating similar scenes in different plays will tell us something about conventions not just as formal devices but as part of the language of tragedy. But we can go farther. Conventions have a way of being realized in particularly memorable form in certain texts, and their use later will inevitably evoke those texts. My contention is that, for Euripides and his audience as well as for us, the *Oresteia* was such a text because of its historical significance as a major summing-up of fifth-century Athenian culture, and that some elements in the *Hekabe* might fit the pattern of conventions but *also* recall Aeschylus's text in particular.

In the end, there is no way of proving the existence of an allusion—or of disproving it either.[12] The question is how far one should go, and that is a matter of judgment. But there are some checks along the way. Does a phrase occur only in the two texts in question, or at any rate in the two poets? If so, there is a case for considering the possibility of allusion, especially in the presence of other elements that suggest a connection. And we have to look at the whole case, the cumulative structure of what can be called allusions, which reinforce one another, even if some of them seem questionable to some people.

THE TROJAN WAR

To the two actions of the *Hekabe*, sacrifice and revenge, the Trojan War is background and cause. The brutality of human sacrifice, Polymestor's betrayal of the ties of ξενία, Hekabe's outburst of vengeance, are prolongations of the war's violence in other forms. In the *Agamemnon*, too, the war fits into a sequence between the sacrifice of Iphigeneia and the murder of Agamemnon in retaliation. These events in turn fall within a larger context, from Thyestes' feast to the acquittal of Orestes. Throughout, it is possible to trace a pattern of divine and human motivation, and movement toward a positive end, though these things are complex and, to some readers (myself included), not wholly coherent. In the *Hekabe*, connections between events are attenuated or wholly lacking: there is none whatever between the sacrifice of Polyxena and the murder of Polydoros. Causes are harder to find, beyond the violence within the human psyche. The gods, about whose possible role in events there are only scattered

12. Garner (above, n. 1), 1.

hints, will not serve as an explanation.[13] And at the end of the play, only further murder is in sight.

Around the middle of the *Hekabe* occurs the first of two choral narratives of the Trojan War (629–56). In Aeschylean fashion it traces present suffering—of both Trojan and Greek women—to past actions: Paris's preparations for his voyage to Greece and beyond that his judgment of the three goddesses. This song has a specific parallel in the narrative section of the first stasimon in the *Agamemnon* (427–55), for it too moves from Paris's crime to the grief of those left in Greece for the warriors killed at Troy. The relation between these songs perhaps consists not of allusion but of a similar conception of the same story, although it is quite possible that Euripides had the Aeschylean passage in mind when he wrote his ode. In any case, the similarity only calls attention to differences of detail and context.

There is some evidence that after the Persian Wars the Trojan War was used as a paradigm to shed glamor on contemporary warfare in support of Cimon's policies, and that Aeschylus's anti-Homeric criticisms of the war were unusual and striking.[14] But the first part of the stasimon (*Ag.* 355–426), before the description of the grief and resentment in Greece, celebrates the sack of Troy as just retribution for Paris's act and dwells on the pathos of Menelaos's desertion by Helen as a wrong in need of righting. But doing just that inflicted widespread loss on Greece in general (see especially *Ag.* 427–31). Thus the war was in one way just, but Greece paid a heavy price. Whether or not the contradiction is finally resolved by "the Aeschylean theodicy,"[15] the stasimon could be read in such a way that the emphasis on the war's justice significantly offsets its destructiveness, places it in a broader moral and religious perspective. To this possible reading Euripides seems to respond as dangerous, if only by bringing together the elements of a negative critique of the war in Aeschylus's text, and so by resolving the chorus's ambivalence in favor of protest.

Take away the religious perspective, the lens of theodicy, shift from the Argive to the Trojan point of view, and the result is the *Hekabe*'s second stasimon. The Trojan women are directly involved in the disaster as victims, unlike the more detached Argive elders in Aeschylus:

> ἐμοὶ χρῆν συμφορᾶν,
> ἐμοὶ χρῆν πημονὰν γενέσθαι,
> Ἰδαίαν ὅτε πρῶτον ὕλαν
> Ἀλέξανδρος εἰλατίναν
> ἐταμεθ', ἅλιον ἐπ' οἶδμα ναυστολήσων
> Ἑλένας ἐπὶ λέκτρα.
>
> (*Hek.* 629–35)

13. See Charles Segal, "The Problem of the Gods in Euripides' Hecuba," *MD* 22 (1989) 9–21.

14. D. M. Leahy, "The Representation of the Trojan War in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*," *AJP* 95 (1974) 1–23, esp. 8–10.

15. Leahy (above, n. 14) 17–19.

For me calamity,
for me suffering had to happen,
when first Alexandros
cut the fir tree's trunk on Ida
to voyage over the sea swell
to Helen's bed.

No explanation for their misery is possible for these enslaved women; this is just what "had to be [χρῆν]." Trace the situation though they might to Paris's departure for Greece and, in the antistrophe, to *its* cause in his judgment of the three goddesses, all that links cause and effect is the inexplicable "sufferings and necessities greater than sufferings" (638–39; note the responsion with 629–30). And perhaps that is why Aeschylus does not mention the Judgment of Paris: it would have injected an element of divine caprice into a situation that his chorus tries to see as morally coherent. The way an individual's folly brings disaster to the whole community is regarded by the *Agamemnon* chorus as an awe-inspiring demonstration of the fitness of things (*Ag.* 392–95; cf. 699–716), as it was also in earlier tradition.[16] For Euripides' chorus, it only makes events more monstrously unfair (*Hek.* 640).

It is thus all the more remarkable that these women see beyond their own grief to imagine the mourning of a Spartan girl or mother for her dead at Troy (*Hek.* 650–56), in lines that may well allude to *Ag.* 429–55. Significantly, it is women with whom these Trojan captives feel a solidarity of grief, rather than the indefinite subjects of the verbs in *Ag.* 433–55, presumably relatives of the dead, for one way the *Hekabe* depicts women is as victims of male violence. It is also a mark of the chorus's imaginative sympathy that they picture the mourning of a *Spartan* woman (Λάκαινα), for Helen their destroyer is ἡ Λάκαινα, "the Spartan" (*Hek.* 441).

Men in the *Hekabe* are not conspicuous for such sympathy (except, perhaps, Talthybios). Odysseus earlier has also commented on the suffering of Greek women in very similar terms but for different reasons:

εἰ δ' οἰκτρὰ πάσχειν φῄς, τάδ' ἀντάκουέ μου·
εἰσὶν παρ' ἡμῖν οὐδὲν ἧσσον ἄθλιαι
γραῖαι γυναῖκες ἠδὲ πρεσβῦται σέθεν,
νύμφαι τ' ἀρίστων νυμφίων τητώμεναι,
ὧν ἥδε κεύθει σώματ' Ἰδαία κόνις. (*Hek.* 321–25)

If you call your sufferings pitiful, hear this reply of mine:
there are among us old women and aged men
no less wretched than you
and wives who have lost the best husbands,
whose bodies the dust of Ida conceals here.

16. Cf. Hes. *WD* 240–41.

The last line recalls *Ag.* 452–55:

οἱ δ' αὐτοῦ περὶ τεῖχος
θήκας Ἰλιάδος γᾶς
εὔμορφοι κατέχουσιν, ἐχ-
θρὰ δ' ἔχοντας ἔκρυψεν.

There around the wall
they [the Argive soldiers] in their beauty
dwell in graves of the Ilian land,
and a hostile earth has concealed them, its possessors.

Odysseus is justifying the sacrifice of Polyxena and takes for granted the righteousness of this and all wars.[17] A Greek, he echoes the Greek chorus of the *Agamemnon*. There is no sympathetic crossing of national boundaries in his attitude, but rather their assertion. If Greek women suffer from the war, so should Trojan women; and therefore Polyxena should be sacrificed. So what in Aeschylus is criticism of the war and for the captive Trojans is reason for a generalized compassion is, on Odysseus's lips, justification of an act that arises from this war and will make possible future Greek military ventures (*Hek.* 306–16). Euripides thus uses an idea that occurs in Aeschylus, perhaps uses the Aeschylean passage as a model, in two opposite ways to heighten the criticism of the war by showing the nature of the victims and the victors.

The sensibility of the defeated women finds utterance again in the third stasimon (*Hek.* 905–51). The intimacy of the marriage chamber broken by the shout of the attacking Greeks,[18] the women's sight of their husbands dead as they themselves are dragged into slavery, not only imply the familiar idea of war as sexual violation but also provide an instance of the destruction of *philia* (here the bond of marriage) that in various forms is a main theme of the *Hekabe*. Then the chorus tell how, looking back from the Greek ships upon the ruins of their city, exhausted with grief, they cursed Helen and Paris; the connection between sorrow and anger is made, ominously, immediately before the entrance of Polymestor and Hekabe's revenge on him:

τὰν τοῖν Διοσκούροιν Ἑλέναν κάσιν Ἰδαιόν τε βούταν
αἰνόπαριν κατάρᾳ
διδοῦσ', ἐπεί με γαίας

17. Cf. especially *Hek.* 310 (of Achilles): θανὼν ὑπὲρ γῆς Ἑλλάδος κάλλιστ' ἀνήρ ("the man who died most gloriously for the land of Greece"). How was the Trojan War an effort in behalf of Greece? Euripides will later raise this question again, more emphatically, when Iphigeneia justifies *her own* sacrifice in the *IA*.

18. This cry—ὦ παῖδες Ἑλλάνων ("O sons of the Hellenes")—may echo the Greek sailors' cry at *Pers.* 402, as Garner (above, n. 1: 129) suggests, commenting that "Euripides seems to be imitating rather than alluding." But if we attend to Euripides' implicit commentary on the Trojan War, this might be a very pointed allusion, which contrasts a war truly waged for the defense of Greece against barbarians with one that Odysseus only spuriously claims has had this aim (*Hek.* 309–10; see n. 17 above).

ἐκ πατρίας ἀπώλεσεν
ἐξῴκισέν τ' οἴκων γάμος οὐ γάμος ἀλλ'
ἀλάστορός τις οἰζύς·
ἂν μήτε πέλαγος ἅλιον ἀπαγάγοι πάλιν
μήτε πατρῷον ἵκοιτ' ἐς οἶκον.

(*Hek.* 943–52)

[I looked back] cursing Helen, sister of the Dioskouroi,
and the Idaean shepherd, Paris the dreadful,
since there ruined me from my father's land
and exiled me from my house
a marriage no marriage but
some Avenger's woe.
May the salt sea never bring her home,
may she never come to her father's house.

Against the picture of legitimate marriage earlier in the ode is now set the union of Helen and Paris as a perversion of marriage—an insistent theme in the second stasimon of the *Agamemnon* (especially *Ag.* 699–749), which the language here recalls. Euripides' αἰνόπαριν ("dreadful Paris," 945) echoes Πάριν τὸν αἰνόλεκτρον at *Ag.* 712: the reproach against Paris "dreadful in his bedding" that the chorus of the *Agamemnon* imagines Troy uttering (*Ag.* 709–12) is actually voiced by Euripides' Trojan chorus as they are taken from their ruined city.[19] Lines 948–49 recall both *Ag.* 744–49 (especially γάμου πικρὰς τελευτάς, "the bitter consummations of marriage")[20] and 1460–61 (ἦ τις ἦν τότ' ἐν δόμοις / Ἔρις ἐρίδματος ἀνδρὸς οἰζύς, "surely there was then in the house the mighty spirit of strife, the woe of a man," also within a condemnation of Helen).[21] Deliberate allusion, or just a similar way of conceiving the same subject, perhaps under the influence of Aeschylus? Either way, we can appreciate what a difference context and perspective make to the significance of the same theme, blame of Helen. On the one hand, the Argive elders engage in a satisfied if awed contemplation of others' suffering as illustrating a coherence that they want to find in events; on the other, the Trojan women directly suffer

19. Cf. *Helen* 1120, Πάρις αἰνόγαμος, "Paris dreadfully married." Both the Aeschylean and the Euripidean passages may ultimately derive from Δύσπαρι, "Evil-Paris," in *Il.* 3.39, perhaps through the intermediary of Alcman *PMG* 77, quoted in a scholium on that line: Δύσπαρις Αἰνόπαρις κακὸν Ἑλλάδι βωτιανείρᾳ, "Evil-Paris, dreadful Paris, an evil to Hellas nurse of men." See Antonio Garzya, *Euripide: Ecuba* (Rome, 1955) 107, on *Hek.* 945.

20. Cf. Richard Seaford, "The Tragic Wedding," *JHS* 107 (1987) 126.

21. These echoes are noted by Krausse (above, n. 1) 84. Cf. Fraenkel's remark on *Ag.* 1641: "The end of the ephymnium (not only the last word) seems to have been in Euripides' mind when he made the Trojan captives sing of Helen's marriage (*Hec.* 946ff.)." *Aeschylus: Agamemnon*, corrected edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), III, 693. Cf. Garner (above, n. 1) 129: "In both plays the reflection on Helen comes as a strong, threatening woman is engaged in revenge." But I would think that the Trojan War is more at issue in this case; Euripides has more overt ways of drawing the parallel between Hekabe and Clytemnestra (see below).

the horrors of war and are permitted no reflections on how fittingly the world works.

Besides the chorus, Hekabe makes comments on Troy's destruction that may go back to Aeschylus. When Polyxena is taken from her and she collapses in misery, Hekabe curses Helen, echoing Aeschylus's pun (*Ag.* 689–90) on the first syllable of her name and the root ἑλ-, "destroy":[22]

ὡς τὴν Λάκαιναν σύγγονον Διοσκόροιν
Ἑλένην ἴδοιμι· διὰ καλῶν γὰρ ὀμμάτων
αἴσχιστα Τροίαν εἷλε τὴν εὐδαίμονα.

(*Hek.* 441–43)

So may I see the Spartan sister of the Dioskouroi,
Helen. For through her beautiful eyes
she destroyed [*hel-*] most shamefully wealthy Troy.

Again, the triumphant Agamemnon proudly mentions smoke as the sign (σῆμα) of Troy's destruction:

καπνῷ δ' ἁλοῦσα νῦν ἔτ' εὔσημος πόλις·
ἄτης θύελλαι ζῶσι, δυσθνήσκουσα δὲ
σποδὸς προπέμπει πίονας πλούτου πνοάς.

(*Ag.* 818–20)

By smoke the city's destruction is now still conspicuous.
The winds of ruin are alive, and reluctantly dying
the ash sends forth the rich savor of wealth.

Hekabe twice refers to smoke in this way, while making appeals—*to him:* καπνὸν δὲ πόλεως τόνδ' ὑπερθρῴσκονθ' ὁρῶ (*Hek.* 823, "I see the smoke of the city leaping up here"),[23] καπνὸς δ' ἐσήμην' ἄστυ πολεμίοις ὕπο (*Hek.* 1215, "the smoke signaled the city beneath the enemies' sway").[24] Perhaps in the references

22. On the pun here, see Garzya (above, n. 19) 70. Euripides seems to have been impressed with this pun, and used it elsewhere as well in criticisms of the war and its costs: *Tro.* 1213–15, 890–93, and (with pungent irony when Iphigeneia calls herself ἑλέπτολις, "city destroyer") *IA* 1476 (cf. 1511). *Hek.* 441–43 have been suspected, and Diggle brackets them in his text. *Tro.* 772–73 are not so close that they clearly served as a model for interpolation here (see Diggle's apparatus). For a defense of the lines, see Quintino Cataudella, "I.'Ecuba' di Euripide," *Dioniso* 7 (1939) 121–22; and on their dramatic appropriateness, see Wolf Steidle, "Zur Hekabe des Euripides," *WS* 79 (1966) 133–42. Both are briefly anticipated by Johanna Schmitt, *Freiwilliger Opfertod bei Euripides* (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1921) 50: "Wenn noch ein so elementarer Hassausbruch möglich ist, so ist trotz allen Unglücks die Lebenskraft noch nicht gebrochen. Auch dieser Zug wie der Hinweis auf Polydoros leitet zu der furchtbaren Rache im zweiten Teil der Tragödie über." On the erotic appeal of (Helen's) eyes, see *Ag.* 742, in a passage that, as we have seen, was perhaps in Euripides' mind (and contrast *Ag.* 418–19).

23. For ὑπερθρῴσκον(τα), see ὑπερθορών at *Ag.* 827 (both mean "leaping above").

24. The parallel between this line and *Ag.* 818–20 is noted briefly by Krausse (above, n. 1) 84. Perhaps *Hek.* 823 and 1215 also ironically echo *Od.* 1.57–59, where Odysseus ἱέμενος καὶ καπνὸν ἀποθρῴσκοντα νοῆσαι / ἧς γαίης, θανέειν ἱμείρεται ("wishes to die, longing to see the smoke just leaping up in his native land"), lines that Aeschylus too just might have had in mind.

to smoke, and surely in the play on Helen's name, Euripides qualifies the tone of the Aeschylean lines by making the same language mark the feelings of the defeated. In these passages and wherever we see him alluding to Aeschylus's depiction of the war or apparently writing under its influence, Euripides raises by implication the question of what kind of achievement the Trojan War is supposed to represent.

In Aristophanes' *Frogs*, Aeschylus claims to have made the Athenians better by infusing them with a martial spirit in such plays as the *Seven Against Thebes* and the *Persians* (1019–27). In this, he says, he was the successor of Homer, from whom his mind molded itself (1034–42). These claims are exaggerated, but at least half true. The *Iliad* presents a complex view of the Trojan War, but does depict it as an occasion for heroic achievement. In later ages, the poem could be read as encouraging militaristic values; the *Frogs* is one piece of evidence that it was so read. Its effect must have been profound, in view of Homeric epic's prestige as a fundamental document of Greek culture and particularly its importance in schools, where future Athenian citizen-soldiers were shaped. Already the *Odyssey*, perhaps in reaction to the *Iliad*, diminished the Trojan War's heroic glamor by emphasizing the Achaeans' hardships and losses, including Agamemnon's inglorious death. In dramatizing this story, which had only been a recurrent motif in the *Odyssey*, Aeschylus put even heavier stress on the war's cost. At the same time, he made the war seem just and necessary, or more likely—what is not at all the same thing—made his chorus seek to depict it that way. Euripides takes a radical further step. In the *Hekabe* the Trojan War seems meaningless, causeless except for the most selfish human motives, and cut off from all religious or moral structure. Except insofar as it relies on direct allusions to Homer (discussed by King), Euripides' critique of the Trojan War is filtered through, and sharpens, Aeschylus's own reevaluation of it. Euripides takes, we might say, a critical stance toward Aeschylus's stance toward Homeric epic. He shows himself skeptical of whatever in the Aeschylean text might be advanced to justify this or any other war.

THE SACRIFICE OF POLYXENA

It is, accordingly, to one of Aeschylus's major devices for putting the war in a diminished perspective that Euripides responds critically in his turn. The sacrifice of Polyxena is a replaying, at the end of the Trojan War, of the sacrifice of Iphigeneia at the war's beginning ten years before—but a replaying with critical differences. No longer is the act a crime within the family, a father sacrificing his daughter, but the slaughter of one of the spoils of war. In both plays, the sacrifice is a focal point of the tension between *oikos* and the community, but this tension is worked out very differently in each text. If Agamemnon at Aulis chooses public over family interests, it is equally true that in the first two plays of the *Oresteia* problems within the *oikos* widen to affect the whole community. In the

Hekabe, community interests (those of the Greeks as they perceive them) simply override the claims of the *oikos*, and *oikos* ties are destroyed or debased. For example, Agamemnon still has a private reason to resist the sacrifice, as he did at Aulis; but his personal connection with the victim has shrunk from a blood tie to one through his concubine Cassandra (*Hek.* 120–22)—a more distant and (despite Hekabe's claim at lines 834–35) an irregular relationship. As for the community, a personal decision by Agamemnon is replaced by the anachronistically democratic debate in the assembly, complete with representatives of Athens, the Theseidae.[25] Society in the *Hekabe* is fragmented into opposing private and public interests, with no hope that the individual might be integrated into society without conflict—a hope implicit in the Furies' prayers for Athens at the end of the *Eumenides*.

The choice for the Greek army in the *Hekabe* is between abetting their king's lust and honoring their greatest warrior (*Hek.* 122–40). If Agamemnon's motive for resisting the sacrifice is debased, the driving force on the other side—traditional heroic values, the hero's right to exact honor from the community—is also pushed to an extreme of inhuman selfishness. It is, after all, not now an enraged goddess who demands the sacrifice but the shade of the greatest Greek hero, whose obsession with honor extends, and is even intensified, beyond the grave. In his scene with Hekabe, Odysseus rationalizes these values by arguing that it is in a society's interest to reward its best warriors (*Hek.* 299–331). His ruthlessness and his refusal to save Polyxena out of personal obligation to Hekabe cast his position in a suspicious light, but he has a point. The *Iliad* shows what happens to a society that fails to reward its heroes adequately. Katherine King has shown how the situation in the *Hekabe* repeats that of *Iliad* 1, and how the arguments for the sacrifice recast Achilles' complaints about his treatment there and in Book 9. Thus in Euripides, "Achilles becomes a vehicle for carrying to its logical and ultimate barbarity the Homeric system of using human prizes as a measure of *timē*."[26] But in Aeschylus also heroic values took precedence over even the most serious consequences. When Agamemnon decided to sacrifice his daughter, his reluctance to abandon the expedition outweighed love for his daughter and fear of incurring pollution (*Ag.* 206–13). "How shall I become a deserter, losing the alliance?" he asked.[27] Agamemnon seems to accept epic

25. They are marked as mediating between the heroic world of myth and contemporary Athenian reality not only by the connotations of διττῶν μύθων / ῥήτορες, "the orators of two speeches" (see Michelini [above, n. 4] 143) but also by the reworking of the Homeric ὄζος Ἄρηος "offshoot of Ares," into ὄζω Ἀθηνῶν, "twin offshoots of Athens" (line 123).

26. King (above, n. 3) 51–57; quotation from p. 53.

27. Note especially ξυμμαχίας ἁμαρτών. Fraenkel (above, n. 21: II, 123) opts for a rare meaning of the participle so that the phrase means "when I have failed in my duty as a ξύμμαχος [ally]," rather than the more natural "losing the alliance." The only reason to do so is the assumption that both parts of Agamemnon's choice must be morally repugnant from a perspective outside the heroic system of values in which he operates. That is not necessarily the case, and the phrase attracts particular attention when one encounters it after the experience of Euripides' play.

heroism without question as his guiding system of values, but Aeschylus puts no particular emphasis on this fact or on Agamemnon's assumption that family ties and avoidance of pollution can properly be surrendered to those values. By replaying both the situation in the *Iliad* and the Aeschylean sacrifice of Iphigeneia together, Euripides teases out the implications that Aeschylus only hinted at. He explores and makes explicit the full brutality to which an uncritical acceptance of the heroic world-view can lead[28]—a world-view that was still an important element of the ideology of contemporary warfare.

In his version of the Aeschylean scenario, then, Euripides made the issues arising from the sacrifice as public as possible, as though to implicate a whole society in the guilt arising from the deed. That society is Homeric, but also fifth-century Athenian; for it is the Theseidae, those "twin offshoots of Athens," who contend that Cassandra's bed should not be preferred to Achilles' war spear (*Hek.* 122–29). And in this play Euripides shows what can lead a society that prides itself on its civilized values by contrast with barbarians (*Hek.* 327–31, 1247–48)[29]—as contemporary Athens preeminently did—to commit such an act.

28. Unless, of course, we follow the argument of some that Odysseus does make a compelling case for the sacrifice in putting communal over private values. G. M. A. Grube, for example, finds Odysseus's reasoning "eminently sensible," though we cannot like him because of his "coldness" (*The Drama of Euripides* [London: Methuen, 1941] 217–18). See above all A. W. H. Adkins, "Basic Greek Values in Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Hercules Furens*," *CQ* 16 (1966) 193–219. On this reading the inclusion of the Theseidae would be "a patriotic touch": Alfred Cary Schlesinger, "Two Notes on Euripides," *CP* 32 (1937) 67–70. Adkins' arguments are convincingly met by James C. Hogan, "Thucydides 3.52–68 and Euripides' Hecuba," *Phoenix* 26 (1972) 241–57. For me the decisive consideration is that, even if we grant all Odysseus's assumptions, his argument leads to the killing of a helpless and innocent girl; surely such an outcome casts doubt on Odysseus's prior assumptions and values. Lest this be thought a modern prejudice, it should be pointed out—what is too often forgotten in discussions of this point—that human sacrifice was not included in the value system of "the contemporary audience," and no abstract talk about "cooperative virtues" can disguise that fact. Grube's observation (p. 220) that Polyxena frees the Greeks from blood guilt by going to her death willingly, though it may be true in a formal sense, blurs this essential distinction between a human and an animal victim. More recently, Malcolm Heath in a very interesting article has pictured the Greeks as confronted by a genuine moral dilemma: "[The sacrifice] is not, then, what one would choose to do. But once Achilles, who has undeniable claims on the Greeks, demands it, there is no morally straightforward way out of the dilemma; and Achilles' power over the winds leaves no way out at all" (" 'Jure Principem Locum Tenet': Euripides' *Hecuba*," *BICS* 34 [1987] 40–68; quotation p. 66). Note the palliating understatement of the first sentence, which disguises the terrible nature of the act. Achilles' claims on the Greeks are "undeniable" only from within the heroic system of values. Nor can practical necessity be substituted for the moral question: as I shall argue, Achilles does not control the winds here (they are not at issue in the Polyxena episode). On what the Greeks thought about human sacrifice, see Albert Henrichs, "Human Sacrifice in Greek Religion," Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique 27 (Geneva, 1980) 195–235, esp. 232–34; and E. A. M. E. O'Connor-Visser, *Aspects of Human Sacrifice in the Tragedies of Euripides* (Amsterdam: Grüner, 1987) 211–30. In discussing the *Hekabe* (pp. 60–67), the latter author shows that it cannot be assumed that Euripides agreed that Polyxena should be sacrificed, but concludes that Agamemnon, not the army as a whole, is to blame—a dubious distinction, in my view.

29. Notice how these passages play off against one another, in a way that exposes the contradictions within the system of thought that straightforwardly opposes Greek to barbarian—an opposition, of course, fundamental to Greek culture. On Athens' self-definition through a construction of the barbarian character, see Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), esp. pp. 201–23 for the "deconstruction" of this antithesis in tragedy. The dynamics of the Greek/barbarian polarity in the *Hekabe* have been well set forth by Segal (above, n. 4), who shows that much as the Athenian audience might have liked to project the events of the play onto an alien place and people, it would have been deeply implicated in them as well.

The sacrifice itself is described twice, first in anticipation by the chorus (*Hek.* 147–52) and then as past by Talthybios (*Hek.* 518–82). It is never represented directly. That is unsurprising, in view of the Athenian theater's reluctance to display acts of violence, but it means that the scene of sacrifice comes to us filtered through the different perceptions and feelings of the female chorus and the herald, who gives the perspective of the watching male soldiers.

The chorus foresee the sacrifice as follows:

ἢ γάρ σε λιταὶ
διακωλύσουσ' ὀρφανὸν εἶναι
παιδὸς μελέας ἢ δεῖ σ' ἐπιδεῖν
τύμβῳ προπετῆ φοινισσομένην
αἵματι παρθένον ἐκ χρυσοφόρου
δειρῆς νασμῷ μελαναυγεῖ.

(*Hek.* 147–52)

For either your prayers
will prevent you from being bereft
of your unhappy daughter or you must look upon her
fallen forward on the tomb, a virgin
reddened by blood, the dark-gleaming flow
from her gold-adorned throat.

In the last three lines, details are interwoven in a complex word order unusual in Euripides' nonlyric anapaests, so as to give a vivid sense of the terrible contradictions that the sacrifice of a girl entails. The juxtaposition of "blood" and "virgin," three color terms ending successive metra, and the contrast between the dark glint of blood and the gold jewelry at the girl's neck all set this grim ritual off from the decorum of normal life. There is no sacrificer here, no audience, only the female victim, described by an adjective and a participle as the object of her mother's (anticipated) sight. Talthybios, by contrast, will set the whole ritual scene, populated by men, and his account of the death blow (*Hek.* 566–68) will describe Neoptolemos's emotions ("not willing and willing through pity for the girl"), his act in a transitive verb ("he cuts"), his instrument (the iron sword), and the place of the wound with a clinical precision ("the channels of the breath") that depersonalizes the body. "The girl"[30] enters the sentence not as possessor of the throat but as the object of male emotion (οἴκτῳ κόρης). Then the blunt statement of the gush of blood, without visual embellishment or any sense of what this flow of virgin blood might mean: κρουνοὶ δ' ἐχώρουν.

30. Note the typifying term; the proper name Polyxena is used just once in this speech (*Hek.* 523), in significant juxtaposition with Ἀχιλλέως παῖς ("the son of Achilles") and as object of the verb of which he is the subject.

In the *Agamemnon* also the scene of sacrifice is described in anticipation, through Agamemnon's command, within the chorus's narrative of the past:

φράσεν δ' ἀόζοις πατήρ μετ' εὐχὰν
δίκαν χιμαίρας ὕπερθε βωμοῦ
πέπλοισι περιπετῆ παντὶ θυμῷ
προνωπῆ λαβεῖν ἀέρ-
δην στόματός τε καλλιπρῴ-
ρου φυλακᾷ κατασχεῖν
φθόγγον ἀραῖον οἴκοις.

(*Ag.* 231–35)

After the prayer the father commanded his attendants
to lift her with all zeal face downwards above the altar
like a she-goat, fallen as she was about his robes(?),
and to restrain with a gag the speech of her lovely mouth
that would curse the house.

A sign that Euripides had this passage in mind might be the similarity between προπετῆ ("fallen forward," *Hek.* 150) and περιπετῆ and προνωπῆ ("fallen around," "face downward," *Ag.* 233, 234).[31] But the differences between the scenes are striking. Polyxena is to die at a tomb, not an altar: that a hero, not an insulted goddess, receives the sacrifice both comments on the nature of traditional heroism, as we saw, and gives the act that much less justification. And although Euripides' two accounts of Polyxena's sacrifice differ greatly in narrative style, their explicitness with regard to the actual cutting of the throat contrasts strongly with Aeschylus's reticence. He gives Agamemnon's order to lift Iphigeneia above the altar (not even that is described directly, as an event) and a description of the victim, but never the actual death blow. At most, the flow of blood may be symbolically anticipated by Iphigeneia "pouring the dyes of saffron to the ground" (*Ag.* 239—a line to which we shall return).[32] Aeschylus's chorus never recount the actual killing. When they come to that point they break off ("what happened then I neither saw nor tell," *Ag.* 248—a narrative, if not a physical, averting of the eyes). It seems that Euripides wished to emphasize what is only implicit in the Aeschylean text: the full physical brutality of human sacrifice, its violation of the human body, and—in ways we shall see more fully below—the significance of this sacrifice as an expression of the male violence against women that characterizes the Trojan and all wars.

The circumstances surrounding Polyxena's death make it different from

31. The sense of περιπετῆ is disputed; on the uncertainty, see Ann Lebeck, *The Oresteia: A Study in Language and Structure* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971) 82–83. If the verbal root is taken as active, Polyxena will fall forward on Achilles' tomb, as Iphigeneia fell around Agamemnon's robes in supplication. For this interpretation of the Aeschylean passage, see Hugh Lloyd-Jones, "The Robes of Iphigeneia," *CR*, n.s., 2 (1952) 132–34.

32. See Lebeck (above, n. 31) 80–86.

what the chorus anticipate, different too from Iphigeneia's death in Aeschylus, although some points of similarity show that Euripides is refashioning that narrative.[33] For example, Talthybios tells Hekabe that certain "picked young men" (λεκτοὶ ἔκκριτοι νεανίαι), who correspond to the "attendants" (ἄοζοι) of *Ag.* 231, led Polyxena to the top of the tomb "to restrain with their hands the skittish leaping of your calf [μόσχου σῆς]" (*Hek.* 526). It was, of course, common in Greek to refer to unmarried girls as young animals, and in fact Polyxena calls herself Hekabe's calf (μόσχον) at line 206 (if genuine). But in association with the action of attendants the metaphor must recall δίκαν χιμαίρας at *Ag.* 232 (Agamemnon signed to his attendants to lift Iphigeneia "in the manner of a she-goat"). In both passages, mention of an animal draws attention to the terrible incongruity, the violation of religious custom, in the substitution of a human for an animal victim.[34] In Aeschylus this incongruity is deepened by a terrible appropriateness: a χίμαιρα or goat was sacrificed to Artemis Agrotera before battle.[35] In Euripides the effect arises from the ruthless literalization of a metaphor: if a girl can be spoken of as a calf, she can be sacrificed like one. Hekabe has already protested against this blurring of distinctions (*Hek.* 260–61): πότερα τὸ χρή σφ' ἐπήγαγ' ἀνθρωποσφαγεῖν / πρὸς τύμβον, ἔνθα βουθυτεῖν μᾶλλον πρέπει; ("Has necessity led them to human sacrifice / at the tomb, where animal sacrifice is more fitting?"). Polyxena as μόσχος ("calf") also implies male control over the female and the connection between sacrifice and marriage.[36]

There is a slight complication of roles in Euripides' version of the sacrifice. The sacrificer signals (by nodding) to his attendants to seize the victim (544–45),

33. On several of the connections pointed out below, see Schmitt (above, n. 22) 57–58, who describes Euripides as indebted to Aeschylus here but as going beyond him both in contrasting Polyxena's beauty with the horror of the sacrifice and in depicting the triumph of her heroism over her fate and the fear of death. In what follows, it will be obvious how my view of the relation between the narratives and of Euripides' description of the sacrifice differs from hers.

34. This is, of course, a reversal of the process that controls violence by disguising, through animal sacrifice, its true locus within the human community, according to René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977). And in fact the *Hekabe* as a whole could be read from the perspective of his "sacrificial crisis." Polyxena is also referred to as a fawn in Hekabe's account of her dream at *Hek.* 90; but a fawn, not being a domestic animal, would not be expected to be a sacrificial victim, and anyway the line occurs in a suspected passage: see Werner Biehl, "Die Interpolationen in Euripides' Hekabe," *Philologus* 101 (1957) 55–62; and J. M. Bremer, "Euripides *Hecuba* 59–215," *Mnemosyne* 24 (1971) 232–50. Their arguments are not fully met in the defense of the passage by Carlo Brillante, "Sul prologo dell'*Ecuba* di Euripide," *RFIC* 116 (1988) 429–47. For Iphigeneia sacrificed like a calf (μόσχος), see *IT* 359.

35. See Fraenkel (above, n. 21) II, 133. For discussion, see Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Artemis and Preliminary Sacrifice in Combat," in *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays, Jean-Pierre Vernant*, ed. Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991) 244–57, esp. 250–57.

36. Nicole Loraux, *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1987) 35–37, who also discusses the metaphor of the πῶλος ("filly") at *Hek.* 142. Μόσχος ("calf") is used to describe Iphigeneia in exactly the same way at *IA* 1083, where wildness and intactness—attributes of unmarried girls in Greek thought—are stressed. Shortly after, Agamemnon plays on the connection between sacrifice and marriage in his use of μόσχοι ("calves") in an attempt to deceive Clytemnestra(!) with verbal ambiguity (*IA* 1113).

just as in Aeschylus,[37] but here this role is taken not by Agamemnon but by Achilles' son, Neoptolemos, as though to stress that the issue here is not crime within the family but the demands of traditional heroism.[38] His violence seems all too characteristic of Neoptolemos, to judge from the description of Priam's death (*Hek.* 23–24): αὐτός [i.e., Priam] τε βωμῷ πρὸς θεοδμήτῳ πίτνει / σφαγεὶς Ἀχιλλέως παιδὸς ἐκ μιαιφόνου ("He falls at the god-built altar, / slaughtered at the hands of the murderous son of Achilles"). Here σφαγείς ("slaughtered"), with its sacrificial associations, looks ahead to the death of Polyxena (and perhaps characterizes it as an extension of the carnage at Troy). And it is part of the dislocations in the play that the slaughter of Priam takes place on an altar, whereas Polyxena is sacrificed on a tomb. As for Agamemnon, he does play a role, but it is the reverse of his action in Aeschylus. He commands the attendants to free Polyxena; he did not do so much for his own daughter ten years before at Aulis.

But it is in the description and behavior of Iphigeneia and Polyxena that the relations between the two narratives become most complex:

> κρόκου βαφὰς δ' ἐς πέδον χέουσα
> ἔβαλλ' ἕκαστον θυτή-
> ρων ἀπ' ὄμματος βέλει φιλοίκτῳ,
> πρέπουσα θ' ὡς ἐν γραφαῖς, προσεννέπειν
> θέλουσ'. (*Ag.* 239–43)
>
> Letting flow upon the ground her saffron-dyed cloth,
> she struck each of her sacrificers with a piteous bolt from her eye,
> prominent as though in pictures, wishing to speak.

> κἀπεὶ τόδ' εἰσήκουσε δεσποτῶν ἔπος,
> λαβοῦσα πέπλους ἐξ ἄκρας ἐπωμίδος
> ἔρρηξε λαγόνας ἐς μέσας παρ' ὀμφαλὸν
> μαστοὺς τ' ἔδειξε στέρνα θ' ὡς ἀγάλματος
> κάλλιστα, καὶ καθεῖσα πρὸς γαῖαν γόνυ
> ἔλεξε πάντων τλημονέστατον λόγον·
> Ἰδού, τόδ', εἰ μὲν στέρνον, ὦ νεανία,
> παίειν προθυμῇ, παῖσον, εἰ δ' ὑπ' αὐχένα
> χρῄζεις πάρεστι λαιμὸς εὐτρεπὴς ὅδε. (*Hek.* 557–65)
>
> And when she heard this word of her masters,
> seizing her robe she tore it from the top of her shoulder
> to mid-flank beside the navel,

37. A parallel noted without much comment by Aélion (above, n. 1) II, 117–18.

38. In this play Neoptolemos is "always referred to by his patronymic": Charles Segal, "Violence and Dramatic Structure in Euripides' *Hecuba*," in *Violence in Drama*, Themes in Drama 13, ed. James Redmond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 39.

> and displayed her breasts and chest most beautiful,
> as of a statue, and letting fall her knee upon the ground
> she uttered the most unhappy speech of all:
> Look, here, young man, if you desire to strike
> my chest, strike; but if you wish to hit beneath the neck
> here is my throat, ready for you.

Polyxena's breasts and chest are "most beautiful, as though of a statue" (ὡς ἀγάλματος), just as Iphigeneia is said to have been prominent "as though in pictures" (ὡς ἐν γραφαῖς, *Ag.* 242). Surely Euripides is directly alluding to that scene. But in Aeschylus the comparison marks Iphigeneia as feminine victim of male force and thus as passive and silent, able because of her gag only to "strike each of her sacrificers with a piteous bolt from her eye" (*Ag.* 240–41). The same comparison comes in the *Hekabe* when Polyxena does what no Greek virgin would ever have done in public, much less before an entirely male audience: bare herself to the navel and expose her breasts. This gesture can be one of supplication, when married women make it and it emphasizes motherhood—for instance, Hekabe at *Il.* 22.79–89 or Clytemnestra at Aeschylus *Cho.* 896–98. But it can also be intensely erotic, as when Helen bared her breasts to Menelaos in the sack of Troy and he dropped the sword with which he meant to kill her (Eur. *Andr.* 629–31, written not much earlier than the *Hekabe*, Ar. *Lys.* 155–56). And this is the best parallel for what Polyxena does, which to a Greek audience would have been shocking.

Recent critics have agreed that this scene has an intense erotic charge, and that Euripides, far from being merely lurid, is bringing out the implications of virgin sacrifice by playing on common Greek notions of the parallels between marriage and death (the dead girl as "bride of Hades"), marriage and sacrifice, and sacrifice and sexual violation.[39] Thus Polyxena as sacrificial victim occupies an ambivalent status as (in Hekabe's words later) "both bride and virgin, neither bride nor virgin"—in keeping with the liminality that bride and victim have in common.[40] But it would be useful to go farther and speak of the *pornographic* character of this scene, if by "pornography" we can understand the construction of the female body as a depersonalized erotic object by and for the male gaze.

39. For this reading of the scene, see Loraux (above, n. 36) 39–41, 56–60; Segal (above, n.4) 3–11; and Froma Zeitlin, "Euripides' *Hekabe* and the Somatics of Dionysiac Drama," *Ramus*, 20 (1991) 74–75, 78. On the connection between marriage and female death/sacrifice, see Helene P. Foley, *Ritual Irony: Poetry and Sacrifice in Euripides* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985); and Seaford (above, n. 20) *passim*. Zeitlin suggests that the baring of the breasts signifies both eros and Polyxena's untouchability, and also "her intrinsic identification with her mother's body" (cf. *Hek.* 424). That may be, although I would want to emphasize more sharply than she does the contrast between Polyxena's leave-taking from Hekabe, where the breasts are a focus of physical intimacy between mother and daughter, and the later scene, where Polyxena's body, bared before a male audience, is a focus of eros.

40. *Hek.* 612: νύμφην τ' ἄνυμφον παρθένον τ' ἀπάρθενον. Ovid, acute reader of Euripides that he was, and with his unerring eye for such things, calls Polyxena "plus quam femina virgo" (*Met.* 13.451).

This description is all the more appropriate since pornography often takes the form of eroticized violence against the female, as in this scene of sacrifice where Polyxena's helplessness and vulnerability add to the titillation.[41] Talthybios's reporting is not neutral; he adds the epithet κάλλιστα, "most beautiful," to μάστους στέρνα θ', "breasts and chest" (*Hek.* 561). Polyxena is viewed through his eyes not as a person but as a statue, reduced to her (or a statue's) breasts and chest. From this point of view, Polyxena's care to fall dead decorously, "hiding what should be hidden from the eyes of males" (*Hek.* 570) helps to contain the erotic force of the scene,[42] and Hekabe's worry that the soldiers will violate the corpse (*Hek.* 604–8), which has shocked many critics, merely shows that she has appreciated this aspect of the scene as well as her daughter's nobility.[43]

Iphigeneia, like Polyxena, is the object of sight (πρέπουσα, "prominent"), but she also looks reciprocally on her sacrificers "with a pitiable bolt from her eye." There may be an erotic overtone to this look, as there certainly is in the similar description of Helen at *Ag.* 742.[44] A contrast between the two passages is equally possible. In any case, some connection is clear, since Helen is ἄγαλμα πλούτου, "statue / adornment of wealth," as Iphigeneia is δόμων ἄγαλμα,

41. See E. Ann Kaplan, "Is the Gaze Male?" in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983). The parallel between modern cinema, which she discusses, and this scene from ancient tragedy is close: for the camera with the male eye behind it, whose footage is for consumption by males, substitute Talthybios reporting a scene played before a male audience (the army) before an audience in the theater that may have been all or mostly male. Anyone worried that the use of the term "pornography" demeans Euripides should note Kaplan's argument that the boundary between "art" and "pornography" cannot be drawn. In commenting on this scene, Segal, significantly, writes that "Polyxena's naked body . . . is viewed from the perspective of the masculine gaze" (above, n. 4: 4). See also Susanne Kappeler, *The Pornography of Representation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986). For an eloquent treatment of the sacrifices of Polyxena and Iphigeneia from this point of view, see now Terri Marsh, "The (Other) Maiden's Tale," in Amy Richlin, ed., *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) 269–84.

42. Very different is the use of this motif in the earlier *Herakleidae* (560–61), where the sacrifice seems to be played without irony. Makaria's inviolability even in sacrifice is insisted on because she is to be seen as embodying a female heroism parallel to the male's, and so the ideology is affirmed that maintains that the woman's role in war is to be sacrificed, as the man's is to die in battle. Doubtless for these reasons the sacrifice is not described. On this sacrifice, see John Wilkins, "The State and the Individual: Euripides' Plays of Voluntary Self-Sacrifice," in *Euripides, Women, and Sexuality*, ed. Anton Powell (London and New York: Routledge, 1990) 177–94, esp. 185–88.

43. Michelini's view of the scene (above, n. 4: 160–70)—that the idealism of Polyxena's conduct verges into sentimentality, which is then undercut by the coarseness of Hekabe's imagination—has attractions but plays down the erotic implication of Polyxena's self-exposure. I would not agree with Aélion's view that Euripides was presenting in Polyxena an idealized image in reaction to the "réalisme terrible" in Aeschylus's account of Iphigeneia's sacrifice (above, n. 1: II, 116–18; quotation from 118). Idealization, after all, is another name for fetishization of Polyxena's breasts. And I see little realism in Aeschylus's description.

On Hekabe's use of comparisons of herself to works of art in her speech of supplication to Agamemnon (*Hek.* 806–8, 836–40), which should be connected with the simile in the sacrifice scene, see Segal (above, n. 4) 9–10; Zeitlin (above, n. 39) 78.

44. Seaford (above, n. 20) 125.

"statue / adornment of the house" (*Ag.* 741, 208). There are also the beautiful statues of Helen, eyes emptied of eros, that are all Menelaos has after she has left him:

πόθῳ δ' ὑπερποντίας
φάσμα δόξει δόμων ἀνάσσειν·
εὐμόρφων δὲ κολοσσῶν
ἔχθεται χάρις ἀνδρί,
ὀμμάτων δ' ἐν ἀχηνίαις
ἔρρει πᾶσ' Ἀφροδίτα.

(*Ag.* 414–19)

Through longing for the woman beyond the sea
a phantom will seem to rule the house.
And the grace of lovely statues
is hateful to the husband,
and in the eyes' emptiness
all love has vanished.

There is, then, a three-way relationship and a reciprocity between Helen, her statues, and Iphigeneia, Greece, Aulis, and Troy, that involves contrasts between presence and absence, fullness and emptiness, the life of the body and the lifelessness of a statue (Iphigeneia being poised between the two), the absence of eros, its destructive excess, and the pitiable sight and glance. But Euripides changes the significance of the gaze by making Polyxena purely its object, not its subject, to sharpen the suggestion already in Aeschylus of male control over the female expressed in violence to the female's sexuality and life.[45]

For there is an erotic overtone in the Aeschylean scene. Just what its form is, and so the way in which Euripides extends and transforms it, depends on the interpretation of *Ag.* 239, κρόκου βαφὰς δ' ἐς πέδον χέουσα ("letting flow the dyes of saffron upon the ground"). These seem to be the possibilities:

1. Iphigeneia sheds her robe and bares her body. This was long the accepted view, adopted by Fraenkel. Euripides would then have made the gesture much more explicit, describing Polyxena tearing her robe whereas Iphigeneia merely let hers fall, and dwelling on Polyxena's breasts whereas Aeschylus concentrated exclusively on Iphigeneia's eyes. Or if the Aeschylean line does not suggest nudity, Euripides may have been the first to read it that way,[46] and proceeded to explore what it meant for a virgin to expose herself publicly before men in the context of a sacrifice.

45. Not that the gaze is simple in the *Hekabe*; elsewhere in the play it functions in complex ways. See the excellent discussion by Zeitlin (above, n. 39) 64–74.

46. Loraux (above, n. 36) 87 n. 33.

2. According to Lloyd-Jones, Iphigeneia's saffron robe trails to the ground as she is hoisted above the altar.[47] In this case, Euripides turned the mark of Iphigeneia's passivity (the robe) into an object by means of which Polyxena shapes the nature of her own sacrifice through an independent gesture. And Euripides would have capitalized on the hint of sexual violation in the robe trailing on the ground.

3. Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, while agreeing that the literal meaning of the line is as Lloyd-Jones takes it, suggests that it also refers to the shedding of the krokotos by girls at the Brauronia upon completion of their service as Artemis's "bears." A reference to this ritual of initiation would associate the sacrifice of Iphigeneia with the transition from "sexually ambivalent childhood to fully female status," the shedding of negative aspects of virginity (untamed wildness) and acculturation under male control, and the anticipation of the bride's sexual surrender to her husband.[48] On this reading, many of the implications surrounding Polyxena's actual nudity are already latent in the line, and above all Euripides is accentuating the irony of associating a ritual of transition from girlhood to maturity with the ritual slaughter of a virgin, in order to comment on the full meaning of such an act, which Aeschylus might seem to have elided.

4. Alternatively, the reference might be to the removal of the bride's veil, which was part of the wedding ceremony. At that point, bride and groom looked directly into each other's eyes in a frankly erotic gaze.[49] This view has the advantages of connecting the shedding of the garment with Iphigeneia's gaze at her sacrificers and fitting exactly with other ironical references to the wedding, especially προτέλεια ναῶν, "the ships' preliminary rites" (*Ag.* 227).

I find it difficult to decide between the last two interpretations, but it is unnecessary to do so, since rites such as the Brauronia and the wedding ceremony are stages in the same transition from girl to mature woman. With either reading, whether or not Euripides also got the idea of nudity from Aeschylus, he emphasized the erotic overtones he found there, the suggestions, inherent in virgin sacrifice, of initiation into sexuality outside marriage and of male control over the female unchanneled by the wedding ritual but exercised violently. And by doing so he constructed a scene that was frankly pornographic. He made his audience experience its terrible pleasure even while using the scene as a symbol

47. Lloyd-Jones (above, n. 31) 134–35.

48. Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, *Studies in Girls' Transitions: Aspects of the Arkteia and Age Representations in Attic Iconography* (Athens: Kardamitsa, 1988) 127–35. See also her earlier article, "Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, 641–647," *CQ* 65 (1971) 339–42.

49. David Armstrong and Elizabeth A. Ratchford, "Iphigeneia's Veil: Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 228–48," *BICS* 32 (1985) 1–12. The same suggestion was made independently by M. L. Cunningham, "Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 231–247," *BICS* 31 (1984) 9–12.

for something essential in his and their society: its reliance on gender imbalance and the ease with which it turned to violence.

At least, this is one side. The scene has another, contradictory aspect. Polyxena not only accepts her death; in sharp contrast to Iphigeneia, far from needing to be held and gagged she speaks, directs the scene of her sacrifice. Not only does she bring out its significance by tearing open her robe, but she also offers Neoptolemos the choice of stabbing her in the chest, the place where warriors receive the death wound, or cutting her throat, as is conventionally done to female victims.[50] And in this aspect the scene is highly ambivalent. On the one hand, we can say that Euripides redresses the Aeschylean imbalance between male and female, which is not resolved even at the end of the *Oresteia*, by giving the female victim a voice, a point of view, and some initiative. Polyxena is an Iphigeneia who does not need a Clytemnestra to act in her behalf (significantly, she rejects the aid of her mother, who becomes a Clytemnestra figure in the second half of the play). She becomes, we would say, heroic. But heroism is a tricky concept in this play. Vincent Rosivach comments that Polyxena subscribes to the aristocratic code of Homeric heroes and that "by a particular irony, the original cause of Polyxena's death lies in another facet of this same aristocratic code . . . that respect is due the hero even after his death."[51] But why does she subscribe to that code? Hekabe thinks that the answer is her birth and perhaps her upbringing (*Hek.* 592–602). But nobility—adherence to dominant values—means to accept the dominant ideology of both class and gender. The truth is that if Polyxena is not to be a passive Iphigeneia there is only one pattern of heroism available to her. So she both is feminine victim of male power and takes on the male attributes valued by the power structure that demands her death; and *that* is why the watching soldiers are so filled by admiration for her.[52] But of course her identification with male heroism is not total. As Loraux points out, Neoptolemos treats her to the woman's way of death by cutting her throat, for not even the transgressive genre of tragedy can go to the extreme of "overturning the civic order of values."[53] And in any case, as Segal remarks, "Polyxena's 'heroism' . . . is intentionally paradoxical, resting

50. Loraux (above, n. 36) 56–60.

51. Vincent J. Rosivach, "The First Stasimon of the *Hecuba* 444ff.," *AJP* 96 (1975) 359–60; quotation from p. 359. This can also be seen in Polyxena's echo of Odysseus's πότερα μαχούμεθ' ἢ φιλοψυχήσομεν; ("Shall we fight or love life?" 315) in 347–48: εἰ δὲ μὴ βουλήσομαι, / κακὴ φανοῦμαι καὶ φιλόψυχος γυνή ("If I am not willing, I shall appear a cowardly and life-loving woman"), and also in ψυχὴν ἀρίστη ("best in courage," 580; cf. 134, τὸν ἄριστον Δαναῶν πάντων, "the best of all the Greeks," of Achilles).

52. Instead of vying with each other to violate the corpse as Hekabe imagines (*Hek.* 608), the soldiers urge each other to prepare a funeral for Polyxena befitting a male hero; for the fetching of logs for a pyre (*Hek.* 574–75), cf. *Il.* 23.110–26, 24.778–87. In throwing leaves on the body they treat her like the victor in games, if the scholiast on 573 is correct: φυλλοβολεῖται δὲ ἡ Πολυξένη, ὥσπερ ἐν ἀγῶνι νικήσασα ("Polyxena is pelted with leaves, as though a winner in a contest"). But there is a limit to her identification with a male hero; in the event Hekabe will bury her with Polydoros.

53. Loraux (above, n. 36) 60.

as it ultimately does on female submission to male violence."[54] So the two aspects of Polyxena as victim, feminine and masculinized object of violence, the one an extension of Aeschylus's Iphigeneia and the other sharply contrasting with it, contradictory though they are, converge in affirming the Greek hierarchy of genders. But the scene also shows to what lengths a society murderously dominated by heroic values will go to maintain that hierarchy.

HEKABE'S REVENGE

We know from the prologue that a slave will find Polydoros's corpse and take it to Hekabe, who will bury it. But what we are not at all prepared for is Hekabe's revenge on Polymestor or the form it takes, both of which seem to have been Euripides' invention.[55] In only some seventy lines (657–725), we see Hekabe develop from helpless victim, bending over the shrouded corpse and taking it for Polyxena's (she has been compared here to Aigisthos at the end of Sophocles' *Elektra*), through the cruel shock of discovery, to passionate avenger.[56] In her plot for revenge and its execution, however novel, the audience that knows the *Oresteia* will again feel a comforting familiarity—for a time.

The deception and blinding of Polymestor is a citation, verbal and visual, of the scene between Agamemnon and Clytemnestra and his death off the scene in the *Agamemnon*. Here, as there, a king enters in state (Polymestor has not only his children but also armed attendants), and is met by a woman who seems weak but actually controls the scene through that apparent weakness, who uses verbal ambiguity to manage his entrance into the scene building, her sphere of influence, on her terms (Polymestor goes in with his children but without his attendants), and there takes her revenge after lulling him with a false show of welcome.[57]

54. Charles Segal, "Golden Armor and Servile Robes: Heroism and Metamorphosis in *Hecuba* of Euripides," *AJP* 111 (1990) 316.

55. See R. G. Tetstall, "An Instance of 'Surprise' in the Hecuba," *Mnemosyne* 7 (1954) 340–41.

56. The coherence of the play's action, and of Hekabe's character, has been discussed by nearly all writers on the play as a major problem. For discussion and selected bibliography, see Heath (above, n. 28) 62–65. Perhaps the best "common-sense" defense of the play's artistry is given by Grube (above, n. 28: 82–84, 221–22) and Antonio Garzya, "Intorno all' 'Ecuba' di Euripide," *GIF* 7 (1954) 211, whose views converge: Polymestor's crime is far worse than the sacrifice of Polyxena, which at least was carried out as a duty to the dead (Grube) and had the character of a religious rite (Garzya); therefore, Hekabe, who could not rebel against the latter deed, is free to do so against the former, and sorrow and vengeance are two naturally complementary sides of her character. Cf. Garzya's remarks in the introduction to his edition of the play (above, n. 19: 25–27). Heath (p. 64) seems right, however, to point out the "historical contingency" of such critical preoccupations, but I cannot follow him in regarding the Polyxena episode as subordinate to the revenge on Polymestor. Reading the play in relation to the *Oresteia* allows us to see that Euripides has conflated two actions—sacrifice and revenge—for reasons that will be suggested later in this paper. Though that may not satisfy readers obsessed with problems of "unity," at least we should recognize the powerful comment on the tradition that this play makes. For a recent and unusually subtle exploration of the play's thematic unity, see Segal (above, n. 4).

57. On these parallels, see especially Aélion (above, n. 1) II, 65–68, 301–303.

Polymestor's cries from within (*Hek.* 1035–37) echo those of Agamemnon (*Ag.* 1343–45).[58] Both passages are preceded by a short astrophic choral lyric (*Hek.* 1024–34, *Ag.* 1331–42), and are interspersed with and followed by trimeter comments and reaction by coryphaeus or choreutae (*Hek.* 1042–43 compresses the debate of *Ag.* 1346–71 over whether the chorus should go in and intervene in the action). These are then followed by the entrance of avenger and victim.

These similarities are well enough known, but more might be made of them than simply to ascribe them to the convention of revenge tragedy set by Aeschylus,[59] or to find in them merely "a dramatic smirk at the matching of the scenes."[60] If we follow them out, in this new plotting of the old story Hekabe remains the equivalent of Clytemnestra as she was in the Polyxena episode. Polydoros is the counterpart of Iphigeneia, and Polymestor of Agamemnon. But Polydoros's death cannot be made to appear a sacrifice for the good of the community; Polymestor does not have even the excuse (whatever it is worth) that Agamemnon did, or Odysseus in this play, though significantly he tries to argue that he does (*Hek.* 1136–44). Is Hekabe therefore completely in the right? Whether or not she is justified is much debated,[61] but I think that it is posed too narrowly. Hekabe is an ambivalent figure, terrible in both suffering and action. Some critics have felt, correctly, that in her attack on Polymestor she is avenging Polyxena as well as Polydoros, substituting one persecutor whom she can fight for another (the Greeks) whom she cannot, and so that there is a significant connection between her powerlessness and her explosive revenge. Judging her individually is less important than recognizing that through her Euripides is

58. See R. Meridor, "Eur. *Hec.* 1035–38," *AJP* 95 (1975) 5–6, anticipated by Krausse (above, n. 1) 84–85.

59. This is the tendency of Aélion's discussion (above, n. 57). Richard Seaford has posed the question most pointedly, though in a slightly different context (in an argument against dating plays because of similarities with other plays). Speaking of the similar offstage cries in *Agamemnon*, Sophocles' *Electra*, and Euripides' *Hekabe* and *Cyclops*, he says, "It seems . . . that the dramatist, when treating a situation identical or similar to one in a previous play either by himself or another, is not always concerned to devise structure or diction that is entirely original, but will draw, consciously or unconsciously, and even after a lapse of years, on a stock of metrical phrases that is not the private property of one individual" ("The Date of Euripides' Cyclops," *JHS* 102 [1982] 169). I agree with the point about dating, but would not extend this argument to skepticism about allusions (it is not clear whether Seaford would). For reasons, see the discussion at the beginning of this paper of the false dichotomy between "conventional" and "significant." In this case, given Agamemnon's passive connivance in the revenge and the prophecy of his murder at the end of the play, I find it impossible to doubt that there is a very marked allusion to the *Agamemnon*.

60. Gellie (above, n. 7) 36. For an example of what can be accomplished by taking the resemblances seriously, see Theodore A. Tarkow, "Tragedy and Transformation: Parent and Child in Euripides' *Hecuba*," *Maia* 36 (1984) 132–35.

61. For arguments that the revenge is justified, see Adkins (above, n. 28) 200–206; and R. Meridor, "Hecuba's Revenge: Some Observations on Euripides' *Hecuba*," *AJP* 99 (1978) 28–35. Both make the same kind of argument, from traditional values and contemporary law. But as with Polyxena the question is whether the form of the act outweighs the content, here especially the death of innocent children; and I think that as usual Euripides' complexities are beyond simple formulation.

raising questions about revenge and its representation in the theater, about gender, and about the order of things in his whole culture.[62]

Agamemnon's role in this part of the play is as significant as Hekabe's. He, who sacrificed his own daughter ten years before, secretly connives at the playing-out prospectively and by proxy of his own murder. Cassandra ensures that the two actions will be linked by something more than formal resemblance. In her name Hekabe successfully pleads with Agamemnon when more principled arguments have failed (*Hek.* 824–35), and Cassandra will provide an added reason for Clytemnestra to kill Agamemnon and will die with him (*Hek.* 1275–77).[63] In not seeing that many of the issues apply to him, Agamemnon is morally obtuse, of course, but his individual failing is not what matters most. The story enacted in the *Hekabe* gives an external perspective on his own death. Agamemnon may think that he is uninvolved, judging other people's troubles (τἀλλότρια κρίνειν κακά, *Hek.* 1240), watching an episode of murderous treachery and grisly vengeance among barbarians from a detached Hellenic point of view (*Hek.* 1247–48), and the audience may think so too. But similarities in the patterns of action annihilate the distance. In the barbarian mirror the Greek audience see one of their most important myths in its full brutality.[64]

Hekabe's revenge, like Clytemnestra's, pits a woman against a man. But whereas Clytemnestra combines male and female attributes and transgresses socially determined gender boundaries, Hekabe deliberately conforms to the male stereotype of women, uses it as her strength. In one of the most pointed ironies of the play, Agamemnon, soon to fall victim to a death blow from his wife, expresses his contempt for women's strength even while Hekabe reminds him what makes women formidable to men:

Αγ. καὶ πῶς γυναιξὶν ἀρσένων ἔσται κράτος;
Εκ. δεινὸν τὸ πλῆθος σὺν δόλῳ τε δύσμαχον.
Αγ. δεινόν· τὸ μέντοι θῆλυ μέμφομαι σθένος.
Εκ. τί δ'; οὐ γυναῖκες εἶλον Αἰγύπτου τέκνα
καὶ Λῆμνον ἄρδην ἀρσένων ἐξῴκισαν; (*Hek.* 883–87)

Ag.: And how will women conquer males?
Hek.: Terrible is the might of numbers, and with deceit invincible.

62. Hekabe has often been compared to Medea. Zeitlin (above, n. 39), who makes a welcome protest against moralizing interpretations of the play (p. 57), describes the distinctive pattern of women's suffering and equally strong revenge that these heroines share as part of tragedy's typical "Dionysiac scenario" (pp. 82–85).

63. Cf. Tarkow (above, n. 60) 134.

64. *Iphigeneia in Tauris*, the Euripidean sequel to the *Oresteia* as the *Hekabe* is its Euripidean prelude, also makes use of a barbarian setting for clarification, but the journey to the land of the Taurians and back to Greece seems an attempt to rescue the myth from its own "barbarism." There Thoas draws the line between barbarian and Hellene, but his perspective is the reverse of the Greek one; commenting on Orestes' matricide, he says, Ἄπολλον, οὐδ' ἐν βαρβάροις ἔτλη τις ἄν ("Apollo! No barbarian would have dared that," *IT* 1174).

Ag.: Terrible. But I don't think much of woman's strength.
Hek.: Well, didn't women kill Aigyptos's sons
and utterly empty Lemnos of men?

Sheer numbers and deceit, both cowardly, give women an unfair advantage over men unless men preempt them, according to the gender ideology that Hekabe parrots here. Of the myths that project male anxiety about women on this basis, she mentions two in which groups of women took treacherous revenge on men. Both have Aeschylean associations. The killing of Aigyptos's sons would evoke Aeschylus's Danaid trilogy, and the Lemnian women are prominent among the examples of female criminality cited in the notorious misogynist stasimon of the *Choephoroi* (631–38; τὸ δεινόν, "horror," there—cf. 586—is echoed by δεινόν, "horrible," in *Hek.* 884 and 885). In order to enlist Agamemnon's aid in a deed that anticipates his doom, Hekabe skillfully uses a hatred and fear of women that for Aeschylus's chorus is confirmed by his death.

This exploitation of stereotypes continues as Hekabe convinces Polymestor to enter the hut, leaving his bodyguard outside, since the hut contains only women (*Hek.* 981, 1017–18). Inside, the women disarm him and gain possession of his children by acting like stereotypical women, admiring his clothing, taking his spears to examine them curiously, and passing the children in apparent play from hand to hand (lines 1150–59). But after the deed it is the blinded Polymestor's turn to quote the ode in the *Choephoroi:*

ὡς δὲ μὴ μακροὺς τείνω λόγους,
εἴ τις γυναῖκας τῶν πρὶν εἴρηκεν κακῶς
ἢ νῦν λέγων ἔστιν τις ἢ μέλλει λέγειν
ἅπαντα ταῦτα συντεμὼν ἐγὼ φράσω·
γένος γὰρ οὔτε πόντος οὔτε γῆ τρέφει
τοιόνδ'· ὁ δ' αἰεὶ ξυντυχὼν ἐπίσταται. (*Hek.* 1177–82)

Not to prolong my speech,
if anyone in the past has spoken ill of women
or does so now or will in the future,
cutting short all these speeches I shall declare:
neither sea nor land nurtures such a race.
Whoever encounters them knows this.

The last two lines clearly echo *Cho.* 585–92 (and line 1178 seems to gesture to Aeschylus: εἴ τις τῶν πρὶν εἴρηκεν κακῶς, "if anyone in the past has spoken ill of women").[65] There is no need for a lengthy condemnation of Hekabe or of women; one need only cite tradition, and especially Aeschylus. Yet although

65. This echo has been recognized recently by Garner (above, n. 1) 129–30, 138; and Segal (above, n. 4) 11. To my knowledge, of earlier scholars only Michael Tierney in his edition (*Euripides Hecuba* [Dublin: Richview Press, 1946] 127–28) noted it, but without comment. Compare Eur. fr. 1059.

Hekabe is certainly a Clytemnestra figure—indeed, has implicitly accepted the identification in her own words on women's strength—this sweeping blame of women is spoken by a man who has shed blood terribly, as did Aeschylus's Agamemnon. The allusion thus may comment on the Aeschylean ode, which, coming just before the killing of Clytemnestra, might seem to ignore too easily that she had a reason for what she did. A categorical condemnation of women, Euripides seems to suggest, is too simple to resolve the issues not only in his own play but also in the *Oresteia*.

The complexity of these issues is suggested by another group of similarities between texts. Agamemnon says to Polymestor (*Hek.* 1250–51), ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ τὰ μὴ καλὰ / πράσσειν ἐτόλμας, τλῆθι καὶ τὰ μὴ φίλα ("But since you dared what was not good / endure what is not to your liking")—words that resemble what Orestes says to Clytemnestra just before killing her (*Cho.* 930):[66] ἔκανες ὃν οὐ χρῆν, καὶ τὸ μὴ χρεὼν πάθε ("You killed one you should not have killed. Now suffer what is not right"). That in Euripides the lines are spoken by the judge and not, as in Aeschylus, by the avenger perhaps emphasizes the just aspect of Hekabe's revenge. But Agamemnon is not immune to the judgment that he passes on Polymestor and Orestes passes on Clytemnestra. Both *Hek.* 1250–51 and *Cho.* 930 recall *Ag.* 1525–30, Clytemnestra's condemnation of her husband for the sacrifice of Iphigeneia:

> ἀλλ' ἐμὸν ἐκ τοῦδ' ἔρνος ἀερθὲν
> τὴν πολυκλαύτην
> Ἰφιγένειαν ἀνάξια δράσας
> ἄξια πάσχων μηδὲν ἐν Ἅιδου
> μεγαλαυχείτω, ξιφοδηλήτῳ
> θανάτῳ τείσας ἅπερ ἦρξεν.
>
> The branch sprung from him and me,
> the much-lamented Iphigeneia
> he treated unfittingly. He has suffered fittingly.
> Let him not boast in Hades, since he has paid
> with death by the sword for what he started.

Can we trust a judge oblivious to the full application of his principle? Can we trust the order of a world in which, as the reminders of the *Oresteia* show, that principle leads to further violence?

There is, however, one great difference with the *Oresteia:* the nature of the revenge. Polymestor is blinded, not killed (and in his cry from within the hut τυφλοῦμαι at *Hek.* 1035 replaces πέπληγμαι in the corresponding *Ag.* 1343; it has the same position in the line and the same metrical shape). His torment is worse: his last sight of the outer world, before he is blinded, is of his children being killed. And his subsequent entrance at *Hek.* 1056 provides a dramatically

66. The similarity is noted by Krausse (above, n. 1) 85.

effective contrast with the appearance after their respective revenges of Clytemnestra and Orestes with the corpses of their victims. Death is displaced onto the children, who recall the children of Thyestes in the myth Aeschylus uses; and though there is obviously a symmetry and hence a certain fitness here—Hekabe, who has lost two children in this play, takes the lives of two children—in this play the myth of the House of Atreus is collapsed in on itself. Euripides blurs the Aeschylean distinction between generations and hence the Aeschylean ordering of cause and effect. No son will come to avenge the father in an act that will bring about progress toward a resolution. There will be no resolution, as in the *Eumenides,* as though Euripides found the Aeschylean ending impossibly contrived. Hekabe's revenge will be followed only by Clytemnestra's, which echoes it.

The issue, once again, is not whether Hekabe's revenge is right or wrong—as if that ever could be sorted out. The play reveals clearly the problem with revenge and revenge drama: that the avenger, no matter how deeply injured, no matter how defensible the cause, becomes in the act of revenge morally indistinguishable from the victim. This problem Aeschylus sought to control (even if he could not abolish it) by weighting the *Choephoroi* poetically and emotionally against Clytemnestra and so making possible Orestes' acquittal and the placation of the Furies in the *Eumenides.* Despite this effort, the problem now comes back to haunt Athenian tragedy. For there can be no breaking of the repeated patterns of crime and revenge, only, at most, variations, from which there is no way out.

One variation is so audacious that most critics refuse to recognize that it is there. I mean the transfer of the motif of winds from the sacrifice story, where Aeschylean precedent leads us to expect it, to the revenge story. That contrary winds or windlessness keep the Greek fleet from sailing is mentioned only when Agamemnon agrees to permit Hekabe's revenge (lines 898–901), with an abruptness that draws attention to this transfer and suggests that it is significant. When Achilles appears to demand a sacrifice the Greek fleet is already setting sail (37–39, 109–19); indeed, line 112 clearly means that the sails were puffed out by the wind, and therefore that the wind was both favorable and strong. Neoptolemos's prayer to his father (538–41) does not mention winds. Although the text is corrupt, it seems that he asks Achilles' favor in setting sail and his aid for all Greeks in getting home safely. There is no reason to think that Achilles controls the winds.[67]

The result of the transposition of the winds to the revenge plot is, first, that

67. See Kovacs (above, n. 9) 105 and n. 58. The misconception that the Greek fleet is prevented by the winds from sailing in the first half of the play appears already in the scholia to line 110 and is sometimes used by modern critics in extenuation of the sacrifice of Polyxena (e.g., Heath as quoted in n. 28 above). But I cannot agree either with Kovacs' use of a similar argument in favor of Hekabe's revenge. For other recent denials (both brief) that the winds have anything to do with the sacrifice see O'Connor-Visser (above, n. 28) 63; and Renate Schlesier, "Die Bakchen des Hades: Dionysische Aspekte von Euripides' *Hekabe,*" *Métis* 3 (1989) 114–15.

the sacrifice of Polyxena is required by no divine necessity; the Greeks debate freely between two equally possible alternatives, and their decision reflects upon traditional heroic values. Second, even in the second half of the play, the matter of the winds is only tenuously, if at all, related to divine agency. The only mention of the gods in this connection is in line 900: οὐ γὰρ ἵησ' οὐρίους πνοὰς θεός ("for the god does not send following winds").[68] At most, Euripides both suggests and leaves uncertain that the gods delay the fleet, and more likely the suggestion is not even there. In either case, the emphasis is on Hekabe's initiative, much more than on Agamemnon's in Aeschylus; and this is another sign of the moral ambiguity of her violence. In the third place, the displacement of the motif aligns Polyxena, Polydoros, and Polymestor's children together as victims equally of a world gone brutal. And finally, whereas the winds seemed to *require* a violent act in the *Agamemnon*, they now *permit* one that anticipates the revenge Clytemnestra will take for that earlier sacrifice, on Agamemnon. That the king himself mentions the winds in such a way as to remind the audience of both his deed at Aulis and his murder to come deepens the ironies of his position in the *Hekabe*, of which he cannot be aware.

At the end of the play, Polymestor's prophecies and three Aeschylean echoes in fifteen lines join the action to the rest of the myth and, more pertinently, the *Hekabe* to the *Agamemnon*.[69] "This man's [Agamemnon's] wife will kill her [Cassandra], a bitter housekeeper [οἰκουρὸς πικρά]" (*Hek.* 1277)—words that recall Calchas's terrifying φοβερὰ παλίνορτος / οἰκονόμος δολία, μνάμων Μῆνις τεκνόποινος ("a frightful deceiving housekeeper arising in the time to come, mindful, child-avenging Wrath," *Ag.* 154–55; cf. 1225, 1625). Polymestor then rounds on Agamemnon: "the bloody bath [φόνια λουτρά] awaits you in Argos" (*Hek.* 1281); compare the λουτρῶν φόνον ("bloodshed of the bath") of *Eum.* 461 (and cf. *Cho.* 491).[70] Finally, and above all, the last words in the play of an Agamemnon superbly blind to his fate virtually quote the first line of the play that dramatizes his murder (*Hek.* 1291–92): εὖ δ' ἐς πάτραν πλεύσαιμεν, εὖ δὲ τἀν δόμοις / ἔχοντ' ἴδοιμεν τῶνδ' ἀφειμένοι πόνων ("Prosperous be our voyage home, prosperous the things / we find in the house, released from these toils"); compare (*Ag.* 1)[71] θεοὺς μὲν αἰτῶ τῶνδ' ἀπαλλαγὴν πόνων ("I ask the gods release from these toils"). The farther back in time we go, only to find the same actions underlying those of the *Oresteia*, the more remote that "release from toils" seems.

The "join" thus created with the *Oresteia* helps us appreciate what Euripides has done. Between the end of the Trojan War and Agamemnon's homecoming he has inserted two stories, one given him by tradition, the other evidently his own invention, that together collapse the ten-year perspective of the *Agamemnon* into one day and that, since they are only loosely connected by the figure of Hekabe, slacken the ties of causality between sacrifice and revenge that the corresponding events have in Aeschylus—a comment on the randomness and brutality of the world Euripides portrays. The essential operation that Euripides performs on the *Oresteia* is duplication, which creates an excess of action that has the paradoxical effect of emptying events of intelligibility and meaning. With the sacrifice, Euripides makes present and stages directly at the war's end what Aeschylus only narrated as past and selectively from the war's beginning, and thereby not only fills in elisions and draws out implications in the Aeschylean text but also confuses our notion of the linear progress of time.[72] (If the Greeks sacrifice a virgin when they leave for Troy and when they return, has anything changed? Is change possible?) The revenge also repeats an event, Agamemnon's murder—from a prior text. But in the time scheme of the myth this event is actually in the future. A dubious light is thus cast on both subsequent story and anterior text. When literary and narrative succession conflict, in what sense can things go forward, reach an end? There is no ending to this play, only an opening-up onto another text that this one repeats (or that repeats this one?) and that has already been read. The characters are trapped within the same circularity. By making the figures in the *Hekabe*'s and the *Oresteia*'s myths interchangeable counters in repeated patterns of action, Euripides drains the myths of their uniqueness and hence their paradigmatic value. All that is left is a system of literary signifiers detached from their signifieds, a circle of ultimately pointless violence.[73]

68. This seems significantly different from saying that the gods send contrary winds or a calm and may well not even imply it. Agamemnon might just be using a conventional expression. His words hardly justify the conclusion that "it is the gods who favor Hecuba's scheme" (Kovacs [above, n. 9] 105). Heath (above, n. 28: 67–68) is more properly tentative in finding evidence of divine causality in this play but suggests more than is really justified. For good sense on this question, see Segal (above, n. 13) 16–17.

69. On these prophecies and the parallels they create between the two plays, see Cataudella (above, n. 22) 127. I do not understand why, when he finds so much significance in the other prophecies, he says that Hekabe's transformation is not a comment on her revenge but merely serves an aetiological purpose.

70. See further Richard Seaford, "The Last Bath of Agamemnon," *CQ* 34 (1984) 252.

71. Euripides seems to have been much impressed with this line and the possibilities of exploiting it: cf. *El.* 1291, *IT* 92, *Tro.* 271, *Or.* 1522. Cf. *Rhes.* 474. On the other hand, similar phrasing from the main caesura to line end occurs so often elsewhere in Euripides without any discernible allusive effect (e.g., *Med.* 333; *Heracl.* 586, 811; *Andr.* 424; *Supp.* 396; *Ion* 1604; *Hel.* 278; *Phoen.* 972, 1077, 1678; *Hipp.* 629; *IA* 323, 1004) that one might be tempted to explain *all* occurrences as stereotyped tragic diction. There is, however, no use of this phrasing in Sophocles (except, just possibly, *Trach.* 825). Thus it seems fair to claim that its use in some Euripidean contexts is a pointed allusion to *Ag.* 1, and that in other contexts recollection of the line exerted a (perhaps unconscious) influence on Euripides as he composed—still a sign of how memorable the line was for him. This position is consistent with Milman Parry's consideration of the possibility of the tragic "formula" in "The Epic Technique of Oral Verse-making," in A. Parry, ed., *The Making of Homeric Verse* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) 285–98.

72. Cf. Tarkow (above, n. 60) 135.

73. The *Hekabe* thus shows, perhaps more subtly, the effect that Zeitlin has described in the *Orestes*: "Repetition in a closed and circular set of circumstances implies a rut, a stutter, as it were, a meaningless pattern that arrests both the plot and the characters and fixes them in a mode that cannot be transcended" (above, n. 6: 52; cf. 55–56).

CONCLUSIONS

"Parody" is the word that most easily comes to mind in discussions of the relations between Euripides and any of his predecessors. And if we mean by that not something trivializing and destructive, but a form that reflects on other texts, calling attention to the distinction between form and content that they (seek to) conceal, is produced at a transitional stage of culture when literary forms have fulfilled and therefore exhausted themselves, and reproduces the rifts and conflicts within its society, then it might be an accurate term.[74] Certainly large parts of many of Euripides' plays could be called parody in this sense, and the term would be useful as long as we did not imagine that by labeling a particular effect "parody" we had explained something, without going on to tell how it functions as parody. But to call one of his plays as a whole a parody is, even at best, to relegate it to "secondary" status, by contrast with the "primary" works of Homer, Aeschylus, and Sophocles, and thus to reinforce the hierarchical distinctions that critics have all too often made in the past. So it might be best in discussing these poets to avoid the term "parody" or to use it only in a limited and specific sense.

But there are other relations between texts than that between "original" and "parody." And in fact we have come to recognize that any text refers not directly to the experiential world, but to other texts, in the very broadest sense of that term—the values, attitudes, and ideologies systematized in codes and conventions, and often in prior works of literature, that are the precondition for the appearance of any literary text. This notion of "intertextuality," however, as Jonathan Culler points out,[75] is so broad in its scope that it is very difficult to use: the search for intertextual relations becomes traditional source hunting, and so the theory is distorted. I have therefore avoided the term here, even though I have had this theory in mind throughout. Not that I consider this exploration of Euripides' stance with regard to Aeschylus "source hunting" in the sense of a search for "origins" that will "explain" the text in question. But I have concentrated on a particular text, the *Oresteia*, with which the *Hekabe* seems to have a strongly marked relation. Despite this narrowing of focus, I would hope to have contributed toward a fully intertextual study. If the latter considers "the relationship between a text and the languages or discursive practices of a culture and its relationship to those particular texts which, for the text in question, articulate that culture and its possibilities,"[76] examining Euripides' relation to the *Oresteia*,

74. See G. D. Kiremidjian, "The Aesthetics of Parody," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 28 (1969–70) 231–42. Cf. Alastair Fowler, "The Life and Death of Literary Forms," in Ralph Cohen, ed., *New Directions in Literary History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 77–94.

75. Jonathan Culler, "Presupposition and Intertextuality," *MLN* 91 (1976) 1380–96, reprinted in revised and expanded form in his *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981) 100–118.

76. Culler (above, n. 57) 1383 (= 103).

which does seem to have been for Euripides an important articulation of fifth-century Athenian culture, might be part of this enterprise—especially if we recognize that the *Hekabe* is related in complex and important ways to other texts also (Homer, Sophocles) as well as to extraliterary discourse. This may help us think of the *Hekabe*, or any Euripidean drama, as "a dialogue with other texts, an act of absorption, parody, and criticism, rather than as autonomous artifact which harmoniously reconciles the possible attitudes to a given problem."[77]

Another perspective on Euripides' relation to Aeschylus—one that emphasizes poets as well as their texts—is offered by the theory of Harold Bloom.[78] In Bloom's terms, Aeschylus would be Euripides' "strong precursor," the *Oresteia* the anterior text with which Euripides spent many years grappling in an attempt to turn his own belatedness into a strength. The "meaning" of the *Hekabe* would reside not within its own boundaries as autonomous artifact but in its relation to the *Oresteia*, and interpretation would be interpreting its differences with Aeschylus's trilogy, reading Euripides' reading of Aeschylus. The result would be an "antithetical criticism," and I think that in the case of our texts this can happen.

"I ask the gods for release from these toils"—can one reread the opening of the *Agamemnon* innocently after reading Agamemnon's wish for a prosperous homecoming, with the Greeks "released from these toils" at the end of the *Hekabe?* Euripides' play puts the whole of the *Oresteia* in a different context. After the full experience of human sacrifice, whose ends and intrinsic worth as a gesture have been so thoroughly undermined, and of revenge that leads to self-brutalization rather than ultimate salvation, can a reader believe in progress, or does such a reader see that the idea of progress itself is harmful, leading as it does to violence? But to ask this is to suggest that Euripides can induce us to read as if his own text were prior, as if by opening up a stage in myth that precedes the beginning of the *Oresteia* he made Aeschylus the belated poet and himself the strong precursor. The *Hekabe*, that is, is a fine example of what Bloom calls "transumption."[79]

The reading of the *Oresteia* that the *Hekabe* implies is, of course, a misreading, as Bloom says it must be. It flattens out the complexities of Aeschylus's own version of events from Aulis to the incorporation of the Furies into Athens.

77. Culler (above, n. 57) 1383 (not in revised version).

78. In what follows I have in mind particularly his *A Map of Misreading* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975). On p. 77 of that book, Bloom comments in passing on Euripidean drama as a "misprision" of Aeschylus (an idea he attributes to William Arrowsmith). G. Zuntz, *The Political Plays of Euripides* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1955) 25, has a splendid paragraph on Euripides' "contest" with Aeschylus that in some ways anticipates Bloom's theory.

79. Compare what Bloom says about "Milton and his precursors" (above, n. 77: 132–38). He puts the point succinctly, again in connection with Milton, in his more recent book *Ruin the Sacred Truths: Poetry and Belief from the Bible to the Present* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989) 96: "Milton's most characteristic stance . . . is to station himself, with radical originality, in an anxiously emptied-out present time, between a culturally wealthy but error-laden past and a weirdly problematic future."

Returning to Aeschylus from Euripides gives, on the one hand, a recognition of the genuine gaps and elisions in Aeschylus's representation, which the *Hekabe* really does expose, and on the other hand a renewed sense, in reaction to the distortions in Euripides' reading, of those elements in Aeschylus's text that undermine a straightforward view of the issues. Against Euripides, for example, we might protest that Aeschylus does not represent the events at Aulis, or the Trojan War they made possible, as what had to happen, or as clearly justifiable by their convergence with the need for Paris to be punished. We might notice that the very structure of the narrative at *Ag.* 184–257, with its subordinate clauses and oblique approaches to and avoidance of the central act of sacrifice, both is a highly effective way of presenting that act in its full horror and complicates and obscures any simple causality we may try to find in it. If Hekabe is presented as a Clytemnestra with the justice of an Orestes (or if she seems an Orestes as horrific as Clytemnestra), we reply that though the trilogy as a whole seems weighted against Clytemnestra there are plenty of signs in the text that there is much to be said on her side, not least the failure of the resolution in the *Eumenides* to redress the wrong done her (and its more general bias against the female). To reread Aeschylus through Euripides in this way is, I take it, to engage in the antithetical reading that Bloom commends.

Bloom's theory is, however, limited by his deliberate choice to confine the issues to the "interpsychical"—the Oedipal struggle of belated newcomer against his precursor—and to abstract the poet and his language from the surrounding culture, to narrow radically the "discursive space" entered by a text that it is the great advantage of the theory of intertextuality to widen. Bloom remarks, for instance, that "as the language of a poet is his stance, his relation to the language of poetry, you therefore measure his stance in regard to his precursor's stance."[80] But the "language of poetry" is not neutral, independent of the language (or languages) of contemporary society and the cultural tradition. Thus the stance that we have seen Euripides take to Aeschylus's stance to Homer implies a criticism of all the values that both Homer and Aeschylus had come to carry for Greek culture. And similarly, though Bloom's theory offers a powerful explanation of why Euripides was so obsessed with the *Oresteia* and why his relation with Aeschylus took the agonistic form it did, what we learn from it has to be supplemented. Whatever we said above about the true complexities of the *Oresteia*, it is clear enough that the trilogy could be read as celebrating Athenian political and cultural values through their inaugural myth. Euripides' critique of the *Oresteia* is more than an assault on Aeschylus's authority; it is a critique of his whole culture as the *Oresteia* is read (rightly or wrongly; it does not matter) as representing it[81]—its ideology of war, its easy slides into violence, and its hierarchical

80. Bloom (above, n. 77) 76.

81. See especially Zeitlin (above, n. 6) 53; King (above, n. 3) 58–60; and, more generally, William Arrowsmith, "A Greek Theater of Ideas," in John Gassner, ed., *Ideas in the Drama* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1964) 1–41, esp. 9–21.

structure of genders, all of which the *Oresteia* might seem to legitimate as the necessary price for that "progress" that culminates in fifth-century Athens. It could be that the experience of the Peloponnesian War, even as early as the late 420s, brought Euripides to this critical stance.[82] If so, however, it only precipitated much more general insights: not just into the psychology of war, but into the contradictions within Athenian ideology, its inherited values, summed up in—among other places—certain literary works.

Such a critique is not negative; it implies the need for a reformed culture. But what that would be, Euripides cannot show us, for all he has are the terms his culture gives him: its myths and its prior texts.

82. On the response in the *Hekabe* to the contemporary situation—the Peloponnesian War and war politics within Athens—see Vincenzo di Benedetto, *Euripide: Teatro e società* (Turin: Einaudi, 1971) 138–43. For the play as "a reaction to the first major atrocities of the Peloponnesian War"—Mytilene, Plataea, and Corcyra—see Katherine Callen King, *Achilles: Paradigms of the War Hero from Homer to the Middle Ages* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987) 259. Cf. also Justina Gregory, *Euripides and the Instruction of the Athenians* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991) 112–24. These authors accept the commonly accepted dating of the play to around 424. It is unlikely to be earlier, but if it were not for the metrical evidence (incidence of resolutions in the trimeters), one would be tempted to put the play later, closer to *Troades*, with which it is thematically related. That there is an allusion to the purification of Delos at lines 458–65 is extremely doubtful, and the parody of lines 172–74 at Ar. *Clouds* 1165–66 (parody of 159–61 at *Clouds* 718–19 is much less certain) dates *Hekabe* securely only to sometime before the revised version of *Clouds*. But it is clear, at any rate, that experience of events surrounding the war profoundly shaped Euripides' attitude toward his culture; and that general attitude, if we cannot be sure about specific events, is reflected in his plays.