Agonizing Hekabe

Paul T. Keyser

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By PAUL T. KEYSER

ONCE UPON A TIME there was a queen blessed with all that makes life good: a fine and wealthy husband who ruled an ancient and powerful city where her many children played and dreamed in security. Then war came, through no fault of her own, bringing destructive wrath upon her people. Her youngest son was sent to a distant country to stay with close friends for safety. After a lengthy siege her city falls to the foreigner, her husband is slaughtered before her eyes in the inner sanctum of her private chapel, her sons' bodies litter the ground, her daughter, the priestess of the god of prophecy, is raped by a soldier and enslaved by the corrupt commander of the enemy troops. She herself, with the last living member of her family, her youngest daughter, is made a slave. From such great heights, the greatest her world could conceive, to such awful depths, the lowest her world could plumb, had she fallen.

There is worse to come. The slipperiest mouthpiece and most self-serving propagandist of the enemy comes to collect her last daughter who is to be offered as a human sacrifice, butchered like a pig to appease the ghost of the ravening warrior who struck down her worthiest son and desecrated his body. Her daughter dies nobly, proving what a loss the queen has suffered, and she believes the last blow has fallen. It has not—the bloated and fish-gnawed body of her youngest son, thought safely protected, is washed up on shore. Her last hope is gone, her entire world, her entire self has been destroyed. She takes a terrible and subhuman vengeance on her former friend, killing his innocent sons and brutally mutilating him. As the final act of horror, an irrational divine power in the world transforms her into a speechless and literal dog.

1. *Prior Criticism*

THAT IS EURIPIDES' HORRIFYING story in the *Hekabe*, whose final actions are presented on stage as the drama of the queen's disempowerment and corruption. Previous critics of the play have seen it as problematic because it seems to involve *two* disjointed actions: Polyxena's sacrifice and Hekabe's revenge

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upon Polymestor for the murder of her son Polydoros. A variety of solutions have been proposed to deal with this duality, some of which are even absurd (Euripides tacked the revenge story onto a tragedy about Polyxena which was too short for presentation). Despite Aristotle's explicit and sensible rejection (*Poetics* 8 [1451a14]) of the notion that tragic unity can inhere in a set of events which happen to occur to a single person, several interpreters of the *Hekabe* have suggested some version of such a "protagonistic" unity, i.e., a unity merely of the character who experiences the events of the drama. This will implicitly suggest a particular kind of reading, one which tends to isolate the protagonist from her dramatic context, and thus amounts to reading the play as "psychodrama," i.e., making the play depict an inner transformation of Hekabe. Another group of scholars prefers to see a thematic unity, i.e., the drama is not primarily the representation of an action but a discussion on stage of a question or idea. Such a unity falls short of a dramatic unity by definition, and in the absence of a convincing dramatic unity is overly cognitive and slips easily from exegesis into "eisegesis."

Perhaps the most influential recent reading is M. C. Nussbaum's explicitly post-Kantian interpretation of the play as concerned with "the betrayal of convention."[1] For Nussbaum the *Hekabe* is an example of a discussion in Greek ethics on the hope for "rational self-sufficiency" to free the self and its goodness from the power of external contingency ("luck") via reason: this provides a strong sense of the existential tension between our inner world and the outer world.[2] Hekabe herself is portrayed as someone who believes only in a human and relational *aretê* and denies that there is any "higher tribunal." Furthermore, good character, once formed, is unalterable (i.e., Nussbaum refers to Hekabe's speech, lines 592-98), and escapes all corruption; the play's example of this is Polyxena whose steadfast goodness is set forth in the first episode, which the second episode calls into question in the person of Hekabe.[3] That, claims Nussbaum, can be done because Polyxena's nobility contains features which are unstable and whose violent removal in the case of Hekabe causes degeneration. Thus, in reading *Hekabe*, she focuses on "the betrayal of convention" of social and relational values experienced by Hekabe as the external and chance reversal which leads to the destruction of her good character. While enlightening and valid as far as it goes, that approach is too narrowly cognitive and in fact does not unravel the riddle of dramatic unity. Her reading does not provide any sort of dramatic or essential unity of action, but rather it is a kind of "point counterpoint" which could exist between two plays of a trilogy, or even between two plays by different authors on the same mythic story. Nussbaum is a sensitive and insightful reader, but she has approached the drama as a psychodrama and Platonic dialogue. (Nussbaum also wrongly dates the modern failure to perceive the unity and tragedy of *Hekabe* to the era of Kant.)

1. Nussbaum (1986) 397-421.
2. Nussbaum (1986) 3.
3. Nussbaum (1986) 400-06.

2. *A New (and Old) Approach*

I PROPOSE THAT WHAT IS missing from modern readings is not a defect in our understanding brought on by a mistake of Kant's, but rather a loss in our vision caused by accepting Descartes' claim that cognition is the primary and fundamental ground of our being. As Heath has shown in a magisterial survey, the *Hekabe* stood first in the manuscripts, as it did in the Byzantine and Renaissance paradigms of tragedy.[4] He demonstrates that most critics since La Mesnardière (1640) and Corneille (1660) have faulted the play's unity, believing that the "break" between Polyxena's sacrifice and Hekabe's revenge resulted in two actions or plots. Thus something changed around 1625, and it seems that the change in viewpoint is associated with the acceptance of Descartes' notion. Descartes' claim has the effect of isolating everyone in their own inner world of perceptions, of beliefs, and, in sum, of mental states; Cartesian individuals are profoundly cognitive and disconnected from the "outer worlds" of nature and humanity. By accepting that view, even implicitly or as part of a cultural background, we prevent ourselves from seeing that Hekabe's tragedy is one which takes place in the "outer" (i.e., external to the mind and noncognitive) world of human interactions. A Cartesian cognition-centered view overlooks the relevance of our capability for social interaction.

According to the reading I propose, the sacrifice of Polyxena, the revenge of Hekabe, and the prophecy of Polymestor all advance and are integral parts of the same dramatic action, the progressive *peripeteia* of increasing powerlessness experienced by Hekabe on the day when (already a foreign female slave) she loses her last daughter as a human sacrifice to the chief hero of her victorious enemies, then realizes the loss of her last son foully murdered for his gold by her treacherous friend, and lastly reaches the endpoint and limit of powerlessness in being reduced to a literal dog. The progressive dramatic corruption of Hekabe is that she is destroyed and dehumanized precisely in and as she becomes disempowered. Her final canifaction is neither punishment nor revelation but a final act (by the gods) of disempowerment. The murder of Polydoros, the sacrifice of Polyxena, and her own bestialization are all and each acts by others which affect and destroy Hekabe.

The ability or power to be and act in the world of humanity and the world of nature is necessary for every human being, male or female, native or foreign.[5] The loss of that ability *ipso facto* constitutes dehumanization, which is what destroys and corrupts Hekabe. All *dunamis* to act in society has been stripped from her. The actions enacted and the character of Hekabe herself are precisely how a Greek would depict powerlessness—Hekabe is a foreign female slave (i.e., thrice powerless in an ethnocratic, patriarchal, slaving society) and is deprived of the remnants of her family by cruelty from the

4. Heath (1987a).

5. Because "power" has acquired in English connotations foreign to my purpose, I use *dunamis* (in Aristotle's sense) to refer to this sort of ability or capability to act.

spirit realm (the ghost of Achilles) and by the treachery of her friend and ally. She is utterly cut off from all that constituted the world of humanity for an ancient Greek (or "Trojan"). As a foreign woman enslaved, she has been deracinated from her familial loci of power, i.e., *dunamis*: her homeland has been torched and her husband slaughtered; now the madness and slavery of Kassandra, the sacrifice of Polyxena, and the death of Polydoros leave her nearly nothing.

It is important to recall that for the ancient Greeks, far more than for twentieth-century members of a democratic industrial society, the family was the chief locus of social being. Herodotos' tale of Tellos, who lives and dies in and for his descendants and city (Hdt. 1.30), is only the readiest example of this outlook: family and city were the primary, essential, and fundamental defining social entities for an ancient person.[6]

Greek tragedy involves not spiritual degradation (what psychic change is one supposed to see in Sophokles' Oidipous or in Euripides' Hippolytos?), but *peripeteia*, a dramatic (i.e., enacted and stageable) change in the world of humanity around and including the protagonist. A search for psychodramatic unity is in fact a typically Cartesian effort of and for an isolated subject: a ghost in one machine seeks the same in another. Similarly, the desire for thematic unity as primary and fundamental is too narrowly cognitive an enterprise: Attic tragedy is not primarily the dramatization of philosophical puzzles or moral cruces.

The actions of this drama are not merely "what happened to Hekabe one Friday"; nor are they merely a way of depicting a troubling ethical conundrum on stage. Such readings of *Hekabe* omit power, *dunamis*, from their calculus. The unity and sense of the *Hekabe* as a drama of disempowerment became obscured once Descartes' error became epidemic, because then the individual's natural relation to the external worlds of humanity and nature was broken; no longer did people tend to consider that part of what it means to be human is to maintain and enact those external relations. The Cartesian view of human nature is restricted to cognitive behavior, and the external world and our capability to relate to one another seem to dissolve into a flux of mental states. But if we adopt a more wholistic and humane vision of what it means to be human, as including relations and enactments grounded in our *beingness* (Aristotle's τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι), we can retrieve the vision of Euripides and his audience. On that view, there is logical and necessary connection between the several actions of this drama and their results; each connects to the next according to the necessities of *dunamis* in ancient Greek society, and each reveals the relevance of our social powers and the horror of their deprivation.

6. Fustel de Coulanges (1864) has at last been superseded by a more reliable work: Lacey (1968); see pp. 15-32, 51-99, and esp. 118. The ancient Greek view greatly differs from our industrial-age view in degree but not in essence.

This dramatic force has actually been felt by a number of commentators in whose writing isolated elements of this perspective have repeatedly arisen without being pursued. That provides some welcome confirmation that my reading is not simply imposed upon the text. Arrowsmith, seeing it all as political necessity, described *Hekabe*'s theme as "the interrelationships between those who hold power and those who suffer it" and notes that it is "the fact of power which makes [Hekabe] helpless."[7] The influential philosopher and interpreter Nussbaum writes:[8]

> Hecuba had argued that *nomos*, though human and contingent, is stable, and that through *nomos* humans can make themselves stable. The events of this play show us that the annihilation of convention by another's act can destroy the stable character who receives it. It can, quite simply, produce bestiality, the utter loss of human relatedness and human language.

Michelini reads Euripides as a rebel against Sophoklean tradition and has a rather Sartrean view of *Hekabe* itself, but she remarks: "the play forces us to see . . . the sense of powerlessness and insignificance that underlies all human pretensions."[9] And most recently Rabinowitz, working with a feminist-theory reading, says: "young [Polyxena] is glorified as a sacrificial martyr . . . old [Hekabe] literally becomes a bitch . . . both become objects while trying to become subjects."[10]

3. *Euripides' Inventions*

MORE SIGNIFICANTLY, THIS READING explains, as natural and necessary to his dramatic purpose, all Euripides' selections from, and invented additions to, the Hekabe tradition. Euripides' additions are indeed remarkable[11] and have proven a riddle for previous interpreters. In the epic tradition Polydoros was no son of Hekabe's but of Laothoe: *Iliad* 21.84-91 and 22.48; and he had been killed by the berserk Achilles himself long before the fall of Troy: *Iliad* 20.407-18. Polyxena either died of wounds suffered in the sack of Troy (*Cypria* fr. 27 D.) or was indeed sacrificed at Achilles' tomb (*Iliou Persis*), though not always at the behest of Achilles' ghost (that apparently first in Simonides, fr. 557 PMG = *Subl.* 15.7);[12] but his tomb was of course at Troy, not in Thrace (*Odyssey* 24.76-84).[13] Her willingness to die is nowhere else attested and is very unlikely to have been found outside Euripides (compare below ad 346-68). Polymestor himself is not found outside this play, has no

7. Arrowsmith (1959) 489, 490.
8. Nussbaum (1986) 417.
9. Michelini (1987) 179-80.
10. Rabinowitz (1993) 114. I will argue below that there is a crucial difference between the two.
11. Schmid and Stählin (1940) 473 describe them as "den von Euripides mit so viel Willkür in der Stofferfindung behandelten Gegenstand," and point out that his version was never superseded and was the standard which Ennius, Accius, and Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 13.429-575) translated.
12. Mossman (1995) 31-32, 256-63 speaking of "the originality of Euripides' version."
13. Compare Conacher (1961) 3-6; Collard (1991) 34.

genealogy, and is thus almost certainly an invention.[14] And fourthly, there are two or three inventions connected directly to Hekabe's character. Only Euripides gives Hekabe any former relation to Odysseus by making her the one who let him, when he came in disguise to spy on Troy, go free: in the *Odyssey* itself, 4.242-58, Helen alone caught him on his secret mission and set him free.[15] Hekabe did not come to a bad end in all versions: Stesichorus, *Iliou Persis* (fr. 198 = Paus. 10.27.2), had Apollo rescue her and take her to safety in Lykia.[16] And most significantly, Hekabe's final dehumanization was almost certainly Euripides' invention, the scrap of unattributed lyric quoted by Dio Orator 33.59 (fr. lyr. adesp. 965 Page) being most probably Hellenistic.[17]

The combined force of all these choices and inventions may best be seen by narrating them. Euripides has taken the youngest son of Priam, Polydoros, who dies pathetically young despite his father's attempt to keep him out of battle, attached him to Hekabe, and had him killed, not in honorable if futile battle but treacherously by a supposed friend, acting out of mere greed. The friend, Polymestor, is also an invention. Hekabe's daughter Polyxena does not die in the sack of Troy but as a human sacrifice, and specifically at the behest of the ghost of her son's killer and mutilator. Despite that, Polyxena herself is willing to die. Hekabe is also given an old connection of obligation with Odysseus, whose life she once saved. Hekabe is not saved by Apollo, nor does she merely die, but she is dehumanized and made a dog. Every one of these narrative features operates in the same direction—to reveal or effect her disempowerment. All serve to strengthen the impression of Hekabe already given by Homer, of a woman who has lost everything.

Homer has also shown us a Hekabe who, having been shattered by the blow of her son Hektor's death, is willing to turn to cannibalism in vengeance: *Iliad* 24.212–14. The Homeric prototype of Hekabe provides the clue which explains the logical (if not linear) connection between Hekabe's experience of loss (at the sacrifice of Polyxena) and her subhuman vengeance (for the murder of Polydoros). As stated, the essential point is that each action, as experienced and realized by Hekabe, is an act by others

14. Mossman (1995) 30-31 arguing for an invention by Euripides; similarly Collard (1991) 33-34.

15. Mossman (1995) 38-39 rightly noting that this will allow Euripides to set up supplication and *charis* as themes. The Odyssean version is of course more realistic: the treacherous princess Helen has second thoughts and allows her countryman to escape: why ever would Hekabe have allowed him to go free?

16. Mossman (1995) 34. Euripides himself in fr. 968 N² (Ἑκάτης ἄγαλμα φωσφόρου κύων ἔσηι), possibly from the *Alexandros* of 415 B.C.E. (see Coles [1974]), and *Troades* 428-30 (also of 415 B.C.E.) has Hekabe dying at Troy; in the *Troades* at least no mention is made of metamorphosis, but it would seem that in *Hekabe* her death is *not* at Troy.

17. Mossman (1995) 35-36. That Dio does not attribute it, when to do so would grant it greater authority, suggests that it was by no early authoritative poet but some later one. Compare also Plautus, *Menaechmi* 714-18, for later interest outside tragedy in Hekabe's canifaction. Nothing in Thuc. 8.104-06 associates the known Thracian landmark Κυνὸς Σῆμα with Hekabe: there are many such spots around the Mediterranean (compare Hesychios s.v. Κυνόσσουρα: πᾶς χερσοειδὴς τόπος; *RE* 12 [1924] 36). I doubt the lyric can be earlier than ca. 250 B.C.E.; the text contains an Homeric hapax (χαροπ- : *Odyssey* 11.611, elsewhere imitative) and the recondite word φιλήνεμοι, which coupled with the interest in tragedy make one think of Lykophron, though it could equally well be Antipater of Sidon a century later, or some unknown.

which disempowers her. But the linkage is closer than just that. Preceding her brutal revenge, she has experienced the destruction of her last living family companion, Polyxena, and at the same time justice is doubly denied her. First, the Greek decision to commit human sacrifice using her daughter, a woman whose life has already been spared (*Hekabe* 287–90) according to the "rules of engagement" of ancient warfare ("kill the men, enslave the women"), is neither just nor fitting (*Hekabe* 260–63). Second, her supplication of Odysseus is coldly denied on specious and legalistic grounds: her relation with him is evilly and selfishly (*acharistos*) destroyed by him (*Hekabe* 251–57).[18] The epic antecedent of Achilles tells readers that a person who has been violently and destructively denied justice is thereafter prone to vengeful violence: the destruction of those reciprocal relations between an individual and the world of humanity is a kind of disempowerment and corruption which allows or even produces in a reciprocal way the corresponding behavior.[19] And indeed, directly after Polyxena's death has been narrated, and as Hekabe begins to prepare her funeral, the death of Polydoros is realized by Hekabe. The timing is clearly deliberate and jarring (the coincidence is almost too much to believe), and a satisfying explanation is provided by this close connection between the violent denial of justice (Polyxena's sacrifice) and Hekabe's subsequent and consequent vicious vengeance.[20]

4. *The Canifaction*

HEKABE'S CANIFACTION, EVEN IF somehow not Euripides' invention, is striking, disturbing, mysterious, even irrational. On other readings it has seemed a mere mythological factoid, a bit of trivia to explain an odd landmark, tacked weakly on to the tail of the drama. It is grossly disproportionate and deeply unsatisfying that Hekabe's canifaction be a mere aitiological appendix to an otherwise coherent drama. Dio explains that the Erinyes transformed Hekabe ἐπὶ πᾶσι τοῖς δεινοῖς τελευταῖον (as the culmination to all her terrible sufferings), but not why they made her specifically a *dog*. Plautus offered a Stoicizing allegory (*Menaechmi* 714–18), that the Greeks called Hekabe a dog because she heaped abuse on everyone she saw, and Cicero gave the same answer (*Tusc.* 3.63). Later writers connected her cani-

18. The word *acharistos* means "without reciprocality"—i.e., in a manner which denies the reciprocal bonds of obligation which were part of the world of humanity for every ancient Greek. The word is found in Euripides, *Hekabe* 138 (of Greeks reciprocally obligated to Greeks), *Medea* 659 (of the necessity and importance to everyone of such mutual obligations), *Ion* 880 (those who have betrayed Kreusa are *acharistos*); nowhere else in tragedy; once in Homer, *Odyssey* 8.236 (of the relation between Odysseus and his benefactors the Phaiakians); compare also Hdt. 5.91.2.

19. The Homeric parallel, that Achilles falls into berserk wrath, *mênis*, as a consequence of the injustice of Agamemnon's appropriation of Briseis, but not until directly after Patroklos is killed, has been ably narrated by Shay (1994) 94-96; note especially: "betrayal of 'what's right' is a conditioning event that prepares a soldier to go berserk at the death of a closest friend-in-arms." Shay provides numerous moving and convincing parallels from his own work with Vietnam veterans.

20. Abrahamson (1952) remarks on the connection between cruelty by enemies and betrayal by friends but not on the causal relation between those items and her vengeance.

faction with her inconsolable woe, e.g., Quintus of Smyrna 14.282–88, 347–51, referring to her howling in mourning.[21]

Animals in early Greek literature lacked *psychê* and *nous*, those elements of a living being which for the Greeks made a person an individual—no animal's *psychê* ever is said to go down to Hades, and only snakes (in a fragment of Hesiod and in Pindar, *Olympian* 8.39, *Nemean* 1.47) and a swine of Eumaios (*Odyssey* 14.426) even have *psychê* at all.[22] The suifaction of Odysseus' men attributed to the crafty power of Kirke is clearly intended to be dehumanizing (*Odyssey* 10.234–43), but the men are explicitly stated to retain their human minds (*nous*, 240).

The symbolic value of metamorphosis in Greek myth was multiple.[23] In the Homeric epics there seems to be a clear and sharp separation of existential categories such as animal, human, and god, and narrated metamorphoses are restricted to the magicians Kirke and Proteus; those epics do allude to several folk tales of transformation.[24] But for the tragedians, metamorphosis was a more productive and active metaphor. In Aischylos the transformation of Io into a calf-girl Mischwesen (*Suppliants* 564-70, note μειξόμβροτος) seems to have been a visible sign and "grotesque intensification" of her inner chaos and suffering.[25] When petrifaction comes upon a protagonist, it produces images of a "mysterious or otherworldly character" which stands between life and death; one thinks here not only of Niobe (see below), but also of the loveless, soulless statues in Aischylos, *Agamemnon* 416–17, as the chorus sings of Menelaus gazing on statues of the absent Helen.[26] Avifaction produces a being of remoteness and detachment, one freed now from further tragedy, and even possibly an intermediary or sign of the other world; one thinks here especially of Tereus and Prokne (see below).[27] But animal transformations are monstrous and unredeemed, although mostly imposed on deflowered virgins; in those cases they seem to symbolize the "frightening and repellent outbreak of wildness" associated with the "unorthodox or illegitimate change from young girl to sexual object."[28] These distorted and nightmarish fantasies probably can be seen in Jungian terms as reflecting the fear and anxiety attendant upon female puberty in a patriarchal society. Euripides in *Hekabe* insists often on Hekabe's aged decrepitude, so it would be arrant eisegesis to see Hekabe's canifaction as in any way sexual. But it is surely to be seen as dehumanizing and (consistent

21. Followed by Pohlenz (1954) 277-78. My daughter Rachel has pointed out that since her man and her city died at night and that dogs howl at night, the parallel is indeed close.
22. Bremmer (1983) 125-31. Emotive attributes such as *thumos* or *menos* they do have, but none of those ever survive death or are in any way individual, even for humans.
23. See Forbes-Irving (1990) for an excellent recent discussion from which I draw heavily in this section.
24. Forbes-Irving (1990) 10.
25. Forbes-Irving (1990) 15.
26. Forbes-Irving (1990) 141, 144-45.
27. Forbes-Irving (1990) 112, 121.
28. Forbes-Irving (1990) 112, 68-69. Forbes-Irving notes that neither at law nor in myth were the woman's feelings considered—a distinction between rape and seduction was not made.

with the patterns just described) frightening, repellent, monstrous, and unredeemed. There seem few or no parallels.

What of the form itself, a dog? Dogs in Greek poetry are an ambiguous metaphor already for Priam, *Iliad* 22.66-76, whose table-fed house hounds will gnaw his dead flesh. In fact dogs are primarily seen as scavengers of dead meat in the *Iliad*, and it was a horrific fate to have one's body eaten by them (or birds or fish): *Iliad* 1.3-5 (birds and dogs, a programmatic passage), 21.203–04 (fish), and similarly in the *Odyssey,* 14.133–36 (dogs, birds, and fish).[29] That image is connected with Hekabe even in the *Iliad,* 24.212–14, where she wants to avenge her son Hektor's death by eating Achilles' liver; Hektor she fears will be gnawed by dogs (24.210–11). That dogs were corpse eaters reappears often in Greek tragedy: Aischylos, *Suppliants* 800-01; Sophokles, *Aias* 830, *Antigone* 204-06 (from *Iliad* 22.336), 254, 697, 1017, 1081, 1197-98; and Euripides, *Phoinissai* 1650; and even in prose (Hdt. 1.140.1 of the Persian death ritual).[30]

Secondly, and doubtless related, is the imagery connecting dogs with the spirits of the dead, and often their vengeance. The dark Greek ships brought in them to Troy "Κῆρ-bearing dogs" (*Iliad* 8.527-28) and Greek tradition associated canine form with those hellish death-dealing spirits.[31] In other contexts, the dead themselves appeared as dogs,[32] and that led to the avenging Erinyes being conceived as canine in tragedy: Aischylos, *Choephoroi* 924-25, 1054, *Eumenides* 131-32, 147, 231, 246-47, 326-27; Sophokles, *Elektra* 1388; and Euripides, *Elektra* 1252, 1342, *IT* 293, *Orestes* 260-61 (Euripides describes the Κῆρες as κυνώπιδες goddesses in the *Elektra*).[33] These two images suggest that Hekabe as dog becomes a corpse-eating vengeful spirit.

A third epic attribute or significance of dogs was their insolence. The only abusive metaphor in Homer derived from the animal world is "dog," and is there always used by the Greeks as an insult specifically referring to insolence.[34] The metaphor is explicit at *Iliad* 13.621 (ὑπερφίαλ-) and 633 (ὑβριστ-) and especially connected with Achilles in *Iliad* 22.26-403 and the maids in *Odyssey* 18.338, 19.91, 154, 372 (where disloyalty is also in view).[35] The usage is borrowed from epic into tragedy, where *Odyssey* 11.427 becomes Aischylos, *Agamemnon* 1228 of Klytaimestra, but rarely. It is possible that connotations of insolence (in killing a male, and even a king)

29. See below ad 1075-77. Compare Faust (1970) listing occurrences, pp. 10-21.

30. Also in the pseudo-Aischylean appendix to *Septem* 1014, 1020-21, 1035-36. Lilja (1976) 57, 60, 64 on tragedy and 19 on Herodotos.

31. Roscher (1897) 46-48.

32. Eitrem (1922) 274-75.

33. Lilja (1976) 56-57, 59, and 65 of spectral dogs. Note Hesiod, *Theogony* 311, combining the two: Κέρβερον ὠμηστήν.

34. Lilja (1976) 21-22, 23-24. She lists also *Iliad* 1.158-59, 1.225, 9.372-73, *Odyssey* 11.424-27, 17.248, 20.18, and 22.35 as examples.

35. As Lilja (1976) notes, it is also used of Helen by herself (*Iliad* 3.180, 6.344, 356; *Odyssey* 4.145) and between gods (*Iliad* 18.396; *Odyssey* 8.319). Odysseus' "shameless" belly is a joke (*Odyssey* 7.216), and Diomedes' intended "impudent" daring is dramatic irony (*Iliad* 10.503).

are to be seen in Hekabe's canifaction.

Hekabe has lost all that makes human life human and so, as the culmination of her woes, is reduced to subhuman, soulless beast. That beast, repellent and irredeemable, was in fact a dog because the influential epic narrative had told of Hekabe bitchily desiring to consume Achilles' liver and had told of dogs ferociously scavenging corpses, and because in tragedy the avenging spirits were night-howling inconsolable dogs. We must also note that the only divine figure named in the play, Dionysos, is the authority for the prophecy of her final doom (1267) and that Dionysos for the Greeks seems often to represent a breaking out of the irrational (as in Euripides' *Bacchae*). Hekabe's final transformation is not ambiguous but uncanny and fearful.[36]

5. *Literary Antecedents*

PARALLELS AND CONTRASTS WITH other Euripidean and Attic tragedy confirm this interpretation, where they present similar dramatic cruces. In this play, Hekabe attempts to enact *dunamis* through the Greek social custom of supplication (*hiketeia*) in which the weaker party, by certain gestures, acts, and words, entreated the stronger to allow them to live, or to live in a certain way.[37] Such scenes are very frequent in Greek drama, especially that of Euripides, but we may relevantly focus on the supplications of three other female outsiders: Medea, Andromache, and the Greek Hermione. In each case, their relation to a powerful Greek male determines their fate.

In the *Medea*, the first of these dramas (of 431 B.C.E.), Medea has been abandoned by Iason who is now allying himself with the local king by marriage to the princess. That leaves the foreigner Medea, and her children, unprotected and in danger and with no way home (*Medea* 17-19, 30-35). In fact, as expected, the king is going to exile them (271-76), and it is then frequently reiterated that their suffering consists in that they have nowhere to go (340-43, 359-63, 386-91, 501-15, 613-14, 643-51). It is only when opportune help appears in the person of Aigeus, king of Athens, whom Medea successfully entreats as a suppliant (709-18), that she can enact her plans of doom (757-58, referring back to 389-90).

In the *Andromache* (written sometime between the *Medea* and the *Hekabe*) the protagonist is the widow of Hektor, who saw their son executed, thrown from a tall tower, and who is now the enslaved concubine of Achilles' son Neoptolemos (*Andromache* 1-15). She and her son have been discarded in favor of Hermione of Sparta, who wants to kill Andromache (24-40). Neoptolemos has abandoned them (49-51), and so Andromache naturally sends for her next nearest Greek "in-law," Peleus, her baby's great-grandfather (79-90). Until he arrives, Andromache is at the mercy of

36. Compare Forbes-Irving (1990) 63: "final and ambiguous," but 209-10: "outside human society . . . becomes a literal animal . . . she has had to endure more than a human being can bear."
37. Gould (1973).

Hermione and Menelaus, who taunt, threaten, and arrest her (147-80, 234-68; 309-18, 366-83; and 425-34). But once Peleus does at last appear, her entreaty succeeds (572-76, where she refers explicitly to supplication, even though her bonds prevent the standard gesture): Peleus orders her release and cows Menelaus (577-746). Meanwhile Hermione, who first appeared as a proud and rich young bride (147-54), empowered by the presence of her father and her marriage to the lord of the land, is now revealed as a woman maddened by the loss of her father (driven off by Peleus)—her husband Neoptolemos is out of town, and she believes her father has not only left but abandoned her and that her husband will not approve her attempt to kill Andromache and her son (802-78). That is, she is represented as bereft of wit because bereft of male protector through and under whom she can act. As soon as her cousin Orestes appears, she entreats him by supplication to protect her (884-95). Orestes accepts, citing his original engagement to her, and she recovers her wits (957-92).

That is, though disempowered by being female outsiders with no Greek male to protect them, these other Euripidean female foreigners are "saved" from complete dehumanization by successfully supplicating powerful Greek men. Medea (though monstrous by play's end) has found escape at the knees of Aigeus, while Andromache, unbound by Peleus, likewise escapes the chains of oppression and hence leaves the stage. Even a Greek woman who even briefly has been disempowered goes mad: Hermione floating unanchored between Neoptolemos and Orestes raves. Like these other outsiders, Hekabe also seeks to exploit ties to a powerful Greek male, Odysseus, but she fails. It is only once that she chooses to relate to her own daughter as concubine of her enemy, Agamemnon (a choice which itself springs from powerlessness), and so successfully supplicates him, and in her vengeful violence, born of despair, that she can act.

Two earlier lost tragedies, one by Sophokles and one by Aischylos, are also relevant since they presented influential tragic transformations. In Sophokles' *Tereus* (frr. 581-95 R.) we have a situation like Euripides' *Andromache*—a husband with a child by his first wife (Prokne) has taken a second "wife"—but with the additional complication that Philomela, the second "wife," is the sister of the first. The main pattern is again that of a conflict between the husband's locus of enactment (his house and heir) and the wife's locus (her own family).[38] Tereus' rape of his wife's sister is a "savage parody" of a marriage and occurs in a circumstance where the wife is isolated from her family (fr. 583 R.). Philomela's mutilation reduces her to a dumb animal, and, imprisoned, she is unable to call for help.[39] She turns to the typically female act of weaving (as had Penelope), all that is left to a woman who has "lost all social and even human status." The two sisters, having committed Medea's crime of killing one's own child, together with

38. For discussion see Forbes-Irving (1990) 99-107.
39. The imprisonment, inferred from Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 6.424-674, is doubted by Hourmouziades (1986) 135.

Tereus all become birds, which (as noted above) allows them escape from a self-polluted self. The Sophoklean antecedent provides a parallel of disempowerment incarnate in suffering and resulting in execrable violence crowned by metamorphosis. In fact Euripides seems to refer to this play when Hekabe advises Polyxena to be a nightingale, Prokne's bird form (*Hekabe* 334-41).[40]

Aischylos' play *Niobe* (frr. 154-67 R.) seems to have been focused on the disaster to the house brought on by Niobe; the play opened with her seated mutely muffled in garments and silent with woe (Aristophanes, *Frogs* 911-26). Already for Homer, Niobe's mourning was "such intense identification with the dead that it isolated her from the living" (*Iliad* 24.617).[41] Niobe's petrifaction (as discussed above) seems to represent a permanent memorial and anomaly. The myth also attracted Sophokles, who wrote a *Niobe* about which we know very little (frr. 442-51 R.) and twice in extant plays referred to Niobe: *Antigone* 823-33, where Antigone compares her own sorry death in a tomb, and *Elektra* 150-52, where Elektra compares herself to Niobe always weeping (she also invokes Prokne's bird in the immediately preceding lines, 147-49). Euripides briefly refers to the story at *Phoinissai* 159-60 and in *Kresph.* fr. 453 N^2 (before 424 B.C.E.);[42] also fr. (adesp.) 34a N^2. I believe he also does so a number of times in this play. When Polyxena is sacrificed, she is compared to a stone statue—like Niobe she is isolated from the living at that moment, having *chosen* death, and her death will be a memorial (*Hekabe* 559).[43] Moreover when Hekabe is found on stage by Talthybios, she is mute and muffled as Niobe had been (*Hekabe* 486-87). And finally, after Hekabe will have died, her tomb will be a permanent rocky sign, the well-known Κυνὸς Σῆμα of Thrace (*Hekabe* 1273).[44]

Thus from Aischylos' *Niobe* through Sophokles' *Tereus* there is a clear line of descent to Euripides' *Hekabe*: the abused, deracinated, disempowered woman becomes in the end, as the last disaster to befall her, subhuman. The earlier plays provide a parallel, and by Euripides' references to them at crucial points they reinforce his own presentation. Hekabe's disasters are acts (by others) causing her disempowerment, whose culmination is her irrational canifaction. Kirke's magical metamorphosis of men to pigs in the *Odyssey* was reversible—because they had a powerful patron, Odysseus, and because their minds were not affected by her poison—and hence the spell is only momentarily terrifying and ultimately perhaps even comic. Aischylos' Niobe became a memorial in petrifaction while Sophokles' Prokne and Philomela are removed from suffering in avifaction. Euripides shows us the horror of bestialization in Hekabe's canifaction by presenting her extreme sufferings

40. See ad loc. below for further discussion, including about the date of Sophokles' play.
41. See the discussion in Forbes-Irving (1990) 142, 147-48, and 295-96.
42. Date from Cropp and Fick (1985) 70, 81-82.
43. See also ad 559 below for further discussion.
44. The rockiness is not explicitly mentioned by Euripides; I take it to be implied in the name. Lykophron did too but had her stoned to death to create the rock pile: *Alexandra* 330-34, followed by Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 13.565-71. That is the only change of any significance made by Ovid to Euripides' account.

of which the metamorphosis is the final and terrible metaphor. For his Greek audience, the particular sufferings of Hekabe—loss of the world of humanity in the form of loss of city, man, and children—would elicit the deepest sympathy and pity. Her sufferings move us because they are all the immedicable woes of humankind. If we then re-present to ourselves a Hekabe whose actions and reactions are steps on her way to powerlessness, a powerlessness itself pressed upon her by external necessity in the persons of Odysseus and Polymestor, we recover the pity and terror of her tragedy. The loss of body is the endpoint of the loss of self brought about by deracinating powerlessness.

6. *The Reading*

AS I TURN TO MY DETAILED READING of the play let me ask readers to consider that it stands as a whole, as an insight based upon the whole play, and on each of its parts. It may happen that one or another of the details I bring forward will not in itself be wholly convincing to every reader (it would be most surprising indeed if all were convincing to everyone). But that of course would not refute the overall picture, only remove that detail from it as an extraneous piece, not after all cohering with the whole.

The play opens with the disembodied voice of a child slaughtered in an alien land—not even Polydoros, son of Hekabe, but only his ghost speaks to us. All Euripides' extant plays open with a summary monologue, in six plays by a ghost or a god.[45] Here the gods are silent and a boy robbed of life foretells his mother's twin griefs of her daughter Polyxena's sacrifice to the ghost of her greatest enemy Achilles (35-44) and of her discovery of Polydoros' own pitiful corpse cast up by the sea into which he—or rather it—had been dumped by his treacherous foster-guardian Polymestor.[46]

For the ancient Greeks, to have one's body dumped into the sea was shame and degradation;[47] for the ancient Greeks, to have one's child to bury was pathos and horror;[48] for the ancient Greeks, when the soul left the body (31: σῶμ' ἐρημώσας ἐμόν) at death, its existence was a pale flitting shadow of real life.[49] Polydoros thus serves as a premonitory sign of the powerlessness coming upon Hekabe—all that remains of him is his bloodless

45. Erbse (1984) 48-59 for *Hekabe* and 289-93 in summary. He concludes that the prologues are orienting and reliably indicate authorial intent: "Der Prolog ist die Grundlage des Dramas, und Euripides lässt . . . fast stets seine Auswirkungen spielen" (291).

46. Kitto (1939) 284 n. 1 remarks that the prologue also ensures "that our foreknowledge of Polydoros' death increases for us the pathos of Polyxena's." Compare also *Iliad* 23.65-107.

47. *Odyssey* 5.308-21; Hesiod, *Erga* 687; Andoc., *Myst.* 137-38; Xenophon, *Hellenika* 1.6-7, etc. Connected with this is the shame of the denial of burial: Bremmer (1983) 90-91.

48. As it is even now. See Euripides, *Medea* 1034-80, her anguish at her planned murder of her own children; *Troades* 377-78, 1185-86, Hekabe lamenting Astyanax; and most famously Hdt. 1.87.4.

49. *Iliad* 23.65-107; *Odyssey* 11. See Burkert (1977) IV.2, pp. 300-06 (tr. 195-99). Bremmer (1983) shows that the concept was actively evolving just at the time Euripides was writing; the "psychological" (emotive etc.) functions which had been thought to be distributed to such "organs" as the *thumos* and *phrên* were gradually coming to be seen as collected about and fused with the concept of the *psychê*, the "free soul" which is the activating but not self-conscious principle of life. The *psychê* of a dead person was a kind of *eidôlon* or image lacking the "psychological" traits or elements of the "organs" *thumos* etc. such as emotion and will: it had left those behind when it left the body. This *psychê* survived death and went to Hades once its body was properly buried.

phantasm (φάντασμα, 54) and his desire for burial (47-50). But he does state that Hekabe is to be destroyed, corrupted (φθείρει, 58), and that her destruction will be as great as her former prosperity: ...ὡς πράσσεις κακῶς / ὅσονπερ εὖ ποτ' (56-57). That statement, placed by Euripides at the conclusion of his orienting prologue, and repeatedly paralleled throughout the play, should guide the reading of the drama which follows.[50] Hekabe's destruction will consist not only in her fall from royalty to slavery (ἐκ τυραννικῶν δόμων / δούλειον ἦμαρ εἶδες, 55-56), itself the greatest degree of social or political disaster an ancient Greek could envision,[51] but now also of the realization in one day of the deaths of her last two children in whom she had hope (45-46).[52] The drama is the depiction of her descent ever deeper into this powerlessness (*adunamia*).

Hekabe enters as Polydoros evanesces and reiterates what has befallen her, she who was once a queen and is now a slave (60-61). We are also presented with a woman weakened by age and needing to lean upon others even to walk (59-60, 65-67). Hekabe thus enters already reduced to nearly nothing. She is a foreigner, hence (in the eyes of an Athenian audience) without political rights; she is a woman; she is a slave; she is weak with age. Furthermore, she has already seen in a dream a presentiment of the final woe to come, the realization of the death of her son "who is the sole anchor of my house" (80).

The chorus of fellow slaves, women of Troy (99-103),[53] enter with news of Hekabe's penultimate woe (104-06). Her child Polyxena is to be made a victim for Achilles: Ἀχιλεῖ / σφάγιον θέσθαι (108-09). That is, her daughter is to be treated as if she were no more than a calf or kid; she is to be reduced to the function and status of an animal. And for what? To honor Hekabe's enemy—the one who led the forces attacking her city, the same who killed her son Hektor and whose son slaughtered her husband on his family altar (23-24). This Achilles is thus both *polemios* (enemy in war) and *echthros* (personal enemy); and it is to him that Hekabe's only companion and living relative who accompanies her is to be offered as if she were no more than a beast of the field (just as Achilles had slaughtered a dozen captives on Patroklos' tomb: *Iliad* 23.166-76).[54] Even the Greek arguments

50. Polydoros blames "some god," θεῶν τις (58), but the gods are silent until the very end of this play. Any god's voice, explaining, would seem to some degree to validate or palliate Hekabe's destruction—and so would dull the effect Euripides intends. That, in short, is why the gods are so silent here.

51. Compare Herodotos' account of Kroisos: 1.26-91; Aischylos' account of Xerxes in *Persae*; or Sophokles' account of Oidipous (from king to blind exile).

52. Kassandra, though alive, is lost to hope as she is the maddened concubine of the enemy general.

53. Collard (1991) 23 and Mossman (1995) 69-72 rightly emphasize that the chorus is depicted from their entrance as fellow-sufferers with Hekabe.

54. Everyone thinks of the sacrifice of Iphigeneia at Aulis as a parallel (compare Collard [1991] 33 and ad 150-53, 402-40, 521, and 529-33); but it is crucially different both in religious purpose and dramatic function. Iphigeneia is sacrificed by her father, as leader of the army, to Artemis as huntress who demands a sacrifice (originally no doubt magical, later propitiatory) of the young of the animal hunted (here, humans): see W. Burkert (1977) § II.1.2, pp. 105-08 (Engl. tr. 59-60); and Lloyd-Jones (1983a). Polyxena is sacrificed by the leader of her enemy as a blood-offering to the ghost of the berserk champion of her enemy (perhaps originally the sacrifice represented the eating of the defeated enemy's blood—or heart or liver—in order to obtain his strength); she stands and falls for all the spilled blood of the defeated enemy.

reported by the chorus from the wily Odysseus, that the Greeks were obliged to honor their dead (134-40), do not reflect any consideration that Polyxena is in fact a girl not a goat.[55]

Hekabe's response points out again what was apparent to the audience at her entrance (59-67), that Polyxena's impending death deepens her *adunamia*. She thrice cries out that she cannot even express her misery: "whatever am I to cry out?" (154-55): τί ποτ' ἀπύσω; / ποίαν ἀχώ; ποῖον ὀδυρμόν. She proceeds to a litany of her weakness, a staccato expression of her powerless status: she is broken with age (δειλαία δειλαίου γήρως, 156), she is sunk in unbearable slavery (δουλείας τᾶς οὐ τλατᾶς, / τᾶς οὐ φερτᾶς, 157-58), she has no protector, no family—her old man is gone as are her sons (τίς ἀμύνει μοι; ποῖα γενέα / . . . ; φροῦδος πρέσβυς, / φροῦδοι παῖδες, 159-61), and her city itself is lost (ποῖα δὲ πόλις; 160). She has lost all connections to the world of humanity—save only Polyxena and Polydoros. A Greek male might perhaps suffer the loss of family and city and yet survive by reconnecting with fellow Greek males in another city; but for a Greek woman no such possibility existed.[56] It must be stressed however that for the Greeks both male and female the family and the city were the locus of social identity: the loss of those meant the almost inevitable loss of self.[57] Hekabe concludes that this news has brought destruction, utter destruction upon her (ἀπωλέσατ' ὠλέσατ', 167), and there is no life or joy left in her (οὐκέτι μοι βίος / ἀγαστὸς ἐν φάει).

Polyxena is informed of the outrage (175-96), and her response emphasizes that the sacrifice is a disaster for *Hekabe* (197-210). She exclaims that her dear mother is terribly suffering (δεινὰ παθοῦσ'), is utterly miserable (παντλάμων), and is once again the object of an outrage (οἵαν οἵαν αὖ σοι λώβαν, 197-99). And the precise nature of this extra outrage Polyxena perceives as being that "no longer will Hekabe have Polyxena with her, no longer will Polyxena be a fellow-slave with Hekabe in her horrid old age" (202-04). Hekabe will have to see her daughter torn from her arms and sent to Hades (207-10), and Hekabe will see her daughter treated as a wild calf (οὐριθρέπταν / μόσχον, "mountain-bred," 205-06), her throat cut (λαιμότομον, 208).[58]

55. Usually the Greeks abhorred human sacrifice: see Henrichs (1981) 195: "The Greeks clearly preferred the fiction of human sacrifice to its reality." The closest parallel seems to be Hdt. 2.119.

56. Compare *Medea* 253-58, 510-15, and 643-51. See also W. Steidle (1968) 50: (comparing Medea) "ohne Schutz von Heimat und Familie . . . ohne den für eine Frau nötigen Beschützer"; and Conacher (1967) 160.

57. Compare Orestes' prayer in Aischylos, *Choephoroi* 246-63, and Lacey (1968) 48, 77-78, 80, 219 on the dissociation of exile.

58. The hapax adjective οὐριθρέπταν must stress that a human victim is abnormal since sacrificial animals were usually domestic in all ancient religion: compare Loraux (1985) 65-68 = (1987) 34-37. The rare adjective λαιμότομος/τμητος first here (found later in Euripides, *Elektra* 459, *Ion* 1054, and *Phoinissai* 455, all of the Gorgon's severed head) seems also to stress the inhuman character of this act. There is a lacuna in 207 and some editors wish to delete 206 as redundant. In any case the sense is clear: Polyxena states that she will be treated as a sacrificial animal and that that is an outrage for *Hekabe*.

Odysseus bustles onto stage confirming the news and telling Hekabe that it is wise to think what one must (228), hardly an entrance to elicit sympathy. Hekabe the slave asks permission to question Odysseus the free man (234-36) and proceeds to remind him of the great favor she did him when he snuck into Troy (239-50): she saved his life when he was her slave (δοῦλος ὢν ἐμός, 249). That is, she attempts to recreate between herself and Odysseus some humane relation by recalling their former relation. Hekabe seeks to de-objectify herself *vis-à-vis* Odysseus: she and Odysseus ought to have a reciprocal relation of obligation.[59] She then calls upon that relation entreating favor for favor (251-53),[60] points out that oxen are a suitable sacrifice, not children (258-61), and insists that as Polyxena has done no harm to Achilles, neither ought he to do her any (262-64). She offers Helen as a fitting sacrifice instead: just as beautiful, and far more guilty (265-70)—this serves as a foreshadowing of her own willingness to objectify, since if human sacrifice is wrong, it is wrong even for Helen. In each point Hekabe is seeking to overcome her *adunamia*: in and of herself at this point (as a foreign female slave) she can do nothing to save her beloved daughter; but as Odysseus' friend (note φίλον, 286) who once saved his life, she hopes to gain the *dunamis* to save her daughter. She repeats her appeal to Odysseus as friend (273-78) to return favor for favor (χάριν, 276) and reiterates that Polyxena is for her the whole world of humanity (279-81): "she is . . . my city, nurse, my support, my guide." Moreover, at the same time, she is making an appeal to canons of justice and morality which any Greek would accept. It was neither just nor fitting according to the "rules of engagement" of ancient warfare to kill a woman whose life had already been spared (*Hekabe* 260-63, 287-90: compare *Iliad* 9.591-96).

Her double supplication of Odysseus is coldly denied on specious and legalistic grounds: her relation with him is evilly and selfishly (*acharistos*) destroyed by him (*Hekabe* 251-57).[61] Having thus been violently and destructively denied justice, she will soon be revealed as prone to vengeful violence: the destruction of the reciprocal relations between an individual and the world of humanity is a kind of disempowerment and corruption which allows or even produces in a reciprocal way the corresponding behavior. And indeed, directly after Polyxena's death will have been narrated and as Hekabe begins to prepare her funeral, with clearly deliberate and even jarring timing the death of Polydoros will be realized by Hekabe.

Now Odysseus refuses (299-302), only conceding that he owes Hekabe her life. That is, he rejects her attempt at human relation, and by insisting on

59. Just as Gould (1973) 90-91 points out: "suppliancy is designed . . . to establish a relationship where none would normally exist." Normally, no such reciprocal relation could exist between slave and master.

60. The four lines 254-57 have often been seen as an anachronism since the era of the scholiasts (see Collard [1991] ad loc.). But Easterling (1985) shows that the Attic dramatists had a strong and well-grounded sense of the heroic world, which they were careful to recreate while dramatizing issues and problems of their own society (p. 1). Euripides is suiting the heroic material to his own purposes; in particular, in Hekabe's remark of 254-57, Euripides is pointing out that language has power which can be misused to oppress; Hekabe has been oppressed, i.e., cut off from human relation with Odysseus, by his rhetoric of lines 218-28.

61. On *acharistos*, "without reciprocality," see n. 18 above.

objectifying Polyxena, he treats Hekabe not as friend but as slave, i.e., as object. He insists that Polyxena is an appropriate sacrifice for the foremost soldier (304-05), and his discourse is concerned solely with justifying that claim (306-31). Hekabe's suffering is objectified by being weighed against that of the Greeks, as if there could be a balance of pains (321-25).

Hekabe then attempts to enact her desire indirectly and turns to Polyxena. Odysseus' response to Hekabe was that her supplication would save her own life only. Polyxena, she counsels, should sing in tones as varied as those of a nightingale (ἀηδών), and her supplication should win her her life (334-41). The nightingale was an old symbol of mourning, first appealed to by Penelope bewailing her long-lost Odysseus (*Odyssey* 19.518-23) and so neatly relevant when supplicating the same man. But usually the nightingale is a symbol of inconsolable woe, of powerless protest, as when Kassandra weeps for her own and Agamemnon's imminent death (Aischylos, *Agamemnon* 1140-45), so that Euripides' reference here is probably intended as foreshadowing of failure. Sophokles had recently dramatized the story alluded to by Penelope, that the nightingale had once been the princess Prokne who had slaughtered her own son as vengeance on her husband for the rape and mutilation of her sister, and now as bird ceaselessly laments her son.[62] That is, the reference anticipates not only failure but powerlessness, vengeance, infanticide, and bestialization.

But Hekabe's second attempt is also rebuffed and her desire foiled, for Polyxena responds to Hekabe's command to entreat Odysseus by in fact proclaiming her willingness to die (346-47). This is surely intended by Euripides to come as a shock to the audience: after describing Odysseus' stance of aversion (342-44), Polyxena says "take heart" (θάρσει, 345). This "paradoxical moral confidence" is striking indeed,[63] but is not due simply to Euripides' desire to portray slaves as superior; rather it is a sign to direct our response. Polyxena is here doing something unexpected—choosing death. True, as even she says, she goes to death also by necessity (346: τοῦ τ'ἀναγκαίου). But she takes the one action left to her, she rejects powerlessness, and so her life cannot be *taken* because she *gives* it. She will be dead all the same, but her final act is an act of enactment not of subjection: she is defeated, not destroyed.

She herself explains her choice as motivated by a desire to die free, i.e., not yet assigned to a specific master (359-66). She has fallen with her mother from the very heights of power, princess of Troy, heart's desire of princely suitors (349-55), "god-like save only in mortality": ἴση θεοῖσι πλὴν τὸ

62. Paus. 1.41.9 tells that Tereus was originally a Megarian hero. In epic the husband is Zethos, who became the Thracian Tereus in the standardized Attic version of Sophokles, who also added rape and mutilation. At least in Pherekydes (*FGrHist* 3 F 124) the murderess acted out of jealousy of Niobe's fecundity but in error killed her own son. The fragments of Sophokles' *Tereus* (Radt [1977] frr. 581-95) include what is almost certainly the hypothesis of Sophokles' play, *POxy* 42 (1974) 3013. Aristophanes, *Aves* 93-100, in 414 B.C.E. refers to Sophokles' *Tereus*; Calder (1974) reconstructs the tragedy and (p. 91) dated it to the early 430's B.C.E.

63. Collard (1991) ad 345 (p. 149).

κατθανεῖν μόνον (356). And like her mother, she has nothing left to live for (τί γάρ με δεῖ ζῆν; 349)—all that defined her life in the world of humanity—her royal father, her intended regal wedding, her position of mastery in her household of women—is gone, and like Hekabe she is as good as dead. "No indeed," she says, "I myself put the light of day out of my free eyes and make my corpse over to the ruler of death" (367-68). She concludes by inviting her mother to enact the same final yet powerful choice and action before she ends in shame (372-74).

But Odysseus prohibits even that action by Hekabe—her sacrifice was not what Achilles wanted—he wanted youth and beauty (382-95). The metaphor used by Hekabe, that she will cling to Polyxena like ivy to a tree (398), reinforces the picture of Hekabe as weak (ivy) and Polyxena as strong (tree);[64] might there also be an anticipation here, in equating Hekabe to ivy, of the Bacchic theme of Hekabe's vengeance (685-87, 1075-78)? As Luschnig points out, Hekabe "is not given the option of a noble death"; she is presented as, and reduced to, someone "not even worthy of being sacrificed."[65] Polyxena is desired for sacrifice; Hekabe has insisted that only animals ought to be sacrificed—and now Hekabe is less than an animal. In the end even Polyxena counsels her mother not to bring further degradation upon herself by struggling futilely with Odysseus (405-08). Her age, mentioned by Odysseus as the grounds for rejecting her as a sacrificial victim (389: ὦ γεραιά), is also what renders her struggle vain (note 405-06, "wound your *old* skin as you are shoved with violence"). And so as mother and daughter exchange final farewells, Hekabe exclaims that she has died already before her death because of her woes (τέθνηκ' ἔγωγε πρὶν θανεῖν κακῶν ὕπο, 431).

The first choral interlude intervenes, the chorus singing of their plight as slaves while the obscene sacrifice occurs somewhere offstage (444-83). Their lot is what Polyxena would have faced had she not been chosen for sacrifice, and what Hekabe expects to face—as in the later stasima, the chorus here sings in harmony with Hekabe's sufferings. They will go off to some part of Greece and become servants to foreigners since their children (475), their families (476), and their land (476) are utterly destroyed. They naturally, for a Greek audience, describe their various allotted lands positively (the most lovely and fertile waters of Phthia's river, 451-54; Delos' palm and bay trees offered their shoots as a loving adornment, 458-61), and Athenian works are of course especially praised (466-74).

Talthybios enters and observes Hekabe prostrate in grief, lying on the ground muffled in her *peplos* (486-87)—as Niobe had been in Aischylos' play; his entry speech amounts to a further reiteration of the trials of Hekabe (492-98). She was once rich, powerful, and happily married—now her city is

64. Rabinowitz (1993) 113. Of course the image also stresses the *closeness* and tenacity of the attachment, as at *Medea* 1213 (old man's flesh clings to girl's clothing).
65. Luschnig (1976) 229.

eradicated and herself enslaved, childless and old (δούλη γραῦς ἄπαις, 495). Hekabe rises only because she believes, falsely, that she is to be allowed to give her life as her daughter did (505-07). Talthybios recounts the killing of Polyxena—her mode of death is consonant with her desire. When she saw that the acolytes were about to restrain her (544-46), she insisted on a death by choice, not coercion, even at the hands of her city's destroyers (547-49):[66]

> Ὦ τὴν ἐμὴν πέρσαντες Ἀργεῖοι πόλιν,
> ἑκοῦσα θνήισκω· μή τις ἅψηται χροὸς
> τοὐμοῦ· παρέξω γὰρ δέρην εὐκαρδίως.
>
> You Argive sackers of my city,
> I die willingly: let no one touch me,
> for I will offer my neck bravely.

She insists on, she takes up, the last *dunamis* left her, of dying freely, not slavishly. It is as a free woman that she will die (550-51):

> ἐλευθέραν δέ μ', ὡς ἐλευθέρα θάνω,
> πρὸς θεῶν, μεθέντες κτείνατ'. . . .
>
> By the gods, let me go free
> when you kill me, that I may die free. . . .

She will not be called "slave" even among the dead (551-52), she it is who in a warrior's gesture bares her breast to the slaughtering sword (558-61),[67] she it is who positions her body for the killing blow (561), she it is who by her last words directs the executioner's aim (563-65). And even as she falls dying (ἡ δὲ καὶ θνήισκουσ' ὅμως, 568) she has the great foresight to fall forward modestly, hiding what must be hidden from the eyes of men (569-70). For a Greek (male or female) public female nudity was not erotic (as we might feel) but shameful (as in Euripides, *Andromache* 830-35 and *Elektra* 308).[68]

To a post-Freudian, especially to someone influenced by the myth-and-ritual school, the subconscious and eroticizable subtext of Polyxena's sacrifice is irresistible. Nevertheless the text itself provides no relevant support: even Loraux, e.g., who reads Polyxena's sacrifice as a "marriage to death," can only point to such lines as 368 (Polyxena transfers her body to Hades), 414 ("mother who bore me, I go off below"), 416 (she goes ἄνυμφος ἀνυμέναιος), and 482-84 (the chorus leave Asia, exchanging the θάλαμοι of Hades for European dwellings).[69] Burkert talks of "the sexualization of ritual killing" and the sacrifice of virgins, alleging a structuralist parallel and

66. Loraux (1985) 77-80 = (1987) 45-46, similarly.
67. So read by Mossman (1995) 157-58 and even Loraux (1985) 96-97 = (1987) 60. The offer of her neck (549) provides the sacrally-required willingness of the sacrificial victim: see Aischylos, *Agamemnon* 1297, and compare Burkert (1972) I.1 (pp. 10-11) = (1983) 3-4.
68. Compare Hdt. 1.8-12 of Gyges and Kandaules' wife; *Dissoi Logoi* 2.9; and in this play 933-34 where the insufficiently-clothed state of the suppliant Troiades is part of their abasement at the sack of Troy.
69. Loraux (1985) 68-75 = (1987) 36-42, and (1985) 91-98 = (1987) 56-61.

therefore identity between the two—but even so, virgin-sacrifices are a preliminary ritual to hunt or war.[70] A third bizarre interpretation is Michelini's vision of "necrophilia" in Hekabe's vague fear of lines 605-08 that the sailors will wrong Polyxena's body.[71] The cases of Sophokles' *Antigone* (653-54, 810-16, 1240-41, etc.) and of Euripides' *Iphigeneia (in Tauris)* (364-71, 856-61, etc.) are another matter, and the respective texts do insist on a "marriage to death" of some sort.[72] If there is a religious aspect to Polyxena's sacrifice, it perhaps symbolizes the obtaining of the strength or life force of the enemy by consuming his blood or liver—or (as here) his children, particularly the last living child of the dead king. There is no doubt some connection, even a biological one, between male aggression and male sexuality (as a glance at chimpanzees would seem to show), and that may have colored or even prompted the tales of Antigone or especially Iphigeneia (though, as noted above, Iphigeneia's sacrifice is as first fruits of the creature hunted, humans), but such a Freudian current remains subliminal while a *pathos* of a very different sort is here foregrounded by the text.[73]

The description of Polyxena's death here elicits not *erôs* but *pathos*. In Sophokles' earlier *Polyxena*, she was also demanded as a sacrifice by Achilles' ghost in a famous appearance, there too probably so that the winds would blow.[74] In that version, since the high point of the play was Achilles' ghost and not Polyxena's striking bravery (as here in *Hekabe*), one presumes she went to her death unwillingly. Euripides alters that tradition, not by adding extraneous *erôs* but by heightening *pathos*. Staging the death of the young and beautiful was appealing to Attic dramatists because it was so pathetic—as Herodotos 1.87.4 famously notes, it is a horror for parents to bury their children.[75] Beauty is good and thus sad to lose, and most such stage victims were women (Menoikeus in *Phoinissai* being the great exception), because women in Greece had less social status and power than men, and hence were more likely and believably subject to being sacrificed.[76] Talthybios' comparison of Polyxena to a statue, ἄγαλμα, seems to be a rep-

70. Burkert (1972) I.7 (pp. 70-85) = (1983) 58-72. He can only explain Polyxena's sacrifice by unsupported analogy: "Geht dem troischen Krieg die Opferung der Iphigenie voraus, *so* folgt die Opferung der Polyxena ihr nach. So erhält Achilleus sein Teil von der erbeuteten Frauen" (emphasis added; p. 79; tr. 67). The only parallel he offers is astoundingly remote: an Arabic report of a medieval Russian custom according to which a maiden who volunteered for a kind of suttee was first gang raped and then strangled (p. 80; tr. 67). I believe Forbes-Irving (1990) 38-57 has sufficiently refuted the ritual theory of metamorphoses.

71. Michelini (1987) 161-68. Necrophilia was not unthinkable as Hdt. 3.50.1, 5.92η.2-3 proves (not cited by Michelini).

72. As Mossman (1995) 154 notes; she adds the case of Euripides' "Makaria" (*Herakleidai* 500-34, 574-96) which seems to me less clearly a "marriage to death."

73. As Fontinoy (1955) shows, the idea that Achilles and Polyxena were affianced and that her sacrifice is a kind of suttee is not found in Greek literature before Lykophron, *Alexandra* 323-29, and the Hellenistic source of Seneca's *Troades*; the phrases in Euripides, νύμφην τ' ἄνυμφον, παρθένον τ' ἀπάρθενον (612) do not establish her sacrifice as nuptial—rather they are an example of pathetic paradox imitative of Aischylos, *Persae* 680, and similar to Euripides, *Hekabe* 194, 566, *Helen* 690, *Supplices* 32, *Herakles* 1133, etc.

74. Calder (1966), accepted with some adjustments by Mossman (1995) 42-47. As Calder and Mossman argue, the Sophoklean play predated the *Hekabe* since Euripides makes only a brief allusion to the appearance of Achilles' ghost, and he surely would have gone into greater detail had not Sophokles already upstaged him.

75. Golden (1988).

76. Mossman (1995) 142-47 discusses this and refutes Loraux's views convincingly.

resentation of funerary monuments; in this case she is her own monument.[77] And the particular deathblow, to her throat, reminds one not only of sacrificial animals but of her own brother Hektor's death by a blow to the throat (*Iliad* 22.324-25).[78] Her deliberate self-stripping works on two levels—it is an artistic quotation of sculpture (just as Talthybios hints), in particular of a kneeling bare-torsoed "Stumbling Niobid" (now in the National Museum in Rome) of ca. 435 ± 5 B.C.E. (and recall the connection I hypothesized between Aischylos' *Niobe* and Euripides' *Hekabe*).[79] And it is also a last representation of Polyxena's choosing death and dying free—she wills death and she wills her own nudity so that she cannot be shamed in death, having already given all that could be taken.

Part of some readers' difficulty in seeing the dramatic unity of the *Hekabe* seems to lie in a misappraisal of Polyxena's role and character. She is not a "romantic hero" who achieves distracting prominence.[80] In fact, her willing death and the manner of it is a careful contrast to the ongoing corruption of Hekabe; moreover, Polyxena attracts our pity, and her untimely and unjust death is a part of the action which destroys and disempowers old Hekabe.[81] Polyxena takes and enacts the power available to her, the *dunamis* of dying by her own will, and Euripides portrays that death as noble (all the Greeks honor her, 572-80).[82] Nowadays we often speak of "death with dignity," desiring for ourselves such freedom in our exit as we can discover and enact. Very different will be Hekabe's end. Second, by portraying Polyxena as a noble and wholly admirable victim (even her executioner is "both unwilling and willing, from pity for the girl," 566), Euripides elicits pity from his audience. This girl, we feel, least of all deserved to die—young, innocent, and forthright in facing and even willing her fate. Finally, her death, however pitiable, is still a disaster for her old mother Hekabe. That disaster is in fact made all the greater by the nobility of Polyxena's death and the character therein revealed. That disaster, first of the twin blows to strike Hekabe on stage, pushes her along the path to corruption by powerlessness. The last proximate bit of the world she knew has been torn from her and senselessly, inhumanely, and sacrilegiously skewered to allow an enemy's corpse and ghost to drink her blood. Hekabe is indeed "of all women the most harsh-fortuned" (πασῶν γυναικῶν δυστυχεστάτην, 582).

77. Mossman (1995) 158-60 notes that his horses stood for her brother Hektor's monument: *Iliad* 17.432-34.

78. Mossman (1995) 160, who also compares Euripides' own later Amphitryon in *Herakles* 319 and Menoikeus in *Phoinissai* 1091-92.

79. On the date and modeling of the statue see Ridgway (1981) 55-57, plate 25.

80. Collard (1991) 21, 24. Compare Murray (1946a) 90: "The one light that shines through the dark fury of the *Hecuba* is the lovely and gentle courage, almost the joy, with which the virgin martyr, Polyxena, goes to her death."

81. Compare also Collard (1991) 31: "Polyxena's sacrifice . . . is still chiefly part of Hekabe's suffering."

82. In fact it would seem that they honor her as a victor by piling leaves on her, 574, as the scholion notes (Collard [1991] ad loc.) and as is confirmed by Pindar, *Pythian* 4.240 and 9.123-24. See also Mossman (1995) 160-61.

Hekabe laments her daughter's death as one of her many miseries (585-88) and as poignant through Polyxena's nobility (589-98).[83] Hekabe's remark that Polyxena's nobility in death takes away the "excess" (591-92, τὸ λίαν) refers to the "excess" of evils (κακῶν, 588) which are occurring to Hekabe herself, and which would have occurred to Polyxena had she *not* died nobly. Now Hekabe prepares for Polyxena's burial, the last act of love left to her (604-18). Hekabe fears that her daughter's body may be desecrated by the Greeks (604-08), just as her son's body had been abused not so long ago: *Iliad* 22.369-74, the Greeks stab and mock the body (contrast *Hekabe* 571-80, the Greeks deck the body and praise the person); *Iliad* 22.395-404, Achilles mutilates and drags Hektor's corpse through the dust. There is also of course the foreshadowing of the abuse of Hekabe's own body in its ultimate dehumanized metamorphosis into a dog's body. Her activities here also allow the discovery of Polydoros' body by sending a servant to the shore for cleansing saltwater (609-11). But this is no merely dramaturgical or empty plot-forwarding speech: Hekabe also makes two significant remarks which further the portrait of her destruction. First she utters the *gnomê* that goodness and badness of human nature is invariable (596-99), as a query: "is it not remarkable that . . . ":

> ὁ μὲν πονηρὸς οὐδὲν ἄλλο πλὴν κακός,
> ὁ δ' ἐσθλὸς ἐσθλὸς οὐδὲ συμφορᾶς ὕπο
> φύσιν διέφθειρ' ἀλλὰ χρηστός ἐστ' ἀεί;
>
> the wicked man is nothing other than bad,
> but the virtuous is virtuous and does not corrupt his
> nature by misfortunes, but is good always?

As a remark on Polyxena it is justified; as an implicit approval of her own goodness it is about to be ironically deconstructed. Hekabe will not always be an ἐσθλός or a χρηστός person; she will soon take an inhuman revenge. Second, Hekabe connects Polyxena's death with her own prior experiences of disaster and oppression (619-23). Her house and home—that is, her city and family—were once most blessed in wealth and children, but she as an old woman has come to nothing (ἐς τὸ μηδὲν ἥκομεν). This is the end of her lament for Polyxena; but Euripides adds a reflection on the transience of wealth, honor, and all that "we" might take pride in (622-28) in order to deepen the audience's pity. Any one of us could also suffer grave misfortune; the sort of thing which we see happening to Hekabe could one day strike us.[84]

83. Her remarks on nobility of character have been seen as anachronism, but as above (n. 60) they are part of Euripides' intention to appropriate heroic material to the concerns of his own day.

84. As for example in his contemporary Herodotos' remarks on Kroisos put in the mouth of Solon, who also advises living like Kleobis and Biton (Hdt. 1.30-32), a precise parallel to Hekabe's (or Euripides') statement, 627-28: κεῖνος ὀλβιώτατος / ὅτωι κατ' ἦμαρ τυγχάνει μηδὲν κακόν.

After a choral interlude (the second stasimon) lamenting the disasters which have befallen the Trojan women and in which sympathy for their sufferings is elicited by a reference to the tears of Spartan women who have also suffered loss from the war (629-57), Polydoros' body is carried on stage by the servant sent to fetch saltwater for Polyxena's body (658-60). Hekabe is described by the servant as "she who excels every man and woman in sufferings," which is not poetic exaggeration but the claim of every speaker who describes or addresses Hekabe. As her mistress enters, the servant proclaims what she, but not yet Hekabe, knows—that the very last blow has fallen (667-69):

> ὦ παντάλαινα κἄτι μᾶλλον ἢ λέγω,
> δέσποιν', ὄλωλας κοὐκέτ' εἶ, βλέπουσα φῶς,
> ἄπαις ἄνανδρος ἄπολις ἐξεφθαρμένη.
>
> Mistress all-miserable and more than I can
> say, you are ruined and exist no more, though gazing on the light,
> childless, manless, cityless, you are wholly destroyed.

Hekabe, as already at 431 ("I died before death came") and 622 ("I have come to nothing"), is in effect among the living dead. In truth, having lost her world, having suffered more than one can bear, Hekabe has been destroyed (ὄλωλας) and lacks her being (οὐκέτ' εἶ). She is without child—now that Polydoros is known (at least to the servant) to be dead;[85] she is without man—she has no powerful male to defend her in a male world; and she is without society—her city is a smoking ruin. She is thus indeed ἐξεφθαρμένη—utterly destroyed, wholly reduced to nothing.

When Hekabe realizes what is lying before her, she too confesses her destruction and nonbeing: ἀπωλόμην δύστηνος, οὐκέτ' εἰμὶ δή (683).[86] The final blow has fallen, and of or to her there is left nothing. Immediately she turns to thoughts of evil revenge (685-87):

> αἰαῖ, κατάρχομαι νόμον
> βακχεῖον, ἐξ ἀλάστορος
> ἀρτιμαθὴς κακῶν.
>
> Alas, I begin the Bacchic
> song, just now informed
> of evils by a spirit of revenge.

The "Bacchic song" will of course immediately suggest maddened women rending the flesh of men (compare below ad 1075-78).[87] It is important to note that the *alastôr* is *not* the ghost of Polydoros who appeared in the prologue:[88] he asked *only* for burial and to fall into his mother's hands, and he

85. Since Kassandra no longer counts, being mad and in the household of Agamemnon.
86. The terminal δή stresses her emphatic agreement with the servant's earlier οὐκέτ' εἶ (668).
87. Herakles' infanticidal rage is also Bacchic: see *Herakles* 1119, 1122 which picks up the Bacchic imagery of the choral ode 891-99, sung as he kills his children; even Antigone's woe over her brothers is Bacchic in Euripides, *Phoinissai* 1489.
88. As Collard (1991) ad 684-87 (p. 167) seems to assume by connecting ἀλάστωρ here with 704-07 where Hekabe refers to her dream described in 69-72.

will get *all* that he requested (49-52). An *alastôr* is a "personified power of vengeance for spilled blood"[89] and is here connected with Hekabe alone. Hekabe will be seeking blood for the blood of her son. And what are the evils of which she is being informed? Surely not the death of her son (no *alastôr* taught her that), rather it is the vengeance to come, just what one would expect to learn from an *alastôr*.

Hekabe next inquires of the circumstances of her son's death and disposal (694-720)—the servant informs her the body was cast up on shore, from which Hekabe leaps to the correct conclusion that Polymestor killed him (that it was by sword she can apparently tell from the body: σιδαρέωι τεμὼν φασγάνωι, 719). The motive is assumed to be the gold deposited with him. This is all implicitly an argument κατὰ τὸ εἰκός—but is gotten through quickly because Polymestor's motive is not crucial, so long as it be treacherous, and almost any motive for killing a child fostered with him would be treachery. Euripides keeps the focus clearly on Hekabe's sufferings and powerlessness; the chorus again reiterates that theme (σε πολυπονωτάτην βροτῶν, 721) as they announce the advent of Agamemnon.

Agamemnon strides, commanding, onto stage, demanding the reason for Hekabe's delay in performing the funeral of Polyxena (726-32). He notices the Trojan body and there ensues a disengaged exchange—Agamemnon and Hekabe simply talk past each other (733-51). This is partly to allow Hekabe to debate whether and how to entreat him for aid, though Euripides could have accomplished the same in another way—e.g., Hekabe could debate with the chorus while Agamemnon is known to be approaching. More significantly, such a disconnection is a sign and enactment of Hekabe's isolation and powerlessness.

For Hekabe, the decisive consideration is that she would not be able to avenge her children without Agamemnon (749-50). The one act left to her is revenge; the one way to that revenge will require Agamemnon's collusion. She tells Agamemnon of Polydoros' death at the hands of Polymestor greedy for gold and of the disposal of her son's body as sea junk, θαλασσόπλαγκτον (752-82). They agree that she is destroyed and has nothing left (783-86): a crucial agreement, for it shows that they have some relation—though it concerns only the oppression of Hekabe.

In a long monologue Hekabe appeals to Agamemnon, on every ground she can think of, for support (787-845). The casting about for something that will move him is itself indicative of her desperation and powerlessness: she rages like a caged beast. She first appeals to law and logic—Polymestor has

89. Burkert (1977) § III.3.5, p. 281 = (1985) 181 citing Aischylos, *Agamemnon* 1500-01, *Persae* 353; Sophokles, *OC* 787-88; and Euripides, *Medea* 1333. Fraenkel (1950) ad 1501 compares indeed Aischylos, *Persae* 353, and also Euripides, *Elektra* 979, *Phoinissai* 1556, and *Orestes* 1668-69: "spirit of vengeance." In Euripides before the *Hekabe* I would compare not only *Medea* 1333 but also *Hippolytos* 820; and after *Hekabe*, not only *Elektra* 979 etc. but also *Herakles* 1234 and *Orestes* 337, 1669.

done wrong and must be punished (790-92) while Hekabe has suffered unholy things (788-89): the balance must be restored. Agamemnon, she claims, is bound to fulfill this law since, if he does not, he risks corrupting (διαφθαρήσεται, 802) law itself, i.e., the whole system by which he lives (800-05). She concludes by reminding him (and us) once again of her fall from power to powerlessness (809-11): "I was once queen and now am slave; once of flourishing family but now childless and old; I am a cityless exile, the most miserable of mortals." The first appeal fails; Agamemnon averts gaze and face (812-13), and Hekabe bewails her lack of skill in persuasion (814-19). In the very depths of her despair she takes stock of her status of abjection (820-23): "Why then could one yet hope to succeed? Those who are my children no longer exist for me, I myself am destroyed, enslaved in shamefulness, and I look upon this smoke billowing over my city."[90]

Hekabe's second appeal (the καὶ μήν of 824 signals a deflection of the discourse)[91] will be so odd that Euripides adverts it by Hekabe's parenthetical remark, "well perhaps this part of the argument is strange, to propose sex, but nevertheless it will be said" (824-25).[92] Hekabe means Kassandra, her sole living child, dead to her (οὐκέτ' εἰσί μοι, 821) by her madness and through being sex-slave to Agamemnon: "by your side sleeps my child" (826). And what is Hekabe's appeal? She pimps her daughter; she seeks to gain by Agamemnon's use of Kassandra's body (828-30):[93]

> ποῦ τὰς φίλας δῆτ' εὐφρόνας λέξεις, ἄναξ;
> ἢ τῶν ἐν εὐνῇι φιλτάτων ἀσπασμάτων
> χάριν τιν' ἕξει παῖς ἐμή, κείνης δ' ἐγώ;
>
> At what value will you reckon her nightly sexual favors, milord?
> And for her loving embraces in bed,
> what thanks will my child get; and what will I get for her?

Horrid indeed and nothing can soften the shock or palliate the objectification. Hekabe makes her daughter, the *hetaira* or *pallakis* of Agamemnon, into nought but his *pornê*, whore.[94] Bad enough that Kassandra should be mad, should have her valid prophecies disregarded always,[95] should be the sex-slave of the lord of the conquering host; Hekabe chooses, as the first of the evils of the *alastôr* now possessing her, further to demean her daughter. The last relation of love and family still possible for her she chooses to

90. Compare Aischylos, *Agamemnon* 819-20, also of Troy.

91. Denniston (1954) 351-52 comparing line 1224; see also p. 358.

92. Reading Nauck's conjecture ξένον for the MSS κενόν as does Collard; if κενόν be retained, the parenthetical remark serves the same function but less clearly.

93. We know Agamemnon is pleased with Kassandra by the chorus' report 121-22: τῆς μαντιπόλου Βάκχης ἀνέχων / λέκτρ' . . . "loyally upholding the bed of the Bacchic prophetess." I accept the emendation of Diggle (1982) 321-23 proposing ΛΕΞΕΙΣ for ΔΕΙΞΕΙΣ in 828. Euripides uses εὐφρόνη with sexual connotation at *Troades* 665 and *Bacchae* 237 and composes a probable double-entendre at *Phoinissai* 727.

94. Conacher (1961) 22-23 calls Hekabe's appeal a "base device" and the "calculated return of whores and pimps"; Luschnig (1976) 232: "her use of Cassandra's favors is a final degradation . . . Hekabe's love for her child becomes secondary to her lust for revenge"; and Michelini (1987) 151-54: "she is taking to herself the status of pimp."

95. Compare Aischylos, *Agamemnon* 1202-13.

reduce to a relation of exchange. Just as her vengeance will be a dehumanized and dehumanizing exchange, so is this, her means to that vengeance. Her entreaty to Agamemnon stands in stark contrast to her failed appeal to Odysseus—rather than trying to recreate a humane relation of *charis*, she objectifies the remnants of her existing relation with Kassandra.[96] That is Hekabe's "offer"—her entreaty is that Agamemnon must do right by the dead Polydoros because Agamemnon is (in virtue of his "marital" possession of Kassandra) bound in ties of familial affinity to Polydoros (833-35).[97]

Hekabe's immediate thoughts on realizing her son's death were of the Bacchic evils of an *alastôr* (685-87); she first entreats Agamemnon to aid her search for vengeance arguing on the basis of law (787-811), but descends deeper into her own dehumanization (812-23) and pimps her daughter Kassandra to add power to her appeal (824-35). Her peroration fuses fanciful wishes with ironic anticipation of her own impending dehumanization. She wishes (εἴ μοι γένοιτο, 836) that there were voice in her arms, and hands, and hair, and footsteps (by magic or miracle), which would cling to Agamemnon's knees and clamor every sort of argument (836-40). That is, she wishes that all the parts of her body through which she enacts the varying *dunameis* of, e.g., embracing, working, and walking would be granted the presently needed *dunamis* of persuasion and supplication. Each part of her would both cling and cry. She wants her gripless parts to gain grasp, her voiceless parts to gain voice.[98] But soon she will lose all voice and all grasp in her new canine form.

Agamemnon grants the very minimum—he wants unholy Polymestor to give satisfaction (852-53) so long as no one suspects himself of acting to please Kassandra (854-56). Hekabe's plan, already alluded to in the νόμον βακχεῖον of 685-86, requires only Agamemnon's complicity and noninterference (870: σύνισθι; 872-74: ἐπικουρία . . . εἶργε ⟨τήνδε⟩). She begins with an outburst (864-67) that "no one is free," but rather everyone is subject to the power of money, luck, law, or the crowd (πλῆθος) and so cannot act as he intends. That is, paradoxically, even the seemingly powerful are not—she herself being the example of one who by luck has lost all power, all *dunamis* of action. But if no *one* is free or has *dunamis* to enact intention, perhaps a πλῆθος has some freedom? She will make use of the strength and power of collective action—the women are powerless as foreign female slaves, but in a mass and with trickery they take power (876-87).[99] That is almost always a good solution for individual powerlessness *vis-à-vis* the

96. Contrast Sophokles' Tekmessa to Aias asking him for *charis* in turn: *Aias* 520-24.

97. On κηδεστής see Thompson (1971) 110: "any male affine is κηδεστής."

98. The parallel is Aischylos, *Agamemnon* 37-38, and Euripides, *Hippolytos* 418, 1074 ("if this house could speak")—inanimate nature gains voice to express the inexpressible or suppressed.

99. Both her mythic exempla—the slaughter by the Danaids of their unwanted bridegrooms (886) and the slaughter by the Lemnian women of their disloyal husbands (887)—suggest the power of concerted action by relatively powerless women against powerful men. Mossman (1995) 26-27 notes that female solidarity or collective action is both Euripidean and even Homeric (*Iliad* 6, 22, and 24). Neither exemplum is inculpatory: the Danaids were pardoned and remarried (Pindar, *Pythian* 9.112-16, and Aischylos, *Supplices*), and the Lemnian

world of humanity: to enact the *dunamis* of some part of the world of humanity. Individual *adunamia* is offset and countered by collective *dunamis*.[100] Agamemnon agrees to allow Hekabe to entice Polymestor to the slave women's tents and to delay Polyxena's funeral (888-904).

The third stasimon (905-52) is the lament of the Troiades for their lost city and home: the destruction of their city was the destruction of their world. They begin with the statement that Ilion had been numbered among the unconquered cities (ἀπορθήτων, 906)—the shock of being reduced from a status of freedom and power right down to destruction is the greatest that can be imagined for a city. That implicit parallel to Hekabe's oppression (from queen and mother to childless slave) is immediately strengthened by the image of the city as being shorn of its crown of walls (910-11: ἀπὸ δὲ στεφάναν κέκαρσαι πύργων), as if the city were a crowned queen.[101] Not just shorn but burnt (912-13), and now no more. They retell the oft-told tale of Ilion's capture in the midst of peaceful safe nighttime—the ordinary life of eating and sleeping, merriment and worship, was cruelly broken into (914-32).[102] The rapidity of their destruction, of their fall from power to powerlessness, is conveyed by the swift and episodic narrative (almost filmic in the abruptness of its "cuts")—from safe bedroom to futile supplication to overseas slavery, husbands slaughtered before their eyes (933-37: just 25 words). Their experience is a lighter parallel to Hekabe's—family and city gone, and now instead of empowering blessedness their lot is powerless slavery.[103] They conclude with a curse against Helen, wishing that she may never get home (944-49), a curse known since Homer to be futile. Everything about the ode underlines the pitiably powerless state of the Troiades as a kind of lighter parallel to the sufferings of Hekabe.

Polymestor with his speechless sons enters, mouthing pious hypocrisies (953-67); his first meaningful word (φίλτατ' of Priam, then of Hekabe) is false, and he ironically declares "nothing is trustworthy" (οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν πιστόν, 956). Indeed. Although he is there, unbeknownst to him, to allow Hekabe's revenge, one must understand that his presence, especially when announced with such lies, would increase Hekabe's pain—and rage. The murderer of her last son, the incarnate symbol of the world which has wronged her, the visible focus of her vengeance stands before her. To hide her rage (perhaps already flashing from her eyes?) she pretends to be so miserable as to be *ashamed* to look Polymestor in the face (968-74).[104]

women, though an example of wicked parricide (Aischylos, *Choephoroi* 631-34), return to male companionship, were not punished, and, as Burkert (1970) suggests, are to be connected with annual festivals of the renewal of fire during which the women abstained from men (compare Hdt. 2.171 and Aristophanes' *Eccles.*).

100. So Rabinowitz (1993) 121 rightly.

101. City walls as a crown, no doubt from their appearance on the brow of a hill, "crowning" it. Already in *Iliad* 16.100 and Pindar, *Olympian* 8.30-36, even of Troy.

102. Compare Collard (1989-90).

103. Two details reinforce this image: (a) they sat as suppliants clad shamefully in only one gown, μονόπεπλος, like Dorian girls, famed in Athens for their improperly revealing clothing (*Andromache* 595-99 and n. 68 above); and (b) their supplication seemed to them even at the time as useless (οὐκ ἤνυσ').

Polymestor believes himself still to be in a position of power from which he can dissimulate even in the face of his living victim, the mother of the boy he murdered for gold; Hekabe must practice the δόλος she threatened (884). Her trickery takes advantage of Polymestor's known proclivity—she inveigles him into his deathtrap with promises of greater gold (while providing him with the opportunity to lie about her son, 986-97), gold buried near Troy (1000-10) and smuggled out of Troy (1012-16). She repeatedly reassures him that he is safe among friends and that her information is for him and his sons alone (978-79, 1000, 1005-06, 1017) because he is a good man (990: φίλταθ', 1004: εὐσεβής); and he is prone to such inveigling for it accords with his own public image as a friend, good and true, to Hekabe and the Greeks (953-54, 981-85). Even as she descends to her final and inhuman act, an act of vengeance, though destroyed and disempowered (her man, her family, her city gone forever), Hekabe retains sufficient *dunamis* to get her treacherous friend to act as she needs.

And she, with the cooperation of the other women who have suffered as she has (if not as deeply), has also the residual *dunamis* of enacting her vengeance. We learn from Polymestor what happens next, for as an obscenity it occurs offstage. Although many, perhaps most, readers of the play come to it already knowing what Hekabe's vengeance will be, Euripides has not had Hekabe describe it in detail to Agamemnon (who seems to assume she will simply kill Polymestor, 856, 876-77). The chorus imagines Polymestor's imminent demise "by an unmilitary hand" (1034). The vengeance takes place offstage precisely because the horror and terror are increased for the audience if they must *imagine* what is done.[105] The greatest horrors (as the greatest joys) are individual, and each theatergoer would (as each reader might) imagine a vengeance of particular terror. As Polymestor is being blinded, we too see nothing but only hear his voice shrieking (1035)—we are left to imagine the horde of frenzied women, Bacchants indeed. As he reacts to the attack on his children (1037), we picture the Troiades in the act of slaughter. Polymestor's own later account is that they killed his sons and *then* blinded him, so that his first cry might seem to confirm the assumption of Agamemnon and the chorus that Hekabe has plotted death for Polymestor.[106] His second cry likewise allows one to picture him crying out for his children as he dies.[107]

As Hekabe bursts forth, exulting in her vengeance, we learn from her

104. Compare rightly Lesky (1972) 335 (tr. 245); and Kovacs (1987) 106.

105. Compare Aischylos, *Agamemnon* 1343-47, and *Choephoroi* 869-74; Euripides, *Medea* 1271-78, *Herakles* 734-62, and *Elektra* 1165-71.

106. He cries "I am blinded of the light of my eyes" (1035), which is formally ambiguous because a common Greek metaphor for dying was "losing the light of the sun" (compare *Hekabe* 411-12 and 435-37).

107. Collard (1991) ad loc. rightly notes: (1) σφαγή may refer either to his own "wound" (as at *Supplices* 765, *Elektra* 1228, *Phoinissai* 1431; or even Aischylos, *Agamemnon* 1389; Sophokles, *Trachiniae* 573, 717) or to the "killing" of his sons; and (2) the vocative τέκνα allows either. The reversed order of the cries is probably an imitation of Aischylos, *Agamemnon* 1343-46: Meridor (1975).

what has been done: with the help of the Troiades, Hekabe has blinded Polymestor and killed his sons (1044-55). She exults not only in her deed but in Polymestor's newly imposed relative powerlessness—his heavy blows (1041) worry her not (1044). Despite—or perhaps because of—the parallels cited to punishment by blinding,[108] it cannot be overlooked or denied that Hekabe's vengeance is an inhuman horror. She has mutilated Polymestor and killed his two sons, who were innocent as her own boy had been. Bodily mutilation of any kind held a special horror for the Greeks;[109] and the mutilation of sight seemed deeply horrifying: note the reaction to Oidipous' self-blinding (Sophokles, *OT* 1268-79, 1297-1308). Agamemnon will confirm by describing her deed as "impossible daring" (τόλμαν ἀμήχανον, 1123).[110]

Polymestor stumbles on stage like a beast (1057-58):[111]

> τετράποδος βάσιν θηρὸς ὀρεστέρου
> τιθέμενος ἐπὶ χεῖρα καὶ ἴχνος
>
> making the motion of a four-legged
> mountain beast on hand and foot.

His mask and words confirm for the audience his bloody blinding (1066-68) as he rages like an animal seeking to eat human flesh (1070-73):

> πᾶι πόδ' ἐπάϊξας
> σαρκῶν ὀστέων τ' ἐμπλησθῶ,
> θοίναν ἀγρίων τιθέμενος θηρῶν...;
>
> Which way may I leap upon them
> and fill myself with flesh and bones,
> making a feast like a wild animal's?

Hekabe's vengeance has dehumanized Polymestor, robbing him not only of his eyes but also of his reason—he crawls about on all fours, seeking to consume his enemies.[112] Two images fuse in his frenzy—the madness of dehumanization and the madness of Maenads. Polymestor's state is Euripides' re-presentation of the blind raging madness of Polyphemos, who violated *xenia* by murder and denial of burial, was blinded, and threatened further bestial acts and shouted for help (*Odyssey* 9.395-412, his raging, 456-

108. In historical or quasi-historical accounts, blinding is frequently a punishment for treachery. In Greece or Greek literature: Hdt. 8.116.2 (his six sons by a Thracian chieftain); Hdt. 9.93.3 (Euenios by the citizens of his town, Apollonia); Sophokles, *Antigone* 966-76 (Phineus' sons by their stepmother in Thrace); and of course especially Oidipous' self-blinding (Sophokles, OT 1268-79; Euripides, *Phoinissai* 62).

109. Hdt. 9.78.3-79.1 records that Pausanias refused to mutilate Mardonios' body—"only barbarians do that," as at *Rhesos* 513-15 (threats to impale Odysseus and feed him to birds) or in Sophokles' *Tereus* where the Thracian king rips his sister-in-law's tongue from her mouth. Mutilation is associated with the horrible Erinyes in Aischylos, *Eumenides* 187-89. In Euripides threats of mutilation in the form of impalement are attributed to the barbarian Thoas at *IT* 1429-30.

110. Compare Abrahamson (1952) 121 "as bestial as [her] tormentors"; Lesky (1972) 337 (tr. 247): "Unmaß bestialische Rache"; Luschnig (1976) 228, 232 "so inhuman and unjust that it dehumanizes her utterly"; Michelini (1987) 171 one is "glad of the punishment and revolted by it in equal measure"; and Rabinowitz (1993) 108, 121.

111. With Porson's καί for MS κατ' (1058). This is the earliest attested use of ἴχνος in Euripides, which usually means "track" or "step" but can mean "shin, leg" as at *Elektra* 859, *Troades* 1328, *IT* 266, *Ion* 741, *Phoinissai* 1718, *Orestes* 1439, 1468, and *Bacchae* 1134.

112. Compare Achilles' threats to Hektor in *Iliad* 22.346.

60, threats). That is, by this device Euripides assimilates Polymestor to a thoroughly unsympathetic creature, the wild, violent half-man Cyclops. The second image was adumbrated when Hekabe suggested that her vengeance would be Bacchic (685-87); now Polymestor takes up that image as he himself is carried away in madness (1075-77):

> ποῖ πᾶι φέρομαι
> τέκν' ἔρημα λιπὼν
> Βάκχαις Ἄιδα διαμοιρᾶσαι
> σφακτά, κυσίν τε φοινίαν δαῖτ'
> ἀνήμερόν τ' ὄρειον ἐκβολάν;
>
> Whither and how am I carried off
> abandoning my children
> for Bacchants from Hell to butcher
> as meat, and for dogs to eat as bloody feast
> savagely and roughly made into garbage?

Polymestor's language reflects the disintegration of his psyche, soon to be mirrored and magnified in Hekabe's canifaction. The Troiades have become Bacchants from the kingdom of death who butcher his kids;[113] they then, as one expects for frenzied Bacchants, will cast the kid-meat into the wilderness where it will be gnawed by dogs.[114] The image of kid-meat gnawed by dogs not only foreshadows Hekabe's impending metamorphosis but was the ultimate post-mortem horror for a Greek.[115]

Polymestor cries for help (1085-98), with the expectation that it will come, in contrast to Hekabe's futile cries (when she learned of Polyxena's sacrifice, 154-64); and behold, Agamemnon hears his cries and comes (1109-13). Greeted by Polymestor with an ironic "friend" (φίλτατ', 1114), Agamemnon sees Polymestor's disaster (1116-19), and Polymestor tells him it is Hekabe who has "destroyed—not destroyed but over-destroyed" (1121). Agamemnon insists that Polymestor not resort to barbarism of hands which rend (1126-29); rather he, the impartial judge and righteous ruler, will judge fairly (κρίνω δικαίως, 1131). Polymestor puts the best face on it he can and claims to have killed Polydoros to benefit the Greeks (1132-44)—and surely Alkibiades defected to the Spartans as an act of patriotism? Polymestor reveals his own unpitiable depravity in seeking to defend himself. He also

113. The verb διαμοιράω is literally "to divide up into shares," as if to joint the meat into cuts ("flank steak" and the like). The verb here picks up its prior use in line 716, Hekabe's description of Polymestor's deed done to Polydoros; elsewhere in Euripides attested only at *Hippolytos* 1376 (the protagonist wishes he could be jointed to death to escape the pain of his crushing wounds); compare also its one occurrence in epic, *Odyssey* 14.434, to distribute portions of meat.

114. The adjective ἀνήμερος, hapax in Euripides, seems to be an Aischylean echo: *Eumenides* 14 and *Prometheus* 716, "savage" (of inhuman places or peoples); it is usually applied to plants, meaning "wild," and is thus parallel to the οὐριθρέπταν of line 205. And ἐκβολή (passive) means anything thrown out and is found elsewhere in Euripides only at *IT* 1424, of shipwrecked sailors spewed up by the sea. The reference to mountains would suggest Maenads as well as harshness and wildness. I have tried in my translation to convey the *relational* sense; the literal version ("wild mountainous throwaway outcast") seems distortingly flat; Collard's "thrown out inhumanely on the mountain" is not flat but lacks sufficient force.

115. Compare above nn. 29-30. Add *Odyssey* 3.259 (dogs), 22.30 (birds); Euripides, *Ion* 505 (birds and beasts); Thuc. 2.50 (birds and dogs).

participates in the dehumanization of others in treating Polydoros as merely a token or counter in the conflict between the Greeks and Trojans. Indeed, "no one can be trusted." He then describes the obscenity done to him (1150-75), of which the audience has so far only heard hints and shrieks. The women cooperated to strip Polymestor of his twin spears (κάμακε, 1155),[116] on pretence of admiration (1155-56), and deprived him as well of his twin sons (1157-62). When the women attack him directly, they again act in a mass so that he describes them as many-armed like an octopus (1162-64).[117] They blind him after killing his sons so that his last vision of anything is of his children's corpses. To the inhuman Polymestor the women seem tricky subhuman horrors like a collective many-armed octopus (cp. *Odyssey* 5.432 and Theognis 215-18),[118] as he concludes by slandering: "neither land nor sea brings to birth a race like women" (1181-82). And he proclaims his own bestial character while again anticipating Hekabe's metamorphosis (1173-75):[119]

> θὴρ ὡς διώκω τὰς μιαιφόνους κύνας,
> ἅπαντ' ἐρευνῶν τοῖχον, ὡς κυνηγέτης
> βάλλων ἀράσσων.
>
> Like a beast I pursue the murderous bitches
> searching in every corner, like a hunter,
> beating and smashing.

Both hunted and hunter are red of tooth and claw. Each robbery, of spears, of sons, of eyes, is symbolic of a deprivation of power: military, familial, and personal.

Hekabe counters, after a conventional prologue on the evil of false eloquence (1187-94),[120] by answering his two claims, that he killed Polydoros to help the Greeks (1197-1216) and that he is a friend of the Greeks (1218-32). As a foreigner he could never truly be a friend (1199-1203),[121] nor was it likely that the Greeks would ravage his lands (1204-05; contrast 1142-44): it was the gold that drove him (1206-07). She refutes his claim of benefi-

116. The word refers to poles or staves for support as well as to spear shafts: perhaps not only synecdoche ("shaft" for "spear") but the connotation of "support" (as in its one occurrence in *Iliad* 18.563: vine poles) or "defence" (cp. Aischylos, *Agamemnon* 66; and as elsewhere in Euripides: *Elektra* 852, *Phoinissai* 1403) was intended.

117. Verrall's bold emendation of the admittedly flat and pointless πολεμίων δίκην ("as enemies do") to πολυπόδων δίκην ("as octopi do") is clearly correct. Mossman (1995) 194 n. 66 calls the unemended text "intolerably flat."

118. Also Pindar fr. 43 Sn. = 208 Tu.; and Sophokles, *Iphigeneia* fr. 307 R.

119. The word μιαιφόνος "murderous" has overtones of inhumanity in Euripides: *Medea* 266, 1346 of Medea; Pasiphae to Minos in *Kretae* fr. 82, lines 36-39 (in Austin [1968]; the play is 428 B.C.E. or earlier: see Cropp and Fick [1985] 70, 82); *Troades* 881 (of Helen); *Elektra* 322 (of Aigisthos); and of the Sphinx in *Oidipous* fr. 83, line 20 (in Austin [1968]; Cropp and Fick [1985] 70, 85 date this play to 419 B.C.E. or later), and *Phoinissai* 1760.

120. The closest parallel is probably the slightly later *Clouds* of Aristophanes, where the Good and Bad Logoi dispute (889-1114); compare also Euripides' own *Medea* (579-87); and Sophokles, *Antigone* 1045-47.

121. Euripides implicitly relies on the Greek feeling that foreigners were alien; compare Hippokrates, *Airs, Waters, Places*; see Hall (1990) 1: "the barbarian is often portrayed as the opposite of the ideal Greek." She discusses Euripides' *Hekabe* pp. 107-10 and suggests that Polymestor is Euripides' invention since he lacks genealogy and reflects the Attic stereotype of Thracians as greedy (Thuc. 2.97) and treacherous (Zenobios 4.32).

cence by pointing out that killing Polydoros or handing him over as hostage would have done the Greeks some good while Troy still stood, but the same act, done when the Trojan world had been destroyed, rings false (1208-16).[122] Secondly, he is no friend to the Greeks, for were he, he would have given the gold to them in their need (1120-21); but as it is he keeps it for himself.[123] It is necessary for the dramatic economy of the play that Polymestor appear vile since Hekabe's revenge must seem indeed vengeance (but excessive); and Hekabe has at least this modicum of power to show that Polymestor's dissimulation is that. Agamemnon irritably (ἀχθεινά, 1240) concurs, for as Greek leader he does not like to be shown up by a foreign slave woman, even one to whom he has promised complicity (σύνισθι, 870); moreover he tries to distance himself from his involvement, despite Kassandra and despite his alliance with Polymestor (858), calling Hekabe's evils and those of Polymestor ἀλλότρια (1240), "not properly my own." Agamemnon's judgment is hardly judicial—he only agrees with Hekabe that Polymestor has done wrong by Greek standards (1243-48), and gives as the basis of his judgment that he himself would be subject to censure (ψόγον, 1249) did he decide otherwise (1249-50). As to Polymestor's sufferings, they are in recompense for his deeds (1250-51); nothing is said of or to Hekabe.

The final exchange involves Hekabe taunting Polymestor, adding insult to injury, and receiving in return the prophecy of her final obscene disempowerment (1252-79). Hekabe will become a bitch with flashing fiery eyes (κύων γενήσηι πύρσ' ἔχουσα δέργματα, 1265), climb the ship's mast, and fall into the sea where her tomb will become a mere nautical landmark. The metamorphosis, in Euripides' play, serves as the sign and consummation of her dehumanization[124] and is certainly no mere automatic and tidy closing reference to a traditional mythic end.[125] It of course must occur offstage for it is obscene (not to mention technically unenactable upon the ancient stage), and yet we as audience (readers) must come away assured that the canifaction is certain—thus Euripides validates it by having Polymestor report the prophecy not in his own words but as from Dionysos (1266-67).

The flashing fiery eyes of the canine Hekabe have caused needless trouble for commentators: eyes that flash with fire are a typical feature of animals in Greek thought (derived no doubt from the common observation that

122. Note that 1214, ἡμεῖς οὐκέτ' ἦμεν ἐν φάει, picks up the theme of destruction and disempowerment—the city being dead, so are any survivors (compare above ad line 668, e.g.): as oft stated by Hekabe, without her city she lacks being.

123. And we have Polydoros' authority for believing that Polymestor did *not* need it since his land is rich (ἀρίστην) and his folk valorous (φίλιππον: referring to their cavalry, ἱππεῖς, always a sign of wealth).

124. Meridor (1978) 32-34 argues that the metamorphosis is not a horror and adduces as parallel the "positive" Euripidean serpentifaction of Kadmos and Harmonia and their ultimate translation to the land of the blessed, *Bacchae* 1330-39, only the last part of which is confirmed by Pindar, *Olympian* 2.78. But (as noted above) Dionysos himself indicates that they aren't happy with their new shape, 1340-43 ("you'd be happy now had you been sensible then"), and Kadmos says that the sentence is too harsh (1346): ἐπεξέρχῃ λίαν.

125. As Collard (1991) 32 aporetically suggests. For Meridor (1978) 32-34 the metamorphosis is only meant by Euripides to "reestablish his heroes in the world of traditional myth."

animals' eyes seem to "glow" at night), used here to emphasize her dehumanization.[126] To have a "dog's eyes" was an epic expression (*Iliad* 1.225) for being selfish (as we would say, a "dog in the manger")—and surely Hekabe has become wholly self-centered.[127] Eyes are often a symbol of the life or soul of the person: Polyxena referred to her eyes as "free" (meaning her soul) and "put" the light of day out of them by her choice to die (367); but Polymestor had his eyes (like his symbolic spears and boys) ripped from him (1117-18, 1169-71). For all three persons, what happens to their eyes is a symbol or sign of what is happening to them: Polyxena freely puts out the light, Polymestor has his life cruelly torn from him, Hekabe is reduced to bestial form.

Hekabe's sole support and last familial companion Polyxena was sacrificed to honor the tomb of Achilles; but even honor to a tomb the powerless must forego. Hekabe will not have a tomb to be honored—she will get nothing but a nautical landmark (1271-73). The key was given by wily Odysseus (306-20): the good and zealous (ἐσθλὸς καὶ πρόθυμος, 307) man must be rewarded even after death (312, 316). I, Odysseus says, would want my tomb to be seen as honored, for that is a *charis* which endures (319-20).[128] Hekabe, deprived in life of everything that made her life livable, is deprived in death of even the *charis* of an honored tomb—she gets a mere rock pile by which Greek ships steer. And she will even lose her name, as befits one reduced to subhuman status (1270-72), for her tomb will be called after her *shape*.[129]

Such then is the tragedy of Hekabe—not a mere collection of events gathered around the convenient focus "Hekabe," nor even a psychodrama about one woman's awful problems, but a drama, enacted on stage, of corruption through deprivation of *dunamis*. Hekabe is the woman who as a character representing an existing individual is portrayed as not just experiencing these deprivations but as suffering them, as being the object of their enactment. One can point to elements in Euripides' own world that might have led him to write such a play—the long-lasting internecine war of course comes to mind as indeed a βίαιος διδάσκαλος (Thuc. 3.82.2)[130]—it did lead Aristophanes, a year or two before or after this play, to write his *Acharnians* in which Dikaiopolis makes his own separate peace. But the reading offered

126. The eyes of Seirios, the divine dog, also flash fire (1101-03): Σείριος . . . πυρὸς φλογέας ἀφίησιν ὄσσων αὐγάς. Empedokles, fr. B84, and Plato, *Timaios* 45b-46c, play with this to "explain" vision.

127. Also the eyes of raging men "flash fire" in epic: *Iliad* 1.104 = *Odyssey* 4.662; *Iliad* 12.466, 15.607-08 of Hektor in battle; *Iliad* 19.365-66 of Achilles in battle. That the image is intended to depict a frightening, even bestial, visage is clear from its transferred use of Odysseus as he approaches Nausikaa, *Odyssey* 6.131-32.

128. As before, *charis* is untranslatable; here favor, grace, and reward all come into it. An honored tomb was a value for Euripides and his audience: see Lacey (1968) 78-81.

129. Note that in epic the only named animals are horses save the highly humanized Argos (*Odyssey* 17.290-327); see Lilja (1976) 31-32.

130. Pointed out by many critics: Abrahamson (1952), Luschnig (1976), Reckford (1985), Nussbaum (1986), and Collard (1991) 30-31. A scholar once even proposed that Euripides was dramatizing news from Thrace: Delebecque (1951) 154-64. Who knows, he may well have been led to think about Hekabe and powerlessness by events in Thrace—or because of something else. Anyway, he did write about Hekabe and her powerlessness.

here of the play, though it can be enriched by such data, stands firmly upon the text, the sense and reference of the words and images in the text, and is a wholistic insight going forth on its own merits. There is certainly nothing unlikely about seeing the play this way; quite the contrary—it seems to fit well in the late fifth century of Athens, a world steeped in old Homer and new war, in the roles of soldiers and wives, of freemen and slaves.