

ABSTRACT

Howling: Hecuba in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* XIII and Beyond

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Hecuba, the ill-fated Queen of Troy, appears in significant literature from Homer's *Iliad* to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. While the Hecuba of Euripidean tragedy has warranted much attention, Ovid's rendering of her in epic poetry is rather overlooked; this thesis appraises both Euripides' and Ovid's version of the Hecuba narrative. By codifying heroic vagueness in the Euripidean tragedies, *Hecuba* and the *Trojan Women*, and analyzing the differing depictions of Hecuba in each, the first chapter establishes why Hecuba has remained a compelling figure. Next, by noting Ovid's change from tragedy to epic, the second chapter considers the influences on the Ovidian approach in *Metamorphoses* 13.399-57 and compares this approach directly to Euripides'. Through a close reading of the text in Latin, the third chapter discusses the three-fold identity of Hecuba through her three slaughtered children: Hector, Polyxena, and Polydorus. Finally, by considering other instances in Roman poetry, the fourth chapter evaluates the importance of the transformation of Hecuba into a dog in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 13. This thesis concludes that this beastly transfiguration, and the Ovidian Hecuba narrative as a whole, can be read as a commentary on maternal grief, female rage, and feral madness.

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HOWLING

HECUBA IN OVID'S *METAMORPHOSES* XIII AND BEYOND

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In Memory of Sofia Liekweg Elnaggar, انا احبك

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INTRODUCTION

My interest in tragic women began in childhood, from a copy of *Bullfinch's Mythology* and an interest in astronomy. Looking up into the clear New Mexican sky, I would always find Cassiopeia, that famous queen hanging tight to her throne in the stars. For a long time, I held a fascination with the female characters from Greek and Roman mythology but drifted from the love of these old stories as life happened upon me. Upon my return to academia, I did not initially pursue the Classics, but after writing a paper on Clytemnestra and Penelope for a Great Texts class, and receiving some good advice, I took my first Greek class. Through these texts, I remembered my interest in the tragically complex women, such as Hecuba, that are found in the classics. The melding of condemnation, outrage, sorrow, and agency that I found in the Ovidian Hecuba drew me in and held my interest. Not a doomed ingénue, not a wicked witch, or even a selfish queen, like vain Cassiopeia: Hecuba was something different, more complex. And I was hooked.

Who is Hecuba, exactly? She was the queen of ill-fated Troy, originally one of the many wives of Priam, and the mother of Hector and Paris. However, it was many years until playwrights and authors asked the question: what was this experience like for the women of Troy? For faithless Helen, unbelieving Cassandra, and steady Andromache, what fate did they suffer? Even the Greek women got their due, as Homer himself explored the contrast between Clytemnestra and Penelope in the *Odyssey*, as well as highlighting fascinating female characters such as Arete, the wise queen, and Circe, the

capricious witch. Hecuba would wait many years before she received a story worthy of the depth of her emotion and the extent of her change.

Before laying out the arguments of this thesis, a brief overview of Hecuba and her journey as a literary and theatrical character is necessary. What makes her significant and worthy of attention? Can she truly claim the title “the mother of sorrow”? Hecuba appears first in the *Iliad*, an epic Greek poem composed in dactylic hexameter sometime during the Greek Dark Age (1100-800 BCE). The *Iliad* drew on an older oral tradition, making it one of the oldest extant works of Western literature. Part of a lost poetic cycle of mythologized history, it covers only the final weeks of the ten-year Trojan War. In the *Iliad*, while the abduction of Helen purportedly causes the war, the women have few lines — the action focuses on Agamemnon, Hector, and the great, doomed Achilles. Hecuba, the queen of Troy, only appears in the *Iliad* six times, mostly related to the heroic Hector, her most famous son. Homer relegates Hecuba to the role of someone’s wife or someone’s mother. Her depiction is a reflection of the perception of women in the ancient world, only noteworthy for their beauty, their faithfulness, or their treachery. They seldom held power, and when they did, like Medea, they met messy ends. However, Hecuba fades from view in the original telling of the downfall of Troy.

Hecuba, like most characters from the *Iliad*, appears in many different texts from authors in Ancient Greece and Rome. However, her most well-known depictions come from Euripides, in the *Trojan Women* and the eponymous *Hecuba*. Additionally, Hecuba has remained present beyond the works of authors in antiquity. She famously appears in one of Shakespeare’s most celebrated works, *Hamlet*. Marina Carr’s 2015 interpretation of the Greek classic, *Hecuba*, has won many awards on the Irish stage, including the 2020

Best Actor award for the role of Agamemnon. Her rendition has shown that the themes of Hecuba remain relevant to the modern audience. Hecuba has remained a character of interest to poets and playwrights and continues to be popular even today.

As well as an overview of Hecuba, a basic overview of both Greek theatre and Roman poetry and of the authors Euripides and Ovid is necessary. A ground-floor understanding of the purpose of the Greek theater, beyond its ability to entertain, as well as a rough schema of the physical space on which plays were staged, will orient the portions of this thesis that focus on Euripides' tragedies. Additionally, a survey of Roman epic poetry and its significant features and writers will give context to the literary heritage of the Ovidian text. As well as surveying these institutions, I will briefly give a biography of each Euripides and Ovid, with additional focus on Ovid's poetic style.

Greek theater rose to prominence in fifth-century Athens, where yearly religious festivals took place featuring tragedies or comedies. One of these festivals, the City Dionysia, was a five- or six-day spring festival which featured tragedies. The dramas at the City Dionysia took place on the south slope of the Acropolis. The natural features of the land were enhanced, and wooden seating was arranged in a semi-circle (*theatron*) facing the area where the plays took place. While there is some scholarly debate about the exact layout, it featured a dancing area (*orchêstra*) behind which the stage entrance (*skênê*) was positioned. Only men wrote for the City Dionysia, and only men performed the plays. The most well known of the Greek tragic playwrights are Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, who often competed against each other at these festivals. However, not all their works survived to the modern day, and some are only available as references or fragments. Nevertheless, the impact of Greek tragedy can hardly be

overstated. Without them, much of the work of that great English playwright, Shakespeare, would not exist.¹ Like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the influence of the Greek stage is so pervasive and ubiquitous in Western culture beyond even literature, that a recounting of the works inspired by it would fill hundreds of pages, if not books.

Euripides, one of the most influential tragedians, lived 480-406 BCE, during the height of the Athenian democracy.² There are between 92-95 plays attributed to Euripides, most of which only survive as fragments. Due to his continuously building popularity in antiquity, he has more extant plays than either Aeschylus or Sophocles. Frank Laurence Lucas observes of the personality of Euripides and his writing habits, “Once he was indicted for impiety; always he maintained an aloofness, eccentric in Athenian eyes, from public life — an unsociable hermit, lurking now in his library, the first ever formed in Athens, now in his study, a sea cave on the isle of Salamis” (1963: 6). His innovations with both the Chorus and the Prologue, seen in both *Hecuba* and the *Trojan Women*, were far-reaching and genre-building. Edith Hall says of the musicality of Euripides in antiquity, “Euripides’ songs were extremely popular: the ancients believed that some Athenians in Sicily saved themselves after the disaster at Syracuse in 413 BCE by singing some of his songs to their captors (Plutarch, *Life of Nicias* 29)” (Morwood 2000: xxxix).³ Like Ovid’s, Euripides’ body of work grew in popularity and significance even past his death.

¹ On *Hecuba* in 16th century English literature, see Westney 1984.

² On Euripides and his influence, see Lucas 1963.

³ For more on the connections to Sicily and Syracuse within the *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba*, see Easterling 1994.

Where the Greeks perfected tragedy, the Romans worked wonders in the form of epic. When one considers the tragedies, the Greeks usually surpass the Romans.⁴ Some of that is due to the Romans themselves: they did not value the classical Greek theater as highly as the Homeric epics or hymns. However, the Romans perfected the poetic form, from elegy to epic. The triumvirate of Roman poets are the Augustan poets Virgil, Horace, and Ovid. Epic poetry rose to prominence in this period, combining art with politics explicitly, even more than the Greek theater which had come before. Virgil was the premier Augustan poet, and the *Aeneid* remains a work of genius, giving the Roman people a foundational myth and epic. Known as the “golden age” of Roman poetry, the Augustan period is characterized by a flourishing patronage of poets and a focus on the new Rome that had emerged from an extended civil war. It was this period and this community of poets and their legacies that greatly influenced Ovid.

Last, I would be remiss not to recount the life of Ovid and his influence. Publius Ovidius Naso, one of the later Augustan poets, lived 43 BCE-18 CE. Regarded now as one of the most important Roman poets, in his lifetime, Ovid’s *corpus* was defined by the influence of those that had come before, such as Callimachus and Virgil.⁵ He was well-known for his elegy, though his great epic, the *Metamorphoses*, has since eclipsed his earlier work, including his lost tragedy *Medea*. Though numbered with the greats, Ovid

⁴ See Goldberg 1996: 272-3; Goldberg makes the argument that tragedy never fell out of fashion with Romans, but instead was reinterpreted and recontextualized; for a historical overview of Roman tragedy, Erasmo 2004; for more on Latin theater in general, Beare 1951.

⁵ On some appropriated Virgilian language in the Ovidian *corpus*, see Rivero García 2018: 321-28 (the version used is the available pre-print edition of this article); on the impact of the Virgilian Orpheus on Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Anderson 1982: 26-36; Knox 1986.

fell out with Augustus and was exiled for many years.⁶ After the Roman period, he rose to prominence during the Middle Ages and the Italian Renaissance, when his work was referenced both on stage and on canvas to great effect. Ovid is an essential link in the continuous chain of Western and World literature, with a legacy that reaches back to Homer and continues forth today.

From the types of poetry he wrote to the style in which he wrote, Ovid sought to replicate facets of Virgil's career and *corpus*. Philip Hardie suggests that Ovid "[had] the desire to forge for himself a literary stature comparable to that of his immediate and great predecessor, Virgil" (2002b: 3). Ovid also took some of his Callimachean inspiration from Virgil's usage of the style in long-form epic for the *Aeneid*.⁷ Apart from form and style, Ovid has taken inspiration for heroines from Virgil as well. Elaine Fantham suggests that "[t]he immediate Roman model [of a grieving mother] would seem to be Euryalus' mother in *Aeneid* 9" (2004a: 115). In several ways, Ovid has looked to Virgil for inspiration of what literary or poetic paths to tread.⁸ One of the earliest extant receptive works to the *Aeneid* is Ovid's *Heroides* 7, his letter from Dido to Aeneas (Tarrant 2002: 25). Much of the Ovidian *corpus* can be seen as a response to Virgil, a sort of one-sided rivalry that pushed Ovid to innovate and create.

⁶ The cause of Ovid's exile is still a subject of much scholarship; nevertheless, Ovid leveraged his exile to even more literary fame.

⁷ See Wheeler 1999: 25: he observes that "[the] Callimachean polemic was reinterpreted and exploited by Augustan poets to address the demands of their own poetic milieu." See also Tarrant 2002: 22.

⁸ See Tarrant 2002: 23-27 for how Virgil shaped Ovid's poetic career; he suggests, "Ovid could contemplate Virgil's *oeuvre* as a whole... and could measure his progress against what Virgil had achieved" (23).

Ovid is most notable for his inventive use of genre, intertextuality, and poetic style, which is epitomized in the *Metamorphoses*. Scholars have identified him as a writer of elegy; however, scholarly opinion has started to shift, with some thinking that Ovid has been undervalued as a tragedian. By writing the *Metamorphoses*, especially narratives like the story of Hecuba in book 13, Ovid enters into the canon of great tragedians, as well as a notable writer of epic. Regarding Ovid, Richard Tarrant suggests, “innovation for him consisted less in free invention than in seeing richer possibilities in existing material” (2002: 18-9). His most well-known work, the focus of this thesis, the *Metamorphoses*, has fascinated reader and scholars, due not only to its wide-ranging mythological narrative but also to its clever poetic style. As Stephen Wheeler observes, “style reinforces, even becomes content” (1999: 13). The *Metamorphoses* is an exploration of transformation and emotions in the medium of epic, written in the Callimachean style.⁹ With a sweeping timeline from the beginning of creation to Rome, which is heralded as an Ovidian innovation, it can be read as a series of tragedies (1999: 21-2).¹⁰ Its Callimachean roots are found in daisy-chained epyllia, which were “Hellenistic substitute[s] for epic” (Solodow 1998: 18). By utilizing this poetic style, Ovid wove a complex tapestry of themes and evocative myths.¹¹ L. P. Wilkinson

⁹ See Tarrant 2002: 21-3 for the impact of Callimachus on Ovid and his poetry, specifically the *Metamorphoses*; see also Kenney 1977: 52, who makes the amusing assertion that “Ovid is Super-Callimachus”; Heyworth 1994; Wheeler 1999: 8-30.

¹⁰ See Lafaye 1904: 89-90 for a list of poetic genres found within the *Metamorphoses*; Solodow suggests that the *Metamorphoses* also references other genres beyond these; he states, “Second only to epic comes tragedy” 1988: 18.

¹¹ See Solodow 1988: 7-36 for an in-depth analysis of the structure of the *Metamorphoses* as a whole; see Fantham 2004b: 6 on the Callimachean style of Ovid’s

observes, “[Ovid] might simply have recounted the stories in succession, without connexions or setting; but instead, his ingenious mind, fascinated as ever by puzzles, wove a continuous narrative in which there are some fifty stories long enough to rank as epyllia and some two hundred others that are treated more cursorily or merely referred to” (2005: 144-5). This unique nested narrative style allowed Ovid to foreshadow emotion and story and to create subtle connections within his epic poem to a greater extent than previous Latin epics.¹²

Why is Ovid’s version of the Hecuba narrative significant? Though the Hecuba epyllion itself is only about 175 lines within the *Metamorphoses*, it references many existing stories or works of poetry and theater, sometimes obliquely. The Euripidean tragedies, the *Trojan Woman* and *Hecuba*, have been restructured and reconstructed to the style of Roman epic poetry, even featuring translations of original lines of the plays. Indeed, Ovid has explored his meta-theme of transformation through the very style of his poetry, changing the Greek theater and myth to Latin epic, as well as altering its subject matter in form. Euripides brought Hecuba back to prominence through two tragedies, the *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba*. Nevertheless, it is Ovid who baked the clay that Euripides shaped. Ovid took Hecuba, and focused on her as a person, justifying her transformation as a magnification of human emotions, maternal sorrow, and great misfortune.

In Chapter 1, this thesis will focus on the two Euripidean tragedies, the *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba*, that center on the doomed queen of Troy. By examining the socio-

Metamorphoses which featured “the collecting of short allusive, self-contained poems into a carefully arranged volume that played on internal balance and contrast.”

¹²See Solodow 1988: 13: “It abounds in parallels and contrasts, symmetries and variations, with links of every sort, thematic as well as formal.”

political aspects of theater as well as the purpose of theater in fifth-century Athens, I will evaluate the heroic vagueness of tragic theater. Through the scholarship of Jon Hesk and P.E. Easterling, I will draw a framework from the *Eumenides* and apply it to the two Euripidean Hecuba tragedies. Additionally, I will assess the *Trojan Women* as a *threnody*, a lament-song that features emotional monologues and dialogues, rather than utilizing a more traditional plot structure. Finally, by creating criteria through which I will examine each of the Euripidean Hecuba tragedies, I will demonstrate that Hecuba is a heroically vague character. Heroic vagueness, a multi-faceted sense of narrative, emotional, and moral ambiguity, is part of the reason she has remained relevant and continued to be explored, by Ovid and even in modern theater. French actor Vincent Cassel observed recently, “The revenge of women is something very modern, and these are very strong female characters who want revenge and they want freedom, and this resonates a lot with modern times too” (D’Alessandro 2020). Though spoken of the robotic protagonist of *Westworld*, Dolores, this statement by Cassel could easily fit the Euripidean Hecuba. It is due to her heroic vagueness that she and Euripides’ two Hecuba tragedies remain intriguing to modern sensibilities. She epitomizes the fate of women, especially mothers, in conflict areas. Hecuba’s viewpoint and struggles still seem fresh to the modern audience. It was this heroic vagueness, as well, that made her a prime candidate for Ovidian exploration in the *Metamorphoses*.

In Chapter 2, I will evaluate Ovid’s Hecuba epyllion by way of Euripides’ *Hecuba*. By comparing the relationship both authors had to women through their texts, I will assess Ovid’s and Euripides’ affinity for women. This affinity for women is why both authors examine women, their roles in society, and their emotions through either

tragedy or epic. I will assess the Euripidean innovation of the twinned deaths of Polyxena and Polydorus, and the association of *Cynossema* with Hecuba, and how Ovid appropriates these to use in his Hecuba epyllion. Additionally, I will examine the intertextuality of *Hecuba* and *Metamorphoses* 13.399-575, by examining Polydorus, Polyxena, and Hecuba in turn. Through several instances of verbiage drawn directly from Euripides, Ovid demonstrates a high degree of intertextuality in his Hecuba epyllion. I will evaluate how Ovid replaces Polydorus' voice with that of the narrator, an inversion of Euripides' *Hecuba*. Euripides was not the only author in antiquity who featured the exiles of Troy or the death of Polydorus; in fact, Virgil displays them in *Aeneid* 3. I will show that Polyxena's death has mirrored language in both the Latin and Greek texts, as well as a common comparison of Polyxena as a sacrificial animal. Additionally, I will compare the use of "cub" in each text, and how it relates both Polydorus and Polyxena to Hecuba, the metaphorical lioness. Finally, I will compare the lament of the Chorus in *Hecuba*, and their role as "handmaids of hell" to Hecuba's figurative role as an image of punishment, or a Fury, in the *Metamorphoses*. It is his aptness to transform and renew that makes Ovid's borrowing of Euripides' perspective noteworthy; their Hecuba stands opposed to Aeneas' claim that the exiled women of Troy, now slaves, are fortunate to at least have a home.¹³ The intertextuality between Ovid and Euripides is essential to understanding the point of view of the Ovidian Hecuba epyllion.

In Chapter 3, I will examine Ovid's deployment of language and style in *Metamorphoses* 13.399-575, especially in relation to the three-fold loss of identity Hecuba suffers, which Ovid parallels to her triplicate loss of children. I examine Ovid's

¹³ See *Aeneid* 3, especially the conversation between Andromache and Aeneas.

repetition of the Latin verb *haurio* (drink up) throughout the epyllion, from its first usage at Hector's graveside to its final appearance in the mutilation of Polymestor. There is a dual meaning that can be found in *haurio*, a syllepsis. By taking the meaning figuratively, as well as literally, I will suggest that Hecuba herself is "drunk-up" or "exhausted." Elizabeth Gaskell wrote of exhaustion of spirit, "I am so tired — so tired of being whirled on through all these phases of my life, in which nothing abides by me, no creature, no place" (1906: 478). At the gravesides or deaths of each of her children, Hector, Polyxena, and Polydorus, Hecuba loses aspects of her identity in a mirror of each child's death. For Hector, Hecuba suffers the loss of her status as the royal wife of Priam, the queen of Troy. But even more than just as Priam's wife, Hecuba serves as a metonymy for the state of Troy, the greatest of states (*maxima rerum*, *Met.* 13.508). She is also identified as the "picture of flourishing Asia" later in the text. In Polyxena's sacrifice, Hecuba is severed from her connection to motherhood. I will consider that it is Polyxena's sacrifice and Hecuba's emotional lament which qualify Hecuba as the *mater dolorosa* (mother of sorrows). Through the discovery of Polydorus' corpse, Hecuba's tenuous grasp on her emotions and sanity slip from her. Finally, I will examine how Ovid makes her loss of humanity dependent on a self-armament with rage, even before Hecuba is literally transformed. Hecuba's emotional states are exposed through the building action: sorrow, rage, and madness.

In Chapter 4, I will focus on the canine transformation of Hecuba and the meaning it gives to the Ovidian epyllion. I will consider transformation in the *Metamorphoses*, including transformation into monument through death, and the significance of transformation into beasts. Transformation into beasts, plants, or animals

will be categorized as a censorship or silencing of victims of interpersonal or societal violence. Terry Pratchett wrote of objectifying, “evil begins when you treat people as things (2010: 181). I will examine women’s roles in society, especially as they relate to lamentation and mourning, and I will parallel those roles to the Latin verb *gemo* (howl) in *Metamorphoses* 13.399-575. Additionally, the association of women with the arcane or supernatural, especially for women that fell outside the boundaries of society, will be considered. I will assess the place of dogs in antiquity, including their correlation to the supernatural and the arcane. I will survey other examples of canine transformation, both figurative and literal, in the Ovidian *corpus* and the Horatian. By comparing Ovid’s transformation of Lycaon to that of Hecuba, I will show duplicated verbiage and themes. By comparing the Horatian Canidia to the Ovidian Hecuba, I will show the intertextuality of the Hecuba epyllion and how Ovid raises the question of Hecuba’s inner nature. Canidia stands as a literary figure that represents the worst aspects of women: wickedness and wildness. Finally, I will analyze Hecuba’s transformation in the *Metamorphoses*, from Ovid’s first use of foreshadowing at Hector’s grave to the final judgment placed upon her by the pantheon of gods at the end of the epyllion. Through Hecuba’s metamorphosis, Ovid explores the transformative nature of emotions when facing overwhelming grief.

CHAPTER ONE

Who Calls Her Villain? Heroic Vagueness and Euripides' Hecuba¹

When Shakespeare wanted to reference enormous suffering, his Hamlet asked memorably, “what’s Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba, / that he should weep for her?” (*Hamlet*, 2.2.547-8). Aristotle thought she was the “most tragic” and that she epitomized many aspects of the form (*Poetics* 1453a.29). Hecuba is renowned for the depths of her sorrow and the heights of her rage, best interpreted on the tragic stage by Euripides. But why, of the many tragic heroes and heroines, has Hecuba remained relevant? Generations of playwrights, from Shakespeare to Sartre to Carr, have seen Hecuba as vital and fresh to their stages and audiences. Anne Carson observes of Hecuba that “her story is a war story and Euripides develops it around two of the ugliest principles that govern war stories — necessity and revenge” (2006: 27).² She is a *sui generis* tragic heroine, neither a beautifully doomed ingénue, like Antigone or Iphigenia, nor a dangerously powerful woman, like Medea or Hippolyta; instead, she is most significant for her motherhood, and for her sorrow. Often called the *mater dolorosa*, her image is marred by a bloody act, the mutilation of Polymestor and the killing of his sons, that marks the end of her Euripidean narrative. This complexity of Hecuba remains part of her intrigue.

¹ Translation is my own, unless otherwise noted. The Greek text of Euripides' *Hecuba* comes from Kovacs 1995; the Greek text of Euripides' the *Trojan Women* comes from Kovacs 1999.

² On heroic vagueness, see Hesk 2007; also see Easterling 1997; on the *Trojan Women* in respect to music in tragedy, see Weiss 2018: 100-139.

In this chapter, to reach the heart of why Hecuba has remained relevant, I will discuss how Greek tragedies functioned in the socio-political sphere of fifth-century Athens, how Euripides constructs heroic vagueness into the two Hecuba tragedies, and how Hecuba herself is a heroically vague character. By considering the tragedies as a response to the Melos and Miletus incidents, I will assess the importance of Greek tragedy in the socio-political sphere and expand this concept to include gender politics. I will analyze and respond to the concept of heroic vagueness in tragedy, first put forth by Easterling and Hesk. Additionally, by examining Euripides' two plays, the *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba*, I will evaluate each tragedy as an example of heroic vagueness. Furthermore, I will expand that concept to include heroically vague characters, using Hecuba to develop a framework, and I will evaluate each of the Euripidean tragedies with the criteria of a heroically vague character.

The Socio-Political Aspects of Theater

Athenian tragedy stood in tension between the democratic fervor of Classical Athens and its foundational Homeric myths.³ The Athenian dramatist would use the mythic “historical” past to confront difficult political, military, and civil events happening in the Greek peninsula. Jon Hesk suggests that the Athenian audience, consisting mostly of men of some means, would have been accustomed to watching plays which “unsettled their senses of social and political well-being” (2007: 72). He notes that

³ See Hesk 2007; also see Roberts and Westad 2013: 167-200: “Social history therefore blurs into politics. [Especially due to] the Greek preoccupation with political life — the life of the *polis*” (186). The Athenian process of civic engagement was unique because it put power in the hands of the people, democracy. Thus, the Athenian theater had an impact on civic affairs in a greater way than it would in other political systems. The dramatists could speak directly to and sway the *demos* (people).

the purpose and reception of Greek tragedies is “completely different to the modern western experience of theatre” (2007: 73). The City Dionysia was, at its heart, like all Greco-Roman religious festivals, an expression of communal civic identity. The stage was the appropriate place to comment on, to move, or to make decisions for society (Mendelsohn 2002: 27). Thus, the Athenian theater was as much politics as it was drama.

An example of the merging between the socio-political sphere and the tragic stage, the dual real-life tragedies of Melos and Miletus are important background for the two Euripidean Hecuba plays.⁴ In 499 BCE, the Ionian revolt occurred; the Athenian colony-city of Miletus revolted against the Persian Empire, then ruled by Darius the Great. Darius responded by fiercely subduing the city with military force, killing all the men, and selling the women and children into slavery. The act of brutality was shocking to Athens across the sea. When the tragedian Phrynichus staged *The Fall of Miletus*, he moved the audience to such heavy emotion that he was fined, and the play was banned.⁵ The second of the two tragedies concerned Melos, an island which occupied a strategic location between the warring city-states of Athens and Sparta and their respective allies, the Athenian empire and the Delian League.⁶ During the Peloponnesian war, despite

⁴ On the influence of war on Greek tragedians, see McDonald 2006.

⁵ See Herodotus concerning the enslavement of Miletus; in particular 6.21.1: “[t]he Athenians reacted differently... [they] clearly expressed their profound grief over the capture of Miletus in many ways, but one in particular deserves mention: when Phrynikos composed his play on the capture of Miletus and produced it on stage, the audience burst into tears, fined him 1,000 drachmas for reminding them of their own evils, and ordered that no one should ever perform this play again.”

⁶ For more on the Athenian brutality in the name of democracy and the siege and enslavement of the island of Melos, see Croix 1954: 12-16; also see Thucydides 5.85-116.

remaining mostly neutral, Melos made some small contributions to the Delian League. In 426 BCE, the Athenians responded by demanding tribute from Melos which would make them a *de facto* member of the Athenian empire. A decade later, in 416 BCE, Athenians invaded Melos and demanded that the island become their tributary ally. At the refusal of Melos, Athens razed the island, killing all the adult men and selling all the women and children into slavery. The *Trojan Women* could have been influenced by the political climate that led to the massacre at the island of Melos (Hesk 2007: 78). Both of these acts of war, Miletus and Melos, lay heavy on the Athenian imaginations and were rife for exploration and interpretation by tragedians, especially Euripides.

In addition to commentary on society or politics in general, Euripides comments on gender dynamics and gender politics through the tragic stage.⁷ He, even more than other tragedians, frequently uses foreign or non-Athenian women as tragic heroes, as with the eponymous protagonist of *Medea*. The *Trojan Women* reverses the more traditional Greek-as-hero paradigm by placing foreign women in the role of heroines (2007: 77). Furthermore, the women “transcend their ‘barbarian traits’” by taking on viewpoints of the present-day Athenians (2007:78). In a reversal of position, the Greek characters in *Hecuba* and the *Trojan Women* take the barbarian role by engaging in activities like human sacrifice and enslavement. By using the Trojan women as sympathetic characters, Euripides gives them a more positively coded dramatic role than most foreign women held in tragedy. Euripides, among all the tragedians, makes some of the strongest commentary on gender politics through his plays, especially the two *Hecuba* tragedies.

⁷ See Hesk 2007: 83: he observes that *Medea*’s words would have had a powerful effect on Athenian husbands present in the audience.

Heroic Vagueness and Tragedy

Heroic vagueness, the ambiguity of moral and political stances taken by a play as a whole, is an essential facet of why tragedies were successful in a politically charged time.⁸ The creation of distance is an important tool in the hand of the tragedian and allows facility to explore subject matter that may be troubling to the audience. The earlier example of *The Fall of Miletus* shows that failure to create distance can lead to a negative public reaction, and in that case specifically, censure by the *polis* (city). Style is as important as substance; P. E. Easterling observes that “getting the heroic ambiance right was a serious matter, even in plays where the emphasis was on radically unheroic behaviors of the characters” (1997: 23). Hence, heroic vagueness was utilized by tragedians as a method of audience reception (1997: 25). As an example, the themes in *Antigone* continue to play well for modern audiences due to the heroic vagueness of the tragedy as a whole.⁹ An Athenian audience may have easily seen the solution of the problem presented in the play, the death of Antigone, as a restoration of order into a more known patriarchal structure. The use of heroic vagueness by tragedians has allowed plays that potentially had a strongly political message to be enjoyed by a wide variety of audiences, with varied personal paradigms, through the years.

⁸ See Easterling 1997: 22: he establishes that “the heroic world... is designed to be identifiable, however indeterminate many of its details, and however freely a dramatist could reshape or redefine tradition.” Easterling, along with Hesk, provides the basis of this chapter’s framework for heroic vagueness of a play.

⁹ See Easterling 1997: 28: he explores the use of heroic vagueness through *Ajax* and *Antigone*, showing that “from the start the plays will have been open to very diverse political readings”; also Hesk 2007: 84: he explores heroic vagueness further, stating that “[t]he ‘heroically vague’ idiom may... be what ultimately made Greek tragedy a ‘unifying’ cultural form in sociological terms — just as all social groups in Athens united to worship heroes and gods.”

Heroic vagueness, as it initially has appeared in scholarship, applies to the construction and intention of the play as a whole, not the parsing of one particular character. By analyzing the elements of the *Eumenides*, I will codify the criteria that form a heroically vague play. These elements are as follows:¹⁰

1. Atemporal: the play takes place during the mythic past, not during a specific historical period.¹¹
2. Apolitical: the play does not make any concrete judgments on Athenian politics but allows the audience to insert their own political values.¹²
3. Morally Indeterminate: the play allows both conservatives and radicals to see their preferred moral worldview.
4. Stabilizing: the play is performed amid instability and makes an argument against *stasis* (civil war).
5. Amplifying: the play offers a grander perspective on messy socio-political realities.

These elements, the atemporal, apolitical, morally indeterminate, stabilizing, and amplifying aspects of heroic vagueness, all work together to make the tragedy offer a broad and unifying perspective.

¹⁰ This framework of a heroically vague tragedy is drawn from the conclusions of both Hesk's and Easterling's scholarship; the example of the *Eumenides* is used to establish this framework, and Orestes, its protagonist, is used to construct the following framework in this chapter for a heroically vague character.

¹¹ See Easterling 1997: 22: to Easterling, these characters and mythic settings have "credentials in epic poetry, and they deal in named persons and places which more often than not have a life and tradition of their own."

¹² See Easterling 1997: 22: this "elsewhere ... avoid[s] the danger of immediate political repercussions."

The Two Hecubas of Euripides

Within his two tragedies, Euripides presented different interpretations of the story and character of Hecuba; these two Hecuba tragedies must be surveyed individually before each play can be assessed to be heroically vague. While the *Trojan Women* takes place first chronologically in the post-Trojan War narrative, it was written and performed on the tragic stage second, in 415 BCE, around the time of the Athenian conflict with the Dorian island of Melos, which was examined earlier.¹³ The *Trojan Women* is notable for its extensive and varied female cast, who give different viewpoints on the female responses to suffering and tragedy. Though the title indicates a focus on all the women, Hecuba is the protagonist, since she remains throughout the play. Other significant focal points of the *Trojan Women* are the suffering of Andromache and the death of Astyanax, one of the few crucial moments of action in the tragedy, which mostly contains dialogues and monologues. Much of the play can be read as more of an emotional spectacle than a meaty plot-driven affair. This play is often considered a *threnody*, or lament play, that serves to show the emotional states of women through Hecuba's speeches.¹⁴ Euripides displays on the stage the different struggles and emotional lives of the women, Helen, Cassandra, Andromache, and Hecuba, and how the world of men in which they live, shapes and controls their lives. While less popular at its first staging and in antiquity, the *Trojan Women* was part of the *corpus* of ten canonical plays studied by posterity. For

¹³ See Hesk 2007: 78; he makes the connection between the *Trojan Women* and the "recent Melian atrocity"; also see Storey and Allan 2005: 267.

¹⁴ On tragedy as mourning, see Loraux 2002; for lament and women in conflict areas, see also Nielson 2015.

many years, it has received more attention than the more destructive and plot-driven *Hecuba*. The *Trojan Women* is a play with brutal honesty for the fate of a woman in a war-torn country: the women, and Hecuba herself, have only servitude and rape, along with despair and death, to look forward to. Euripides' focus regarding Hecuba of the *Trojan Women* is more on lament than on a volatile plot or extreme action.

Euripides' second Hecuba is found in the furious eponymous tragedy, *Hecuba*, which takes place second in the chronology of the post-Trojan War narrative and was written and performed first of the two Hecuba plays, around 424 BCE.¹⁵ This play has been called "one of the most brutal and grim plays of a brutal and grim tragedian" (Mossman 1995: 3). *Hecuba* focuses on the deaths of Hecuba's children, particularly Polyxena's, whose sacrifice is a tragic motif typical to Euripides, and Polydorus', whose role in *Hecuba* is often considered a literary invention of Euripides.¹⁶ This play takes the form of a revenge play: Polydorus appears as a ghost at the beginning of the play, Hecuba "dies" as the avenger at the end of the play, and there is a large amount of gore and violence. The appearance of Polydorus at the beginning of the play is dramatic irony since it is the discovery of his body at the end of the play that finally drives Hecuba to madness. In *Hecuba*, she is the *mater dolorosa* (the mother of sorrows), but ultimately,

¹⁵ For a comprehensive analysis of *Hecuba*, especially themes of justice, see Mossman 1995; for the reinterpretation of Euripides' *Hecuba* by Ovid, Curley 2013.

¹⁶ On the origin and development of the mythological figure Polydorus, "the Many-Gifted," see Lozanova 2013.

Hecuba is moved to feral rage as well as lament.¹⁷ This duality in the nature of Hecuba has made her endlessly fascinating to the modern audience.

Hecuba and Heroic Vagueness

In both of Euripides' tragedies that feature Hecuba, *Hecuba* and the *Trojan Women*, the above outlined elements of heroic vagueness can be seen. First, like the *Eumenides*, the Hecuba plays take place in an atemporal position in the aftermath of the Trojan War.¹⁸ By the playwright removing the setting from a specifically dated time, the Greeks of the play, the homebound Achaeans, are not the Greeks of fifth-century Athens; nevertheless, they are a part of Athenian cultural identity. Second, both Hecuba plays are apolitical; although they comment on both Miletus and Melos, an atrocity perpetrated by the Athenians, there is a separation between the actions of the Achaean Greeks on stage and those of the Athenians sitting in the audience.¹⁹ Euripides makes no concrete judgments about the politics or fallout from the Melian attack. Third, the plays are morally indeterminate; while both depict the enslavement of the Trojan women and Hecuba, the Achaean Greeks of the play are generally depicted in favorable terms, allowing the audience to see themselves, also Greeks, in a more positive light. An audience may feel more or less moved by Hecuba's sorrow (the *Trojan Women*) or rage

¹⁷ See Mossman 1995: 37: Hecuba of the plays is consistent with her Homeric portrayal as an "archetypal mother" and "a restraining figure" within the *Iliad*.

¹⁸ See Mossman 1995: 20: Mossman points out that though Euripides is "the least 'Homeric' of the dramatists... Hecuba is... closely linked with the world of the *Iliad*." To her, *Hecuba* directly follows lines of thought or continues action from five passages within the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*.

¹⁹ On the *Trojan Women* as a response to Melos, see Weiss 2018: 101.

(*Hecuba*) depending on if they were more conservative or radical, but there is little call to action. The audience chooses their emotional response to the play and its degree of intensity; there is no call to act concerning the plight of women in war.

While there is no specific call to action, the framing of the *Hecuba* plays around the fate of women in war does have the fourth element of heroic vagueness: it promotes a desire for stabilization in the Greek audience. This is primarily accomplished by Euripides through the centralizing of women in conflict areas as the protagonists within both the *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba*. Through this centralization, Euripides shows the foreign women of Troy in a positive light. In the *Trojan Women*, both Andromache and Hecuba are examples of upstanding women that have been faithful to their husbands, children, and fatherland. Their lamentation is heartfelt and powerful. In *Hecuba*, the protagonist is esteemed by the Greek leader, Agamemnon, and, until the final action of the play, she is also the ideal wife, mother, and queen. Euripides has framed the plight of Hecuba to give the Athenian audience a desire to not see their own wives and daughters in such dire straits. It encourages the Athenian audience to stabilize the political situation in the peninsula, to pursue empire with care, and to turn away from acts of extreme violence in war. The tragedies use the distanced story of the Trojan women to call the Athenian *polis* to stability, though they do not dictate the actions needed to do so.

Finally, by framing the entire question of the treatment of women in war through a grand mythological narrative such as the fall of Troy, Euripides implements the last element of heroic vagueness. The *Trojan Women* raises explicitly the question of honor in

war.²⁰ The death of Astyanax, a source of tragedy for both Hecuba and Andromache, is a source of dishonor for the Achaean Greek men. Hecuba claims that the poet would write upon his grave, “‘This child the Argives slew out of fear.’ / An epitaph shameful for Greece!” (Τὸν παῖδα τόνδ’ ἔκτειναν Ἀργεῖοί ποτε / δέισαντες; αἰσχρὸν τοῦπίγραμμά γ’ Ἑλλάδι, Eur. *Tro.* 1190-1). The shame that she ascribes to the Greeks is the fear of a future resurrected Troy that would come to defeat Greece in the future. She makes them ignoble in their child murder. There is reason to believe that this barbarity is unnecessary; in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus’ most loyal servant is a man that was a foreign prince before being captured and sold as a slave. Astyanax was probably not more than a toddler or young child when killed; so, it would be unlikely that growing up enslaved, he would have either the means or the inclination to avenge his father or his city. His death is a demonstration of the cowardice of the Achaeans, along with the rape of Cassandra, a sacred virgin, and the human sacrifice of Polyxena, though that is not mentioned in this play. These Greeks are dishonorable through their breaking of social norms and their reveling in cruelty. Through this framing, Euripides is able to admonish the current Athenian actions in Melos and other places in the peninsula, within a grand narrative that employs heroic vagueness to distance the audience from the present-day conflict.

The Heroically Vague Character

While there is existing scholarship that examines tragedies in light of heroic vagueness, there has not yet been an examination of individual characters as heroically

²⁰ See Mendelsohn 2002: 225 on feminine suffering as a means to critique greediness or dishonorableness in men; it is “a means rather than an apparent theatrical end in itself.”

vague. The heroically vague character takes on the central aspect of the heroically vague play as an individual: the ability to be seen from multiple viewpoints and to find various depths of meaning depending on the paradigm of the audience. This is not simple moral ambiguity, because one of the main aspects of a heroically vague character is their guilt. Are they the hero or merely the villain of a different person's story? Additionally, characters that are heroically vague have the ability to metamorphose as society changes, taking on new meanings that were previously undiscovered in their depths. They continue to be an evergreen source of reflection on the human character itself. I argue that while a tragedy can, as a whole, be heroically vague, so can a specific character as well. Indeed, a heroically vague character, like a heroically vague tragedy, is one that the audience can map their opinions and values upon, making the character relevant to a wide variety of audiences for an extended period of time. Below are the elements of a heroically vague character:²¹

1. Morally and/or Emotionally Ambiguity: the character performed an action that seems irredeemable but has an emotional justification for the act.
2. Fated Actions: the character is forced into their situation by "forces of destiny" beyond their control.
3. Divine Judgment: the character receives intervention from a divine source to restore necessary order.
4. Familial Motivation: the character is driven by familial bonds and/or a familial curse.

²¹ The character used as a framework for the criteria is Orestes since the *Eumenides* is qualified as heroically vague in the referenced scholarship.

5. Gender Conflict: the character is presented with gender conflict between a male and female view of the world.

The Trojan Women: Threnody and the Heroically Vague Character

The *Trojan Women*, the first of the two plays I will examine through the framework of the heroically vague character, is set in the aftermath of the ten-year Trojan War and is remarkable for its lack of action and its heavy reliance on emotional conversations between the characters of the play.²² Naomi Weiss observes that the *Trojan Women* is “offering instead a relentlessly immobile picture of the captive women’s misery” (2018: 100). Lament dominates the *Trojan Women* more extensively than in other Greek tragedies; it opens the play, closes the play, and appears throughout the play. This emphasizes the musicality of the *Trojan Women*; it is a *threnody* — a lament song. Lament songs were associated with women, especially foreign women from the Near East, such as Hecuba and the other Trojan Women. Weiss suggests, “Lament in this play...corresponds with the protagonists’ gender and foreignness, but at the same time the women’s songs evoke prior forms of women’s music making within Troy, offering us glimpses of a functioning civic life that contrasts sharply with the desolation of the present” (2018: 102). This uniquely musical form, more than even other tragedies, explains why the structure of the *Trojan Women* is oriented less toward action and plot and more toward emotion and dialogue.

In the *Trojan Women*, Hecuba’s status as a foreign queen from a Near Eastern country makes her implicitly emotionally ambiguous to a Greek Athenian audience. The

²² For the section, much of the information concerning lament music in tragedy is from the chapter “Musical Absence: *Trojan Women*”; see Weiss 2018: 100-39.

Greeks in antiquity had a particularly strong in-group mentality, and there was a long history of conflict with the Near East, including Troy and Persia. Instead of rooting against the foreign woman, as in *Medea*, the audience is compelled to be on Hecuba's side as she buries her grandson Astyanax:

οἴμοι, τὰ πόλλ' ἀσπάσμαθ' αἶ τ' ἐμαὶ τροφαὶ
ὑπνοὶ τε κοινοὶ φροῦδά μοι. τί καὶ ποτε
γράψειεν ἄν σε μουσοποιὸς ἐν τάφῳ;
**Τὸν παῖδα τόνδ' ἔκτειναν Ἀργεῖοί ποτε
δεῖσαντες; αἰσχρὸν τοῦπίγραμμά γ' Ἑλλάδι.**
ἀλλ' οὖν πατρώων οὐ λαχὼν ἔξεις ὅμως
ἐν ἧ ταφήσῃ χαλκόνωτον ἰτέαν. (Eur. *Tro.* 1187-93)

Ah me! Those many embraces, and the food I gave you,
and slumbers we shared are all gone away.
What could a poet write of you [sc. Astyanax] on your tomb?
“This child the Argives slew out of fear.”
An epitaph shameful for Greece!
But, though not obtaining your patrimony,
nevertheless, you will have the bronze-backed shield [of your father]
in which you will be buried.

This moving lament is carried by Hecuba until almost the close of the play. In these lines, Hecuba delivers a fierce reproach to the Greek warriors for having killed her grandson Astyanax: “‘This child the Argives slew out of fear.’ / An epitaph shameful for Greece!” (Τὸν παῖδα τόνδ' ἔκτειναν Ἀργεῖοί ποτε / δεῖσαντες; αἰσχρὸν τοῦπίγραμμά γ' Ἑλλάδι, 1190-1). A modern audience might identify with her sorrow as she mourns the loss of the dear things most grandparents share with their grandchildren: hugs, treats, and naps. However, Euripides' construction of a heroically vague character makes the Athenian audience able to sympathize with her as well, even though she is not Greek. While she does not necessarily take actions that are ambiguous morally, she would be inherently emotionally ambiguous to the Athenian audience due to her status as a foreign woman.

As well as being emotionally or morally ambiguous, Hecuba in the *Trojan Women* is a fated character, another component of the heroically vague character. She emphasizes the role Fortune has played in the outcome of both her and the Trojan women's lives.²³ They are without agency, driven and tossed by the actions of men, both friend and foe. She gives a very Greek view of happiness and fortune: "and consider no one to be among the fortunate before dying" (τῶν δ' εὐδαιμόνων / μηδένα νομίζετ' εὐτυχεῖν, πρὶν ἂν θάνῃ, 509-10). Interestingly, Hecuba did not boast when she held good fortune, which aligns with the Greek conception that an extremely fortunate person will ultimately find sadness.²⁴ For women in Greece and Rome, an unremarkable life as a faithful wife and fertile mother was a virtuous life. However, Hecuba was, as far as accounts go, a virtuous wife and mother, though little is known about her outside of the Trojan War and its aftermath. While she may have been initially fortunate in her position, wealth, and abundance of children, the long-lasting war should seem to be a type of continuous misfortune that she experienced for the last ten years of her life. Her life seems driven to ruin and downfall, perhaps due to her earlier fortune.

Next, as a heroically vague character, Hecuba experiences divine judgment for being the mother of Paris. This is similar and connected to being fated, though it bears the connotation of judgment for an action. Since the *Trojan Women* does not include much action, her previous actions can be investigated through the words of other characters.

²³ For more on the mutability of fortune and the character of Hecuba, see Mossman 1995: 110.

²⁴ Herodotus *The Histories* 1.30-3

Helen, in particular, lays the claim of divine judgment on Hecuba. Helen claims the blame falls with her for Paris' actions, and thus the entire Trojan War:

πρῶτον μὲν ἀρχὰς ἔτεκεν ἦδε τῶν κακῶν,
Πάριν τεκοῦσα: δεύτερον δ' ἀπόλεσεν
Τροίαν τε κάμ' ὁ πρέσβυς οὐ κτανῶν βρέφος,
δαλοῦ πικρὸν μίμημ', Ἀλέξανδρον ποτε. (Eur. *Tro.* 919-22)

First, having birthed Paris, she brought into the world
the beginnings of evils: and, second,
the old man destroyed both Troy and me
since he did not at once kill the infant, Alexander,
a bitter imitation of a torch.

Because Paris (Alexander) was the subject of a prophecy, heeded by neither Hecuba nor Priam, in which he appeared as “a bitter imitation of a torch” (δαλοῦ πικρὸν μίμημ', 922) which will burn down the whole of Troy, Helen attempts to lay the blame for the Trojan War on Hecuba's shoulders. Helen indicates that Hecuba bears guilt because she did not protect Troy through correct interpretation and response concerning the prophecy of Troy's destruction, which could be seen as a divine gift. Whether that gift was for Hecuba's good could be debated, but the Greek gods were never known for their altruism. While this argument may be spurious to a modern reader, there is a sense through the play that capricious supernatural forces both work against Hecuba and judge her actions.

Next, Hecuba of the *Trojan Women* is defined by her familial bonds, the driving force of her life. Throughout the play, she laments the state of misfortune her family has fallen into; the men are dead, and the women are being carried away into slavery. Her motivation in the play centers around trying to save the life of her grandson Astyanax,

and, ultimately being unable to do so, to give him a proper burial.²⁵ As seen in the earlier lines 1186-7, she spent much time with Astyanax and deeply mourned the loss of her relationship with him, as well as the loss of his future. She also spends a good portion of the play discussing the fate that lies ahead for her daughter Cassandra. Her actions are primarily driven by the conditions of members of her family, especially Astyanax and Cassandra, throughout the entirety of the *Trojan Women*.

The *Trojan Women*, with Hecuba as its protagonist, is strongly focused on gender conflict. Through multiple dialogues between Hecuba and Cassandra, Andromache, and then Helen, Euripides emphasizes the gendered nature of their predicament. Each woman has a different view on the events that have transpired and what their fate will be now that the Greeks have won. In particular, Hecuba looks down on Helen for her actions leading up to and during the Trojan War and for not being a moral woman. Hecuba condemns Helen for her failure to be faithful and seek out Menelaus before the destruction of the city, calling her “an abominable head” or “a head to be spat upon” (ὄ κατάπτυστον κάρα, 1024). She implores Menelaus to “crown Greece, in a manner worthy of yourself, by killing this woman, laying down this law for other women ... that whoever betrays her husband be killed” (στεφάνωσον Ἑλλάδ’ ἀξίως τήνδε κτανῶν / σαυτοῦ, νόμον δὲ τόνδε ταῖς ἄλλαισι θεῖς / γυναιξί, θνήσκειν ἥτις ἂν προδοῖ πόσιν, 1030-2). The play ends on a sorrowful, but accepting, note from Hecuba: “we are borne away, carried off / ... to a house of slavery” (ἀγόμεθα φερόμεθ’ / ... δούλειον ὑπὸ μέλαθρον, 1310,12) and the chorus: “you cry pain, sorrow / ... for my homeland.” (ἄλγος ἄλγος

²⁵ See Easterling 1987 on how women represent the inside/the domestic, while men represent the outside/the political. Hecuba represents an overlapping of these two spheres of influence; she makes commentary on the actions of the men.

βοῶς /...ἐκ πάτρας γ' ἐμᾶς, 1311,13).²⁶ Hecuba is both a proponent of vicious laws that would punish women and a recipient of gendered violence via her abduction.

Hecuba: A Heroically Vague Protagonist

The second of the two plays, *Hecuba*, has a more traditional plot structure; it has more action and conflict, which lends itself to examination of its eponymous protagonist as a heroically vague character. *Hecuba* has a significant focus on oration and rhetoric with several important monologues that later led to inspiration for Ovid. The more Aristotelian structure of *Hecuba* is conducive to more straightforward analysis than the *Trojan Women*. In terms of heroically vague characterization, the eponymous Hecuba is more easily assessed to have moral and emotional ambiguity. Through the course of the tragedy, Hecuba's emotional state moves from grief and sorrow to madness and rage. The definitive moment when she changes states is at the discovery of Polydorus' body:

οἴμοι, βλέπω δὴ παῖδ' ἐμὸν τεθνηκότα,
Πολύδωρον, ὃν μοι Θρηξ ἔσωζ' οἴκοις ἀνήρ.
ἀπωλόμην δύστηνος, οὐκέτ' εἰμι δὴ.
ὦ τέκνον τέκνον,
αἰᾶ, κατάρχομαι νόμον,
βακχεῖον, ἐξ ἀλάστορος ἀρτιμαθῆ κακῶν (*Hec.* 681-6)

Alas, I see my son Polydorus, dead,
the one whom the Thracian man used to keep safe for me at his home.
I am lost utterly/destroyed, indeed I am no longer.
Oh, my son, my son!
Alas, I begin a lament song,
a **Bacchic song**, a song of evil,
learning just now of evils from an **avenging spirit**.

²⁶ There is an ambiguity in ἐκ πάτρας γ' ἐμᾶς of whether it means “from my homeland,” continuing Hecuba's sentence from line 1312, or whether it completes the Chorus' thought in line 1311; different translators take it each way.

The discovery of Polydorus is where Hecuba turns from sorrow to rage: “alas, I see my son Polydorus, dead” (οἴμοι, βλέπω δὴ παῖδ’ ἐμὸν τεθνηκότα, 681). She sees him as “having died” or “dead” or “a corpse” (τεθνηκότα, 681). While the audience was addressed by the ghost of Polydorus at the beginning of the tragedy, the “avenging spirit” (ἀλάστορος, 686) is not him, but a more general spirit of vengeance (Bond and Walpole 1882: 92). This spirit could even be Hecuba, who chooses the path of vengeance in her grief; her reaction at his death is not one of hope or acceptance but of a darker tenor. Hecuba names her lament a “Bacchic song” (βακχεῖον νόμον, *Hec.* 685-6) which emphasizes the frenzied nature of her emotions. She assembles the other Trojan women in her revenge plot and lures Polymestor into an attack, killing his sons and blinding him by scratching out his eyes. Of her actions, Agamemnon questions her, “What are you saying? Did you do this deed, as he said, / Hecuba, did you dare to do this inconceivable act of daring?” (τί φῆς; σὺ τοῦργον εἴργασαι τόδ’, ὡς λέγει; / σὺ τόλμαν, Ἐκάβη, τήνδ’ ἔτλης ἀμήχανον, 1122-3). The repetition in these lines of cognate verbs and objects lends weight to his question and is an interesting rhetorical device. Because of her “inconceivable act of daring” (τόλμαν ἀμήχανον, 1123), Hecuba’s final act is both understandably motivated and morally reprehensible — repaying murder with mutilation.

Hecuba is a fated character, driven by forces outside her control to an awful end in *Hecuba*. As in the *Trojan Women*, Euripides investigates fortune as an impartially cruel dealer of tragic outcomes. On the source of her anger, Polyxena asks Hecuba:

ὦ δεινὰ παθοῦς’, ὦ παντλάμων,
 ὦ δυστάνου, μάτερ, βιοτᾶς,
 οἶαν οἶαν αὖ σοι λώβαν
 ἐχθίσταν ἀρρήταν τ’

ὄρσέν τις δαίμων (*Hec.* 197-201)

Oh, one having suffered terrible things, O all-suffering,
Oh, mother of a wretched living/life;
What sort, what sort, once again, of unspeakable,
hateful outrage has **some spirit** has incited against you?"

The “some spirit” (τις δαίμων, 201) in this passage is a general spirit, not a specific person. However, Hecuba sees her circumstances as fated: “there is no one, unless you mean Misfortune herself” (οὐκ ἔστιν, εἰ μὴ τὴν Τύχην αὐτὴν λέγοις, 786). The personification or deification of Misfortune (τύχη) could be equivalently called Fortune; there is not a distinction between the good and bad outcomes, revealing the capricious nature of the deity (Battezzato 2018: 175). At her lack of control of the outcome of her life, Hecuba experiences *aporia*, the recognition that “there is no way out of a catastrophic situation” (Nielson 2015: 325). Not only does she recognize the extent of her extreme grief and loss, but the Greek herald Talthybius does as well: “Alas, alas: on one hand, I am an old man; nevertheless, may it be for me to die, rather than to fall by means of some shameful fate [like you]” (φεῦ φεῦ: γέρων μὲν εἰμ’, ὅμως δέ μοι θανεῖν / εἶη πρὶν αἰσχρᾷ περιπεσεῖν τύχη τινί, *Hec.* 497-8).²⁷ Her children and her adversaries alike recognize the desolation of Hecuba’s circumstances. Her course seems to be guided to sorrow by an invisible and inexorable hand.

While Hecuba certainly experiences fate as a driver of her circumstances, she is prophesied to receive divine justice: a death by drowning and/or transformation into a

²⁷ In lines 488-97, the insight Talthybius has about Hecuba’s change in fortune and the role of the gods in misfortune is very close to theodicy, the Christian “Problem of Evil.” However, while he questions if Zeus has intentionally inflicted or cares about Hecuba’s fallen state, there is no conception of the divine as solely a force of good in the world; so, the paradox does not exist in the same way.

dog.²⁸ This theme of beastly transformation is found throughout the play in references to multiple characters. In these lines, Polymestor is compared to a beast after his eyes are poked out by pins:

ὄμοι ἐγώ, πᾶ βῶ, πᾶ στῶ, πᾶ κέλσω,
τετράποδος βάσιν **θηρὸς ὄρεστέρου**
τιθέμενος ἐπὶ χεῖρα κατ' ἴχνοϛ; (Eur. *Hec.* 1057-9)²⁹

Woe is me, where do I go?
Where do I stop? Where shall I find haven,
walking like the **four-footed mountain beast**,
on his hand, along their [the Trojan women's] trail?

He has been dehumanized not only by his own cruelty towards Polydorus, whom he has treated inhumanely, but also by women clawing his eyes out. Polymestor compares himself to a “four-footed mountain beast” as he follows the women to enact his own revenge. It is his inward nature of avarice and bloodshed that has made him beastlike.³⁰ His transformation, which is metaphorical, foreshadows the prophesied metamorphosis of Hecuba.³¹ His final prophecy to Hecuba is thus:³²

Πολυμήτωρ: ἀλλ' οὐ τάχ', ἤνικ' ἄν σε ποντία νοτιϛ...
Ἐκάβη: μῶν ναυστολήση γῆϛ ὄρους Ἑλληνίδοϛ;

²⁸ See Kalfina 2016 on Euripides' innovations in respect to Hecuba's transformation and *Cynossema*.

²⁹ See Battezzato 2018: 223; he notes, “[t]he Pythia was reduced to walking like an animal by psychological and religious shock; Polymestor by blindness and shock”; Aesch. *Eum.* 34-7; Eur. *Rhes.* 208-15.

³⁰ On metaphorical animal transformation in *Hecuba*, see chapter 2; on the importance of transformation into beasts, see chapter 4.

³¹ See Meridor 1978: 32: there are differing interpretations of whether the prophesied metamorphosis in Euripidean tragedy is literal or figurative. Meridor suggests: “Hecuba's transformation into a bitch prophesied in 1265 is often interpreted as a symbolic condemnation of her treatment of the murderer of her son.”

³² See Kalfina 2016: 81

Πολυμήστωρ: κρύψη μὲν οὖν πεσοῦσαν ἐκ καρχησίων.
Ἑκάβη: πρὸς τοῦ βιαίων τυγχάνουσαν ἀλμάτων;
Πολυμήστωρ: αὐτὴ πρὸς ἰστὸν ναὸς ἀμβήση ποδί.
Ἑκάβη: ὑποπτεροῖς νώτοισιν ἢ ποίῳ τρόπῳ;
Πολυμήστωρ: κύων γενήσῃ πύρσ' ἔχουσα δέργματα.
Ἑκάβη: πῶς δ' οἴσθα μορφῆς τῆς ἐμῆς μετάστασιν;
Πολυμήστωρ: ὁ Θρηξὶ μάντις εἶπε Διόνυσος τάδε. (*Hec.* 1259-67)

Polymestor: But not soon, when the ocean water . . .
Hecuba: Surely not, it [the ocean water] will ferry [me] to the borders of the Greek land.
Polymestor: . . .[ocean water] will conceal you, certainly, when you have fallen from the mast.
Hecuba: At the bidding of whom [am I] happening upon forced leaps?
Polymestor: [You] yourself, you will climb upon the mast of the ship, with your foot.
Hecuba: With my winged-back, or in what sort of way?
Polymestor: You will become a dog, having a fiery glance.
Hecuba: How do you know the change of my form?
Polymestor: In Thrace, the prophet Dionysus said such things.

Hecuba is prophesied to receive divine judgment because she has responded to the beastly act of Polymestor with her own.³³ By engaging in murder, she has acted extrajudicially.³⁴ Only by both Polymestor and Hecuba receiving divine judgment can the social order be restored. The fact that her transformation is not magic, but a prophesy received by an oracle, gives the transformation itself a weight of divine influence. Through the fulfillment of the oracle of the prophet Dionysus and a restoration of social order, Hecuba receives divine judgment in metamorphosis.

Hecuba is driven by familial bonds, though to an even greater extent than in the *Trojan Women*, to even murder and mutilation. She no longer mourns only her own

³³ See Meridor 1978: 32: “[t]o give it acceptance, this revelation of the future comes either from the mouth of a *deus ex machina*, a human with superhuman powers, or one who, while not himself possessed of such powers, relates the prophecy of an acknowledged authority.”

³⁴ On the aspects of “wild justice” in the Hecuba narrative, see Mossman 1995.

losses, but expresses that loss outwardly, by inflicting it on others, piling grief with anger. Initially, in *Hecuba*, her grief over the loss of her homeland is overshadowed by the loss of her children and the sight of their dead bodies:

πῶς τί οὖν ἔτ' ἄν τις ἐλπίσαι πράξειν καλῶς;
[οἱ μὲν γὰρ ὄντες παῖδες οὐκέτ' εἰσί μοι,
αὕτη δ' ἐπ' αἰσχροῖς αἰχμάλωτος οἴχομαι,
καπνὸν δὲ πόλεως τόνδ' ὑπερθρώσκονθ' ὀρῶ.] (Eur. *Hec.* 819-23)

How then could anyone hope to fare well?
For those who are my children/were my children are no longer mine,
and I am gone off as a captive to suffer disgraces,
and I see the smoke of the city leaping up.

Hecuba is often considered the archetypal character for sorrow, as she bears the triple losses of her state, her husband, and her children; she declares, “call me the most wretched of all” (ἄγγελλε πασῶν ἀθλιωτάτην ἐμέ, 423), and the handmaid says of her, “women, where is Hecuba, the all-suffering, / who conquers every man and woman in terms of evil fortunes? / No one will take away her crown” (γυναῖκες, Ἐκάβη ποῦ ποθ' ἡ παναθλία, / ἡ πάντα νικῶσ' ἄνδρα καὶ θῆλυν σπορὰν / κακοῖσιν; οὐδεὶς στέφανον ἀνθαιρήσεται, 658-60). The treasured bonds that tie Hecuba to her children ultimately become a source of her destruction.

Finally, Hecuba, as well as fulfilling the other criteria for a heroically vague character, exemplifies gender conflict within the play. She experiences gendered violence both through the loss of Polyxena and also through the enslavement of herself and the other Trojan women. Polymestor, the antagonist, perpetuates a type of misogynist worldview that seems shocking to the modern reader. Polymestor makes this bold claim of the female sex after his mutilation at Hecuba's hands:

ὥς δὲ μὴ μακροὺς τείνω λόγους,
εἶ τις γυναῖκας τῶν πρὶν εἴρηκεν κακῶς,

[ἢ νῦν λέγων ἔστιν τις ἢ μέλλει λέγειν,]
ἅπαντα ταῦτα συντεμὼν ἐγὼ φράσω:
γένος γὰρ οὔτε πόντος οὔτε γῆ τρέφει
τοίονδ' ὁ δ' αἰεὶ ξυντυχὼν ἐπίσταται. (*Hec.* 1177-82)

And so that I not stretch my words long,
**if someone of those men before spoke ill of a woman
or is now speaking or someone will say it,**
I will phrase all those things cutting it short:
for neither ocean nor the earth supports such a race,
and one who always has dealing with them understands this.

Hecuba's experience of gender conflict is evident, not only in this monologue, but also in the enslavement and lack of agency she experiences throughout the play. She seeks to gain control and offer her life for Polyxena but is mocked by Odysseus (400-1). In the previous lines, Polymestor indicates that though only one group of women has attacked him, all women in space and time are to be disparaged: "if someone of those men before spoke ill of a woman, / or is now speaking or someone will say it" (εἴ τις γυναῖκας τῶν πρὶν εἴρηκεν κακῶς, / [ἢ νῦν λέγων ἔστιν τις ἢ μέλλει λέγειν,] 1178-9). However, despite Polymestor's implications, women in antiquity faced hurdles in civic life not faced by men; they often lacked freedom of movement or experienced true bondage. Hecuba is unable to die a heroic death like her son Hector; instead, she must become the property of one of the Achaean Greek men, Odysseus. In classical tragedy, there is built-in gender inequality; women are often the objects to be won or the obstacles to be eliminated. Often, a man's failures, irritations, or even death result in the death of a woman. Women are the currency of tragedy, spent to make the world right again. Nicole Loraux writes that in tragedy, the death of a woman balances the death of a man, often with suicide (1987: 7). Death by suicide is considered a death without glory, unbecoming of the Homeric warrior. However, suicide is seen as the "tragic death chosen under the weight

of necessity by those on whom fell an intolerable pain of misfortune from with there was no way out” (1987: 9). Is Hecuba’s action in the same vein? Is it the last action of tragedy for one who has no other recourse? Is her transformation at the end a type of suicide? The death and methods of death of women within tragedy is often an indication of an unequal power balance.

Greek tragedy remains significant to the modern reader and audience because it was written to stand the test of time. Because Greek theater straddles more than one sphere of life, many different social and political problems could be investigated in a single work. This heroic vagueness of Greek drama led to varied layers of meaning that change depending of the perception and values of the audience. Particularly, as a character, Hecuba of Euripidean tragedy remains an intriguing and inspiring figure to modern dramatists and audiences due to the heroic vagueness imbued into her as a singular character. Whether it is the musicality and depth of her communal lament in the *Trojan Women*, or the heart-rending depth of sorrows and the length to which she is willing to go to avenge her children in *Hecuba*, she stands out among the other women of tragedy. She truly is a “queen of suffering” (*Hec.* 657-60) who has served to inspire many personally and creatively. The ambiguity of Hecuba makes her a perpetual source of tragic emotion and drama; each generation has been able to see themselves in her grief and fury.

CHAPTER TWO

Shadows of Differences: Inspirations of the Ovidian Hecuba¹

Resemblances are the shadows of differences.
Different people see different similarities and similar differences.
(Nabokov, *Pale Fire*)

“Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery,” said Oscar Wilde, and nowhere is that more true than in Ovid’s depiction of Hecuba in *Metamorphoses* 13.399-575. Ovid, who has become one of the most noteworthy and studied Roman poets, partially due to his resurgence in the Italian Renaissance, was heavily influenced by both the Latin and the Greek works that preceded him.² Nevertheless, Ovid showed facility in transmutation and translation; his intertextuality created caverns of meaning to be discovered by the intrepid reader throughout his *corpus*. Indeed, when looking at the Hecuba epyllion in *Metamorphoses* 13, no greater influence can be seen than that of the tragedian Euripides. Ovid took Euripides’ innovations and built on them, expanding, deepening, or even inverting meanings found in Euripides’ tragedies. While Euripides cut the pattern for the portrayal and understanding of Hecuba through his tragedies, *Hecuba* and the *Trojan Women*, Ovid took his pattern and made something new.

¹ Translation is my own, unless otherwise noted. The Latin text for Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* 13.399-575 comes from Tarrant 2004; the Greek text of Euripides’ *Hecuba* comes from Kovacs 1995; the Greek text of Euripides’ the *Trojan Women* comes from Kovacs 1999.

² See Curley 2013: 101-115; 153-161 for the transformation of Hecuba from tragedy to epic; on women and sacrifice, see Loraux 1987.

In this chapter, I will show that Ovid used Euripides' *Hecuba* as the basis for his Hecuba epyllion, through parallels and inversions of the Greek tragedy. First, I will emphasize the similarity in both Ovidian and Euripidean portrayals of women, and how their affinity for women gives each text a common viewpoint in the interest of women's emotional lives. Furthermore, I will compare directly Euripides' and Ovid's portrayal of Hecuba, looking at Euripides' *Hecuba* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 13.399-575. Specifically, I will compare Polydorus' ghostly appearance, the death of Polyxena and the similar usage of language and themes, and the characterization of Hecuba, including her monument, *Cynossema*, and the reuse of lament by Ovid. By comparing the speaking Polydorus of Euripides' *Hecuba* with the spoken to Polydorus of Ovid's Hecuba epyllion, I will show that Ovid creates intentional inversions of language within his rendition of the Hecuba narrative. Next, I will assess Euripides' innovation in connecting the deaths of Polydorus and Polyxena and demonstrate how Ovid has utilized this device within his text. Furthermore, I will survey lines that Ovid has pulled from the Greek and translated to the Latin more directly, especially those surrounding Polyxena's death. I will examine the parallel usage of animal metaphors, specifically "cub" and "lioness" in both Euripides' and Ovid's Hecuba narratives. I will evaluate the different usages of supernatural entities by both Euripides and Ovid, especially the ghost or *imago* (spirits). Lastly, I will compare the use of lament in each author's text and show the connection drawn between Hecuba and Asia in each. Through these analyses, I will seek to emphasize the intertextuality of Euripides' *Hecuba* and Ovid's epyllion, drawing attention to the parallels and inversions of meaning.

An Affinity for Women

Ovid and Euripides stand out amongst writers in antiquity for their approaches to women, both the emotional lives of women and their portrayals, whether on the dramatic stage or the poetic page.³ While the overall theme of the *Metamorphoses* is transformation, this epic poem also focuses on the inner lives of women. Much of the Ovidian *corpus* explores interactions between men and women, often through romantic love. However, Ovid gave attention to more than just the relationships between men and women, and, as Alison Sharrock observes, he “has been called sympathetic to women” (2002: 95). It is Ovid’s ability to highlight feminine emotion and inner lives that has contributed to the evergreen nature of his work. Nevertheless, while having a distinctive focus on women, the *Metamorphoses* often depicts women in situations of personal or societal violence, a negative portrayal of their place in society. On the other hand, many of the stories are told from the perspective of the pursued, the humble, rather than only the strong or the godly. The dual themes of womanhood and transformation play off each other in pivotal ways, as Ovid explored both violence and its impact on women. Likewise, Euripides often emphasized the societal hardships which women underwent and allowed them to have a voice on stage, such as in the *Trojan Women* or *Hecuba*. His plays featured both courageous and brave women, such as Iphigenia, and women who commit wicked deeds, such as Medea, indicating that he sought to understand feminine

³ On “Euripides the Misogynist?” see March 1990: 32-75; March examines how Euripides uses mythological characters, especially “bad women,” and what that indicates about his approach to women. It is these bad women, incidentally, that earned Euripides a negative reputation for slander and misogyny; however, March indicates that they prove the opposite and strengthen the argument that Euripides had an affinity for women. This chapter is utilized for much of the insight on Euripides’ approach to women on stage.

emotions and depict women in their myriad of forms. Euripides' focus on women centers on making them the heroines of his plays, though he experienced accusations of misogyny even in antiquity.⁴ Both Ovid and Euripides continue to stand out amongst their ancient peers for the proto-feminist slant of their works.

There are many strong links between Euripides and Ovid, including their aptness to explore stories from a more feminine vantage to their shared choices of heroines.⁵ The protagonist of the lost Ovidian tragedy *Medea* is also the subject of one of Euripides' most lauded tragedies. More than any other tragedian, Euripides is known for making women the subject of his dramas. Fantham raises the question, "is it a coincidence that three of Ovid's most complex portraits of the mourning mother have antecedents in Euripidean tragedy?" (2004a: 118).⁶ With the *Hecuba* epyllion, Ovid has drawn from not one, but at least two Euripidean tragedies, *Hecuba* and the *Trojan Women*. Ovid includes *Hecuba* in the *Metamorphoses* because of the prophesied transformation at the end of Euripides' *Hecuba*, which does not occur on stage in Euripides' text.⁷ Like many of his other transformations, Ovid has chosen to make transformations that were more subtle or peripheral in older versions more central to his narrative. In *Metamorphoses* 13.399-575, Ovid has taken Euripidean tragedy and transformed it into Ovidian epic.

⁴ An absurd rendition of Euripides is found in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*, which implies that women are angered by his portrayal of them.

⁵ For a list of occurrences of Euripidean drama within the *Metamorphoses*, see Solodow 1998: 19.

⁶ See also Fantham 2004b: 72: she suggests, "Ovid remodels Euripides' dramatic form to narrate *Hecuba*'s emotional transformation from grief to bitter vengeance."

⁷ See Curley 2013: 101-14 for an in-depth analysis of the functional ways that Ovid has transformed *Hecuba* from the stage to the page.

Euripides Transformed

While *Metamorphoses* 13.399-575 is influenced by both of Euripides' *Hecuba* tragedies, it hews more closely to the plot found in *Hecuba*.⁸ Dan Curley observes that the Ovidian *Hecuba* narrative "seems to glory in displaying what the original play never could or never would, including the murders of Hecuba's children" (2013: 101). It is the inclusion and even magnification of these deaths that tie the Ovidian *Hecuba* epyllion closely to Euripides' tragedy, the first *Hecuba* narrative to feature the stories of Polydorus and Polyxena as parallel and interrelated.⁹ Moreover, it is the differences as well as the similarities that I will seek to draw out from the *Hecuba* and *Metamorphoses* 13.399-575, to obtain meaning from the liminal space between the two authors' texts.

A Ghost Speaks: Polydorus

A particularly interesting comparison is the role that Polydorus plays in both Euripides' and Ovid's narratives.¹⁰ Polydorus is sent to Polymestor in both the Euripidean and Ovidian texts; however, Euripides emphasizes *xenia* (guest-friendship), an important facet of Homeric Greek culture, while Ovid does not. Euripides' ghostly Polydorus breaks the fourth wall and addresses the audience in the prologue, while in the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid, as the presumed narrator, addresses the already dead Polydorus,

⁸ Much of this section is owed to observations found in Curley 2013: 101-114.

⁹ See Curley 2013: 102; Fantham 2004a: 120.

¹⁰ For the origin and development of the mythological figure Polydorus, see Lozanova 2013; for the staging of Polydorus' death in space and time within both Euripides' *Hecuba* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, see Curley 2013: 105-8. This section was the inspiration for the comparison between these two passages from Euripides and Ovid, respectively.

an unresponsive corpse.¹¹ These inversions and inclusions exemplify Ovid's reworking of genre while referencing Euripides' drama indirectly:

Ἔκω νεκρῶν κευθμῶνα καὶ σκότου πύλας
λιπῶν, ἴν' Ἄιδης χωρὶς ὄκισται θεῶν,
Πολύδωρος, Ἐκάβης παῖς γεγὼς τῆς Κισσέως¹²
Πριάμου τε πατρός, ὅς μ', ἐπεὶ Φρυγῶν πόλιν
κίνδυνος ἔσχε δορὶ πεσεῖν Ἑλληνικῶ,
δείσας ὑπεξέπεμψε Τρωικῆς χθονὸς
Πολυμήστορος πρὸς δῶμα Θρηκίου ξένου,
ὅς τήνδ' ἀρίστην Χερσονησίαν πλάκα
σπείρει, φίλιππον λαὸν εὐθύνων δορὶ. (Eur. *Hec.* 1-9)

I have come, leaving my hiding place and the gates of gloom,
where Hades dwells away from the gods
I, Polydorus, son of Hecuba, daughter of Kisseus,
and of my father Priam, who, when there was danger of the city of the Phrygians
falling to the Greek spear,
in fear sent me away secretly from the Trojan land
to the house of Polymestor who is a guest-friend from Thrace,
who sows fields throughout the excellent Chersonese,¹³
ruling the horse-loving people with a spear.

Polymestoris illic
regia diues erat, cui te commisit alendum
clam, **Polydore**, pater Phrygiisque remouit ab armis,
consilium sapiens, sceleris nisi praemia magnas
adiecisset opes, animi inritamen auari. (Ovid *Met.* 13.430-4)

The rich court of Polymestor was there,
to whom your father entrusted you
for the purpose of being nourished secretly,
Polydorus, and removed you from Phrygian war,
a wise plan, if he hadn't added great wealth as a reward for crime,
the incitement of a greedy spirit.

¹¹ See Curley 2013: 106.

¹² See Battezzato 2018: 72; Hopkinson 2000: 72; on Kisseus, see Lozanova 2013: 225.

¹³ This references a part of the Hellespont, including where *Cynossema* is located, Hecuba's eventual monument, "The Tomb of the Dog".

Here, Ovid creates a few inversions to Euripides' text, while he follows Euripides' narrative more closely in other aspects. Kisseus, Hecuba's father in these Euripidean lines, presumably was a Thracian king. In the *Iliad*, Hecuba's father was Dymas, making it likely that Euripides intends this link to Thrace to have an implicit meaning (though it is not entirely clear to the modern audience what that link is), possibly related to a cult of Dionysus. Because of this distinction in Euripides' *Hecuba*, both Hecuba and Priam may have held ties of *xenia* (guest-friendship) with Polymestor. Polydorus brings up both his mother and his father in his initial statement referring to *xenia* (guest-friendship) as the reason for his guardianship, though he allows that his father "sent me away secretly from the Trojan land / to the house of Polymestor who is a **guest-friend** from Thrace" (δείσας ὑπεξέπεμψε Τρωικῆς χθονὸς / Πολυμήστορος πρὸς δῶμα Θρηκίου ξένου, *Hec.* 6-7).

While both Ovid and Euripides agree that Polydorus was sent away secretly (*Hec.* 7; *Met.* 13.430-1), Ovid does not allude to a connection between Hecuba and Thrace; she lays the plan fully on Priam, his father: "The rich court of Polymestor was there, / to whom your father entrusted you..." (*Polymestoris illic / regia diues erat, cui te commisit, Met.* 13.430-1). This intertextuality, a paralleling in narrative concerning the sending of Polydorus to Thrace secretly, as well the slight differences, such as the indeterminate relationship of Polymestor to Hecuba, marks tactical derivation by Ovid from the original Euripidean play.

Ovid cleverly references the *Trojan Women* before he introduces Polydorus onto the page. Nevertheless, both Polydorus tableaux take place early on in their respective texts; Polydorus serves as the prologue-speaker in the Euripidean *Hecuba*, while he appears at line 432 in the Ovidian epyllion, which is found in *Metamorphoses* 13.399-

575. The first twenty-five lines of Ovid, 399-425, summarize Euripides' the *Trojan Women*. However, it is a brief touch on the famous tragedy, with the only speaking characters being the eponymous women crying: "Troy, farewell! We are captured!" (*Troia, uale! Rapimur!*, 420). Hecuba, as the focal character of the entire epyllion, bridges the two Euripidean tragedies in lines 425-8 of Ovid, which are analyzed in the next chapter. However, Hecuba does not speak until later in the narrative, in line 494. Thus, Ovid utilizes both tragedies, though in his characteristic style he has made the *Trojan Woman* a segue, while he centers the main focus of the epyllion on the narrative found in Euripides' *Hecuba*: the death of Polydorus and the fallout from the delayed discovery of his body.

While Euripides' Polydorus both comprehends his fate and elucidates it for the audience, in Ovid's narrative, he is entirely unresponsive. However, excepting the Trojan women, the first "character" heard is the narrator speaking to Polydorus in direct address (*Polydore*, 432). Curley suggests that this is to emphasize "that the former tragic narrator is now being narrated" (2013: 106). The Euripidean *Hecuba* is also a revenge play; the ghost of Polydorus appears alone on the stage, addresses the audience, and reveals his fate.¹⁴ Euripides' Polydorus is a divine messenger in the same vein as Patroclus in *Iliad* 23, who visits Achilles asking for a proper burial, and Achilles himself in the lost Sophoclean tragedy *Polyxena*. The Euripidean Polydorus may have either descended from the *skênê* or ascended from below to signal his appearance from Hades. He would then address the audience from an empty stage. These Greek tragedies emphasize that

¹⁴ Another famous revenge play, which also features Hecuba in a small, but vital role, is *Hamlet*; it notably also features a ghost.

these apparitions are “souls” (*psychai*), while Ovid shows Polydorus as *exanimis* (without a soul) (2013: 107). With these changes from Euripides’ *Hecuba*, Ovid has transmuted the animated soul to a lifeless corpse, even while he keeps the flow and order of the action regarding Polydorus’ guardianship and death the same.

The Lioness’ Cub: Polyxena

Polyxena is one of the most noteworthy characters connecting the Euripidean and Ovidian versions of the Hecuba narrative.¹⁵ Euripides is credited for the connection between the deaths of Polydorus and Polyxena. These mythological figures have names that mirror each other: Polydorus “Many-Gifted” and Polyxena “Many-Guest-friends.” Nevertheless, despite this superficial connection, before Euripides’ *Hecuba*, these ill-fated siblings were not strongly connected to each other in narrative. The use of the parallel deaths in the *Metamorphoses* is the strongest argument for the Euripidean inspiration of Ovid’s text. Ovid uses not only the parallel deaths but also uses the same sequence of events as *Hecuba*. He often depicts on the poetic page what was impossible to portray on the tragic stage. In the Polyxena portion of the narrative, both Euripides and Ovid emphasize the sacrificial nature of her ritual murder and compare her to an animal. Additionally, Ovid borrows the focus on Polyxena’s modesty almost wholesale from Euripides. However, the interactions between Hecuba and Polyxena differ between the Greek and the Latin, giving different shades of meaning to each portrayal.

An interesting feature of both works is the depiction of Polyxena as an animal when she is taken from her mother. As Loraux observes, “women in tragedy die

¹⁵ On voluntary sacrifice in Euripides, see Wilkins 1990: 177-94.

violently” (1987: 3). Polyxena is slaughtered, like a sacrificial animal. Euripides gives Polyxena more innocence, depicting her as a deer, while Ovid implies that she is more like her mother than first glances suggest: she is the cub of the lioness. Additionally, both works depict Polyxena being taken from her mother with similar verbiage. These verbal and metaphorical parallels strengthen the connection between the two works in these passages:¹⁶

σκόμνον γάρ μ’ ὄστ’ οὐριθρέπταν
μόσχον δειλαία δειλαίαν
 <.....> ἐσόψη
 χειρὸς ἀναρπαστᾶν
 σᾶς ἀπο λαιμότομόν θ’ Ἄϊδα
 γᾶς ὑποπεμπομέναν σκότον, ἔνθα νεκρῶν
 μέτα τάλαινα κείσομαι. (Eur. *Hec.* 205-10)

For you, wretched, will see me wretched
as the young of a mountain-raised wild beast, a calf
 snatched away from your hands,
 to Hades with my throat cut

sent below into gloom into the earth
 I will lieS dead there amid the corpses.

utque furit **catulo** lactente orbata **leaena**
 signaque nacta pedum sequitur, quem non uidet, hostem,
 sic Hecabe... (Ovid *Met.* 13.547-9)

And just as **a lioness** rages when bereft of her sucking **pup**
 and she follows the enemy, whom she does not see, having found footsteps,
 thus is Hecuba...

In Euripides’ tragedy, Hecuba receives a vision at night, of which she recounts, “I saw a spotted deer being slaughtered by the eager claw of a wolf” (εἶδον γὰρ βαλιὰν ἔλαφον λύκου αἴμονι χαλᾷ / σφαζομένην, *Hec.* 90-1). In this prophetic dream, the deer is a

¹⁶ Two of the passages assessed can be found in the next paragraph, but the words emphasized are discussed in both passages.

metaphorical stand-in for Polyxena and the wolf for Achilles, demonstrating Polyxena's relative helplessness.¹⁷ Particular attention should be paid to the figurative language that assigns Polyxena the role of a sacrificial or "slaughtered" animal (σφαζομέναν). In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Polyxena is also implied to be an animal ready for slaughter: "she was led [as an animal] to the bloody altar" (*crudelibus aris / admota*, 13.453-4). While *ducitur* or *admota* can generally mean "be led," with the presence of a sacrificial altar the implication of both words is that Polyxena is "led as an animal" and (*OLD* s.v. *duco* 2.a. *passim*; s.v. *admoveo* 2) and led to slaughter in the "feral rite" (*fera sacra*, *Met.* 13.454). Additionally, when Polyxena refers to herself "as the young of a mountain-raised wild beast, a calf" (σκύμνον γάρ μ' ὄστ' οὐριθρέπταν / μόσχον, 205-6), there is an implication that she is a slaughter-animal, probably a sacrificial heifer due to the qualifier "mountain-raised" (οὐριθρέπταν, 205). Additionally, in line 141, Polyxena is referred to as a "filly" (*pōlos*), in line 327 a "heifer" (*bous*). Throughout Euripides' text especially, Polyxena is a slaughter-animal, but Ovid also alludes to this metaphorical role as well. Often in tragedy, young women are made sacrificial victims.¹⁸

As well as figurative language connoting Polyxena as a slaughtered animal, there is verbiage that refers to Polyxena, Hecuba, and also Polydorus as animals, specifically lions or dogs. In Euripides' tragedy, Polyxena is figuratively a "pup" (σκύμνον, *Hec.* 205) while Polydorus is a "pup" in Ovid's epyllion (*catulo*, *Met.* 13.547), though each

¹⁷ See Kovacs 1995: 406. Some scholars view these lines as later additions, but this view is not universal.

¹⁸ On virgins as sacrifices, see Loraux 1987: 31-48: "Iphigenia, Macaria, Polyxena... all these were virgins offered up ... for the safety of the community; so that a war should start or, on the contrary, end" (33).

word gives different shades of meaning. The Greek σκύμνος can be translated not only as “pup” but also as “lion’s whelp” (*Liddell and Scotts* s.v. σκύμνος 1.a); the Latin *catulus* means not only “pup” but also “dog’s whelp” (*OLD* s.v. *catulus*).¹⁹ Interestingly, Hecuba is a *leaena* (lioness). Clearly, Ovid is alluding to Euripides with this wordplay, with both passages emphasizing each of dead children as the “pup” of Hecuba. The role of “pup” does not have the same connotation of sacrifice, as seen above, but a connection to Hecuba as a lioness. Particularly, with Polydorus, one justification for his death is to prevent him from arising to avenge Troy at some future point in time. The quality of “pup” in both the Greek and the Latin is a young animal that is not yet dangerous but could grow to be a dangerous animal, whether a lion or a feral dog. However, this potential is never realized, as both Polyxena and Polydorus die, while still a “pup.”

Not only did Ovid utilize theme and original plot construction from Euripides’ *Hecuba*, but he also took some lines wholesale from the Greek and repurposed them for his epic. Some instances may be due to the similarities in the stories, but as discussed earlier, this was a technique Ovid often deployed as either homage or revisionism of past literary works. In the passages below, Ovid translated the Euripidean motif of Polyxena being taken from Hecuba forcibly:

[εἶδον γὰρ βαλιάνῳ ἔλαφον λύκου αἴμονι χαλᾷ
σφαζομέναν, ἀπ’ ἐμῶν γονάτων σπασθεῖσαν ἀνοίκτως.] (Eur. *Hec.* 90-1)

**For I saw a spotted deer being slaughtered by the eager claw of a wolf
which he drew from my knees ruthlessly.**

rapta sinu matris, quam iam prope sola fouebat,
fortis et infelix et plus quam femina uirgo

¹⁹ For more on dogs and transformation into animals, see Chapter 4.

²⁰ For an explanation of this word “dappled” see Eur. *Iph. Aul.* 221.

ducitur ad tumulum diroque fit hostia busto.
quae memor ipsa sui, postquam **crudelibus aris**
admota est sensitque sibi **fera sacra** parari, (Ovid *Met.* 13.450-4)

the girl snatched from the bosom of her mother, whom she [Polyxena]
practically alone supported,
she strong and unlucky and more than a woman, a maiden
was led to the mound and made as sacrifice to the dire tomb.
Who mindful of herself, after **she was moved towards [as an animal]**
the bloody altar, and she sensed **the feral rite** to be prepared for her

In the Greek, Polyxena is taken from Hecuba's knees (her lap): she is "[drawn] from my knees ruthlessly" (ἀπ' ἐμῶν γονάτων σπασθεῖσαν ἀνοίκτως, *Hec.* 91), while in the Latin, she is "the girl snatched from the bosom of her mother" (*rapta sinu matris*, *Met.* 13.450) with *rapta* "one taken forcibly" (*OLD* s.v. *rapio* 7.b.) mirroring the adverb ἀνοίκτως (ruthlessly). Another such instance of borrowed language is the death of Polyxena:

ὁ δ' οὐ θέλων τε καὶ θέλων οἴκτω κόρης
τέμνει σιδήρῳ πνεύματος διαρροάς·
κρουνοὶ δ' ἐχώρουν. ἡ δὲ καὶ **θνήσκουσ'** ὅμως
πολλὴν πρόνοιαν εἶχεν **εὐσχήμων πεσεῖν**,
κρύπτουσ' ἃ κρύπτειν ὄμματ' ἀρσένων χρεῶν. (Eur. *Hec.* 566-70)

Indeed, not willing and willing, with pity for the girl [Polyxena]
he [Neoptolemus] cuts her windpipe with his sword
and the springs [of blood] went forth. But she, though **dying**,
had much foresight **to fall with decency**,
covering the things which need to be covered from the eyes of men.

illa super terram defecto poplite labens
pertulit intrepidus ad fata nouissima uultus;
tunc quoque **cura fuit partes uelare tegendas**,
cum caderet, **castique decus** seruare **pudoris.** (Ovid *Met.* 13.477-80)

That girl [Polyxena] **tumbling/falling upon the earth**, knee given way,
maintained her intrepid face [as a message] unto her last/newest fate.
Then too, **it was a concern** [for her] **to cover the parts which ought to be covered**,
while she fell, and to save the **dignity of her chaste modesty.**

In Euripides' tragedy, Polyxena dies off stage, perhaps due to the difficulty of depicting the on-stage death and also due to the tragic tradition of off-stage deaths. However, Ovid puts her death as an "on page" feature, even giving her a heroic death monologue.²¹ Both passages have Polyxena "fall" to the earth in death: in the Latin, she is "that girl falling upon the earth" (*illa super terram... labens*, *Met.* 13.477), while in the Greek, "dying, [she] fall[s]" (θνήσκουσ' / πεσεῖν, *Hec.* 568-9). The highly conclusive element that is mirrored in both *Hecuba* and the *Metamorphoses* is Polyxena's concern for her modesty. In the Latin, it is a "care" or "concern to cover the parts which ought to be covered" (*cura fuit partes uelare tegendas*, *Met.* 13.480). This closely echoes the language of Euripides: in the Greek, Polyxena falls carefully "covering the things which need to be covered from the eyes of men" (κρύπτουσ' ἃ κρύπτειν ὄμματ' ἀρσένων χρεών, *Hec.* 570). The emphasis in both texts is on her decency (εὐσχήμων, *Hec.* 569) or her chastity (*decus casti pudoris*, *Met.* 13.480). Significantly, while dying, Polyxena's last thought, above all other concerns, is to make herself modest for the male onlookers, in preservation of her virtue. The Ovidian depiction of Polyxena's demise is highly derivative of Euripides, both in the verbiage used, and in its themes and plotting.

Graves and Ghosts: Hecuba

For Hecuba, there is a strange backward relationship between her death, monument, and transformation, which began in Euripidean tragedy.²² The location of her tomb, *Cynossema*, is an invention of Euripides, which Ovid borrowed. While this

²¹ On heroic death and oration, see Loraux 2018.

²² See Kalfina 2016; this article is the source of much of my information on this landmark, the *Cynossema*. For more on death as transformation, see chapter 4.

connection has taken hold of the popular imagination, in antiquity multiple versions of the Hecuba narrative existed that either neglected or deemphasized *Cynossema*.

Additionally, both Euripides and Ovid tie Hecuba to ghosts, spirits, or apparitions, though Euripides has many literal hauntings, and Ovid, excepting Achilles' ghost, uses metaphoric language in his epyllion. Ovid also mirrors the language of tragedy and drama through repetition and lament. These elements serve to show how Ovid used intertextuality to build expanded meaning in his Hecuba epyllion. He transforms the genre of Hecuba, as well as the character herself.

Hecuba's metamorphosis is inextricably tied to the location of her monument, *Cynossema*, in both Euripides' and Ovid's texts.²³ Euripides is the first to relate Hecuba's transformation into a dog with the historical landmark *Cynossema*, the Dog's Grave.²⁴ However, the site holds a long history and is found in a number of sources from antiquity. *Thucydides* 8.104 places *Cynossema* in the Hellespont, a well-known feature of the land to the Athenians.²⁵ *Cynossema* was a nautical landmark, as this passage from Euripides' *Hecuba* shows. However, the connection between *Cynossema* and the transformation of

²³ There are varied spellings of this landmark, which included *Cynossema* and *Kynossema*; there also does not appear to be a standardized English translation: this chapter will use *Cynossema*.

²⁴ See Kalfina 2016: 78: while the transformation into a dog is "firstly attested to in the epilogue of Euripides' tragedy *Hecuba*.... The most detailed description of the transformation is to be found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 13.567-70." She concludes that the connection between this landmark and Hecuba is an invention of Euripides that cleverly ties together her connection to dogs with the previously given toponym.

²⁵ See Crawley and Strassler 2008: 545: of the narrowing coastline near this landmark, Thucydides says, "and as the coast round Point Cynossema formed a sharp angle which prevent their seeing what was happening on the other side of it."

Hecuba has had a strange literary journey. Euripides ended his tragedy not with a transformation, but with a prophecy:

Πολυμήστωρ: **θανοῦσα; τύμβω δ' ὄνομα σῶ κεκλήσεται ...**

Ἑκάβη: **μορφῆς ἐπωδόν, μὴ τι τῆς ἐμῆς ἐρεῖς;**²⁶

Πολυμήστωρ: **κυνὸς ταλαίνης σῆμα, ναυτίλοις τέκμαρ.** (Eur. *Hec.* 1271-3)

Polymestor: **By dying: your tomb will have this name...**

Hecuba: **Called some name after my form?**

Polymestor: **...grave of the suffering dog, a sign for sailors.**

In this passage, Polymestor names the site, *Cynossema*, after Hecuba. He begins, “your tomb will have this name” (τύμβω δ' ὄνομα σῶ κεκλήσεται, 1271).²⁷ This naming is interrupted by Hecuba questioning whether his words hold magic in the following line: “Called some name after my form?” (μορφῆς ἐπωδόν, ἦ τί, τῆς ἐμῆς ἐρεῖς, 1272).²⁸ However, the name he gives is “grave/mound of the suffering dog” (κυνὸς ταλαίνης σῆμα, 1273) and is not quite the toponym *Cynossema*, “the Dog’s Grave.” The physical site mentioned in Euripides can be found on the east coast of the Thracian Chersonese, as seen earlier, in line 10. Other than in Euripides’ and Ovid’s versions of the Hecuba narrative, “[it] is surprisingly rarely attested” as the site of Hecuba’s transformation (Kalfina 2016: 78). This location does not appear in Pseudo-Apollodorus’ *The Library*, in which it is only related that Hecuba transforms at a different location and then travels to *Cynossema* to die, buried there by her son Helenus (2016: 78, 80). Nicander places the

²⁶ An occurrence of metamorphosis, before the word was codified into language.

²⁷ See Meridor 1978: 32: logically, if Hecuba drowns at sea, “this [tomb] cannot be her sepulcher.”

²⁸ See Battezzato 2018: 253 on Hecuba’s possible belief that Polymestor cast a spell or used “name magic”; also see Meridor 1978: 32 on the link between prophecy in Euripides, pre-existing names, and authority via *deus ex machina*.

Hecuba narrative in Asia Minor, not Thrace (2016: 78). Virgil also makes no mention of the connection between the landmark and Hecuba's demise; although he does mention the death of a Trojan prince at the hand of the Thracian king Polymestor in *Aeneid* 3.40, he does not connect it to Hecuba (2016: 79). Hyginus' *Iliona* seems to replace Hecuba with Iliona, Polydorus' sister and the wife of the Thracian queen, as the main female character (2016: 79). Pliny and Strabo at least, however, seem to connect the landmark to Hecuba's death (2016: 78-9). This Euripidean innovation seems to have been borrowed and expanded upon by Ovid, establishing the transition of Hecuba from monument to myth.

Euripides and Ovid deal with the supernatural in their works differently. The dream that appeared earlier in this chapter is part of a dream narrative. A dream narrative also occurs in Aeschylus' and Sophocles' dramas, as well as other works of Euripides. Hecuba has a dream at the beginning of the tragedy that portends her children's death. A dream narrative followed this pattern, given by Luigi Battezzato: "a mysterious dream makes the dreamer fear about the future; interpretations are offered, but the wrong one is chosen; events fulfill the dream; the dreamer at last realises the correct interpretation" (2018: 79). *Hecuba* follows this same pattern: Hecuba initially believes the dream to reference Polydorus but comes to understand that it refers to Polyxena. As well as in drama, prophetic dreams were often found in Herodotus' *Histories*, particularly concerning foreign or Persian kings. While Euripides emphasizes prophecy and even ghosts throughout *Hecuba*, Ovid only utilizes the supernatural sparingly, such as with Achilles' ghostly apparition and Hecuba's final transformation into a dog.

Ovid reuses the language of lament which Euripides used for the Chorus to associate Hecuba strongly with Asia as a “spirit” or “image” of the fertility of the region. While several “actual” ghosts appear on stage in *Hecuba*, she herself is a metaphorical “spirit” in the Ovidian text. Ovid plays on the word *imago* (image or spirit) to associate the position of Hecuba with that ascribed to the Trojan women, as the Chorus, in *Hecuba*. While several ghosts or spirits, including Polydorus, appear in Euripides’ text, Ovid limits their appearances. Only Achilles, or at least the ghostly version of him, appears in both works; he memorably splits the ground to achieve his entrance onto the Ovidian page. However, Ovid repurposes the language of the Chorus, casting Hecuba as supernatural herself:

ὄμοι τεκέων ἐμῶν,
 ὄμοι πατέρων χθονός θ’,
 ἃ καπνῷ κατερείπεται
 τυφομένα δορί-
 κτητος Ἀργείων· ἐγὼ δ’
 ἐν ξείνῃ χθονὶ δὴ κέκλη-
 μαι δούλα, λιποῦσ’ Ἀσίαν,
 Εὐρώπας θεραπνᾶν
 ἀλλάξασ’ Ἴδιθα θαλάμους. (Eur. *Hec.* 475-83)

**Alas for my children,
 Alas for the fathers and the country**
 which is fallen to ruin, smoldering with smoke
 won by the spear of the Argives. And I,
**in a foreign country indeed, I am called a slave,
 having left Asia; a servant of Europe
 I exchange the dwelling place of Europe
 for the domicile of Hades.**

Troades excipiunt deploratosque recensent
Priamidas et quot dederit domus una cruores,
 teque gemunt, uirgo, teque, o modo regia coniunx,
 regia dicta parens, **Asiae florentis imago,**
nunc etiam praedae mala sors. (Ovid *Met.* 13.481-5)

The Trojan women received [her body], and recounted the [already] lamented **children of Priam, and the quantity of blood that one house gave,** and they howl for you, girl, and you just now called the royal wife, the royal parent, the **spirit²⁹ of flourishing Asia,** **now even the evil lot of a spoil...**

In Euripides, these lines are spoken by the chorus of Trojan women, as they lament their destroyed country. Their grief is nationalized: “Alas for my children, / Alas for the fathers and the country!” (ὄμοι τεκέων ἐμῶν, / ὄμοι πατέρων χθονός θ’, *Hec.* 475-6) instead of directed at Hecuba, as it is in Ovid’s *epyllion*, which focuses on “the children of Priam, and the quantity of blood that one house gave” (*Priamidas et quot dederit domus una cruores*, *Met.* 13.482). Ovid reworks the connection to Asia that Euripides gives all the Trojan women, though it is directed at Hecuba implicitly, “I exchange the dwelling place of Europe / for the domicile of Hades” (Εὐρώπας θεραπνᾶν / ἀλλάξασ’ Αἶδα θαλάμους, *Hec.* 482-3). Euripides makes the women “handmaids of hell” in their enslavement. However, Ovid writes Hecuba explicitly as the “spirit of flourishing Asia, / now even the evil lot of a spoil” (*Asiae florentis imago / nunc etiam praedae mala sors*, *Met.* 13.484-5). In both passages, there is a supernatural element of the lament: the women will become servants of the underworld, while Hecuba is spirit (*OLD* s.v. *imago* 5). The second time Ovid refers to Hecuba as an *imago* is before her transformation, as she sets her mind to revenge. At this point in the narrative, Hecuba can no longer handle the weight of living; she is burdened with continual deaths, one after another. Hecuba burns, and at the moment of decision, “as though she still remained a queen / [Hecuba] decides to avenge” (*qua simul exarsit, tamquam regina maneret / ulcisci statuit*, 544-5). However, Hecuba would not have remained a queen, but as the Chorus of Trojan women observed, “in a

²⁹ Also translated as image or picture (*OLD* s.v. *imago*).

foreign country, indeed, I am called a slave” (ἐν ξείνῳ χθονὶ δὴ κέκλημαι δούλα, *Hec.* 480-1). Hecuba denies that reality, and she assumes the “image” (*OLD* s.v. *imago* 1) of one like a Fury: “She is wholly in the image of punishment” (*poenaeque in imagine tota est, Met.* 13.546). Ovid cleverly plays on the different meanings of the word *imago*; he transforms Hecuba from a queen to a slave to a Fury: “she rages furiously” (*furit*, 546). While Euripides made the Trojan women and Hecuba like servants of Hades, Ovid has given Hecuba the role of an agent of the underworld, figuratively.

The Ovidian Hecuba epyllion of *Metamorphoses* 13.399-575 is heavily indebted to Euripides’ works, the *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba*. While both writers had a similar affinity for women that led them to examine narratives from the female perspective, Ovid built upon Euripides’ well-laid foundation. With the Hecuba narrative, Ovid has taken the Euripidean tragedies, especially *Hecuba*, and created new meaning or emphasized existing meaning through inversion and affirmation of the Greek tragedies. He uses at least two innovations of Euripides’, the connection between the deaths of Polyxena and Polydorus and the relevance of the physical location *Cynossema* to Hecuba’s death and transformation. Ovid, as the narrator, takes the position of the Euripidean Polydorus and speaks back to the prologue giver. He pulls what is off stage, the death of Polyxena, and rehearses it on the page, while keeping the details of the sacrifice the same. Ovid expands upon the significance of Euripides’ use of *Cynossema* to foreshadow the transformation of Hecuba. Throughout the passage, he mirrors Euripides’ figurative language, presenting both Polyxena and Hecuba as animals. Ovid reuses Euripides’ reliance on ghostly apparitions to drive the plot as a way to express the identity of Hecuba, the spirit of Asia.

In essence, Ovid has not only transformed Hecuba but translated Euripides, changing his words and themes to fit a new age and a new genre.

CHAPTER THREE

Grief in Three Acts: Identity and the Ovidian Hecuba¹

How does tragedy define a woman? With his exploration of the grief of Hecuba in *Metamorphoses* 13.399-575, Ovid adds to the tradition of tragedy that began with the Greeks. Ovid's treatment of the Hecuba narrative demonstrates the nature of emotion, transformation, and women's emotional lives as a through-thread of the *Metamorphoses*. Recent scholarship has turned its attention specifically to the Ovidian version of the Hecuba narrative.² Hecuba continues in significance due to the depth of her emotion, rage, sorrow, madness, and the unfairness of her transformation and death. She is a picture of a woman in a conflict area, driven by extraordinary circumstances to make extraordinary choices. Hecuba represents the way emotions change the marginalized and victimized. Adverse experiences have power over people, often changing them beyond their control. Hecuba in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is a powerful depiction of a woman in conflict; she is a woman that suffers not only external losses but also internal loss of identity.

¹ Translation is my own, unless otherwise noted, and the Latin text of Ovid *Metamorphoses* 13.399-575 comes from Tarrant 2004.

² See Sharrock 2002: 95 for an overview of how Ovid uses gender and sexuality within his work; for a comparison of three tragic mother figures in the *Metamorphoses*, Fantham 2004a; for an overview of Hecuba as the bereaved mother, see Fantham 2004b: 69-73; for a look at the connections of motherhood to transformation, McAuley 2015; for a look at the Hecuba narrative as a metatheatrical work, Curley 2013: 101-14.

In this chapter, I will survey Ovid's use of language and his emphasis on the word *haurio*, which exemplifies Hecuba's changing emotional state and foreshadows her metamorphosis, and I will explore the triple deaths of Hector, Polyxena, and Polydorus and relate them to the three-fold loss of identity Hecuba suffers. Ovid's use of *haurio* is notable for its repetition and the figurative weight it ascribes to Hecuba: she is "drunk-up" by her emotions, her sorrow, her anger, and even her madness. As a queen, Hecuba is representative of the state of Troy; she is the *maxima rerum*. Ovid emphasizes this loss of regal status through her grief concerning Hector at his gravesite. As a mother, Hecuba is the *mater dolorosa*, an aspect which is explored through the sacrifice of and lament for Polyxena. As a person, Hecuba loses her ties to humanity when she submits to murderous rage after the discovery of Polydorus' corpse and is transfigured.

The Hecuba epyllion in *Metamorphoses* 13.399-575, a change in pace from the stories of the heroes of the Trojan War that precede it, encompasses the actions of both Euripidean tragedies, *Hecuba* and the *Trojan Women*, which were discussed in the previous chapters. After a brief reference to two stories, Philoctetes and the bow and the Isle of Lemnos, the Hecuba epyllion starts with four lines that sum up the entire narrative.³ While many editors, including Tarrant and Hopkinson, have bracketed these lines as a possible later insertion, some scholars, such as Fantham, argue that they may

³ See Hopkinson 2000: 163-4: he suggests that the mention of the Isle of Lemnos is an "epicising periphrasis" and a reference to many well-known Greek dramas; it may also serve as narrative foreshadowing, as a conflict where women attacked and killed men in an especially horrific fashion. Acts of extreme cruelty or horror were known colloquially as "Lemnian evils" in reference to this event, which Ovid alludes to with the phrase "infamous for the murder of the men" (*infames caede uirorum*, 400).

serve a narrative purpose (2004: 120).⁴ Either way, they stand as handy summary of the action, and an interesting foil to the content to take place in the following lines:

[Troia simul Priamusque cadunt; Priameia coniunx
perdidit infelix hominis **post omnia** formam
externasque nouo latratu terruit auras,
longus in angustum qua clauditur Hellespontus.] (*Met.* 13.404-7)

Troy and Priam were destroyed together;
the unlucky wife of Priam lost the form of a human **after everything**,
and she terrified the foreign airs with new barking,
at the strait which is bounded by the long Hellespont.

The action begins with Troy burning and Priam dead on the temple floors. The short “after everything” (*post omnia*, 405) summarizes most of the intervening lines between 405 and 575.⁵ Those small words contain Hecuba at Hector’s graveside, already beside herself with grief, the sacrifice of Polyxena at the grave of Achilles, and the discovery of Polydorus, which results in the vengeful mutilation of Polymestor. This summary prioritizes the setting and the ending and capitalizes on the reason for Hecuba’s inclusion in the *Metamorphoses*, without realizing what makes her important as a character. It could be elided with little effect to the narrative, though it serves as a useful primer to the story.

Haurio: *Drawn up and Exhausted*

The repeated use of the Latin verb *haurio* in the Hecuba narrative, which has not yet received sufficient attention, is verbally and thematically intriguing. Appearing five times throughout the 175 lines of the Hecuba narrative, it stands out as unusual and

⁴ See Hopkinson 2000: 164 on the possibility of these lines being from an alternative draft or an inclusion of a later reader.

⁵ See 2000: 164: Hopkinson notes that “the expression is odd.”

intentional. Its initial use from Hecuba’s entrance onto the page foreshadows the ultimate violent act as she exits the poem. Ovid first uses *haurio* in line 425, *hausit*, and repeats it immediately in line 426, *haustos*: “Yet, she drew up the remains of Hector, the one and only, and carried the drawn-up ashes with herself in her bosom” (*tamen unius hausit / inque sinu cineres secum tulit Hectoris haustos*, 425-6). Here, a parallel exists with the earlier use of *conbiberat*, in line 410, with which Ovid depicts the temple floor “soaking up” or “drinking up” Priam’s blood. This is reminiscent of Hecuba “drawing up” the remains of Hector.⁶ As in the scene with Priam, there is a sense of unease; just as the final resting place of a king should not be to lie dead, blood staining the floors of a temple, Hecuba should not be desecrating the grave of her famous son.⁷ Neil Hopkinson suggests that the *haurio* in these lines means, “she digs up the urn and carries it with her” (2000: 168).⁸ Ovid’s usage of *haurio* stands out in this passage in which Hecuba goes to retrieve water:

Dixit et ad litus passu processit anili,
 albentes lacerata comas. ‘date, Troades, urnam’
 dixerat infelix, liquidas **hauriret** ut undas;
 adspicit **eiectum** Polydori in litore corpus
 factaque Threiciis ingentia uulnera telis. (*Met.* 13.533-7)

She spoke and to the shore proceeded with a step of an old woman,
 tearing her white hair. “Give me, Trojan women, an urn”
 she had said, wretched/unlucky, so that **it may draw up** the clear waters.

⁶ See Hopkinson 2000: 165: the indication is that Priam did not possess much blood, perhaps a commentary on his vitality.

⁷ On familial practices in burying the dead, see Fantham 2004b: 69 “[i]n Ovid’s Rome, as in classical Greece, it was the mother’s role to close the eyes of the family dead and lay out the body. Once it left the house the duties of cremation or burial were taken by the son or male next of kin.”

⁸ See Hopkinson 2000: 168, this use of *haurio* also occurs in *Met.* 11.185-7 referring to Midas’ barber; also *Martial* 9.30.3; *Ann.* 2.75.1.

She saw the body of Polydorus **flung** on the shore,
And the huge wounds made with Thracian spears.

This verbiage also occurs in line 535, *hauriret*, when Hecuba goes to wash Polyxena's body.⁹ However, it is the other usages and connotations of *haurio* which draw interest; these range from the mild and everyday, "to draw up" or "to drink," to the violent, such as "to gouge so as to drain the blood" or "to consume, to devour" (OLD s.v. *haurio*). Ovid's usage here, along with the earlier *conbiberat*, gives the impression, like the common English cognate "exhaust," that both Priam and Hector have been used up, drunk completely dry. It is the multiple meanings of *haurio*, from mundane to violent, that make the multiple instances stand out to the discerning reader.

Ovid utilizes *haurio* to identify Hector as *haustos*, a use that works in concert with other participle descriptions for each of the children who are either visited at their burial, such as Hector, or buried during the narrative, such as Polyxena and Polydorus. While Ovid writes Hector as "drawn up" (*haustos*), Polyxena is "snatched" (*rapta*), and Polydorus is "laid out" or "flung" (*eiectum*).¹⁰ Each participle identification of Hecuba's children is in relation to their manner or place of death, including *haustos*. In each case there is movement and positioning; Hector is drawn toward Hecuba's heart (*sinu*, 426), while Polyxena is stolen from it (*rapta sinu*, 450) — a living girl given to death.¹¹ Only at the reception of Polyxena's body is Hecuba able to again draw her daughter to her in

⁹ See OLD; s.v. *haurio* 4.a.

¹⁰ Even Cassandra, the often forgotten last-living daughter, is given a similar description "dragged off" (*tractata*, 410).

¹¹ See Eur. *Hec.* 141-2.

loving embrace, “she embracing the corpse” (*corpus complexa*, 488). Hecuba can only draw up her loved ones in death.

The funerary association of *haurio* is found throughout the Hecuba narrative, including in Hecuba’s monologue as she prepares to receive the body of Polyxena.¹² The usage here is unique, and it warrants a specified definition: “to scatter dust or sand over a grave.”¹³ Hecuba, imagining what she will give Polyxena for a death offering, says, “this is not the fortune of our house. The weeping of your mother will fall as a grave gift to you and the handful of foreign sand!” (*non haec est fortuna domus; tibi munera matris / contingent fletus peregrinaeque haustus harenae!*, 525-6). In this third usage of *haurio*, as with the first two concerning Hector’s ashes, there is a connection to the treatment of bodies for or after death. Ovid again makes the connection to death when using *haurio* to describe Hecuba as she goes to draw the urn full of water to wash Polyxena’s corpse. These four usages of *haurio*, including at the reception of Polyxena’s body, all have a connection with both death and mourning, primarily concerning familial grief.

The final instance of *haurio*, in line 563, is the last stitch of the continuous thread Ovid has woven through the entirety of the Hecuba narrative, from her first grief-stricken appearance at Hector’s grave to her fatal descent into rage and madness. Now, Hecuba no longer mourns her own family, but “she is wholly in the image [an avatar] of punishment” (*poenaeque in imagine tota est*, 546). Earlier in the epyllion, the Trojan

¹² For more on burial practices in Bronze Age Greece, see Mee 2012; for more on masculine and feminine aspects of death and the afterlife in Greece and Rome, see Burke 2016.

¹³ See Hopkinson 2000: 181; while the definition I use is paraphrased, it is drawn from Hopkinson’s commentary.

women identify Hecuba as “you just now called the royal wife, / the royal parent, the image of flourishing Asia” (*teque, o modo regia coniunx / regia dicta parens, Asiae florentis imago*, 483-4). Hecuba has been diminished from the “image” or “picture” of life and flourishing to an image (*imago*) of death and punishment, a revenant. She has been drunk up herself, just like her children — all the life drawn from her, exhausted. In the following passage, Ovid represents the transition of Hecuba from grief to rage and vengeance:

spectat truculenta loquentem
 falsaque iurantem **tumidaque exaestuat ira**
 atque ita correpto captiuarum agmina matrum
 inuocat et digitos in perfida lumina **condit**
expellitque genis oculos (facit ira nocentem)
immergitque manus foedataque sanguine sonti
 non lumen (neque enim superest), loca luminis **haurit**. (*Met.* 13.558-64)

She, ferocious, looked at him speaking
 and swearing falsities, and she **boils over with swollen anger**,
 and so, she calls the herd of captive mothers to him snatched,
 she **buries** her fingers in his deceitful eyes
 and **drives out** his eyes from his cheeks (anger makes her powerful)
 and **plunges** her hands, and having been defiled with his criminal blood,
 she **gouges out** not his eyes (indeed nothing remains) but the place of his eyes.

In line 563, the initial familial sense of grief and mourning found in the earlier usages of *haurio* is replaced by a scene of anger-fueled body horror.¹⁴ Hecuba “boils over with swollen anger” (*tumidaque exaestuat ira*, 559) and attacks Polymestor with vicious force. The verbiage Ovid uses, “buries” (*condit*), “drives out” (*expellit*), “plunges” (*immergit*), and “gouges out” (*haurit*), depicts a bloody, forceful encounter. She is no longer the recipient of vengeance, a bearer of grief offerings; she has become the purveyor and

¹⁴ See Fantham 2004a: 113.

avatar of vengeance and rage. By using *haurio*, first, when Hecuba is depicted dealing with the deaths and burials of her beloved children, and again as she mutilates the man who killed her last son and hope, Ovid has cleverly foreshadowed Hecuba's descent into anger and madness since her appearance roaming the grave of Hector.

Throughout his Hecuba epyllion, Ovid cleverly ties Hecuba's identity and emotional state to each of her children. Through each graveside or death, he explores an aspect of her identity, slowly stripping away her cornerstones.¹⁵ Hardie observes that “[a]ll tombs and funerary monuments are signs of the absent presence of the dead”; it is these absent presences which incite Hecuba's change in identity (2002b: 84). First, in *Metamorphoses* 13.399-575, Ovid strongly associates the death of Hector, as well as that of Priam, with the destruction of Troy, which is correlated to Hecuba's identity as the queen of the illustrious, doomed city. Hecuba experiences an immediate loss in status as Odysseus makes her a war-prize. Second, he explores her role as a mother, and more widely, her role as a woman through the kidnapping and sacrifice of Polyxena. Ovid writes Polyxena as a foil to Hecuba: a supportive daughter to a bereaved mother, as well as a naïve maiden to an old widow. Finally, in the exploration of his explicit theme, Ovid associates Hecuba's loss of humanity and personhood with the death of Polydorus. Each child's death is a stand-in for Hecuba's triplicate loss of identity: queen, mother, and person.

Hector: the Greatest of Things

¹⁵ On death as transformation and the tomb as a place of metamorphosis, see Hardie 2002b: 81.

Ovid begins with Hecuba, the queen, the wife of Priam (*Priameia coniunx*, 404 and 513), who he writes as a stand-in for the State, the kingdom/city of Troy. As noted earlier, Hecuba is identified as the very image or picture of the East: “and you just now called the royal wife, the royal parent, the image of flourishing Asia” (*teque, o modo regia coniunx / regia dicta parens, Asiae florentis imago*, 483-4). Hecuba names herself, “the greatest of things” (*maxima rerum*, 508); as Roma is to Rome, she is the “spirit” (*imago*) of Troy. The use of *rerum* would have drawn the Roman reader to the State, the Public Matter (*Res Publica*). Even the setting emphasizes and parallels the state of Troy with the state of Hecuba.

Ovid changes the opening setting. Where Euripides starts in Thrace, Ovid puts the destruction of Troy in full view: “Ilium was burning, and the fire had not settled down at that time” (*Ilium ardebat, neque adhuc consederat ignis*, 408).¹⁶ In these lines, Hecuba’s own destruction parallels that of Ilium, a destruction which is still in progress, the city smoldering in the background. She is consumed with grief, just as the kingdom is consumed with fire. Ovid references both Euripidean tragedies, *Hecuba* and the *Trojan Women*, in his version of the events; Hecuba’s tragedy is shared by the other women and children of Troy, who are “spiteful prizes” (*inuidiosa... praemia*, 414). Many women are dragged away to servitude, even while they clutch to temple pillars, and children’s heads are dashed upon the ground.¹⁷ The Trojan women cry out, “farewell, Troy! We are snatched” (*Troia, uale! Rapimur*, 420), adding their capture to the rapine history of the

¹⁶ See Curley 2013: 103-5: Curley discusses five location changes between the Ovidian and Euripidean retellings of the Hecuba narrative; Hill 2000: 149.

¹⁷ See Hill 2000: 151: Astyanax’s death is found in Hom. *Il.* 6.399-405 and 466-84; Eur. *Tro.* 719-39, 1133-5.

Trojan War.¹⁸ The grief is communal and certainly feminine. Hecuba is the tragic queen of a destroyed country, literally, with Ilium in flames, and figuratively, with its women dragged off to be absorbed into Greek households as slaves.

This loss of Hecuba's identity as queen, the head of state, is tied to the burial site of Hector. Immediately, upon her entrance onto the page, Ovid depicts Hecuba completely consumed with grief, and, as anonymous soldiers board their ship, their victory is in sharp relief to her defeat as she mourns among the graves. Ovid fashions a profoundly intimate and uncomfortable scene of her visiting the grave of the favorite son of Troy for the last time. She has become old prematurely; her white hair and tears are the only offerings she can leave to the great hero of the *Iliad*, her son Hector:

ultima conscendit classem (**miserabile uisu**)
in mediis Hecabe natorum inuenta sepulcris;
prensantem tumulos atque **ossibus oscula dantem**
Dulichiae traxere manus. tamen **unius** hausit
inque sinu **cineres** secum tulit Hectoris **haustos**;
Hectoris in tumulo canum de uertice crinem,
inferias inopes, crinem lacrimasque reliquit. (*Met.* 13.422-8)

The last [woman] boarded the fleet, as Hecuba, **miserable to see!**
was found in the middle of the graves of her children.
The Dulichian hands [Odysseus] dragged her, **she grasping their tombs,**
and giving kisses to their bones.
Yet, she drew up the **remains of Hector, the one and only,**
and carried the drawn-up ashes with herself in her bosom.
She leaves on the **tomb of Hector** white hair from her head,
hair and tears, a poor offering for the dead.

At this moment, the yet-to-come deaths of Polyxena and Polydorus have yet to batter the psyche of Hecuba, but this unsettling visit to the grave of Hector begins her unwinding, her loss of identity. As was shown earlier, the act of “drawing up” Hector's ashes was

¹⁸ In Herodotus' *Histories*, the Trojan War is considered as part of a series of events surrounding the kidnapping of women from Greek and the Near East.

against normal funeral practices for the Greek world.¹⁹ Mario Erasmo asks, “if [the children of Hecuba] were cremated before burial, ... how can she kiss their bones (just fingers from the *ossilegium* and removed from cremation urns implied? [question is the author’s])” (2008: 93). As he points out, there is somewhat of a logical fallacy to Hecuba “drawing-up” Hector’s ashes to carry with her and his grave remaining there. Did Hecuba rebury him in another location, near Polyxena and Polydorus? The question lingers of the location of his burial after Hecuba has drawn up the ashes, and if Hector remains unburied. Hecuba’s actions at the grave not only signal her unwell mental state, due to grief, but also raise questions of the legitimacy of her actions in digging around the graveside.

Nevertheless, Ovid makes it clear: the fall of Hecuba’s house is the fall of a kingdom, a people, a way of life. Ovid connects her strongly to Troy later in the passage; Hecuba refers to herself in odd language which connects her to Troy intimately: “just now, [I was] the greatest of things” (*modo maxima rerum*, 508). She was that great city, and its downfall is her own. Like her, Hector is tied closely to Troy; he is “the one and only” (*unius*, 424), the outstanding prince, the very picture of Trojan virility and virtue. He is no more, reduced to ashes cradled close to his mother’s chest. Only ruins remain of him, and only ruins remain of Troy.²⁰ Hecuba stands there in deep despair at the loss of

¹⁹ On the disposal of the dead, particularly cremation, see Erasmo 2008: 75-101; for a description of funeral practices during the Trojan War, drawn from the account of Patroclus’ funeral, see also Loraux 2018: 76-7. Loraux observes, “[i]n the funerary rite, certainly, the corruptible flesh, which was totally consumed, departed in smoke, while the ‘white bones’ survived, which were all that remained of the dead man’s body.”

²⁰ Hector’s death, as part of the ending of the Trojan War, signals the divide from Greek to Roman myths, as the Roman people sprung from the ashes of Troy in Virgil’s *Aeneid*.

her son and her homeland. She desecrates the hero Hector's grave, digging up her son's ashes to bring with her; she is a mother that cannot bear to leave him behind. She is sorrow personified, the sorrow of a lost people, a fallen kingdom. Hecuba is, as Ovid identifies her, "miserable to see" (*miserabile uisu*, 422), a sight of grief so strong that it extends beyond herself, her own physical space.

Polyxena: The Grieving Mother and the Bereaver

Ovid depicts Hecuba's loss of her maternal identity which is tied to her internalized womanhood. Hecuba is the grieving mother (*mater dolorosa*); while the graveside visit to Hector symbolizes her royal nature, the sacrifice of Polyxena emphasizes Hecuba's maternal emotions and feminine relationships. Certainly, in antiquity, much of women's lives were in the domestic sphere, and their bonds with family and each other grew strong through shared experience. The death of Polyxena, who has been her comfort and support, depicts different ideals of womanhood, paralleling a brave maiden with an old bereaved mother. The action begins as Achilles, or his ghost, demands that his tomb be remembered:

hic subito, quantus, cum uiueret esse solebat,
exit humo late rupta similisque minanti
temporis illius uultum referebat Achilles,
quo ferus iniusto petiit Agamemnona ferro,
'inmemores' que 'mei disceditis,' inquit 'Achiui,
obrutaque est mecum uirtutis gratia nostrae!
ne facite! utque meum non sit sine honore sepulcrum,
placet Achilleos mactata Polyxena **manes!**
dixit, **et, immiti sociis parentibus umbrae,**
rapta sinu matris, quam iam prope sola fouebat,
fortis et **infelix et plus quam femina uirgo**
ducitur ad tumulum diroque fit hostia busto. (*Met.* 13.441-52)

Here Achilles, how great he was accustomed to be when he lived, suddenly **burst forth from the widely split ground**, and like to one threatening,

he renewed the expression of that time
 when he, wild, attacked unjust Agamemnon with a sword.
 He said, "Achaean, you are departing, forgetful of me,
 and your gratitude for my virtue is buried with me!
 Don't do that! And so that my grave may not be without honors,
 let sacrificed Polyxena placate Achilles' **ghost!**"
 He spoke, **and, with the companions obeying the hostile shade,**
the girl [Polyxena] snatched from the bosom of her mother, whom she
practically alone supported, she strong and **unlucky and more than a woman,**
a maiden, was led to the mound and made as sacrifice to the dire tomb.

Achilles, now a "ghost" (*manes*, 448) or "hostile shade" (*immiti ...umbrae*, 449), orders his companions to honor him, and they obeyed (*et... sociis ...parentibus*, 449). This second instance of a burial site appears to be a case of location swapping from earlier retellings; why would Achilles be buried in Thrace, the central location for Ovid's Hecuba narrative? As with Hector, there are unanswered questions concerning the graveside setting. Yet, Ovid writes that Achilles, now a vengeful ghost, has "burst forth from the widely split ground" (*exit humo late rupta*, 442) demanding a sacrifice at his tomb.²¹ The Greek men go to Hecuba and find Polyxena; they snatch her from the very arms of her mother: she is "the girl snatched from the bosom of her mother" (*rapta sinu matris*, 450). In these lines, Ovid combines two feminine archetypes: Polyxena is the raped maiden (*rapta*), and Hecuba is the mourning mother (*matris*).²² Ovid makes clear that Polyxena has become Hecuba's only source of emotional support: he writes her as

²¹ This sacrifice of Polyxena, no doubt, is meant to be a parallel of the sacrifice of Iphigenia, when the Greeks sought favorable winds to sail to Troy.

²² See McAuley 2015: 160; Fantham 2004a: 114,115. McAuley, in her chapter *Matermorphoses*, quotes Fantham, "If recent critics have neglected the type of the mourning mother to focus their lenses on the raped maiden, it is probably because they believe the bereaved mother is too stereotypical to offer any scope for psychological subtlety." Fantham explores maternal suffering as a key theme of the entire *Metamorphoses* and also examines the mother in *Aeneid* 9, further giving weight to the argument that Ovid used Virgil as an inspiration for tragedy within epic.

“[she, Hecuba] whom she [Polyxena] practically alone supported” (*quam iam prope sola fouebat*, 450). Polyxena, as the last daughter, is Hecuba’s final tie to her motherhood and her relationship with other women.²³

Additionally, Ovid uses Polyxena as a foil to Hecuba; while Hecuba has become more valued for her roles as wife and mother, Polyxena symbolizes the purity and naivety of a maiden. Both women deliver monologues in the epyllion, which, Curley suggests, “reveals [her, the person giving the monologue] inner mind and establishes her definitively as the protagonist” (2013: 153).²⁴ However, while Polyxena speaks first, her more limited speech is greatly surpassed by Hecuba’s powerful monologue, establishing Hecuba as the definitive protagonist while still displaying Polyxena’s viewpoint and emotions.²⁵ Ovid’s inclusion of both monologues represents the differing responses of the two women to the adversity they find themselves in: Polyxena has a more hopeful, and possibly more naïve, view of dignity in dying, while Hecuba experiences escalating negative emotions throughout the epyllion. However, that is not to say that Polyxena’s experience is positive; she chooses to see it through a more positive lens. Polyxena, although she is “cursed” or “unlucky” (*infelix*), in death, has more than a woman’s spirit or courage; she is “more than a woman” (*et plus quam femina*, 451).²⁶ Her self-sacrifice

²³ Again, excluding Cassandra, who seemed to have come up short in many versions of the story.

²⁴ See Loraux 1987: 56-65 for an analysis of the rhetorical speech in the Euripidean original, which Curley uses as a basis of his argument.

²⁵ Multiple feminine viewpoints in the Ovidian text is much like the original Euripidean tragedies, especially the *Trojan Women* in which Hecuba is arguably the protagonist, though she shares the spotlight with several other women, including Helen.

²⁶ On Polyxena’s sacrificial death, see Loraux 1987: 56-65.

is full of both female and masculine virtue; she is not only chaste but also brave and selfless. Her only concern, as she dies, is with the sorrow she leaves her mother:

mors tantum uellem matrem mea fallere posset;
mater obest minuitque necis mihi gaudia, quamuis
non mea mors illi, uerum sua uita gemenda est. (*Met.* 13.462-4)

Only I wish my death were able to elude my mother;
my mother stands in the way and lessens delight in my death, although
it is not my death [that is to be howled at by her], but truly her own life that is to
be howled at [by her].

By giving her agency, Ovid casts the maiden as the hero. Polyxena has joy in her self-sacrifice: “my mother stands in the way and lessens delight in my death” (*mater obest minuitque necis mihi gaudia*, 463), that she is made a martyr instead of a slave.²⁷

However, she is aware that slavery is all that will remain for her mother and that her death will make the sentence an even heavier burden.²⁸ Is her self-sacrifice naïve or brave? She knows herself and her feminine power; as she approaches the altar, it is as “she who [is] mindful of herself” (*quae memor ipsa sui*, 453). Her last request is made as a last daughter of the noble house, when she says, “the daughter of King Priam asks, not a captive” (*Priami uos filia regis / nunc non captiua rogat*, 470-1). It is unclear whether Polyxena truly receives dignity in death, or if she simply rationalizes the helpless state in which she has found herself. Polyxena, among other sacrificed maidens in tragedy, such as Iphigenia, receives both a feminine and masculine honor through her death; she can

²⁷ On speech and the beautiful death, see Loraux 2018: 79. Oration, which Polyxena engages in, was a way to recognize the virtue of a beautiful death, especially that of a combatant. Polyxena’s use of rhetoric ties her to the masculine virtue of a warrior.

²⁸ This is different from Euripides’ version, where Hecuba gains some comfort from the nobility of Polyxena’s sacrifice (*Eur. Hec.* 589-92).

claim the bravery of a man and the chastity of a woman. However, she still dies, and it is a death for the sake of another, in Polyxena's case for the sake of her enemy. Where Hecuba rejects the notion of finding dignity in her circumstance, instead finding grief and anger, Polyxena has embraced this dignity through death. By framing Polyxena as courageous, Ovid makes Hecuba even more pitiable.

Hecuba's monologue makes it clear that she views the loss of Polyxena as the loss of her motherhood. Her monologue stands out as an example of female oration within the *Metamorphoses*. It falls, like the lament of Thisbe, the first female speaker in the *Metamorphoses*, within the tradition of elegy.²⁹ Hecuba has become unmoored at the sight of Polyxena's body but continues to wash and prepare the corpse for burial, not wholly having lost her sanity yet. Nevertheless, Ovid makes clear that a few words softly spoken will not suffice to express Hecuba's emotions. Her monologue is raging with grief:

en, **ne perdiderim quemquam sine caede meorum,**
 tu quoque uulnus habes; at te, quia femina, rebar
 a ferro tutam: cecidisti et femina ferro,
 totque tuos idem fratres, te perdidit idem,
 exitium Troiae **nostrique orbator, Achilles**
 at postquam cecidit Paridis Phoebique sagittis,
 'nunc certe,' dixi, 'non est metuendus Achilles:
 nunc quoque **mi metuendus erat; cinis ipse sepulti**
in genus hoc saeuit, tumulo quoque sensimus hostem:
Aeacidae fecunda fui! (Met. 13.496-505)

Behold, **lest I lose anyone of mine own without murder,**
 you also have a wound. But you, because you are a woman, I was supposing
 you safe from a sword: and though a woman, you fell to a sword,
 and that [Achilles] same destruction of so many brothers,

²⁹ See Curley 2013: 153: Curley suggests that this monologue "has an elegiac quality, except that it falls squarely within the tradition of funerary elegy"; he also notes that Hecuba's monologue shares the commonality of elegy with the first solo female speaker, Thisbe.

he has destroyed you, [Achilles] the same destruction of Troy,
 and **Achilles is the destroyer/the bereaver of us.**
 But after he fell by the arrows of Paris and Phoebus,
 I said, “Now certainly, Achilles is not to be feared.
 Now also, **he was to be feared by me.**
The ashes [of the tomb] themselves, interred,
rage against this people, likewise from the tomb I perceive [him] an enemy.
I was fertile for the Aeacides!”

She engages in ritual mourning, beating her chest, and even tearing her skin: “sweeping at her white hair, congealed with blood, and with her chest torn, many things indeed, but these also she said” (*canitiemque suam concretam sanguine vellens / plura quidem, sed et haec laniato pectore, dixit*, 492-3). Through this emotive verbiage of her monologue, Ovid encompasses multiple genres: tragedy as well as epic, elegy as well as lament. Elegy encompasses both grief and love, though in this case, it is maternal and familial love, maybe even civic love, rather than romantic.

Hecuba takes back the reigns of the narrative from Polyxena’s short speech and details a powerful description of loss and grief through her monologue: “Daughter, (since what else remains?), you, the final sadness to a mother, you, child, lie [there], and I see your wound, as my [own] wound.” (*‘Nata, tuae (quid enim superest?) dolor ultime matris / nata, iaces, uideoque tuum, mea uulnera, uulnus,’* 494-5). Fantham observes that, in Ovid’s narrative, “Hecuba has appropriated Polyxena’s suffering” and takes “Euripides[?] ... continuing blows of misfortune” into a “bitter irony of *dolor ultime*,” (2004, 122). Nowhere is Hecuba’s status as *mater dolorosa* clearer than in her response to Polyxena’s sacrifice. She acts almost as an inversion of a Marian archetype, finding increased grief in the selfless sacrifice of her child, though unlike Mary, Hecuba certainly never experiences the joy of resurrection. Hecuba’s monologue following Polyxena’s death is a

powerfully moving part of Ovid's poem.³⁰ Here, he fully taps into the ever-flowing grief of a mother.

Hecuba has been made bereft by Achilles many times over. Hecuba has lived to see her children slaughtered at his feet, one after another, no matter if they are the hero of the Trojan War, Hector, or a maiden of extraordinary virtue, Polyxena. She doubts that any of her children can live without ending in a brutal early death: "lest I may lose anyone of mine own without murder" (*ne perdidderim quemquam sine caede meorum*, 496). There is acknowledgement that virtue has not served as protection. Even Polyxena's maidenhood did not save her; she also fell to the very same man as Hector and many of the illustrious sons of Troy. She sees herself not only widowed, no longer the wife of a king of the great city of Troy, but also bereft. Here, she names Achilles, "destroyer," a uniquely Ovidian distinction: "Achilles is the destroyer/ the bereaver of us" (*nostrique orbator, Achilles*, 500). This word *orbator* is an invention of Ovid in these lines — the destroyer or the bereaver.³¹ There are no other extant instances of the word *orbator*, only of the verb from which it is derived (*OLD* s.v. *orbo*). Ovid's unique application of this verbiage exemplifies who Achilles is to Hecuba particularly and to the Trojans generally. They have deprived her of all aspects of her life that she valued, from her civic role as queen and wife, to the dearest, closest held role of a mother.

Hecuba realizes that she has previously misplaced her fear, when she had thought Achilles' power ended in his death. Achilles, defined by rage, has come to destroy more

³⁰ McKinley:142; McKinley observes that in the *Metamorphoses*, "[the] heroines' monologues were modeled by Ovid after the speeches of Euripides' heroines."

³¹ Hopkinson 2000: 178; Fantham 2004a: 124.

of her children. Unlike Achilles, Hecuba has not yet fully realized the power of rage, both effective and self-destructive. Nevertheless, Achilles has risen from the grave and raged against her and her people: “the ashes [of the tomb] themselves, interred / rage against this people; likewise, from the tomb I perceive [him] an enemy.” (*cinis ipse sepulti / in genus hoc saevit, tumulo quoque sensimus hostem*, 503-4). The usage of *saevit* “he rages” parallels Achilles and Hecuba. She too will rage before the narrative is ended. She realizes that Achilles, or this ghostly echo (*manes*) of him “ought to be feared by [her]” or “must be feared” (*mi metuendus erat*, 503); this gerundive construction gives a sense of obligation and necessity. Hecuba has underestimated, even in her current grief, the effect that rage and sorrow, and all the other negative emotions tied to death, can have on the living. She gives additional power to the *orbator* Achilles, with the most powerful line of the monologue: “I was fertile for the Aeacides [Achilles]!” (*Aeacidae fecunda fui!*, 505). She sees the aim of her children’s lives as death, and their bodies as instruments to honor the dead, even her enemies, as funerary offerings. Hecuba decides to focus on the deaths of her children, instead of the fullness of their lives. She, like Achilles, deprives herself of the joy of celebrating a life lived.

Ovid creates a building pressure with Hecuba’s grief, her rage, and even her madness, through the loss of different parts of her identity. He strips away the layers of protection from Hecuba’s psyche, as he moves through the set-pieces of the narrative. Ovid reminds the reader of Hecuba’s varied losses in different spheres of life; Hecuba is “all-suffering.” The city of Troy has been destroyed; her husband has died; and her children, though bright and illustrious, are being taken from her:

iacet Ilium ingens,
 euentuque graui finita est publica clades,
 sed finita tamen; soli mihi Pergama restant,
in cursuque meus dolor est. modo maxima rerum,
 tot generis natisque potens nuribusque uiroque,
 nunc trahor exul, inops, tumulis auulsa meorum,
 Penelopes munus, quae me data pensa trahentem
 matribus ostendens Ithacis ‘**haec Hectoris illa est
 clara parens,** haec est’ dicet ‘Priameia coniunx,’ (*Met.* 13.505-13)

Huge Ilium lies defeated,
 and by a grave event, our shared disaster is ended,
 but ended nevertheless; to me alone Pergamum remains,
my grief continues. Just now, [I was] **the greatest of things,**
 [I was] **mighty** [with] so many sons-in-law and children [sons and daughters]
 and daughters-in-law and a husband.
 Now I, an exile, am dragged, poor, torn away from the tombs of my own,
 as a gift for Penelope, who showing me off to the mothers of Ithaca,
 as I am carding the given wool, will say,
“This is that famous parent of Hector, this is Priam’s wife.”

In these lines, Hecuba thinks of her sorrows as ongoing, like a smoldering flame that is still hot beneath the ashes: “my grief continues” (*in cursuque meus dolor est*, 508). She formerly was “mighty” (*potens*, 509) not only because of her position as the wife of Priam, the queen, but also because of her motherhood — because she was “fertile” (*fecunda*, 505) with her many sons, daughters, and in-laws. Her losses are not only external but also an internal loss of self: “just now, [I was] the greatest of things” (*modo maxima rerum*, 508). She no longer quite knows by which measure to examine her self-worth. Hecuba thinks on her future servitude to Penelope and surmises that her value to Odysseus comes from her motherhood itself: “this is that famous parent of Hector” (*Hectoris illa est / clara parens*, 512-3). She is reduced to slavery and exile, only valued for the things she no longer is or no longer possesses. Hecuba is becoming more defined by death than the life she formerly led.

Polydorus: A Woman Transformed

As the Ovidian Hecuba moves through each of the deaths or graves of her children, first Hector, then Polyxena, and finally Polydorus, she is stripped of different aspects of her identity. Ovid reduces her bit by bit, while also raising the possibility that hardship has exposed her true nature. As he did with Niobe, Ovid depicts the overwhelming emotions of maternal grief with a literal stone-like quality.³² In these lines, Hecuba compares the fate she has suffered, as the survivor of her family, to her husband Priam's, who died along with the city of Troy:

postque tot amissos tu nunc, quae sola leuabas
maternos luctus, hostilia busta piasti.
inferias hosti peper! quo ferrea resto?
quidue moror? quo me seruas, annosa senectus?
quo, di crudeles, **nisi uti noua funera cernam,**
uiuacem differtis anum? quis posse putaret
felicem Priamum **post diruta Pergama** dici?
felix morte sua est: (*Met.* 13.514-21)

“**and, after so many having been lost,** now you who alone used to alleviate the **maternal grief appease a hostile grave!**
I gave birth to death-offerings for an enemy. Why do I remain iron-like?
Or **why do I linger?** Why do you, old age, preserve me?
Why, cruel gods, do you preserve this long-lived old woman,
unless so that I see fresh funerals? Who would have thought it possible that Priam be called happy, **after Pergamum [Troy] was demolished?**
He is **happy** in his own death.”

Ovid utilizes each burial site as an increasingly suffocating place of grief for Hecuba, with line 514, “and, after so many having been lost” (*postque tot amissos*). However, Priam is able to be “happy” (*felix*, 521) because he has been removed from continuing grief through death. In line 514, she refers not only to her own children, but to all of Troy, and in 520, she says, “after Pergamum [Troy] was demolished?” (*post diruta*

³² *Met.* 6. 146-312

Pergama, 520). This destruction of Troy, which she has tied to Achilles, *orbator*, is to “appease a hostile grave” (*hostilia busta piasti*, 515). Previously, Polyxena alleviated her “maternal grief” (*maternos luctus*, 515). It is her very self-identity, her cornerstone of motherhood, that has opened Hecuba up to full destruction. She sees the very act of giving birth as tied to death, and specifically the hostility and enmity of Achilles: “I gave birth to death-offerings for an enemy” (*inferias hosti peperit*, 516). Hecuba seems to suffer from a type of survivor’s guilt, as she thinks that Priam is happier for having died along with Troy, while she experiences the deaths of her children. Finally, Ovid foreshadows that Hecuba is also in the process of losing her connection to her own humanity; she is “iron-like” or “inhuman” (*OLD* s.v. *ferreus* 4.a.). Hecuba’s transformation, which she began at Hector’s grave, will conclude as she loses the final aspect of her identity, her humanity.

Though Hecuba questions her reasons for living, saying, “why do I linger?” (*quidue moror*, 517), the undiscovered death of Polydorus serves as an answer to Hecuba’s rhetorical question. This setup is an intriguing apposition to Euripides’ play, which opens with a ghostly Polydorus telling of his death, also before Hecuba’s discovery.³³ Ovid uses a trick of narration, as Polydorus is addressed directly in the beginning of the narrative: “the rich court of Polymestor was there, to whom your father entrusted you for the purpose of being nourished secretly, Polydorus, and removed you from the Phrygian war” (*regia diues erat, cui te commisit alendum / clam, Polydore, pater Phrygiisque remouit ab armis*, 431-2). This address is a mirror image of Euripides’ tragedy; the playwright has the character address the audience. However, Ovid reverses

³³ For more on Polydorus in Euripides prologue, see Chapter 2.

the fourth wall and addresses the character. So, when Hecuba gives her monologue after the death of Polyxena, the reader knows that Polydorus has already died. The question, “why do I linger?” (*quidue moror*, 517), serves as dramatic irony which Hecuba herself answers, “unless so that I see fresh funerals” (*nisi uti noua funera cernam*, 518).³⁴

Finally, the last aspect of her identity that Ovid removes is Hecuba’s identity as a person. The impetus of her transfiguration, examined more thoroughly in the next chapter, is the loss of hope and the drive for vengeance that Hecuba experiences when she is confronted with Polydorus’ death. In lines 428-438, Ovid, as the narrator, explains both the circumstances of Polydorus’ trip to the Thracian king and the reason for his death at that king’s hand. However, while the reader is aware of his death, in Hecuba’s mind, her youngest son was sent away for safety, where he yet remains. The discovery of Polydorus’ body is under unusual circumstances, as the likelihood of Hecuba stumbling upon his body, flung into the ocean, while drawing water to wash Polyxena’s corpse seems to beggar belief:

aspicit eiectum Polydori in litore corpus
 factaque Threiciis ingentia uulnera telis.
 Troades exclamant; **obmutuit illa dolore**,
 et pariter uocem **lacrimasque introrsus obortas**
deurat ipse dolor, duroque simillima saxo
 torpet et aduersa figit modo lumina terra, (*Met.* 13.536-41)

She saw the body of Polydorus laid out on the shore,
 huge wounds made with Thracian spears.
 The Trojan women exclaimed; **that one lost her speech on account of grief**
 and in the same way as her voice, **grief itself devoured the tears**
rising from within. She is dumbstruck, and similar to a hard rock,
 and just now fixes her eyes on the facing ground,

³⁴ See Curley 2013: 156-8 for how the questions are framed in Ovid’s version of the Hecuba monologue and how that diverts from the usual conventions of *topos*.

Though it seems unusual that Hecuba would discover her last hope dashed, Polydorus' safety, amidst the lamentation for Polyxena, it is the proximity of these deaths that continues the building emotional pressure. Hecuba experiences loss after loss of her dearest children and is a powder keg of emotions. Ovid, and Euripides before him, uses this as the propulsion into feral madness from maternal grief.

The circumstances in which Hecuba finds Polydorus' corpse are especially egregious and contribute to her worsening mental state. Polydorus has not only been murdered needlessly but also been betrayed and dumped into the sea as refuse. The way that Hecuba finds his body is like flotsam having floated to shore: "she saw the body of Polydorus laid out on the shore" (*aspicit eiectum Polydori in litore corpus*, 536). Polydorus was done in by the basest of human desires, greed and disloyalty. The blame lies with both Priam and Polymestor, Priam for being unwise, and Polymestor for lacking basic virtue: "a wise plan [of Priam's], if he hadn't added great wealth as a reward for crime, / the incitement of the greedy spirit [of Polymestor]" (*consilium sapiens, sceleris nisi praemia magnas / adiecisset opes, animi inritamen auari*, 433-4). Polymestor has killed him out of self-interest twice over; once, because at the Trojan's defeat, he sees him as a greater risk, and second, because he looks to claim the gold sent for Polydorus' welfare as his own. The most significant factor is Polymestor's greed; the gold which Priam sent with Polydorus for his upkeep is too irresistible, and Polymestor kills him for little and discards him as less. Polydorus simply washes ashore, already long-dead, for Hecuba to find amidst her grief.

Though Ovid foreshadows her transformation earlier in the narrative, as I will examine in the next chapter, Hecuba truly begins her loss of humanity when she first sees

Polydorus' corpse and finalizes her loss of self completely in the act of mutilation. She first loses volubility: "that one lost her speech on account of grief" (*obmutuit illa dolore*, 538). It is by this same instrument, grief (*dolore*), that she also is deprived of tears. Grief begins to consume her; Ovid moves it from an instrumental role (*dolore*) in the sentence to the subject (*dolor*). Sorrow, not Hecuba, is in command of the situation, depriving her of the very act of mourning tears: "grief itself devoured the tears / rising from within" (*lacrimasque introrsus abortas / deuorat ipse dolor*, 539-40). She is not only bereft of her children but has also lost control of her body itself: "she is dumbstruck" (*torpet*, 541). Her emotions transform her as much as her actions.

Ovid transitions Hecuba from sorrow to rage through her glance. There is an interesting repetition of the idea of the face one shows, or the glances one makes, at a pivotal moment.³⁵ Earlier, Achilles recalled the "threatening" face he had when he argued so fiercely with Agamemnon (*similisque minanti / temporis illius uultum referebat Achilles*, 442-3). Polyxena had "an intrepid" face in death (*pertulit intrepidus ad fata nouissima uultus*, 478). Hecuba has a "grim face" (*toruos uultus*, 542). There is an importance laid on the connection of Hecuba's appearance and position of her body to her emotions:

interdum **toruos** sustollit ad aethera **uultus**,
nunc positi spectat uultum, nunc uulnera nati,
uulnera praecipue, seque armat et instruit ira.
 qua simul **exarsit**, tamquam regina maneret,
 ulcisci statuit **poenaeque in imagine tota est,**
utque furit catulo lactente orbata leaena (*Met.* 13.542-7)

Now and then she lifted **her grim face** to the air. **Now, she looks at the face of the one having been laid out, now at the wounds of her son, especially at his wounds,** and **anger arms and guides itself.**

³⁵ See Loraux 2018: 81 on the face as a representation of the dead.

As soon as **she blazed up with it**, as though she still remained a queen,
she decides to avenge, **she is wholly in the image of punishment**.
and **just as a lioness rages when bereft of her sucking pup...**

It is with her glance that her emotions change, as she again focuses on the wounds of the dead Polydorus: “Now, she looks at the face of the one having been laid out, now at the wounds of her son, especially at his wounds, and anger arms and guides itself” (*nunc positi spectat uultum, nunc uulnera nati / uulnera praecipue, seque armat et instruit ira*, 543-4). She adds wrath to her earlier sorrow, and they together guide her fully. Sorrow will no longer suffice: “she blazed up” (*exarsit*, 545). She plans her revenge, having given herself over to howling rage.³⁶ She gives up her humanity by allowing herself to be ruled by the worst emotions.

Ovid does not merely allow emotions to guide Hecuba but makes her the spirit of wrath. She is an avatar of vengeance with a “grim face.” In the reversal of Hecuba’s earlier naming as “the image/spirit of flourishing Asia” (*Asiae florentis imago*, 484), now “she is wholly in the image of punishment” (*poenaeque in imagine tota est*, 546). More than just appearing as one out for blood, she has transformed into a spirit of vengeance. In fact, in the next line Ovid writes, “she rages furiously” (*furit*, 547). Has Hecuba become something like a human embodiment of a Fury? Or is she no longer human at all? Ovid still approaches her transformation as metaphorical: Hecuba is “just as a lioness bereft her sucking cub” (*utque furit catulo lactente orbata leaena*, 547). Hecuba is not fully transformed outwardly, as will be examined in the next chapter, until she engages in the act of blood lust. However, Ovid has already indicated her inner nature has

³⁶ For the constant theme of the eyes and the gaze as a reference to spectator and the stage, see Westerhold 2011.

transformed, that she is something other than human — a being driven by rage. He has, even before her famous act, stripped her three-fold, bringing her from sorrow to rage, even to madness.

Hecuba in Ovid is a narrative of transformation: the transformation of identity and emotion. Ovid foreshadows that Hecuba will be emptied of her identity through the repeated use of the verb *haurio*, with which he links her to a love or obsession for death and dead things. Through her grief at Hector's tomb, Ovid shows that Hecuba has lost her identity as Queen, as a stand-in for the fertility and growth of Troy. Polyxena's sacrifice is a demonstration of Hecuba's loss of the best feature of womanhood and the deprivation of her motherhood by Achilles. Finally, the discovery of the corpse of Polydorus and the overflow of emotion serve to remove Hecuba's humanity, the last piece of identity she had preserved. She is left as less than human, a revenant or specter. Without even considering the literal nature of her transformation in *Metamorphoses* 13, Hecuba has already been transformed three times over.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Beast You've Made of Me: The Ovidian Metamorphosis of Hecuba¹

If you could only see the beast you've made of me
I held it in but now it seems you've set it running free
Screaming in the dark, I howl when we're apart
Drag my teeth across your chest to taste your beating heart
(Florence + the Machine, *Howl*)

Is Hecuba most famous for her grief, her anger, or her transformation? It is partially her transformation that has fascinated the reader through the ages, as well as her “all-suffering” grief. However, what significance lies in the translation from woman to dog? To the modern eye, there is immediate inference. Was she “that” kind of woman? Difficult, bold, problematic, free of boundaries? The answer is somewhat sinuous; it is the complexity of Hecuba that drives our interest in the first place. Ovid layers meaning on top of allusion, reference on top of inference, not making completely clear his authorial agenda. Is her transformation judgment, as Euripides’ tragedy seems to cast it, for disordered retribution, for excessive force? Is it divine punishment for lacking the foresight to interpret a dream decades earlier? Is it simply Misfortune working, as she always does, randomly and without intention? By examining the matter thoroughly, we can grasp the intention behind Ovid’s depiction of her transformation. As in much of the Ovidian *corpus*, the answer lies in the myriad of his words, in the woven illusion, the clever intertextual “borrowings.” So, while Euripides certainly made Hecuba’s name on

¹ Translation is my own, unless otherwise noted. The Latin text of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* comes from Tarrant 2004; the Greek text of Euripides’ *Hecuba* comes from Kovacs 1995; the Latin text of Horace’s *Epode* 5 comes from Garrod 1901.

the stage through his depiction of her extensive grief, Ovid has solidified her end in the popular imagination by means of her unusual metamorphosis in *Metamorphoses* 13.399-575.

In this chapter, I will focus on the canine transformation of Hecuba, through both an intertextual lens and an overview of the importance of transformation in the *Metamorphoses*. While in previous chapters I focused on Euripides' two Hecuba centered tragedies, *Hecuba* and the *Trojan Women*, as well as how Ovid built and expanded on the narrative in the *Metamorphoses* by centering the evolution and transformation of Hecuba's identity and emotions, until now, this thesis has only lightly touched on the reason for Hecuba's inclusion to the *Metamorphoses*, her canine transformation.² I will establish the general importance of transformation in the *Metamorphoses*, as well as what the significance of transformation into beasts or silent object signifies within the poem and broader Roman society. I will assess the emphasis put on the verb *gemo* by Ovid, which gives Hecuba a canine quality throughout the passage. I will analyze the role and perception of dogs in Greek and Roman society, as well as famous canine transformations, both Ovidian and otherwise, such as Lycaon and Canidia. Finally, the foreshadowing of the transformation of Hecuba at Hector's grave will be shown through a close reading of the Latin, as well as by looking closely at her transformation at the end of the epyllion.

² On Cynossema, see Kalfina 2016.

Transformation in Ovid

Transformation plays a vital role in the Ovidian *corpus*, especially the *Metamorphoses*.³ Throughout his literary career, Ovid had a tendency to play with story and genre, often molding them into new, captivating shapes. Hardie observes that “metamorphosis has moved to the centre stage as a dominant trope of Ovidian criticism, a way of thinking about change and continuity not just in linguistic and literary areas such as genre, allegory and personification, allusion and intertextuality, and reader response but also in Ovid’s dealing with the extratextual worlds of psychology, culture, history and ideology” (2002a: 4).⁴ Ovid used transformation itself as a literary device, challenging the reader of his texts to evaluate his work in comparison to what had come before. Wheeler suggests, “[t]he premise of Ovidian transformation is that something of the old form is retained in the new” (1999: 33). This passion for changing words and ideas into new things led Ovid to his most intrepid work, the *Metamorphoses*. Ovid compiled stories found in the *Metamorphoses* with several aims in mind, linking them with the commonality of physical transfiguration, of metamorphosis.

Throughout the *Metamorphoses*, transfiguration or metamorphosis is a stand-in for death.⁵ As noted in the previous chapter, Hecuba’s identity changes through

³ See Hopkinson 2000: 1: he comments that Ovid is not the first to write a work in hexameter with the theme of metamorphosis; Nicander and Beous wrote on the subject previously.

⁴ See Tarrant 2002: 21: he suggests, “[t]he concept of rewriting is fundamental to the *Metamorphoses*, where every story retells an earlier version or versions.”

⁵ On death as transformation, see Hardie 2002b: 81-97: he observes that “[m]etamorphosis as a process that closes the narrative of a human life takes the place of death” (81); this section borrows from the ideas he puts forth.

interaction with the deaths of each of her children; her transformation is internal and emotional before it ever manifests in her outward form. There is a link between death and the transformation into memory; when a person dies, they cease to exist as an entity on this plane, but live on as the perceived and received memory of those left behind (Hardie 2002b: 81). Often, memorial and monument change the perception of someone's life significantly. For example, little is known of Ovid other than his words, which exist as a monument to him and live on as an almost separate person, the literary Ovid, who continues to change with each age.⁶ This transformation into monument, whether literally of gravestones or figuratively into words, is the course of most human lives. It has been said colloquially that a person lives on only as long as the last person who remembers them. However, Hecuba, like Troy itself, holds a place between myth and history; while there was undoubtedly a queen of a powerful Near Eastern city, was she anything like the literary Hecuba? Consider that Hecuba may have existed, though all traces of her personhood are lost. Then, would not Hecuba's transformation have had the opposite course of most? A physical landmark, *Cynossema* (the Dog's Grave), existed, and her story was transformed into the monument. The metamorphosis of Hecuba exemplifies the paralleling of transformation and death with monument-making, through her association with *Cynossema*.⁷

⁶ Poets, especially the Romans, have always been especially aware that their words stand as monuments; nowhere is this clearer than in Horace's Ode 3, "I have built a monument more lasting than bronze" (*exegi monumentum aere perennius*, 3.1), or in the final lines of the *Metamorphoses*.

⁷ For a more detailed analysis of *Cynossema*, see chapter 2.

As death, lamentation, and monument play a substantial role in Ovidian transformation, especially Hecuba's, it is important to examine the roles women played in mourning. Women exemplified states of grief in both Greek and Roman society, especially the act of vocally mourning, lamentation. Lamentation often took the form of wailing or ululation, which is still a practice in some cultures today. Motherhood, womanhood, and mourning rituals were frequently linked together. In particular, there is a pattern of mourning mothers throughout the *Metamorphoses*.⁸ The Trojan War, for which the Hecuba narrative serves as a conclusion before the various stories of the *nostoi* (those returning from Troy), was especially significant for its funerary practices, due to the large scale of death.⁹ During the Trojan War, there had been a “ban on lamentation *on the Trojan side* [emphasis author's] (e.g., *Il.* 7.427)” which led to a pent up grief that was released when the dead were reclaimed and were met with “female wailing” (Loroux 2018: 74). As Loroux suggests for the heroes of the Trojan War, on both the Achaean and Trojan sides, the “funeral accommodated lamentations, a display of the body (*prothesis*), a banquet, and/or games” (2018: 75). Ovid uses lamentation in the Hecuba epyllion to connect Hecuba literally with grief and metaphorically with the howling of a dog.

Howling Grief: gemo in the Hecuba Epyllion

Ovid's use of *gemo* throughout *Metamorphoses* 13.399-575 emphasizes Hecuba's transformation at the end of the narrative by exploiting syllepsis, the doubling in the meaning of a word, both the figurative and literal. The most common use of *gemo* is “to

⁸ See Fantham 2004a for three examples of mourning mothers, including Hecuba, in the *Metamorphoses*.

⁹ On the beautiful death and funerary rituals, see Loroux 2018; also Erasmo 2008.

utter a sound expressing sorrow, pain, regret, etc. to groan” (*OLD* s.v. *gemo* 1.a.), for which I would like to substitute *howl*, which the Cambridge dictionary gives as “to make a loud sound, usually to express pain, sadness or another strong emotion” (1.a.). While the other two topline definitions in the *OLD* differ slightly in connotation, they are not substantively different in meaning from the first.¹⁰ Ovid uses this verb cleverly to portend the transformation of Hecuba:

mors tantum uellem matrem mea fallere posset;
mater obest minuitque necis mihi gaudia, quamuis
non mea mors illi, uerum sua uita gemenda est.¹¹ (*Met.* 13.462-4)

Only I wish my death were able to elude my mother;
my mother stands in the way and lessens delight in my death,
although, it is not my death [that ought to be howled at] by her,
but truly her own life that **ought to be howled at [by her]**.

The passive periphrastic construction of *gemenda est*, often called the gerundive of obligation, lends a sense of necessity to the words. If “howl” is assigned as the translation for *gemo*, the phrase “her own life ought to be howled at [by her]” (*sua uita gemenda est*, 464) holds a double meaning at least. Hecuba will be obligated both to mourn and to make a noise like an animal, a form of silencing or dehumanizing. The construction is also paralleled with the thought, “it is not my death to her” (*non mea mors illi*, 464) which elides a second *gemenda est*. This elision, along with the adverb *uerum*, ties the idea that it is her own life that is sorrowful, rather than her children’s deaths. While one

¹⁰ The first use of this verb within the *Metamorphoses* as a whole is “and the bulls pressed by the yoke groan (howl)” (*pressique iugo gemuere iuuenci*, 1.124) and is used in respect to animals, not people. In book 13, the first usage is in line 48, “you move the rocks with your groan (howl)” (*saxa moues gemitu*) from the Judgment of Arms narrative that begins the book.

¹¹ See Tarrant 2004: 389 in some versions of the text *gemenda est* appears as *cremenda est* or *tremenda est*.

view of this may be that life lived after the destruction of all held dear is something to be mourned, another is literally her life after the death of her children will be one comprised of howling.

This idea that Hecuba's diminished state is one to be mourned, or *howled* at, is strengthened by the next appearance of *gemo* in *Metamorphoses* 13. Now, Hecuba is not the one who is howling, but the Trojan women howl at her. Again, Ovid emphasizes that the loss of her status and identity is a significant reason for her suffering:

Troades¹² excipiunt *deploratosque recensent*
Priamidas¹³ **et quot dederit domus una cruores,**
teque gemunt, uirgo, teque, o modo regia coniunx;
regia dicta parens, Asiae florentis imago,
nunc etiam praedae **mala sors;** quam uictor Ulixes
esse suam nollet, nisi quod tamen Hectora partu
edideras, dominum matri uix repperit Hector! (*Met.* 13.481-7)

The Trojan women received [her body], and **recounted the [already] lamented children of Priam, and the quantity of blood that one house gave, and they howl for you, girl, and you just now called the royal wife,** the royal parent, the spirit of flourishing Asia, now even **the evil lot** of a spoil, you whom victor Odysseus would not want as his own, except that you had given Hector in birth: Hector scarcely found a master for his mother!

This passage gives two recipients for the howling of the Trojan women; however, for each recipient, there is a different reason for the howling. Ovid begins this portion of the epyllion with the women and Hecuba recovering Polyxena's body after her ritual murder, but he clarifies that other than Polyxena, the Trojan women, including Hecuba, have

¹² See Hopkinson 2000: 167: as in line 421, this nomenclature is probably an allusion to the Euripidean play *Troades* (the *Trojan Women*); however, the earlier lines are a simplified version of that play.

¹³ See Hopkinson 2000: 175: in *Il.* 24.495-501, Priam counts fifty sons, nineteen of whom are the children of Hecuba.

already conducted ritual lamentation for her other children and, as is implied, the whole of Troy. The Trojan women have “recounted the [already] lamented / children of Priam, and the quantity of blood that one house gave” (*deploratosque recensent / Priamidas et quot dederit domus una cruores*, 481-2) which has happened before the reception of Polyxena’s body; Hopkinson gives “review in their minds” as a possible translation, which also indicates a passage of time between the events (2000: 175). The Trojan prepare for a burial and lament of Polyxena: “they howl for you, girl” (*teque gemunt, uirgo, teque, Met.* 13.483), but they also “howl for... you just now called the royal wife [Hecuba]” (*gemunt, ... teque, o modo regia coniunx*, 483), though Hecuba has not died. Hecuba receives the lament of the other Trojan women due to her “evil fortune” or “bad lot in life” (*mala sors*, 485), though these women are also suffering similar losses of family, dignity, and self-autonomy. While it could be considered a difference of magnitude, in line with the colloquial saying “the bigger you are, the harder you fall,” it could also be that Hecuba will be transformed as well as suffer loss, another dual meaning. Ovid makes Hecuba’s howling unambiguous after she has transformed, though he still uses the verbiage of lamentation (571). Ovid’s use of *gemo* in these passages creates a syllepsis; the women literally mourn Polyxena in ritual practice, as well as mourn the fate of Hecuba, and figuratively it signifies her transition into one who howls herself.¹⁴

¹⁴ See Hardie 2002b: 230: “[s]yllepsis thus fuses within one and the same word a literal and a metaphorical sense.”

Transformation into Beasts

While the *Metamorphoses* has a focus on the transformation of genre or transformation as a substitute for death, almost every transformation in this epic is into a lower form, human to plants or animals. Fantham suggests, “the transformations that make men wonder and stirred their fantasy were those that seemed contrary to nature” (2004b: 7). There was an idea in both the Greek and Roman world that men represent order and civilization, while women represent the wild or arcane. Indeed, throughout the *Metamorphoses*, the focus is on how women often react to men’s actions through the means of transformation into nature. Many of the transformations in the *Metamorphoses* are from human to animal or plant — from a higher, more civilized form to a lower, less sensible form. There is an implicit bias in a correlation of women to animals, plants, and objects, a type of acknowledgment of societal practices that have a limited, prescribed position for women.

Another aspect of transformation into beasts or plants is the loss of the faculty of intelligible speech. The *Metamorphoses*, like many texts from antiquity, is filled with scenes of interpersonal and societal violence being inflicted upon women. Often, the transformation serves as a type of censorship of violence. The Echo and Narcissus narrative (3.339-401) especially emphasizes this: her transformation leaves her still able to speak but unable to be understood in a meaningful way. In Ovidian metamorphosis, the woman is often pursued and escapes unwanted advances only through transformation, as in the story of Daphne and Apollo (1.473-567). The Ovidian woman may lose all agency, as the Daphne-become-laurel does, since she is still claimed by her pursuer post-metamorphosis. In another instance, Procne and Philomela find a release from bondage in

return for a loss of humanity, which features the literal silencing of Philomela when Tereus cuts out her tongue (6.401-674). Throughout Ovid's text, metamorphosis is often a silencing of the victim's voice.

Hecuba's transformation into a dog is weighted heavily by the societal perceptions of dogs in the ancient world. The Near East, where Troy was located, has a fascinating history with dogs. Some of the oldest remains of domesticated dogs are found in this area, dating to around 4400-3800 BCE (Brewer, Phillips, and Clark 2002: 53). Not only is there strong evidence that domesticated dogs were a part of Near Eastern society during the period of time in which Hecuba would have lived, but there is also evidence of ritual burial of dogs, with the Saluki breed included as part of healing cult practices (54-5). These types of dogs are identified by Herodotus as "Indian dogs," though scholars debate on the exact breed of dog, whether mastiff or greyhound. Additionally, there was an association between dogs and the Mesopotamian goddess Gula due to images of dogs found on boundary markers. Clearly, dogs held a more elevated status in the Near East, though not much textual evidence exists, instead more archeological evidence survives.

Likewise, dogs played an important role in both Greece and Rome, often as either dear companions or foils for human nature.¹⁵ In Greece, there were both positive and negative connotations of canines, some of which continue on to today. Indeed, Cristiana Franco attests to "kyōn as a term of abuse" in Ancient Greece; dogs were "a member of the human community, [and were] also endowed with agency and held responsible for

¹⁵ On dogs in antiquity much of the information is drawn from Franco 2019a; see also Brewer, Phillips, and Clark 2002 on dogs in the Near East was found; Franco 2019b; Hilzheimer 1932; Kitchell 2020; for sources from antiquity that attest to the roles of dogs see Xenophon *On Hunting*; Plato *Republic* 416A 1-7.

[their] actions” (2019a: 34). While dogs were often household companions, such as Argos, the loyal hound that awaits Odysseus’ return, in many other cases, as sources from antiquity attest, they were often associated with dark magic or death. Dogs were connected to being rabid, “a state of mind whose name in in Greek (*lyssa*) meant more or less ‘wolf-syndrome’: a frenzy that drove them out of civilized spaces” (2019a: 37). This frenzied state was often connected to the Dionysian rites; the maenads (wild women) were often compared with the rabid dogs (2019a: 37). Canines, more than other domesticated animals, were considered part of the household, and in this role, dogs were especially associated with women. Franco suggests they are “sort of a totem animal” for women (2019a: 38). Their relationship with women accompanied dual roles: roles that were both evocative of a loyal servant of the household and also bitchy women who did not reside within the boundaries set for them. In fact, Pandora, Hesoid’s picture of the worst parts of womanhood, is given a “doggish mind” (*kyneos noos*, *Works and Days* 67). In Greece, the duality in the perception of dogs drove gendered comparisons to women.

In Rome, more than in Greece, canines were regarded positively, though the negative connotation of relation to witchcraft or the supernatural remained. Dogs were often thought of as puppies or lapdogs in Roman households and valued highly for their virtue.¹⁶ Indeed, the common name Fido is drawn from the Latin *fidus* (faithful), a vestige of the Roman view of dogs that remains today. Many inscriptions remain which record the mourning of a Roman household dog. As with women, dogs were appreciated when they were tame, but feared when they were wild; they are often described as “harsh”

¹⁶ See Pliny the Elder *Natural History* 8.61.

(*acer*) or “ferocious” (*saeva*). Another quality assigned to canines in Rome was *sagacitas* (keen-nosed-ness) which drew their relation to witches (*sagae*).¹⁷ More than just being related to witches, divination, and magic, dogs were closely related to death. Cerberus, a supernatural three-headed dog, was the guardian of the underworld, and groups of hell-hounds, who resided in the underworld, were thought to aid Hecate in her infernal tasks.¹⁸ The various ways people in antiquity related to dogs inform the significance of Hecuba’s transformation into a dog, as she is driven from civilized spaces and pushed to the edges of human society by the depth of her emotions.

Like dogs, women in Rome could be associated with the arcane and the supernatural when they fell outside the established norms of domestic society.¹⁹ Emily Gower suggests, especially “in wartime, women risk being more than usually defaced, cast as the enemies within who suck away men’s strength, because [of]... ‘male hysteria under political pressure’”(2016: 2). Often, older women could be seen as witches if they were no longer productive in society, either married or with children, or were autonomous. Various female scare figures, such as Iambe, Bauabo, Lamia, Gorgo, and Empousa also linked women with an unknown, dangerous, and supernatural quality. Hecate, the goddess of witchcraft and night, was aligned with an aspect of womanhood, especially older women or crones. Ovid utilizes these perceptions of uncivilized women being linked with magic, death, and the supernatural in the Hecuba epyllion to cast doubt as to her position in society prior to her transformation.

¹⁷ See Cicero, *On Divination* 1.65 for the connection between witches and dogs.

¹⁸ See Aristophanes *Frogs* 472.

¹⁹ For more on feminine scare figures, see Gowers 2016.

Other Transformations in the Metamorphoses

In the *Metamorphoses*, several other transformations take place that either concern dogs and wolves or otherwise mirror Hecuba's transformation. The first of these is Lycaon, who is transformed into wolf after attempting to commit murder. The next is Niobe, who, as mentioned in the previous chapter, is transformed into stone after the death of all of her children. Then the transformation of the lovelorn Scylla by the witch Circe into a half-dog monster stands as an interesting parallel to Hecuba's transformation. These transformations each hold elements in common with Ovid's treatment of Hecuba and can serve to show his intentions.

Ovid is self-referential within his Hecuba epyllion; the first human transfiguration in the *Metamorphoses* is that of Lycaon, who is transformed into a wolf. There is duality of literal and figural states of being, as Hardie suggests, "Lycaon is like a wolf/Lycaon is a wolf" (2002a: 230). In the aftermath of his evil deed, Lycaon is transformed:

territus ipse fugit nactusque silentia ruris
exulalat frustra que loqui conatur; ab ipso
colligit os rabiem, solitaeque cupidine caedis
uertitur in pecudes et nunc quoque sanguine gaudet.
in uillos abeunt uestes, in crura lacerti;
fit lupus et ueteris seruat uestigia formae;
canities eadem est, eadem uiolentia uultus,
idem oculi lucent, **eadem feritatis imago est.** (*Met.* 1.232-9)

He himself flees terrified and having gained possession of the silence of the fields
howls and in vain he attempts to speak;
his mouth gathers to itself ferocity
and with his accustomed desire for murder he turns against flocks
and now also is one who delights in blood.
His garments go away into hairs, his arms into the leg of a beast;
he is become a wolf, and preserves vestiges of his old form:
There is the same **hoary-hair**, the same violent glare,
the same eyes gleam, there is the **same image of ferality**.

Lycaon has several obvious parallels to Hecuba in the manner of his transfiguration. As with Hecuba, Lycaon's words are replaced with howls as he attempts to speak: he "howls and in vain attempts to speak" (*exululat frustra que loqui conatur*, 233). Likewise, Hecuba "attempting to speak, her jaws prepared for the words, she barked" (*riktuque in uerba parato / latrauit, conata loqui*, 13.567-8). Both Hecuba and Lycaon are surprised by their inability to speak. They also share the attribute of grey hair; Hecuba has "white hair" (*albentes comas*, 534) and Lycaon remains "hoary-haired" (*canities*, 1.238) even after his bestial transformation. Again, Ovid uses the word *imago*; here, Lycaon has "the same spirit/image of ferality" (*eadem feritatis imago*, 239) while Hecuba changes from "the image of flourishing Asia" (*Asiae florentis imago*, 13.484) to a spirit of vengeance (546). Both Lycaon and Hecuba are guilty of blood-crimes and are transfigured by their actions. Through intratextuality, Ovid parallels the two figures, though their final judgment is different: Lycaon is guilty, while Hecuba is pitiable.

Other significant transformations in the *Metamorphoses* that work in tandem with Hecuba's transfiguration are those of Niobe, who Ovid transforms into stone, and Scylla, who Ovid changes into a dog monster. Niobe holds two resonances with the Hecuba narrative: her loss of her children and her transformation into stone. However, unlike Hecuba, Niobe is not morally ambiguous. She risks the lives of her children for vanity's sake and only too late decides to change her course. Unlike Niobe, Hecuba's transformation is solely due to her grief and rage at the loss of her children. Scylla, like Hecuba, shares a sense of lessened guilt. Her transformation is due to the jealous rage of a witch-like figure, Circe. There is an inversion in the Hecuba epyllion, Hecuba serves as a witch-like figure in her narrative, while Polyxena is more blameless. However, like

Hecuba, Scylla is transformed into a mutated woman-dog; Scylla becomes a doggish woman with puppies around her waist, while Hecuba is transformed into a howling dog. Both of these transformations, Niobe's and Scylla's, have resonances with that of Hecuba's; Niobe due to motherly grief, and Scylla due to the transformation into a dog.

Canine Characters outside of the Ovidian Corpus

Outside of the Ovidian *corpus*, there are significant intertextual allusions to women who are associated with dogs in other Greek or Roman texts. One of the most notable of these doggish women is Canidia, Horace's menacing literary creation. Ovid, known for his penchant to borrow, reuse, and repurpose likely incorporated motifs from the Horatian Canidia into the Hecuba epyllion. The actions of Hecuba at Hector's gravesite are strongly reminiscent of *Epode 5*, which features Canidia. Like Hecuba, Canidia is strongly connected to dogs; there are parallels that can be drawn between her depiction and Hecuba's in the *Metamorphoses*.²⁰ In Horatian poetry, the witch Canidia frequently works under the baleful presence of the Dog Star (*Sirius*), an essential signifier of her ill repute (Johnson 2012: 21; Oliensis 1991: 121). Canidia, as a witch, is tied to female practices of magic, especially natural or sympathetic magic.²¹ Additionally, Canidia is used as a feminine scare figure, which Hecuba can also be read as, especially

²⁰ For a more thorough tabulation of Canidia's occurrences within Horatian canon, see Carrubba 1969; Porphyron, *In Horatium, ad Epodon 3,8*.

²¹ Johnson 2012: 7-9;13,14; Johnson states the Roman response to these practices, which include "illicit divination and soothsaying, illegitimate nocturnal rites, and even the 'practice' of atheism [necessitated] ... social control" (9).

after her canine metamorphosis.²² In *Epode 5*, Horace associates Canidia strongly with a feminine form of the Latin word for dog which means “hellhound” (*OLD* s.v. *canis* 1.c.) when she snatches the bone from the “bitch.” The specificity of the feminine form of “hellhound” (*canis*) separates Canidia’s depiction from that of the “loyal” (*fidus*) Roman dog. In *Epode 5*, when Canidia first appears within the Epodes, Horace paints a vivid picture:

Canidia, **breuibus illigata uiperis
crinis et incomptum caput,
iubet sepulcris caprificos erutas,
iubet cupressos funebris** et
uncta turpis oua ranae sanguine
plumamque nocturnae strigis
herbasque, quas Iolcos atque Hiberia²³
mittit uenenorum ferax,
et **ossa ab ore rapta ieiunae canis**
flammis aduri Colchicis (Horace *Ep.* 5.15-9)

Canidia, **with hair bound up with tiny serpents
and matted upon her head,
ordered the goat fig torn up from the tombs,
ordered the cypresses [prepared] for a funeral**
and the eggs of a foul frog, smeared [with its] blood
and the feathers of the witch-familiar owl
and herbs, which fertile in poison Iolcus and the Hiberia export,
and **a bone, snatched from the mouth of a ravenous bitch**
to be burnt with the flame of Colchian [magic].

Canidia’s strangely messy hair is a metaphor for feral madness. Horace depicts Canidia

“with hair bound up with tiny serpents and matted upon her head” (*breuibus illigata*

uiperis / crinis et incomptum caput, 5.15-6). The snakes within her hair are reminiscent of

²² For a more in-depth look at Canidia as a feminine scare figure, see Gowers 2016.

²³ Canidia has a proficiency with mixing herbs and poisons and is associated with the foreign witch Medea, the subject of Ovid’s lost tragedy, who was known for her vengeance when denied her rightful place in society.

the shaggy fur of Cerberus, or the Furies (*Sat.* 1.8.54), both also writhing with “snakes” (*uiperis*, *Ep.* 5.15). In the lines, “[Canidia] ordered the goat fig torn up from the tombs, ordered the cypresses [prepared] for a funeral” (*iubet sepulcris caprificos erutas, / iubet cupressos funebris*, 17-8), Horace forms a vivid word picture by arranging the Latin so that the canine Canidia is surrounded by both funerary trees and graves as she digs the earth.²⁴ Reinforcing the feral image, Canidia obtains a gnawed “bone, snatched from the mouth of a ravenous bitch” (*ossa ab ore rapta ieiunae canis*, 5).²⁵ Later in Horace’s *Epode* 5, he positions Canidia “at this point, gnawing her uncut claw, with baleful blackened bite” (*hic irsectum saeva dente liuido, Canidia rodens pollicem*, 47 -8). Here, she is wild (*saeva*) biting at her thumbs like a mutt attempting to loosen a thorn. Throughout this passage in *Epode* 5, not only are Canidia’s canine qualities, as well as her ties to death, apparent, but also the reuse of this imagery by Ovid in the *Hecuba* epyllion is clear.

Hecuba’s Ovidian Metamorphosis

When Ovid brings Hecuba into the narrative, after briefly acknowledging the *Trojan Women* in the preceding lines, he immediately foreshadows her canine transformation through her actions and movements near Hector’s grave.²⁶ By doing this,

²⁴ See Oliensis 1991: 121: cypress and wild fig are both connected to death and funeral rites and would have been used on funeral pyres in antiquity.

²⁵ See Tupet 1976: the effect of Canidia taking a bone from the dog is sympathetic magic; its ravenous nature is transferred to her through the incantation. Additionally, the chewed-off fingernail is also a common magical ingredient in Ancient Rome.

²⁶ Much of this is drawn from Curley 2013, especially the recognition of the dog-like attributes of Hecuba at Hector’s grave mound; for further elaboration on this passage, see especially Ch 4.

Ovid implies to the reader that Hecuba already contains the qualities of a dog, either rabidity or a connection to death beyond the actions of normal mourning or lamentation. Hecuba's transfiguration is the reason Ovid included and emphasized her narrative in the *Metamorphoses*; hence, the prominence of the canine qualities of the Ovidian Hecuba, while she is still human, is significant:

ultima conscendit classem (miserabile visu)
 in mediis Hecabe natorum inventa sepulcris;
prensantem tumulos atque **ossibus oscula dantem**
 Dulichiae traxere manus. tamen unius hausit
 inque sinu **cineres** secum tulit Hectoris **haustos**;
 Hectoris in tumulo canum de vertice crinem,
inferias inopes, crinem lacrimasque reliquit. (Ovid *Met.* 13.422-8)

The last [woman] boarded the fleet, as Hecuba, miserable to see!
 was found in the middle of the graves of her children.
 The Dulichian hands [Odysseus] dragged her, she, **grasping their tombs**
 and **giving kisses to their bones**.
 Yet, she drew up the remains of Hector, the one and only,
 and carried the **drawn-up ashes** with herself in her bosom.
 She leaves on the tomb of Hector, white hair from her head,
 hair and tears, **a poor offering** for the dead.

Hecuba is cast as a dog in a graveyard. Like a dog is drawn to remains in the earth, she is “grasping their tombs” (*prensantem tumulos*, 424); she “kisses bones” (*ossibus oscula dantem*, 424). Hecuba, dog-like, digs around in the ground for family bones, and when she finds them, takes them to her mouth. The digging up of dead things continues at the graveside of her illustrious son, Hector; she obtains the “drawn-up ashes” or “dug up remains” (*cineres...haustos*, 426).²⁷ Since transformation is linked to death, this attraction to dead things is the beginning of her transformation to an inhuman form. At the graveside, her grief is solitary, which is not part of the ritual tradition, and is shown

²⁷ See Morris 1994: 42-57 on the prevalence of cremation in Ancient Rome.

through the lack of a proper funerary offering, instead leaving “a poor offering for the dead” (*inferias inopes*, 428).²⁸ She desecrates the hero Hector’s grave, digging up her son’s ashes to bring with her, a mother that cannot bear to leave her son behind. By removing her from the consort of women, and giving her these strange graveside actions, Ovid has portended her demise and transfiguration.

Ovid’s depiction of Hecuba stands out due to the emphasis he placed on her transformation, both of identity and physical form. Exactly when does Hecuba transform? Is it when she discovers her son Polydorus, slain in avarice? When she decides to take justice into her own hands? Is it at the moment when she takes the action and mutilates Polymestor? The compatriots of Polymestor respond in horror to this inhuman act which is more akin to an attack dog that has latched onto prey than a woman in mourning. Fantham suggests, “a physical metamorphosis follows the more important psychological transformation” (2004b: 72). Hecuba’s giving over to animalistic rage anticipates the transformation from woman to bitch:

clade sui Thracum gens iritata tyranni
Troada telorum lapidumque incessere iactu
coepit: at haec **missum rauco cum murmure saxum**
morsibus insequitur rictuque in uerba parato
latrauit conata loqui (locus exstat et ex re
nomen habet), ueterumque diu memor illa **malorum**
tum quoque Sithonios **ululauit** maesta per agros. (*Met.* 13.565-71)

The clan of the Thracians enraged at the destruction of their king began to assault the Trojan woman [Hecuba] by throwing spears and stones; but **with a harsh growling, she pursues the thrown stone with her teeth, and attempting to speak, her jaws prepared for the words, she barked.** The place exists, and [is given its] name for the event: and she, long since unforgetting of her old misfortunes, moreover, also, she **howled**, mourning, through the Sithonian fields.

²⁸ See Fantham 2004a: 113.

The all-consuming emotions have changed her, as was foreshadowed early in the graveyard (424-26), into a beast, a howling dog. Rocks are thrown, “the thrown stone” (*saxum missum*, 567), as if she is an animal that has attacked or lost control. Like a dog, she instinctively snaps at the projectiles: “she pursues ... with her teeth” (*morsibus insequitur*, 568) while making “a harsh growling” (*rauco cum murmure*, 567). Realizing her fleeing humanity, Hecuba is “attempting to speak, her jaws prepared for the words, [when] she barked” (*rictuque in uerba parato / latrauit, conata loqui*, 568-9). In Euripides’ time folklore existed that Hecuba changed into a dog due to her foul or strong language, not due to her fury, as is the case in Ovid’s version of the narrative (Fantham 2004b: 72). Ovid places much more emphasis on Hecuba’s emotional state as part of her transformation.

Ovid used much of the same imagery when Hecuba initially appears at the gravesite of Hector as Horace did with Canidia. As noted above, Hecuba is represented with dog-like qualities in her actions, but the paralleling of the verbiage used with Canidia is stark. Hecuba tears out her “white hair from the top of her head” (*canum de uertice crinem*, *Met.* 13.427), which recalls the Canidia motif (*Ep.* 5.15-6), though Hecuba lacks snakes in her coiffeur. Additionally, both women are positioned in a gravesite, for the similar reasons of digging up bones, though with vastly different intentions. Hecuba seeks to dig up the remains of her children, especially Hector’s, to wish them a farewell, while Canidia seeks to use bones for an incantation or spell. Nevertheless, though their intentions are different, both women’s actions are very similar, lending strength to the intertextual claim that Ovid has borrowed from Horace. Hecuba is sympathetically viewed in Ovid’s text: she is the mother “grasping their tombs and giving

kisses to their bones” (*prensantem tumulos atque ossibus oscula dantem*, *Met.* 13.424). On the other hand, Horace clearly disdains Canidia, depicting her as a foul, dirty child-snatcher. Although Ovid’s Hecuba epyllion ends without explicit judgment, the allusion to Canidia serves to raise doubt in the reader. Was it only in the moment of transformation that Hecuba embraced a darker nature? This intertextuality in the Ovidian Hecuba narrative serves to create ambiguity of character even more than Euripides’ version.

When looking at the answer to the meaning of Hecuba’s transformation in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, there is nowhere better than to look then to the text itself. The parallels between Hecuba and both Lycaon and Canidia raise the question of the revelation of inner nature through transformation, but Ovid never confirms this explicitly in the Hecuba epyllion. Instead, he offers another possibility: sorrow has changed Hecuba through Misfortune, ever capricious. The first suggestion is found at her moment of transformation:

latrauit, conata loqui: (locus exstat et ex re nomen habet), **ueterumque diu memor illa malorum tum quoque Sithonios ululauit maesta per agros.** (*Met.* 13.569-71)

...attempting to speak, she barked.

The place exists, and [is given its] name for the event:

and she, for a long time unforgetting of her **old misfortunes**, moreover, also, **she howled, mourning, through the Sithonian fields.**

Hecuba first barks in an attempt to speak and justify her actions to the Thracian men:

“attempting to speak, she barked” (*latrauit, conata loqui*, 569). Like Orestes, Euripides’

Hecuba was the recipient of divine judgment for engaging in unauthorized vengeance, in

disordered justice.²⁹ However, Ovid's Hecuba is not the recipient of divine judgment (574-5). The remembrance of her losses, of her beloved city, and of her dear children, all of her "old troubles/misfortunes" (*ueterum malorum*, 570) cause her to howl. Ovid puts it best, "moreover, also she howled, mourning, through the Sithonian fields" (*tum quoque Sithonios ululauit maesta per agros*, 571). This lamentation, this act of ululation, of howling, that comes from deeply felt grief has changed Hecuba. That mourning itself has changed Hecuba seems the strongest conclusion, and the last lines of the narrative strengthen this position:

illius Troasque suos hostesque Pelasgos,
illius fortuna deos quoque moverat **omnes**,
 sic omnes, ut et ipsa **Iouis coniunxque sororque**
eventus Hecaben meruisse negauerit illos (*Met.* 13.572-5)

Her fortune had moved the Trojans and her enemies, the Greeks,
 and also, it had moved **all the gods**,
 all, so much so that even, **Jove's sister, and wife**, herself,
she denied that Hecuba had merited these misfortunes.

Ovid uses three evidences that Hecuba's transformation is both underserved and not a reflection of her inward nature. First, both the Greeks, who were her enemies, and the Trojans, who had suffered alongside her, are moved by "her fortune" (*illius fortuna*, 573). Ovid's repeated verbiage of "fortune" makes it explicit that the things that she has suffered are pitiable and out of her control. This phrasing includes her transformation as part of the "fortune" she has suffered. Second, not only does the mass of her suffering move the people present to witness her sorrows but also "all the gods" (*deos omnes*, 573). Since the Greek (and Roman) gods are practically defined by their lack of care to human states of being, except to rescue their own progeny or romantic liaisons, that the whole of

²⁹ On the justice aspects of Euripides' *Hecuba*, see Mossman 1995.

the pantheon is moved has strong implications. Finally, Ovid specifies that not only the whole pantheon, but specifically “Jove’s sister-wife” (*Iovis coniuxque sororque*, 574), that same Juno who in the first lines of the *Aeneid* was driven by un-ending rage to seek to the destruction of the Trojan race, explicitly “denied that Hecuba had merited these misfortunes” (*eventus Hecaben meruisse negauerit illos*, 575). The language throughout emphasizes the nature of Hecuba’s sufferings as “fortune” (*fortuna*), calamity (*casu*), or “a happening” (*eventus*). Hecuba is not responsible for her transformation in the greater sense, she is a victim, as Euripides had said, of “Misfortune.” It is this misfortune and these sorrows that cause her howling, her lamentation.

Ovid uses the transformation in his Hecuba narrative to imply ambiguity through intertextual allusions which give additional shades of meaning to the existing Hecuba narrative. The dual themes of metamorphosis and the inner lives of women are played out in the Hecuba epyllion to great effect. Hecuba’s emotions are both a global reaction to societal ills and a specific reaction to her personal losses. By utilizing syllepsis through the inclusion of *gemo* throughout the epyllion, Ovid reminds us that lamentation is as prominent as the canine transformation. Surely the Roman reader would have seen the question of transformation Ovid raises in the *Metamorphoses*: is Hecuba’s transformation a revelation of her inner nature? Certainly, it is in the Lycaon narrative, which Ovid, utilizing intratextuality, mirrors in the transformation of Hecuba. Even his allusions to a supernatural or witchy inner nature are brought to the forefront by the use of motifs from the Horatian Canidia in *Epode 5*, a witch strongly associated with dogs. However, Ovid removes most of the ambiguity at the end of the narrative. By casting the transformation as one of Hecuba’s sorrows, she both howls for her children, but also for herself. Truly,

as Polyxena said, “her life is one to be howled at.” The conclusion of the epyllion clearly denies laying divine judgment on Hecuba. Her transformation is not a means of judgment, in Ovid’s narrative, but a recognition of the role misfortune has played in her immense sorrow.

CONCLUSION

Hecuba has remained an intriguing figure of both Greek and Roman literature for many years. On the one hand, she is still performed on the stage in both of her famous Euripidean roles, showing the vitality of the tragic interpretation of her character. On the other hand, while the Ovidian Hecuba has been more overlooked, she lends layers of nuance to some of the most fundamental human questions concerning grief, vengeance, and identity. Hecuba, as heroically vague characters always have, allows us to examine ourselves and the society in which we live. She reminds us to remember the plight of women in war-torn countries, who often suffer the loss of all they hold dear. She invites us to consider the maligned, the outcast, and the oppressed and the impact of the struggles that society imposes on their lives. She reminds us to have consideration for what it means to be human in times of adversity or grief, and that we must overcome our basest instincts, lest they destroy us. She reminds us that hope is necessary in hopeless times because we have only truly lost everything when we believe that we have.

In the two Euripidean depictions of Hecuba, from the *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba*, we have seen how the heroic vagueness imbued in both the plays in which she is featured and the character herself has led to Hecuba's lasting relevance. The ability of Greek tragedy is not only to entertain, to titillate the senses, but to ask open-ended questions through which the audience can challenge themselves, if they choose to do so. That facility to challenge us to consider the politics and social mores of the places we live is why tragedies such as Euripides' the *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba* have continued to have new-found meaning even for today's audiences. Many playwrights, whether in the

Japanese or the Irish theater, have found these characters and their struggles as “of the times we live in.” The examination of the criteria that lend heroic vagueness to these tragedies enables us to pinpoint why they remain a fixed point, able to slip through changing times and changing people, continuing in power and relevance. This ambiguity enables Hecuba to transform into a West African woman, among other permutations, in *Women of Owu*, a 2004 retelling of the *Trojan Women*. Even Shakespeare recognized this quality, asking the famous question in *Hamlet*: “What is Hecuba to us?” It is the character of Hecuba herself, as well as the structure of the dramas in which she dwells, which allow the rawness of Hecuba’s emotions, and those of the Trojan women, to influence and move us. She is heroically vague, in and of herself. With Hecuba as a heroically vague character, we can ascribe layers of meaning to her actions and emotions. This complexity makes Hecuba fascinating and modern, though her roots are firmly in antiquity.

Ovid took the complexity found in Euripides’ Hecuba and made it his own in the Hecuba epyllion in *Metamorphoses* 13.399-575, in some instances, hewing close to the Euripidean original, and in others, flipping verbiage or circumstances completely. Ovid’s adaption of Euripides’ *Hecuba* forms the basis of most of the Hecuba epyllion; he only references the *Trojan Women* glancingly. One of the most outstanding uses of intertextuality is the flipping of the narrator and Polydorus, who delivers the prologue in Euripides’ *Hecuba*. It is this type of clever allusion that gives depth to the Ovidian epyllion by its own merits. Additionally, Ovid builds on the use of animal metaphors in Euripides’ *Hecuba*. The mirroring of Euripides’ use of “cub” through the Latin *catulus*, “pup” or “dog’s whelp,” alludes to Hecuba’s status figuratively as a lioness, which occurs in the same passage, and more literally, to her canine transformation. The usage of “cub”

also offers the possibility that the slaughter of both Polyxena and Polydorus was to prevent the replication of Hecuba's ferocious nature. What is more, the clear allusions to Euripides' Greek in the death-scene of Polyxena demonstrates that young women, particularly virgins, were still seen as expendable in Roman culture, as they had been also in Greece. Finally, Ovid uses the language of lament, drawn from *Hecuba's* Chorus, to translate values ascribed to all the Trojan women to Hecuba singularly. As Euripides cast the Chorus as "handmaids of hell," Ovid puts Hecuba in the role of a Fury through the verbiage that directly precedes her transformation. This intertextuality between Ovid and Euripides serves not only to strengthen the allusive nature of his text but also to create new areas of ambiguity and meaning which were not found in Euripides' tragedies.

Not only did Ovid use intertextual allusion, but he creates a three-fold structure which linked Hecuba's loss of identity, as a queen, a mother, and a person, with each of her three slaughtered children. His emphasis on *haurio* within *Metamorphoses* 13.399-575 creates syllepsis. Hecuba both "draws up" ashes, water, and blood, and is also "exhausted" of emotions: sorrow and rage drain her through seemingly perpetual loss. Ovid uses the noteworthy phrase, *maxima rerum*, which both connotes the magnitude of Hecuba's loss but also that she viewed herself as a representation of Troy. Even the Trojan women consider her the "image of flourishing Asia." The loss of her identity as royalty or as a metonymy for Troy is represented in Hector's death. Likewise, in response to Polyxena's death, Hecuba asks, "what remains for me?" Past-childbearing age, she is only useful to the Greeks as a war-prize, the mother of famous children that no longer live. She considers herself to have been "fertile for Achilles' sake": that her children were directed, by cruel fate, to die at his hand, to serve as grave offerings. At the loss of

Polydorus, Hecuba embraces madness, not hope, and fueled by rage, she commits an atrocity. Ovid raises questions of identity and loss of self through his Hecuba epyllion, which challenge us to examine how we allow grief and anger to control the direction of our lives, even if we cannot control the events of them.

It is Hecuba's transformation that makes the Ovidian epyllion especially important; Ovid actualizes the prophesied canine metamorphosis of Euripides' *Hecuba*. Transformation is the main concern of the *Metamorphoses*, whether the transformation of genre or form. Often transformation is a stand-in for death; we all will become memory and monument after our days in the sun have passed. Additionally, the transformation, particularly of women, is a form of silencing victims by figuratively and literally depriving them of their voices. In the Hecuba epyllion, Ovid instills layers of meaning through the use of *gemo* (howl) throughout the text, both in relation to the lament of the dead and to the silencing of the transformed by means of metamorphosis. While Hecuba maintains volubility, particularly in the ability to mourn, she loses her intelligibility, unable to form words. Furthermore, the roles that dogs took in antiquity imbue meaning into the transformation not only of Hecuba but also of her poetic predecessors, Lycaon and Canidia. Lycaon, another Ovidian transfiguration, is changed into a wolf in book one of the *Metamorphoses*, emphasizing his guilt. Likewise, the canine qualities of the Horatian Canidia demonstrate her witchcraft and malice. Through examination of Hecuba's own canine transformation, we can see the interplay of poetic and societal perception of dogs, as well as a commentary on the depth of emotions. Hecuba is transformed not in an indictment of guilt, though she is not blameless, but as a confirmation of the mutability of fortune.

In response to writing this thesis on Hecuba, I have dived deep and looked to see how her story, whether from Euripides or Ovid, can inform my life. Recently, like Hecuba, I dealt with grief at the unexpected passing of my sister. Adversity is sometimes unavoidable, but unlike Hecuba, we have a chance to respond differently — with hope. Florence + and the Machine, whose “Howl” was quoted at the beginning of chapter 4, summarizes my feelings succinctly:

Happiness hit her like a bullet in the back
Struck from a great height
By someone who should know better than that
The dog days are over
The dog days are done
Can you hear the horses
'Cause here they come
Run fast for your mother and fast for your father
Run for your children for your sisters and brothers
Leave all your love and your longing behind you
Can't carry it with you if you want to survive
(Florence + the Machine, *Dog Days are Over*)

Truly, we must reach for hope in the face of tragedy. Whether that hope is found in the spiritual, the familial, or even just internally, through acceptance, we can find happiness after sorrow. For us, unlike Hecuba, the dog days can be over.

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