

THE HELEN SCENE IN EURIPIDES' *TROADES*

Troades has often been thought to lack any coherent structure,¹ and this has been variously attributed to its being the last play of the trilogy² and to Euripides' overriding concern to impress the horrors of war upon his fellow Athenians.³ More recently, however, attention has been drawn to how the constant presence of Hecuba gives unity to the play and to how it is articulated by the striking entries of Cassandra, Andromache, and Helen.⁴ Cassandra and Andromache enter in mock triumph, Cassandra waving torches in her ironical wedding song and Andromache on a waggon, while Helen is dragged out by force and her scene marked off by Menelaus' second prologue.⁵ All three women emerge from the tent, argue with Hecuba but fail to convince her, and depart for marriage in Greece. Andromache's ideal marriage to Hector (645–56) contrasts with Cassandra's perverted 'marriage' to Agamemnon and with Helen's destructive marriage to Paris. The departure of the Trojan women for marriage in Greece balances Helen's earlier departure from Greece for marriage in Troy.

There are thus two ways of looking at the play, not necessarily incompatible with one another: one can see it as a series of disasters befalling Hecuba, each worse than the last, in which every possibility of hope and consolation is knocked away. At the beginning she has the defeat of Troy to lament (98 ff.), then the marriage of Cassandra to Agamemnon (247–59) and her own allocation to Odysseus (275–92); after this she must witness the madness of Cassandra (343 ff.) and the enslavement of Andromache (577 ff.), and hear about the death of Polyxena (622 ff.). The climax of her misfortunes comes with the announcement that Astyanax is to be killed (709 ff.), the final destruction of Troy, and her own departure for Greece at the end of the play. In this context the Helen scene can be viewed as another twist to the suffering of the Trojans: we have seen the innocent suffer, including Andromache the ideal wife, and now the guilty Helen goes free. Thus Pohlenz writes: 'in der ganzen Tragödie heisst immer wieder Helena die Gottverhasste, die alles Leid verschuldet hat, und in dem Meere von Elend ist sie die einzige die lächelnd triumphiert. Wo bleiben die Götter?'.⁶ On the other hand, one can, instead of looking at events entirely from Hecuba's point of view, stress the actual arguments put forward by Cassandra, Andromache, and Helen, even though they make no impression on Hecuba. Cassandra and Andromache try to console her, and I will argue that Helen's speech, though not consolatory, is in some ways parallel to theirs and, like theirs, makes a contribution to the understanding of the situation with which the play begins.

An argument against the view that Helen's escape is another twist to the suffering of the Trojans is that Euripides does not, in fact, make a point of showing that she gets off scot free. Menelaus has already, when he enters, decided to take her to Greece and kill her there (876–89) and this is exactly what he plans to do after the agon

¹ Thus e.g. M. Pohlenz, *Die griechische Tragödie*² (Göttingen, 1954), i. 366.

² Thus e.g. U. von Wilamowitz in T. von Wilamowitz, *Die dramatische Technik des Sophokles* (Berlin, 1917), 373.

³ Thus e.g. H. Steiger, 'Warum schrieb Euripides seine Troerinnen?', *Philologus* 59 (1900), 362–99.

⁴ E.g. W.-H. Friedrich, *Euripides und Diphilos* (Munich, 1953), 73–5; H. Strohm, *Euripides* (Munich, 1957), 116 ff.; W. Steidle, *Studien zum antiken Drama* (Munich, 1968), 52–4.

⁵ Cf. W. Schadewaldt, *Monolog und Selbstgespräch* (Berlin, 1926), 241.

⁶ Pohlenz, op. cit. i. 369 f.

(1055–9); at no time has he intended to kill Helen on the spot, and there is no indication in the play that he is not going to do so when he gets back to Sparta.⁷ The usual story, alluded to at *An.* 627–31 and *Or.* 1287, was indeed that Menelaus was disarmed by Helen's beauty, and that they lived happily ever after in Sparta as described in the *Odyssey*, but we are not entitled to make use of our knowledge of the story if nothing is made of it in the play. Euripides could easily have shown Menelaus pardoning Helen there and then either because he was convinced by her arguments or because, while agreeing with Hecuba, he admitted that justice meant nothing to him (for the latter kind of behaviour cf. *An.* 436 ff., *Or.* 682 ff.). That he does not do this shows that Helen's escape, right or wrong, is not an issue in the play.

An agon of some sort is present in almost every play by Euripides of which we have knowledge, with various combinations of set speech, dialogue, and stichomythia.⁸ The agon in *Troades* is of a type in which a character is 'tried' on a specific charge, either before a third party as here (cf. *Hec.* 1129 ff., *Or.* 491 ff.) or not (e.g. *Med.* 465 ff., *An.* 147 ff., *Hi.* 936 ff., *El.* 1011 ff.), and it is unusual in that not all the facts relevant to a judgement are known to the audience: thus, while there can be no doubt that Hippolytus and Andromache are innocent of the crimes of which they are accused or that Jason and Polymestor are guilty, it is not obvious that Helen is guilty in *Troades*.

It is often said that Euripides has inverted the natural order of the speakers, having the defendant Helen speak first, so that 'the stronger argument and the speech of the sympathetic character come second'.⁹ But, although the sympathetic character normally does speak second, there are exceptions: Medea (*Med.* 465–519), Polyneices (*Pho.* 469–96), and Admetus (*Alc.* 629–72) all speak first while being obviously more sympathetic than their opponents, and Medea and Polyneices, at least, get the best of the argument. The only exceptions to the rule that the plaintiff speaks first (cf. *Pho.* 465–7) are the debates in *Electra* and *Troades*, and the reason in both cases is surely that both Clytemnestra and Helen are already so much on the defensive when the scene begins that a further prosecution speech would be superfluous. Helen's speech is an appeal against Menelaus' already fixed decision to kill her (901), and her entry has been prepared for by a long series of references to her as the cause of Troy's destruction (34 f., 211, 357, 398, 766 ff.). It is a tragic feature of Helen's predicament that, like the Plataeans in Thucydides (3. 53. 2) and Gorgias' Palamedes (*Pal.* 4), she must plead for her life against a charge that has not been formally expressed. There are also, as has already been suggested, important parallels between this scene and those in which Cassandra and Andromache reason with Hecuba, and these parallels would be obscured if Helen did not speak first.

Menelaus orders that Helen should be dragged out by force (880–2), and this is what actually happens (897); Helen says that she is afraid (895), and later prays for mercy with evident anxiety (1042 f.). When she begins her speech with a rhetorical statement of the disadvantages under which she labours (914–17) there is thus no reason to doubt that, like Andromache at *An.* 184 ff., she has good cause for what she says.¹⁰ It is odd

⁷ T. V. Buttrey, *LCM* 3 (1978), 285–7 argues well that there is nothing in Menelaus' tone to suggest that he does not really intend to kill Helen.

⁸ Cf. J. Duchemin, *L'AGON dans la tragédie grecque*² (Paris, 1968), 124–34.

⁹ K. H. Lee, *Euripides Troades* (London, 1976), on 912–13. Page on *Med.* 465 ff. says that the rule is that the sympathetic character speaks second; Dale on *Alc.* 697 ff. that the stronger speech comes second. The agon in *Alc.* is in fact the only possible case in which the sympathetic character does not also have the best of the argument.

¹⁰ For the rhetorical technique of *προδιόρθωσις* cf. [Aristotle], *Rh. ad Alex.* 1437a 1–7.

that she is so often accused of being arrogantly calm and self-confident.¹¹ Hecuba does indeed criticise her for dressing up and for failing to approach Menelaus with sufficient self-abasement (1022–8), but there is no reason why Helen, who believes herself to be innocent, should behave as if she were guilty. No one other than Hecuba comments on Helen's self-adornment, and there is no sign that it has any effect on Menelaus. Helen does indeed seem to be *φρίκη τρέμουν* as Hecuba says (1026) that she should be.

Helen begins her defence by arguing that she herself was only one link in the causal chain that led to the war and that others, including Hecuba and *ὁ πρέσβυς*, must take their share of the blame (919–22). Hecuba is blamed for giving birth to Paris in the first place, *ὁ πρέσβυς* for not killing him as an infant.¹² This *ἀντικατηγορία* has not generally been taken very seriously,¹³ but such problems of responsibility were much discussed towards the end of the fifth century. Plutarch tells us that Pericles discussed with Protagoras whether, in the case of a fatal accident at the games, the javelin itself, the thrower of it, or the organisers of the games should be held responsible.¹⁴ Elsewhere in Euripides sympathetic characters propose extensions of responsibility similar to that proposed by Helen: Andromache says that Helen killed Achilles (*An.* 248), Peleus that Menelaus did so (*An.* 614 f.), while Helen considers herself to have killed her mother (*Hel.* 280). Hecuba claims responsibility for the death of Achilles because she gave birth to Paris (*Hec.* 387 f.), and Orestes blames Tyndareus for begetting Clytemnestra (*Or.* 585–7).

It is sometimes said that Helen's identification of the *ἀρχή* of the war is only intelligible if it is taken to be an allusion to *Alexandros*.¹⁵ This is not so: even in plays which have no claim to be part of a connected trilogy Euripides often follows these causal chains back into the remote past, and many references are made to the *ἀρχή* of the Trojan war.¹⁶ At *An.* 274 ff. it is identified as the Judgement of Paris, but the wish is expressed at *An.* 293 ff. that Hecuba had killed Paris as an infant.¹⁷ Regrets about the building of Paris' ships are voiced at *Hec.* 629–37 and *Hel.* 229–39 (cf. *Il.* 5. 63, where they are described as *ἀρχεκάκους*). There is thus nothing at all

¹¹ Thus e.g. Lee, op. cit. p. 220; R. Scodel, *The Trojan Trilogy of Euripides* (Göttingen, 1980), 99.

¹² Now that we know that the old shepherd was a character in *Alexandros* (cf. R. A. Coles, *A New Oxyrhynchus Papyrus: the Hypothesis of Euripides' Alexandros* [BICS Supp. 32, 1974]) it seems more probable that *ὁ πρέσβυς* (921) refers to him than to Priam. Euripides would be inviting confusion by referring to Priam in this way: he had a name, while the shepherd presumably did not. Priam may be referred to as *πρέσβυς* at *Hec.* 160, but that is in a passage of lyric, where a more allusive style is appropriate, and where it is in any case obvious who is meant. In the *dramatis personae* of *Electra* the old paedagogus of Agamemnon is called *πρέσβυς*, in that of *Ion* the paedagogus of Erechtheus *πρεσβύτης*. Although strictly speaking Priam did fail to kill Paris, the important break in the chain was the shepherd's failure to do so: no one would expect a king to kill his child with his own hands, but a servant delegated to perform the task was expected to make sure that it was done properly, as Astyages' treatment of Harpagus, Herodotus 1. 117–19, makes clear. Diggle thinks that 'to blame the herdsman would be a gross irrelevancy' (*CR* n.s. 31 [1981], 106), but Helen is trying to spread the blame as widely as possible, and need not confine her attack to the House of Priam.

¹³ A. W. H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility* (Oxford, 1960), 127, describes this argument as 'intellectual litter'; but cf. *Ar. Rh.* 1397b 23–5, and the advice on *ἀντικατηγορία* at *Rh. ad Alex.* 1442b 7–8: *τὰς πράξεις μάλιστα μὲν εἰς τοὺς ἀντιδίκους ἀποτρέψεις, εἰ δὲ μὴ εἰς ἄλλους τινάς.*

¹⁴ *Per.* 36. 3. Similar questions are discussed by Antiphon, e.g. 1b 13; cf. Adkins, op. cit. pp. 102–8, 124–7.

¹⁵ E.g. by Friedrich, op. cit. p. 63.

¹⁶ Cf. T. C. W. Stinton, *Euripides and the Judgement of Paris* (London, 1965), 14.

¹⁷ For wishes that the *ἀρχή* had not happened cf. *Med.* 1 ff., *An.* 293 ff., *I.A.* 1291 ff.

implausible about Helen's emphasis on these long past events, even without reference to *Alexandros*.

Later in her speech Helen also blames Menelaus for going to Crete and leaving her alone to entertain Paris (943 f.). The *Cypria* version is followed here, rather than that alluded to at *I.A.* 76 according to which Menelaus had already departed when Paris arrived, and this emphasises his responsibility.¹⁸ He is criticised in similar terms by Peleus at *An.* 590–5 (ὦ κάκις τε *An.* 590; cf. *Tro.* 943). Helen naturally does not make one common criticism of Menelaus, that he wasted lives in the effort to retrieve a woman he should have been glad to be rid of (*An.* 605–9, *Cyc.* 283 f., *Or.* 521 f., 647–50, 717 f., *I.A.* 389 f., Herodotus 1. 4. 3).

Helen's second argument (924–37) is that, given the circumstances of the Judgement of Paris, her marriage was a good thing for Greece: Athena offered Paris the military conquest of Greece, Hera tyranny over Asia and Europe, and it was only because Paris preferred her beauty that Greece avoided subjugation.¹⁹ If what Helen says is correct, then it will have been shown that the Trojan War was no worse than what would have happened had Paris chosen differently, and that it was better for Greece than the available alternatives. Jouan argues that Helen misrepresents the offers of the goddesses,²⁰ but we have no direct evidence for the *Cypria* version and later accounts do not allow us to deduce a standard version, or even that there was one. Isocrates writes, διδούσης "Ἡρας μὲν ἀπάσης αὐτῷ τῆς Ἀσίας βασιλεύειν, Ἀθηνᾶς δὲ κρατεῖν ἐν τοῖς πολέμοις,²¹ and some have thought that this preserves the *Cypria* version.²² Pseudo-Apollodorus, however, states that Hera offered rule over the whole world, and Carl Robert thought that he followed the *Cypria* account.²³ In the hypothesis to Cratinus' *Dionysalexandros* Hera's gift is said to be τυραννὶς ἀκίνητος and Athena's εὐτυχία κατὰ πόλεμον, but details are not given of the scope of these gifts.²⁴ These stories are thus in agreement about the nature of the gifts offered but not about their scope, and the reason for this is surely that the precise scope of the gifts was not usually important. Helen's argument is thus not obviously wrong, and Hecuba can only attack it with a rather dubious argument from probability. Furthermore, a Greek, Euripides as much as Helen herself, would perhaps tend to assume that oriental interest in foreign conquest and empire centred on Greece.

It is only in her third argument (938–50) that Helen turns to the question of her own responsibility for her actions. This argument only appears when she is already half way through her speech, and it occupies less than a quarter of its length. Nevertheless, it is only this part of the speech that has usually been regarded as important.²⁵ But, if my account of Helen's first two arguments is correct, then the argument about the influence of Aphrodite, though undoubtedly the climax of her speech, is by no means the only serious element of it. Helen is also more tactful in

¹⁸ Cf. T. W. Allen, *Homeri Opera* v (Oxford, 1912), 108; Wüst in *RE* xviii (1949), 1503, s.v. Paris; F. Jouan, *Euripide et les Légendes des chants cypriens* (Paris, 1966), 180. It is not clear which version is being used at *An.* 590–5.

¹⁹ *Rh. ad Alex.* 1444b36–40 recommends the technique of showing the good one has done the judges. The author also says that if one cannot deny the charge one should say that what one did was *κυμφέρων τῇ πόλει* (1427a7), a method adopted at *Or.* 564 ff., Lysias 1. 47.

²⁰ *Op. cit.* pp. 95 ff.

²¹ *Hel.* 41; cf. Colluthus 141 ff.

²² E.g. Türk in Roscher iii. 1587 s.v. Paris; T. K. Stephanopoulos, *Umgestaltung des Mythos durch Euripides* (Athens, 1980), 96–8.

²³ ps.-Ap., *Epit.* 3. 2; cf. Hyginus, *Fab.* 92, C. Robert, *Heldensage*, p. 1072.

²⁴ C. Austin, *CGFP* No. 70.

²⁵ E.g. A. Lesky, 'Psychologie bei Euripides', *Entretiens Hardt* vi (Geneva, 1960), 129 f.; Scodel, *op. cit.* p. 95.

developing this argument than she is usually given credit for. She begins by saying that it was no mean divinity that accompanied Paris to Sparta (940 f.), but, instead of saying outright that Aphrodite coerced her, she only blames Menelaus for leaving her alone with Paris. She goes on to argue that she could have had no rational motive to desert her country and her home (946 f.), so that she must have been influenced by Aphrodite,²⁶ but she does not disclaim responsibility altogether: she says only that if even Zeus is the slave of Aphrodite then she deserves *συγγνώμη* if she is too (946–50). Helen's plea for *συγγνώμη* is both tactful and reasonable: *συγγνώμη* was regarded as appropriate for errors due to human nature in general or to the nature of certain classes or individuals. *Rh. ad Alex.* 1444a6–16 recommends that one can ask for *συγγνώμη* because *ἀμαρτάνειν κοινὸν πάντων ἀνθρώπων*, and the Nurse asks Hippolytus for *συγγνώμη* for this reason (*Hi.* 615). At *Hi.* 117 f. the old servant says that rash words spoken because of youth deserve *συγγνώμη* (cf. *Su.* 250 f.), while Menoeceus says that his father's old age makes it pardonable to want to save him at the expense of the city (*Pho.* 994 f.). *συγγνώμη* was especially appropriate for human behaviour affected by the gods: Talthybius is indulgent to Cassandra because he thinks that Apollo has made her mad (*Tro.* 408–10), and Artemis says to Theseus,

δεῖν' ἐπραξας, ἀλλ' ὅμως
ἔτ' ἔστι καὶ σοὶ τῶνδε συγγνώμης τυχεῖν.
Κύπρις γὰρ ἤθελ' ὥστε γίνεσθαι τάδε

(*Hi.* 1325–7).

The argument that what is permissible for the gods is permissible for men was sometimes thought to be sophistical (e.g. Aristoph. *Nub.* 1082), but it was not easy to answer because people were reluctant to argue that men should be better than the gods: Heracles (*H.F.* 1340–6), Iphigenia (*I.T.* 391), and Socrates (Pl. *Euthyphro* 5d8–6d1) can only rebut it by denying, in Heracles' case very implausibly, that the gods are immoral at all. The use made of the argument by the Nurse at *Hi.* 433–81 is indeed open to question, but it is different in important respects from the use made by Helen: firstly, the love which the Nurse urges Phaedra to indulge is adulterous and incestuous, whereas Helen has argued that her own marriage to Paris was a good thing, at least for Greece; secondly, Helen is not justifying bad behaviour in advance but apologising after the event (as Agamemnon does at *Il.* 19. 95 ff.); and thirdly, Helen makes a modest use of the argument in which she claims, not that it is right to imitate the gods, but that it is pardonable for mortals to share their weaknesses. This type of argument *a fortiori* is recommended by Aristotle, whose example is *εἰ μὴδ' οἱ θεοὶ πάντα ἔσασιν, χολῇ οἱ γ' ἄνθρωποι* (*Rh.* 1397b12 f.).

When Helen talks about the power of Aphrodite in this speech she should not be supposed to be referring merely to the power of love, commonplace as that was.²⁷ Her reference to the Judgement shows that she is well aware that Aphrodite is an anthropomorphic goddess, with plans of her own to accomplish that mere mortals cannot be allowed to obstruct. Aphrodite offered Helen as a bribe to Paris, and once Paris had awarded her the prize of beauty there could be no question of Helen preventing the goddess from fulfilling her side of the bargain. Helen alludes to this when she describes her marriage to Paris as *θεοπόνητα* (953), a word which recurs at *Hel.* 584 in connection with the fake Helen contrived by Hera to deprive Paris of the real one. Helen does not say whether Aphrodite coerced her by threats, as at *Il.* 3. 383 ff., or by making her fall in love with Paris, which is suggested at *I.A.* 573–89,

²⁶ This is a version of the common argument 'I could have had no rational motive, so I did not do it', which appears e.g. at *Hi.* 1008–20, *An.* 192–204, *S. O.T.* 584 ff.

²⁷ Cf. *h. Aph.* 33–44; Barrett on *Hi.* 1277–80.

but in either case she would be exculpated if what she says about the Judgement is correct.

Helen's knowledge of the divine influence on events is altogether exceptional: the reason why divine pressure could never in life, and rarely even in literature, be used as an excuse was that such pressure could not normally be discerned, let alone proved. It is sometimes said that divine prompting could not in any case count as an excuse,²⁸ but this is not how the matter is presented by Euripides: Hecuba does not argue that Helen is guilty whatever the part played by Aphrodite, but denies that, as an anthropomorphic goddess, she played any part in Helen's behaviour at all. She implicitly accepts that, if Helen were right about the Judgement, she would indeed be exculpated.

Cassandra has indeed said that Helen came to Troy *ἐκούσης κοῦ βία λεληγμένης* (373), and it has been argued that Cassandra always tells the truth.²⁹ But Cassandra is only denying that Helen was literally abducted by Paris, and in any case she has a rhetorical point of her own to make: arguing that the Greeks were fighting pointlessly, she says that they were fighting not only for a single woman, but for one who had not even been abducted.

Helen's defence has a good deal in common with that of Pasiphae in *Cretes*,³⁰ which is also often dismissed as sophistical.³¹ Helen presents herself as a victim, destroyed by forces set in motion by Hecuba (*ἀπώλεσεν* | *Τροίαν τε κάμει* 920 f.), just as Pasiphae blames Minos for not having sacrificed the bull in the first place as he had promised Poseidon (*κύ τοί μ' ἀπόλλυς, σὴ γὰρ ἡ ῥαμαρτία, | ἐκ σοῦ νοσοῦμεν* 34 f.). Orestes uses similar language when blaming Tyndareus for begetting Clytemnestra (*ἀπώλεσάς με* *Or.* 586). And surely Pasiphae is right: Poseidon uses her as a means to punish Minos and her own freedom is overridden. For similar reasons Croesus forgives Adrastus: *εἰς δὲ οὐ κύ μοι τοῦδε τοῦ κακοῦ αἴτιος, εἰ μὴ ὅσον ἀέκων ἐξεργάσσο, ἀλλὰ θεῶν κού τις, ὅς μοι καὶ πάλοι προεσήμεινε τὰ μέλλοντα ἔσσεσθαι* (Herodotus 1. 45. 2).³² Helen argues that she must have been the victim of divine influence because there was no rational motive for what she did (946 f.), just as Pasiphae says that the bull could not have attracted her naturally (11–20). Helen emphasises that Paris was primarily an agent of Hecuba's destruction by ostentatiously referring to him by the ill-omened name 'Paris' (941 f.)³³ and by calling him *ὁ τῆς δ' ἀλάστωρ* (941), just as Pasiphae makes the point that she was unwittingly involved in divine action against Minos by saying *δαίμων ὁ τοῦδε κάμ' ἐνέπλησεν κακῶν* (21).

Helen goes on to say that after the death of Paris, when Aphrodite had no further interest in her remaining in Troy, she did indeed try to escape but was restrained by the guards (951–60).³⁴ Hecuba will deny this, claiming that Helen was often encouraged to depart but enjoyed the luxury of Troy too much to agree to do so (1010–22). This is another dispute in this agon, like that over the offers made at the Judgement, where we have no certain way of deciding who is right. Helen's appeal to witnesses gives some authority to her version of events, but there is something ludicrous about the idea of Helen slithering down the walls of Troy on a rope that might incline us to disbelieve her.

²⁸ E.g. H. Lloyd-Jones, *The Justice of Zeus* (Berkeley, 1971), 150 f.

²⁹ E.g. Scodel, op. cit. p. 119.

³⁰ C. Austin, *Nova Fragmenta Euripidea* (Berlin, 1968), No. 82.

³¹ E.g. Duchemin, op. cit. p. 207.

³² Croesus has a natural tendency to attribute responsibility to the god for events that he had merely predicted. Cf. S. *O.T.* 1329 f.

³³ For Paris as an ill-omened name see Stinton, op. cit. p. 36 n. 2.

³⁴ For Helen's *προκατάληψις* cf. the examples given by Stevens on *An.* 929, and for her appeal to witnesses cf. Page on *Med.* 476, Duchemin, op. cit., pp. 198 f., *Ar. Rh.* 1355b35–9.

Helen concludes by saying that she does not deserve to be punished with death as she was married by force and endured a slavery that was bitter to her (961–5).³⁵ Whom does Helen accuse of marrying her by force (962)? Hecuba will speak (998–1001) as if Helen means a literal abduction from Sparta by Paris (998 echoes 962), and one would certainly expect that the only marriage to which Helen would refer in the conclusion to her speech would be that to Paris, with which the speech has been primarily concerned. But if 959 f. are retained, then 962 can only refer to Deiphobus because his coercion of Helen would just have been mentioned, and the relative pronoun in 962 would therefore refer to him. There is thus no alternative to deleting 959 f.,³⁶ which would also relieve the text of the anomalous *οὗτος* (959): when *οὗτος* is used in the contemptuous sense that it allegedly has here, the person referred to is always familiar from what has gone before (as at *H.F.* 38, *S. El.* 301), which Deiphobus certainly is not here. The reason for the interpolation of 959 f. could have been that some reason was felt to be needed for the Trojan guards preventing Helen's escape. When Helen says that she was married *βία* she must be referring to the pressure from Aphrodite mentioned elsewhere in the speech,³⁷ and when Hecuba replies as if physical abduction were meant (998–1001) she is thus either misunderstanding or deliberately twisting what Helen has said. The evidence for a story in which Helen was literally abducted by Paris is extremely slight,³⁸ and Helen would surely have made more of it if that is what happened.

Any examination of Hecuba's attitudes in the agon must begin with the prayer that she addresses to Zeus when she hears that Menelaus intends to punish Helen (884–8). This prayer has rarely been taken seriously in its dramatic context: Lee, for example, thinks that 'the various names given to this controlling power are patently undramatic, being a reflection of the influence of contemporary speculation on Euripides' own thought'.³⁹ It is indeed true that a queen in the heroic age would not have expressed herself in this manner, but that does not mean that the lines are not dramatically apt in the mouth of Euripides' Hecuba: we should not imitate the bad habit current in antiquity, which was responsible for much of the scandal aroused by Euripides' plays, of taking lines out of context as representing the poet's own thought.⁴⁰ Menelaus comments on the novelty of the prayer (889), and it does indeed seem to go beyond the immediate need to express Hecuba's pleasure that Helen will be punished, but this emphasis should lead us to consider first the light that the prayer sheds on Hecuba's beliefs about the gods.

³⁵ Diggle rightly accepts Dobree's *ἐδούλω(ε)* and Paley's translation, 'that natural gift, in lieu of having the prize of beauty assigned to it, enslaved me to my cost' (*CR* n.s. 31 [1981], 107).

³⁶ Scodel, *op. cit.* p. 144 wants to delete 998–1001, but without sufficient reason: she objects to *ἀνωλόλυξας* (1000) being used of a cry for help, but *ὀλολυγῆ* is used in just this sense at *Thuc.* 2. 4. 1. On the *βοή* cf. W. Schulze, *Kl. Schr.* pp. 160 ff.

³⁷ Pohlenz, *op. cit.* ii. 151, observes that in Gorgias divine influence as much as physical abduction counts as *βία*.

³⁸ Robert, *Heldensage*, p. 1078 cites Lycophron 106 ff. and Servius on *Aen.* 1. 651 as evidence for a story that Helen was abducted, and abduction was considered as a possibility by Gorgias. Helen was indeed abducted by Theseus; cf. L. B. Ghali-Kahil, *Les Enlèvements et le Retour d'Hélène* (Paris, 1955), 305–13. That Paris is often said to have removed a quantity of Menelaus' property along with Helen does not mean that he abducted her: Proclus' summary of *Cypria* (Allen, *op. cit.* p. 103) suggests that she was actually party to the theft. On these problems generally see J. T. Kakridis, *Homer Revisited* (Lund, 1971), ch. 1.

³⁹ *Op. cit.* p. 223; cf. L. H. G. Greenwood, *Aspects of Euripidean Tragedy* (Cambridge, 1953), 21. Such views are criticised by Lloyd-Jones, *op. cit.* p. 207 n. 85, and a more subtle interpretation offered by W. Schadewaldt, *op. cit.* pp. 113–18.

⁴⁰ Cf. Barrett on *Hi.* 612, W. B. Stanford, *Greek Tragedy and the Emotions* (London 1983), 7 f.

The prayer is orthodox in form in its concern to find the right name for the deity addressed, a concern which sometimes reflects genuine difficulty in discerning the true nature of the gods.⁴¹ The alternatives mentioned by Hecuba do, however, show what kind of entity she believes Zeus to be, and the concluding lines of the prayer (887 f.) show that she is in any case convinced of his power and justice. These alternatives all suggest a reductive view of Zeus: he might be the *αἰθήρ*,⁴² or the law of nature, or mortal *νοῦς*.⁴³ This combination of a reductive analysis of the nature of a divinity with an exalted view of its power and goodness recurs in Hecuba's account of Aphrodite in the agon, and Euripides is clearly being careful to attribute consistent and distinctive beliefs to her. Her vision of the justice of Zeus is traditional, and her account of his silent tread resembles Solon's account of the movement of *δίκη*,⁴⁴ but it more particularly resembles the views of some of the early philosophers and physical theorists who used hieratic language to describe their reductive versions of the divine. Diogenes of Apollonia, for example, says of *ἀήρ* that *ὑπὸ τούτου πάντας καὶ κυβερνᾶσθαι καὶ πάντων κρατεῖν* (DK 64B5), and this recalls Anaximander describing *τὸ ἄπειρον* (DK 12A15) and Heraclitus' *τὰ δὲ πάντα οἰακίζει κεραυνός* (DK 22B64). Anaxagoras, too, seems to have believed in 'not only the ultimate intelligibility, but the ultimate purposefulness and fitness of the whole plan',⁴⁵ and it was this aspect of his theory that interested Plato and Aristotle.⁴⁶ Hecuba attributes impressive powers to Zeus to control human affairs in accordance with justice, and this means that some transcendent entity must be in question: she cannot, as is sometimes alleged,⁴⁷ be expressing a view like that in fr. 1018 *ὁ νοῦς γὰρ ἡμῶν ἐστὶν ἐν ἐκάστῳ θεός* or Heraclitus' *ἦθος ἀνθρώπων δαίμων* (DK 22B119) where the existence of a transcendent deity, or at least its influence on human minds, is denied.

Hecuba's first argument in her speech in the agon (969–82) is based on the high expectations that she has of divine behaviour: Hera and Athena, who had no need to win a beauty contest in order to gain a husband, would not have been so *ἀμαθείς* (981; cf. 972) as to make offers to Paris that would entail their favourite cities being subjugated by barbarians. The transmitted text (with *αἶ* in 975) leaves it unclear whether Hecuba is denying altogether that the Judgement took place, or only that the goddesses made the offers attributed to them by Helen. In favour of the second

⁴¹ Cf. Fraenkel on A. Ag. 160.

⁴² With 884 cf. ps.-Hippocrates, *De Flat.* 3 (DK 64c2), where *πνεῦμα* is called *γῆς ὄχημα* (thus H. Diels, *Rh.M.* 30 [1887], 12). *πνεῦμα* embraces *ἀήρ* and *αἰθήρ*, but that Hecuba is referring to *αἰθήρ* is suggested by fr. 919, *κορυφῇ δὲ θεῶν ὁ περίξ χθόν' ἔχων | φαεινὸς αἰθήρ* and by fr. 941. 1–3, *ὄρᾳς τὸν ὑψοῦ τόνδ' ἄπειρον αἰθέρα | καὶ γῆν περίξ ἔχονθ' ὑγραῖς ἐν ἀγκάλας | τοῦτον νόμιζε Ζῆνα, τόνδ' ἡγοῦ θεόν*. Cf. K. Matthiessen, *Hermes* 96 (1968), 699–701. Euripides prays to *αἰθήρ* *ἐμὸν βόσκημα* at Aristophanes, *Frogs* 892, and Socrates to *λαμπρὸς αἰθήρ* at *Clouds* 265 (cf. E. *Hel.* 866), which suggests that belief in the divinity of *αἰθήρ* was a readily recognisable sign of advanced ideas. G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge, 1957), 200n., W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* ii. 310n., 379 f. give references to beliefs that *αἰθήρ* was divine.

⁴³ The scholion suggests Anaxagorean influence here, and Euripides was said in antiquity to be a *μαθητής* of Anaxagoras, e.g. D.L. 2. 10 (DK 59A1); cf. Sch.-St. i. iii. 316 n. 2. Scodel, op. cit. p. 94 denies the relevance of Anaxagoras because 'he did not place his divine *νοῦς* within men'; cf. Lloyd-Jones, op. cit. p. 150. But in Anaxagoras there is no such distinction between divine and human *νοῦς*: *νοῦς δὲ πᾶς ὁμοῖός ἐστι καὶ ὁ μείζων καὶ ὁ ἐλάττω* (DK 59B12); cf. E. Hussey, *The Presocratics* (London, 1972), 138–41, M. Schofield, *An Essay on Anaxagoras* (Cambridge, 1980), ch. 1.

⁴⁴ Solon 4. 15 f.; cf. Dodds on *Ba.* 888–90.

⁴⁵ Hussey, op. cit. p. 139.

⁴⁶ Pl. *Phd.* 97d–99a, *Ar. Met.* 985a 18–21.

⁴⁷ E.g. by Lesky, op. cit. p. 132, Scodel, op. cit. p. 95.

interpretation it can be argued that Hecuba could not deny such a well-known event as the Judgement of Paris, and in fact does not need to do so for the purposes of her argument: all she needs to deny is that the goddesses made offers involving the conquest of Greece by Paris.⁴⁸ On the other hand, the relative clause could easily be taken as part of the consequence: Hecuba speaks as if what Helen said were true, with the indicative ἦλθον (976) on a par with ἀπημπόλα (973), in order to bring out its absurdity more clearly. For this view of the structure of the sentence we may compare Herodotus 7. 16. γ 2, where Artabanus replies to Xerxes' suggestion that he dress up in his clothes in order to test the dream figure that has been encouraging him to invade Greece οὐ γὰρ δὴ ἐς τοσοῦτό γε εὐηθείης ἀνήκει τοῦτο... ὥστε δόξει ἐμὲ ὀρῶν ἐε εἶναι, τῇ κῇ ἐσθῆτι τεκμαιρόμενον. Here it is clear that identification by clothing is not what the dream figure actually does, and that the participial phrase (admittedly easier than a relative clause) is to be taken as part of the ὥστε clause. One might indeed expect Hecuba to know about the Judgement, about which Cassandra seems to have prophesied in *Alexandros*,⁴⁹ but her denial of it would be no odder than the denials apparently made by Heracles at *H.F.* 1341–6,⁵⁰ and an attribution of frivolity to the goddesses seems inconsistent with Hecuba's stance as their *σύμμαχος* (969) and with her attitude to the gods generally.⁵¹ It is in the interest of Hecuba's argument to deny the Judgement altogether because it implies, as I have argued, that Helen had no choice in coming to Troy.

It is thus perhaps more likely that Hecuba is denying the Judgement altogether, but on either interpretation her argument is mistaken in a way that is characteristic of her: in all versions of the story the goddesses took the Judgement very seriously indeed, and the enmity of Hera and Athena to Troy was thought to be due to their failure in it.⁵² Hera, at least, took this enmity to the lengths of being prepared to sacrifice any of her favourite cities if only Troy were to be destroyed (*Il.* 4. 30 ff.). Although we are not in a position to say with certainty what offers, if any, the goddesses are supposed in *Troades* to have made, Hecuba's argument that they would not have put vanity before their concern for mortals will not command assent from anyone familiar with the behaviour of the Euripidean gods. Nor would Hecuba be the only character in Euripides whose high expectations of the gods are shown to be unfounded (cf. *H.F.* 1341–6, *Ion* 429–51).⁵³

In her next argument (983–97) Hecuba tries to refute Helen's claim that Aphrodite accompanied Paris to Sparta: the goddess would not have needed to move from heaven to bring Helen to Troy. This argument seems at first sight to be merely captious: Helen did indeed say (940–2) that Aphrodite came to Sparta with Paris, but her point was that Aphrodite coerced her and not that she necessarily came to Sparta in order to do so. What, then, is the point of Hecuba's argument? Commentators cite

⁴⁸ Thus Stinton, op. cit. p. 38 no. 1.

⁴⁹ Cf. T. C. W. Stinton, *PCPS* n.s. 22 (1976), 87 n. 36.

⁵⁰ Thus P. T. Stevens, *CR* n.s. 16 (1966), 291. *I.A.* 72 does not, as Jouan, op. cit. p. 109, believes, cast doubt on the Judgement: Euripides is merely, as he often does (cf. Bond on *H.F.* 1021 f., 1315), giving the source of his mythological information.

⁵¹ Hera and Athena were patrons of Hecuba's enemies, but that is not a reason for her to slight them: there was a shrine of Athena at Troy (*Tro.* 536 ff., 599, *Hec.* 1008, *H. Il.* 6. 279) and a famous temple of Athena at Sparta (*Hel.* 228, Thuc. 1. 128, Aristophanes, *Lys.* 1300, Pausanias 3. 17. 3).

⁵² That this is true even in Homer was pointed out by K. Reinhardt, *Das Parisurteil* (Frankfurt, 1938); cf. M. Davies, *JHS* 101 (1981), 56–62.

⁵³ What is probable is not always what happens: see Ar. *Rh.* 1402a3–28; cf. C. W. Macleod, *JHS* 98 (1978), 67.

Zeus' boast about his supreme power at *Il.* 8. 18–27, but there is no question in the Homeric passage of his acting at a distance, which is essentially the ability that Hecuba attributes to Aphrodite. For a better parallel to Hecuba's view of Aphrodite we must go to Xenophanes, who wrote of God

αἰεὶ δ' ἐν ταῦτῳ μέμνει κινούμενος οὐδέν
οὐδὲ μετέρχεσθαι μιν ἐπιτρέπει ἄλλοτε ἄλλη (DK 21B26).

In Xenophanes, as in Hecuba's prayer, the goodness of God and his absolute power go closely together, and this provides a clue to Hecuba's argument here: a supremely powerful Aphrodite will also be supremely good, and will thus be above acting in the manner attributed to her by Helen. Hecuba's second argument, like her first, will thus depend on her exalted vision of the gods. In the first argument she accepted, for the sake of argument, the traditional anthropomorphic features of Hera and Athena while saying that Helen had taken too low a view of them; but in the second argument she moves on to an even more exalted view of Aphrodite, similar to that of Zeus in her prayer.

Just as Hecuba suggested various reductive accounts of the nature of Zeus in her prayer, so she goes on now to give a reductive account of the nature of Aphrodite. She says that Aphrodite is no more than human folly, and that Helen's *νοῦς* became Aphrodite when she saw Paris in his oriental finery:

τὰ μῶρα γὰρ πάντ' ἐστὶν Ἀφροδίτῃ βροτοῖς,
καὶ τοῦνομ' ὀρθῶς ἀφροσύνης ἄρχει θεᾶς (989 f.).⁵⁴

This recalls her idea that Zeus might be *νοῦς βροτῶν* (886), and the similarity suggests that her view of the gods in this scene is meant to be consistent. It is characterised by an exalted view of the gods' power and goodness combined with a reductive analysis of their nature. Hecuba's account of Aphrodite is central to her argument: she does not say that Helen is guilty whatever the part played by Aphrodite, but argues that in so far as Aphrodite is more than a personification of lust she is an aloof Xenophanean goddess who would not have interfered with Helen at all. This is not a traditional view: a partly reductive view of the gods has deep roots in Greek religious thinking (*Ἀρχή*, for example, means 'war' at *Il.* 2. 381 and 'warlike spirit' at *E. Pho.* 134), but did not usually exclude an anthropomorphic view. Even Tiresias, in his philosophically sophisticated defence of his worship of Dionysus at *Ba.* 274 ff., can point to the service which the god has done mankind both as the inventor of wine (279) and as wine itself (284) without feeling any inconsistency with his exalted vision of the anthropomorphic god (306–9). Hecuba herself has a traditional view of the gods elsewhere in the play (cf. 1240–5, 1280 f., 1288 ff.), but it is essential to her argument here to deny Helen's picture of an anthropomorphic Aphrodite taking part in the Judgement and giving her to Paris as a result.

Hecuba's view of the gods is idealistic, but it is not shown to be obviously incorrect like Ion's view of Apollo at the beginning of *Ion*. In this agon, unlike others in Euripides, it is not made clear whose version of events is correct: both characters make good points, and both accounts of what happened are possible. Helen is right that she alone cannot be held responsible, but her argument that she could have had no rational motive to leave Sparta (946 f.) is answered by Hecuba (993–7), who also gives a reason why Helen should have wanted to stay in Troy once she was there (1020–2). If there was a Judgement we cannot know for sure what offers were made in it by

⁵⁴ Hecuba's play on words is commended at *Ar., Rh.* 1400b23. On the problem of *ὀρθότης ὀνομάτων* (signalled here by *ὀρθῶς*) see G. B. Kerferd, *The Sophistic Movement* (Cambridge, 1981), ch. 7.

the goddesses, and we have no way of deciding whether Helen tried to escape from Troy after the death of Paris. In view of the uncertainty on so many other points in the agon, it would be misguided to look for a certain answer to the question of whose view of the gods is correct: it would be as mistaken to suppose that Helen must be right because her views are traditional as it would be to assume that Hecuba must be right because her views are advanced. Menelaus agrees with Hecuba (1036–9), but this is not decisive: he has no special knowledge, and he does not convincingly justify his decision as, for example, Demophon does at *Held.* 236–49.

However, although the agon does not provide the answer to the question of Helen's guilt, the contrast of attitudes that it presents is itself significant. The Helen scene is, as I have suggested, formally similar to the scenes in which Cassandra and Andromache emerge from the tent and reason with Hecuba before departing for marriage in Greece, and this should lead us to look for some similarity in content. Cassandra tries to console Hecuba by arguing that the Greeks suffered as much or worse in the war, while Hecuba replies by contrasting present suffering with happiness that is either past or ideal. She thus begins her speech by saying that she wants to speak of past happiness in order to make her present plight more pitiable (472 f.), and goes on to describe the deaths of her sons in battle (475–80), which for her is a frustration of her hopes in them rather than, as Cassandra had argued, a fulfilment of their lives as warriors (385 f., 394–402). Hecuba laments that her daughters failed to marry as she had hoped (486), contrasting the actual with the ideal, while Cassandra draws attention to the losses of Greek parents (381), emphasising the common suffering of both sides. For Hecuba it is the Trojans who are wretched because they suffered *διὰ γάμον μῆας* *ἔνα γυναικός* (499), while Cassandra regards the Greeks as especially unhappy because so many of them died *διὰ μίαν γυναῖκα* (368). Cassandra thus describes a state of affairs in which everyone suffers, and although this may, from one point of view, be worse than one in which only one side suffers, it can nevertheless be consoling in that it shows what can reasonably be expected. Hecuba, on the other hand, contrasts what actually happened to the Trojans with what might ideally have happened. In her scene with Andromache, Hecuba takes an idealistic attitude to the future: first she says that life is always better than death because where there is life there is hope (632 f.) and then, after Andromache has argued that in her own case there is no hope even though she lives (634–83), Hecuba encourages her to bring up Astyanax so that he might refund Troy (699–706). This hope is immediately dashed by the arrival of Talthybius announcing that Astyanax is to be killed. Andromache finds consolation in the oblivion brought to everyone by death, while Hecuba arouses hopes for the future that cannot be fulfilled.

In the Helen scene, Hecuba's view of the gods is idealistic: her account of Zeus in her prayer combines a reductive analysis of his nature with an exalted view of his power and goodness, and she takes a similar attitude to Aphrodite in the agon. A world governed by such gods ought to be perfect, and Hecuba argues that the trouble was only caused by the delinquency of Helen. Helen, on the other hand, argues that guilt is very widely spread, among Hecuba, Menelaus, the old shepherd, the guards who prevented her escape; and that the gods themselves are far from perfect: they can betray their favourite cities to win a beauty contest, they can coerce mortals for frivolous reasons, and even Zeus is subject to Aphrodite. The Trojan War is a natural event in such an imperfect world, and not an avoidable aberration.⁵⁵

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