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CHANNELING CLYTEMNESTRA: EURIPIDES' *HECUBA* AND ARISTOPHANES'
LYSISTRATA

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I will examine how Aeschylus' *Clytemnestra*, as the earliest example of a female character subverting gender expectations, becomes a model for this type of character in both tragedy and comedy. While there are many instantiations of this character type, I will focus my attention on the figures of Euripides' *Hecuba* and Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*. By reading *Clytemnestra* as the model behind these women, we are better able to understand these transgressive women and the plays in which they perform.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Even in contemporary culture, women who do not conform to gender expectations are often labeled as scary or even “nasty.” This way of speaking about women is, not surprisingly, also present in the literature of ancient Greece, where there exists certain trends in how women are portrayed and discussed. Generally speaking, the women of Greek poetry are often regarded as potential threats to men. Hesiod’s *Works and Days*, for example, depicts Pandora as the origin of wickedness in women and the bringer of evil to all of mankind (53-105). Similarly, in Semonides 7, the poet describes different types of women in negative terms, emphasizing their laziness and propensity for deception. Many of his descriptions focus on the fact that the women appear or represent themselves as one way, but truly are another thing (Gerber 304-13). Similar trends can be recognized among prose writers. Lysias’ speech *On the Murder of Eratosthenes*, for example, likewise reflects this distrust of women. In it, Lysias describes how his wife lies and sneaks around behind her husband’s back to meet her lover (Lamb 4-27). In Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus*, the woman’s sphere of influence is defined exclusively as the *oikos*, a view that dates back to Homer’s Penelope. The *Odyssey* establishes one of the most recognized female paradigms through the character of Penelope. Penelope represents the ideal image of both a clever and loyal wife because she is able to devise the weaving trick to keep the suitors at bay. She is also considered to be the perfect match of Odysseus’ cleverness, which is revealed when she tests Odysseus’ identity with the bed trick.

While these stereotypes seem to have influenced the representation of women on the Greek stage, Greek drama also presents us with women who seem to go beyond the boundaries of expected behavior. Unlike other genres, drama (both tragedy and, with the exception of the parabasis, comedy) removes the voice of the poet and provides the audience direct access to the views of the characters. In addition, the audience is asked to suspend disbelief and to immerse themselves in the performance. To hear a poet sing of a woman is one thing, but to witness an actor playing such a character makes her more of a reality.

Primary female characters of Greek drama are often divided by modern scholars into character types. Either they represent an ideal of femininity and obedience, or they transgress these norms. The former type of women is often portrayed as fulfilling the expectations of their gender by remaining loyal to their husbands. Both Euripides' *Alcestis*, who willingly and obediently sacrifices herself in order to save her husband, and Sophocles' *Jocasta*, who attempts to protect Oedipus, her son and husband, represent examples of this character type. These women stand in contrast to the women who pose a threat both to the men on stage and to the general order of the *oikos*. Clytemnestra represents the earliest surviving example of this character type, and she seems to have been the inspiration behind the subsequent transgressive women in tragedy, most notably Euripides' *Medea* and *Phaedra*.

It is this type of tragic woman that most often captures the imagination of modern audiences. Because they do not behave as we might expect Greek women to behave, these women are often viewed as more masculine than feminine. This is particularly evident in their adoption of the sort of public speech that is usually associated with men. As Helene Foley explores in her discussion of Euripides' *Medea*, *Medea* complicates this reading because her character portrays an internal struggle between her masculine, heroic self and her feminine,

maternal self. Foley argues that Medea experiences a conflict between her two sides because she views her maternal voice as weaker in comparison to her masculine and heroic self. When Medea decides to murder her children, her female side effectively falls victim to her masculine side, and she emerges as a perverted imitator of heroic masculinity.¹

Foley's discussion of Medea provides a useful model for approaching other examples of transgressive women. In this paper, I will return to Clytemnestra as the earliest dramatic character who demonstrated these transgressive and masculine qualities. My aim will be to explore further how this character came to be a model for other female characters, both in tragedy and comedy beyond the examples of Medea and Phaedra. In particular, I will suggest that Clytemnestra represents in certain respects a model for Euripides' Hecuba and Aristophanes' Lysistrata. Though both women are little discussed in comparison to Clytemnestra, by examining them in context of her model, we are better able to understand the behavior of Hecuba and Lysistrata, and are more likely to view them as strong women, rather than scary.

¹ For a discussion of the complexities of Medea's character, see Foley: 61-85.

Chapter 2

Clytemnestra

The tragic poets do not hesitate to give women a voice; yet, in doing so, they exploit a tension between the desire for self-expression and how women are expected to behave in the real world. This disparity between behaviors creates female characters that would have been as fascinating to ancient audiences as they are to modern. Such female characters can be divided into different character types, the most common being, virgins, chorus members, mothers, and wives. These categories are not static, but often overlap and at times are interrelated. A large portion of these tragic women fall into the category of wives. As I discussed in the introduction, feminine characteristics are at times emphasized and shown in a positive light because they act within the boundaries of female behavior. Two examples of this type of character are Alcestis, who gives up her life for her husband, and Jocasta, who attempts to save Oedipus. Others, however, are viewed as transgressive, as stepping outside of the female realm by taking action into their own hands.

Clytemnestra is often considered to be the most infamous of tragic wives. This is in part thanks to Homer, who, as early as the opening of the *Odyssey*, establishes Clytemnestra as the negative foil to the feminine ideal represented by Penelope. Yet, in the *Odyssey* it is the character of Aigisthus, who is largely blamed for the murder of Agamemnon: “Agamemnon was slain by the guile of Aigisthus and of his own wife,” (ὡς Ἀγαμέμνων ὄλεθ’ ὑπ’ Αἰγίσθοιο δόλῳ καὶ ἧς ἀλόχοιο 3:234-5).² It is only Agamemnon who, in his speech to Odysseus in the Underworld, blames her for his murder (11: 405-435). In this section I will explore how, in contrast to the

² All translations of the *Odyssey* are taken from Murray’s Loeb 1919.

Homeric model, Aeschylus creates in Clytemnestra a female character type who surpasses female conventions and is fundamentally transgressive in nature. Clytemnestra becomes a paradigm that countless other murderous and “scary” wives will follow, most recognizably, Euripides’ *Medea*. Her portrayal suggests a distrust of women, especially wives, that is found in other genres of Greek literature and within the mindsets of the contemporary Greek audience.³

Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* was performed in 458 BCE. The first play of the trilogy, deceptively named *Agamemnon*, does not focus on the Greek king, but rather on his somewhat androgynous wife, Clytemnestra. Referring to Clytemnestra as androgynous is not to question her gender, but rather to indicate that she portrays both stereotypically masculine and feminine characteristics. She neither embodies fully feminine nor completely masculine attributes, but instead manipulates her behavior as she needs by switching between gendered personae. How the male characters relate to her reinforces this characterization, as is evidenced by the opening of the play.

Although the majority of the men, including the chorus and Agamemnon, attempt throughout the course of the play to define Clytemnestra according to gendered expectations, the Watchman defies these norms within the first few lines when he speaks from his roof-top perch.⁴ As the first character to speak in the play, he performs the role of setting the scene, which includes introducing Clytemnestra and the power she is currently exerting. The Watchman’s first description of her brings into relief the androgynous nature of her character, which Aeschylus will explore in the rest of the play: “For such is the ruling of a woman’s hopeful heart, which

³ For examples where distrust and fear of women are prominent, see Hesiod’s *Works and Days* 55-105, Aeschylus’ *Thesmophoriazousae* 475-466, Lysias’ *On the Murder of Eratosthenes* 6-21.

⁴ For a conflicting discussion claiming that the Watchman does not speak from the roof, see Metzger 2005.

plans like a man,” (ὄδε γὰρ κρατεῖ γυναικὸς ἀνδρόβουλον ἐλπίζον κέαρ, 10-11).⁵ The androgyny of her nature is established by the Watchman’s use of both γυναικός and ἀνδρόβουλον, and later confirmed by Clytemnestra’s own oscillation between masculine and feminine language. As the Watchman’s description suggests, Clytemnestra assumes both female and male attributes and uses this gender dualism to her own advantage. This characterization of her introduces the prevalent conflict that occurs between Clytemnestra and the chorus, her husband, and the other players.

As John W. Vaughn has proposed, Aeschylus’ development of the Watchman’s character is purposeful and deliberate. The style of his speech reveals that Aeschylus subtly created the Watchman as more than just an informative servant, but rather as a way to set up the entire play. As Vaughn argues, this prologue encapsulates the play as a whole, with the division of order in the Watchman’s language mirroring a dichotomy of order in the *oikos*.⁶ In following the Watchman’s train of thought, it is clear that he wanders in significant ways. In his opening line, the Watchman says, “I beg the gods to give me release from this misery—from my long year of watch-keeping,” (θεοῦςf μὲν αἰτῶ τῶνδ’ ἀπαλλαγὴν πόνων / φρουρᾶς ἐτείας μῆκος, 1-2). While the audience might expect him to continue into a description of why there is a need for the φρουρᾶς, he instead digresses into his own affairs. This focus continues, until he makes the most important statement regarding Clytemnestra’s androgynous nature, which I have quoted above. But conforming to his preceding style, he drops the topic of his mistress and once again continues to speak about himself. As Vaughn indicates, it is not until the appearance of the

⁵ All translations of the *Agamemnon* are taken from Sommerstein’s Loeb 2009.

⁶ For further discussion of the Watchman’s speech as a representation of the play’s dichotomy of order, see Vaughn 1976.

beacon that the Watchman stops from his distracted thoughts and returns to watching for the beacons from Troy (Vaughn 337).

The arrival of the beacon acts as a dividing force within the Watchman's speech, abruptly changing how he speaks. Before its arrival, his style is disjointed, jumping from one idea to the next, and never following a clear train of thought through his speech. It is not until he catches sight of the beacon that the Watchman switches back to his original purpose. As Vaughn argues, the confusion inherent in this speech looks ahead to and parallels the chaos that is about to engulf this play. To this I would add that it also reflects the confusion of Clytemnestra's character, namely that she is both a grieving mother and a ruler seeking revenge.

As the Watchman exits the stage, the chorus enters to offer more background information on the current situation, focusing specifically on the sacrifice of Iphigenia, the origin of Clytemnestra's anger. In its description of her sacrifice, the chorus uses imagery evocative of a marriage ceremony. Here, Aeschylus confronts his audience by describing the sacrifice in explicitly sexual terms. As the chorus describes, Iphigenia was gagged and led to the sacrificial altar, much as a bride would have been led: "By the silencing power of a bridle. As she poured saffron dye towards the ground she cast on each of her sacrificers a glance darted from her eye, a glance to stir pity," (βία χαλινῶν τ' ἀναύδῳ μένει. κρόκου βαφὰς δ' ἐς πέδον χέουσα ἔβαλλ' ἕκαστον θυτήρ-ων ἀπ' ὄμματος βέλει φιλοίκτω, 238-42). As Victoria Wohl notes, the imagery of the bridle recalls the common trope that virginal girls were like wild animals that had to be trapped and tamed by their first sexual experience (Wohl 72). The image is compounded by the fact that saffron was the color that young brides would have worn on their wedding day. Yet, Aeschylus distorts the image of a young virgin by portraying Iphigenia as on the cusp of adult sexuality. Given that in the lyric tradition the eye was considered to be very erotic, references to

her pitiful glances have sexual undertones.⁷ In addition to the description of her gaze, the chorus notes that her saffron garment “poured” to the ground, rendering her naked before her father and the other Greeks. In this scene of sacrifice, Aeschylus portrays her as beginning to show signs of female sexuality, and the chorus’ description of the sacrifice creates the image of a perverse marriage ceremony between Agamemnon and his virgin daughter.⁸ Before Clytemnestra herself has even entered onto the stage, Aeschylus has utilized both the Watchman and the chorus to develop her character. While the Watchman prepared the audience for the androgynous and perhaps scary nature of Clytemnestra, the chorus has now established the maternal side of her because they have explained the evil Agamemnon did to her and her daughter.

When Clytemnestra enters the scene, she is the first of the protagonists to speak, giving her a place of prominence within the play as well as a commanding role in the ensuing action. This dominant role is immediately contrasted by the chorus who refuses to believe that Clytemnestra is capable of thinking beyond female inclinations. When she enters the stage, the chorus greets her and says, “I have come, Clytemnestra, in reverence towards your power; for it is proper to honor the wife of one’s paramount ruler when the male throne is unoccupied,” (ἤκω σεβίζων σόν, Κλυταιμίστρα, κράτος: δίκη γάρ ἐστι φωτὸς ἀρχηγοῦ τίειν γυναῖκ’ ἐρημοθέντος ἄρσενος θρόνου, 258-60). While the chorus initially claims that they respect her κράτος or the

⁷ An example of lyric poetry on the erotic nature of eyes can be found at Anacreon 417: “Thracian filly, why do you look at me from the corner of your eye and flee stubbornly from me supposing that I have no skill? Let me tell you, I could neatly put the bridle on you,” (πῶλε Θρηκίη, τί δὴ με λοξὸν ὄμμασι βλέπουσα νηλέως φεύγεις, δοκεῖς δέ μ’ οὐδὲν εἰδέναι σοφόν; ἴσθι τοι, καλῶς μὲν ἄν τοι τὸν χαλινὸν ἐμβάλοιμι 1-4). All translations of Anacreon are that of Campbell’s Loeb 1988.

⁸ See Wohl 1998: 71-82, for further conversation regarding Iphigenia’s sacrifice scene and images of a failed marriage.

political power she holds in the absence of her husband, it becomes increasingly clear that they do not trust her and view her speeches as trivial.

This is demonstrated by the disbelief that the chorus expresses upon hearing from Clytemnestra that “Troy is in the Achaeans’ hands,” (Τροίαν Ἀχαιῶν οὔσαν 269). That they are distrustful of her is further evident by their subsequent assertion that she has gained the knowledge of Agamemnon’s *nostos* through what they consider to be frivolous dreams: “Have you been awed by a persuasive vision in a dream?” (ὄνειρων φάσματ’ εὐπιθῆ σέβεις, 274). When Clytemnestra shares the good news of victory with them, assuming that they will believe her, she is not met with confidence, but rather with endless questions—queries that call into question not only her information, but her character and ability to be pragmatic. Furthermore, her comments on how the chorus treats her as if she were a child (παιδὸς νέας ὡς κάρτ’ ἐμωμήσω φρένας, 277) are ignored by the chorus, who continues to doubt her.

Yet in her description of how she set up the beacon, Clytemnestra proves herself through her rhetorical ability. Laura McClure states that this speech is very masculine in nature and follows a model of expressing facts that would have been found in the law courts.⁹ Clytemnestra also reveals that she has an exhaustive knowledge of geography as she describes the journey the beacon took from Troy to Greece. If we return to the model of Penelope, Clytemnestra’s cleverness in establishing the beacon signal appears to parallel Penelope’s weaving trick in the *Odyssey* (2:103-122). Penelope is praised in Homer’s poem for the wit she shows in this plan, yet Clytemnestra’s clever scheme is viewed as frightening. The difference between the two women

⁹ See McClure 1999: 74 for further discussion of the emphasis on victory and the motifs used in the speech.

is, of course, that Penelope is attempting to remain loyal to her husband and free from the suitors, while Clytemnestra notably has not and is plotting to kill her husband.

It is worth noting that once Clytemnestra explains the signal system to the chorus, they praise her persuasiveness, likening her directly to a man: “Lady, you have spoken wisely, like a sensible man; and having heard trustworthy evidence from you, I am preparing to address the gods,” (γύναι, κατ’ ἄνδρα σώφρον’ εὐφρόνως λέγεις. ἐγὼ δ’ ἀκούσας πιστά σου τεκμήρια θεοῦς προσειπεῖν εὖ παρασκευάζομαι, 351-3). That she is described in masculine terms makes sense from the perspective of the chorus, who regard women as not capable of the behavior that the play associates with Clytemnestra. For the chorus, credibility is equated with male speech. The contradiction of Clytemnestra—namely that she is a woman with what they perceive to be masculine traits—causes them to waver in their trust in her:

τίς ὧδε παιδὸς ἢ φρενῶν κεκομμένος,
 φλογὸς παραγγέλμασιν
 νέοις πυρωθέντα καρδίαν ἔπειτ’
 ἀλλαγᾶ λόγου καμειῖν;—
 ἐν γυναικὸς αἰχμᾷ πρέπει
 πρὸ τοῦ φανέντος χάριν ξυναινέσαι.—
 πιθανὸς ἄγαν ὁ θῆλυς ὄρος ἐπινέμεται
 ταχύπορος: ἀλλὰ ταχύμορον
 γυναικογήρυτον ὄλλυται κλέος (479-87)

Who is so childish or so stricken out of his senses
 as to have his heart fired up
 by the message of the flame when it was fresh, and then
 to wilt when the talk changes?
 It is just like a woman in command
 to authorize thanksgivings before the situation is clear.
 A woman’s ordinance is too persuasive, gaining much
 ground
 and quickly flourishing; but quickly perishing,
 a rumor proclaimed by a woman vanishes.

Although Clytemnestra had previously convinced them of the truth of her words, they now regard her as “childish and senseless” because she allows the beacon to convince her that Troy has fallen. It is not until the herald, notably a male character, returns from Troy bearing the news of the victory that the chorus realizes the truth of what Clytemnestra had already spoken.

By expecting Clytemnestra to be naïve, the chorus thus imposes their own assumptions about women onto her. While they initially claimed that her speech was persuasive and like that of a man, they now say persuasion crosses a woman’s mind too quickly. Through this choral song, they are able to dismiss female speech as trivial and as lacking persuasive force, and it is masculine speech alone that is presented as reliable. Clytemnestra, however, ultimately disproves this assumption when she uses speech interlaced with masculine language to deceive her husband and murder him upon his arrival home.

It is clear from the play’s opening that Clytemnestra does not fear the return of her husband, but rather awaits it with anticipation. She is anxious to show her superiority and prove that she is more powerful than her husband, a man considered to be one of the greatest warriors in Greece. By utilizing the signal system, Clytemnestra was able to overcome the distance that would have delayed her hearing of her husband’s return, thus allowing her to prepare for his welcome. Just as Clytemnestra’s exchange with the chorus emphasize their expectations of gender roles, Agamemnon’s *nostos* dramatizes the competition occurring between husband and wife. Clytemnestra famously gains control of Agamemnon by convincing him to tread on the purple carpet. While his comments that she is pampering him like a woman seem to acknowledge the role she has put him in, saying explicitly, “Do not pamper me as if I were a woman,” (καὶ τᾶλλα μὴ γυναικὸς ἐν τρόποις ἐμὲ ἄβρυνε, 918), he does in the end surrender to

her. This exchange between husband and wife is a power struggle, which ultimately results in Clytemnestra asserting dominance over Agamemnon through her ability to manipulate language.

In her first encounter with Agamemnon, Clytemnestra no longer speaks as a masculine agent as she did in the previous encounter with the chorus, but now acts duplicitously as a loyal wife in order to convince Agamemnon that she has been faithful to him. Yet, even as she attempts to present herself as a devoted wife, her speech betrays masculine speech patterns. For example, the very first line of her speech points to her ability to utilize civic speech and the adoption of a public persona, “Men of the city, you assembled Argive elders, I will not be ashamed to speak to you of my feelings of love for [the man],” (ἄνδρες πολῖται, πρέσβος Ἀργείων τόδε, οὐκ αἰσχυνοῦμαι τοὺς φιλόνορας τρόπους λέξαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς, 855-7). Given that public speech was conventionally afforded only to men, Clytemnestra here appears to undermine the persona of a loyal wife that she otherwise seems to be adopting. Moreover, her use of the word φιλόνορας, raises questions as to whether this love for a man refers to her husband, or to her lover, Aigisthus. As she continues, she describes her solitude in the years while Agamemnon was away at war:

ἐμαυτῆς δύσφορον λέξω βίον
 τοσόνδ’ ὅσον περ οὗτος ἦν ὑπ’ Ἰλίῳ.
 τὸ μὲν γυναῖκα πρῶτον ἄρσενος δίχα
 ἦσθαι δόμοις ἔρημον ἔκπαγλον κακόν,
 πολλὰς κλύουσας κληδόνας παλιγκότους (859-63)

my own wretched life through
 all the time that this man was away at Ilium.
 In the first place, it is a terrible trial
 for a wife to be sitting alone at home
 without her man, hearing many dire reports.

In her description of her time spent during the war, Clytemnestra places herself firmly in the conventions of an upstanding, Greek wife. She describes how she sat at home in her loneliness

doing nothing, and like a typical woman she was susceptible to the rumors of her husband's death. Here it is apparent that there is a notable disparity between the wife Clytemnestra claims to be, which notably evokes images of Penelope, and the reality of Clytemnestra's behavior. In contrast to her previous claim not to trust rumors, she here presents an alternate image of herself. Later in her speech, she even describes how she was awoken from dreams in which she saw Agamemnon suffer. In the dramatic fiction of the play, Clytemnestra presents herself as able to utilize gender-specific norms to her rhetorical advantage, a characterization that Aeschylus ultimately undermines.

In the previous scenes of the play, Clytemnestra adopts a feminine persona that is contradicted by her use of masculine speech. The carpet scene exemplifies these contrasting purposes. Agamemnon, in fact, initially admonishes Clytemnestra for speaking in public: "You have made a speech that was like my absence—you stretched it out to a great length," (ἀπουσία μὲν εἶπας εἰκότως ἐμῆ: μακρὰν γὰρ ἐξέτεινας: ἀλλ' ἐναισίμῳς αἰνεῖν, παρ' ἄλλων χρὴ τόδ' ἔρχεσθαι γέρας, 915-17). Agamemnon here reprimands her for speaking at such length and warns her that such praise should not come from her, but rather, because of its public nature, is more appropriately spoken by men. In his attempts to correct her behavior, Agamemnon attempts to reassert his own role in the *oikos* by controlling who can speak publically.

Clearly from the very beginning of the encounter, Agamemnon attempts to control Clytemnestra's speech, grossly underestimating his wife's rhetorical prowess: "It is unwomanly, you know, to be eager for a fight," (οὔτοι γυναικός ἐστιν ἰμείρειν μάχης 940). Yet in the course of the short dialogue that he has with her (931-944), Clytemnestra is able to persuade the initially hesitant Agamemnon to tread on the purple carpet. The purple color of the cloth indicates the wealth of the fabric and the hubristic nature of Agamemnon's action by treading on them. This

act suggests either that Agamemnon had been corrupted by his time at Troy and has taken to barbarian customs or that the king views himself as more than a mortal man. In the latter case, the act of walking on the carpet could be interpreted as impious or even possibly hubristic.¹⁰ Clytemnestra, however, succeeds in convincing Agamemnon to do this by citing other examples like Priam, who would have willingly tread on such carpets. This act underscores how she has outsmarted and defeated him. When Agamemnon enters the door of the palace, Clytemnestra calls on Zeus to help her with her murderous plans, “Zeus, Zeus, lord of all fulfilment, fulfil my prayers, and whatever you intend to fulfil, take care to do so, I beg you!” (Ζεῦ, Ζεῦ τέλειε, τὰς ἐμὰς εὐχὰς τέλει: μέλοι δέ τοι σοὶ τῶν περ ἄν μέλλης τελεῖν, 973-4). The scene between husband and wife culminates in Clytemnestra overpowering Agamemnon and bending his will to her own. As she welcomes the conqueror of Troy back home, she herself becomes the conqueror in their conjugal relationship, and Agamemnon remains unaware that his wife has subdued him in his very own home.¹¹

When Agamemnon enters the scene in the chariot, he is not alone, but is accompanied by his war-prize, Cassandra. In a play with many masculine voices surrounding Clytemnestra, Cassandra enters the drama as a feminine contrast to the transgressive nature of the queen. It is important to note that Cassandra is the only living female foil for Clytemnestra in this play. Yet, just as Clytemnestra is in constant discord with the men around her, she also clashes with her own gender, namely Cassandra, who views her as acting beyond the expectations of her gender.

¹⁰ Debate surrounds the nature of these cloths, in particular whether they are actually a carpet or clothing. McNeil 2005 discusses a connection to bridal cloths.

¹¹ See McClure 1999: 80-92 for further discussion of Clytemnestra’s language in the carpet scene as magical incantations.

As Clytemnestra removes herself from the role of Agamemnon's wife, Cassandra steps in to occupy it. She conforms to all the Greek gender norms, assuming many of the female roles previously staged in the play: bride, sacrificial virgin, and wife. In contrast to Clytemnestra who is the Greek wife that is disloyal to her husband, Cassandra is a foreign concubine that remains faithful to Agamemnon as if she were a legitimate wife. The inversion of these relationships reveals how much disorder this *oikos* is in—a disorder which, at least in this generation, all began with a perverted marriage ceremony between virginal daughter and father that ended with sacrifice. Similar to the sacrifice of Iphigenia, Cassandra's very entrance alongside Agamemnon in the chariot would have recalled for the Athenian audience a marriage procession. Despite being a virgin, Cassandra is here cast in an analogous position to a legitimate wife. She laments the shared fate that she and Agamemnon will suffer, while also focusing on the tragedy befalling the house of Atreus as more important than her own: "Now I shall go to bewail, even within the house, my own fate and Agamemnon's," (ἀλλ' εἶμι κἂν δόμοισι κωκύσουσ' ἐμὴν Ἀγαμέμνονος τε μοῖραν, 1313-4). By mourning Agamemnon's death, Cassandra fulfills the conventional wifely duties that Clytemnestra neglects. Andrea Doyle argues that her visions regarding the house of Agamemnon reveal her to be a loyal wife, as she cares not only about the ancestors of the house, but also about the future—a concern that far exceeds what is expected from a concubine won in war (Doyle 68-9).

Cassandra contrasts sharply with Clytemnestra, most noticeably in her speech patterns. In her speech, she conforms to the gender norms by remaining silent, lamenting, and prophesying, all forms of speech that were typical of women in tragedy. Cassandra is notably present when Agamemnon famously treads on the purple carpet, but remains silent. Her lack of speech distinctly balances the excess of Clytemnestra's dialogue in this scene. While Clytemnestra uses

rhetorical arguments, Cassandra defiantly remains silent when the queen speaks to her, “If you don’t understand my words, then instead of speaking, express yourself with in the way foreigners do,” (εἰ δ’ ἀξυνήμων οὔσα μὴ δέχῃ λόγον, σὺ δ’ ἀντὶ φωνῆς φράζε καρβάνῳ χερί, 1061-2). As Clytemnestra’s public speech calls into question her feminine identity, the silence of Cassandra emphasizes her as a foreigner, as both the queen and the chorus imagine she does not respond because she does not know Greek. Yet, once Clytemnestra enters the palace, Cassandra offers prophecies to the chorus, revealing that she does indeed know how to speak Greek. In this way both women utilize their control over speech as they see fit, but notably in opposite ways.

The exchanges that each of the women have with the chorus are also distinctly different, further underscoring Cassandra’s position in the play as a foil to Clytemnestra. As we have seen, the speeches that Clytemnestra delivers to the chorus are well thought-out and full of ambiguous language that contributes to her deceptive abilities. In contrast, Cassandra’s passages are often defined as being uncontrolled and inspired by the gods—her words are not her own and she involuntarily shares her visions. The spontaneity of her communication emphasizes the consciousness involved in Clytemnestra’s mastery of rhetoric. Clytemnestra utilizes calculated language in order to persuade the chorus and her husband, and these men fall victim to her deceitful language, especially the murdered Agamemnon. Yet, Cassandra, who actually speaks the truth through her prophecies, is unable to convince the chorus thanks to the curse of Apollo: “I still don’t understand; the riddling words in these obscure oracles leave me quite at a loss,” (οὔπω ξυνῆκα: νῦν γὰρ ἐξ αἰνιγμάτων ἐπαργέμοισι θεσφάτοις ἀμηχανῶ, 1112-3).

In the scene following the murder of Agamemnon, Clytemnestra stands over the two corpses and delivers a speech that reveals the violence she has brought down upon the house. The chorus immediately is aghast at the boastful language she uses: “We are amazed at your

language—the arrogance of it— uttering boastful words like these over your husband!”

(θαυμάζομέν σου γλώσσαν, ὡς θρασύστομος, ἥτις τοιόνδ’ ἐπ’ ἀνδρὶ κομπάζεις λόγον, 1399-400). It seems from these lines that the chorus does not consider the actual act of boasting over the dead as transgressive—although in other literature it is viewed as inappropriate—rather they object to the fact that a woman would dare boast.¹² Her gender does not allow her the right to boast, especially over the corpse of her husband.

For the remainder of the interaction between the chorus and Clytemnestra, the chorus speaks through lyric song. Even as she attempts to take responsibility for her actions, and claim autonomous agency, the chorus refuses to believe that a woman is capable of such a premeditated act: “What evil thing have you tasted, woman—”, (τί κακόν, ᾧ γύναι, χθονοτρεφὲς ἔδανόν 1406). Preoccupied with the disbelief that a woman could act in such a way, they ascribe her actions as being a result of some sort of drug. Even when they consider her crime, they propose her punishment be banishment. Helene Foley notes that banishment would have only be awarded to involuntary homicide, whereas for premeditated homicide the punishment is the death penalty. Therefore, Foley claims, their punishment for Clytemnestra reveals that they do not believe she performed the murder deliberately, but rather assume she is only capable of doing it if it were an involuntary act (203).

Clytemnestra attempts to defend herself and plead her case, but she questions the chorus and their judgement: “Now you judge me to have incurred exile from the city, the hatred of the community, and loud public curses; but you didn’t show any opposition at all to this man at that former time,” (νῦν μὲν δικάζεις ἐκ πόλεως φυγὴν ἐμοὶ καὶ μῖσος ἀστῶν δημόθρους τ’ ἔχειν ἀράς,

¹²On the inappropriate nature of boasting over a corpse, see *Odyssey* 22.412; cf. Euripides, *Electra* 900-56.

οὐδὲν τότε ἄνδρὶ τῷδ' ἐναντίον φέρων, 1412-14). She is angered that while her act is being punished, the heinous crime that Agamemnon committed against his daughter Iphigenia is overlooked by the chorus. The chorus, however, ignores these claims, and instead calls Clytemnestra bold and crazy. They go so far as to say they can see the madness, “Driven mad by your experience of flowing blood—the flecks of blood show clearly on your eyes,” (ὥσπερ οὖν φονολιβεῖ τύχα φρήν ἐπιμαίνεται, λίπος ἐπ' ὀμμάτων αἵματος εὖ πρόπει, 1427-9). Instead of regarding the truth in Clytemnestra’s claims of unequal justice between herself and Agamemnon, they characterize her as a woman driven mad by murder.

As their speech proceeds, the chorus laments the fact that the death of their king was brought by the hands of a woman, and his wife no less: “Ah me, ah me!—lying in a state unfit for a free man, laid low in treacherous murder by the hand of your wife with a two-edged weapon,” (ὅμοι μοι κοίταν τάνδ' ἀνελεύθερον δολίῳ μόρῳ δαμεις δάμαρτος ἐκ χερὸς ἀμφιτόμῳ βελέμῳ, 1494-6). In their opinion, Agamemnon has been shamed not just because he was murdered, but also because he was murdered by his own wife. A wife was supposed to respect and honor her husband above all things, but instead Clytemnestra, as a wife that kills her husband, comes to embody the epitome of a treacherous kind of woman. This type of treachery was considered, both by the chorus and the Athenian audience, to be the greatest danger, because a wife over-powering her husband brought conflict to the *oikos*, which in turn brought turmoil to Athenian society.

In response to the chorus’ distress at Agamemnon’s death by her hands, Clytemnestra responds in a shocking way, “You think this deed is mine? Do not suppose so nor reckon that I am the spouse of Agamemnon,” (ἀρχεῖς εἶναι τόδε τοῦργον ἐμόν; μηδ' ἐπιλεχθῆς Ἀγαμεμνονίαν εἶναί μ' ἄλοχον, 1497-9). At first, it seems that Clytemnestra is refusing to consider herself the

wife of Agamemnon, a proclamation which is shocking enough given that in Athenian society women were only defined by the relations to their male kin. But in the next lines, Clytemnestra's claim creates even more controversy, "No, the ancient, bitter avenging spirit of Atreus, the furnisher of the cruel banquet, has taken the likeness of this corpse's wife," (φανταζόμενος δὲ γυναικὶ νεκροῦ τοῦδ' ὁ παλαιὸς δριμύς ἀλάστωρ, 1499-500). Clytemnestra here rescinds her previous statements and now declares that her action was not her own, but that of the ἀλάστωρ, or avenging spirit. The speech seems an attempt by Clytemnestra to avoid responsibility for killing her husband. Yet, if this is her motive, this speech conflicts with all of her previous statements. As discussed above, Clytemnestra continuously attempts to prove to the chorus that she acted by her own autonomous will and that the murder was premeditated by herself. In an attempt to explain this inconsistency, Foley argues that Clytemnestra does not remove herself from blame by claiming the ἀλάστωρ is responsible, but rather justifies the murder by including an avenging spirit on the action.

The murder of her husband reveals that Clytemnestra has taken on a heroic role as well as the masculine speech patterns that accompany this portrayal. By the end of the play, the only role left for the chorus is to lament Agamemnon's death and reprimand Clytemnestra for not mourning her husband: "Who will bury him? Who will sing his lament? Will you dare to do it?" (τίς ὁ θάψων νιν; τίς ὁ θρηνήσων; ἦ σὺ τόδ' ἔρξαι τλήση, κτείνας' ἄνδρα τὸν αὐτῆς ἀποκωκῦσαι ψυχῆ, 1542-5). The chorus are unable to persuade or change what has occurred with their speech and are rendered further powerless. Clytemnestra, on the other hand, has continued to utilize masculine language to persuade and to fulfill her plans. The woman of the play is featured as the most adept speaker, while the men around her continue to express their disbelief at a woman's ability to blind them to her power.

Throughout the play, Aeschylus utilizes different scenes and characters to characterize and develop the character of Clytemnestra. In the opening scenes of the play, both her own behavior and how the other characters speak about her underscore her androgynous character. In this play, Clytemnestra emerges as a threat to the male-ordered society and thus as a paradigm for other “scary” wives. Most notably, Phaedra and Medea will follow the paradigm Clytemnestra has established in this play, with Medea taking the vengeful wife act a step further when she kills her children. In the next section, however, I will examine a less obvious permutation of this model, namely the figure of Hecuba who also seeks revenge for the murder of her children.

Chapter 3

Hecuba

Although Euripides' Hecuba is a less obvious example of the Clytemnestra paradigm, she nonetheless represents another instantiation of a vengeful and vindictive woman. In many ways, Hecuba's circumstances are similar to Clytemnestra's: Hecuba is a mother seeking revenge against the men who murdered her children, and she also uses persuasive language to achieve the revenge that she seeks. As a suffering mother and a victim of war, Hecuba's predicament invokes more sympathy than that of Clytemnestra; yet, by the end of the play, Hecuba like Clytemnestra, has violated the conventions of female acceptable behavior. In this section, I will explore the usually unacknowledged similarities between Hecuba's situation and that of Clytemnestra, namely in relation to the sacrifices of their daughters and the absences of their sons. In addition, I will also explore how Hecuba utilizes rhetorical speech to persuade the men of the play. Like Clytemnestra, she feigns stereotypical female behavior to exact revenge against the murderer of her son.

As the play progresses, Hecuba's character degenerates as she morphs from a suffering mother into a vengeful murderer and, ultimately, into the beast that Polymestor foretold that she would become. These changes in her character are mirrored by how she employs rhetorical persuasion in the play: while she initially uses her words to seek justice for herself, they become one of the primary tools by which she exacts her revenge. Just as Clytemnestra was characterized as a transgressive woman through her interactions with the other characters of the play, Hecuba and her revenge scheme is defined by how she interacts with her daughter, Odysseus, and Agamemnon. As we saw in the previous section, Clytemnestra at times adopts the persona of a dutiful wife and at times that of a skilled rhetorical speaker. Similarly, Hecuba has two

personalities: a suffering mother who maintains restraint and the monstrous Hecuba, who appears at the end of the play. Through her encounters with her daughter before her death and her supplication of Agamemnon and Odysseus, the transformation from powerless slave and victim to murderous mother is revealed.

At the opening of the play, Euripides emphasizes Hecuba's maternal status. The play opens with the ghost of her son, Polydorus, revealing to the audience how he was treacherously murdered by Polymestor. Following this scene, Hecuba learns that her daughter, Polyxena, will be sacrificed by the Greeks to appease the ghost of Achilles. When she hears the news, Polyxena laments for her mother rather than for herself: "O mother of terrible suffering, of utter wretchedness, of life ill-starred," (ὦ δεινὰ παθοῦσ', ὦ παντλάμων, ὦ δυστάνου μάτερ βιοτᾶς, 197-9).¹³ As these lines indicate, Polyxena has accepted her fate. She knows that she will die, and, therefore, will escape the torment that will presumably follow. In comparison, her mother will have to watch yet another one of her children be taken from her and killed. Odysseus' entrance subtly draws attention to the distress of Hecuba's character: "Even in misfortune it is wise to take the attitude circumstance requires," (γίγνωσκε δ' ἀλκὴν καὶ παρουσίαν κακῶν τῶν σῶν, 227-8). His warning to Hecuba here establishes a contrast between how Hecuba and Polyxena each handle the situation. Upon hearing of her fate, Polyxena acknowledges that she will die, yet Hecuba must be urged to embrace the suffering that will follow. In her response to Odysseus, Hecuba reminds Odysseus of the similarly helpless position that he once found himself in:

ἂ δ' ἀντιδοῦναι δεῖ σ' ἀπαιτούσης ἐμοῦ,
 ἄκουσον. ἦψω τῆς ἐμῆς, ὡς φῆς, χερὸς
 καὶ τῆσδε γραίας προσπίτνων παρηίδος:
 ἀνθάπτομαί σου τῶνδε τῶν αὐτῶν ἐγὼ

¹³ All translations of the *Hecuba* are taken from Kovacs' Loeb 1995.

χάριν τ' ἀπαιτῶ τὴν τόθ' ἰκετεύω τέ σε,
 μή μου τὸ τέκνον ἐκ χειρῶν ἀποσπάσης,
 μηδὲ κτάνητε: τῶν τεθνηκότων ἄλις (272-78)

As you admit, you fell in supplication before me and
 grasped my hand and my aged cheek. I grasp you in the same way,
 and I ask for the return of the favor I showed you then,
 and I beg you: do not tear my child from my arms,
 do not kill her! Enough have been killed already!

In an attempt to convince Odysseus to spare her daughter, Hecuba here reminds him of how she once spared his life. Notably, she does not refute the belief that a sacrifice is needed, but instead argues that Helen should take the place of her daughter. That Euripides ascribes to her a desire to see Helen killed suggests that a desire for revenge is inherent to her character.

Once Hecuba realizes that Odysseus will not reciprocate the mercy she showed him, she attempts to arouse pity in him: “She is a consolation to me for many things, she is my city, my nurse, my staff, my guide upon the road,” (ἦδ' ἀντὶ πολλῶν ἐστὶ μοι παραψυχή, πόλις, τιθήνη, βάκτρον, ἡγεμῶν ὁδοῦ, 280-1). At this point in the play, Hecuba is plagued by dreams that her son Polydorus is dead and is unsure who of her family is still alive. She pleads with Odysseus because Polyxena is the only child that Hecuba is completely sure survives. In a last effort to persuade Odysseus, Hecuba appeals to him through *nomos* or the conventional laws of the Greeks: “Moreover in your country there is a law laid down, the same for free men and slaves, concerning the shedding of blood,” (νόμος ἐν ὑμῖν τοῖς τ' ἐλευθέροις ἴσος καὶ τοῖσι δούλοις αἵματος κεῖται πέρι, 291-2). It is interesting that Hecuba, being both a woman and a barbarian, must remind a Greek man of the *nomos* regarding suppliants and victims of war. She is not the only woman of Euripidean tragedy that acts as a defender of *nomoi*, Euripides also depicts Jocasta in *Phoenissae* and Aethra in *Suppliants* as mothers who come to the defense of these laws. As Foley notably argues, Euripides uses these characters to reflect on the changing status

of these laws during the Peloponnesian War—what was once in the realm of men has been displaced onto women (Foley 276).

Odysseus responds to Hecuba’s supplication by systematically dismantling her claim to *nomoi* and redefining her as an aged slave whose persuasive abilities lack force or power. In regards to her claims of *charis* or reciprocity, Odysseus responds:

ἐγὼ τὸ μὲν σὸν σῶμ’ ὑφ’ οὔπερ εὐτύχουν
 σώζειν ἔτοιμός εἰμι κοῦκ ἄλλως λέγω:
 ἃ δ’ εἶπον εἰς ἅπαντας οὐκ ἀρνήσομαι,
 Τροίας ἀλούσης ἀνδρὶ τῷ πρώτῳ στρατοῦ
 σὴν παῖδα δοῦναι σφάγιον ἐξαιτουμένῳ (301-5)

I am ready—I will not say otherwise—to save your life,
 since at your hands I enjoyed good fortune.
 But I shall not unsay what I said to the whole assembly,
 that since Troy has been captured, we ought to sacrifice your daughter
 to the most valiant man in the army since he has asked for her.

In his response, Odysseus acknowledges that Hecuba did in fact save his life and that he does owe her, but he notably asserts that he must repay her for saving his life by saving her life, not that of her daughter. While Hecuba is attempting to use laws and customs to persuade Odysseus, he counters with crafty rhetorical arguments. As she appeals to the *nomos* that both freemen and slaves are protected in the same way, Odysseus counters by citing another law, which states that the best soldiers must be honored in death (306-23). Because Achilles died for Greece, the Greeks now owe him and must pay tribute to him. The needs of the state, namely the appeasement of Achilles’ spirit that is necessary for their return home, takes precedence over the life of Polyxena. Similarly, he also responds to her pleas for pity by saying: “If you claim that your sufferings are worthy of pity, hear what I have to say in reply. We have in Greece gray-haired women and old men who are no less wretched than yourself,” (εἰ δ’ οἰκτρὰ πάσχειν φῆς, τάδ’ ἀντάκουέ μου: εἰσὶν παρ’ ἡμῖν οὐδὲν ἥσσον ἄθλῃαι γραῖαι γυναῖκες ἠδὲ πρεσβῦται σέθεν,

321-23). As Odysseus' arguments here suggest, the suffering of the Greeks means that he does not feel pity for her situation.

Hecuba laments that her speech has done nothing to convince Odysseus that her daughter should be spared. While she hopes that her daughter can be more successful begging for her own life, Polyxena takes a different approach. She does not approach Odysseus as a suppliant, but instead tells him that she will go to her death willingly:

τί γάρ με δεῖ ζῆν; ἢ πατήρ μὲν ἦν ἄναξ
 Φρυγῶν ἀπάντων...
 νῦν δ' εἰμὶ δούλη. πρῶτα μὲν με τοῦνομα
 θανεῖν ἐρᾶν...
 οὐ δῆτ' ἀφίημι ὀμμάτων ἐλευθέρων
 φέγγος τόδ', Ἴδιη προστιθεῖσ' ἐμὸν δέμας (349-50, 357-8, 367-8)

Why should I live? My father was king of all the Phrygians...
 But now I am a slave. First, the very word in its strangeness makes me long to die...
 From eyes still free I shut out the light of day and consign myself to the world below!

In her speech, Polyxena does not follow the model of supplication set by her mother, but instead submits to her fate, claiming that in death she will escape the humiliation of being a slave and will retain her honor. She would rather die, remaining the daughter of the king of Troy, than continue to live as a slave. In this way, she views herself as remaining free, because she has chosen to die freely.

Even as Polyxena speaks this, Hecuba attempts to continue convincing Odysseus to spare her daughter. When she asks that he take her instead, Polyxena silences her saying: “unhappy mother, do not fight against your masters,” (ὄ τάλαινα, τοῖς κρατοῦσι μὴ μάχου, 404). Euripides here accentuates the difference between the two women: where Hecuba attempts to fight against their terrible fate, Polyxena chides her and tells her not to resist against those who have power over her. Polyxena thus assumes the characterization of a conventional woman who does not struggle against the men who have control over her and her life. She does not attempt to use

rhetoric or persuasion to change the mind of Odysseus, but allows herself to be led to the sacrifice. In contrast, Hecuba becomes a woman who will use masculine arguments and speech to fight for justice. Polyxena's refusal to convince Odysseus to change his mind only emphasizes Hecuba's desperation to supplicate on behalf of her children. In this sense, Polyxena, despite being her daughter, serves as a foil for Hecuba.

In his depiction of Polyxena's sacrifice, Euripides recalls that of Iphigenia described by the chorus in the *Agamemnon*. When the herald Talthybius tells Hecuba of her daughter's death, he recounts that she remained brave through the entire sacrifice and that she persisted in asserting her death was voluntary. Even the Greek soldiers were impressed by the fortitude she showed when she offered her own breast or neck to the sword. The description of Polyxena's sacrifice remains in the style of most other virginal deaths; however, her death does present some problems. Virgin sacrifices usually occur either because of a divine request or to fulfill a communal purpose. Yet, in the case of Polyxena, Odysseus is the one who pushes for her sacrifice to occur, not a god, and it is the Greeks, the enemy, who are benefitting from Polyxena's death rather than the Trojans (Gregory 97). This contrasts to the sacrifice of Iphigenia, which was requested by Artemis and benefitted her father and his army so they could sail to Troy.

Polyxena's sacrifice thus emerges as a perverted example of the model set by Iphigenia and it is perhaps not surprising that Euripides employs similar imagery to the chorus' description of Iphigenia's death in the *Agamemnon*. As in Aeschylus' play, the language is laced with erotic undertones, especially once she tears open her robe:

λαβοῦσα πέπλους ἐξ ἄκρας ἐπωμίδος
 ἔρρηξε λαγόνας ἐς μέσας παρ' ὀμφαλόν,
 μαστούς τ' ἔδειξε στέρνα θ' ὡς ἀγάλματος
 κάλλιστα, καὶ καθεῖσα πρὸς γαῖαν γόνυ (558-61)

She seized her robe and tore it from the shoulder
to the middle of her waist, by the navel,
and showed her breasts, lovely as a goddess' statue,
then sinking to her knees.

Similar to Iphigenia's sacrifice, Polyxena appears partly nude before the men and she is described as being almost as perfect as a statue. At her death the virgin exposes herself and, just as in Iphigenia's sacrificial scene, Polyxena has begun to show signs of her female sexuality. It is worth stressing here that two virginal sacrifices frame the Trojan War, and that both drive their mothers to exact violent revenge. The resonances of Iphigenia contained in the description of Polyxena's sacrifice subtly invite comparisons between the situations of Hecuba and Clytemnestra: both mothers have lost their daughters to sacrifice and their sons have been sent away. While Clytemnestra exacted revenge for the death of her daughter, it was not until Hecuba's son Polydorus was killed that she seeks revenge.

Often Hecuba is viewed as having two different personalities. In the beginning of the play, she is the suffering queen who watches her daughter be taken away to her death, yet she still has hope that her last son Polydorus remains safe. When she is brought his dead body, however, she seems to break and immediately wishes to exact revenge on Polymestor. She turns to Agamemnon and her ensuing speech of appeal connects her hopelessness to the violence that she will enact at the end of the play. This shift in personality is put on display in her supplication to Agamemnon, where she once again appeals to *nomos*;

ἡμεῖς μὲν οὖν δοῦλοί τε κάσθηνεῖς ἴσως:
ἀλλ' οἱ θεοὶ σθένουσι χῶ κείνων κρατῶν
Νόμος: νόμῳ γὰρ τοὺς θεοὺς ἠγούμεθα
καὶ ζῶμεν ἄδικα καὶ δίκαι' ὠρισμένοι:
ὃς ἐς σ' ἀνελθὼν εἰ διαφθαρήσεται,
καὶ μὴ δίκην δώσουσιν οἵτινες ξένους
κτείνουσιν ἢ θεῶν ἱερὰ τολμῶσιν φέρειν,
οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν τῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἴσον. (798-805)

Now I may be a slave and of no account. But the gods have force
 and so does the law that rules over them.
 For it is by virtue of law that we believe in the gods
 and distinguish right from wrong in our lives.
 If this law comes before your tribunal and is set at naught,
 if those who murder their guests or plunder the temples of the gods are not punished,
 then there is no more justice among men.

Initially, she positions herself as a slave, and asks that he avenge her son's death. In doing so, she acknowledges that she is at the very bottom of the hierarchy, with Agamemnon and the gods being established above her. Yet, as she also argues, *nomos* applies to all, no matter one's position. *Nomos* is the foundation of everything and establishes cosmic order, such that if the *nomoi* are disregarded, justice is not possible. As a final point, Hecuba contends that Polymestor has gone against one of the most highly honored laws of *xenia* or guest-friendship: he killed the son of his friend for the sake of gold. Hecuba thus attempts to defend her desire for personal justice by using these claims for *nomos* that are universal and lead to order for all of humanity.

After this appeal to *nomos*, Agamemnon begins to turn away and attempts to remove himself from her supplication, prompting Hecuba to lament that she is not able to persuade Agamemnon:

τί δῆτα θνητοὶ τᾶλλα μὲν μαθήματα
 μοχθοῦμεν ὡς χρῆ πάντα καὶ ματεῦομεν,
 Πειθῶ δὲ τὴν τύραννον ἀνθρώποις μόνην
 οὐδέν τι μᾶλλον ἐς τέλος σπουδάζομεν
 μισθοὺς διδόντες μανθάνειν, ἢν ᾗν ποτε
 πείθειν ἅ τις βούλοιο τυγχάνειν θ' ἅμα, 814-19.

Why is it that we mortals take pains to study all other branches of knowledge
 as we ought, yet we take no further pains, by paying a fee,
 to learn thoroughly the art of persuasive speaking,
 sole ruler where mortals are concerned,
 so that we might be able to persuade
 people of whatever we wish and gain our ends?

Here, Hecuba is describing a sophistic education. She has moved away from a traditional argument, of relying on societal laws, and is using contemporary arguments of the day. In this way, she reveals she knows different methods of public speech and can utilize the argument style that best fits her needs. Whereas previously she argued generally that enforcing *nomos* is a shared obligation among all men, she tailors her argument specifically to her listener, Agamemnon. She knows that she does not have much power to persuade him; however, she recognizes that he cares for Cassandra and that she can use her daughter to convince him.

Her personal appeal to Agamemnon is based on *charis* or a favor that he owes her. She treats Agamemnon as if he has taken Cassandra as his wife rather than a concubine: “My daughter shares your bed. She sleeps beside you, and you enjoy her favors. What are they worth to you, these nights of love? What thanks are due to Cassandra? To me, my lord?” “ποῦ τὰς φίλας δῆτ’ εὐφρόνας δείξεις, ἄναξ, ἢ τῶν ἐν εὐνῇ φιλτάτων ἀσπασμάτων χάριν τίν’ ἔξει παῖς ἐμή, κείνης δ’ ἐγώ, 828-30). Hecuba invokes her daughter Cassandra to create a bond between herself and Agamemnon, and, in doing so, places him in an analogous position to a relative, who should exact revenge himself for his pseudo-brother-in-law, Polydorus. As a modern audience, it seems demeaning and crude that Hecuba is using Polyxena’s sexual status to convince Agamemnon, but the Athenian audience would have been accustomed to this type of *charis*.¹⁴ To a certain degree, her appeal to *charis* is successful: Agamemnon pities her and her son, but he does not want to appear to be choosing Cassandra over the army. In the fiction of the play, the Greek army viewed the Thracian Polymestor as an ally and Polydorus as an enemy. Rather than

¹⁴ See Gregory 1991: 106, for discussion of this precedent for *charis* as used by Tecmessa in *Ajax*.

seem to prefer his concubine to his duties to the army, Agamemnon promises to her in any way her can so long as the army does not find out.

In response to Agamemnon's fear concerning the opinion of the army, Hecuba responds: "No mortal is free! Either he is the slave of money or fate, or he is prevented by the city's multitude or its laws from acting as he thinks best," (οὐκ ἔστι θνητῶν ὅστις ἔστ' ἐλεύθερος: ἢ χρημάτων γὰρ δοῦλός ἐστιν ἢ τύχης, ἢ πλῆθος αὐτὸν πόλεος ἢ νόμων γραφαὶ εἴργουσι χρῆσθαι μὴ κατὰ γνώμην τρόποις, 864-7). It is ironic that Hecuba, previously the queen of Troy now a slave to the Greeks, calls Agamemnon a slave as well. She claims that he is a slave to the opinion of the army, and cannot act as he truly wishes. Furthermore, she actually frees Agamemnon from his dilemma by asking that he only restrain the Greeks, but not actually take part in the violent revenge. This prompts Agamemnon to voice his doubts about her ability to exact revenge: "And how shall women overcome a man?" (καὶ πῶς γυναιξὶν ἀρσένων ἔσται κράτος, 883). Just as Aeschylus' Agamemnon rejects Clytemnestra as a persuasive speaker and does not realize that she could be plotting violence against him once he has returned home, Euripides' Agamemnon also doubts that Hecuba and her fellow captive women will be able to harm Polymestor. In her response, Hecuba notes that: "There is terror in numbers, numbers joined with guile," (δεινὸν τὸ πλῆθος σὺν δόλῳ τε δύσμαχον, 884). Hecuba and her fellow women will act against the conventional expectations of both gender and age, and like other examples of this character type, she achieves her revenge through deception.

When Polymestor enters the scene, Hecuba, similar to Clytemnestra's actions in the *Agamemnon*, deceptively adopts the female persona that the male characters have thus far sought to impose her: "Shame prevents me, Polymestor, from looking you in the face since I have been put into such calamity. I am embarrassed, before someone who has seen me in prosperity,"

(αἰσχύνομαί σε προσβλέπειν ἐναντίον, Πολυμήστορ, ἐν τοιοῖσδε κειμένη κακοῖς. ὅτω γὰρ ὤφθην εὐτυχοῦσ', αἰδῶς μ' ἔχει ἐν τῷδε πότμῳ τυγχάνουσ' ἴν' εἰμὶ νῦν κοῦκ ἂν δυνάιμην προσβλέπειν ὀρθαῖς κόραις, 968-72). Hecuba here utilizes conventional feminine behavior as a way to fool Polymestor, by pretending that she is so ashamed by her fall from nobility that she cannot even meet his gaze (Rabinowitz 121). She then tests him by asking how her son is, prompting him to lie that Polydorus is safe and well. By lying to Hecuba, Polymestor has once again violated an important aspect of *xenia*. As a result of this, Hecuba draws Polymestor and his children into the tent with the promise that she wants to share with him where a great amount of treasure is hidden. Once he is in the tent, Hecuba and her women set upon his children and kill them with knives hidden in their robes, and blind Polymestor: “You will soon see him coming out in front of the tent, blind and with blindly reeling steps, and soon you will also see the bodies of his two sons, whom I with the help of the noble Trojan ladies have killed. He has paid me satisfaction,” (ὄψη νιν αὐτίκ' ὄντα δωμάτων πάρος τυφλὸν τυφλῷ στείχοντα παραφόρῳ ποδί, παίδων τε δισσῶν σώμαθ', οὓς ἔκτειν' ἐγὼ σὺν ταῖς ἀρίσταις Τρωάσιν: δίκην δέ μοι δέδωκε. χωρεῖ δ', ὡς ὀρᾶς, ὅδ' ἐκ δόμων, 1049-53). Her decision not to kill Polymestor, but rather his kids notably represents a divergence from the Clytemnestra model. In this way, Hecuba may seem even scarier because she transgresses even more against what a mother should be by killing the children in a manner reminiscent of Medea.

Hecuba takes full responsibility for the violence that has occurred in the tent, and eventually the pained shouts of Polymestor attracts Agamemnon. With the arrival of Agamemnon, a trial scene occurs that recalls the trial scene of Orestes in the final play of the *Oresteia*. Agamemnon calls for the savagery to stop and says: “speak, so that hearing both you and her in turn I may judge properly why this has been done to you,” (ὡς ἀκούσας σοῦ τε τῆσδέ

τ' ἐν μέρει κρίνω δικάίως ἀνθ' ὅτου πάσχεις τάδε, 1130-1). In her defense, Hecuba once again frees Agamemnon from his dilemma of which side to choose by proving that Polymestor was never truly an ally of Greece. Consequently, her argument is that Agamemnon should not be required by the army to choose the Thracian, but instead can claim that Hecuba was just in her actions because she was punishing Polymestor for breaking the bonds of *xenia*. Agamemnon thus declares Polymestor guilty of his crimes, prompting Polymestor to become enraged over his defeat by both a slave and woman: “How terrible! I have been beaten, it seems, by a slave woman and must pay the penalty to my inferiors!” (οἴμοι, γυναικός, ὡς ἔοιχ', ἡσσωμένος δούλης ὑφέξω τοῖς κακίοσιν δίκην, 1252-3). By the end of the play, Hecuba shows herself capable of exacting revenge and using her rhetorical ability as persuasion to exact justice for the sufferings of herself and her family.

To the Greek audience, Hecuba would have been the very image of a suffering mother and victim of war, but by the end of the play she proves that even in a position of powerlessness she was able to gain revenge. Her success, however, required her to transgress the limits of female behavior. Unlike her virginal daughter Polyxena, Hecuba was not complacent in her fate and would not surrender to the Greeks, but used persuasive arguments in the form of invocation of *nomos* and *charis* and pleas of pity to convince Agamemnon to allow her to avenge her children. The men of the play, most specifically Odysseus, Agamemnon and Polymestor raise questions about the effectiveness of female action, especially in the trial scene. Ultimately, change becomes the central theme of the play: the change of Hecuba from a queen to a slave, from a mother of many children to a childless crone, as well as the overall change of the great city of Troy to ashes. Euripides' play underscores the effects of war, specifically how it can transform the fate of people. As Hecuba realizes at the end of the play, this also includes a

change in physical form: “You’ll be transformed—into a dog, a bitch with fiery eyes,” (κύων γενήσῃ πύρσ’ ἔχουσα δέργματα, 1265). Medea is the obvious connection to draw to the character of Clytemnestra, but Hecuba’s situation and ways of exacting revenge are actually more similar to the techniques employed by Clytemnestra than is usually acknowledged. Both Hecuba and Clytemnestra utilize rhetorical and persuasive speech: yet, perhaps most frighteningly, they feign conventional female behavior in order to deceive. In the last section I will examine an even less obvious example of this paradigm as found in the character of Lysistrata.

Chapter 4

Lysistrata

As we have already seen, Clytemnestra established a paradigm for the vengeful wife in Greek tragedy. In the previous chapter I have explored how Euripides' Hecuba and the grief that she expresses over the loss of her daughter represents an interesting refraction of this character type. In this section, I will turn to Old Comedy, a genre where women are featured far less prominently. This makes Aristophanes' decision to produce in 411 two plays showcasing female characters, *Lysistrata* and the *Thesmophoriazusae*, all the more striking. My focus here will primarily be on the former play and how the character of Lysistrata follows to a certain degree female tragic paradigm, but also introduces behavior reserved only for comic characters, namely the use of obscene language and highly sexualized performance.

To understand the significance of Lysistrata's portrayal, it will be useful to first consider the female character types that were frequent on the comic stage. Previously, most female roles consisted of secondary characters, such as prostitutes, market women, and female family members. These women might be present on stage, but were not necessarily afforded a speaking role and did not add to the overall drama (McClure 207). One exception to this is Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, the oldest of his surviving plays, where Dicaeopolis' daughter is given a few lines. Female personifications were also common on the comic stage. In Cratinus' comedy *Pytine*, produced in 423, Cratinus is married to Comedy whom he abandons for Drunkenness. Later in the play an actor may have been brought on stage dressed as a wine flask or a pytine. These roles of personified objects or ideas would have all been female figures.

A third type of female character present on the comic stage is the figure of the *hetaira*, which was prominent particularly in the comedies of Pherecrates. Based on the surviving

evidence, it seems that many of his plays focused on domestic themes and female characters, and five of his plays, *Coriannu*, *Pannychis*, *Thalassa*, *Petale*, and *Tyranny*, seem to have had a *hetaira* as the main character (Storey 10).¹⁵ In addition, his *Chiron* depicted Music personified as a high-class *hetaira*. As this evidence suggests, there was a previous tradition for women in comic drama, yet the roles that they performed were much different from the one which Aristophanes attributes to *Lysistrata*. Since there was no strong precedence for female protagonists in comedy for *Lysistrata* to follow, it seems plausible that her character represents Aristophanes' response to the female protagonists of tragedy.

In both tragedy and comedy, the ever-present conflict and separation between men and women is prominent, and this is especially true in the *Lysistrata*. The comedy of the play develops because of the role reversal that occurs between the sexes. While the blurring of gender-boundaries was a longstanding trope of tragedy, this would have been somewhat of a surprise in comedy and may have left the audience amused and shocked by the unexpected twist. Unlike tragedy, where the strife between the sexes ends in disaster, in comedy, the conflicts end in restored harmony between the men and women. In *Lysistrata*, the women bring the personal and private concerns of the *oikos* into the public, an action that would have been considered transgressive as public speaking was a prescribed masculine behavior (McClure 78). Through their struggle to forgo sex with their husbands, the women, with the exception of *Lysistrata*, reveal themselves to be just as sex crazy as the men. At the same time, their husband's desire for them renders them standard objects of male desire (Taaffe 48). The humor of the play thus relies on the reversal of the expected behaviors of the sexes. The women must curb their own sexual

¹⁵ Dates of these works are not recorded, but these plays were probably written between the years 440-410. See Storey 2011: 410-15 for information on dates.

urges in order to divert their husbands' attentions from fighting, and in doing so they have become even more appealing to the men.

To further clarify the position of the women here, it may be useful to briefly resort once again to the paradigm of Penelope. As we have already seen, Penelope represents a model of a loyal and upstanding wife, and despite not being mentioned in the play, the audience would have been aware of the implicit comparison that Aristophanes seems to draw through the scenario of his play. In Homer's poem, Penelope is defined entirely by her relationship to Odysseus, as his wife, as mother of his child, and as mistress of his household. Even when faced with the countless suitors in her home, she remains devoted to Odysseus and refuses to wed any of the suitors. In Aristophanes' play, the women, with the exception of *Lysistrata*, struggle to abstain from sex. That they represent the opposite of Penelope is evident in their language:

“ANYTHING else for me. I'd walk through fire, but do without dick? Be serious! There's nothing, *Lysistrata*, like a dick,” (ἄλλ' ἄλλ' ὅ τι βούλει: κἂν με χρῆ διὰ τοῦ πυρὸς ἐθέλω βαδίζειν: τοῦτο μᾶλλον τοῦ πέους. οὐδὲν γὰρ οἶον ὃ φίλη Λυσιστράτη, 133-5).¹⁶ In the *Odyssey*, Penelope waits twenty long years for her husband's return and never succumbs to the suitors. In what is perhaps a comic riff on the model of Penelope, *Lysistrata* proposes a plan in which the women must refuse to have sex with their husbands, or, in other words, they must act as Penelope does with the suitors. This parallel, however, complicates the audience's view of the men by seeing them as suitors and not as husbands. Thus, the women, being asked to behave like Penelope, are actually not acting as wives should, but are going against their husbands by denying them sex.

¹⁶ All translations of the *Lysistrata* are taken from Ruden 2003.

When Aristophanes brings the women's sexuality into the open, he also seems to remove them from their roles as wives. Sarah Culpepper Stroup argues that a woman who brings her sexual identity outside the doorway of the *oikos* forfeits her role as a wife and instead is "hetairized" (Stroup 41). According to this understanding of the play, Aristophanes' depiction of the young wives as highly sexualized demonstrates that being out in public is counterintuitive to being a good wife. This war has brought upon the city a situation where the women are no longer behaving within the boundaries of being a wife, and it is only through peace that these wives will return to their prescribed places in the *oikos* (Stroup 42).

As *hetaira*-like characters, the women have placed a price on their sexual company, not as a monetary or a material gain, but as a way of achieving peace for the state (Stroup 44). The "hetairizing" of the Greek wives can be seen in the language that Aristophanes utilizes. Once Lysistrata shares her plan for the sex strike, the other women make an oath,

Κα: ἀλλά πως ὁμούμεθα ἡμεῖς;
 Λυ: ἐγὼ σοι νῆ Δί, ἦν βούληι, φράσω.
 Θεισαι μέλαιναν κύλικα μεγάλην υπτίαν,
 μηλοσφαγουσαι Θάσιον οἴνου σταμνίον
 ὁμόσωμεν εἰς τὴν κύλικα μὴ πιχεῖν ὕδωρ.(193-7)

Calonice: We need to swear on something.
 Lysistrata: Listen up! I know the way:
 a big black drinking bowl laid on its back;
 a jar of Thasian to sacrifice;
 an oath to mix no water with the wine.

The reference to the kylix imbues this oath with sympotic undertones. This is significant because a symposium is notably an event frequented not by wives but by *hetairai* (Stroup 48). The broader sympotic context of this scene thus contributes to Aristophanes' subversion of the women's roles as wives and what Stroup has considered to be their hetairization.

Beyond the connections to the figure of the hetaira that Stroup draws, the use of wine in this scene instead of the usual sacrifice of blood seems to underscore the women's obsession with drinking—behavior that would have not been considered acceptable for a wife. To drink unmixed wine was considered an indulgence, and thus the women here are depicted as extravagant. In the oath which follows, the women describe themselves and what actions they will not take part in, all which are spoken of in highly sexualized terms:

Λυ: οὐ πρὸς τὸν ὀροφὸν ἀνατενω τῷ Περσικά.
 Κα: οὐ πρὸς τὸν ὀροφὸν ἀνατενω τῷ Περσικά.
 Λυ: οὐ στήσομαι λέαιν' ἐπὶ τυροκνήστιδος.
 Κα: οὐ στήσομαι λέαιν' ἐπὶ τυροκνήστιδος.(229-32)

Lysistrata: I will not point my slippers to the roof;
 Calonice: I will not point my slippers to the roof;
 Lysistrata: I will not assume the position of a lioness on a cheese grater.
 Calonice: I will not assume the position of a lioness on a cheese grater.

The women go into detail here about how they will avoid having sex with their husbands. Many of the sexual acts that they describe, most notably the reference to their Persian slipper and to the position of lioness on a cheese grater (231-2), seem to further cast them more as highly sexualized *hetaira* than as wives. While the sexual positions described are ones that are not usually described in fifth-century literature, they are depicted on vases and other vessels of the time portraying *hetaira* (Stroup 51).¹⁷ The description of throwing the Persian slippers to the ceiling, for example, is suggestive of a *hetaira*, who in some artistic depictions were seen wearing Persian slippers. Furthermore, the act of throwing their legs into the air hints at a woman being excited for the sexual encounter about to occur. This interpretation is supported as well by vase paintings, which depict a *hetaira* with their legs in the air (Stroup 52).

¹⁷ One example of this is a cup by the Triptolemus painter (Tarquinia ARV 376,94) depicting a *hetaira* with her feet in the air, as well as an *askos* (Kerameikos Museum 1063).

Another explanation for the sexual behavior and obscene language on display in this play is that Aristophanes is making a joke about the way women speak when men are not present. Obscene language has long been considered to be a part of Old Comedy, but Aristophanes has made a point to have women use this language, specifically when men are not around. In Aristophanes' plays, men speak primary obscenities, or language which refers to sexual organs or the use of them, about three times more frequently than the women do, while the women usually only use sexually obscene words (McClure 209). Of his three plays *Lysistrata*, *Thesmophoriazousae*, and *Ecclesiazusae*, all of which reveal gendered uses of obscene language, the most amount of obscenities appear in *Lysistrata*. The reason for this increase may be because of the nature of the plot: the pretense of a sex strike may require the use of more language referring to things sexual in nature, as well the presence of men within the scenes (McClure 210). Surprisingly it is Lysistrata herself who speaks the most amount of obscenities (τοῦ πέους, 124; σπλεκοῦν, 152; ἐστυκῶς, 214), not the wives or even the old women on the acropolis. It is worth noting, however, that she only pronounces them in the presence of other women. Generally speaking, after the oath-taking scene the women begin to cease from using primary obscenities, and Lysistrata does not use them when speaking with the assembled men (McClure 208). Her use of obscene language supports her transgressive character as she oversteps the boundaries of her gender, and uses the type of language usually utilized by men. This feature of her character notably sets her apart from her tragic counterparts. While Clytemnestra at times employs sexual language or imagery, it is always something that is merely hinted at, as the following lines indicate: "His life ebbing away, spitting spurts of blood, which splattered down on me like dark sanguine dew. And I rejoiced just as the newly sown earth rejoices," (οὕτω τὸν αὐτοῦ θυμὸν ὀρμαίνει πεσῶν: κάκφυσιῶν ὄξειαν αἵματος σφαγὴν βάλλει μ' ἔρεμνῆ ψακάδι φοινίας δρόσου,

χαίρουσαν οὐδὲν ἤσسون, 1388-91).¹⁸ Therefore, the use of the obscene language by the women and Lysistrata may not be a way of removing them from their role as wives, but instead Aristophanes' way to comment on female speech, especially when men are not around.

Aristophanes also separates the women involved in terms of where they conduct their actions, at home and on the Acropolis. This is part of a broader strategy of distinguishing between married and unmarried women. The sex strike against the husbands is undertaken by the young wives led by Lysistrata, while the occupation of the Acropolis is led by the older women, who are no longer regarded as sexually appealing, but demonstrate their power in other ways. Perhaps the greatest distinction between the married and unmarried women, however, occurs in relation to Lysistrata herself. Unlike her companions, Lysistrata is not married and does not take part in the sex strike, but rather acts as the creator and organizer of the strike, not as a participant. It is Lysistrata herself who separates herself from the other women, creating in her opening speech a clear distinction between “them” and her:

ἀλλ' εἴ τις ἐς Βακχεῖον αὐτὰς ἐκάλεσεν,
ἢ 'ς Πανὸς ἢ 'πὶ Κωλιάδ' ἢ 'ς Γενετυλλίδος,
οὐδ' ἂν διελθεῖν ἦν ἂν ὑπὸ τῶν τυμπάνων.
νῦν δ' οὐδεμία πάρεστιν ἔνταυθοῖ γυνή: (1-4).

If I'd invited them to hoot and prance
At Bacchic rites, or at some sleazy shrine,
I would have had to crawl through tambourines
To get here.

In the opening lines of the play, Lysistrata separates herself from the rest of the women. She notably depicts them as only caring for drunken revelry and sex, while she has important matters

¹⁸ For further discussion of how in this description Clytemnestra represents Agamemnon as having an ejaculation of blood, while she rejoicing climaxes as her husband splatters her with his blood, see Moles 1979: 179-89.

to discuss. This effectively sets her apart from the other female characters on stage in that she is neither included among the group of the wives or that of the old women.

Most scholars agree that Lysistrata is an allusion to the priestess of Athena, Lysimache. The name Lysistrata means “the one who disbands the army,” while Lysimache means “the woman who puts a stop to a fighting.” The similarity of their names means that it is not improbable that the audience would have made a connection between the comedic character and the important priestess of their time (Taaffe 62). Given that the priestess could not marry, this helps to explain why Lysistrata is not depicted as having a husband or children. This connection is further supported by Lysistrata’s own reference to the priestess’ names: “The Greeks will rename us Lysimaches,” (οἴμαί ποτε Λυσιμάχας ἡμᾶς ἐν τοῖς Ἑλλησι καλεῖσθαι, 554). Lysistrata is not only removed from the rest of the women because of her possible connection with the priestess, but also because her character thinks and acts like a man. Unlike the other women, who have been worrying about their husbands being away because of the war, Lysistrata has been planning how to end the war: “This thing I’ve gone through exhaustively; I’ve worked it over, chewed it late at night,” (ἀλλ’ ἔστιν ὑπ’ ἐμοῦ πρᾶγμα ἀνεζητημένον πολλαῖσιν τ’ ἀγρυπνίαισιν ἐρριπτασμένον, 26-7). As her speech continues, she reveals that she has a clear understanding of the ramifications of this war on Greece. When she reveals her cunning and her plan to the women, we can see faint resonances of Clytemnestra. Lysistrata says, “It’s such a bitch assembling Attica. You know they’d rather die than be on time. Nobody even came here from the coast, or our of Salamis,” (ἀλλ’ ὃ μέλ’ ὄψει τοι σφόδρ’ αὐτὰς Ἀττικάς, ἅπαντα δρώσας τοῦ δέοντος ὕστερον. ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ Παράλων οὐδεμία γυνὴ πάρα, οὐδ’ ἐκ Σαλαμῖνος, 56-9). The coast and Salamis were strategic areas in Greece and were also important politically, so as well as

revealing that she has forethought, she shows that, like Clytemnestra's account of her torch relay, that she has a keen knowledge of geography and the importance of certain areas.

Later, Lysistrata is even able to arrange the reconciliation between the two ambassadors from Sparta and Athens. As she explains, she achieves this through the education she received: "I am a woman, but I have a mind that wasn't bad to start with, and I got a first-class education listening to Father and the elders year on year," (ἐγὼ γυνή μὲν εἰμι, νοῦς δ' ἔνεστί μοι, αὐτὴ δ' ἐμαυτῆς οὐ κακῶς γνώμης ἔχω, τοὺς δ' ἐκ πατρός τε καὶ γεραιτέρων λόγους πολλοὺς ἀκούσασ' οὐ μεμούσωμαι κακῶς, 1124-27). As part of her tactics to push the men to reconcile, Lysistrata reminds them that if they both settle and bring peace to their cities they can return to their wives and the sex strike will be over. It is this reminder that convinces the ambassadors to agree and end the war.

Although Lysistrata is the author of the sex strike and plan to attain peace, she does not appear in the end of the play after line 1189, and her absence from the end of the play is striking. One possible explanation for this is that, once Lysistrata's plan has succeeded, and the husbands and wives have been reunited, Lysistrata no longer has a place within this setting. The marriages of the Athenians have been restored, and Lysistrata, having no husband, has served her purpose to the city. It was only when the war was continuing, and the spheres of men and women were separate that she belonged, because she was the one who bridged this space. Now that peace has returned, there is no space for her to bridge and no place among the reunited couples.

When Lysistrata takes the stage in 411, she brings a completely new type of women to the comic stage—a type of prominent, comic women that we, as modern readers of the play, might wish would become a paradigm for later comedies. Yet, Lysistrata seems to be the only woman of her type in Aristophanic comedy. Even in Aristophanes' following two plays,

Thesmophoriazusae and *Ecclesiazusae*, women are not brought onto stage in the same way. In the *Thesmophoriazusae*, the focus is not placed on the women at the Thesmophoria, but rather on Euripides and his kinsmen. With her intelligent plan for peace and her ability to cross the boundaries of her gender Lysistrata connects more to women of tragedy like Clytemnestra, Hecuba, and Medea, who all portray many of the same behaviors she does, than to her fellow comic women. Within her own play, she highlights the common conflict that occurs between the sexes, especially in tragedy, and the stereotypical behavior considered proper for each gender. Yet, she is also a character that does not fit any of the female stereotypes: she has no husband of her own, and she leads the strike for peace with intelligence and forethought. She fits neither with the women, whom she does not view herself as sharing the same concerns, nor with the men who do not take her seriously because of her sex. Lysistrata is her own character, she leads the women not as a member as the group, but as the creator of the plan and the leader.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Foley's examination of Medea's character established a framework for my discussion of Aeschylus' Clytemnestra and the character type that she engendered. While Euripides' Medea appears to draw on the model of Clytemnestra, I have argued that Hecuba does as well. This comparison is in part invited by the similarities in scenario: despite the fact that Hecuba is a prisoner of war, the loss of her children and the ways in which she exacts her revenge is reminiscent of Clytemnestra. Beyond examples of this character type in tragedy, I have also argued that the figure of the transgressive woman also became a model for Aristophanes' Lysistrata, particularly in the complex ways in which she employs masculine and feminine speech.

The potency of Aeschylus' portrayal of Clytemnestra stems from the way in which it builds on and reacts to the Homeric model. While Homer establishes Clytemnestra as the foil of Penelope, Aeschylus amplifies this model by creating Clytemnestra as the primary actor in the murder of Agamemnon, rendering Clytemnestra a paradigm for other scary wives and women. Yet, Aeschylus also both softens her character and gives cause to her rage by reminding the audience of Clytemnestra's maternal side through the depiction of Iphigenia's sacrifice. In this way, Clytemnestra emerges as a character possessing both male and female attributes. The Watchman establishes this characterization in his first speech by describing Clytemnestra in both masculine and feminine terms.

It is this feature of Clytemnestra's character that creates the greatest tension between her and the other characters, both male and female. For example, she utilizes masculine speech when she needs to persuade the chorus, but she also adopts a feminine persona in order to deceive

Agamemnon. In this way, Clytemnestra utilizes gender stereotypes to fit her needs. By way of contrast, Cassandra emerges as the counterpoint to Clytemnestra: despite being a virgin, she fulfills Clytemnestra's vacant role as wife of Agamemnon. Notably, Cassandra views Clytemnestra as acting beyond the expectations of her gender, and she is the only character to see through Clytemnestra's deceit.

Hecuba is one of the least acknowledged tragic women who seems to draw on the model of Aeschylus' Clytemnestra. Her situation and her way of exacting revenge, however, is very similar to Aeschylus' treatment of Clytemnestra. Like Clytemnestra, Hecuba utilizes rhetorical and persuasive speech, at the same time as she feigns conventional female behavior in order to deceive the men in the play. Euripides' accentuates the similarities between her character and Clytemnestra largely through their roles as mothers: they both have lost their daughters to sacrifice and their sons have been sent away. It is the deaths of their children that drive both Clytemnestra and Hecuba to seek violent revenge. Like Clytemnestra, Hecuba must act against the conventional expectations of gender in order to attain revenge for her children.

There was no precedence for strong female characters in comedy, but it is possible to read *Lysistrata* in the light of tragic female protagonists. Although it is not prevalent in the *Lysistrata*, Aristophanes invites comparisons between comedy and tragedy in other plays, for example the use of tragic lamentations in the *Acharnians*. *Lysistrata*, like the former tragic women, utilizes persuasive masculine speech. Her speech, however, is set apart from that of the other two women through her use of obscene language. Obscene language was usually associated with men, and *Lysistrata*'s use of obscenities is suggestive of stereotypically masculine behavior. Her use of obscene language thus seems to support her as a transgressive character, as she

oversteps boundaries of her gender. Yet, this feature does set her apart from her tragic counterparts, as obscene language was a distinctive feature of comedy.

Clytemnestra establishes a paradigm that became very popular in tragedy, and may have influenced how Aristophanes constructs the character of Lysistrata and her complex use of typically masculine and feminine speech. While each poet handles the masculine and transgressive female character in a distinct way, many characteristics transfer across plays and even across genres. Both Hecuba and Lysistrata seem to channel Aeschylus' Clytemnestra as they surpass feminine conventions and transgress gender boundaries.

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