INTRODUCTION

1 EURIPIDES: LIFE AND WORKS

Euripides was born of Athenian parents around 480 BCE. According to the ancient sources, he wrote ninety-two plays, seventy-eight of which survived until the Hellenistic age.[1]

Scholars are sometimes able to establish the exact date when an extant or fragmentary play was first staged in Athens, on the basis of evidence ultimately deriving from epigraphic records made in Athens, which list all plays staged at the Dionysia festival.[2] In addition, in the case of Euripides, the iambic trimeter provides robust evidence for a relative dating of the plays, as the rate of resolutions increases regularly over the years.[3]

On these criteria, the main dates of Euripides' career can be reconstructed as follows:[4] 455 first tragic tetralogy presented at the Athenian Dionysia; 441 first victory at the tragic context at the Athenian Dionysia; 438 *Alcestis*; 431 *Medea*; 430–427 *Children of Heracles*; 428 (?) *Hippolytus*; 425–421 *Andromache*; 423–418 *Hecuba* (see however the discussion below); 424–420 *Suppliant Women*; 422–417 *Electra*; 421–416 *Heracles*; 415 *Trojan Women*; 418–413 *Ion*; 417–412 *Iphigenia among the Taurians*; 412 *Helen*; 414–408 *Phoenician Women*; 408 *Orestes*; 407–406 *Bacchae, Iphigenia at Aulis* (composition; 405–400: posthumous staging).[5] Euripides is also the author of the only complete extant satyr drama, *Cyclops,* of uncertain date.[6] He produced almost all his plays in Athens, but it is likely that at least some of them were first staged in festivals other than the Dionysia,[7] and

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[1] Cf. Kannicht 2004: 45–7, 57–67, Collard and Cropp 2008a: xi–xxii, with bibliography. On the life of Euripides see Mastronarde 2002: 1–7, Scullion 2003: 391.

[2] Cf. Snell 1966, Sommerstein 2010b: 11–29.

[3] The list printed in the text gives the secure dates registered in Kannicht 2004: esp. 77–80; when we lack secure non-metrical evidence, the list gives the date ranges registered in Cropp and Fick 1985: 23 (column for the 10% Relative Likelihood Interval), rounded to the nearest whole number. Cf. also Cropp 2000: 61.

[4] For a survey of Euripides' plays, with discussions of dating, see Mastronarde 2010: 28–43. More detailed discussion can be found in the commentaries listed on pp. 257–8.

[5] The tragedy *Rhesus*, transmitted as part of the corpus of Euripides in ancient and medieval manuscripts, is now generally considered a fourth-century play, not by Euripides: Fantuzzi 2007: esp. 195, Liapis 2012: lxvii–lxxv, Fries 2014: 22–47.

[6] It is not clear how the criterion of the resolution rates can be applied to satyr drama, a genre which used iambic trimeters much more freely than tragedy. Seaford 1982 and Marshall 2001 favour 408 as a date for the play, but it can be earlier: Battezzato 1995: 134–5.

[7] Ael. *VH* 2.13 (= Kannicht 2004: 73 (T 47a)) attests that Euripides competed at a theatrical festival at the Piraeus with a new play.

outside Athens.[8] Some scholars have suggested that Euripides wrote *Bacchae* while in Macedonia,[9] or that he envisaged the possibility of performing (or reperforming) the play in Macedonia, after a first performance in Athens.[10]

2 THE DATE OF *HECUBA*

On the basis of metrical evidence, Cropp and Fick judge that *Hecuba* was probably composed between 423 and 419. They also note that the number of resolutions in this play may suggest a later date than was actually the case, because of 'an excessive incidence of proper-name resolutions': names such as Ἑκάβη, Ἀγαμέμνων, Πολύδωρος and Πολύμηστωρ occur very frequently in the play.[11]

Scholars have also tried to date the play by discovering allusions to historical events, but such arguments are very fragile. Matthiae, for example, suggested that *Hec.* 454–65 alludes to the reorganisation of the festival at Delos that took place in 426/425 (see Thuc. 3.104); if so, the play must be dated after 425.[12] The text however simply mentions the existence of festivals in Delos, and such festivals are attested from the Archaic age onwards.[13] Müller suggested that *Hec.* 650–6 'seems to refer to the misfortunes of the Spartans at Pylos in BC 425'.[14] Mentioning the suffering of the enemies is however a *topos*, often employed as a self-consolation in misery (*Il.* 24.736–9, Eur. *Andr.* 1028–46, *Tro.* 374–82); the audience may have interpreted this passage as an allusion to contemporary events, but Euripides was well capable of writing it before the events of 425 at Pylos.

The study of literary allusions in and to *Hecuba* does not change the date range established on the basis of metrical criteria. Ar. *Nub.* 1165–6 is a parody of *Hec.* 172–4;[15] it is also possible, but less certain, that Ar. *Nub.*

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[8] Cf. Easterling 1994: 89, Taplin 1999: 44–8, W. Allan 2000: 159–60. For other possible productions of Euripides' plays outside Athens, in Euripides' lifetime or shortly afterwards, see Taplin 1992: 3 and 98–9, Dearden 1999, W. Allan 2001, Scullion 2003: 394.

[9] Dodds 1960: xlvii.

[10] Easterling 1994: 75–8, Csapo 1999: 414, Revermann 1999: 460–1, Scullion 2003: 393–4.

[11] Cropp and Fick 1985: 6–7, 23. The date is approximated to the nearest integer (their figures are 422.6–418.6).

[12] Matthiae 1821: 53 (note on line 451 in his edition = 455 in modern editions). Cf. the commentary *ad loc.*

[13] Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1895: I.140–2, Zuntz 1955: 58, Ley 1987, Matthiessen on 462–5.

[14] Müller 1840: 369 n. *.

[15] As noted in the scholia to *Clouds*: see Koster 1974: 165 on 1165–6. On philological problems in Ar. *Nub.* 1165–6 see Ley 1987, Dover 1968 and Sommerstein 1982 *ad loc.*

718–19 parodies *Hec.* 159–61. *Clouds* was put onstage in 423, but the text
we have is a revised version, written before the ostracism of Hyperbolus (an
event variously dated to the year 417, 416 or 415).[16] It is probable, but not
certain, that the passages alluding to *Hecuba* belong to the original version.
Other possible allusions to *Hecuba* in Aristophanes are less conclusive.[17]
Scholars have also noted several points of contact with Euripides' own satyr
drama *Cyclops*: both the Cyclops and Polymestor are blinded, and both
appear onstage lamenting their fate.[18] Some scholars argue that *Cyclops*
was presented in the same dramatic festival as *Hecuba*,[19] but this must
remain an intriguing, yet ultimately unverifiable, hypothesis; it would be
unusual for serious drama to allude to a comic or humorous treatment of
similar narrative material.[20] *Cyclops* is in fact generally thought to be
considerably later than *Hecuba*.[21]

   Another possible intertextual relationship concerns Sophocles' play
Polyxena. The subject matter of *Polyxena* clearly coincided with the events
narrated in the first half of Euripides' *Hecuba*.[22] In Sophocles' play the
ghost of Achilles appears onstage, probably at the beginning of the play,
like Polydorus' ghost at the beginning of *Hecuba* (Soph. fr. 523: cf. 1–2 n.).
In Sophocles, a messenger narrates Achilles' apparition to the Greek fleet
departing towards Greece, as do the chorus in *Hecuba*.[23] Many scholars
claim that Sophocles' play was the earlier one, since it presented the
traditional version, involving Achilles' ghost, whereas Euripides innovated
by inventing the ghost of Polydorus.[24] However, Sophocles' treatment is
equally innovative, implying two apparitions of Achilles' ghost[25] (did
Sophocles match Polydorus' and Achilles' apparitions in *Hecuba*? Or did
Euripides split into two characters Achilles' double apparition in
Sophocles' play?). Clearly there are intertextual links between the two
plays; it is probable, but not certain, that Euripides' is the later. We have
no information about the date of Sophocles' *Polyxena*.

   In conclusion: the metrical evidence demonstrates that *Hecuba* was
certainly written after *Hippolytus* (428),[26] and that the period 424–418 is

   [16] Dover 1968: lxxx–xcviii and on line 551, Kopff 1990, Storey 1993,
Hornblower 2008: 968–72 on Thuc. 8.73.3.
   [17] Ar. *Eq.* 725–8 is similar to *Hec.* 172–4: Battezzato 2010: 115–17. Cf. also
Sommerstein 1982 on *Clouds* 1154.
   [18] Compare *Cycl.* 663~*Hec.* 1035, *Cycl.* 666–8~*Hec.* 1039–41; Ussher 1978:
196–7.
   [19] Sutton 1980: 114–20. Zeitlin 1996: 197 considers the idea attractive.
   [20] Marshall 2001: 230.   [21] Cf. above, n. 6.
   [22] Mossman 1995: 42–7, and below, nn. 23–5.
   [23] Cf. 109–10n., [Longinus], *Subl.* 15.7, Sommerstein, Fitzpatrick and Talboy
2006: 52–3 and 68–9.
   [24] Sommerstein, Fitzpatrick and Talboy 2006: 65.
   [25] Sommerstein, Fitzpatrick and Talboy 2006: 52–65.
   [26] Cf. Cropp and Fick 2005.

a plausible range. *Hecuba* is, however, also probably earlier than the first version of Aristophanes' *Clouds* (423). Possible allusions to contemporary events would work well if the play was staged in 424 and it seems, therefore, that 424 BCE is a very likely, but not certain, date.

3 PRODUCTION

3.1 Casting the Play

The original production involved three actors, fifteen chorus members and a few mute extras. The first actor (protagonist) played Hecuba. The distribution of the other roles is less certain. The second and third actor played Polyxena and Odysseus in the first episode, and Polydorus and Talthybius might have been played by either the second or the third actor. The actor who played Agamemnon (onstage 726–904 and 1109–1295) could not play the Servant (onstage, with a speaking part, at 658–894) or Polymestor (onstage 953–1022 and 1055–1286). The Servant is present onstage, as a mute extra, at 609–18[27] and again at 953–81 (see 966n.). One can envisage the following distribution of parts:

1. Hecuba
2. Polydorus; Polyxena; Servant; Polymestor
3. Odysseus; Talthybius; Agamemnon

This arrangement has the advantage of requiring only one singing actor besides Hecuba for delivering the monodies of Polyxena and Polymestor.[28] It also ironically has one single actor playing Polydorus, Polyxena and Polydorus' killer Polymestor. The third actor would be playing all the Greek characters: Odysseus, Talthybius and Agamemnon.[29] Talthybius could be assigned to the second actor as well, but this combination of roles would be a very demanding one; the distribution of roles suggested above is more balanced.[30] These are however only tentative suggestions. Euripides may, for example, have had two very good actors, and decided to leave a very lightweight part for the third actor. We have no means of knowing what the usual practice was in

[27] She must have arrived onstage with Hecuba at 59.
[28] So Collard 1991: 37. The scholiast on *Pho.* 93 suggested a complex arrangement for *Phoenician Women*, so that a single actor would play the demanding monodies of Jocasta and Antigone. The fact that this 'principle of lyric assignment' (Marshall 2003: 264 for other references) was formulated already in antiquity suggests a possible echo of actual ancient (probably Hellenistic, possibly already Classical) theatrical practices.
[29] This is the 'principle of thematic significance': Marshall 1994: 53, Damen 1989.
[30] 'Principle of equal stage time': Marshall 1994: 53.

general, and other arrangements are also possible, apart from the two
outlined above (e.g. the second actor playing Polyxena, Talthybius and
Agamemnon; the third actor playing Odysseus, the Servant and
Polymestor).[31]

3.2 Stage Movements

The play is set on the Thracian Chersonese (Gallipoli peninsula); the *skēnē*
represents Agamemnon's tent, where Hecuba is also lodged (1–58n.
'Staging'). This is a reconstruction of the stage movements:[32]

1	Polydorus enters above the *skēnē* (1–58n. 'Staging').
53	Hecuba opens the *skēnē* door(53–4n.).
58	Polydorus leaves the space above the *skēnē* (52–3n.).
59	Hecuba arrives onstage, accompanied by mute female attendants (fellow Trojan slave women). The attendants include the (female) Servant who will have a speaking part at 658–894.
98	The chorus arrive onstage through *eisodos* A.
177	Polyxena enters onstage through the *skēnē* door(cf. 174).
218	Odysseus enters onstage through *eisodos* A, accompanied by male attendants (soldiers: cf. 405–8).
275	Hecuba touches Odysseus' knee, hand and chin in supplication (245n., 274–5n.). Physical contact is interrupted at 334 at the latest.
342–5	Odysseus hides his hand in his mantle, and turns his face away from Polyxena, avoiding supplication.
409–31	Polyxena and Hecuba embrace.
432	Polyxena asks Odysseus to veil her head (432n.).
437	Polyxena and Odysseus (with male attendants) leave through *eisodos* A.
438–40	Hecuba falls to the ground, veiling herself (438n., 486–7n.).
484	Talthybius enters onstage from *eisodos* A.
499–505	Hecuba stands up (499–500n., 501–2n.).
608–9	Talthybius leaves through *eisodos* A (609n.).
618	The Servant leaves through *eisodos* B, probably with female attendants.[33]

[31] Pickard-Cambridge 1968: 145 suggests the following distribution: '(a)
Hecuba; (b) Polyxena, Agamemnon; (c) Odysseus, Serving woman, Polymestor:
Talthybios and Polydoros could be (b) or (c)'. Di Benedetto and Medda 1997:
224–5 suggest the distribution: (a) Hecuba; (b) Polyxena, Talthybius, Servant,
Polymestor; (c) Polydorus, Odysseus, Agamemnon.
[32] Cf. also Mossman 1995: 50–68, Matthiessen 2010: 10–13.
[33] Matthiessen 2010: 11 argues that 609 λαβοῦσα τεῦχος implies that the water jar
is onstage at that moment. If so, it must have been onstage from the beginning of

628	Hecuba leaves the stage, exiting through the *skēnē* door, with her female attendants.
658	The Servant (now played by an actor) arrives onstage from *eisodos* B, probably with female attendants who help her carry the veiled body of Polydorus.
665	Hecuba arrives onstage through the *skēnē* door, with her female attendants.
679–80	The Servant unveils the body of Polydorus.
724–6	Agamemnon arrives onstage from *eisodos* A, accompanied by male attendants (soldiers).
752	Hecuba touches Agamemnon in supplication (736–51n.).
812	Agamemnon moves away from Hecuba (812n.).
894	The Servant leaves along *eisodos* A (cf. 889–90).
904	Agamemnon leaves along *eisodos* A, accompanied by his male attendants. The attendants carry away the body of Polydorus (904n.).[34]
953	Polymestor arrives onstage from *eisodos* A, accompanied by the Servant, male attendants (soldiers) and his two sons (played by mute extras). He carries two spears (cf. 1155–6).
981	Polymestor's attendants leave along *eisodos* A.[35] The Servant probably leaves at this point, too.
1019–22	Polymestor leaves the stage, exiting through the *skēnē* door, accompanied by his sons.
1022	Hecuba leaves the stage, exiting through the *skēnē* door, with her female attendants (1019–22n.).
1035, 1037, 1039–41	Polymestor cries from inside the *skēnē* (1035–41n.).
1044	Hecuba arrives onstage through the *skēnē* door.
1053–5	Polymestor enters onstage on all fours through the *skēnē* door. His mask has changed (he is blind). He does not have his spears with him any more (cf. 1155–6). The *skēnē* door is opened (1051–3n.). Hecuba's female attendants arrive onstage too, running away from Polymestor (Polymestor mentions them at 1063–5, 1069–74n.). Hecuba moves aside (1054–5n.).
1109	Agamemnon arrives onstage from *eisodos* A, accompanied by male attendants (soldiers).

the play, incongruously, or must have been brought onstage by the attendants at 58. However, the wording of Hecuba's order does not imply that the jar must be onstage: cf. *Med.* 393 ξίφος λαβοῦσα, *Hec.* 876–7 φάσγανον χερὶ | λαβοῦσα (in neither passage is the sword onstage); *Tro.* 92–3 (the thunderbolts are clearly not onstage), *Ion* 423 (no branches onstage: see Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1926 *ad loc.*).

[34] Hecuba may go inside the tent at 904 and enter onstage again at 953 (so Matthiessen 2010: 10); the text does not prove nor disprove this possibility.

[35] Polymestor will call them for help, without success, at 1088–90.

1124–31	Polymestor attempts to lay hands on Hecuba; Agamemnon's attendants possibly restrain him (1127n.).
1282–5	Some of Agamemnon's attendants gag Polymestor (1283) and take him away, leaving the stage along *eisodos* A (1284–5n.).
1287	Hecuba leaves the stage along *eisodos* A; alternatively, but less likely, she leaves with the chorus, a few lines later.
1295	Agamemnon leaves the stage, accompanied by his attendants and the chorus, along *eisodos* A.

Eisodos A leads to the Greek camp, *eisodos* B to the seashore. *Eisodos* B is used only at 618 and 658, when the Servant goes to the seashore to fetch water and returns carrying the body of Polydorus. It would be possible to imagine that the Servant is using *eisodos* A, since the Greek camp must have been close to the seashore. However, it would be unusual if only one *eisodos* was used in the play. Moreover, when the Servant must go through the Greek camp to call Polymestor, Hecuba feels the need to ask Agamemnon to guarantee her safety (889–90). It is thus unlikely that the Servant left through *eisodos* A at 618 when no such guarantee was granted.

The focus on a single *eisodos* has thematic significance: it symbolises Greek domination. *Eisodos* A is the only possible space through which Trojan characters can communicate with the external world, and it is firmly under the control of the Greek army. The sacrifice of Polyxena, the revenge on Polymestor and the final departure to slavery all depend on the benevolence or malevolence of the Greeks. Even the burial of Hecuba's children is controlled by the Greeks, and requires an exit through *eisodos* A (894–7, 904n.). By allowing the Servant to cross the Greek encampment (889–90), Agamemnon becomes complicit with Hecuba. Agamemnon also allows Hecuba to exercise complete control over the tent and the *skēnē* space in the second half of the play. Hecuba makes the most of the *skēnē* space in order to accomplish her revenge scheme (see esp. 1013–55, 1145–75). However, the main significance of this *eisodos* is stressed again at the end of the play. Polymestor is dragged away through it towards a lonely place of punishment (1284–6), and the Trojan women exit this way at the end of the play, when they go into slavery (1293–5). Ironically, Agamemnon offers a completely plausible, but wrong, interpretation of his own departure through the same *eisodos.* He thinks that, by taking this route, he will find 'freedom from the toils' he 'endured' at Troy; in fact, he is alluding to the first line of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon,* the very play that dramatises his death (1292n.). As in *Medea,* the protagonist controls the *skēnē,* but is powerless on the *eisodoi*; unlike Medea, however, Hecuba will leave through the *eisodos,* and will turn into a non-human being only outside the theatrical space (1252–95n., 1270n., 1273n.).

4 MYTH

Several archaic and classical texts narrated the apparition of Achilles to the
Greek army and the sacrifice of Polyxena. The apparition of Achilles fea-
tured in the *Nostoi* (37–9n.),[36] and in the *Sack of Ilium* (*Iliupersis*) the Greeks
sacrifice Polyxena on the tomb of Achilles.[37] Ibycus (307 *PMG*) is the first
known author who names Neoptolemus as the sacrificer (cf. 523).
According to other archaic sources, Achilles fell in love with Polyxena
when he saw her in the course of his ambush against her brother Troilus.[38]
In many versions of the story, love is the reason behind Achilles' request for
Polyxena as a sacrificial victim.[39] *Hecuba* probably echoes this tradition when
bridal imagery is employed to describe the sacrifice (523n.). On the other
hand, the play innovates on the traditional story when it places the tomb of
Achilles not near Troy but in the Thracian Chersonese (8n., 37–9n.).

   Polydorus is a traditional character, but Euripides profoundly modifies
the Homeric version of his story. In Homer, Polydorus is Priam's youngest
son (*Il.* 20.407–10), and he is killed in battle by Achilles in front of Hector
(*Il.* 20.412–22); Priam had tried in vain to prevent him from fighting. In
Hecuba, Polydorus is actually too young to fight (13–15), and Priam, in
an attempt to protect him, sends him off to Thrace, where he is killed by
Polymestor. The play probably echoes a somewhat similar story narrated in the
Iliad about Iphidamas, son of Theano, who was reared in Thrace by his
maternal grandfather Kisses.[40] Euripides also innovates in relation to
Homer by making Hecuba the daughter of the quasi-homonymous
Kisseus (3n.). This may suggest that the Theano and Iphidamas story was
among the models for Euripides' Polydorus plot.[41]

   Polymestor is probably a non-traditional character. His name means
'someone who contrives many skilful plots' (connected with μήδομαι

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[36] Achilles appeared to the Greeks also before the fall of Troy, in the *Little Iliad*:
West 2003: 122–3 and 2013: 190.
[37] West 2003: 146–7 = West 2013: 241–3 = Bernabé 1996: 89 lines 22–3. For
discussions of these traditions cf. also Jouan 1966: 368–71, Debiasi 2004: 177.
In another version, Polyxena dies as a consequence of the wounds inflicted on her
by Odysseus and Diomedes during the sack of Troy, and is buried by Neoptolemus:
some scholars attribute this to the archaic poem *Cypria* (Bernabé 1996: 62 (fr. 34)),
others, less convincingly, to a prose history of Cyprus (West 2013: 55 n. 1).
[38] The story is attested in written sources, and in one fifth-century BCE vase:
Touchefeu-Meynier 1994: 431–2, Schwarz 2001: 43–5, Tuna-Nörling 2001,
Sommerstein, Fitzpatrick and Talboy 2006: 42–7, 50. The Troilus episode was
narrated in the *Cypria*: West 2003: 78–9 and 102–3 = West 2013: 121–2 =
Bernabé 1996: 63 fr. 41.
[39] It is probable, but not certain, that this version was known in archaic Greece.
Cf. Fantuzzi 2012: esp. 7 and 14–18, Philostr. *Her.* 51.2–6, Fantham 1982: 238 on
Sen. *Tro.* 195, and below, section 7, 'Reception', on Seneca.
[40] Iphidamas eventually died at Troy, killed by Agamemnon: *Il.* 11.223–43.
[41] Gregory 1995: 394–5.

'I contrive') and sounds like an ironic parody of the names Polydorus ('someone who has many gifts') and Polyxena ('someone who has many *xenoi*'): the names of these children characterise their father Priam as having many *xenia* relationships.[42] Polymestor's name signals his untrustworthiness and his betrayal of the rules of *xenia*. The absence of pre-Euripidean sources for the story about Polymestor, the lack of a genealogy for him in the play, and his transparent name, a name that fits so well the requirements of this play, increase the likelihood that this character was invented specifically for this play.[43] This means that the audience cannot predict the exact outcome of Hecuba's revenge against him (1021–2n.). Polymestor's children do not have a name, and are introduced into the narrative only to be killed.

The final episode mentioned in the play is Hecuba's transformation into a dog. All datable sources for this story are later than Euripides (1252–95n.), but it is probable that Euripides did not invent it. First of all, the toponym Cynossema, where Hecuba's tomb is said to be located, was certainly in use before Euripides' play; some interpreters suggest that Hecuba's transformation was a local myth.[44] Secondly, the transformation may also be explained by an association with the goddess Hecate, who was at times imagined in dog-shape; Hecuba's name is etymologically connected with that of Hecate (1265n., 1270n.), and it is therefore plausible that Hecuba's transformation is traditional, and connected with Hecate's cult. Finally, Euripides alludes to the metamorphosis in a cryptic and compressed way: why does Hecuba climb up the mast of the Greek ship? How can the transformation into a dog make this climb or the fall into the sea easier (1263n.)? Euripides usually takes great care to provide rational explanations for the events he narrates. These puzzling elements, introduced in passing, may have been intended as allusions to other, now lost, oral and/or literary sources.

5   CHARACTERS AND RECIPROCITY: *CHARIS, XENIA, PHILIA*

All the characters in the play are linked by a web of obligations and favours.[45] Odysseus is in debt to Hecuba, who saved his life (239–50);

[42] Cf. 4 and 7, Schlesier 1988: 113 n. 8 and Zeitlin 1996: 172. Similar epithets (such as 'she who has many sorrows') are used for Hecuba: cf. 492, 722–3n. and 1162n. *Xenoi* often named their children after the host or the *xenia* relationship in general: Herman 1987: 19–21 and 1990: 349–52 and 358. Another son of Priam was called Mestor (*Il.* 24.257). Polymestor combines the names of several children of Priam, and kills one of them.

[43] Hall 1989: 107–10, Mossman 1995: 30–1, with references.

[44] Mossman 1995: 35.

[45] Cf. Adkins 1966: 194 and 207, MacLachlan 1993: 157–60, Stanton 1995: 21, 25 and 30. For an earlier version of the arguments presented in this section cf. Battezzato 2003b.

Polymestor, out of friendship with Priam, agreed to take care of Polydorus, and to safeguard his gold (4–12); Agamemnon receives Cassandra's sexual 'favours', which, according to Hecuba, puts him under the obligation of helping Cassandra's family (824–35). The text describes these links of obligation using terminology that is standard in Greek culture: *xenia* 'guest-friendship', *philia* 'friendship' (but also 'family relationship') and *charis* 'favour'. Utilitarian or commercial calculation of advantages and disadvantages is ideally banned from *xenia* or *philia* relationships.[46] *Philia* is the more general term: it includes the relationship with family members, friends and *xenoi*.[47] *Xenia* indicates a 'ritualised friendship', typically created when someone hosts a stranger. *Xenoi* are a sub-class of *philoi* bound by ethical rules, guaranteed by Zeus, to exchange gifts and to provide help, shelter and protection, not only to the person involved but also to their family and offspring.[48] *Charis* 'favour' is a term used to describe the feeling of gratitude and the specific acts performed by people who help their *philoi*, in material and non-material ways.[49] These practices were typical of (but not exclusive to) the aristocratic elite. In *Hecuba*, the expectations of reciprocity conspicuously and repeatedly fail: the war destroys the links of aristocratic obligation, and forces Hecuba to forge new and unexpected ways to enact her shocking revenge, in response to Polymestor's perverted reciprocity.[50] Hecuba is at the centre of this web of relations with Odysseus, Polyxena, Agamemnon and Polymestor.

Hecuba expects Odysseus to conform to the aristocratic values of reciprocity. When she meets him, she asks him to return a 'favour' (*charis*): she spared his life when he secretly entered Troy. She also adds that Greek laws forbid the killing of slaves (291n.). He does not feel the need to explain why this law does not apply in the circumstances of war: he focuses instead on his willingness to repay Hecuba with exactly the same favour. He will spare *her* life, if she wants (301–2), but will not spare Polyxena's. Even if he does not formally renounce his *charis* relationship with Hecuba, his insistence on precise equality recalls the exactitude of commercial exchanges, rather than *charis* (299–331n.). The chorus had already characterised Odysseus as someone who 'likes to give *charis* to the *dēmos*' (131–3n.), and Odysseus explicitly claims that the bond he feels to the

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[46] Cf. 1187–1237n., Blundell 1989: 30–1.
[47] Blundell 1989: 39–59, Konstan 1997: 1–92.
[48] On *xenia* cf. Herman 1987, Kurke 1991: 135–59, Mitchell 1997, Vlassopoulos 2013: 131–2, and below, 79on., [794n.], 1133n., 1187–1237n. On the names Polydorus and Polyxena cf. above, section 4, 'Myth'.
[49] Cf. 137n., 216–95n., 254n., 276n., 299–331n.
[50] On reciprocity in Greece cf. Seaford 1994, von Reden 1995, Gill, Postlethwaite and Seaford 1998, Mueller 2001. Coo 2006 discusses offstage characters.