

Euripides' *Hecuba* and the *Iliad*: ancient commentaries, Virgil, and Ovid

1. Introduction

Euripides is a much admired and much criticised playwright. Many ancient commentators of his works discussed and criticised his mythological 'mistakes' and 'innovations'¹. The *Hecuba* of Euripides did not escape such criticism but was in any case one of the most successful and imitated Greek tragedies in antiquity². This is proved by the large number of papyrus fragments³ and early imitations. Virgil famously tells his version of the Polydorus story in Book 3 of the *Aeneid*, 'improving' on the Euripidean version, and alluding to the *Hecuba* in other sections of this poem; Ovid reframes the whole narrative in Book 13 of his *Metamorphoses*, competing both with Euripides and Virgil.

Virgil and Ovid, in imitating crucial passages from Euripides' *Hecuba*, took into account ancient critical reactions to the works of the playwright. Moreover, they combined the Euripidean model with a Homeric one, taken from the *Iliad*, also read through the lens of ancient critical approaches.⁴ The paper will focus in particular on two problems in the *Hecuba*, and the reactions to them in Virgil and Ovid: the location of the tomb of Achilles (section 2) and the fate of Trojan women, especially Andromache and Polyxena, after the fall of the city (section 3).

2. The tomb of Achilles

The Homeric poems placed Achilles' tomb in the Troad.⁵ In the *Hecuba* of Euripides, however, Achilles' tomb is situated in the Thracian Chersonese. Polydorus, in the prologue, firmly locates the action of the play on 'this splendid plain of Chersonese' (8: τήνδ' ἀρίστην Χερσονησίαν πλάκκα).⁶ When Polyxena is sacrificed on Achilles' tomb, the Greeks simply take the victim where the tomb is (484-584);⁷ Achilles already appeared as a ghost to the Greek army as they were about to leave from the Thracian Chersonese (108-15). The ancient commentators noticed the anomaly:

Sch. MS M on *Hec.* 521 (Schwartz (1887): 50) αἴτημα σκηνικόν. πῶς γὰρ τοῦ Ἀχιλλέως ἐν τῇ Τροίᾳ θανόντος τοὺς Ἕλληνας φησι πρὸ τοῦ τύμβου αὐτοῦ θύειν ἐν Χερρονήσῳ ὄντας;

This [that is: the presence of the Greek army at the tomb of Achilles] is requested by the theatrical action.⁸ For Achilles died at Troy: how can Euripides say that the Greeks make a sacrifice in front of his tomb when they are in the Chersonese?⁹

¹ See in general Elsparger (1908). On the formation of the corpus of scholia on Euripides, see Mastronarde (2017).

² See Heath (1987); Mossman (1995): 217-43; Foley (2015) *passim*; Dugale (2015); Battezzato (2018): 18-21.

³ See e.g. Carrara (2005).

⁴ On Virgil and Homeric commentators see Schlunk (1974), Schmit-Neuerburg (1999). On Virgil and tragedy see Hardie (1997). On Virgil, Ovid and imitation see Conte (1986). On Ovid and Virgil see Casali (2007). These topics have been intensely studied; the works cited above provide useful starting points for exploring these complex issues. On ancient commentaries and the formation of scholia in general see Dickey (2007), Schironi (2012), Montana and Porro (2014), Montanari et al. (2015).

⁵ See *Il.* 23.125-6 and 245-8, *Od.* 24.82; Cook (1973): 159-64; Burgess (2009): 111-26.

⁶ See Battezzato (2018) on Eur. *Hec.* 1-58 'Staging', 8, 37-9.

⁷ The text does not mention that the Greeks and the sacrificed girl crossed the Hellespont.

⁸ The commentator implies that his version does not correspond to the established version of the myth.

⁹ See Elsparger (1908): 28 and 156 on this scholion.

Other scholia notice that the *Hecuba* is set in Thrace (e.g. 74) or that the tomb of Achilles is nearby (e.g. 110, 188), but they do not discuss the conflict with the traditional version, which set Achilles' tomb near Troy, not in Thrace.

We do not know for certain whether adaptations in Roman tragedy followed Euripides in locating the play in Thrace. We only have minimal information about Accius' (170-ca. 86 BCE) version of *Hecuba*.¹⁰ Aulus Gellius (11.4) states that Ennius' *Hecuba* followed Euripides rather closely, and the few extant fragments do not suggest the possibility of striking differences in plot or setting.¹¹ Pacuvius' adaptation, the *Iliona*, is apparently set in Thrace, at Polymestor's palace; the Roman playwright made some drastic changes to the plot of Euripides.¹² The most radical one is the complete elimination of the Polyxena plot. This of course also solves the problems of the location of Achilles' tomb. Pacuvius also introduced new characters, such as Iliona, Polydorus' sister, married to Polymestor, and eliminated Hecuba's revenge. In Pacuvius' play (if indeed Hyg. *fab.* 109 is a summary of that text) Polymestor kills his own child by Iliona, mistaking him for Polydorus; Polydorus, instigated by Iliona, then blinds and kills Polymestor. The apparition of the ghost of Iliona's child was a celebrated and dramatically successful scene from the play¹³. This was an imitation of the apparition of Polydorus' ghost at the beginning of *Hecuba*.

The 'ghost-like' apparition of the child Polydorus is the crucial moment of the most famous adaptation of the *Hecuba*, Virgil's narrative at the beginning of Book 3 of the *Aeneid*. This episode is fully analysed in a large number of important contributions¹⁴ and cannot be discussed in detail here. One general point needs to be made: Virgil's text alludes to Euripides' version, but also makes some important aspects of Euripides' plot impossible. In Virgil, Polydorus is transformed into a plant (Verg. *Aen.* 3.45-6):

*nam Polydorus ego. hic confixum ferrea textit
telorum seges et iaculis increuit acutis.*

For I am Polydorus. Here I was struck down and an iron crop of spears covered me
and grew up with sharp shafts¹⁵

Virgil thus turns into a concrete reality Euripides' image at the beginning of *Hecuba*, where Polydorus himself says that, at the court of Polymestor, he was growing 'like a shoot' (Eur. *Hec.* 19-20):

καλῶς παρ' ἀνδρὶ Θρηκίῳ πατρῶίῳ ξένῳ
τροφαῖσιν ὡς τις πτόρθος ἠϋξόμην τάλας·

I grew up well with my father's ally, the Thracian, thriving like some sapling – but for
misery (translation Collard (1991))

However, Virgil's metamorphosis makes the plot of Euripides' *Hecuba* impossible. In the *Hecuba*, Polymestor throws Polydorus' body into the sea; Hecuba's servant finds it and brings it to the mother. This is the only way for Hecuba to know the fate of her son. If Polydorus, as in Virgil, is transformed

¹⁰ See Dangel (1995): 164 and 320; Jocelyn (1967): 304-5.

¹¹ See Jocelyn (1967) 104-6 (text), 303-18 (commentary), Manuwald (2012): 151-64 (text only).

¹² See Schierl (2006): 312-41; Manuwald (2000); their reconstruction of the plot is based on Hyg. *fab.* 109, which may (but need not) be a summary of Pacuvius' play. Cf. Manuwald (2011): 213-14. Huys (1996), Huys (1997) Meccariello (2014) 86-8 are somewhat skeptical on the traditional idea that Hyginus' text is often based on the *hypotheses* to Euripides' plays; Finglass and Davies (2014): 70-1 shows that this is indeed the case on some occasions, even if Hyginus may introduce changes; see also Battezzato (2020). On Pacuvius and the *Hecuba* see now Battezzato and Mariani (2018), who argue that Pacuvius fr. 130 Schierl, from his *Hermiona*, alluded to Eur. *Hec.* 355.

¹³ See Cowan (2013): 334-8, and the bibliography cited above, note 10.

¹⁴ On Virgil and Greek tragedy in general see König (1970), Hardie (1997), Galinsky (2003), Conte (2007), Panoussi (2009), with references. On the Polydorus episode, see esp. Horsfall (2006): 50-87 on Verg. *Aen.* 3.13-68, with references; Coe (2007); Gowers (2011): 96-104.

¹⁵ All translations from *Aeneid* 3 are from Horsfall (2006).

into a plant, his mother cannot know of his death, and cannot avenge him. The metamorphosis thus preempts the plot of the very play alluded to.

In Virgil, Polydorus even sides with Polymestor against Hecuba and Agamemnon in explaining the reasons for the murder. In Euripides, Hecuba argued that Polymestor killed Polydorus out of greed, whereas Polymestor claimed that he did this as a favour to the Greeks (*Hec.* 1175-7 ‘This is what I have suffered in pursuing your interest – actually killing your enemy, Agamemnon’), a view rejected by Hecuba (*Hec.* 1197-1216) and Agamemnon (*Hec.* 1241-5 ‘To my mind, so you may know it, you seem to have killed a man who was your guest neither for my sake nor yet for the Achaeans’, but in order to keep that gold in your house’).¹⁶ In Virgil, Polydorus does not deny greed as a reason for Polymestor’s actions but notes that his killer (*Aen.* 3.54) ‘followed Agamemnon’s cause and the winning side’ (*res Agamemnonias uictriciaque arma secutus*), that is, he also acted because of political reasons, as Polymestor’s himself unpersuasively claims in Euripides.

Virgil’s text thus completely rewrites Euripides’ *Hecuba*. Polydorus himself, in the very first words he speaks, urges Aeneas to let him rest in peace, and to flee away from Thrace (Verg. *Aen.* 3.41-4)

*quid miserum, Aenea, laceras? iam parce sepulto,
parce pias scelerare manus. non me tibi Troia
externum tulit aut cruor hic de stipite manat.
heu fuge crudelis terras, fuge litus auarum*

Why, Aeneas, do you torture a poor wretch? Do spare my burial, spare the defiling of your dear good hands. I am born no stranger to you or to Troy nor does this blood ooze from a tree-trunk. Alas, flee this land of cruelty, flee this land of greed

Aeneas and the Trojan leaders do as requested and ‘leave the land of crime’ (Verg. *Aen.* 3.60 *scelerata excedere terra*), without even entertaining the possibility, or considering the moral duty, of punishing Polymestor.

The apparition of the ghost of Polydorus is the focus of another allusion in Virgil. In book 6, Palinurus appears to Aeneas and narrates his story: he fell off Aeneas’ ship, survived for three days in the sea (*Aen.* 6.355 *tres ... hiberans ... noctes crudelis*), echoing Odysseus’ similar fate at *Od.* 5.388-9. However, Odysseus survives at sea only *two* days and *two* nights. Virgil ‘improves’¹⁷ on the Homeric model by grafting onto it an allusion to *Hec.* 32 τριταῖον ... φέγγος αἰωρούμενος ‘suspended for three days’. The allusion is made more explicit a few lines later. Palinurus arrives ashore but is killed by a ‘cruel people’ (*Aen.* 6.359). His body is cast at sea just like Polydorus’, and scholars have often noted the similarities in the wording of the two passages: *Aen.* 6.362 ‘Now the waves hold me, and the winds toss me on the shore’.¹⁸ *Nunc me fluctus habet, versantque in litore venti* alludes to *Hec.* 28 κείμαι δ’ ἐπ’ ἄκταῖς, ἄλλοτ’ ἐν πόντου σάλωι ‘I lie sometimes on the shore, sometimes in the heavy swell of the sea.’¹⁹ Virgil suppressed this section of Euripides’ narrative of Polydorus in book 3, where a body floating in the sea did not fit the disturbing metamorphosis of the Trojan prince; the floating body resurfaces here in book 6. Both Polydorus and Palinurus ask Aeneas to give them proper burial: a clear thematic link connects these episodes. These subtle allusive touches imply the status of Euripides’ *Hecuba* as a classic, and Virgil’s usage of commentaries to the play.

In Euripides, Hecuba’s revenge against Polymestor can be seen as an emotional compensation for her loss of two children: she kills Polymestor’s two children, a horrific murder that parallels her

¹⁶ Translation Collard (1991).

¹⁷ See Horsfall (2013): 287 on *Aen.* 6.355; Horsfall misses the allusion to the *Hecuba*.

¹⁸ Translation Horsfall (2013): 27.

¹⁹ See Norden (1903): 234 and Horsfall (2013): 288 *ad loc.*

loss of Polydorus and Polyxena. In Virgil’s version, Polyxena’s death is completely disconnected from Polydorus’ story, and the problem of the location of Achilles’ tomb can be easily solved.²⁰

Virgil alludes to *Hecuba* later in book 3 again, when Andromache mentions Polyxena’s sacrifice. In this case, Virgil seems to allude to some interpretive problems discussed in the scholia to Euripides, ‘correcting’ some of the mythological innovations made by Euripides. Andromache ‘corrects’ the version of Euripides, explicitly making the point that Polyxena’s sacrifice took place ‘below the lofty walls of Troy’ (*Aen.* 3.323: *Troiae sub moenibus altis*), not in Thrace.²¹ The morally problematic revenge plot of *Hecuba* is thus omitted by Virgil along with the problematic location of Achilles’ tomb. Aeneas is telling his story to Dido, and a gruesome revenge narrative would not have depicted him favourably.

Andromache’s speech needs to be discussed in detail for other allusions to Euripides and to ancient commentators of poetic texts. Before reading Virgil’s text, however, we need to examine at least some details of the complex web of intertextual relationships between Homer, Euripides and Virgil.

3. The fate of the enslaved woman

In antiquity, after the fall of a city, young women were often raped or taken as concubines by the conquering enemies; this is for instance what happened to Cassandra, raped by Ajax and taken as a concubine by Agamemnon.²² Agamemnon orders each Greek soldier to rape a Trojan woman when the city falls (*Il.* 2.354-6):

τῶ μή τις πρὶν ἐπειγέσθω οἶκον δὲ νέεσθαι
πρὶν τινα παρ Τρώων ἀλόχῳ κατακοιμηθῆναι, 355
τίσασθαι δ' Ἑλένης ὀρμήματά τε στοναχάς τε.
Therefore let no man be urgent to take the way homeward
until after he has lain in bed with the wife of a Trojan 355
to avenge Helen’s longing to escape and her lamentations (translation Lattimore
(1951))

When Hector speaks to Andromache in book 6 of the *Iliad*, he imagines her fate after the fall of the city (*Iliad* 6.447-465):

εὔ γὰρ ἐγὼ τόδε οἶδα κατὰ φρένα καὶ κατὰ θυμόν·
ἔσσεται ἡμᾶρ ὅτ' ἂν ποτ' ὀλώλῃ Ἴλιος ἱρὴ
καὶ Πριάμος καὶ λαὸς ἔυμμελίῳ Πριάμοιο.
ἀλλ' οὐ μοι Τρώων τόσσον μέλει ἄλγος ὀπίσσω, 450
οὔτ' αὐτῆς Ἑκάβης οὔτε Πριάμοιο ἀνακτος
οὔτε κασιγνήτων, οἳ κεν πολέες τε καὶ ἐσθλοὶ
ἐν κονίησι πέσοιεν ὑπ' ἀνδράσι δυσμενέεσσιν,
ὅσσοι σεῦ, ὅτε κέν τις Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων
δακρύνουσαν ἀγῆται ἐλεύθερον ἡμᾶρ ἀπούρας· 455
καί κεν ἐν Ἄργει ἐοῦσα πρὸς ἄλλης ἰστὸν ὑφαίνοις,
καί κεν ὕδωρ φορέοις Μεσσηίδος ἢ Ὑπερείης
πόλλ' ἀεκαζομένη, κρατερὴ δ' ἐπικείσεται ἀνάγκη·
καί ποτέ τις εἶπησιν ἰδὼν κατὰ δάκρυ χέουσαν·
Ἔκτορος ἦδε γυνὴ ὅς ἀριστεύεσκε μάχεσθαι 460
Τρώων ἵπποδάμων ὅτε Ἴλιον ἀμφεμάχοντο.

²⁰ On these problems see Battezzato (2018): 19.

²¹ See below, section 3, and n. 32.

²² On these grim realities of war, see in general Pritchett (1991): 203-245 (esp. 238-9). On rape in ancient Greece, more in general, see Omitowoju (2002), Harris (2006) 297–332, James (2014), De Boer (2017), with further references.

ὥς ποτέ τις ἐρέει· σοὶ δ' αὖ νέον ἔσσεται ἄλγος
 χήτει τοιοῦδ' ἀνδρὸς ἀμύνειν δούλιον ἦμαρ.
 ἀλλά με τεθνηῶτα χυτὴ κατὰ γαῖα καλύπτοι
 πρὶν γέ τι σῆς τε βοῆς σοῦ θ' ἔλκηθοιο πυθέσθαι. 465
 For I know this thing well in my heart, and my mind knows it:
 there will come a day when sacred Ilion shall perish,
 and Priam, and the people of Priam of the strong ash spear.
 But it is not so much the pain to come of the Trojans 450
 that troubles me, not even of Priam the king nor Hekabē,
 not the thought of my brothers who in their numbers and valor
 shall drop in the dust under the hands of men who hate them,
 as troubles me the thought of you, when some bronze-armored
 Achaian leads you off, taking away your day of liberty, 455
 in tears; and in Argos you must work at the loom of another,
 and carry water from the spring Messeis or Hypereia,
 all unwilling, but strong will be the necessity upon you;
 and some day seeing you shedding tears a man will say of you:
 'This is the wife of Hektor, who was ever the bravest fighter 460
 of the Trojans, breakers of horses, in the days when they fought about Ilion.'
 So will one speak of you; and for you it will be yet a fresh grief,
 to be widowed of such a man who could fight off the day of your slavery.
 But may I be dead and the piled earth hide me under before I
 hear you crying and know by this that they drag you captive' 465
 (translation Lattimore (1951))

The so-called 'exegetical' scholia (see esp. the manuscripts bT)²³ are well aware of Hector's predicament in this scene: the war is not going well, but he should understand that, if he mentions the fall of the city and Andromache's future as a slave of the Greeks, she will be scared and disheartened. How could a loving husband such as Hector do this to his wife? Moreover, when mentioning Andromache's future servile condition, he mentions the menial tasks she will be forced to perform, stressing that they will be humiliating for her. However, Hector omits other very probable types of misfortune, especially forced sex. The scholia try to interpret Hector's speech as a sign of his love for Andromache,²⁴ suggesting that he does what he can to relieve Andromache's fears:

Sch. *Il.* 6.448a2 Erbse

οὐκ ἐκφοβεῖ, εἰ καὶ τῆς ἀλώσεως μέμνηται, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον εὐπαράμυθον ποιεῖ καὶ τὴν αὐτοῦ φιλοστοργίαν πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα ἐμφαίνει· διὸ οὐδὲ τὸν τῆς ἀλώσεως ὀρίζει χρόνον. ὦν δὲ δεινῶν χρόνος οὐχ ὀρίζεται, τούτων ἦττον ἢ προσδοκία ἐλύπησεν, ὥσπερ ἔστιν ἰδεῖν καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ θανάτου· προειδότες γὰρ ὅτι τεθνηξόμεθα διὰ τὸ μὴ εἰδέναι τὸ πότε ἦττον ἀχθόμεθα. b(BCE³E⁴)

He [= Hector] does not frighten (his wife), even if he mentions the fall of the city, but rather makes (this) something that admits of easy consolation and demonstrates his love for his wife: for this reason, he does not even specify the time of the fall of the city. If the time of terrible events is not specified, their expectation causes less pain. One can see this also in the case of death: we all know in advance that we will die, but, since we do not know when, we are less distressed.²⁵

²³ See Richardson (1980); Nünlist (2009) *passim* offers extensive discussions of many such scholia.

²⁴ The schol. *Il.* 6.464a1 (T) and 6.464a2 (b(BCE³E⁴))

²⁵ Similar remarks in the scholium on 6.448a1 (AT). The parentheses enclose words that are not present in the Greek, but are either omitted in quotations from Homer or simply need to be added for clarity.

This may sound as special pleading since Hector could have omitted the mention of the fall of the city altogether. The scholia also note that Hector cautiously avoids any mention of Andromache's possible rape and/or sexual submission to a master:

Sch. *Il.* 6.454a1 and a2 Erbse

6.454a1 ὄσσον σεῖ', ὅτε κέν τις: δεινὸν γὰρ ἢ τῶν γυναικῶν ὕβρις καὶ αὐτῶν αἰσχύνη· “πρὶν τινα πὰρ Τρώων ἀλόχῳ κατακοιμηθῆναι” (B 355). T
'as (troubles me the thought) of you when someone': (Hector says this) because the violence suffered by women and the related shame is something terrible: 'until after he has lain in bed with the wife of a Trojan' (*Iliad* 2.355)

6.454a2 δεινῶν γὰρ πάντων χείρων ἢ τῶν γυναικῶν ὕβρις. b (BCE³)
(Hector says this) because the violence suffered by women is worse than all terrible sufferings.

The scholium on 6.454a2 refers to *Iliad* 2.355, quoted above, the very passage where Agamemnon 'told the Achaeans that nobody should set sail for home 'until he has lain in bed with the wife of a Trojan, to avenge Helen...' (Graziosi and Haubold (2010): 29). Trojan characters too expect that Trojan women will be raped after the fall of the city; even Priam, when he imagines the fall of the city, says that he will see 'my sons killed, my daughters dragged away' (a euphemism for 'raped')²⁶ (*Il.* 22.62: υἱᾶς τ' ὀλλυμένους ἐλκηθείσας τε θύγατρας). The scholia on *Iliad* 6 seem to ignore that Hector's penultimate word in the speech is ἐλκηθμοῖο 'the action of dragging away' (*Il.* 6.465), and that it can be plausibly read as a euphemism for 'rape', not simply as 'slavery'²⁷. The reading strategies of these commentators tone down any possible reference to forced sex. As another ancient comment notes, it would be cruel of Hector to mention this topic; moreover, it would also be very disgraceful for him:

Sch. *Il.* 6.457b Erbse

καὶ κεν ὕδωρ φορέοις: τέτακται μὲν ἢ δουλεία εἰς ὕδροφορίαν ἢ εἰς ἰστουργίαν. ὁ δὲ ἄμφω φησὶν (sc. Z 456 et 457) εἰς ἐπίτασιν. θαρρῶν δὲ τῇ σωφροσύνῃ τῆς γυναικὸς ὅτι οὐκ ἂν ὑπομείνειεν οὐδὲ ἀκουσίως προδοῦναι ἑαυτῆς τὸ σῶμα, ἐτέρου ἀνδρὸς οὐ μέμνηται b(BCE³E⁴)T

'and carry water': the condition of slavery implied the obligation to carry water or to weave. Hector mentions both tasks to increase the pathos. Confiding in the sexual restraint of her wife, namely that she would not suffer to surrender her body, not even unwillingly, he does not mention another husband.

The authors of the comments reported in our scholia know very well that the grim fate of captive women included rape and forced concubinage and tried to find explanations for Hector's omission. They attribute to Hector the thought that Andromache would rather commit suicide ('she would not suffer to surrender her body, not even unwillingly') than suffer rape or concubinage. In fact, as the ancient commentators very well knew, Neoptolemus took Andromache as his concubine (*Little Iliad* fr. 21.1-5 Bernabé (1996) = fr. 29 West (2003), 140-1 = fr. 29 in West (2013): 219-22)²⁸.

Euripides has Polyxena imitate Hector's speech: again Polyxena takes up a 'male' 'heroic' role (Mastrorarde (2010): 267-9), a gender reversal that was not lost on ancient readers and writers. For instance, the Stoic philosopher Cleanthes (331-232 BCE) adapts *Hecuba* 346-8 and 369 in order

²⁶ See Richardson (1993): 112 on *Il.* 22.62-4, comparing *Od.* 11.580 Λητώ γὰρ ἔλκησε, Διὸς κυδρὴν παράκοιτιν (describing how Tityus attempted to rape Leto), and *Il.* 6.465.

²⁷ The D-Scholia *ad Il.* 6.465 interpret ἐλκηθμοῖο as a synonym for 'abduction', 'slavery': Z 465/Y^s ἐλκηθμοῖο: ἐλκυσμοῦ, ἀνδραποδισμοῦ, τουτέστιν αἰχμαλωσίας (see the edition of van Thiel (2014)). The word ἐλκηθμοῖο is not discussed in the scholia published in Erbse (1971).

²⁸ On fr. 21.6-11 Bernabé (1996) = fr. 30 West (2003) = fr. 30 West (2013): 219-222 see Perale (2010), with bibliography

to illustrate his Stoic credo: one must willingly follow fate. In his poetic fragment, Cleanthes indirectly extols the heroism of Polyxena, seen as a model also for male behaviour (568-70), and casts himself in the role of the Trojan princess addressing Odysseus. Cleanthes rephrases the lines of Euripides, placing Zeus in the role of Odysseus: ‘lead me, o Zeus (ἄγου δέ μ’, ὦ Ζεῦ: cf. *Hec.* 369 ἄγ’ οὔν μ’, Ὀδυσσεῦ), and you also, Fate, wherever you destined me to go: I will follow you (ὡς ἔψομαί γ’: cf. *Hec.* 346 ὡς ἔψομαί γε) without hesitation; but if, being a coward (κακὸς γενόμενος: cf. *Hec.* 348 κακὴ φανοῦμαι), I do not want to, I’ll follow anyway’²⁹.

This is Polyxena’s speech in Euripides (*Hec.* 357-66):

νῦν δ’ εἰμὶ δούλη. πρῶτα μὲν με τοῦνομα
 θανεῖν ἔραν τίθησιν οὐκ εἰωθὸς ὄν·
 ἔπειτ’ ἴσως ἂν δεσποτῶν ὤμων φρένας
 τύχοιμ’ ἂν, ὅστις ἀργύρου μ’ ὠνήσεται, 360
 τὴν Ἴκτορός τε χιᾶτέρων πολλῶν κάσιν,
 προσθεὶς δ’ ἀνάγκην σιτοποιὸν ἐν δόμοις
 σαίρειν τε δῶμα κερκίσιν τ’ ἐφεισθάναι
 λυπρὰν ἄγουσαν ἡμέραν μ’ ἀναγκάσει·
 λέχη δὲ τὰμὰ δούλος ὠνητός ποθεν 365
 χρανεῖ, τυράνων πρόσθεν ἡξιωμένα.

And now I am a slave. Firstly the name makes me desire death from its unfamiliarity. Next, I might get perhaps a cruel-hearted master, someone which will buy me for silver, “the sister of Hector and many others”, and impose on me the duty in his home of making bread, and force me to a painful daily round of sweeping the house and being set to mind the loom. My bed will be defiled by some bought-in slave from who knows where, a bed which formerly was thought worthy of kings. (translation Collard (1991))

In her words to Hecuba, Polyxena alludes to several aspects of Hector’s speech. Hector imagined Andromache weaving (*Il.* 6.456 ἱστὸν ὑφαίνοις) or carrying water (*Il.* 6.457) for her Greek masters, under the compulsion of coercion (*Il.* 6.458 κρατερὴ δ’ ἐπικείσεται ἀνάγκη), and reports the imagined speech of a Greek bystander, comparing the slavery of Andromache with her past position of social preeminence as Hector’s wife (*Il.* 6.460 Ἴκτορος ἦδε γυνὴ ὅς ἀριστεύεσκε μάχεσθαι). Similarly, Polyxena introjects the possible comments of her future Greek masters and contrasts her present servile condition with her past preeminence, as Hector’s sister (*Eur. Hec.* 361 τὴν Ἴκτορός τε χιᾶτέρων πολλῶν κάσιν); she too envisages weaving (*Eur. Hec.* 363 κερκίσιν τ’ ἐφεισθάναι) as her future task, in addition to preparing meals and sweeping the floor; she too stresses the element of coercion (*Eur. Hec.* 362 ἀνάγκην σιτοποιόν). To these clusters of motifs, Polyxena adds a final and most important argument for choosing death over slavery: she explicitly mentions (forced) sex with a fellow slave (*Eur. Hec.* 365-6) as a crucial element of life as a slave. The addition is a natural one in the context but is also a correction on Hector’s speech. Polyxena can say to her mother what Hector could not say to his wife. We are not in a position to know whether the early body of Homer scholarship, already developed in the fifth century,³⁰ discussed this crucial speech of Hector, and whether it made comments similar to those found in the exegetical scholia. It is in any case notable that Euripides makes Polyxena fill the omission that the exegetical scholia note in Hector’s speech (*Sch. Il.* 6.457b Erbse: ‘he does not mention another husband’).

²⁹ Cf. Cleanthes fr. 2 in Powell (1925): 229 = *SVF* 1.527 (Arnim (1905): 118-19), Dalfen (1971): 178-80, Carlini (1995): 214-17; Thom (2005): 71-2, with bibliography. See also Battezzato and Mariani (2018) 325 n. 24. For another instance, see Suet. *Iul.* 82.2 and Bömer (1982) on *Ov. Met.* 13.479-80.

³⁰ See esp. Pfeiffer (1968): 8-12, 32-56, 67-74; Richardson (1975); West (2001): 23-28.

When Virgil has Aeneas narrate the fate of Andromache to Dido in the *Aeneid*, he includes a complex web of allusions to the *Iliad* and to the interpretive tradition that discussed the episode from book 6; he also includes allusions and corrections to Euripides' reframing of Hector's speech.

The Andromache episode is set in Buthrotum, a location where Andromache recreates a new Troy. Aeneas is astounded by the news 'that Andromache has passed a second time to a husband of her own nation' (*Aen.* 3.207): precisely the thought that *Sch. Il.* 6.457b Erbse attributes to Hector ('confiding in the sexual restraint of her wife, namely that she would not suffer to surrender her body, not even unwillingly, he does not mention another husband').

In the Buthrotum episode, history repeats itself, but in a ghostlike manner. As Hardie observed, Buthrotum is 'trapped in a sterile obsession with a dead past' (Hardie (1998): 67).³¹ Aeneas himself stresses the imitative quality of this 'Illyric' Troy; Andromache is offering a sacrifice to her dead husband (*Aen.* 3.301-5) by a 'fake' Trojan river (*Aen.* 3.302: *falsi Simoëntis ad undam*). Andromache is so trapped in her past that she even entertains the possibility that she is surrounded by ghosts; when she sees Aeneas, she imagines that he has come from the dead, and asks where Hector is (*Aen.* 3.311-12 'Are you alive? Or, if the kindly light has passed, where is Hector?' *uiuisne? An, si lux alma recessit, | Hector ubi est?*).

When he finally speaks, Aeneas (*Aen.* 3.317-19) asks the same question as the Homeric commentator: how can Andromache have another man after Hector?

*Heu! Quis te casus deiectam coniuge tanto
Excipit, aut quae digna satis fortuna reuisit?
Hectoreis Andromache, Pyrrhin conubia seruas?*

What circumstance has taken you up, cast down as you were from such a husband, or what sufficiently fitting fortune gazes on you? Hector's Andromache, is it with Pyrrus that you keep a union?

This is yet another instance of Virgil's well-documented use of Homeric scholarship³². If Virgil's Aeneas read Hector's speech from *Iliad* 6 with the help of ancient commentators, Virgil's Andromache, in her reply to Aeneas, recreates Polyxena's speech from Euripides, but also filling in the details that were missing in Hector's speech in *Iliad* 6. In Virgil, Andromache stresses that Polyxena was spared a life in slavery and was not sullied by the sharing the bed of a master (*Aen.* 3.321-9):

*o felix una ante alias Priameia uirgo,
hostilem ad tumulum Troiae sub moenibus altis
iussa mori, quae sortitus non pertulit ullos
nec uictoris heri tetigit captiua cubile!
nos patria incensa diuersa per aequora uectae
stirpis Achilleae fastus iuuenemque superbum
seruitio enixae tulimus; qui deinde secutus
Ledaeam Hermionen Lacedaemoniosque hymenaeos
me famulo famulamque Heleno transmisit habendam.*

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O Polyxena, daughter of Priam, you were blessed beyond all others when you were condemned to die at your enemy's tomb below the lofty walls of Troy; you did not endure the casting of the lots, nor as a captive did you come into contact with the bedchamber of a conquering master. We, after our homeland was consumed by fire, travelled over various oceans, gave birth in slavery and put up with the haughty boy and the arrogance of Achilles' stock; he then went after Hermione, granddaughter of

³¹ For discussions of the episode see Bettini (1997); Hexter (1999); Seider (2013): 87, Barchiesi (2017).

³² See above, n. 4.

Leda and a Spartan union. To his slave Helenus he passed me on as a slave to be held (translation Horsfall (2006)).

We already saw that Virgil's Andromache 'corrects' Euripides' version about the location of the tomb of Achilles, making the point that Polyxena's sacrifice took place 'below the lofty walls of Troy' (*Aen.* 3.323: *Troiae sub moenibus altis*), not in Thrace.³³ However, Andromache also notes that Polyxena, if taken into slavery, would have shared the bed of one of the *masters* (*Aen.* 3.324: *nec uictoris eri tetigit captiua cubile* 'nor as a captive did you come into contact with the bedchamber of a conquering master'), not that of a fellow slave.³⁴ This again corrects the text of Euripides' *Hecuba*. In that play Polyxena imagined that 'some bought-in slave from who knows where' would 'sully' her bed (*Eur. Hec.* 365-6 λέχη δὲ τὰμὰ δοῦλος ὠνητός ποθεν | χρανεῖ): not simply a slave, but a slave that was not born in the house. Virgil's Andromache imagines that surely, as in her own case, Polyxena's Greek *master* would have taken the former princess for himself, rather than assigning her, a precious spoil of war, to the bed of a lowly slave. That is precisely what happened to Andromache: she was taken by Pyrrhus (*Aen.* 3.326-9), who then discarded her for Hermione, and passed her on to a fellow slave (*Eur. Hec.* 365 λέχη δὲ τὰμὰ δοῦλος...). Andromache's fate thus both includes the narrative of Euripides' Polyxena (marriage to a fellow slave) and corrects it (marriage to a Greek master).

Andromache candidly answers Aeneas' startled question: forced sex is the fate of female prisoners, and there is no way to escape; only Polyxena was spared that. Virgil combines an allusion to Euripides' text with a reference to dialogue between Hector and Andromache in the *Iliad*, as interpreted in Hellenistic commentaries.

Ovid's version, as often, focuses on what is missing from Virgil's adaptation, filling in the gaps and correcting the *Aeneid*. Ovid conspicuously discards the Virgilian version of Polydorus' prodigious transformation, which would have been a very suitable topic for his poem.³⁵ In Book 13 of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid mostly follows closely the structure of Euripides' plays and echoes many of Euripides' phrases.³⁶ He simplifies the plot, eliminates some characters (e.g., Odysseus, Talthylus, Agamemnon) and eschews some problematic topics, such as the location of Achilles' tomb. His narrative is briefer and more focused. Ovid, like Pacuvius, but less radically than Virgil, discards the ethically dubious narrative element from Hecuba's revenge: in his version, Hecuba does not kill Polymestor's children, who are nowhere mentioned. Just like Virgil, Ovid focuses on the fear of sexual assault on Polyxena, modifying and correcting Euripides' text, with the help of Homeric intertextuality. In Ovid, it is Polyxena herself, not Hecuba, that asks not to be touched by the Greek soldiers for fear of sexual contamination (compare *Ov. Met.* 13.445-7 with *Eur. Hec.* 604-8).

Ovid transfers from Polyxena (*Eur. Hec.* 359-66) to Hecuba the complaint over the lot of enslaved women (*Ov. Met.* 13.508-13):

*in cursuque meus dolor est: modo maxima rerum,
tot generis natisque potens nuribusque viroque
nunc trahor exul, inops, tumulis avulsa meorum,* 510
*Penelopae munus, quae me data pensa trahentem
matribus ostendens Ithacis "haec Hectoris illa est
clara parens, haec est" dicet "Priameia coniunx,"*

³³ On this scene König (1970): 55-7 (who discusses some of the allusions to the *Trojan Women*, missing the implication of *Hecuba*); Horsfall (2006): 255-8 ad loc.; Panoussi (2009): 146-9.

³⁴ The translations are taken from Horsfall (2006): 19.

³⁵ See Casali (2007): 182-8.

³⁶ For detailed analyses see Bömer (1982): 299-346, Galasso in Paduano and Galasso (1999): 1461-9, Hopkinson (2000): 22-7 and 165-186 ad *Ov. Met.* 13.404-575, Curley (2013): 101-14, 153-61, 185-91. Note that *Ov. Met.* 13.464 echoes the spurious line *Eur. Hec.* 214, which was clearly present in the text Ovid read.

My woes still run their course. But late on the pinnacle of fame, strong in my many sons, my daughters, and my husband, now, exiled, penniless, torn from the tombs of my loved ones, I am dragged away as a prize for Penelope. And as I sit spinning my allotted task of wool, she will point me out to the dames of Ithaca and say: 'This woman is Hector's noble mother, this is Priam's queen (translation Miller (1916)).

Like Polyxena (and Homer's Andromache), Hecuba imagines she will be forced to perform menial tasks, such as weaving for a master (511-12: cf. *Il.* 6.456; Eur. *Hec.* 363). Ovid echoes Hector's speech to Andromache also in voicing the imagined speech of the future Greek master (*Ov. Met.* 13.512-13 'this is the famous mother of Hector'; *Il.* 6.460 'this is the wife of Hector'). This time, the motif of sexual exploitation of the enslaved woman is omitted in reference to old Hecuba: Ovid echoes Homer, through Euripides and Virgil, giving a new twist to the allusion. Ovid's text assumes (alas, wrongly) that no one would rape an old woman in reality and presents Hecuba's omission of the motif of forced sex as unproblematic. Hector's words about Andromache omitted the reference to forced sex, out of tact; ancient commentators of Homer discussed and tried to explain this absence. Euripides and Virgil 'corrected' this absence in a competitive allusion to Homer, inserting mentions of forced sex. Ovid, by simply transferring this cluster of motifs to Hecuba, manages to 'correct' Homer without the need to make additions or radical changes to the content of the model. Euripides transferred the speech from Hector (addressing Andromache) to Polyxena; Virgil transferred it from Polyxena to Andromache, who spoke about Polyxena, thus making clear the Homeric and Euripidean intertexts; Ovid from Andromache again to Hecuba. Virgil and Ovid, with different means, managed to solve the interpretive 'problems' that ancient commentaries found in Hector's speech in *Iliad* 6.

4. Conclusions

The case studies discussed in the paper show the influence of ancient commentaries on the Latin reception of Greek texts. As we saw in section 2, Euripides controversially locates the tomb of Achilles in the Thracian Chersonese, in contrast with the Homeric version, which places it near Troy in Anatolia. The ancient commentators on Euripides, as reported in the scholia transmitted in manuscripts from the Byzantine era, criticised this choice. Some Latin writers, like Pacuvius, solved the problem by simply eliminating the sacrifice of Polyxena from their narratives. Virgil too eliminates the sacrifice of Polyxena; he also drops the revenge plot. Ovid retains the sacrifice of Polyxena and Hecuba's revenge but takes advantage of epic conventions to gloss over the problem of the localisation of the tomb.

Ancient scholars discussed the fate of enslaved women, and forced sex, when commenting on the character of Andromache in Homer. In *Iliad* 6, Hector apparently avoids mentioning forced sex in connection with Andromache's reduction into slavery. The scholia on Homer already discussed this puzzling absence, and Hector's disconcertingly defeatist words to his wife. We can see traces of this critical approach in the ancient rewritings of the episode. Euripides 'corrects' Homer and mentions forced sex in reference to Polyxena in the *Hecuba*, in a speech that clearly alludes to the *Iliad* passage. Virgil in turn 'corrects' Homer and Euripides: he makes Aeneas react with disbelief to the news of Andromache's *two* 'marriages' after the death of Hector and has Andromache correct Polyxena's predictions about the future lot of female prisoners of royal status. Ovid alludes to Homer, in rephrasing Euripides, and omits the motif of forced sex, because he transfers the motifs of Hector's speech from Polyxena to Hecuba, the protagonist of Euripides' play.

This complex web of imitations and allusions demonstrates the pervasiveness and importance of ancient critical approaches in shaping the ancient literary reception of tragedy and epic.³⁷

³⁷ I would like to thank Ettore Cingano for inviting me to give this paper at the University of Venice. I also thank Stefano Cianciosi and the anonymous readers for comments and suggestions on this paper. Any errors remain the author's responsibility.

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