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Pascale Brillet-Dubois

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A Competition of *choregoi* in Euripides' *Trojan Women*. Dramatic Structure and Intertextuality*

I wish to focus on the structure of the *Trojan Women*'s *parodos* and first episode in order to argue that it is strongly influenced by Euripides' response to the *Agamemnon*[1], and that this response consists both in turning Aeschylus' use of myth and lyrics into spectacular drama and in undermining the religious and cosmic pattern of the *Agamemnon*. I will start by examining the complex dramatic structure of this first part of the *Trojan Women*, especially the striking changes in tone occurring while Cassandra is on stage. I will then reflect upon the conflict of authority thus created between Cassandra's inspired voice and that of the suffering Hecuba. This conflict, I believe, is Euripides' way of dramatizing the mortals' inability to grasp the meaning of their actions and woes.

The Cassandra scene of the *Trojan Women* has often been considered 'a tribute to, and imitation of' the *Agamemnon*'s[2]. I would rather suggest that some of the transformations to which Euripides submits his predecessor's treatment of the Trojan catastrophe, when perceived by the audience, serve the programme of the *Trojan Women* by challenging the authority of the Aeschylean tragic tradition the way it does other authoritative voices. The *Agamemnon* is thus not viewed as a model external and unessential to the *Trojan Women* but as an internal element constitutive of the play's dynamics and meaning[3], and intertextuality as the set of poetical procedures by which Euripides incorporates that other text to his own[4].

From a chronological point of view, the plot of the *Trojan Women* precedes that of the *Agamemnon* in mythical time, for it is located at Troy when the Greek victors are distributing the Trojan captives among themselves and preparing to sail home. Thus the fate awaiting Agamemnon when he returns is known only to the external audience, who is aware of mythical and tragic traditions concerning the king of Argos, and to Cassandra, the inspired prophetess, who predicts his death in the first episode.

* A first version of this paper was presented in October 2011 at the Belgrade International Conference on Greek and Roman Poetics and a second one at the 2012 Gasparov Readings in Moscow. It was significantly improved thanks to discussions with Nikolay Grintser, Boris Nikolsky, Douglas S. Olson, Andrew Ford and Enrico Medda and to the comments of the two anonymous reviewers. I am deeply grateful to all of them.

1 I take it for more than likely that Euripides knew a text of Aeschylus' play. He was portrayed as a poet surrounded with books (Ar. *Frogs*, 943) and the allusions to the *Oresteia* in his work are precise enough to allow this inference (see Torrance 2011, 177). It does not mean, however, that this intimate knowledge of the *Agamemnon* was shared by all the members of the audience watching the *Trojan Women* in 415. The use that Euripides makes of intertextuality was probably accessible only to some learned spectators; it is but one dimension of a play which could appeal to the audience in many different ways.

2 Rutherford 2008, 127. See also, among many, Aélion 1983.

3 For a comparable analysis of the recognition scene in Euripides' *Electra*, see Torrance 2011.

4 Rabau 2002, 17. These procedures were analyzed (under the name of 'transtextualité') by Genette 1982. See also Wach 2012.

Yet the fall of Troy is also told in part in the *Agamemnon* through different narratives, notably in the second stasimon which recounts Helen's arrival at Troy and the disaster she has brought to the city[5]. The plot of the *Trojan Women* therefore follows chronologically this story told by the chorus in the *Agamemnon*. Euripides inscribes his play at the heart of *Agamemnon*'s temporality, between the two poles of Helen's arrival at Troy and Cassandra's arrival at Argos.

1. The structure of the *parodos* and first episode.

1.1. The *poluthrenos humnos* of Hecuba and the chorus.

As the *Trojan Women* begins – the third play of a Trojan trilogy including *Alexandros* and *Palamedes* –, the audience witnesses a dialogue between Poseidon and Athena in which the gods foretell the disaster awaiting the Greek victors, a disaster that will not happen during the time of the tragedy.

Then they are drawn to focus on Hecuba, who was already on stage during the divine dialogue. The old queen laments on the fall of Troy, the death of the Trojan men and her own slavery. At first she sings alone, accompanied only by the music of her tears, but gradually she calls to the chorus, inviting the Trojan women to join in her expression of grief (αἰάζωμεν 'let us cry aiai', *TW* 145), and sets herself as their leader (ἐξάρξω, 'I will lead [the song]' *TW* 147) in a plaintive *kommos* that constitutes the beginning of the *parodos*. She characterizes her own song as a *threnos* (*TW* 111), an *elegos* (*TW* 119), but it is not strictly defined as a genre and the chorus calls it merely *oiktos* ('a piteous lamentation', *TW* 155). As the monody turns into a *kommos*, Hecuba's destiny becomes emblematic of that of the whole chorus (compare chor. δούλα τλάμων, *TW* 185 and Hec. τλάμων…δουλεύσω, *TW* 191-92). For a moment, her royal *persona* fades away – as does the distinction between the orchestra and the space of the actor – and she becomes only an elder *koruphaios* of the captives, performing the *parodos* song with the others and sharing their fears. Yet her lost status as a queen remains as a memory; it is the backdrop against which she contrasts her present situation and song. She thus expresses the fact that her melody is 'of a different kind than the one [she] used to lead' when she was queen of Troy and struck up joyful hymns to the gods (*TW* 147-52):

> ἐξάρξω 'γὼ
> μολπάν, οὐ τὰν αὐτὰν
> οἵαν ποτὲ δὴ
> …ἐξῆρχον

This idea that a change has occurred in Troy's songs already appears in the *Agamemnon*'s second stasimon (*Ag.* 699-715). In this ode, the chorus tells how Troy, after singing a song of wedding to Paris and Helen (τὸ νυμφότι-/μον μέλος.../ ὑμέναιον, *Ag.* 705-7), came to recognize the true signification of their fatal κῆδος (*Ag.* 699), the word meaning both 'marriage' and 'grief'. The community had to

[5] *Ag.* 681-781.

shift from celebrating the bride and groom to 'learning a new hymn of many sorrows' (μεταμανθάνουσα δ' ὕμνον… πολύθρηνον, *Ag.* 709-11).

What Euripides does here in the *Trojan Women* is stage that change and turn the Aeschylean narrative into a spectacle. He gives us to hear Troy's new song[6] after showing Hecuba as the powerful queen of Troy in *Alexandros*, the first play of the trilogy[7]. She now embodies and gives physical presence to the 'old city of Priam… mourning the slaughter of her citizens' as described by the *Agamemnon* (*Ag.* 710-6). In her lament, she acknowledges the destructive power of Helen (*TW* 130-7) – Helen whose ill-omened name was the object of the first strophe of the *Agamemnon*'s stasimon (*Ag.* 681-98). She pictures Helen as the shameful wife who caused the Greeks to sail to Ilion and burn it to the ground; she calls her the murderer of Priam and, indirectly, of his fifty sons; finally she accuses her of 'stranding [her], miserable Hecuba, on this disaster' (ἐμέ τε <τάν> μελέαν Ἑκάβαν / ἐς τάνδ' ἐξώκειλ' ἄταν, *TW* 137). The image of the ship being wrecked on a reef is both a continuation of the metaphor of Hecuba as a boat, which has been developed from the beginning of the monody, and an allusion to the Aeschylean play on Helen's name. In the *Agamemnon*, the chorus suggested that it was rightly associated with the verb ἑλεῖν as she was born to 'destroy ships, destroy men, destroy cities' (ἑλένας, ἑλάνδρος, ἑλέ/πτολις, *Ag.* 687 f.). In Euripides, each of these elements is matched by Hecuba's experience. Besides, the concrete use of the word ἄταν presents the situation of the *Trojan Women* as the result of the religious forces identified by the chorus in the *Agamemnon*: to them Helen, as the lion she is compared to, is a 'priest of Ate' (*Ag.* 735 f.). Finally, Hecuba's regrets, her repeated expression of the contrast between her glorious past and her sad present, develop the idea of cognitive change contained in μεταμανθάνουσα (*Ag.* 709). Thus she voices in the first person and as a dramatic character what was in the *Agamemnon* a poetical description of the Trojan catastrophe, told in the third person and expressing the chorus' authoritative understanding of the ambivalence and religious power of language[8].

Yet there is an important difference in the way Aeschylus' chorus and Euripides' character express the lesson learned at Troy. Through pain, Hecuba understands the vanity and vulnerability of human life. Fortune, power, family, all the things that seemed firmly established and on which she prided herself were actually nothing (*TW* 108 f.). But this realization does not give her access to a deeper knowledge of the divine design and of the cosmic links between the gods' will and human actions, whereas in the *Agamemnon*, the old men of Argos want to believe in the cognitive

[6] Battezzato 2005, 76-84 adopts another perspective on this change of song; he interprets it as a cultural breakdown, the Phrygian musical tradition being disrupted and replaced by the music of the Greek victors.

[7] The hypothesis of *Alexandros* is not clear as to how the play ended, but it seems that the last episode was a recognition scene between Hecuba and Alexandros (Ἑκάβη μὲν οὖν υἱὸν ἀνεῦρε). It seems likely that she then sang a song of joy. See Jouan – Van Looy 2002.

[8] Lines 120 f., where Hecuba sings of her ἄτας... ἀχορεύτους, have been interpreted as self-referential, as the old queen is about to start a monody while the chorus has not yet entered the stage (Croally 1994, 244; Torrance 2013, 241). Maybe they should also be read as a way of challenging the Aeschylean chorus song.

function of pain: Justice will teach her ways to wrong-doers through suffering[9]. From Hecuba's point of view, however, gods exist as whimsical forces (μεταβαλλομένου δαίμονος, *TW* 101) which submit human beings to changes that they do not comprehend. Helen does not appear to her as the instrument of Zeus' justice, but as someone in flesh and blood whom she might blame for her woes, as opposed to the anonymous *daimon*. Therefore the Aeschylean chorus' interpretation of the Trojan War is both present and rejected by the Euripidean character who finds no meaning in the disaster.

1.2. The Cassandra scene.

The dramatization of the Aeschylean lyrics goes much further, as we shall see. After the *parodos*, enters Talthybios leading a group of mute soldiers; the Greek herald has come to announce the fate of the women of the royal family and to take away Cassandra. For my purpose in the present paper, I will not dwell on the dialogue between Hecuba and Talthybios; its main function is to give Hecuba new reasons to lament. Going straight to the Cassandra scene[10], I will focus on its dramatic structure. Unlike the Aeschylean scene to which it has often been compared, Cassandra's appearance in the *Trojan Women* results in an eclectic generic collage[11], the striking structure of which reveals itself a complex way to characterize the prophetess.

Cassandra makes a spectacular entrance as she rushes out of her tent singing and brandishing torches. Her song has all the characteristics of a wedding-song, a *huménaios*[12], even though its performance is in many ways problematic (I shall come back to it): it is strophic and features both the ritual refrain to the god Hymen and the traditional *makarismos* to the bride and groom (*TW* 311-4). It ends with Cassandra inviting her mother to accompany her to her husband's residence (πέμπε, *TW* 355), which points to a wedding-procession song, as do also the torches she is waving. The bride also compares herself with a mythical exemplum (*TW* 357): L. Swift considers this a common trait of wedding-songs, but the fact that the exemplum is Helen points at the same time to a strong intertextuality, for Cassandra intends to play in Agamemnon's house the role given to Helen in Troy by the second stasimon of the *Agamemnon*. She too will be a νυμφόκλαυτος Ἐρινύς[13]. She too will kill a man, destroy a royal house (*TW* 359); as for the Greek ships, as we know from the prologue, they will be wrecked because of the crime that Ajax committed against her (*TW* 69-86).

As her bacchic transe ebbs, Cassandra shifts to iambic trimeters. She now intends to demonstrate that the Trojans, like the bride and groom, are to be deemed *makarioi*, or at least more *makarioi* than their victors (*TW* 365-7). Her epideictic

[9] *Ag.* 177, 249 f.

[10] For a detailed analysis of the scene, see Mazzoldi 2001, 219-41.

[11] Even though the Cassandra scene of the *Agamemnon* is characterized by remarkable changes in metre and the association of song and speech, it retains an overall consistency. See Aélion 1983, 223-5.

[12] For a presentation of the genre, see Swift 2010, 245-9.

[13] *Ag.* 149; compare *TW* 457: ὡς μίαν τριῶν Ἐρινὺν τῆσδε μ' ἐξάξων χθονός.

speech develops into a funeral oration featuring several *topoi* of the *epitaphios*[14]. Just as the Athenians honour their dead soldiers, Cassandra's discourse enhances the glory of the Trojan warriors who gave their life for the defense of their homeland (*TW* 386 f.). As in the *epitaphioi* that we know[15], the individual identity and existence of the warriors give way to the idea of the *polis* and of its glory (*TW* 365 and 401); beautiful death is praised and becomes the criterion of moral superiority (*TW* 402); the orator mirrors the Trojans' fate with their enemies', to the advantadge of Troy of course. Finally Cassandra ends with an injunction to cease mourning (*TW* 403), which is also a *topos* of the funeral oration, for the *epitaphios* and the collective burial signal that the dead citizens do not belong to their family anymore but exclusively to the city.

The speech is met with contempt by Talthybios, who treats Cassandra as a madwoman and proceeds to take her to Agamemnon. As a response, Cassandra takes on her role of prophetess and predicts her mother's death, the woes of Odysseus and her own death, first in iambic trimeters then in more agitated trochaic tetrameters. The prophecies are introduced as 'Apollo's words' (Ἀπόλλωνος λόγοι, *TW* 427) and spoken in the future tense (*TW* 430, 445, 450 etc.). They do not borrow specific generic features as much as they allude in content to other sources: the passage concerning Odysseus (*TW* 433-43) mirrors the predictions of Circe and Tiresias in the *Odyssey*[16], and the end of the speech with its flash-like horrid vision of Cassandra's death (*TW* 445-50) is clearly an allusion to her vivid hallucinations in the *Agamemnon*[17]. Thus they gain authority from being confirmed, at least for the external audience, by traditional sources. Euripides has Homer and Aeschylus play here the same kind of role as the gods in the prologue: they warrant Cassandra's assertions.

I now want to suggest a few lines of interpretation of the elaborate structure of the scene. First of all, its aesthetic variety allows Euripides and the actor to demonstrate the wide range of their skills. But while it is clear that this type of virtuosity, which distinguishes Euripides' poetics from those of Aeschylus, appealed to the audience as a source of enjoyment in itself, I think the eclectic form of the scene also serves other purposes and draws the attention to deeper levels of understanding.

For one, it characterizes Cassandra as a complex and disturbing figure adopting in turn three *personae*, whereas by Aeschylus she appeared mainly as a seer, be it in song or speech. 1) The *humenaios* presents us with the daughter and *parthenos* about to be wed, the young female at the center of sexual strategies. Though she is now a priestess, she was nevertheless once the object of her mother's great expectations, that is dreams of a prestigious wedding (*TW* 345-7) and even if (or maybe because?) she is *entheos*, she can inspire Agamemnon with passionate love (*TW* 255). 2) As the speaker of a funeral oration, Cassandra assumes a male citizen's vision of the Trojan war, but she also portrays herself as a heroine, a female warrior

[14] See Loraux 1981.

[15] Known *epitaphioi* by Gorgias, Lysias, Demosthenes and Hyperides. See also Thuc. 2.35-46 and Plat. *Menexenos*.

[16] *Od.* 12.37-141 (Circe); 11.100-37 (Tiresias). On this matter, see Battezzato 2005, 89 f.

[17] *Ag.* 1256-63, 1275-8.

whose wedding is to be an act of war. 3) In the final part of the scene, it is Cassandra's mythical role as a priestess that takes over.

The succession of roles played by Cassandra and the striking contrasts in moods certainly contribute to the internal audience's judgement that she is a maniac (see Hec. *TW* 349 f.; chorus, *TW* 342, 407; Talth. *TW* 408, 415). But from Cassandra's point of view, all three *personae* are consistent with one another, even though she acknowledges the different stages of her transe (*TW* 366 f.), and expresses contradictory emotions.

This consistency of character is enhanced by different means:

1. At the conclusion of her speech, Cassandra unites all three *personae* in a poignant farewell (*TW* 451-61). First she renounces her priesthood and salutes Apollo. Then she parts with her mother as young brides do. Finally she addresses her homeland and male relatives in martial, almost epic tone: the heroic role is the one she will retain or hopes to retain in death. Here it becomes clear that her funeral oration was anticipated in order to glorify her own death as well as her brothers'.

2. To strengthen the unity of the character, the poet also uses a network of images and recurrent motifs. In the *Agamemnon,* it is the poetic power of words like κῆδος and names like Helen's which both influences and reveals the tragic complexity of human experience. As for Euripides, he turns to more visible and theatrical elements like the crown. 'Crown my victorious head and rejoice at my royal wedding' says Cassandra to her mother (*TW* 353 f.), thus linking the bride's garland to the victor's, and the *humenaios* to the eulogy. Again, the crown of glory appears l. 401. Finally Cassandra takes off the sacred garlands that symbolize her special relationship with Apollo l. 451. Just as the single object can integrate all those semiotic uses, Cassandra's body and voice appear on stage as a synthesis of apparently incompatible features.

3. Last but not least, the unity of the scene lies in its paradoxical nature. The expectations of the internal and external audiences are being constantly deceived. Cassandra's *humenaios* contradicts the assumptions of both Talthybios and Hecuba. Her willingness and words of joy are in absolute contrast with the herald's prejudices about the Trojan women's dignified reaction: for when catching sight of the glow of her torches, he first thought that the captives were trying to kill themselves to escape slavery. But Cassandra accepts it. Moreover, unlike her mother who has received with shock the announcement of her daughter's desecrating marriage, she does not appear, at least in this first movement of the scene, to regret her state of priestess nor fear the coming union with Agamemnon. Instead she tries to have Hecuba and the chorus join in her wedding-song and particularly in the *makarismos*, but the internal audience is shocked by her display of unseemly happiness and by the performance of the *humenaios* in what they think is an inappropriate context. This seems to them a sign of Cassandra's madness and no one interprets her song as being ironic – whereas the external audience might.

The funeral oration rests on a vision of the situation similar to that of the *humenaios*[18] but operates in fact an even more serious displacement than the wedding-song, for Cassandra delivers to an audience of grieving female relatives and to an enemy a type of discourse normally spoken to an assembly of Athenian citizens. While expected to join in the lamentation, she argues that the Trojan defeat is actually a moral victory and, by announcing that she will reenact Helen's fatal marriage and bring disaster to Agamemnon, transforms her yielding to the wedding that is being forced on her into a heroic deed, an act of resistance similar to the fights of her brothers and compatriots. Here again Euripides makes use of Aeschylean material. At the end of the Cassandra scene in the *Agamemnon*, the frightened prophetess finds some comfort in foreseeing that Agamemnon and Clytemnestra will pay for their crimes. It gives her the courage to cease her lament and face an unescapable death (*Ag.* 1285-9). The chorus marvels at the young woman's heroic attitude and attempts to offer her the consolation of a eulogy, calling her death 'glorious':

ΧΟ. Ἀλλ' ἴσθι τλήμων οὖσ' ἀπ' εὐτόλμου φρενός.
ΚΑ. Οὐδεὶς ἀκούει ταῦτα τῶν εὐδαιμόνων.
ΧΟ. Ἀλλ' εὐκλεῶς τοι κατθανεῖν χάρις βροτῷ.
ΚΑ. Ἰὼ πάτερ σοῦ σῶν τε γενναίων τέκνων.

Ch. Well, be assured, you endure suffering with a courageous heart.
Cass. Those are words that no one ever hears among the happy.
Ch. Yet, certainly, to die gloriously is a blessing for a mortal.
Cass. Alas for you, father, and for your noble children!

(*Ag.* 1302-5)

The old men of Argos voice their admiration in epic terms, conferring greater value to bravery and *kleos* than to life, while Cassandra bitterly resists this political vision of suffering and death by focusing on her misery. She does not engage in a lengthy argument or in irony: the cry of mourning by which she replies is proof enough that her pain cannot be soothed by the illusion of glory and that the loss of the loved ones, however heroic, is unbearable. As she addresses her father in the second person, Cassandra seems to be evoking his ghost or anticipating their reunion in death. She also probably includes herself among Priam's *gennaia tekna*, next to her courageous brothers, thus mourning herself with tragic and pitiful lucidity.

In the *Trojan Women*, on the contrary, Cassandra assumes the kind of discourse that she rejected in the *Agamemnon.* If it is not possible to escape war, she says, then it is better for a city to 'die beautifully' (καλῶς ὀλέσθαι, *TW* 312). She is now the one trying to paint Hector's death in bright coulours and to oppose glory to pain while her mother only considers the grief it causes her (*TW* 394 f.). She even goes to the point of praising Paris' wedding with the daughter of Zeus (Helen's ominous name is carefully avoided here), which prevented him from forming a marriage that

[18] Lee 1976, 125 considers the speech a rationalized version of the wedding-song, while Di Benedetto 1992, 55 considers this rationalistic attitude as being the main aspect of Euripides' novelty.

no one would have spoken of (σιγώμενον... κῆδος, *TW* 399). It is interesting to note that the double meaning of κῆδος is somehow neutralized by Euripides, for it is equally consistent with Cassandra's argument to say that, had Paris not been united to Helen, his *marriage* or Troy's *grief* would have remained unheard of. Whatever meaning the audience gives to κῆδος, the dominant feature of the sentence is the paradoxical absolute value that Cassandra awards to fame. By thus reversing the Aeschylean characterization of the prophetess, Euripides makes use of a certain audience's expectations and strengthens the presentation of his character as a disturbing, surprising one.

All in all, with her funeral oration, Cassandra reinforces the celebratory function of the *humenaios* by claiming that Troy's fate is both retrospectively and prospectively worthy of praise. That is how her divine insight allows her to see and read the chaotic present of the Trojan women. But neither Hecuba, nor the chorus can readily accept her provoking interpretation, for what they see is destruction and what they experience is suffering. As for Talthybios, he is not in a position to agree with Cassandra since her eulogy of Troy includes a condemnation of the Greeks. So again her words are rejected with disbelief and contempt.

2. A dramatic conflict of authority.

Following the Cassandra scene of the *Agamemnon* (*Ag*. 1198-213), it is of common mythological knowledge that Cassandra, though a true prophetess, was deprived by Apollo of the power to convince because she turned him down. It is actually such well-known mythological data that most commentators of the *Trojan Women* overlook the fact that Euripides carefully avoids any allusion to Cassandra's conflict with Apollo. On the contrary, she calls the god *philtatos* (*TW* 451). And whereas in the *Agamemnon* she rips off her priestly attributes in a bitter gesture of reproach towards the god who led her to her death, here she protects them from desecration and respectfully parts with the god while she is still in a state of holiness (*TW* 451-4). The allusion to and difference from Aeschylus signals that another version of the myth is being chosen.

I suggest that Euripides is changing the status of Cassandra's inability to persuade in order to focus on human communication and the human aptitude or inaptitude to construct meaning. That her speeches are met with incredulity is no longer a mythical fact but the result of dramatic interaction. It is not that the internal audience is prevented by a supernatural power from believing the truth that Cassandra voices: they do not believe her because the unsuitable performance of her wedding-song and eulogy makes her words unbelievable, at least given the situation and state of mind they are in when she says them. Whereas Cassandra's enigmatic and chaotic song works as proof of her prophetic gifts for the chorus of the *Agamemnon*[19] – the strangeness of her language being the sign of a supernatural presence –, her paradoxes are attributed to a lack of σωφροσύνη[20] in the *Trojan Women.* As S. Mazzoldi puts it, she is no longer a μάντις incapable of persuasion

[19] *Ag*. 1089-99.
[20] *TW* 350.

but has become a μαινάς[21]. The use of the word βακχεύειν is obviously derogatory in the mouth of the chorus, a reason for shame (*TW* 341), and when Talthybios acknowledges Apollo's influence on the Trojan prophetess, it is only to dismiss her speech as nonsense: had her mind not been clouded by the god, she would have been held responsible for her offensive words towards the Acheans (*TW* 408-10). Strangeness is thus equated to madness while the common sense of Cassandra's audience becomes the only criterion for truth. Moreover, the temporality to which she has access and which frames her interpretation of the present does not coincide with that of the Trojan Women, so that the celebrations she invites them to, which are based on the future punishment of the Greeks, clash with their present experience of Troy's defeat and doom[22].

This conflict is at the heart of the scene's action and dramatic dynamics. The Trojan women are helpless, all they can do is react. Contradictory injunctions and competing attempts to guide their response structure the episode. As soon as she enters the stage, Cassandra utters imperatives addressed either to her mother or to the chorus, maybe also to herself: ἄνεχε, πάρεχε, φῶς φέρε 'Raise it, bring it on, bring the light' (*TW* 308) and later πάλλε, χόρευε, ἄναγε, ἕλισσε, βόατε, ἴτε, μέλπετε (*TW* 332-41). She is thus trying to obtain participation in her *humenaios* and to gather the choral ensemble that normally performs such a song. Her strategy is explicit: she wants to compete with Hecuba's lament (*TW* 315-20). As we saw earlier in the prologue, the old queen successfully took the lead of the lamenting chorus; but because Cassandra deems inappropriate the songs of sorrow with which she responds to the situation, she attempts to replace her mother's cries of pain with cries of joy, the *poluthrenos humnos* with a *humenaios*. She is thus trying to revert the lesson learned by Troy in the second stasimon of the *Agamemnon.* This sets the Trojan women's present situation as well as her own fate in the cycle of disaster and vengeance that constitutes the logic of divine justice in Aeschylus' play.

Hecuba's reaction is revealing of what is actually at stake in the scene. Taking the torches away from Cassandra, she tells the Trojan women to 'answer with tears her songs of marriage' (δάκρυά τ' ἀνταλλάσσετε / τοῖς τῆσδε μέλεσι, Τρῳάδες, γαμηλίοις, *TW* 351 f.). Thus she undercuts her daughter's efforts to exert any authority on them and influence their mood, and discards the cyclical interpretation of Cassandra's wedding as a comforting response to Helen's.

Let us think now of what the play's audience sees: it seems obvious that Euripides relies on the expectation that the *humenaios* should be performed by a chorus to emphasize Cassandra's isolation. The vanity of her efforts to draw the other women into a dancing circle mirrors the ineffectiveness of her words and this strongly contrasts with the way the chorus gathered around Hecuba in the *parodos*. There is also something poignant in the way Cassandra assumes the role of leading the *pompè* while being aware that her mother should be the one doing it. Finally, a

[21] Mazzoldi 2001, 229, 241-4. I agree with many of Mazzoldi's remarks but her perspective does not take into account the dramatic consequences of each poet's choices.

[22] On the topic of attitudes to time, see Papadopoulou 2000 ; Mazzoldi 2001, 226.

choregos without a *choros*, she concedes a first defeat in this competition for authority.

She is not more successful with the rhetorical demonstration of the funeral oration. The conclusive statement of her speech invites her mother not to pity Troy or her daughter, for revenge will come:

> ὧν οὕνεκ' οὐ χρή, μῆτερ, οἰκτίρειν σε γῆν,
> οὐ τἀμὰ λέκτρα· τοὺς γὰρ ἐχθίστους ἐμοὶ
> καὶ σοὶ γάμοισι τοῖς ἐμοῖς διαφθερῶ.
>
> Therefore you must not, mother, pity our country
> or my wedding-bed. Those who are most hateful to me
> and to you, I shall destroy with my marriage.
>
> (*TW* 403-5)

According to the *topos* of the *epitaphios*, the public speech should put an end to the excessive and somewhat subversive expression of private mourning. Cassandra attempts here to assume another kind of authority: the authority of the city over the individuals that compose it and on a second level, as we have seen, that of the Aeschylean male chorus. But she is bound to fail, for her eulogy only points to the absence of its legitimate audience: the community of male Trojan citizens. However hard she tries to impersonate a new hero or to preserve the meaning of the warriors' death by praising the city they fought for, their absence from the stage reveals the vanity of their sacrifice. There is no Troy left. All we see is the spectacle of a dissolved community, of women grieving the loss of their men, women left exposed by war and about to be scattered, away from their homeland. Next to them are the herald and the soldiers who embody the power of the victors upon them.

It is precisely an authoritative statement of Talthybios that triggers Cassandra's last speech. After mocking Agamemnon's foolishness (who would want to marry such a lunatic?), he turns to Hecuba and orders her to follow Odysseus when he calls for her, adding in the future tense that she will be a servant (λάτρις, *TW* 422) to his wife. The issue for Cassandra at that moment is no longer to prevent her mother and the Trojan women from grieving but to reassert the authority of Apollo's predictions and thus of her own voice over the herald's (*TW* 427-30). She contradicts Talthybios with harshness and self-confidence, treating him as the despicable servant (ὁ λάτρις, *TW* 424) of ignorant human masters while she, the servant of the god (τὴν Ἀπόλλωνος λάτριν, *TW* 450), voices the divine words that were delivered to her. She thus competes with the Greeks' messenger for the control of the future and consequently of the meaning of the present.

At the same time, Cassandra is also competing with Talthybios to bring comfort to Hecuba. While the herald tries to soften the pain and horror of enslavement by suggesting that her future mistress is a virtuous woman, Cassandra promises Hecuba death at Troy (an enviable fate according to her recent eulogy) and the punishment of Odysseus. When she bids her mother farewell, she again advises her not to weep: δακρύσῃς μηδέν (*TW* 458). Hecuba's final wish that she be let to die 'worn out by tears' (δακρύοις καταξανθεῖσα, *TW* 509) clearly indicates that Cassandra's consoling speech has failed again.

As a result, even though no one challenges the fact that Cassandra is divinely inspired, even though the external audience shares in Cassandra's insight because of the divine prologue of the play and because of the strong allusions to the well-known events of the *Agamemnon*, her authority is undermined by her inability to adjust to human communication codes and to the limits of common understanding. She has also underestimated the intellectual consequences of pain, for suffering induces in Hecuba a questioning of the divine design. The episode ends with the sight of the fallen queen, as she isolates herself from the chorus and withdraws in her personal grief. Her collapsed and motionless body mirrors her gloomy speech, by which she locks herself in an eternal state of pain: πάσχω τε καὶ πέπονθα κἄτι πείσομαι (*TW* 468). Even if she once was blessed with royalty and children, her mind focuses on the fall and the loss. She cannot escape the vivid memory of the horrors she has witnessed, she cannot help seeing what she sees, that is Greek violence and Trojan suffering. This impedes her ability to learn new reasons to rejoice and to imagine that a cosmic cycle of justice might bring better times. Finally she falls silent, leaving the chorus women to imagine new songs of their own[23].

In the end, the external audience is left to choose between the conflicting responses to the spectacle of disaster. The impact of Hecuba's despair might be softened by the fact that we know from the prologue what she does not know: the gods have taken her side, the wheel is turning. The allusions to the *Agamemnon* and to other poetic traditions also add credit to Cassandra's revelations about the outcome of her union to the king of Argos and about the Greek disaster. Yet her divine perspective on the Trojan events, her efforts to celebrate the coming revenge are so challenging to common sense that they might be discarded even by the external audience as an unsatisfactory interpretive model, especially as the Greeks are not to be punished during the course of the play. It is difficult not to doubt the sincerity of the exultant feelings she expresses and not to consider her song and/or speech as either ironical or self-delusional[24]. Clearly, she is aware of her mother's pain and of the horrors awaiting herself: the axe that will slit her throat (*TW* 361); her naked corpse left unburied in far-away Argos (*TW* 448-50), unlike that of the male Trojan heroes who received burial in Trojan land at the hands of their loved ones (*TW* 388-90). It is therefore uneasy to determine whether she herself finds consolation in naming her death a victory. In this uncertain context, references to the *Agamemnon* are no safe anchor. They both warrant and undermine Cassandra's authority. In her funeral oration, she takes on the authority of the Aeschylean chorus, who led the audience into a heroic interpretation of her death. Yet when Euripides chooses to reverse Cassandra's attitude towards the consolation of glory, it makes her paradoxical eulogy of Troy all the more striking to a learned audience, as if the tradition set by Aeschylus was one other norm against which the character stood. As for the *Oresteia*'s cosmic model of divine justice, which Cassandra attempts to convey to the Trojan women, it is no longer the frame of the Trojan drama but one possible way, among others, of conceiving the city's disaster – a model challenged by the emotionally gripping expression of Hecuba's sorrows.

[23] *TW* 511-4.

[24] For a summary of different approaches, see Goff 2009, 51-3.

Faced with competing *choregoi,* the external audience can but try to construct the meaning of the catastrophe without being offered a comfortable and clear authoritative interpretation.

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***Abstract*:** The paper examines the complex dramatic structure of the Cassandra scene in Euripides' *Trojan Women* as well as its relation to the Cassandra scene in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. It argues that Euripides responds to Aeschylus by turning his use of myth and lyrics into spectacular drama and by undermining the religious and cosmic pattern of the Agamemnon. It then reflects upon the conflict of authority thus created between Cassandra's inspired voice and that of the suffering Hecuba. This conflict is believed to reveal Euripides' way of dramatizing the mortals' inability to grasp the meaning of their actions and woes.

***Keywords*:** *Trojan Women*, Cassandra, Intertextuality, Dramatic technique-rivalry, Competition.