

## MISQUOTATIONS OF EURIPIDEAN PLEADERS

In his note “Euripides, *Andromache* 356”<sup>1</sup> J. Hangard draws attention to the fact that *Andromache*, who allegedly brought about *Hermione*’s childlessness by use of φάρμακα,<sup>2</sup> states in her pleading before *Menelaus* that his daughter accused her of causing her to miscarry;<sup>3</sup> *Hermione*, however, had explicitly mentioned lack of conception and not miscarriage when she stated that *Andromache* was responsible for her childlessness.<sup>4</sup> According to Hangard what *Andromache* aimed at when she attributed to *Hermione* (ὡς αὐτῇ λέγει) this spurious statement was “to put *Hermione* in the worst possible light and discourage *Menelaus* from standing up for his daughter”.

It is not clear how this specific allegation should have “put *Hermione* in the worst possible light” and *Andromache*’s aim may have been different. Since jealous *Hermione* and her complying father exploited the absence of *Neoptolemus* and were unlawfully threatening her with death, *Andromache* smuggled to safety the son she had born to *Neoptolemus* and took refuge at the altar of *Thetis*.<sup>5</sup> There she hoped to hold out till at least old *Peleus*, *Neoptolemus*’ grandfather, came to her rescue.<sup>6</sup> But *Menelaus* got hold of the boy and, unless she gave herself up, was going to kill the child “for the wicked wrongs” she had committed against his daughter and him.<sup>7</sup> To put off her immediate execution *Andromache* offered to submit herself of her free will to *Neoptolemus* for punishment.<sup>8</sup> It is in this context that she mentions

<sup>1</sup> *Mnem.* 31 (1978) 70–1.

<sup>2</sup> *Andr.* 32–3: λέγει γὰρ ὡς υἱν φαρμάκοις κεκρυμμένοις/τίθημ’ ἄπαιδα.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* 355–5: εἰ σὴν παῖδα φαρμακεύομεν/καὶ νηδὺν ἐξαμβλοῦμεν, ὡς αὐτῇ λέγει.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.* 158: νηδὺς δ’ ἀκύμων διὰ σέ μοι διόλλυται.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.* 39–50.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.* 79 sqq.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.* 309–318; the translation of σῆς ἀμαρτίας ὕπερ,/ἦν ... ἀμαρτάνεις is J.F. Nims’s.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.* 357–360.

being accused of having caused Hermione to miscarry. According to Athenian law at the time of Euripides abortion was a wrong against the father;<sup>9</sup> he, as the injured party, could initiate a δίκη to protect his interests.<sup>10</sup> Andromache may, therefore, have hoped that, if she represented what Hermione had accused her of as a penal offence against Neoptolemus, Menelaus would expect Neoptolemus to take action against her himself and consequently might agree to await the latter's return. It would thus seem that Andromache here "departs from the truth"<sup>11</sup> in order to strengthen the persuasiveness of her pleading. Under the circumstances this may be considered a minor departure from the truth. A departure from the truth it is nevertheless.

As this is not the only instance where a Euripidean pleader departs from the truth by incorrectly but explicitly attributing a statement to his<sup>12</sup> opponent, the phenomenon seems worth recording. If additional common features can be found in these passages, a conclusion about Euripides' use of these misquotations may, perhaps, be attempted.

In the *Hecuba* the old queen maintains that, if Polymestor was indeed a friend of the Greeks, he ought not to have kept the gold of her son Polydorus for himself but rather have handed over to them "the gold which thou sayst (φῆς) thou art keeping not for thyself but for Agamemnon".<sup>13</sup> Polymestor, however, had made no mention whatsoever even of the existence of this gold.<sup>14</sup>

It is obvious why Hecuba introduced the subject of the gold. Not only does she seem to have sincerely believed that the true motive for the murder of Polydorus was Polymestor's lust for this gold<sup>15</sup> (as may,

<sup>9</sup> Mainly, if not exclusively; see the following note.

<sup>10</sup> See A.R. Harrison, *The Law of Athens*, I, (Oxford 1968) 72 and 73 n.1. On the whole, it seems that the penalties for abortion imposed by law "are to be thought of merely as securing the rights of the father"

<sup>11</sup> Hangard, *op. cit.* 71.

<sup>12</sup> Her? The phenomenon seems to occur in the argumentation of female pleaders; see the instances dealt with in this paper; there seem to be no others.

<sup>13</sup> *Hec.* 1218–20. The translation of 1219, τὸν χρυσὸν οὖν φῆς οὐ σὸν ἀλλὰ τοῦδ' ἔχειν, is by E.P. Coleridge.

<sup>14</sup> The inconsistency was noticed by the scholiast to *Hec.* 1219; he accused the poet of an oversight and careless writing.

<sup>15</sup> This motive was suggested to Hecuba immediately after she stated who perpetrated the murder of her son (*Hec.* 710–2). When Hecuba shortly afterwards tells Agamemnon that the boy had been sent into hiding carrying gold, and that his host had turned into his

indeed, have been the case<sup>16</sup>), but she also had good reason to expect Agamemnon to accept this theory: he himself had suggested it to her when told of what had happened.<sup>17</sup> What is less obvious is why Hecuba introduced the subject in the way she did. Had she merely asked Polymestor why, if indeed he was a friend of the Greeks, he did not hand over to them the gold of her son but kept it for himself, her argument would hardly have been less convincing. In such a case Hecuba might, perhaps, have been obliged to adduce proof of Polymestor's holding the gold. By attributing to Polymestor a statement which included his admission of this true fact Hecuba seems to have bridged an inessential gap which might have impeded the momentum of her pleading.

Related to incorrectly attributing to an opponent a statement he did not make is the incorrect interpretation of a statement he did make. When Hecuba, in the *Trojan Women*, maintains that Helen claimed (φήσ) to have been abducted by force,<sup>18</sup> she asks Helen "What Spartan heard you cry for help?"<sup>19</sup> Hecuba thus fixes Sparta as the place of the abduction and limits "force" to its meaning of "physical strength"/"act of violence". Yet, when Helen referred to herself as "the bride of force"<sup>20</sup>—to which Hecuba's φήσ clearly points—she meant by force either the irresistible power of Aphrodite, overcome by which—according to her own account—she had abandoned home and country and followed Paris,<sup>21</sup> or the unspecified compulsion under which

murderer, Agamemnon offers the same explanation (*ibid.* 772–5). The theory is, as it were, put to the proof when Hecuba succeeds, by the prospect of more gold, to get hold also of the sons of the initially reluctant Thracian (*ibid.* 1002 ff.). When, after that, Hecuba openly accuses Polymestor of having been motivated by his greed (*ibid.* 1206–7), she sounds sincere.

<sup>16</sup> Alternately, Polymestor may truly have feared the effects on Thrace of another Greek expedition against Troy (*ibid.* 1138 ff., esp. 1142–4). Polydorus' gold he may have kept concealed with the intention of using it, after the Greeks returned to Greece, for the restoration of his long-suffering country. His presentation of his deed as perpetrated for the sake of the Greeks and Agamemnon was, in either case, a *captatio benevolentiae*.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.* 772–5 (see note 15).

<sup>18</sup> *Tro.* 998: βίᾳ γὰρ παῖδα φῆσ <σ'> ἄγειν ἐμόν.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.* 999–1000 (R. Lattimore's translation).

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.* 962: ἦν ὁ μὲν βίᾳ γαμεῖ (R. Lattimore's translation).

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.* 946–7: ἐκ δόμων ἄμ' ἐσπόμην/ξένω, προδοῦσα πατρίδα καὶ δόμους ἐμούς in the context of 940: ἦλθ' (Paris) οὐχὶ μικρὰν θεὸν ἔχων αὐτοῦ μέτα and 948–50: τὴν θεὸν κόλαζε καὶ Διὸς κρείστων γενουῦ/θς ... κείνης ... δοῦλός ἐστι.

she had, in Troy after the death of Paris, married his brother Deiphobus.<sup>22</sup> Hecuba's presentation of Helen's words does not accord with either of these interpretations.

In the context of Hecuba's speech this "misinterpretation" crowns her refutation of Helen's disclaiming responsibility for having left Menelaus. Helen had based her plea on having been the victim of the will of Heaven—she had been allotted to Paris as his prize for the judgment he gave in the competition of the goddesses<sup>23</sup>—and on having acted under the compulsion of irresistible Aphrodite who had accompanied Paris on his fatal visit to Sparta.<sup>24</sup> Hecuba retorted that Helen was to be held responsible: the alleged competitive bribing of Paris by the three goddesses could never have taken place—neither Hera nor Athena had any reason to aspire to the prize of beauty.<sup>25</sup> Also the very idea that Aphrodite had left her abode in Heaven in order to make mortal Helen comply with a wish of hers was ridiculous.<sup>26</sup> Rather Helen, aware of Paris' riches no less than of his good looks, had been attracted by the prospect of a life of luxury<sup>27</sup> and was using Aphrodite as an excuse.<sup>28</sup> The fictitious final proof, the true fact that Helen did not scream, effectively strengthens Hecuba's argumentation from probability. It does not, however, seem to be essential for the credibility of her plea.

Incorrect too, but less blatantly so, seems to be Hecuba's use of Helen's subsequent argument. Helen claimed that she had repeatedly tried to escape to the Greek camp after the death of Paris, when the

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.* 959–60: βία δ' ὁ καινός μ' οἶτος ἀρπάσας πόσις/Δηφόβος ἄλοχον εἶχεν. The two lines are deleted by Wilamowitz, Murray and Biehl, and their deletion is recommended by many commentators, see, e.g., G.M.A. Grube, *The Drama of Euripides* (London 1941) 293 n.2; against deletion now Philip Vellacott, *Ironic Drama* (Cambridge 1975) 146. Parmentier and Lee, who retain the lines, nevertheless identify the husband of *Tro.* 962 (see note 20) with Paris. As commentators do not agree on the meaning of *Tro.* 963–4 (τὰ δ' οἴκοθεν κεῖν' ἀντὶ υκητηρίων/πικρῶς ἐδοῦλευσ') which contains the δέ of the μὲν of *Tro.* 962, no certain guidance can be gleaned from this passage.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.* 924 ff.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.* 940 ff.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.* 971 ff.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.* 983 ff.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.* 987–97.

<sup>28</sup> For the interpretation of this passage see the paper of A. Lesky *Psychologie bei Euripides* and the discussion of it by A. Rivier and H. Diller in *Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classique* VI (Geneva 1960), esp. 131–3, 155–7, 161.

alleged deal between Aphrodite and Paris had no longer any hold on her and she might be considered as having stayed on in Troy of her own free will.<sup>29</sup> Hecuba quotes (λέγεις) nearly verbatim Helen's description of her unsuccessful attempts at leaving Troy<sup>30</sup> and counters it by painting an entirely different picture of Helen's attitude towards the possibility of returning to the Greeks: she, Hecuba, had repeatedly and to no avail tried to persuade Helen to put an end to the war by returning to her former husband.<sup>31</sup> Helen, however, had been unwilling to forgo the Asiatic style of life which she was enjoying in the home of Paris.<sup>32</sup> Hecuba's wording is somewhat ambiguous,<sup>33</sup> but on the whole it seems that her description corresponds to the long years of the war when Paris was alive, rather than to the short time between his death and the fall of Troy.<sup>34</sup> Since Helen, acknowledging responsibility for her actions during that period only, had specifically referred to the latter, Hecuba's description of her daughter-in-law's behaviour is entirely irrelevant to Helen's argument.

Yet from the point of view of Hecuba, who rejected Helen's theory of divine intervention, this description is not only relevant but it stresses Helen's culpability by the very extent of time during which she is depicted as having again and again wilfully insisted on staying in Troy. At the same time Hecuba's use of Helen's words for the description of

<sup>29</sup> *Tro.* 952–8.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *ibid.* 1010–1 with 956–8: πλεκταῖς—πλεκταῖσιν, σῶμα σόν—σῶμα ... τόδε, κλέπτειν—κλέπτουσαν, πύργων in the same place of the iambic trimeter in both passages.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.* 1015–1019. The impf. of ἐνουθέτουν expresses the uncompleted action rather than "its frequentative idea" (K.H. Lee *ad loc.*): this is expressed by πολλὰ πολλάκις. Cf. all the other ind. praeteriti accompanied by πολλάκις in Euripides: *Andr.* 224–5: μαστὸν ... πολλάκις ... ἐπέσχον, 456–7: πολλάκις ... ναύτην ἔθνηκεν, 636–7: πολλάκις ... ἐνίκησε, *Cy.* 200: (ὄχλον) ..., ὑπέστην πολλάκις, *Med.* 292–3: ... με ... πολλάκις ... ἔβλαψε, 446: κατειδὼν ... πολλάκις, 1081–2: πολλάκις ... διὰ ... μύθων ἔμολον, *Tro.* 957: πολλάκις μ' ἐφηῦρον, 1198–9: (ιδρώς,) ὄν ἐκ μετώπου πολλάκις ... ἔσταξεν (V+Σ, ἔσταξεν P), fr. 901: πολλάκι μοι πραπίδων διήλθε φροντίς.

<sup>32</sup> *Tro.* 1019–1022.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.* 1016–7: "There are other girls for my sons to marry" (R. Lattimore's translation). "My sons"=Paris after Helen returns to Menelaus, or Deiphobus who wishes to marry, or has already married, the widow of his brother? See note 22.

<sup>34</sup> See esp. "in the home of Alexander", *Tro.* 1020; the obeisance offered there hardly befits a widow shortly after her husband's death. Besides, if Helen married Deiphobus, she was no longer in the home of Paris.

those attempted escapes creates the impression that she is refuting Helen's argument. By this she counterbalances the effect of the witnesses to whom Helen had, cleverly, referred. As cleverly, since Helen's witnesses could not be refuted by examination: they all were dead.<sup>35</sup>

Common to the passages examined, besides their including an explicit (φήσ, λέγεις, ὡς λέγει) but incorrect reference to words of a previous speaker, are their context and their function. They all occur in speeches of victims of morally inferior opponents,<sup>36</sup> in quasi-official ἀγῶνες (differently adapted to the different dramatic needs and circumstances of each play<sup>37</sup>) held before persons of authority on whose decision the fates of both pleader and opponent depend;<sup>38</sup> and all these misquotations or misrepresentations are evidently intended by the poet subtly to assist their pleader in achieving his aim.<sup>39</sup>

This observation may be of interest in view of Euripides' keen awareness of the power of rhetoric.<sup>40</sup> However, when Euripides time and

<sup>35</sup> The male population of Troy did not survive the fall of the city.

<sup>36</sup> This is not to say that Andromache and Hecuba are altogether perfect, and Hermione, Polymestor and Helen wholly corrupt. Whatever faults (relevant to the plays) may be found with Andromache and Hecuba are the results of the wrong done to them by or on account of Hermione, Polymestor and Helen. This is not true the other way round.

<sup>37</sup> Andromache's speech before Menelaus, *Andr.* 319 ff., is not part of a formal ἀγών. However, Andromache defends herself there against the accusations of Hermione which the audience has heard in the earlier ἀγών-fashioned (see J. Duchemin, *L'AGÓN dans la Tragédie grecque* (Paris 1945) 73) clash between the two women (*Andr.* 147 ff.). Menelaus is assumed to have heard these accusations off-stage. When he appears onstage, he is already enacting his decision in favour of his daughter, a verdict he arrived at without having granted her opponent the opportunity to defend herself. It is this that Andromache is now belatedly doing.

<sup>38</sup> This holds true also for the *Hecuba*, although the ἀγών there is held post factum and, moreover, Agamemnon's promise to acquiesce in Hecuba's revenge (*Hec.* 861–75) as good as guarantees his verdict in her favour. The "courtroom-atmosphere" is upheld throughout, from Agamemnon's "Each of you will give his version of the case and I shall try to judge you both impartially", *Hec.* 1130–1 (W. Arrowsmith's translation) to the final reaction of Polymestor to his conviction by Agamemnon "Worsted by a woman and a slave I am ... to suffer by unworthy hands", *ibid.* 1253–4 (E.P. Coleridge's translation).

<sup>39</sup> In the *Hecuba* Agamemnon accepts Hecuba's claim that Polymestor acted out of greed for his victim's gold (*Hec.* 1245). In the *Trojan Women* Menelaus accepts Hecuba's argument that Helen acted of her own free will (*Tro.* 1037). The situation is different in the *Andromache* where the passage discussed is not part of a formal ἀγών (see note 38). Here Andromache is vindicated by Peleus (*Andr.* 547 ff.) who represents Neoptolemus, to whose jurisdiction and punishment Andromache has offered to submit.

<sup>40</sup> e.g. *Hec.* 816: Πειθῶ ... τὴν τύραννον ἀνδρώπους.

again stresses the danger of the abuse of rhetoric,<sup>41</sup> he appears to have in mind not the bending of truth for the sake of strengthening the plausibility of an argument, but the use of technically good and convincing pleading (εὖ or καλῶς λέγειν) in the service of a bad cause. The question of whether technically good and convincing pleading need on principle be also morally good and impeccable does not seem to have arisen. Indeed, Hecuba's speech against Polymestor, which contains the incorrect statement dealt with above, is nonetheless praised by the chorus for its goodness.<sup>42</sup> It would thus seem that Euripides and his audience did not consider the indiscriminate use of arguments in the service of a good cause<sup>43</sup> as an abuse of the power of rhetoric.<sup>44</sup>

This conclusion may, however, be too rash. The phenomenon of incorrect attribution, should, perhaps, be viewed in the wider context of other inconsistencies introduced by Euripides also into different and non-agonistic contexts, as, for example, Hecuba's statement "Fifty children I once had, and all are dead"<sup>45</sup> which sounds as if she herself had, contrary to human nature as well as to literary tradition,<sup>46</sup> given birth to all the fifty children of Priamus. Another instance is Hecuba's address to Cassandra "There was a time I dreamed you would not wed like this, not at the spear's edge, not under force of Argive arms",<sup>47</sup> from which Hecuba's disappointment of her hopes for a royal peacetime wedding of her daughter is naturally deduced, although Hecuba could never have dreamed of a wedding for "Apollo's virgin, blessed in the privilege the gold-haired god gave her, a life forever unwed".<sup>48</sup> To

<sup>41</sup> See in their contexts e.g. *Med.* 580-1: ἄδικος ὦν σοφὸς λέγειν/πέφυκε, *Hec.* 1191: τῶδικ' εὖ λέγειν, *Tro.* 967-8: λέγει/καλῶς κακοῦργος οὔσα, *Pho.* 526: εὖ λέγειν ... μὴ πὶ τοῖς ἔργοις καλοῖς.

<sup>42</sup> *Hec.* 1238-9: ... ὡς τὰ χρηστὰ πράγματα/χρηστῶν ἀφορμὰς ἐνδίδωσ' ἀεὶ λόγων.

<sup>43</sup> = a cause intended to win without being censured on-stage for doing so.

<sup>44</sup> K.W. Lee, *Euripides, Troades* (London 1976) on *Tro.* 998: "Even the sympathetic character is not above sophistry". Not so Philip Vellacott (note 22) who sees in Hecuba, when intent on revenge, a vicious hater (p. 130) and asserts that Hecuba made the false statement of *Tro.* 998 "either deliberately or because she did not listen to Helen's defence" (p. 146). Vellacott does not remark on the other passages dealt with in this paper.

<sup>45</sup> *Hec.* 421 (W. Arrowsmith's translation).

<sup>46</sup> *Il.* 24, 496-7.

<sup>47</sup> *Tro.* 346-7 (R. Lattimore's translation).

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.* 253-4 (R. Lattimore's translation).

the same category belongs Hecuba's quoting the promise of now-dead Astyanax "Mother, when you die I will... at your grave bring companies of boys my age, to sing farewell"<sup>49</sup> which hardly befits the description of the infant in Andromache's arms when yet alive earlier in the play.<sup>50</sup> These inconsistencies<sup>51</sup> seem intended merely to create an immediate specific effect.<sup>52</sup> No special study seems to have been dedicated to this subject so far.

If the passages dealt with in this paper do belong to this wider category, they ought rather to be dealt with in that framework, and perhaps nothing should be deduced from them about Euripides' attitude towards the meaning of εὖ in εὖ λέγειν specifically.

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<sup>49</sup> *ibid.* 1182-4 (R. Lattimore's translation).

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.* 570-1 etc., esp. *ibid.* 749 ff.

<sup>51</sup> And their like. See R. Meridor, Euripides Hippolytus 1120-50, *CQ* 22 (1972) 231-5, for incongruous details introduced into a choral song.

<sup>52</sup> Σ ad *Hec.* 421 (see note 45): ἀξουσα τὸ πάθος φησί. For what is achieved by this technique in *Hi.* 1120 ff. see *CQ* 22 (1972) 234-5.