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### **Wearing Your Heart on Your Sleeve: Expressing Hecuba's Emotions in Artistic Retellings**

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Wearing Your Heart on Your Sleeve:  
Expressing Hecuba's Emotions in Artistic Retellings

Marie Gruver, 2024

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Hecuba has famously been regarded as the secondary character of the Fall of Troy and not as the maternal symbol of the city's downfall itself as she deserves. Forever the overlooked heroine, I argue that it is not Euripides' *Hecuba* per se, but readings of her story by empathetic artists, creators, and scholars of different time periods are who create new interpretations of Hecuba's role within her own myth. As artistic renditions have progressed through time, Hecuba's grief itself has become the central focus of the illustrated retellings of her story.

The Trojan Queen's legendary fall from power and humanity is most notably told in Euripides' *Hecuba*. As Priam's wife and consort, Hecuba was prosperous and fortunate; she had between nineteen and fifty children.<sup>1</sup> On the whole, she led a content life as mother of both her children and similarly of the city of Troy, itself. Soon after news came that the united Greek forces had declared war on Troy for her son Paris having stolen the Spartan king Menelaus' wife, Helen, Hecuba sent her youngest child Polydoros to be safeguarded by the king of the Bistonians in Thrace. Not only was Polymnestor a political ally of the Trojans, but he was thought of as a close friend and trusted as such. Unfortunately, that was not to be the case. After the fall of Troy at the hands of Greeks, Hecuba's beloved children were led to their deaths, one by one. As most notably in the Euripidean tragedy *Hecuba*, her last remaining daughter Polyxena was chosen to become the sacrifice for the shade of Achilles. Heartbroken, she watches as her beloved daughter is ripped from her arms to become the symbolic reparation of Troy for the Greek forces. In her unabating grief she stumbles down to the sea to collect water to perform the ritual rights for her daughter's burial and sees the lifeless body of her son Polydoros washed up upon the shore. When Hecuba is granted a private audience with Polymnestor, in her blind rage, she gouges out

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<sup>1</sup> The number of children Hecuba had to Priam and the possibly the god, Apollo is ultimately unknown. It varies between 19-50 children depending on the ancient source. Some accounts that her sons Hector and Troilus had divine paternity.

the wicked king's eyes in revenge for the murder of not only her son, but of her trust and in him. In turn, Hecuba is famously turned into a bitch, and in her newly metamorphosed dog-like form, runs away to Kynosema ("the Bitch's Tomb").

I will compare and draw connections between the depictions of Hecuba's myth in artistic media from the Classical period, through the early Neoclassical period of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, and into the later Neoclassical period of the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. In comparing these works based on their sequential positions with one another, as time has progressed, Hecuba's role has considerably grown and is more emphasized as an integral part of the compositional scene. In Classical paintings she rarely appears in artistic and literary representations other than that as a grieving mother, and when she does, she is notably a minor character in her own story. However, in Neoclassical paintings of the 18<sup>th</sup> century she fills the canvas and both her figure and maternal grief quite literally fill the canvas.

The Apulian Red-figure volute krater by the Baltimore Painter, dated to 330-310 BCE, depicts a synoptic view of the legendary fall of Troy (See Figures 1-4; Figures 5-8). Although there are several scenes and events depicted on this particular krater, I will focus on the scenes of Hecuba, Priam, and Cassandra to demonstrate how these figures visually represent and pertain to Hecuba's grief specifically. As especially depicted in this krater's storyline, Hecuba is the passive character who is forced to suffer the pain inflicted upon her by the Greek forces (See Figure 9). Fashioned in a long chiton dress, further covered by a himation which hangs over her arms and decorated in glittering jewelry, she is obviously the motherly and queenly figure of Troy. She is crouched onto one knee and leans back with fear evident from her facial features. Her eyes look up in alarm and her mouth twists downwards into a frown, as her eyebrows furrow in obvious distress. While an effeminately dressed male Trojan warrior rushes up on the right to

protect her, a beardless and youthful Greek warrior brandishes a sword and shield at the ready to capture her as a war prize for Odysseus (Eur. *Tro.* 277).

The fate of Hecuba's husband, Priam, is portrayed on the krater, for Neoptolemus, the Greek warrior, murders him upon an altar (See Figure 10). Situated to the right of Hecuba, the scene of Priam's murder portrays the bearded elderly king garbed in the royal regalia of a lofty purple Phrygian cap, lined with an engrailed white edge and four hanging flaps. He is dressed in a long chiton and himation that is embellished with a dotted radiated girdle and cross-belt.<sup>2</sup> He is positioned with his face to the front, emphasizing the intense terror and pain he experiences. He raises his left arm in alarm while desperately trying with his right arm to push away the sword that Neoptolemos is plunging into his torso. In short, everything about Priam's figure is shocking and startling to the viewer; a purposeful artistic element purposefully utilized by the artist. The fact that this event is taking place in a sanctuary, makes the violence of Neoptolemos and the Greek warriors all the more heinous. Situated in the scene right above her parents lies Cassandra as Ajax drags her by the hair, a story recounted in the *Iliupersis* (See Figure 11). The Greek warrior Ajax encroaches from behind and grabs the princess as she falls at the feet of the statuette of Athena. Cassandra is painted as dressed in a long chiton and himation with armlets and shoes; her hair is unmistakably disheveled. Overall, the scene is just as shockingly portrayed as it is for Priam down below; and as Hecuba is compositionally positioned, she must witness both of these events. Although much of the focus is not on Hecuba on the vase, other scenes do cover her family members. This compositional detail is still widely pertinent to Hecuba's own grief because it is what happens to her family that consequently decides Hecuba's own fate. In short, the events that take place around her are what put in place the series of events that will

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<sup>2</sup> "Volute Krater: Description (2: The Death of Priam)," The British Museum. Accessed October 15, 2021, [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G\\_1870-0710-1](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1870-0710-1).

ultimately drive her to her legendary breaking point. For as many different events are pictured taking place simultaneously, one can assume that as Cassandra and Priam are meeting their fates, the informed viewer of this work of art will recall other atrocities happening to Hecuba's children, Hector, Polyxena, and Polydorus.

The news of Polyxena's imminent sacrifice is depicted in the other two artistic retellings. Pierre Peyron's 1784, *The Despair of Hecuba* is a pen and black ink drawing colored over in gray wash that depicts a scene much more closely resembling Hecuba's own grief (See Figure 12). Three peplos-clad Trojan women help to support an older woman who has fallen to the ground in despair. This grieving woman wears a chiton and himation that is draped over her hair and shoulders. Her left arm is held up and supported by one of her female attendants while her other is outstretched. Despairingly, this hand holds a piece of the draped cloth that covers another figure's head and face to the right of her. This female figure kneels on the ground and is completely covered by a bridal veil that conceals her facial features from view. She is helped up by two male figures who both also wear a peplos. To the extreme right of the compositional scene stand two female figures obviously in mourning; they cover their faces in their hands and lean over the back of a couch in despair as they don't attempt to hide their emotions. On the extreme left is another Trojan woman, but who this time, stands alone. She holds an urn in her left hand and reaches for an oinochoe with her right. The scene itself takes place inside a room made with some sort of stone architecture. A large window on the left side of the composition looks out onto an ionic column that is presumably connected to the building. Further out, five Greek soldiers with spears peer into the room. Behind them, three more buildings' roofs are depicted. Although the scene is only depicted in black and white, the emotions of the figures are clear and concise. The myth it represents is Hecuba as she helps her daughter Polyxena place a

bridal veil over her face after Troy has already fallen to the Greek forces. The two male figures are Greek warriors who carry Polyxena away from her mother as she will be sacrificed as a war prize for the shade of Achilles. In short, the piece itself seems to exude the despair and grief that Hecuba herself experiences.

The final work is a later-Neoclassical piece titled *Hecuba and Polyxena*, created by Merry-Joseph Blondel sometime after 1814. The central scene depicts three women whose facial expressions emote undeniable grief (See Figure 13). In the middle of the triad sits an older woman whose curly gray hair and ashen-colored face fall to the side. Her eyes are closed, and her face and forehead are marred in wrinkles and anguish. Upon her head sits a golden crown and a white epiblema that is delineated in a golden border of thread that pools on the floor. She wears a blue, long-sleeved top that is decorated in gold design near the wrists and accompanied with golden bracelets. Atop this shirt she wears a muted maroon chiton that is pinned at the shoulders and falls loosely around her sitting figure. Behind this woman stands a female attendant who wears an olive-green sleeveless chiton and an ochre-colored scarf tied around her hair. Her face is hidden from view, but her arms are wrapped around the older woman and supports her weight as she falls down in despair. On the other side of the matriarch kneels a young female figure who raises her right arm to conceal her face with a sheer bridal veil. She passively looks downward with her gaze peering at the ground in front of her right shoulder. Her braided, blonde hair is tied up into a bun and wrapped in what looks like a piece of satin fabric. She wears a linen chiton that is pinned upon her left shoulder but falls open at her right shoulder. Fallen around her waist is an ochre-colored epiblema that is decorated in barley designs. She is also fitted with golden sandals and two thin, gold bracelets cuffed on her left wrist. This despondent scene depicts that of Hecuba and Polyxena as Polyxena prepares for her sacrificial

slaughter to the shade of Achilles by placing the bridal veil over her delicate features.

Subsequently, Hecuba is depicted as evidently bereaved as a piece of parchment lies tossed on the floor next to her feet; she has just heard the news. The Ancient Greek text: “Η ΠΙΡΟΣ ΤΟΝ ΣΦΑΓΕΝΤΑ / Η ΠΙΡΟΣ ΤΟΝ ΣΦΑΓΕΝΤΑ / ΠΟΛΥΞΕΝΗ” is written on the letter. When directly translated to English, it reads: “She the one about to be sacrificed in front of the slain Achilles Polyxena” (See Figure 14). The artist has further foreshadowed the events to come as Hecuba’s outstretched left hand reaches to touch an urn that symbolizes her fated discovery of when she sees her son Polydoros’ corpse washed up on the beach.

As a symbol of Troy itself, Hecuba experiences indescribable anguish inflicted upon her by others as she sees everything and everyone she knows reduced to ash and rubble. She is the “eponymous heroine, whose role is to suffer from these atrocities”<sup>3</sup> as Troy’s walls come crumbling down around her. In this way, her grief is both emotional as well as symbolically physical. The artist of the volute krater focuses mainly on the emotional impact of the main character through the expressive characterization of Hecuba. For she is physically set within the composition to watch her husband be murdered—a traumatizing event in itself. But doubled with the seizure of her daughter Cassandra as Ajax drags her away by the hair only adds ‘insult to injury.’ This volute krater depicts Hecuba as the “suppliant, mourner, and self-denying victim” as seen in the more popular depictions of her, especially in how she was described in the earlier half of the Euripidean tragedy, *Hecuba*.<sup>4</sup> However, the artistic representation of Hecuba depicted in this specific manner, as well as the inclusion of her daughter and husband in anguish, only underscore and emphasize her own grief. Furthermore, it helps to rationalize how she could have

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<sup>3</sup> Daniel Turkeltaub, “Hecuba” in *A Companion to Euripides*, ed. Laura K. McClure (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 136.

<sup>4</sup> Eric Dugdale, “Hecuba,” in *Brill’s Companion to the Reception of Euripides*, ed. Rosanna Lauriola, and Kyriakos N. Demetriou (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 105.



turned into the “hound of vengeance” who blinded Polymestor during the apex of her myth as described by Euripides later (Eur. *Hec.* 1265; Ov. *Met.* XIII.404-407, 565-575).

In one way or another, all of these artistic renditions take some form of inspiration from Euripides’ *Hecuba*. This is especially apparent in the ways that Hecuba’s emotional trauma is depicted within the composition. Euripides excelled in “intensive psychological portraits of desperate women” and focused much of the intents of his tragedies on the emotional consequences experienced by these women.<sup>5</sup> In the case of Hecuba specifically, the “exasperation of her suffering is directly related to her concern for her children” and other family members. Therefore, the intensity of her imminent vengeance stems directly from these earlier atrocities.<sup>6</sup> This is especially poignant because Hecuba begins the tragedy as a helpless victim and mourning mother who must witness her remaining children ripped from her arms one by one. Moreover, in the aftermath of a war that has already destroyed her city. Each of these three artists have been able to underscore the extent of the emotional impact that Hecuba’s character has on their compositions by utilizing a deeply intense, expressive characterization of her character.

However, while some inspirations are direct, others are more ancillary. Later Neoclassical pieces such as Peyron and Blondel’s renditions took their Euripidean inspirations indirectly through literary sources who themselves, took direct inspiration from Euripides’ *Hecuba*. These range from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, to Apollodoros’ *Epitome*, and to Seneca’s *Troades*—a compendium of literary resources that specifically emphasize Hecuba’s grief and at the disposal for artists to reference. In short, all of these artistic renditions of Hecuba’s story in

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<sup>5</sup> Charles Segal, “Conclusion: Euripides’ Song of Sorrow” in *Euripides and the Poetics of Sorrow: Art, Gender, and Commemoration in Alcestis, Hippolytus, and Hecuba* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 230.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

some form or another trace back to the great Euripidean tragedy that immortalized her place as the heroine of her own myth. Another result that Euripides had in inspiring other literary works is the specific emphasis on Hecuba's emotive expressiveness. These post-Euripidean writers utilized these artistic effects in different ways, but ultimately, they all furthered Euripides' groundbreaking use of representing Hecuba's trauma through intense emotional expression. For Apollodoros, he employed strong and emotive diction to emphasize the cause of Hecuba's immense grief (*Epit.* E.5.21-23). On the other hand, Seneca and Ovid utilized intensely descriptive imagery to specifically portray Hecuba's grief. For she exclaims, "Shall I weep for my child or grandson, my husband or my country? Or everything, or myself?" (*Sen. Tro.* Act 5, 1169-1171). Whereas in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as she weeps over Polyxena's sacrificed remains, she exclaims: "Now you, my Polyxena, the only one left, after so many were lost, to comfort my grief, you have been sacrificed on an enemy tomb, and I have given birth to a funeral offering for the enemy dead. Why should I go on living, numb with sorrow, why cling to life, preserved in wrinkled old age? Why cruel gods, prolong an old woman's life, unless to see more funerals?" (XIII.620-628). Moreover, when she sees later Polydoros' corpse washed up on the shore, she was so sensorily overwhelmed in anguish that she quite literally was "dumb with grief that blocked not only her voice but her rising tears. She stood like a stone, her eyes fixed...on the face of her son and upon his wounds" (*Ov. Metam.* XIII.651-656). She undoubtedly experiences an unimaginable degree of grief, that these ancient authors try to recreate in each of their literary renditions. For *Hecuba* is "a story of layered traumas" as Hecuba "descends from queen and wife to captive slave and widow, and finally to bereft mother, and experiences various disruptive traumas at different times. Her language cannot keep pace with her obliterated identity, and she

frequently laments that she is destroyed and cannot adequately express what has happened.”<sup>7</sup> While Troy falls down around her, Hecuba is undoubtedly traumatized as seen in what is depicted on the krater (See Figure 11). However, the losses of her last two children Polyxena, and shortly after Polydoros, shake Hecuba’s view of the world to her core. She experiences a trauma that can never truly be accurately portrayed, and as a grieving mother, these two losses are most definitely Hecuba’s final breaking point. This trauma is what the artists Peyron and Blondel (Figures 12 and 13, respectively) try to capture in their artistic renditions. For they attempted to further the intense emotive expressiveness laid forth by Seneca and Ovid, who in their time were trying to do the same with the original Euripidean tragedy. The popularized series events that we know of Hecuba’s demise today is formed through the synthesis of Euripides, Ovid, and Seneca’s collective renditions of Hecuba’s myth.

The Neoclassical movement that both Peyron and Blondel belonged to, spanned the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was a period of time where artistic and social perceptions alike were trying to recreate the aptness that was being revived from a newfound interest in antiquity. During this period of time, an abundance of new archaeological discoveries from the Graeco-Roman world were sparking a widespread zeal for “‘antique’ ideals of calm simplicity and noble grandeur” that was rampant in ancient art and culture alike. “Neo-Classicism differs from previous classical revivals in Europe by the fact that it was a deliberate and conscious imitation of antique models,” and literary and artistic references.<sup>8</sup> This revived ideology is readily apparent in Peyron and Blondel’s own artistic renditions of the Hecuba myth, because they heavily drew inspiration from the art and literary sources that came before them.

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<sup>7</sup> Julia E. Paré, “Falling on Deaf Ears: Trauma in Euripides’ *Hecuba*” (Master’s thesis, University of Arizona, 2020), 15.

<sup>8</sup> Harold Osborne, ed. “Neo-Classicism” in *The Oxford Companion to Art* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 768.

Across each of the three artworks the scenes depicted become less active and more psychologically poignant. This is markedly discernable when comparing the Apulian volute krater (See Figure 9) to Blondel's *Hecuba and Polyxena* (See Figure 13). Although there is a substantial amount of time between the inceptions of the krater and the Blondel and Peyron paints, it is important to note the switch in compositional intentions. The two Neoclassical artists have a completely different aim for the purpose and emotional effect of Hecuba's character within the scene than the artist of the krater did. In short, the differing time periods demand different content and interpretations from the artists. As a sense of the overall physical motion decreases, the expressiveness of the scene becomes more incisive in portraying the emotional state of Hecuba's character. In turn, the activity within the painted scene becomes more static and motionless.<sup>9</sup> Through this stylistic change produced by the artist, Hecuba's emotional impact becomes more moving to the viewer, for it holds more weight within the composition.

Another discernable change between each of the three pieces is the choice of the episode depicted. In the later Neoclassical art of Peyron and Blondel, the specific episode chosen from the Hecuba myth has moved to earlier scenes than the ones portrayed by previous artists. For instance, in his *The Despair of Hecuba*, Peyron depicts Polyxena as being actively carried away by Greek warriors (See Figure 12). These two men's hands are physically touching Polyxena in the literal mid-act of carrying her away for sacrifice. However, in the later piece produced by Blondel, an even earlier scene is depicted; he paints the finite moments before Polyxena is actually taken away (See Figure 13). The foreshadowing within the piece also implies the events to come, as seen in the paper on the floor. Additionally, Polyxena's bridal veil plays an important role in instigating motion and time within the composition. Peyron depicts Polyxena as already

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<sup>9</sup> Compare Figures 9-11 to Figures 12 and 13.

veiled; her face is already shrouded. This artistic detail denotes that the events leading up to her sacrifice to the shade of Achilles has already commenced. But comparatively, Blondel portrays Polyxena merely beginning to veil herself, a transitional episode that takes place moments before she will actively be carried away for her sacrificial slaughter by Greek warriors.

Another stylistic detail that has transitioned across these three pieces is the number of figures included within the composition. This is mostly attributed to a style of epic expansiveness transitioning into a specific tragic focus. In the case of Hecuba, this directly affects her role within the composition as well as her importance within the context of the myth itself, regardless of the method of retelling. She no longer fills up extra compositional space, but she seizes her role as the bereaved symbol of Troy itself. As less unnecessary figures fill up the compositional scene, her role as the grieving mother gains new visual recognition and understanding. The lack of a tragically focused depiction of Hecuba's story in antiquity is also more likely due to the fact that female figures took minor roles in art and literature. This is especially true for Hecuba because in ancient art, as seen in the volute krater, she is largely depicted as a "secondary character witnessing the deaths of [her] loved ones" rather than being the artistic focus herself.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, Peyron and Blondel's artistic renditions exact Hecuba as the main figure of her own piece; she is no longer merely a secondary figure added to another myth. By excluding figures whose compositional roles are only to fill up empty space, a motif common in a style of epic expansiveness, the importance of characters left become ever more heightened. In the case of Hecuba specifically, her figure now not only compositionally takes center-stage, but her emotive expressions do as well. As the viewer, one cannot help but focus their attention on the unremitting woe of Hecuba's turmoil. This is especially poignant because

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<sup>10</sup> Dugdale, "Hecuba," 118.

there aren't other figures or actions taking place within the scene to distract the viewer from her misery. The story is just as epic in expanse in all three works, but the expansiveness transitions from the physical to the metaphysical realm. In the latter two pieces especially, these scenes focus most especially on Hecuba's own self tragedy. For her grief replaces the other unnecessary figures who fill the compositional scene. And it is because of this that the emblematic emptiness Hecuba feels is represented and emphasized.

Not only is Hecuba alone in her grief, but there is also nothing depicted that can compare to it. Compositional details like these ensure that the emotional impact of the characters is highlighted and underscored as the emphasis of the piece. While the activity of the scene becomes more motionless as the artistic renditions progress over time, the scene stills stays just as expressive in activity. Whereas the figures become more static, the figures' emotional expressiveness themselves instead become all the more animated. However now, it is more psychologically dynamic as compared to physically active. As the physical trauma that Hecuba's family members experience around her disappear, her own psychological trauma is accentuated. Furthermore, this trauma that she experiences can be comparable to the physical pain inflicted upon her loved ones. This idea of emptiness within the compositional setting is underscored better in the two Neoclassical pieces (Figures 12 and 13). These artists overwhelmingly focused their attention to Hecuba's loneliness as she grieves the losses of her loved ones. For she is quite literally alone, both physically and psychologically, as she is the last member of the Trojan royal family to come out of the war alive. Set aside for Cassandra who was still rather dragged away by Ajax to be a concubine for Agamemnon. Consequently, Hecuba is the only one of her family to be left standing; both her husband and children alike have been ripped from her arms. It is in this forlorn grief she experiences because of this that Hecuba cries out "for me alone Ilium still

survives, and my troubles go on. Not long ago I had everything, so many sons and daughters and their husbands and wives, and my husband. Now I am exiled, ragged, [and] torn from the graves of my loved ones” (Ov. *Metam.* XIII.611-615).

All fifty of her children had been “slain by the spear of Hellas,” forcing her to have had to mourn their deaths at their tombs. Moreover, she has also seen their father, Priam, butchered on his own hearth” (Eur. *Hec.* 421; Eur. *Tro.* 479f.). In the krater specifically, both the seizure of her daughter Cassandra and her husband are depicted in close account to what Euripides’ describes in his tragedies. Hecuba is likewise portrayed as one of the many figures being harmed by the Greek warriors which both emphasizes her own emotional turmoil and draws comparisons to the other oppressed figures of Troy. Being compositionally proportional to other figures such as her husband and daughter, she can be assumed to have a comparable amount of pain. However, while Priam’s pain is predominantly physical as he is brutally murdered, Hecuba’s pain can be inferred as mostly psychological as she is having to witness both the death of her husband as well as the seizure of her daughter, seen depicted above them. Additionally, this idea of equating Hecuba’s psychological trauma to the physical pain experienced by her family is a common artistic motif also apparent in Peyron and Blondel’s later renditions of the myth. For although Polyxena in these later pieces is not actively being harmed during the episode portrayed, the effect of foreshadowing of her imminent sacrifice stands as substitute. However, these artists both depict Hecuba as in an innumerable amount of grief. Her body language and facial features support this, as in both works, she must be supported by attendants as to not fall down. In this sense, her psychological trauma can undoubtedly be equated to not only match, but to surpass the amount of physical pain that Polyxena is anticipated to undergo.

A final, yet vital concept to discuss is that of the artist's intent to affect the audience. What has come about of the representation of Hecuba in these later two pieces is the guttural and unmasked trauma that she is forced to experience; Peyron and Blondel specifically emphasize this aspect in their pieces. For the terror and sheer grief that she undergoes, is markedly the piece itself. As noted earlier, these two Neoclassical artists have drawn much more of their intentions of their compositions on the emotional turmoil that Hecuba experiences, as compared to the depiction of the Trojan queen in the Apulian krater. They have achieved these aims by underscoring the emotional elements abundant in Euripides' *Hecuba* and the *Trojan Women*, which strikingly "centers on Hecuba's increasing grief and bitterness" as she witnesses the unjustified murders of her loved ones.<sup>11</sup> As the expressive expansiveness that is Hecuba's grief is all the more emphasized in the Neoclassical pieces, her trauma is able to take its rightful place as centerstage. "Euripides' Hecuba exemplifies the worst possible fate that can happen to human beings" and it is undoubtedly "appalling, [and] bound up with terror." Just as Euripides' intended, Peyron and Blondel have seemingly also intended to affect their audience in a similar way. We, as an audience, are forced to experience terror "at the possibility that we and the people we love might suffer what Hecuba suffers" as we experience these artist retellings of Hecuba's unabating grief.<sup>12</sup> It is certainly no coincidence, but a conscious compositional element underscored by the artist.

Euripides' *Hecuba* has had a resounding influence on both the literary and artistic renditions of Hecuba's story throughout time; however, it is not the only guiding force. Societal perceptions and how they change over time and become more empathetic, begin to emphasize

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<sup>11</sup> Kenneth Reckford, "Pity and Terror in Euripides' 'Hecuba'" *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics*, Third Series vol. 1, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 25-26.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.



Hecuba's importance within her own myth and the way that she is included in artistic recreations of it. The way that the Trojan queen's emotional turmoil has been depicted has not only improved since Antiquity, but Hecuba has finally been able to take her rightful place as the heroine and main character within her own story—no longer just a grieving mother watching from the sidelines.

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Appendix<sup>i</sup>



Figure 1. Side A (current)



Figure 2. Side B (current)



Figure 3. Side left, in profile (current)



Figure 4. Side right, in profile (current)





Figure 5. Side A (pre-restoration)



Figure 6. Side B (pre-restoration)



Figure 7. Side left, in profile (pre-restoration)



Figure 8. Side right, in profile (pre-restoration)



Figure 9. Side A (lower row), left. Hecuba is crouched and attacked by a Greek warrior (left) and defended by an effeminately dressed male Trojan warrior (right).



Figure 10. Side A (lower row), right. *The Death of Priam*: Priam is stabbed by Neoptolemos while kneeling on the statuary of Zeus Herkeios. A female Trojan warrior rushes in on the extreme right.



Figure 11. Side A (upper row), left. *Iliupersis*: Ajax (extreme left) seizes Cassandra by the hair who clutches the statuary of Athena. A female Trojan warrior (right) holds arm up as if beckoning.



Figure 12. Hecuba and a group of grieving Trojan women in a room. Hecuba falls over in despair after she hears of the upcoming sacrifice of her daughter, Polyxena to the shade of Achilles. Two Greek men begin to carry away a veiled figure as Hecuba clutches a corner of the cloth's veil. A Trojan woman stands on the extreme left carrying two urns, foreshadowing Hecuba's finding of her son, Polydoros' corpse washed up on the shore as she goes to get water to cleanse Polyxena's body for burial after the sacrifice.



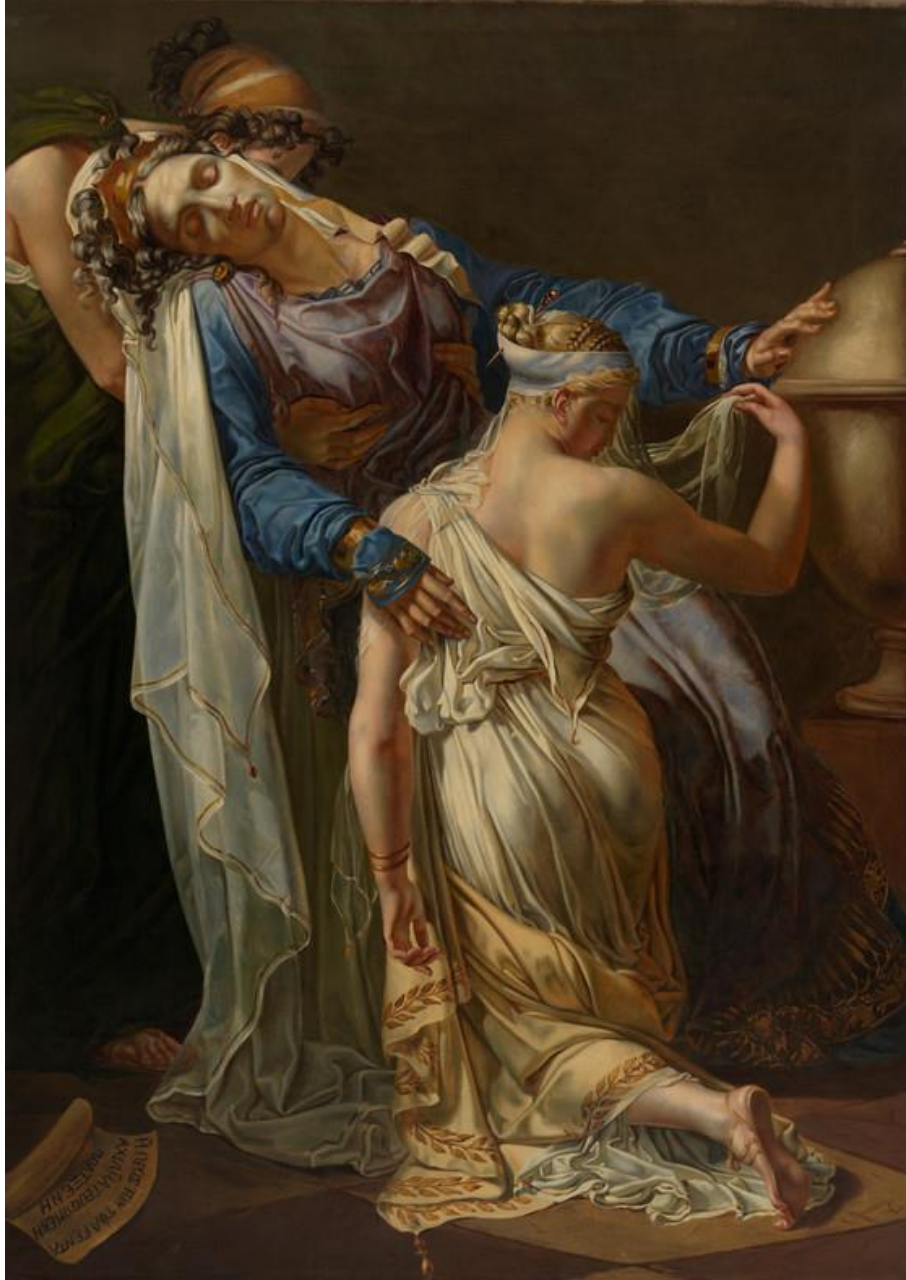


Figure 13. Hecuba falls down in despair as she hears that her daughter, Polyxena must be sacrificed by the Greeks to the shade of Achilles. She stretches out her arm to touch an urn, to foreshadow her finding her son, Polydoros' corpse washed up on the shore. A paper with writing on it has fallen on the floor. A Trojan woman stands behind Hecuba to support the weight of her falling figure. Polyxena crouches in front of Hecuba, pulling a bridal veil over her eyes.



Figure 14. Detail of the fallen letter in *The Despair of Hecuba*. The text is written in Ancient Greek which translates to “She the one about to be sacrificed in front of the slain Achilles Polyxena.” (Η ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΝ ΣΦΑΓΕΝΤΑ // Η ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΝ ΣΦΑΓΕΝΤΑ // ΠΟΛΥΞΕΝΗ).

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<sup>i</sup> N.B. *Volute Krater* was heavily damaged in a restoration process in Dec. 1965—Both the most up-to-date pictures of the vase [Figures 1-4] and those from before [Figures 5-8] are included and will be accurately discussed in the paper. All of the image details will be argued using photos prior to the restoration [Figures 9-11].