

UNSTABLE STATUSES IN EURIPIDES' *ANDROMACHE*

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Lay Abstract

The thesis analyzes the statuses of the characters in the play *Andromache*, written by the Athenian Euripides in the fifth century BCE. Euripides' *Andromache* has been considered one of his weaker plays, with scholars calling the lack of both a central character and a coherent and logical plot as the play's weaknesses. However, with an examination of the characters' statuses, the plot becomes clearer and the play comments on the problems of defining citizenship and status which Athens was experiencing during Euripides' life. All the characters in this play fill the roles of positions connected to the Greek *oikos* (house). By analyzing Euripides' characterization of these characters regarding their relation to the *oikos*, it is possible that this play serves as a commentary on issues of citizenship at Athens of both females and bastard children in the second half of the fifth century BCE. This analysis may also answer some of the play's so-called problems.

Abstract

The thesis argues for a reading of Euripides' *Andromache* that focuses on the statuses of the characters – their roles within the *oikos* – and their instability. The scholarship on this play focuses on its differences from other surviving plays and, based on an ancient hypothesis calling it a “second-rate play,” it has acquired a negative reputation. The goal of the thesis is not to defend the work and salvage its reputation but to provide a reading which responds to some of the criticism and offers a new analysis. The chapters are divided according to the gender of the characters with the first one examining the male characters, Neoptolemus, Menelaus, Peleus, and Orestes and the next two focusing on Andromache, including her child, and Hermione separately. The exploration of these characters is connected to their own relationship to Neoptolemus' *oikos*. It is the actions of men that define the statuses of the female characters in this play and Euripides depicts the men's roles as less questionable. Because the statuses of Andromache and Hermione are the most unstable a full chapter is required for both. The analysis of the characters is based on their interactions with other characters within the play and at times includes an exploration of how the characters relate to the works of other tragedians and political works in fifth century BCE Athens. By reading the play with this specific focus, the actions of the characters suggest a distinctive portrayal by Euripides which can correlate with social issues in Athens at the time of the play's production (c.428-425 BCE). A new reading of this play explains its unique composition and adds another way Euripides may have been influenced by Athenian politics and his interpretation of a problem in the relationship between the *polis* and the *oikos*.

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
I. Historical Evidence of the Play.....	4
II. Complementary Textual Evidence.....	6
III. Chapter Breakdown.....	6
Chapter 1: The Men of Neoptolemus' <i>Oikos</i>.....	8
I. Introduction.....	8
II. Neoptolemus.....	10
III. Menelaus.....	17
IV. Peleus.....	21
V. Orestes.....	24
VI. Conclusion.....	27
Chapter 2: The Concubine and her Bastard Child.....	30
I. Introduction.....	30
II. Andromache and the Slave-Woman.....	32
III. Debate between Andromache and Hermione.....	35
IV. Debate between Menelaus and Andromache.....	39
V. Debate between Peleus and Menelaus.....	43
VI. Thetis and Andromache.....	45
VII. Conclusion.....	47
Chapter 3: The Legitimate Wife in Despair.....	49
I. Introduction.....	49
II. Hermione as a Wife.....	50
III. Hermione and Menelaus.....	51
IV. Hermione as Spartan.....	56
V. Helen and Hermione.....	58
VI. Thetis and Hermione.....	59
VII. Threatened Wives in Tragedy.....	61
VIII. Conclusion.....	64
Concluding Remarks.....	66
Bibliography.....	69
List of Figures.....	78

List of Figures

Figure 3.1: Wedding of Thetis and Peleus on a vase.....	78
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Declaration of Academic Achievement

The author declares that the content of this research has been completed by Nicholas Ryan MacKenzie, with recognition of the contributions of the supervisory committee comprising of Dr. Kathryn Mattison, Dr. Sean Corner, and Dr. Claude Eilers during the research and writing process.

Unstable Statuses in Euripides' *Andromache*

Introduction

Euripides' *Andromache* has gained a negative reputation, with many citing the hypothesis of Aristophanes of Byzantium which refers to it as a second-rate play (τὸ δὲ δρᾶμα τῶν δευτέρων).¹ There problems adduced include the lack of a main character and the issue of the play's divided narrative. There have been attempts to argue that the leading character is either Andromache,² Hermione,³ or even Neoptolemus.⁴ None of these arguments have come to any conclusion and, instead of focusing on a principal character, scholars have looked to find a unifying theme. Some of the major themes involve juxtapositions of moral ideas, such as *sophia* and *sophrosune*,⁵ or *phusis* and *nomos*.⁶ Another theme involves the relationships of the characters and familial anxieties.⁷

Many scholars have focused on the latter and my reading of Euripides' *Andromache* builds upon this theme. The works of Storey, Phillippo, Kyriakou, and Papadimitropoulos present varying arguments revolving around the theme of marriage and relationships. Storey's article focuses on disharmony in the *oikos*. I will examine these questions with an eye to the statuses of the individuals involved. I intend by status both the characters' position or role within the *oikos* and within the community. Scholars

¹ See P.T. Stevens (1971, 27-28), who suggests that the phrase might be more praiseworthy than expected.

² J.C. Kamerbeek (1943, 47-55); H. Erbse (1966, 291ff).

³ A. Garzya (1952).

⁴ J.M. Mossman (1996).

⁵ P.S. Boulter (1966).

⁶ K.H. Lee (1975).

⁷ I. Storey (1989); S. Phillippo (1995); P. Kyriakou (1997); L. Papadimitropoulos (2006).

have examined the familial statuses of characters before. Rabinowitz discusses *Andromache* in relation to the many triangular relationships found within the play, one of which I will focus on here: Neoptolemus-Menelaus-Hermione – husband-father-bride. Rabinowitz focuses on how Euripides raises issues of the exchange status of women in this play, but I want to argue that reading the play with attention to the role of each character removes some of the problems scholars have seen in the play.⁸

The previous scholarship focuses, in the absence of a main character, on the questions of thematic unity to explain the episodic nature of the plot.⁹ Euripides has three characters suffer turmoil and all three receive a form of salvation. This has left scholars confused about Euripides' purpose and unsure of what to make about the connection of these three parts. Andromache, for example, for whom the play is named, plays an important role in the first half of the play and then disappears for the second half.¹⁰ Because three characters are put in a situation of despair – Andromache, Hermione, and Peleus – and all three of them are saved – by Peleus, Orestes, and Thetis respectively – it is understandable to read the play according to a tripartite plot division. Judith Mossman has argued, however, that attempting to suggest a thematic integration of *Andromache* goes against Euripides' process.¹¹ Instead of focusing on a theme, Mossman looks at one

⁸ My goal is not to act as a defender of the play, but instead to propose a new reading which I believe answers some of the problems previous scholars have suggested.

⁹ I, Storey (1989): 1-765, 766-1046, 1057-1288; L. Papadimitropoulos (2006): 1-801, 802-1046, 1047-1288. Both scholars divide the play into its three parts. The difference in the first plot for Storey and Papadimitropoulos is where they decided to place the choral ode (766-801).

¹⁰ See H. Golder (1983) for the argument on Andromache and her possible presence in the play's final stages.

¹¹ Her issue with *Andromache* is that the play incorporates many themes explored in their entirety in other plays. Mossman lists them as "the effects of war, nationality and difference, women and their relationships with men and with each other, and the relationship between men and the gods (144)." Malcolm Heath

uniting character. She argues that the character Neoptolemus connects all the varying themes of the play and helps explain its dramatic issues.¹²

Neoptolemus is an important character and, as I will show, his actions are central to plot. However, I will focus on a specific aspect of his character – his status as the husband and master of the *oikos*. Instead of adducing another possible unifying theme or providing a new reason to believe that there is a central character, I wish to contribute a new reading of the play which involves Euripides' exploration of the varying statuses of the characters in their respective roles in the *oikos*. Looking at this play in this way obviates the need to unite the parts of the narrative; instead I am able to explain the significance of each of the characters' own moments on stage. This has the added benefit, as I hope to illustrate, of making the action of the play more coherent and intelligible.

In *Andromache*, the *oikos* comprises a husband, Neoptolemus, and his wife, Hermione. Together with them, there are, slaves the most important of whom is Andromache herself. She is Neoptolemus' concubine and mother of his bastard child. Because of the tension within the *oikos* in Neoptolemus' absence, Menelaus, Hermione's father, and Peleus, Neoptolemus' grandfather, intervene. In addition, Euripides introduces Orestes to his narrative. Orestes represents a physical and violent threat to the *oikos* as an adulterer and murderer. Lastly, Thetis serves not merely as the *dea ex machina*, but is also specifically significant by virtue of her role in relation to the *oikos*.

(*Unity in Greek Poetics*, 1989, 8-9) shows that the concept of thematic integration is problematic. Laura McClure agrees with Mossman's view on thematic integration (159 n8).

¹² J.M. Mossman, 144.

I. Historical Evidence of the Play

The date and place of production and are not solidly proven and there has been debate about the testimony in regard to the play's authorship. However, we can be assured that the play was written by Euripides, and as such it can, regardless of where it was performed, be treated as an Athenian work. Though uncertain of its precise date, we know that it was written in the second part of the fifth century.¹³ The conditions that prevailed at Athens at this time are vital for understanding the play.

The importance of legitimacy and childbirth for Athenian families and the role of concubines in Athens help establish why Euripides incorporated these ideas into his play. Pericles' citizenship law of 451 BCE made it so that a citizen needed to have an Athenian father and mother. This requirement was reinstated by the law of Nicomenes in 403/402 BCE,¹⁴ suggesting that the Periclean law was either not in effect or not enforced at some time in the interim. Edwin Carawan suggests that the amendment passed in 430-429 that legitimized Pericles' son by Aspasia, was not limited only to his case, but allowed citizens in general to adopt their *nothos* to carry on their name and house if they did not have a legitimate child.¹⁵ It is also possible that, in response to the population loss

¹³ For commentary on the dating of the play, please see M. Lloyd (1994), 11-12 and P.T. Stevens (1971), 15-18. My interpretation of the play is reinforced by the view of Athenian citizenship by its own citizens. The citizenship laws of 451/450 of Pericles and their renewal in 404/403 show that the thought of what made an Athenian citizen a proper one was on the minds of Athenians, but the laws also reveal that they were not always abided. Pericles' own actions are of great interest as he was someone who married a foreign woman and made his child with her a legitimate citizen. It would be interesting if Euripides was commenting on this situation experienced by no doubt many Athenians and not just Pericles and just waited for the death of a prominent Athenian leader.

¹⁴ Schol. Aeschin. I 39; Eumelus FGrH II A 77 F 2. The law states that those born after 403/402 were considered citizens if both their parents were. D. Ogden (1996), 77-81.

¹⁵ E. Carawan (2008).

suffered during the Peloponnesian War, a decree was passed that allowed an Athenian man to marry two women at the same time.¹⁶ It has even been suggested that Euripides had two wives simultaneously.¹⁷

One way or another, it appears that the period between Pericles' legislation in 451/450 and the end of the fifth century witnessed a relaxation of the citizenship law. But with the restoration of democracy in 403 BCE, the citizenship law was reinstated; however, those born before 403 BCE were allowed to maintain their status.¹⁸ In order to preserve the newly restored democracy, the Athenians restored the strict and exclusive boundary between citizens and foreigners in the *polis*. I believe that Euripides' *Andromache* reflects a period in which the boundaries of citizenship became unclear. In the play, a man marries a legitimate wife, a Greek wife, but has a relationship, which produces a child, with a concubine. Some characters seem to approve this situation, based on their actions, and others stand against it. Laws changed throughout the fifth century in Athens and concubines had the opportunity to increase their status within the *oikos*. These circumstances would have permitted some individuals to increase their social rank but would have compromised the exclusive status enjoyed by others. This is what Euripides is exploring in his *Andromache*, depicting how problematic the issue of legitimacy was for Athenians.

¹⁶ Andocides 1.124; Diogenes Laertius *Lives of the Philosophers* 2.26; E. Carawan (2008).

¹⁷ D.M. MacDowell (1978), 90.

¹⁸ D. Ogden (1996), 77-81.

II. Complementary Textual Evidence

For evidence of the context of the play, I have looked especially to Xenophon, Aristotle, Plato, Demosthenes, Andocides, and Plutarch. Equally, it is important to understand the play in its generic context. The tragedians often incorporated the motif of the absent husband in their works and I will explore these cases found in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, and Euripides' *Hippolytus*. The *Agamemnon*, the *Trachiniae*, and Euripides' *Medea* also include a domestic conflict of two women sharing the same marriage-bed. These two themes are important in Euripides' *Andromache*, and I will show how this play connects to these other tragedies.

III. Chapter Breakdown

I have divided my discussion into three parts, each focused on a set of characters or an individual character. In the first chapter, the adult male roles will be examined. An *oikos* was formed by an agreement between two men, in this case Menelaus and Neoptolemus. The discussion will focus on Neoptolemus' failure as a husband and the head of his *oikos* and how this damages his home and family members. His inability leads to the involvement of Menelaus and, later, Peleus. The end of the first chapter will include a discussion of Orestes, the secretive wrongdoer who hangs around the house of the absent husband. These four roles represent different roles, responsibilities, and threats in the life of the *oikos*.

Neoptolemus is the initial cause that starts the problems for everyone else in his house. In the second chapter, I will examine Andromache and her bastard child. In the play, the fates of the mother and son are tied together. Both of their lives are at risk and depend on Peleus for their safety. Neoptolemus' failure to clarify the status of his war-prize is the initial source of the house's troubles, and as such the motive of the action. Andromache's problematic status speaks, beyond the world of the stage, to the questions being confronted by Athens at this time in respect of status in *oikos* and *polis*.

Because of the relationship between Neoptolemus and Andromache, the legitimate wife of the house, Hermione, is angry, then later scared and confused. My third and final chapter will examine her character. Hermione is very much a reaction and a response to the character of Andromache. Because of Neoptolemus' failure in his role, they are pitted against one another in this female competition concerning childbirth. Euripides focuses on this competition between them, a part of the myth which he invented, for the greater part of the play.

I will conclude that the interpretation of the characters framed in these terms reveals the coherence of the play. By analyzing all the characters individually and showing their role in the *oikos*, the play as a whole is revealed as a commentary on the question of Athenian citizenship and the issues of marriage and legitimacy.

Chapter 1: The Men of Neoptolemus' *Oikos*

I. Introduction

Euripides' *Andromache* focuses on female characters, emphasizing the relationship between Andromache and Hermione. It is the status of these two characters that undergoes change, but to thoroughly discuss these is necessarily to discuss them in relation to the roles of the men. It is because of a man's actions that the house is in disarray and the conflict between the two women is a consequence of Neoptolemus' missteps as a husband. His failures affect not only Hermione and Andromache, but also Menelaus and Peleus, who are drawn into the women's dispute. Neoptolemus' inability to protect his household also encourages an uninvited guest, Orestes, to appear and threaten the *oikos*.

The reason to start the examination with the men of this play is because marriage and the relationships formed within the play are governed by the men. This analysis helps recognize their specific roles in these relationships and shows how Euripides specifically focuses on aspects of their characterization that emphasize their status within the *oikos*. Athenian men played the more significant role in the formation of a marriage. A suitor would approach a father for his daughter's hand. This process of betrothal is referred to by both Peleus and Orestes in the play (Peleus at 619ff; Orestes at 966ff). It is hinted at once again at the end of the play when Hermione tells Orestes that she must first go back to her father before she can be handed to another man in marriage (987-988). By referring

to the betrothal throughout the play, Euripides highlights the failures of the men involved to abide by their promises.

In this chapter, I will discuss the roles of all the males involved in relation to their status or position in the *oikos*. This includes Neoptolemus as the husband and *kyrios* of the *oikos*, Menelaus as the father of Hermione, who is the legitimate wife of Neoptolemus, Peleus who acts as the *kyrios* in place of the missing Neoptolemus, and finally Orestes who represents the intruder, the one who destroys Neoptolemus' *oikos*. Thus in this play, Euripides has all these characters representing different roles within and without the *oikos*. We see a husband and his wife, a concubine and her bastard child, the older male relatives from both families who because of the flaws of the young husband must intervene in the affairs of the house, and an insidious interloper. By ending the play with the legitimization of the once bastard son of Neoptolemus, Euripides reinforces the significance of family and the continuation of the *oikos*. The failure to produce offspring and continue a lineage is important to the characters and especially to Peleus, who is most distraught when he discovers that Neoptolemus has been killed. Peleus considers himself dead because he has lost his last legitimate offspring (1176-1178). He only finds peace after Thetis legitimizes the bastard son of Neoptolemus and Andromache.¹⁹

¹⁹ In Plutarch's *Pericles* (36-37), Plutarch describes Pericles experiencing the death of his two legitimate sons and how seeing his despair the Athenian people allowed him to make his *nothos* his official child. According to Plutarch, Pericles most emotional moment in his life was witnessing the death of his two boys. There is a similarity between Plutarch's Pericles and Peleus as depicted by Euripides. Both also receive the required legislation from the more powerful being (the people of Athens and Thetis) in order to legitimize a bastard child.

The play's focus on marriage and its ending with the legitimization of a bastard child has implications for the question of Athenian citizenship. Whether Pericles' request in 430/429 BCE to amend his own citizenship law to grant his *nothos* citizenship was just for himself or an option available to all Athenian fathers who lost their only sons in the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, the events of the play speak to the question confronting Athenian society at the time of roles within the boundaries of the *oikos* and their implication for membership in the city.²⁰ In Euripides' play, a child who is both non-Greek and illegitimate becomes both Greek and legitimate.

The examination of Neoptolemus' characterization will include a comparison to other Athenian tragedies. Euripides' *Andromache* is not the only play to incorporate the use of the absent husband motif as it is also seen in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Euripides' *Hippolytus*, and Sophocles' *Trachiniae*. A speech by Lysias also suggests how a man should have acted when it comes to having relationships with more than one woman. This evidence helps recognize Neoptolemus' faults and shows how tragedians were interested in depicting the problems that can arise when a husband is absent.

II. Neoptolemus

Even though Neoptolemus is not a speaking character in Euripides' play, he looms over the plot.²¹ The failure of Neoptolemus is the original source of the uproar in

²⁰ Depending on when someone dates the play, Euripides may have begun working on this play soon after Pericles' request.

²¹ J. Mossman's article (1996), places Neoptolemus at the forefront to establish a thematic unity of the play.

the house.²² His absence throughout this play demonstrates his incapability as a husband. He is often referred to by the other characters, but the only moment the audience sees Neoptolemus is when his corpse is brought onto the stage (1166ff). Andromache tells us at the play's start that Neoptolemus is away, making a second visit to the Delphic oracle (50-55).²³ His character is developed here as Andromache states that his purpose is to apologize to Apollo for having aggressively blamed the god for the death of Achilles.

Euripides does not depict the aggressive and violent Neoptolemus seen in epic poetry.²⁴ The myth of his killing Andromache and Hector's son, Astyanax, is not directly mentioned, neither is the murder of Priam.²⁵ In three surviving plays of Euripides which mention Neoptolemus, we see no evidence of a violent nature. In *Hecuba*, the story of his sacrificing Polyxena is mentioned and he is portrayed as compassionate throughout the process (566-575). In Euripides' *Trojan Women*, Neoptolemus is only mentioned as the hero who takes Andromache as a war-prize (1123ff).

Euripides presents Neoptolemus as capable of anger, but also remorse. At the same time, he presents him as irresponsible. A previous version of Neoptolemus' myth, by Pherecydes, includes Hermione's barrenness as the reason for Neoptolemus' visit to

²² I would agree with Mossman (1996) that Neoptolemus is the main character of the play as he stands, although never physically present, as the cause of the play's action.

²³ For different versions of Neoptolemus' myth and his reasons for visiting the Delphic oracle, see Stevens (1971), 1-2; Torrance (2013), 193-194.

²⁴ Homer, *Odyssey* XI.504-537; Virgil, *Aeneid* Book II.

²⁵ In Paus., 10.27.2, Neoptolemus drags Priam away from the altar to kill him. In *Iliou Persis*, Neoptolemus murders Priam at the altar. In *Ilias Parva*, Neoptolemus kills Astyanax by throwing him down from the walls of Troy. See Stevens (1971) 1.

the oracle.²⁶ The important or royal figure looking for the oracle's aid in regard to childbearing is common in ancient literature, and Euripides' omission of this aspect of Neoptolemus' myth highlights the character's shortcomings with respect to his duties towards his wife and, by extension, the *oikos* as a whole. Although in the play, Hermione receives all the blame for the lack of a child, Neoptolemos' absence shows him to be distracted and not focused on an important duty. If Euripides would have added that Neoptolemus' purpose for making amends with Apollo were to receive divine assistance to bring a child to himself and Hermione, as in Pherecydes' version, things would be different. But, instead, we are told only that Neoptolemus wants to receive a non-specified favour from the god in the future (55). Euripides never directly shows Neoptolemus to be concerned with the fact that Hermione has not borne a child yet, although he should be. The actions of other characters illustrate the importance of producing legitimate children. It explains Hermione's attack on Andromache and her desire to kill the child. The threat to Hermione's position in the house motivates Menelaus' intervention, in defence of his daughter. All of this is confirmed in the play's final moments, when Peleus can only be comforted with the legitimization of his last surviving offspring. Hermione's barrenness has affected many of the characters in the play and yet there is no indication that it is of any concern to Neoptolemus.

²⁶ Stevens (1971), 2. FGH 1, 78, 64a. F. Jacoby (1947) argues for there being two individuals by the name of Pherecydes. Although he was not the first to raise this idea, Jacoby distinguishes one as Pherecydes of Syros, who lived in the sixth century BCE, and Pherecydes of Athens (of Leros), who lived in the fifth century BCE. Jacoby cites Pherecydes of Athens as the author of a mythological history and a section focuses on Neoptolemus' myth. More recent scholarship, see D.L. Toye (1997), has suggested that Jacoby is incorrect and both Pherecydes are the same person.

Euripides characterizes Neoptolemus early in the play through the words of the other characters. In the prologue, Andromache tells the audience that Neoptolemus is master of his house but that he has permitted Peleus to retain rule in Pharsalus (21-23). This foreshadows the meeting between Menelaus and Peleus during which the latter demonstrates his dominion and control over the situation. But it also indirectly speaks to Neoptolemus' character. Did the ancient audience see Neoptolemus' lack of desire to rule as a weakness? The literary and mythical tradition, heavily dependent upon the words of Homer, possibly suggest that this goes against the norm. In the most famous case from the *Odyssey*, Odysseus is king of Ithaca even though his father, Laertes, is alive. These are not exactly similar situations if one considers the ages of the men involved. Neoptolemus is much younger than Odysseus but the son of Achilles refusing to take the sceptre confirms his youth and an unwillingness to rule more than his house. The practical reason why Euripides adds this detail is to explain the encounter between Menelaus and Peleus. Because the audience has been told that Peleus still rules, it was not unexpected that Peleus' orders take precedence over Menelaus'.²⁷ But it also exposes a lack of independence in Neoptolemus' character.

The theme of the absent husband is not only seen in this play. Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* is one of the earliest known plays to highlight this theme, though of course it takes its cue from the epic *nostoi*. With Agamemnon away at war, the woman of the house, Clytemnestra, forms a relationship with another man, Aegisthus. In addition to her

²⁷ Lloyd (1994), n.715-726. No one prevents Peleus from releasing Andromache from her bonds.

adultery, she also plans for the death of Agamemnon upon his return. This play evokes the male fear of a strong woman and what could happen when men were away at war. The *Agamemnon*, with the other plays that make up the *Oresteia*, consist of the similar themes of the absent husband and its effects on the *oikos* but depicts them with a different purpose. In Euripides' *Hippolytus*, Theseus plays the role of absent husband. Theseus, returning from the oracle of Apollo, finds his wife, Phaedra, dead and her letter stating that his son Hippolytus is to blame. Without the oversight of a *kyrios*, whether his absence is due to war or other duties, tragedy tends to show how irreversible damage can occur.²⁸ In Theseus' absence, Phaedra is cursed by Aphrodite to fall in love with Hippolytus, her stepson, and she takes her own life. The plots of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and Euripides' *Hippolytus* revolve around the theme of the absent husband and portray the possible consequences that can arise when the *oikos* is absent of its *kyrios*.

Likewise, in Sophocles' *Trachiniae* Heracles is absent for most of the play and enters the stage near the end before being carried off to his funeral pyre in the play's final moments.²⁹ Most of the play focuses on Deianeira and her fear of losing her husband once she sees that he has sent a young woman, Iole, back to their house. She uses a potion that she believes will make Heracles fall in love with her again. Tricked by an old enemy of Heracles, Deianeira is ashamed of her actions and so she takes her life. So here, just as in Euripides' *Andromache*, and indeed, the *Agamemnon*, where Agamemnon's

²⁸ J. Morwood notes that Euripides does not even provide a reason for Theseus' absence, just that the tragedian needed Theseus out of the house for his plot to function.

²⁹ Heracles arrives on stage at line 971.

returning with Cassandra adds fuel to Clytemnestra's fire, the problems of a husband's absence are compounded by the introduction of a concubine.

These plays indicate the tragedians' interest in developing plots involving an absent husband and focusing on the chaos that can arise in his absence. In these examples, the wives of the absent husbands fall into a madness that brings forth death and near destruction of the husband's *oikos*. The tragedians were also interested in depicting situations in which two women are connected to one man. This situation places the female characters in competition with one another and one of their deaths is almost always the result.³⁰ In the cases of Deianeira and Hermione, their husbands' absence leads them to question their role in the *oikos* and to try and fix the situation which only creates more problems for themselves.

To be absent from home was a function of men's roles in Greece, but Neoptolemus and Heracles may be blamed for introducing 'another woman' into their homes. Deianeira is already upset at her husband's absence, but her emotions are multiplied when she sees that Heracles has found a concubine. Though Agamemnon cannot be blamed for being the general of an army, Clytemnestra adds his returning with Cassandra to the reasons for her anger (*Agamemnon* 1438-1447). Oratory praises men who keep their concubines away from their wife, as in the case of Lysias in [Dem.] 59 (22):

ἀφικομέναςδ' αὐτὰς ὁ Λυσίας εἰς μὲν τὴν αὐτοῦ οἰκίαν οὐκ εἰσάγει, αἰσχυ
νόμενος τὴν τε γυναῖκα ἣν εἶχε, Βραχύλλου μὲν θυγατέρα, ἀδελφιδὴν δὲ α

³⁰ Of the four plays mentioned here, only in Euripides' *Andromache* do both women live.

ὑτοῦ, καὶ τὴν μητέρα τὴν αὐτοῦ πρεσβυτέραν τε οὖσαν καὶ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ δια-
τωμένην· ὡς Φιλόστρατον δὲ τὸν Κολωνῆθεν, ἤθεον ἔτι ὄντα καὶ φίλον α-
ὐτῷ, καθίστησιν ὁ Λυσίας αὐτάς, τὴν τε Μετάνειραν καὶ τὴν Νικαρέτην.

When the women arrived, Lysias did not bring them into his own house, so
to not dishonour his wife, the daughter of Brachyllus, his niece, and his old
mother who all lived with him. Lysias settled the two, both Metaneira and
Nicarete, in the house of Philostratus of Colonus, who was his friend and
was unmarried.

Athenian men could have relationships with concubines, but it was prudent to keep them
away from their family and a man's responsibility to give proper due to the honour of the
women of his household.

Not only does Neoptolemus insult Hermione by having Andromache live with
them, but he also fails as a husband to confirm the statuses of the women in his house.
The role of the husband and *kyrios* is partly concerned with the education and training of
his new wife.³¹ More importantly, the agreement between husband and the father of the
wife is completed with pregnancy. The Athenian components of marriage included the
engye, which was the contract made orally by the *kyrios* of the bride and her betrothed,
and then the consummation of the marriage.³² In the case of Hermione, the *kyrios* who
agreed to the marriage was her father, Menelaus, and he made this agreement with
Neoptolemus. The wedding procession followed the *engye* and this would have been
when Hermione departed her native Sparta for her husband's home in Phthia. The
consummation of marriage was only proven with the birth of a child. Because wedding
contracts were not used by Athenians, the action of giving birth was the way in which

³¹ Xen. *Oec.* 3.11, 7.4-9.

³² C.A. Cox (1998), 178; [Dem.] 44.49; Dem. 40.57, 59.65 ff.

Athenian marriages were confirmed.³³ This is where Neoptolemus fails to live up to his role. Hermione has been left on her own, unsure and confused about her status and finds herself scared for her position as wife of the house and her own life.

It is not violence, but other faults, that appear salient in Euripides' characterization of Neoptolemus.³⁴ Because of his absence, his unwillingness to rule, and his failure to confirm the statuses of both Andromache and Hermione, Neoptolemus' *oikos* is in disorder. He is a poor husband, and it is this failure that drives the plot and creates the drama for the other characters.

III. Menelaus

Neoptolemus' shortcomings compel other males in his family to intervene because of the issues in his house. Menelaus plays an important role in the *oikos*-focused plot as the father of Hermione. In the perfect situation, the man removed the daughter from her father's home and took her into his. Although there was always the connection between the two families, there was a separation that was created by the fact that the daughter has gone from one *kyrios* to another. With Hermione childless and Andromache threatening her position, Menelaus intervenes to protect her position as Neoptolemus' wife.

³³ R. Osborne (1985), 137-138. Osborne writes that "it is the public recognition by the local community of the offspring as legitimate that makes a marriage."

³⁴ Sophocles' *Philoctetes* will add another depiction of Neoptolemus which does not focus on his violent nature in 409 BCE.

It has been suggested that this play comprised propaganda against Sparta in its portrait of Menelaus and Hermione and the sentiments of other characters' toward them as Spartans.³⁵ I believe that Sparta must be on the mind of the audience, and the several points made about Sparta and its people by the characters reinforce that, but the portrayal of Hermione and Menelaus is not reducible to mere propaganda. The play may not paint Menelaus in an entirely positive or honorable light—his confrontation with Andromache involves trickery and deceit and his argument with Peleus leaves him temporarily defeated and quitting the city to await Neoptolemus' return, but I would argue that Menelaus has a right to be present and to affirm his authority as father of Hermione. Much scholarship has focused on what assistance was available to women in fifth century Athens if ever they found themselves in a dangerous domestic situation. Although a wife was not able to bring a case against her husband, a male relative of hers could represent her.³⁶ Menelaus even refers to this procedure (672-677) when he says that a husband possesses the power to protect himself, but a wife needs help from her parents and friends. It is reasonable for Menelaus to try and help Hermione. Hermione, for her part, is understandably angry at Andromache and the situation of the house, and later, in her final moments, is motivated by fear of Neoptolemus and believes herself to be in real danger. Although her attempt to fix the situation by murdering Andromache and her child is not rational to the audience, she considers it her most viable option. In supporting her in this, however, Menelaus goes awry.

³⁵ H.D.F. Kitto (2002), 230-236.

³⁶ E. Hall (1997), 93.

Hermione, logically, should want to remove Andromache's son from the house as he poses a threat to any children she might have. But in Hermione's view, Andromache is the greater menace. Unable to remove Hermione herself, she must rely on her father's aid. Menelaus decides to dispose of Andromache, and to leave it to Hermione to decide the fate of the boy (431-432). Menelaus should in fact recognize the threat a bastard child presents. In Homer's *Odyssey*, Menelaus celebrates two weddings at the same time (4.4). He marries his daughter to Neoptolemus and at the same chooses a Spartan girl for his son, Megapenthes, whose mother is a slave (4.11-12). This marriage, as Torrance points out, suggests that Menelaus is legitimizing his son.³⁷ It is impossible to know how much Euripides wanted his audience to consider the Menelaus of Homeric tradition, but Menelaus' failure to realize the importance of Andromache's child is an error of judgment. Although he has the right intentions to protect his daughter's role in the household, he succumbs to the unmanly tactics of using trickery against Andromache, he fails in his confrontation against Peleus, and does not provide the right assistance to his distraught daughter.

This is not to say that he is oblivious to the threat represented by the bastard (662-666):

καίτοι φέρ': ἄψασθαι γὰρ οὐκ αἰσχρὸν λόγου:
 ἦν παῖς μὲν ἡμῇ μὴ τέκη, ταύτης δ' ἄπο
 βλάστωσι παῖδες, τῆσδε γῆς Φθιώτιδος
 στήσεις τυράννους, βάρβαροι δ' ὄντες γένος
 Ἑλλήσιν ἄρξουσ' ;

³⁷ I. Torrance (2013), *Metapoetry in Euripides*, 200.

Indeed consider, for there is no shame to discuss this, if my daughter does not bear children, but this woman does, will you establish them as kings of Phthia? Even though they are of barbarian race, will they rule Greeks?

And, indeed, Andromache has raised the question of whether her children would be accepted as rulers if Hermione fails to bear a child (201-202). Menelaus cannot help Hermione concerning her barrenness and so his only recourse is to try and comfort his daughter and confirm her status as the legitimate wife of the *oikos*. Menelaus believes that because Neoptolemus is not present to do so, he therefore must be the one to take his place. When Menelaus fails to accomplish anything against Peleus, he vows to return to speak to a level-headed Neoptolemus to work things out for his daughter (737-743). This reveals that he does not want to usurp the authority of his son-in-law; instead Menelaus just wants the marriage agreement with Neoptolemus to be affirmed and to confirm his daughter's position.

The debate between Menelaus and Peleus reveals a hierarchy of the members of the *oikos*. In the absence of the husband, there is a void of authority to be filled. In this play, Menelaus, Peleus, and Orestes all attempt to manage the situation in Neoptolemus' *oikos*. In the confrontation between Menelaus and Peleus, it is the latter who claims a greater authority, before which Menelaus backs down. In the contest between the women of the *oikos*, engendered by Neoptolemus' failure to properly exercise his authority as *kyrios*, Menelaus is ultimately unable to assert Hermione's claims. Rather, Peleus succeeds in asserting those of Andromache and her son.

IV. Peleus

As his grandfather, it is Peleus who replaces Neoptolemus in the role of the *kyrios*.³⁸ With the death of Achilles, Peleus has taken the place of father-figure in Neoptolemus' life. In a perfect situation Peleus does not have to interfere in his grandson's house. Even though they are related, Neoptolemus is of an age of to rule his own house. But in Neoptolemus' absence, and in the context of the conflict that attends it, Peleus is asked to intervene on behalf of Andromache. Euripides depicts Peleus as an authoritative figure; he is the ruler of the land and by extension Neoptolemus' *oikos*.

Andromache states that she has called for Peleus' assistance in the past and he has not responded (81). It is suggested by the slave woman, who belongs to Neoptolemus' *oikos*, that none of the messengers delivered any of Andromache's previous messages because of her status (82). Andromache accepts this and calls on her past authority to order this slave to deliver her message. There is nothing to suggest that Peleus has been ignoring Andromache's pleas. Menelaus speaks of Andromache's elevated status and of her being welcome at the same dinner table as Peleus (657-659). The reason for his respect toward Andromache is because of her capability to produce children. As Hermione needs the aid of a male relative to leave her marriage to Neoptolemus, Andromache requires male assistance. But as the audience knows, and Andromache never fails to remind everyone, all her family members have been murdered. Her only

³⁸ D.M. MacDowell (1986), *The Law in Classical Athens*, 84.

options are Neoptolemus and Peleus. With Neoptolemus unavailable, it therefore must be Peleus, who comes to her aid, leading to his confrontation with Menelaus.

The confrontation with Menelaus concerns the question of authority and which of the men possesses the greater claim over the house of Neoptolemus. Peleus' initial claim pertains to the location of the house. Neoptolemus' house lies under Peleus' dominion and therefore Peleus has authority, just as Menelaus possesses authority in Sparta (581-582). Evoking negative feelings in regard to what transpired in the Trojan war, Peleus is very aggressive toward Menelaus and he attacks his character and heritage. Peleus' attack on Menelaus is twofold. He clearly wants to protect Andromache and her son, largely for the sake of the son, and at the same time he has a distaste for Menelaus and Spartans in general. He is attempting to preserve his line just as Menelaus is. It is in the speeches of Peleus especially that the themes of childbirth and legitimacy come together. In a speech directed at Menelaus, Peleus tells him (632-638):

κάπειτ' ἐς οἴκους τῶν ἐμῶν ἐλθὼν τέκνων
πορθεῖς ἀπόντων, καὶ γυναῖκα δυστυχῇ
κτείνεις ἀτίμως παῖδά θ', ὃς κλαίοντά σε
καὶ τὴν ἐν οἴκοις σὴν καταστήσει κόρην,
κεῖ τρίς νόθος πέφυκε. πολλάκις δέ τοι
ξηρὰ βαθεῖαν γῆν ἐνίκησε σπορᾷ,
νόθοι τε πολλοὶ γνησίων ἀμείνονες.

And then coming into my grandson's house while he is absent, you ravage it, and you dishonourably try to kill an unfortunate woman and her child who will make you wail and will stand firm against your daughter in the house, even though he is thrice a bastard. For often dry soil overcomes the strong tilled land, so many bastards are better than legitimate children.

While diminishing the status of Menelaus and Hermione, including any children she may bear, Peleus raises the status of Andromache's child. Hermione never discusses

legitimacy, but she expresses her fear of losing her position as wife to Andromache because of the child. Peleus amplifies her fear. Hermione is aware that one's status can change, and her actions suggest that she understands that Andromache's bastard child could be made legitimate by his father. The ending of the play reinforces this theme by Thetis' declaration that Neoptolemus' son and his descendants will rule Molossia as kings.

Peleus takes the place of Neoptolemus in this confrontation. By saving and taking Andromache and her child into the house, Peleus elevates their status, and by doing so he confirms the fear of Hermione, who then reenters the stage with great emotion, scared for her life. In the beginning of the play, Andromache is expelled from the house in fear of Hermione and is forced to give herself to the statue of Thetis for her protection. During Andromache's final moment on stage, she is permitted to reenter the house of Neoptolemus. but this time led inside by the one acting in the place of her *kyrios*, evoking the marriage procession. Peleus does care more for Andromache's child, and the ending of the play confirms the significance of legitimate offspring, but Peleus' action of bringing Andromache and her bastard son into his grandson's house ties the fate of mother and son together, something which Thetis also does when she sends both of them to Molossia together to start a new royal dynasty, and represents the defining moment in the play which shows how quickly status can change. As Peleus establishes Andromache's elevated status in his grandson's house, Thetis does the same for Neoptolemus' child when she names the bastard child the king of Molossia.

With Peleus' victory over Menelaus, Hermione is left helpless. Euripides then brings in a new character to act a savior for the distressed Hermione. Just as Peleus enters at the perfect time to save Andromache and her child, Orestes enters to help Hermione.

V. Orestes

Reading this play with a focus on the *oikos*, Orestes represents the outsider, the threat to Neoptolemus' house. Euripides does not depict Orestes with any redeeming qualities and instead paints him as the villain and the most menacing consequence of Neoptolemus' failings. Orestes is the embodiment of a great fear for Athenian men. A reason Athenian fathers and husbands left their daughters and wives at home was to reduce the likelihood of others within the city ruining the reputation of their family members. The master of the house wanted to avoid any chance of temptation.³⁹ Neoptolemus' prolonged absence has allowed Orestes to become a threat. Even though Hermione attempts to be authoritative in the decision-making, Orestes is in control of the situation. He successfully infiltrates Neoptolemus' house, murders him in Delphi, and steals away Hermione.

In this play, Orestes is depicted as a liar, a wrongdoer, and the jilted lover. In the case of Neoptolemus, Euripides avoids adding details that portray him as violent, but the playwright does not do the same for Orestes. The audience is meant to consider the

³⁹ Lysias 1.8. In this speech, it is stated that while attending the funeral of her mother-in-law, the wife was seen and therefore able to be ruined by another man.

troubling past of the Atreid dynasty and to see Orestes as a continuation of that evil.

When he enters the stage, he asks for Hermione and pretends not to recognize her (896-897). He asks her a series of questions to understand her situation and learn why she is so upset. Once he hears the details directly from Hermione, he then reveals that he had been hiding nearby and intervened when he realized that he could help her (957ff).⁴⁰ Our initial view of Orestes is of him sneaking his way into Hermione's presence and lying to her.

Orestes tells Hermione that he is the cheated lover, who was first promised her hand in marriage by Menelaus, but her father later betrayed their agreement and gave her to Neoptolemus instead. Orestes shows no anger toward Menelaus for not following through on the promise. Orestes tells Hermione that he pardoned him (972 σὺ μὲν συνέγγων) Neoptolemus for not recognizing the initial agreement and not returning her to him. Now that he sees Hermione in despair, he vows to remove her from this house to return her to Menelaus (982-986). A major concern in Euripides' *Andromache* is the legitimacy of children, but there is also the theme of the legitimate marriage. Orestes promises to return Hermione to Menelaus so that her father can decide what to do with her, an aim affirmed that Hermione endorses (987-988). Keeping in mind the idea of the fluctuating status of these characters, Hermione still believes in the correct process of

⁴⁰ There is some debate concerning Orestes' arrival in this play. Regarding the lines 964-966 (ἤλθον δὲ σὰς μὲν οὐ σέβων ἐπιστολάς, / εἰ δ' ἐνδιδοίης, ὥσπερ ἐνδίδως, λόγον, / πέμψων σ' ἀπ' οἴκων τῶνδ'). See Lloyd (1994) *ad* 964; Kovacs (1980) 105 n. 48; Diggle (1984) 318 (app. Crit.); Stevens (1971) *ad* 964. The argument revolves around Hermione's messages mentioned by Orestes. This text suggests that Orestes does not respect Hermione's messages and nevertheless shows up, but Stevens prefers manuscript P which replaces σέβων with μένων to mean "waiting for your message". If the former reading is accepted, then the text may be corrupt because no messages from Hermione are mentioned earlier by Euripides. I do believe that both readings depict Orestes as selfish and impartial to Hermione's wants.

marriage. She does not want to just run away and start a life with Orestes but wants, or rather needs, her father to hand her to her next husband.

Arguably, the two most deplorable characters in the play now find themselves united. But Orestes is surely the more despicable of the two. Every one of his actions in this play suggests that he does not care for Hermione's wishes but instead finds himself in a situation where she is his only available option (974-976). Having been cast out and exiled, marrying anyone outside of his family is impossible, and so Orestes waits for the perfect moment to provide Hermione what she desires, protection from both Neoptolemus and Peleus, and tells her exactly what she needs to hear to leave with him.

Orestes has convinced Hermione to join him by his words. It is through his words that he also manages to convince the citizens of Delphi to murder Neoptolemus (1090-1095). Euripides presents a few debates between the characters, with a winner and loser represented in all of them. Between Andromache and Hermione, we see that Hermione is not able to make a difference and needs her father to assist her. Menelaus is able to overcome Andromache but later falls to the authority of Peleus. Through dialogue a character challenges their opponent, but Orestes is never opposed in this play. Hermione simply follows his instruction and does not try to argue or offer her own opinion in relation to anything Orestes says. The people of Delphi also do not question the words of Orestes and are easily pushed into fighting Neoptolemus. The audience was not meant to sympathize with Orestes and his mission. He believes that Apollo is on his side, as the

god was during his murder of his mother.⁴¹ Orestes is prideful of his deed, referring to himself as the matricide (999 μητροφόντης). Orestes also mentions the reason for Neoptolemus' second visit, to make amends with Apollo for his earlier outburst, and he adds that this action will not help the son of Achilles. If Neoptolemus is not the angry figure the audience expects, Orestes appears not as a figure caught in a tragic bind of vengeance and justice, but a figure of simple vengeance and criminal violence.

Orestes' unexpected arrival reinforces the issue of Neoptolemus' absence. Different characters become involved throughout the play but, in most cases, their presence is expected by another character and the audience. Andromache asks for Peleus' attendance and Hermione asks Menelaus to help her, so when both of those characters arrive on scene, there are no surprises. In the case of Neoptolemus, there are no reasons to not expect that he will play a role in this play, but his return is replaced by Orestes' intrusion. Euripides' depictions of Neoptolemus and Orestes ensure that the two are seen as counterparts. The husband and master of an *oikos* and the threat to the sanctity of the house depicted through a male rival are at odds against one another.

VI. Conclusion

The four men discussed in this chapter are tied together by Neoptolemus' *oikos*. By analyzing these characters according to their status in relation to the *oikos*, we see their connections to both other characters and the plot of the play. All the men seen in the

⁴¹ Aeschylus, *The Libation Bearers*.

play have, by virtue of the *oikos*, a stake in the central conflict, between the contending women, drawn into the void of masculine authority left by Neoptolemus' absence, just as the women are set into contention by Neoptolemos' failure to properly exercise his *kurieia*. The fluctuating statuses of Andromache and Hermione in this play reflect the general tragic theme of the ways in which a woman's status is subject to the status and powers of men. The moment in a woman's life when she was translated from one house to another through marriage was a crucial one, in which she underwent a transformation. But so too are men's statuses bound up with the status of women. Menelaus has stake in his daughter's position in Neoptolemus' house, but also limited authority in another man's house. Peleus, who is not so much concerned with his own status in Phthia but the status of his family and house, fights for and elevates Andromache's status for the purpose of preserving his patriline. And Orestes faces the prospect of being a permanent and unwanted bachelor unless he can convince Hermione to marry him.⁴²

The varying and shifting statuses of the characters are connected to each other and they establish a connection between the putatively disparate parts of Euripides' *Andromache*. Having examined the male characters of the play according to their status, the next chapter will look at Andromache and her child. Their fates, tied together in this play, are in the hands of the male characters. As stated, one of Neoptolemus' mistakes is that he has failed to convince Hermione of Andromache's status in their house. The questions surrounding Andromache's status are at the centre of the play's action. Without

⁴² Orestes only achieves this by removing the status of husband from Neoptolemus by murdering him.

Neoptolemus there to confirm her position within the house, Euripides shows how other characters attempt to classify her. By examining Andromache's interactions with other characters in the play, I will show how Peleus confirms Andromache's status.

Chapter 2: The Concubine and her Bastard Child

I. Introduction

Andromache, the titular character, opens the play and it is her status, and its lack of clarity, that drives its action. In this chapter I examine her dialogues with the slave woman, Hermione, and then with Menelaus. Andromache's status is further explored in the conversation between Menelaus and Peleus. And lastly, even though it is unclear whether Andromache is on stage during the play's final moments, her status and fate are decided when Thetis speaks to Peleus. Although Andromache has no lines in the second half of the play,⁴³ Thetis' actions connect the play's conclusion to its first half and offers a kind of comfort for Andromache who expresses despair in the beginning.

The first part of the play consists of what has been labelled a Euripidean addition to the narrative of Andromache's and Hermione's mythology.⁴⁴ A significant portion of the play focuses on their dispute, which pertains to their respective relationships with Neoptolemus. Andromache who was taken as plunder from the Trojan War by the son of Achilles is now a slave in Phthia. While there as a slave, she has borne a child which is the cause of the friction between the two women. This friction puts the entire house in disarray and creates a barrier between Neoptolemus and Hermione, as they fail to live up to the standard of husband and wife. Hermione, taken as a wife after Neoptolemus

⁴³ Andromache's final line is 756.

⁴⁴ The narrative of Andromache as a slave and Hermione as a wife to Neoptolemus are not new additions by Euripides, nor are the details about the childbearing of Andromache and the barrenness of Hermione. But their confrontation, the attempted murder, and Peleus saving Andromache are possibly Euripidean inventions. Stevens (1971), 5.

returned home from Troy, finds herself barren and blames Andromache and her foreign witchcraft.

Stemming from this issue of infertility, the argument between Andromache and Hermione concerns their opinion of what a proper wife is. The necessary steps for marriage are, as we have seen, the *engye* and the consummation of the marriage, which is proven with the birth of a child. Hermione is the legitimate wife of Neoptolemus by virtue of her father having betrothed her to her husband by formal *engye*. However, they are without child whereas Andromache, while she did not go through an *engye*, does have a child by Neoptolemus, as a consequence of which Hermione sees her as a threat to her position. In *Andromache*, Euripides is examining the ambiguities and fault lines in the relations and statuses of the *oikos*.

Contributing to this dramatization of ambiguity are the play's many reminders of Andromache's past. If Hermione in the play holds the formal position of wife, and Andromache of concubine, Euripides' reminders of Andromache's past relationship with Hector keep in view her status in the tradition as ideal wife.⁴⁵ This view is maintained in the play by Euripides' characterization of Andromache as such, despite her position. In the prologue Andromache observes that she was a legitimate wife to Hector due to her childbearing⁴⁶ and so establishes what is in her view the most valuable aspect of a wife. This ambiguity carries over into Andromache's position as *pallake*, according to

⁴⁵ Arist. *Pol.* VII 1336b27-31: The actor Theodorus always wanted to be the first actor on stage believing that the audience is more sympathetic to the first character who speaks. E. Hall (1997) shows the examples from tragedy that have a female or servile character solicit the audience's sympathies before another character speaks (Antigone, Helen, Andromache, and Deianeira).

⁴⁶ *Andromache*, 4. δάμαρ δοθεῖσα παιδοποιὸς Ἑκτορι

contemporary Athenian standards. Andromache is a slave, but is accorded a status quite different from that of the regular household slave. A concubine at Athens could beget free children.⁴⁷ Because Andromache has provided Neoptolemus a child, and since she is the only one to have done so, Andromache possesses a unique, ambiguous, and contentious position within the *oikos*.

II. Andromache and the Slave-Woman

Although Andromache's status is clearly defined at the end of the play when Thetis makes her Helenus' wife and the mother of a line of kings, her situation until that point remains unclear and problematic. If it were not for the constant remarks made by Hermione and Menelaus and Andromache's own reflective comments that she is a slave, it would not be difficult to forget her position. Andromache does seem to hold a higher status in the house compared to other slaves, as shown by another slave-woman who refers to her as δέσποινα (56 *lady of the house/queen*), a title for women like Penelope in the *Odyssey* (19.83). The slave states that she uses this title because she served Andromache and Hector in Troy and continues to respect her. This reverence that Andromache continues to receive is dangerous because Hermione sees her as a threat in the house. Hermione is the wife of the house and naturally places herself above all the other females in the *oikos*; she alone is δέσποινα. Instead of rejecting the idea that she is elevated above other slaves, however, Andromache takes advantage of it. Even though

⁴⁷ D.M. MacDowell (1978), 89.

Andromache's response to the other slave women, φιλτάτη σύνδουλε (64 *dearest fellow-slave*), has the purpose of maintaining an equality between themselves, she does not refrain from ordering her former slave to bear a message:

Ἀνδρομάχη:
 πόθεν; θέλεις οὖν ἄγγελος σύ μοι μολεῖν;
 Θεράπαινα:
 τί δῆτα φήσω χρόνιος οὗς' ἐκ δωμάτων;
 Ἀνδρομάχη:
 πολλὰς ἂν εὖροις μηχανάς: γυνὴ γὰρ εἶ.
 Θεράπαινα:
 κίνδυνος: Ἑρμιόνη γὰρ οὐ σμικρὸν φύλαξ.
 Ἀνδρομάχη:
 ὄρᾳς; ἀπαυδᾷς ἐν κακοῖς φίλοισι σοῖς.
 Θεράπαινα:
 οὐ δῆτα: μηδὲν τοῦτ' ὀνειδίσῃς ἐμοί.
 ἀλλ' εἴμ', ἐπεὶ τοι κοῦ περίβλεπτος βίος
 δούλης γυναικός, ἦν τι καὶ πάθω κακόν. (83-90)

Andromache:
 Impossible! Can you then go as a messenger for me?
 Slave woman:
 What will I say to explain my long absence from home?
 Andromache:
 You would find many contrivances. For you are a woman.
 Slave woman:
 There is danger; for Hermione is no petty guard.
 Andromache:
 You see! You fail your friends in troubled times.
 Slave woman:
 Of course not! Do not insult me like that.
 I will go, since the life of a slave is not to be
 admired, if I do suffer some evil.

In the text, this passage follows the realization that the other messages which Andromache sent to Peleus failed, implying that either previous messengers did not deliver the message or that Peleus did not care to answer. But because Peleus appears

later in the play, it is logical to think that, since Andromache does not truly hold authority in the house, her other requests went unanswered because other slaves simply refused to help and that this slave-woman is an exception.⁴⁸ The slave woman's comment about the insignificance of the life of a slave would make sense for an ancient audience, yet based on what happens in *Andromache*, the titular character's life does matter. The prologue of the play reveals Andromache's situation and her fear for her life and that of her son and because of the way Euripides opens his play, she is the sympathetic character. She still laments for the losses of her husband, her son, Troy, and finally herself (5-11, 91-116).

Isabelle Torrance⁴⁹ highlights the problematic situation Euripides creates by not being clear about what status Andromache holds. Torrance argues that the playwright characterizes his Andromache in the Homeric style and because of this, she commands the audience's sympathy.⁵⁰ The sympathy the audience feels for Andromache is a consequence of her ambiguous status. One of the terms that is used to define Andromache's status, often by Hermione, in the first half of the play is δούλη.⁵¹ This term is the generic term for slave. However, in the second half of the play, δούλη is no longer used and αἰχμάλωτος becomes the foremost reference.⁵² This describes Andromache in a different way, because it shows her as a captive of war, which carries connotations of her past.⁵³ Andromache was a prize, a worthy prize for any of the Greeks to take home because of her virtue as the wife of Hector. The term can also generate

⁴⁸ There is also the possibility that, due to Peleus' age, his arrival is delayed.

⁴⁹ I. Torrance (2005).

⁵⁰ I. Torrance (2005), 40. See also n.45.

⁵¹ Found at lines 12, 30, 64, 99, 110, 114, 155, 186, 302, 328, 374, 401, 434. I. Torrance (2005), 46.

⁵² Found at lines 583, 871, 908, 932, 962, 1059, 1243. I. Torrance (2005), 46.

⁵³ I. Torrance (2005), 46.

sympathy by referring to the harsh reality of war (consistent with Euripides' general focus in his plays on the aftermath of war, its consequences for the survivors, including women⁵⁴). Hermione refers to herself and Andromache as δύοῖν γυναικοῖν (178): two women, or wives⁵⁵ Hermione is the official wife of Neoptolemus, but Andromache who holds this undefined title is still “intrinsically a wife figure.”⁵⁶

III. Debate between Andromache and Hermione

It is in the argument between Andromache and Hermione that Euripides adds his own interpretation to the mythology of these two characters. Andromache is terrified for her life and the life of her son and Hermione is angry with the house's situation. The *agōn* between the two partakes of the theme of marriage and raises the question of what qualities makes a better wife. Hermione is keen to remind Andromache of her place: σὺ δ' οὔσα δούλη καὶ δορίκτητος γυνή (155 *but you are a slave and prize of war*). Hermione also brings up Andromache's past, demanding that she forgets about Hector, Priam, and her former prosperity and glory, and that she conforms to her status as a slave (163-169). Euripides ensures that even Andromache's enemy brings up her past, not allowing the audience to forget it, and the virtues which made her a good wife to Hector, including the all-important fact that she bore him a child, are still present in her relationship with Neoptolemus.

⁵⁴ Based on his surviving plays, *Andromache*, *Hecuba*, and *Troades*.

⁵⁵ I. Torrance (2005), 55.

⁵⁶ I. Torrance (2005), 56.

The fact that childbearing is so important to Hermione and is what gives Andromache an elevated position within the *oikos* is what provokes Hermione's anger and reveals her immaturity. Her claim is that Andromache is using poison to render her infertile and therefore hated by Neoptolemus (157-158), suggesting a desperate defensiveness. Whether the accusation is accurate or not does not hold much importance; instead it is worth considering how both women find themselves in a predicament by virtue of the actions of Neoptolemus. Andromache is upset with his absence because it puts their son's and her own life in danger (49-50). On the other hand, Hermione is angry because, as she protests, it is inappropriate for a man to have two women in his marriage-bed (177-180). Both women want to protect themselves and their status. Hermione does not want to be replaced by another and Andromache perhaps recognizes that her position in the *oikos* is tied to her having given birth to Neoptolemus' only living heir. The issue is that Andromache does not hold back from speaking her mind, and therefore is insulting towards Hermione, which puts her life at risk. This returns to her inability to forget her stature from the past, something already seen in her exchange with the slave woman. Though her words speak the contrary, Andromache has perhaps enjoyed the benefits she has received in Phthia and is proud of her ability to be wife-like. Andromache has maintained her wifely virtue and it has allowed her to be better off than what the normal situation would be for someone taken as a war-prize. Andromache the ideal wife, a mother, cannot constrain herself from instructing and contending with the younger, childless woman.

Andromache is assertive in her rebuttal of Hermione, believing that she has done nothing wrong. Aspects of this confrontation refer to themes that derive from the Trojan War, and this could have very well been Andromache arguing with Helen, the mother of Hermione. Andromache refers to Helen and her lack of virtue as a wife, blaming her for all the losses she experienced because of the war. The audience is reminded throughout the play of the relationship of Paris and Helen and the consequences which followed. Euripides' depiction of Andromache in this tragedy, wretched and miserable, has her confronting Helen through her daughter. Though Andromache would not be considered an old woman, as she can still bear children, she nevertheless assumes the role of the older and therefore wiser woman. With Helen away for ten years of Hermione's life and Neoptolemus' absences, Hermione has had little guidance. Andromache attempts to mentor the young wife as she sees that Hermione is in a pitiful situation and has lacked the opportunity to be educated in the proper ways of womanhood.

Andromache the ideal wife of the tradition upholds the wifely virtues. In Andromache's view, Hermione fails as a wife because she is not ἐπιτήδεια (206), and her values are not appropriately set. Being a wife means leaving your family and joining yourself to the family of your new husband. Andromache did this when she left her home and followed Hector to Troy, and she upbraids Hermione for not doing the same. Hermione cares too much for wealth, and specifically the wealth of Sparta and her father. The first words of Hermione validate Andromache's claim, as the Spartan princess enters donning a golden headpiece and a decorated robe, which she proudly states come from her father and not Achilles or Peleus (147-153). Andromache rebukes her for prioritizing

wealth and the greatness of Sparta and her own father over modesty, Scyros, and Neoptolemus' father and family (209-212).

Andromache's lessons for Hermione turn to sex, with direct reference to Helen. Hermione blames Andromache for taking her place in bed. Andromache reprimands her for caring excessively about sex. Andromache discusses some of the realities that women faced in an Athenian marriage. Their sexuality is monitored and must be limited, and even though they are the sex that are supposedly unable to control their sexual urges and suffer from them more than men, as Andromache states (220-221), women, both in tragedy and in reality, lack the freedom of fulfilling their sexual desires outside the marriage-bed. Men, on the other hand, as Andromache also mentions, have the liberty to take other women into bed. For Andromache, women, and wives especially, are meant to just live with this fact. It is almost a boast from Andromache when she tells Hermione that she helped Hector in his love affairs and even breastfed his bastard children (222-225). Andromache ends her rebuttal with the reference to Helen and her φιλανδρία (229 *wifely jealousy*) and solicits Hermione not to be like Helen and to avoid following the behaviours of κακῶν μητέρων (230 *evil mothers*).

After both Hermione and Andromache exchange monologues, their *agōn* continues with stichomythia which represents the high level of emotion in their conversation. The topic of their altercation, continuing from Andromache's speech, concerns Hermione's sexual drive. Once again, the perspective from Andromache reveals this to be a negative thing (240). This confuses Hermione who believes that women are supposed to continuously think about sex (241).

This debate can be seen as a zero-sum game. Both women confront each other with the goal of establishing dominance. Andromache is depicted as a valuable wife to any man and Hermione cannot allow someone to usurp her position. Every comment on Hermione's character made by Andromache reduces the former's stature and elevates the latter's. The two women alone cannot make any formal claims pertaining to their status within the *oikos*, but, at the same time, Hermione should not have to. She is Neoptolemus' legitimate wife and Andromache is exaggerating her superiority, and Hermione's failing, as a wife to build up her own authority and protect her son. She does the same thing in her debate with Menelaus.

The two women are looking at their situation from different sides. Andromache emphasizes the responsibilities of the woman, arguing that a wife is meant to be available for her husband, respect his home, and be moderate. Hermione, however, is focused more on Neoptolemus' shortcomings as a husband. As mentioned, the most important confirmation of being a wife is childbearing. This is what leads to Hermione's empty claims about Andromache poisoning her and why she sees Andromache as a threat. Neoptolemus should be at home to produce a child with his wife and Hermione is angry that he is not: in a marriage, a husband too has responsibilities.

IV. Debate between Menelaus and Andromache

With Hermione unable to achieve anything against Andromache, she calls upon her father's aid. Andromache was able to stand firm with Hermione as her opponent but

Menelaus, through deception, puts Andromache in a deadly position in which she needs to wait for Peleus' opportune arrival to protect her and her son.

At lines 334-335, Andromache exclaims that Hermione has killed her, and adds that Hermione will be stained with the "pollution of murder." Following this, Andromache warns Menelaus that he will have to stand trial for helping his daughter with murder. This could very well be Euripides referring to the Athenian law that protects one's property, which includes slaves, from suffering harm by the hands of another. It was for the owner to seek retribution if his slave was killed.⁵⁷ Although Andromache's status is not easily defined, even if she is considered merely a household slave, she enjoys some protection from harm by anyone except her master. When Hermione confronts Andromache, it seems that only the life of the mother is at risk. Nothing is said to threaten Andromache's son. Menelaus, however, threatens both. Andromache argues that Neoptolemus will divorce Hermione should his son be harmed and, that, after a divorce, it will be difficult for Menelaus to give her as wife to someone else. Andromache does not claim that Neoptolemus would seek revenge for her death, but instead all the consequences would unfold because of the loss of an heir. The very thing, her son, that makes her a threat to Hermione is also her source of protection in the household.

But in the absence of Neoptolemus, the son's status is also ambiguous. In the case of Athenian citizenship, Cynthia Patterson has argued that a *nothos*, a child with a citizen father and noncitizen, was not always illegitimate in the English sense of the term;

⁵⁷ D.M. MacDowell (1963), 20-21. His conclusion is drawn from Dem. 47.70 and Plato *Gorgias* 483b.

however in Athenian Law, even though a *nothos* was illegitimate because he was not a *gnēsios*, he was still recognized by the paternal line.⁵⁸ A *nothos* was a free child, but not considered equal to children from two Athenian citizens. The question of Andromache's status is important because it not only determines how her character is defined but also her son's. She is not just a noncitizen, she is a slave, a war-prize, and could be considered a concubine. However, she is also a high-born foreign woman, as the play often remind us. She is considered a worthy war-prize as the wife of Hector. Keeping in mind that citizenship fluctuated throughout fifth century Athens and the amendment in 430/429 BCE to Pericles' citizenship law, it makes sense that Neoptolemus recognizes his child with Andromache as a *nothos*. Peleus even refers to the child as one (636). In the eyes of Hermione and Menelaus, Andromache and her son are both slaves. The issue is that there is only one child and one woman who has given birth in the house. If there is no other child, because Hermione, who is considered the legitimate wife, and Neoptolemus are childless together, does this elevate the status of Neoptolemus' sole child even if he is born from a foreign woman? Hermione's and Menelaus' desire to remove Andromache and the child speaks to the fear of the two Spartans that their position within the *oikos* of Neoptolemus is at risk. Patterson, who places a great importance on childbearing in a marriage, ends her discussion on the *Andromache* with the question of who the real wife of Neoptolemus is.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ C. Patterson (1990), 41.

⁵⁹ C. Patterson (1990), 66.

In her attempt to protect her son, Andromache equivocates on this question. At one moment she defensively asserts her son's importance for his father. Soon afterward, she dismisses his importance, even calling Neoptolemus childless (360). By diminishing the status of her son, claiming that he is nothing to his father, Andromache hopes to allay the threat Hermione feels to herself and her future children. In Andromache's response to Menelaus (384-420), she calls Neoptolemus a despot (390-391 ἐκοιμήθην βίᾱ/σὺν δεσπόταισιν/*I was forced to sleep with my master*). The normal word for a slave to use of her master,⁶⁰ but later in this same speech (403), she uses the verb νυμφεύω (*give in marriage*) to describe her relationship with Neoptolemus. There is no ambiguity in this word: it clearly indicates marriage, a betrothal between a man and a woman. Cheryl Cox discusses the Greek terminology used to define marriage, and states that χράομαι and πλεσιάζω were the verbs used to speak of the relationship between a man and a *hetaira*.⁶¹

This speech by Andromache reflects the reality of Athenian women. Firstly, the woman in the relationship was obliged to consummate the marriage with the man, which confirmed the marriage. And secondly, the use of νυμφεύω in the passive shows the position of the woman as a party given to a man. The woman did not have a choice in her marriage, as the union was formulated by the woman's father and her potential husband. Andromache's relationship with Neoptolemus did not have the first part, at least not in the ordinary sense, but she lived through the second part. The fact that she is a war-prize who had to travel from her home to the house of her new master may in some ways stand

⁶⁰ Liddell-Scott-Jones Dictionary: δεσπότης can be found with the words meaning house and family, but most of the time it was used in respect to slaves.

⁶¹ C.A. Cox (1998), 182.

in contrast but in others parallels the parade an Athenian woman went through as she travelled from her father's house to her husband's. That comparison is not directly referred to in this play by Euripides but is seen indirectly when Andromache talks about how she had to watch her husband and Troy fall and how she was forcefully taken on the Argive ships to her new life. In the contention with Menelaus, Andromache's status is not made any clearer, but instead we see how she herself is conflicted and confused about her place in the house.

V. Debate between Peleus and Menelaus

It is Peleus, in lieu of Neoptolemus, who can resolve the contestation and settle the relations of the house. Upon his entrance, he refers to Neoptolemus as Andromache's *kyrios* (558), and not *despotēs*⁶². One understanding of the term is that of a man who controls the *oikos* in the narrow sense of the legitimate family members. MacDowell suggests that the *oikos* does not include "servants, concubines, and illegitimate children," although they can still reside in the house.⁶³ However, Cox states that a *hetaira* could have a *kyrios* who could help her with property and ensure that she is treated well.⁶⁴ Our understanding of such terms is still debated because the texts themselves are not always clear and contradict. Peleus may then be addressing Andromache as a *hetaira*, and, in stepping into the role of *kyrios* in Neoptolemus' presence, extending his protection over

⁶² Liddell-Scott-Jones: κύριος refers to the head of a family or a house.

⁶³ D.M. MacDowell (1978), 85.

⁶⁴ C.A. Cox (1998), 178.

the entire household, its family members and property, including slaves, but he may also be taken to be treating her as Neoptolemus' wife.⁶⁵ Peleus' treatment of her son suggests the latter.

The son of Andromache and Neoptolemus is referred to as *nothos* several times by Peleus. Peleus avers that νόθοι τε πολλοὶ γνησίων ἀμείνονες (638 *many bastards are better than legitimate sons*). In saying this, he is casting aspersions on Menelaus, someone who considers himself mighty for being a Spartan citizen, but the question also implicates the Athenian citizen audience. We see from Peleus' words and action, that he accepts the son of Andromache as a possible heir. Near the end of his debate with Menelaus, he insults Hermione for being intolerant of others giving birth. Peleus says εἰ τὸ κείνης δυστυχεῖ παίδων πέρι, / ἄπαιδας ἡμᾶς δεῖ καταστῆναι τέκνων (713-714 *if she is unfortunate in regard to bearing children, is it necessary that we be made childless?*), which confirms the importance of having at least one child even if born from an unofficial wife. An heir is what perpetuates the *oikos*, and with his own son dead, Peleus is at least comforted by the fact that his grandson has produced a child. For Peleus, the child is more valuable than Andromache, but their fates are tied together. The reality of Athenian marriage was that the woman's role was to produce heirs. Every other aspect of the woman's life was secondary, especially in the eyes of men. But Andromache's status is connected to her son's. The more value the son possesses, the greater Andromache's value is to the *oikos*, even if it is only because she has shown that she can bear children.

⁶⁵ D.M. MacDowell (1978), 84.

With Peleus protecting Andromache and her child from Menelaus and Hermione, Andromache and her son are now able to reenter the house. The play begins with her in great distress for the life of herself and her child. Andromache outdoes Hermione in their *agōn* and she defends herself as well as possible against Menelaus. Peleus arrives in time to save her and the child, demonstrating his authority over the land and his grandson's house (759-760). Based on Peleus' actions, Andromache is recognized as a member of the house. Peleus is able to offer Andromache λιμένας εὐηνέμους (749 *havens sheltered from the winds*). Although Andromache is never accorded a clear title, her departure from the stage into the house indicates her having secured her place within the *oikos*. However, Andromache does not achieve this fate on her own.

VI. Thetis and Andromache

What at times goes unmentioned by scholars is the significance of the setting where we first find Andromache.⁶⁶ She is sitting as a suppliant at the shrine of Thetis. It is here where Andromache hopes to be protected from the assault of Hermione and Menelaus. She finds herself ἔν' ἡ θαλασσία/Πηλεῖ ξυνώκει χωρὶς ἀνθρώπων Θέτις/φεύγουσ' ὄμιλον (17-19 *here where the sea-Nymph Thetis lived with Peleus apart from men, fleeing the crowd*). This recalls the relationship of Peleus and Thetis and with it provides a reminder of the effect their wedding had. It is with their wedding that the narrative of the Trojan War begins, and their marriage comes full circle at the end of

⁶⁶ Storey (1989) mentions this, referring to it also as a failed marriage, 20.

Andromache. Thetis, forced by Zeus to marry the mortal Peleus, rejects the standard of marriage by not abiding with her husband. This is something known from the common tradition of her mythology and underlined by Euripides' use of the verb ζυνώκει (18 *to live with*) to describe Thetis. Because of the verb's past tense, it notifies the audience that she no longer lives with her husband.

Thetis is third example in this play of a female character who did not go through the normal marriage process. According to Pseudo-Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca* (3.13.5), it was not Thetis' father who promised her to Peleus; instead, Zeus and Poseidon forced her to marry a mortal. Peleus was told to hold onto her as she changed her shape and eventually Thetis gave in and married him. There was thus no *engye*; rather, Thetis is captured. Thus she is similar to Andromache, who is forced to leave Troy and sail to Neoptolemus' home as a spear-won concubine. And, like Andromache, Thetis nevertheless fulfills the requirement of a wife by having a child with her husband, a child who is acknowledged as legitimate heir. But ultimately she returns to the father, Nereus, from whom she was taken without his consent, therefore forsaking her union with Peleus.⁶⁷ Andromache is clearly upset with her situation, and perhaps like Thetis wishes to remove herself from her current predicament. She is still suffering from the losses of Hector, Astyanax, and Troy, and would welcome her death at the hands of Menelaus but for her son. Lacking the power of a deity however, Andromache cannot leave Neoptolemus, but nevertheless it is now to Thetis that she looks for safety.

⁶⁷ In Homer (*Iliad* 1.137-138), we see Thetis living with her father.

This connection to Thetis comes full circle when she enters the play as the *deus ex machina* and marries Andromache to Helenus (1245 Ἐλένω συναλλαχθεῖσαν εὐναίοις γάμοις/(she will) be united with Helenus in marriage). Thetis also promises Peleus that she will take him home with her, bringing them together as husband and wife once again (1257-1258). The play ends with both Andromache and Thetis taking up the position of wife, when earlier their situations were ambiguous. Andromache's status is the major problem in the play, but is resolved, first through the intervention of Peleus, and fully and finally, by Thetis. Thetis not only confirms the fate and status of Andromache but also of her son. With Peleus in despair, Thetis legitimizes Neoptolemus' offspring and the last descendant of Peleus' line. Throughout the play, Euripides does not give the child a name and it is only when Thetis mentions the land of Molossia (1244) that the audience learns the name of the child, Molossos. The act of naming the once nameless bastard child is significant for the legitimacy of the child and his own future descendants.

VII. Conclusion

Euripides' depiction of Andromache leads to many questions. Even though Neoptolemus can be said to be the cause for the plot of the play, it is the problematic nature of Andromache's status that is the play's central tension. Euripides shows her as someone who is unaware of her own status and who often alters her view of herself. Andromache is portrayed as aggressive but also scared for her and her child's life. She does not possess the authority to legitimately change or confirm her status in the *oikos*

and her fate is in the hands of the other characters. Hermione and Menelaus attempt to lower her status and to remove her from the house entirely, but Peleus and Thetis secure and resolve her position. As I argue in the previous chapter, Andromache's final moments on stage are significant for her status and how it is defined. With Peleus leading her into the house after she was forced to flee from it because of Hermione and Menelaus, Andromache is established as a character who belongs to Neoptolemus' *oikos*. Once Neoptolemus' *oikos* no longer exists, Thetis gives Andromache to Helenus and makes them and her son rulers of a new land.

These gestures are not only significant for Andromache's status, but also for Hermione's. The moment during which Andromache's status is elevated by Peleus is immediately followed by a change in the state of Hermione, who now displays completely different emotions and arguably represents a different character than the one seen arguing with Andromache in the earlier part of the play. In the next and final chapter, I will examine Hermione's character and how Euripides depicts a legitimate wife going through the terrible ordeal of losing her place in the *oikos*. Hermione only suffers this fate because of Neoptolemus' absence. While she focuses on trying to take control of her situation in her husband's absence, only to be humiliated by Andromache and Peleus.

Chapter 3: The Legitimate Wife in Despair

I. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the confusion surrounding the status Andromache has in Neoptolemus' *oikos*. The confusion surrounding Andromache's status and Peleus' decision to reinstate her in the *oikos* are what lead to Hermione's anxiety about her own status. In this chapter, I will discuss Hermione's role in the *oikos* and offer an account of why she fears for her life and is confused about her legitimate position, even though she is the rightful wife of Neoptolemus. Hermione has the right to claim the status of wife in the *oikos* and reason to fear and resent Andromache. Because of the sympathy the audience feels for Andromache, however, Hermione appears as an antagonistic figure. Ultimately, however, both women are in a tragic bind, owing to the failings of Neoptolemus.

Hermione is the wife of Neoptolemus and she is Spartan. However, the domino effect which Andromache's complex situation has created has made Hermione confused about these certainties and causes her to act in ways that are contradictory. Though she seeks to assert her status as wife of Neoptolemus, she sometimes acts contrary to the way a wife should act. She embraces her Spartan identity, for which she and her father are upbraided, but reacts to her situation in un-Spartan ways.

The analysis of Hermione's character includes other literary examples depicting married women subjected to the actions of their husbands such as Euripides' *Medea*, Aeschylus' *Clytemnestra*, and Sophocles' *Deianeira*.

II. Hermione as a Wife

I have discussed how Lysias respected the women in his household, including the honour of his wife, by not introducing concubines to share the same house ([Dem.] 59.22). Pericles, rather than introduce a concubine to the marital home, divorced his wife in order to take up with Aspasia, a foreign woman. When Alcibiades, ignoring Pericles' direction, moved a concubine into the same house as his wife, Hipparete attempted to divorce him ([And.] 4.13-14; Plut. *Alc.* 8.3-4). The evidence suggests that a legitimate wife was owed certain levels of respect and that the husband was supposed to be in control of his urges and, though permitted to have sexual encounters with prostitutes and concubines, to refrain from bringing them into the house with the legitimate members of the *oikos*. Hermione, then, has every right to be angry. The issue is that she does not direct her anger at the appropriate person.⁶⁸ Instead of acting like Hipparete and being angry at her husband, Hermione takes her anger out on Andromache, even though she is frustrated with Neoptolemus.⁶⁹

According to Xenophon (*Oec.* 7.41, 9.15), a wife had the right to reward and punish slaves. At the beginning of the play, the slave woman warns Andromache that there is reason to fear Hermione, her mistress (86 κίνδυνος: Ἑρμιόνη γὰρ οὐ σμικρὸν φύλαξ/ *there is danger; for Hermione is no petty guard*). What is telling, then, is that Hermione feels the need to provide a reason for punishing Andromache. In the first half

⁶⁸ Hermione's misplaced anger agrees with other examples from Athenian tragedy which will be explored later in this chapter.

⁶⁹ This once again returns to the important of Neoptolemus' absence. This is what allows the confrontation between the two women.

of the play, Hermione is confident in treating Andromache as a mere house slave. Hermione initially refers to Andromache as a δούλη καὶ δορίκτητος γυνή (155 *slave and spearwon woman*). Hermione however fails to exercise the authority over a slave that a legitimate wife should possess, which suggests that Andromache's status as a slave is not completely clear to Hermione. Andromache's place in the marriage-bed threatens to collapse the difference between Hermione and herself and deprives the Hermione of the capacity to treat her merely as a household slave. Deprived of the potency of her position, Hermione is driven to the desperate expedient of murder.

III. Hermione and Menelaus

As per the custom for the bride, Hermione brought a dowry given to her by her father. A dowry did not just represent monetary units, but it could also be represented by gift-like items, such as furniture, jewels, and plated ware.⁷⁰ By wearing, as she does on her first entry to the stage, golden headwear and a beautifully-coloured robe (147-148), Hermione demonstrates her fortune through her dowry. In Athens, a bride's dowry was important for her social standing. It remained in her possession during the marriage and, should the marriage end, it would be brought back with the wife into her family.

Because the dowry was thus connected to the status of a woman – the greater the dowry, the higher the value the wife held – Hermione should have possessed great confidence within the household, as indeed she would seem to have done, at least to go

⁷⁰ C.A. Cox (1998), 76.

by the testimony of the slave-woman (86). Cheryl Cox calls this “a kind of informal power.”⁷¹ It did have the effect of ensuring, in theory, that the husband remained loyal, knowing that otherwise he could lose the dowry. Hermione's confidence is reflected in the freedom she feels to speak her mind (153 ὥστ' ἐλευθεροστομεῖν/ *and thus I am free to speak my mind*). And within the marriage, of course, the wife properly enjoyed a sphere of authority. Because the husband went outside to work, the wife controlled those inside the house. It was her responsibility to make sure that the slaves, if the *oikos* was wealthy enough to include slaves, were fulfilling their roles and that the children were tended to.

Hermione's flaunting her dowry before Andromache, however, is a defensive gesture, a mark of how her confidence and authority have been undermined. In her mind, the demonstration of wealth is a way to differentiate herself from Andromache – the prosperous bride and the poor slave. Having failed in the crucial wifely task of childbearing, where Andromache has succeeded, Hermione resorts to demonstrating her authority over Andromache in the only way she can. Hermione's wealth is her dowry and that shows her position as the wife of Neoptolemus. The contest here is not only between the women but correlatively between two household goods: children and wealth. The course of the play will suggest that children are the more valuable.

With Neoptolemus absent, Hermione must confront Andromache without the guidance of the *oikos' kyrios*. Hermione relies on the only person whom she can trust, her

⁷¹ C.A. Cox (1998), 69.

father. The main thing for which Andromache condemns Hermione is her inability to remove herself fully from her father's *oikos*. An iconic scene on Athenian pottery is of the wedding procession.⁷² In these scenes, the bride is depicted as moving away from her family, such as her parents, and is led to the house of her husband. The Greeks used the middle form of *γαμέω* to describe the position of the bride in this situation, as translated between *oikoi* rather than as an agent in her marriage. Hermione's opening lines are revealing of her loyalties (147-153):

κόσμον μὲν ἀμφὶ κρατὶ χρυσέας χλιδῆς
στολμόν τε χρωτὸς τόνδε ποικίλων πέπλων
οὐ τῶν Ἀχιλλέως οὐδὲ Πηλέως ἄπο
δόμων ἀπαρχὰς δεῦρ' ἔχουσ' ἀφικόμην,
ἀλλ' ἐκ Λακαίνης Σπαρτιάτιδος χθονὸς
Μενέλαος ἡμῖν ταῦτα δωρεῖται πατὴρ
πολλοῖς σὺν ἔδνοις

The ornament of golden luxury around my head and this beautifully-coloured robe on my body with which I have arrived are not gifts coming from the house of Achilles nor Peleus, but from the land of Laconia Sparta. My father Menelaus gifted me these things with a great dowry.

Andromache's parading of dowry here exposes the fact that she places her father's family above that of Neoptolemus. Euripides does not suggest that Hermione is happy or proud to be connected to Neoptolemus' family; she is, instead, focused on the wealth that her Spartan father has provided her. Her claim that it is her father's wealth which allows her to possess such beautiful things, and not the wealth of Achilles and Peleus, suggests condescension to her husband's family.

⁷² See Figure 3.1.

If the young bride, then, has not fully accepted her translation, so too we see in this scene that her natal ways are an impediment to her assumption of her wifely role. Her Spartan proclivities lead her to act in ways that, by Athenian standards, are improper for a wife. As Laura McClure has argued,⁷³ Hermione's appearance corresponds with how Athenians viewed Spartan women in the fifth century. Lysias (1.14) chastises women for wearing makeup in times which were inappropriate and Xenophon (*Oec.* 10.2-13) discusses how makeup and unfitting clothing were dangerous for a woman's reputation. Revealing one's wealth through ornaments and makeup was improper for a woman (Lys. 1.14; Xen. *Oec.* 10.2-13). Both Plato (*Rep.* 549c-e) and Aristotle (*Pol.* 1270a1-8), however, talk about how Spartan women are outspoken and have a love for wealth.

Still, as we have seen, Hermione's predicament is genuine, and in the circumstances it is not inappropriate for Menelaus to intervene on his daughter's behalf. In the ideal Athenian marriage, the father no longer had to be directly involved in his daughter's life once he had given her to another male in marriage. However, if the husband was not fulfilling his responsibilities or committing atrocities against his wife, she needed the assistance of her closest male relatives. Neoptolemus' absence has left Hermione in legitimate need of paternal aid. We can sympathize with her plea at 854-855:

ἔλιπες ἔλιπες, ὦ πάτερ, ἐπακτίαν
μονάδ' ἔρημον οὔσαν ἐνάλου κώπας.

Oh father, you have abandoned me, you have left me completely alone on
the shore without an oar to paddle the sea.

⁷³ L. McClure (1999), 164-168.

At this point of the play, Hermione believes her life to be in danger and she, as much as Andromache, desperately looks for safety.

It was not easy for an Athenian woman to divorce her husband. A man only had to banish his wife from his house back to her family, but a woman had to present herself to the archon. In the writings of Plutarch (*Alc.* 8.3-4), it is said that Hipparete wanted to divorce Alcibiades but while on her way to the archon, Alcibiades carried her away and returned her to their home. Scholars have discussed the possibility that the wife's father was able to authorize the divorce of his daughter. Evidence for this comes from Demosthenes (41.4), who writes about a father who took away his daughter from one marriage and married her to another man. As Louis Cohn-Haft points out, what was in legal principle a wife's father initiating the divorce of his daughter was in practice a way for a woman to divorce her husband.⁷⁴ The woman used her father, or possibly any male relative, to aid her so that she did not find herself in a situation like the one in which Hipparete found herself. Although there is not much that can be said for certain, it is known that in Athens it was simpler for a man to divorce his wife and that male authority, in one form or another, was required for a wife to gain divorce from her husband. It is, then, only appropriate for Menelaus to try and help his daughter and to also confirm that the marriage agreement with Neoptolemus is being honoured. If Hermione is powerless

⁷⁴ L. Cohn-Haft (1995), 5.

in her husband's *oikos*, however, Menelaus runs up against the limit of his authority when in another man's *oikos*.

IV. Hermione as Spartan

H.D.F. Kitto views the *Andromache* as an attack on Spartan ideals.⁷⁵ We have seen that Hermione's parading of her dowry plays to certain Athenian stereotypes of Spartan women, and Andromache (445-463) and Peleus (590-641) in the play voice criticisms of Sparta. Peleus' speech, in its references to Helen and her treacherous ways, raises the question of Hermione's upbringing and heritage, something which Andromache has also questioned (229-231). Peleus says of Spartan girls (595-601):

(...) οὐδ' ἂν εἰ βούλοιτό τις
 σώφρων γένοιτο Σπαρτιατίδων κόρη,
 αἷ ξὺν νέοισιν ἐξερημοῦσαι δόμους
 γυμνοῖσι μηροῖς καὶ πέπλοις ἀνειμένοις
 δρόμους παλαίστρας τ' οὐκ ἀνασχετοὺς ἔμοι
 κοινὰς ἔχουσι. κατὰ θαυμάζειν χρεὼν
 εἰ μὴ γυναῖκας σώφρονας παιδεύετε;

Even if she wanted to, a Spartan girl could not be σώφρων. They leave their houses with young men, with revealed thighs and with open clothes, and I cannot tolerate that they share the same race-tracks and wrestling-schools. Is there then need to wonder if you do not raise women who are σώφρονας.

Andromache tries to teach Hermione to not care so much about sex (215-221, 240), like Peleus echoing hostile Athenian views of Sparta. However, Hermione's situation must give us pause. Hermione should care about her sexual relationship with her husband. The

⁷⁵ H.D.F. Kitto (2002), 230-236.

only way Hermione can fulfill her most important responsibility as a wife is to produce a child for her husband. In this regard, then, Hermione cannot be faulted for adhering to Spartan norms about female fruitfulness. However, the conditions under which she operates in Neoptolemus' *oikos* are not that of historical Sparta, but Athens.

Xenophon, in his *Constitution of the Lacedaimonians*, attests that at Sparta a married man could have intercourse with the wife of another, if he gained permission from her husband, in order to produce children.⁷⁶ With their husbands absent at war or the *syssition*, Spartan women already enjoyed unusual authority in their houses, and this institution husband-doubling or wife-sharing extended their position across multiple *oikoi*.⁷⁷ In addition, it was normal for Spartans to produce children with helots which led to a group known as *mothakes*.⁷⁸ Sparta allowed citizen men to produce children with female helots who then contributed to the lower ranks of the army. In Sparta, it seems that bastard children possessed certain rights and were raised alongside legitimate sons.⁷⁹ The central obligation of Spartan citizens was to produce able-bodied men to maintain the population of soldiers. Hermione, if she upheld this Spartan value, should be understanding of the fact that a man must seek out a woman who is able to give him a child. Hermione in the play, however, responds to her situation more in the manner of an

⁷⁶ Xen., *Lac. Pol.* 1.8. εἰ δέ τις αὖ γυναικὶ μὲν συνοικεῖν μὴ βούλοιοτο, τέκνων δὲ ἀξιολόγων ἐπιθυμοίη, καὶ τοῦτο νόμιμον ἐποίησεν, ἥντινα ἂν εὐτεκνον καὶ γενναίαν ὀρώη, πείσαντα τὸν ἔχοντα ἐκ ταύτης τεκνοποιεῖσθαι. "On the other hand, in case a man did not want to cohabit with his wife and nevertheless desired children of whom he could be proud, he made it lawful for him to choose a woman who was the mother of a fine family and of high birth, and if he obtained her husband's consent, to make her the mother of his children" (trans. by E.C. Merchant and G.W. Bowersock).

⁷⁷ S.B. Pomeroy (2002), 37-39.

⁷⁸ S.B. Pomeroy (2002), 102.

⁷⁹ S.B. Pomeroy (2002), 102; Xenophon (*Hell.* 5.3.9) says that the bastards of Spartan men received some benefits from the *polis*.

Athenian wife. Hermione's concern throughout the play is the status of Andromache. She is outraged by the fact that she shares the marriage-bed and that a slave is surpassing her regarding the duties of a wife. In the situation Hermione confronts, after all, she stands not just to share the marriage bed but be usurped. Given the pressures of the Peloponnesian War on *oikoi* and *polis*, and the possibility that Athens in this period permitted, against its customary norms, *nothoi* to be granted *anchisteia* and *politeia*, and possibly even bigamy, one might appreciate how the conflicts on stage spoke to anxieties being experienced in the city at the time. In these patriarchal systems, women's roles and interests were subject to and constituted by the arrangements made in the interests of the patrilineal *oikos* and male-dominated *polis*.

V. Helen and Hermione

In terms of the mythic tradition, all the action of the play stems ultimately from the disastrous union of Helen and Paris.

Andromache castigates Helen for her inability to control her sexual urges and warns Hermione about this (229-231, 240). But whereas Helen abandoned her marriage, Hermione is fighting to maintain her position as wife.⁸⁰ In fact, Hermione demonstrates control of her sexual urges, when opportunity presents itself in her husband's absence.

⁸⁰ The literature is unclear whether Helen left Menelaus on her own accord or Paris abducted her. In Homer's *Iliad*, Helen tells Priam that she wished that she had not followed Paris to Troy (3.173-175), but Paris later talks about the moment when he took (ἀρπάζω) Helen from Sparta (3.443-446). In Sappho (fragment 16), Helen knowingly leaves her husband, daughter, and parents.

Hermione possesses other reasons for wanting to leave her marriage to Neoptolemus and this separates her from her mother. Although the image of watching Hermione leave her husband's house with another man evokes the memory of Helen and Paris, mother and daughter are not the same character. But Peleus, like Andromache before him, sees Hermione as being guilty for the wrongs Helen committed (590-641). Hermione is once again judged based on her Spartan heritage and her parents' actions. Peleus comments that there is no way a Spartan woman can remain faithful, because of her education. His evidence is Helen. Neoptolemus' failure as a husband pushes Hermione to want to escape her marriage. But unlike her mother, who did it to be with another man, Hermione just wants to be safe and affirmed in her proper role in a household. It is not so much with her mother, as with Achilles', that Hermione corresponds.

VI. Thetis and Hermione

The deity who is used for the *deus ex machina* in Athenian tragedy is often foreshadowed throughout the play. Euripides' *Andromache* is no exception and, in fact, Thetis' myth is significant for the two mortal female characters. I have already demonstrated how Andromache is linked to Thetis, but Hermione also shares a connection with the goddess. Her connection is arguably stronger because she shares the same title as Thetis. Both Hermione and Thetis are legitimate wives who desire to escape their marriages and return to the natal *oikos*. Thetis leaving Peleus' home to return to her

father's and Hermione leaving Neoptolemus to rejoin Menelaus in Sparta represent the opposite of the wedding procession. Hermione declares (857-860):

(...) τᾷδ' οὐκέτ' ἐνοικήσω
 νυμφιδίῳ στέγα.
 τίνος ἀγαλμάτων ἱκέτις ὀρμαθῶ;
 ἢ δούλα δούλας γόνασι προσπέσω;

I shall no longer live in this bridal house. To which of the statues of the gods shall I rush headlong as a suppliant? Or shall I fall upon the knees of my slave as a slave?

The reference to supplication at an *agalma* may put us in mind of Andromache taking refuge at the statue of Thetis earlier in the play. In a crucial respect, however, Hermione's situation differs from that of Thetis. Thetis is permitted to leave the side of her mortal husband to rejoin the realm of the gods. There is no literature to suggest that this is an inappropriate action. Thetis' status as a divine being grants her consent to leave Peleus but the same consent is not accorded to mortal women. Hermione is not able to simply leave Neoptolemus because she is unhappy. This play tells us that Hermione needs the assistance of a man, and she looks to both Menelaus and Orestes for help. Moreover, whereas Thetis had borne Peleus a legitimate child and her she will rejoin her husband. Childless Hermione determines to abandon that purpose altogether and she quickly urges Orestes to do whatever is required to remove her from her marriage and, once Menelaus has voiced his approval, Hermione promises herself to her cousin. Hermione, then, departs from Thetis in those very areas where Andromache corresponds with the goddess. Andromache, like Thetis, has fulfilled the role of childbearing, she remains loyal to

Neoptolemus until his death, and afterward is given to, rather than choosing, to marry Helenus.

The play's conclusion focuses on the marriage of Andromache and Helenus, by which Neoptolemus' child is legitimized, and the reunion of Thetis and Peleus. The audience does not hear Andromache's view of her new marriage, but Peleus expresses gratitude for what his wife has done (1273-1278). Considering that Andromache is now the mother of a legitimate offspring who will rule Molossia, her new union is undoubtedly an improvement compared to her previous one. Of Hermione's future we are told nothing, but, even though nothing in this play suggests that Orestes would be a good husband, Hermione can at least expect to have a clearer and more secure status with Orestes than she did with Neoptolemus.

With Thetis bookending the play and with both Andromache's and Hermione's connection to the goddess, Euripides explores the theme of marriage and the significance of the positions of husband and wife. The competition between Andromache and Hermione is about the wife's position in the household. The debate between the two in the first part of the play reveals the disruption and the consequences of having two women fighting for the same role.

VII. Threatened Wives in Tragedy

Andromache is not the first play in which Euripides focuses on the theme of female competition over a position in the *oikos*. In his *Medea*, we see the titular character

expelled because what she considered a legitimate marriage is not such in the eyes of her husband, who wants to marry a woman of status. Medea, in the role of the betrayed woman, has produced children for her husband Jason, but he wants the opportunity to produce children who would be considered more legitimate because of their Greek mother.

While both Medea and Hermione consider themselves to be the legitimate wives of their husband, their roles are reversed. If we look at both relationships in light of the antithesis between Greeks and non-Greeks that is established in the fifth century, Medea is the Other and loses her husband to a Greek wife, but Hermione is the Greek wife who seems to lose her husband to the non-Greek Andromache. The switch is perhaps a commentary on the fluctuating notion of Athenian citizenship. In *Medea*, produced in 431 BCE, we see the political importance of a child possessing two Greek citizens as parents, but in *Andromache* we see how the *oikos*' interest in perpetuating the patriline may strain against the bounds of legitimate marriage as constituted in the city. In both plays, Euripides explores the question of legitimacy from the view of his female characters, for whom everything is at stake but who are subject to the actions of men, powerless by themselves to make any real change in their situations and driven into conflict with one another.

Euripides was not the first tragedian to characterize a distressed and jealous wife. Clytemnestra in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* is angered not only by the death of her daughter but also because of her husband returning with Cassandra, his war-prize. Agamemnon even asks for Cassandra to be treated favourably (950 πρεσβυνῶς) in his house.

Cassandra (1256-1279) prophesies her death at the hands of Clytemnestra, saying that the wife of Agamemnon wants revenge for bringing another woman home. After the two murders, Clytemnestra relishes in her success, taking great pride not only in the murder of her husband, but also of Cassandra (1438-1447). Although the loss of her daughter is sufficient reason for Clytemnestra's anger toward Agamemnon, to this is added the added insult to the wife when she sees that she is now sharing her house with another woman. Clytemnestra had already planned to murder her husband for his deeds but, in including this additional reason for Clytemnestra's anger, Aeschylus is able to explore another aspect of sexual conflict within the dynamics of the *oikos*.

Sophocles' *Trachiniae* is another play that shows a wife in distress because of the introduction of another woman into the house. Deianeira's motives are comparable to those of Hermione, although their situations are different. Both women fear losing their husband and their position as a wife, but whereas Andromache is already present in the house when Hermione marries Neoptolemus, Deianeira is only subjected to Iole later in her marriage to Heracles. Hermione enters the house of her husband and finds another woman who was already a member of the *oikos* and had a child with him. When Hermione fails to produce a child, she begins to worry for her position. In Sophocles' play, Deianeira has already fulfilled her wifely duties by bearing Heracles children. When she hears that he is returning with another woman, Deianeira fears being supplanted by a young rival and thinks of ways to maintain her husband's love for her.

Deianeira's goal (531-587) is similar to Hermione's. They both want their husbands to love them more than the other woman. Euripides is looking at this situation

and highlighting the importance of legitimacy; Sophocles focuses on the physical aspect of love, having the older woman compete against the beautiful maiden. In *Andromache*, Hermione is the maiden and yet is still overlooked by her husband. In both cases, however, the madness of the competition compels them to wrong choices and to trusting evil words. Deianeira realizes her stupidity in trusting the words of a dying Centaur (705-722) and Hermione blames the advice given to her by other women (929-953). Ironically their actions ultimately lead to Andromache and Iole finding other marriages. The characterization of Hermione is similar to that of other female characters in tragedy. What Euripides does distinctively in this play, however, is to explore through the predicament and conflicts of the female characters of *Andromache* the themes of legitimacy and status in the *oikos*, themes with a particular freight for the Athens of his day.

VIII. Conclusion

Hermione's failure at being able to act as the wife of the house is connected to Neoptolemus' failure as a husband. Because of her situation, Hermione cannot rely on Neoptolemus and must therefore depend on her family. Andromache and Peleus do not see Hermione's helplessness, however, seeing her as a Spartan woman unwilling to separate herself from her natal *oikos*. Hermione is so powerless that a slave has expelled her from her rightful place and if she errs as a new wife, it is because Neoptolemus failed

to properly educate and train his young wife; Hermione's incompetence is his.⁸¹

Confronted by a rival who, unlike her, has borne a child, Hermione plots murder, and with the failure of her scheme comes to see her position hopeless, with no chance to erase the damage she has caused by attempting to murder Neoptolemus' child. Orestes is her escape.

Much of the conversation between Hermione and Orestes reveals her naivety. She says that she is scared for her life, but it is not certain that Neoptolemus would punish her. Instead of attempting to win over her husband, she decides to run away, trusting her cousin who, based on the depiction by Euripides, is a troubled individual.

As complex as Andromache's status is, and more often the focus of research, Euripides shows that even the status of the legitimate wife is not clear. The other characters in the play comment on her Spartan heritage, her connection to Helen, and her inadequacies as a wife. However, these accusations are not always justified. The characters do not mention the impact that Neoptolemus' absence has on his wife. So, even though Hermione is initially seen as a negative character, she is deserving of our sympathy. Euripides places Hermione in a position in which there is no chance for her to succeed. Hermione is motivated by an entirely understandable anxiety about her position in the household; she is another example of the possible consequences of an absent husband.

⁸¹ Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* includes details about the relationship between a husband and wife and what was expected from both. At 3.11-12, it is said that the husband is the guilty one if he fails to instruct his wife who is then blameless.

Concluding Remarks

In its episodes, *Andromache* is comprised of a series of two-person dialogues. The play begins with Andromache and proceeds to her interactions in turn with the slave woman, Hermione, Menelaus, and Peleus. With Andromache and her child on stage, Menelaus argues with Peleus. The play then shifts attention to Hermione, who is depicted first with the Nurse and then Orestes, who then disappear from the play. At the end of the *Andromache*, Peleus returns and shares a moment with Thetis.⁸² The previous chapters have examined these dialogues with particular attention to the statuses of the characters. This focus affords a different reading from previous scholarship and new insight.

With three characters experiencing despair, and all three rescued by their respective saviors, it is easy to divide the action of the plot into three sections. But, as I have hoped to show, these sections are connected to each other by virtue of the changes of status experienced by the characters. In the first section, Andromache fears for her life and the life of her child, but once Peleus returns her to Neoptolemus' house, her fears are removed, and it is now Hermione who fears for her life. There is a switch in the balance of power between the two women. With Hermione feeling hopeless, Orestes offers her a chance to escape and recover her position as wife through a new marriage. Orestes becomes the husband of Hermione by murdering her first husband. As Andromache challenges Hermione for the status of wife, Orestes removes the status of husband from Neoptolemus. In one part of the play, the position of the wife is unclear and fought over,

⁸² I have ignored the moment between Peleus and the Messenger as it does not revolve around two characters who are joined by Neoptolemus' *oikos*.

and in the next, it is the position of the husband. In the last section, Peleus learns about Neoptolemus' death and anguishes over the fate of his line and house. An answer is found in the legitimization of Molossos. This reading of the play reveals the coherence of its action. The actions of the characters affect the statuses of others and this then creates a domino effect. In this play, Euripides dramatizes how unstable one's position in the house could be and how subject to external contingency.

Through this action Euripides reveals the complexity and conflicts that attend on status in the household and city. I believe, then, that Euripides' *Andromache* is a more political play than scholars have taken it to be. Most political readings have examined the Spartan references within the play against the background of the Peloponnesian War. But instead of looking outward and focusing on the differences and troubles between Sparta and Athens, I believe that Euripides was looking inward and reflecting on the changes that this war engendered in Athens. The issues of status and citizenship were central to the Athenian polis, and norms in this regard were placed under severe pressure by the war. This play does not propose any answers to these concerns, but problematizes and poses searching questions about them, in particular by dramatizing the predicaments confronted by its female characters. Andromache and Hermione are the most helpless when it comes to defining their own statuses. They need the assistance of men to tell them their place in the *oikos*. The only female character who demonstrates any kind of authority is Thetis and, in the connections Andromache and Hermione share with the goddess, Euripides highlights that in this, mortal realm, a woman's agency and status was

determined by, subject to, and at the mercy of men's status in a patrilineal *oikos* and patriarchal polis.

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List of Figures



Figure 3.1: Wedding of Thetis and Peleus. ARV² 924

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