


Playing Pretend or Playing the Part: Enacting Marriage and the Figure of the Bride in Euripides' *Andromache*

Jugando a fingir o interpretando el papel: La representación del matrimonio y la figura de la novia en *Andrómaca* de Eurípides.

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Abstract

The scope of the Athenian wedding somewhat ambiguous—it is difficult for scholars of Athenian ritual, history, and gender studies to agree exactly what constituted the wedding from beginning to end. This article analyzes the gesture, speech, and costuming of two potential brides in Euripides' *Andromache* in order to argue that while the wedding comprised many important steps and actions, the central purpose and concluding event for that ritual was the birth of a child. Both Hermione and Andromache enact important bridal behaviors and gestures; however, Hermione, the “legitimate” partner, is associated with the early stages and representations of the wedding, while Andromache, through the physical presence of her child on stage, embodies the completed ritual. The play ends by affirming Andromache's interpretation of her connection to Neoptolemus and thus supports a definition of a wedding as a ritual that concludes only with the birth of a child.

Keywords: Euripides, Wedding, Childbirth, Staging, *Andromache*, Deictics.

Resumen

El alcance de la boda ateniense es en algún punto ambiguo. Resulta difícil para los estudiosos modernos de los rituales atenienses, la historia y los estudios de género llegar a un acuerdo exacto sobre lo que constituía la boda desde el principio hasta el final. Este artículo analiza el gesto, el discurso y el vestuario de dos posibles novias en la obra *Andrómaca* de Eurípides, con el fin de argumentar que, aunque la boda comprendía muchos pasos y acciones importantes, el propósito central y el evento conclusivo de ese ritual era el nacimiento de un hijo. Tanto Hermíone como Andrómaca tienen comportamientos y realizan gestos nupciales importantes; sin embargo, Hermíone, la pareja “legítima”, se asocia con las primeras etapas y representaciones de la boda, mientras que Andrómaca, a través de la presencia física de su hijo en la escena, encarna el ritual completo. La obra culmina afirmando la interpretación de Andrómaca acerca de su relación con Neoptólemo y, de esta manera, se afianza una definición de boda como un ritual que concluye solo con el nacimiento de un hijo.

Palabras clave: Eurípides, matrimonio, nacimiento, escenificación, *Andrómaca*, deícticos.

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The central conflict of Euripides' *Andromache* arises from “the pain...which has locked [Andromache] and Hermione in hateful strife...around two marriage beds while having one man in common” (121-125).¹ Neoptolemus, the ruler of Phthia, has kept Andromache and their son in his house after marrying Hermione, with whom he has no children. Many scholars have approached the play by analyzing the adversative dynamic between Hermione and Andromache; however, Andromache's status as an enslaved woman has ultimately led most to remark that she cannot be a legitimate potential wife in the play.²

Christina Vester (2009) has argued that the defining purpose of a marriage was the production of children and has duly given weight to Andromache's position as the childbearing woman in the play. I agree with Vester's position, although I wish to go further by showing that the play grants each woman with a legitimate, if incomplete, claim to the title of Neoptolemus' wife and in so doing, draws attention to the essential part that childbirth plays in bringing a wedding ritual to a formal close. This article examines the opening of *Andromache* to see how these women are set up as complementary candidates for the position of Neoptolemus' wife, with Hermione embodying the earlier stages of the wedding ritual, while Andromache physically represents the later stages. Physical gestures, staging, and costuming demonstrate how the women each strive to control the shrine of Thetis and, by extension, Thetis' legacy as the wife of the leader of the Aeacid household. Andromache's ultimate embrace by Peleus and Thetis as the mother of their great-grandson and heir, as well as Hermione's flight from Phthia, supports a definition of the wedding as an event that ritualizes the continuation of the household through the birth of children.

Andromache's prologue reveals a woman who, in spite of her enslaved status and persecution in the house, wields an expert knowledge of the wedding and its social value, which she uses to protect herself and her child. Aware that her arrival to the Phthia does not quite follow the procedure of a wedding, Andromache nevertheless presents her history and connection to Neoptolemus so as to position herself as a wife-figure to him to the greatest extent possible. Underscoring her narrative prowess, Andromache's position on stage, anchored to the shrine of Thetis visually associates her with Thetis' protection. As the last wife of the Aeacid household and as a goddess specifically worshipped for her marriage to Peleus, Thetis' patronage both protects Andromache as a suppliant and associates her with Thetis in their roles as Aeacid wives. This association is suggested by both Andromache and Hermione, who in her own speech and further engagement with Andromache seeks to dislodge her from her physical position on stage. Hermione strategically places weight on the properly conducted early stages of her own wedding as the basis upon which she claims authority in the household. She attempts to manipulate space onstage and in her language in order to dislodge and replace Andromache from her association with Thetis and the wife-role in the Aeacid house.

1. Background on the Athenian wedding

An essential assumption underlying this article is the understanding that the Greek, more specifically the Athenian, wedding was not a day-long, or even few days long, event. Instead, the wedding covered a years long period of time in the life of the bride and groom that did not end until the birth of their first child. It is due to the protracted nature of this rite that both Hermione and Andromache can lay competing, yet not quite overlapping, claims as Neoptolemus' wife. Because the Athenian wedding did not result in a written, legal document like a marriage certificate, each stage of the ritual has its own important role in gradually joining the bride and groom (and their families) together.³ The first step in the wedding ritual is the *engúe* or *engúesis*, commonly referred to as a ‘betrothal.’ This could occur many years before any intended wedding —when the bride or groom was a child— or immediately before the rest of the wedding. It was not binding promise, but rather a public declaration of an intention to transfer the bride to the groom's household at some point. Herodotus is our earliest author to use the verb *ἐγγυάω* in reference to this early stage of the wedding (6.57.23; 6.130.11). His account of the *engúe* between Kleisthenes and Megakles is often taken as an example of the

ritual or contractual language that would have been used, in which the *kýrios* of the bride would declare that he entrusts or betroths his child to the groom according to the customs of the Athenians (τῷ δὲ Ἀλκμέωνος Μεγακλείϊ ἐγγυῶ παῖδα τὴν ἐμὴν Ἀγαρίστην νόμοισι τοῖσι Ἀθηναίων. Hdt. 6.130.10-12). These words situate the beginning of the wedding as a process undertaken by individuals, but that nevertheless follow the priorities and expectations of their community. While in the *engúe* the *kýrios* speaks his intention to transfer his child, that transfer only occurs later, during a sequence of events gathered under the term *ékdosis*, “procession”. During this period both parties make sacrifices, engage in ritual bathing, and adorn themselves for the procession that takes place, either by cart or on foot, from the bride’s natal home to her new home with her husband. Their arrival is marked by a feast called a *proaulía*. From this point on, the bride and groom cohabit, which marks the next stage in the transfer of *kyrieía* from father to husband. A second feast called the *epaulía* takes place the day after the procession at which the new couple is given gifts.⁴ Many discussions of the wedding end at this point —with the bride newly ensconced in her marital household and the relationship presumably consummated.

Angela Taraskiewicz (2012, p. 43), however, has argued that it was only with childbirth that “the betrothed bride ascended to her adult female status and attained permanent attachment to her conjugal home”. Essentially, childbirth is not an experience separate from the wedding, but rather its culminating stage —the final step that irreversibly shifted a young woman from the category of bride into adulthood. Her observation not only clarifies the role of childbirth in this ritual —whose express purpose was to create a new *oikos*— but also brings anthropological study of the wedding as a socially contracted ritual in line with the specific sequence of biological events undergone by the bride.

Helen King (1985), in studying the medical texts, focused on the biological events that mark a girl’s transition from a *parthénos* to a *gyné*. She notes that these events all involve the shedding of blood, from menarche to deflowering to childbirth and *lóchia* (passing of the placenta) (pp. 122-124). In King’s analysis, these events are marked and regulated by male doctors in an effort to bring girls from wild girlhood into domesticated womanhood.⁵ The wedding, as the ritual that is initiated soon after menarche and that ends with *lóchia*, is the social construct that regulates these female experiences and places them in service of a patriarchal society. Although the wedding is a socially constructed and observed series of events, the underlying biological experiences of the bride ground the ritual in a specific set of experiences and period of time with childbirth at its end.

Altogether, these social rituals and biological events move a young girl from a *parthénos* in her father’s house to a *gyné* in her husband’s over time. Childbirth is the biological event that determines the end of the social ritual. Before reaching this *télos*, a young woman could be referred to as a *nýmpe*, or bride, which marked this period as distinct from other developmental or social groups.⁶ A young woman could remain in this state potentially for years if she and her husband experienced difficulty in conceiving. While some prolonged period as a *nýmpe* was to be expected, we can find ample evidence of the anxiety that arose when a couple remained childless for longer than was deemed socially acceptable.⁷ This element of the wedding ritual, unlike nearly all of the others, was outside of the control of both the bride and her *kýrios*. It is a period of potential anxiety for both husband and bride, as the former awaits an heir who will perpetuate the *oikos* and the latter relies upon her experiencing pregnancy and childbirth to become a trusted and integrated member of her new household and to join in the community of adult women.⁸

In my reading of *Andromache*, childbirth is demonstrated to be an essential stage of the wedding ritual. While Hermione can lay claim to a dowry, an *engúe*, and the other early stages that join a young woman to a husband’s household, it is ultimately Andromache’s ability to lay claim to the final stages of the wedding that proves to be socially and dramatically determinative. We can thus understand *Andromache* as a play that not only weighs the value of the various phases of the wedding, but also, through the characters of Hermione and Andromache, physically represents and reenacts those phases for the spectators.

2. Andromache begins

Euripides establishes the world of the play from Andromache’s perspective when he assigns her as the prologue speaker.⁹ The prologue, often a speech delivered before the chorus or other actors are on stage, distinguishes its speaker from other roles in a tragedy. The prologue speaker not only is responsible for orienting the spectators to the place, time, characters, and events of the play, but also sets its emotional tone. Andromache, the eponymous subject of the play, controls the dramatic narrative when she addresses the spectators directly and alone. Although in a position of supplication at the altar of Thetis, Andromache nevertheless dominates the stage and the events to come through her opening speech. She determines the narrative and, in this, exerts authority akin to that of a playwright. From the opening lines, her position on stage mirrors her position in the drama: vulnerable yet in clear possession of the space and her self-presentation and asserting her role as the subject of her own story.

Andromache reveals herself to be a woman well versed in the norms and expectations of weddings and marriage, which form the central themes of her prologue and her self-presentation.¹⁰ She structures her accounts of her relationships with Hector and Neoptolemus in order to heighten the similarities between the two, minimizing the irregular aspects of her status in Neoptolemus’ house, and suggesting herself as a wife-figure to him. The beginning of Andromache’s speech describes her wedding to Hector through the traditional steps of the ritual in traditional language. Her speech begins as her wedding began: with her childhood home, the city-state of Thebe. The specific relative *ὅθεν* introduces the transition encompassed by her bridal *ékdosis* to Troy, accompanied by a splendid dowry appropriate to her station (2-3). The procession ends with the aorist verb *ἀφικόμην* indicating the completed aspect of that stage of the wedding in Troy. Andromache then provides the reason for the *ékdosis* —she was “given as a childbearing wife to Hector” (*δάμαρ δοθείσα παιδοποιός Ἑκτορι*, 4). The completed *ékdosis* is indicated by the aorist passive participle of *δίδωμι* in line 4 and the end of the wedding is hinted at: at some point in the future Andromache will transition from a *nýmpe* to a *δάμαρ παιδοποιός*, or *gýne*. The lines succinctly cover the essential elements of the wedding from start to finish. They take her from the place of her childhood to eventually bearing her own children, established by ritual, dowry, and offspring in her husband’s household and city-state. To conclude she describes her experience as *ζήλωτός*, “envious,” neatly explaining the social consequence of her wedding to Hector—an ideal wedding made her envious to the outside world. This prologue structure introduces Andromache as a model bride, one who not only went through all the necessary steps of the wedding ritual but is also aware of the importance of each step when presenting herself to the spectators as a mature childbearing woman. From the beginning, Andromache is a master of her narrative who knows that her identity as a noble, fertile, and successful wife is her social value even after the sack of Troy. As such, she takes care to present herself within a nuptial context and defined by the completed wedding experience before all else.

While the Trojan War upends this envious path that Andromache’s life had taken, nevertheless Andromache continues, in her description of her life after the sack, to present herself in a nuptially-coded framework that echoes the structure and content of her ideal wedding:

Αν. αὐτὴ δὲ δούλη τῶν ἐλευθερωτάτων
οἴκων νομισθεῖσ’ Ἑλλάδ’ εἰσαφικόμην
τῷ νησιώτῃ Νεοπτολέμῳ δορὸς γέρας
δοθείσα λείας Τρωϊκῆς ἑξάϊρετον. (vv. 12-15)

An.: and I myself, from a family esteemed
as the most free of all, came to Greece a slave,
given to the islander Neoptolemus as a choice
spear-prize from the plunder of Troy.

Once more Andromache begins with her place of origin. While *τῶν ἐλευθερωτάτων* / *οἴκων* (12-13) could refer to either her natal or marital household, it marks the beginning of a voyage she and her story are about to

begin. οἶκων stands in contrast to Ἑλλάδ' at the end of the line, emphasizing the change from a home of origin to a new land that marriage entailed. Her choice of εἰσαφικνέομαι, a compound of the verb that indicated her arrival to Troy as Hector's wife (ἀφικόμην, 3), establishes a parallelism between her two voyages. The following describes her capture, yet the lines, preceded by εἰσαφικόμην, following another description of the wealth of a city and Andromache's being given over (δοθείσα) and arrival (ἀφικόμην) after a voyage (1-4), encourage the spectator to consider the similarities between her wedding and her captivity.¹¹ In both, Andromache's fate is decided for her by the men around her, she is associated with or accompanied by great wealth, and given as a valuable addition to a man's household.

On stage, Andromache is likely relatively static during this speech as her safety depends on her continued contact with the altar of Thetis. Her narrative, however, guides her spectators through the two most significant voyages and changes in her life. As discussed above, Andromache's position as the prologue speaker marks her speech as distinct from that of other characters; as the first and lone speaker, her initial words create the world of the play. Repeated themes, experiences, and vocabulary would stand out prominently to spectators who have only these few vignettes to ease them into the play.

The defining experience of Andromache's life in Phthia is that of childbirth.¹² She says: "Lying with Achilles' son, my master, I have born a male boy to this house" (καγὼ δόμοις τοῖσδ' ἄρσεν' ἐντίκτω κόρον, / πλαθεῖσ' Ἀχιλλέως παιδί, δεσπότηι δ' ἐμῶι, 24-25). The seemingly redundant construction ἄρσεν'...κόρον stresses the degree to which Andromache identifies her child as Neoptolemus' son. κόρος on its own refers only to male individuals, to boys. The addition of the adjective ἄρσην to this already male-specific noun intensifies the gendered identification.¹³ Andromache knows the social value of a male child, as is evident in the lines that follow, and her account of the generations of Aeacids may also reveal the especially high value a male child would have in a family of only sons.¹⁴ Bearing a male child provided Andromache with a hope that she had found "some defense and protection against evils" (ἀλκὴν τιν' εὔρεῖν κάπικούρησιν κακῶν, 27) as her son integrated her into, and proved her value to, Neoptolemus' otherwise childless household. This approximates the function that childbirth performed for formally married wives —bearing a child, especially a son, ended the wedding ritual and cemented a woman in her husband's household. The early stages of Andromache's journey into Neoptolemus' household echoed her journey to Troy and so likened the second journey to her wedding. The sentence structure of her two births (9, 24) echo one another as her "weddings" did.¹⁵ The births of her two sons do the same social work for Andromache —they secure her position in a new man's household— and she implements them in the same ways in her narrative —at the end of her journey and at the end of their respective lines.¹⁶

The details of Andromache's relationships with these two men necessarily vary —she is given first as a "childbearing wife" (3) and second as "a choice spear-prize" (14), she stresses the gender of Neoptolemus' child much more than Hector's, perhaps reflecting her greater insecurity in Neoptolemus' home— but the repeated sequence, vocabulary use, and placement creates a sense of repeated experiences.¹⁷ In drawing this comparison, I do not wish to minimize the trauma of Andromache as a survivor of war. But I would suggest that the echoes between these two experiences perhaps ought to encourage reflection on the degree of trauma experienced by a new bride.¹⁸ Andromache, in representing her life in this way, introduces herself to the audience as a potential wife-figure to Neoptolemus, as a woman who has undergone separation from a family of origin and displacement into a new household as a bearer of children not once, but twice. Andromache's wedding to Hector is an ideal representation of the wedding ritual, so while her relationship to Neoptolemus differs in important ways, the similarities between the two processes suggest that she did experience some form of a wedding with him.

The prologue ends with another structural parallelism to Andromache's former life. Michael Lloyd (2005) observed that lines 8-15 form an ascending tricolon relating the fate of Hector, Astyanax, and Andromache

(on 1-15). I propose that lines 42-55 can be read as a tripartite piece that closes out a ring composition begun at 8-15. Here Andromache starts with her own fate (42-44), before going on to that of her “only son” (παῖς μοι μόνος; 47-48) and ending with “his father” (ὁ γὰρ φυτεύσας αὐτὸν οὐτ’ ἐμοὶ πάρα / προσωφελῆσαι παιδί τ’ οὐδέν ἐστ’, 49-50). Closing the prologue this way suggests an equivalence between the two family units and by extension encourages the spectators to consider Neoptolemus as a second Hector figure, just as Andromache’s child in this play replaces her former “only son” Astyanax. Her language draws equivalencies between her marriage to Hector and her relationship to Neoptolemus. These segments that open and close the prologue reveal that Andromache is aware that in bearing Neoptolemus’ child, she entered into a conceptual space in which she could be thought to be acting as Neoptolemus’ wife.

Beyond approximating her relationships with Hector and Neoptolemus to one another, Andromache aligns both relationships to other marriages in the Aeacid line through her precise application of the verb *γαμέω*. Andromache uses *γαμεῖ* only at line 29, long after her description of her ideal wedding to Hector, the marriage of Thetis to Peleus (commemorated with a shrine, as we learn at 19-20), and her near-wedding relationship with Neoptolemus. While there are many standard terms that describe a marriage or wedding, *γαμέω* is the verb that most directly relates the action ‘to marry’ and is cognate with the noun for a wedding (*γάμος*). Andromache uses the verb for Neoptolemus’ actions towards Hermione, a woman who, as will be explored fully in the next section, is associated with the early stages of the wedding ritual rather than its successful completion. While it may be troubling that Andromache uses this loaded verb for her antagonist, I propose that she subtly deploys this verb in her favor. *γαμέω* grammatically introduces Hermione to the prologue by name and function: she is the woman Neoptolemus wed in a wedding (*γάμος*). The special application of this word to her alone of all the brides discussed in the prologue holds her apart from both her mother-in-law Thetis and from Andromache’s ideal wedding. Unlike those two women, Hermione has not borne a child and is not integrated into her husband’s household (33). Here the prologue presents three child-bearing relationships —Andromache and Hector, Peleus and Thetis, Andromache and Neoptolemus— as roughly similar and sets Hermione and Neoptolemus apart. Neoptolemus “marries” (*γαμεῖ*) Hermione and since then the couple has been stuck in the early stages of the wedding associated with that verb, childless and *atelés*.

When Andromache and Hermione share the stage, the spectators see how each woman positions herself in order to lay claim to the space (dramatic, ritual, and domestic) in an effort to step into Thetis’ role as the female head of the Aeacid household. While Andromache’s position as a suppliant clinging to the altar of Thetis may initially present her as weakened and subordinate to Hermione, as the scene progresses it reveals Andromache to be in a symbolic position of strength through the protection of and association with Thetis that Hermione wishes to claim for herself. When Andromache and her child are later reunited and embraced by Peleus as members of his own family, the extent of Thetis’ protection becomes clear. Not only does the husband of Thetis and the head of the Aeacid household acknowledge the boy as his heir, but the child’s physical presence on stage with his mother recalls Hermione’s childlessness when she appears on stage.

3. Hermione responds

Although Andromache is undeniably the woman who garners more sympathy in the play, Hermione too attracts the sympathy of the chorus for being a childless wife who shares her house with her husband’s concubine. She is a bride frozen mid-transition —although she has formally initiated a wedding, her lack of children prevents her from inhabiting the role of an adult woman within Neoptolemus’ household. Instead she remains stuck between two households and two developmental phases and cannot be sure of her place in Neoptolemus’ house without having a child and becoming his *gýne*.

Hermione is associated with the initial stages of the wedding throughout the play. She announces her entrance onto the stage by describing the wealth of her dowry and the authority it gives her. She says:

κόσμον μὲν ἀμφὶ κρατὶ χρυσέας χλιδῆς
στολμόν τε χρωτὸς τόνδε ποικίλων πέπλων
οὐ τῶν Ἀχιλλέως οὐδὲ Πηλέως ἀπὸ
δόμων ἀπαρχὰς δεῦρ' ἔχουσ' ἀφικόμην,
ἀλλ' ἐκ Λακκαίνης Σπαρτιάτιδος χθονὸς
Μενέλαος ἡμῖν ταῦτα δωρεΐται πατῆρ
πολλοῖς σὺν ἔθνοισι, ὥστ' ἐλευθεροστομεῖν. (vv. 147-153)

The luxurious gold that adorns my head and neck
and the spangled gown that graces my body—
I did not bring these here as the first fruits
of the house of Achilles or of Peleus:
my father Menelaus gave them to me
from the city of Sparta together with a large dowry,
and therefore I may speak my mind.

Hermione first refers to her physical appearance, relying on the wealth that her *kósmos* signifies to project her authority to the spectators as soon as she is seen. Following Oliver Taplin's assertion in 1997 that essential actions and props were most likely mentioned in the text of the play, Hermione's declaration indicates that her costuming at this point is essential to understanding her as a character (pp. 28-38). Visually, her golden band or crown on her head and her richly embroidered *péplos* identifies her as a bride rather than as an adult married woman. These items could tie Hermione to Neoptolemus' household, essentially drawing attention to the formally recognized wedding that brought her to Phthia, but she is careful to dispel this as the primary signifier of her clothing. Instead, she denies any connection between her wealth and her marital house both in line 149 and in her use of *τόνδε* and *δεῦρ'* which, perhaps accompanied by hand gestures, stress the physical and conceptual distance between the wealth signaled by her clothing and her current home. The final attribution of her father and Sparta as the gift-givers responsible thus grounds her claim to authority on stage and in Neoptolemus' household, not through her relationship to her husband, but through her relationship to her father and his wealth.

Beyond Hermione's costuming, Susanna Philippo (1995) has noticed that Hermione is predominantly referred to by her patronymic and connection to Sparta rather than in connection to Phthia, Neoptolemus' homeland, further displaying her alienation from her husband (365).¹⁹ The chorus, Andromache, and Peleus all stress her youth and inexperience as the primary reasons for her rash behavior and poor relationship with Neoptolemus. Her entrance, evidently a number of years into her marriage, dressed as a newly-arrived bride, claiming her connection to her father rather than her husband, further stresses the dissonance of her position in the house and on stage. This is a liminal young woman —she is out of place both in Phthia and in Sparta.

Further identifying her with this liminal position of *nýmpe* is her childlessness. In the prologue she is called *ἄπαιδα* (33). Hermione is also called a *παῖς ἄτεκνος* (a childless child, 709), and is said that “she, sterile heifer that she is, cannot put up with others' having children because she herself has none.” Her “barren womb” (mentioned at 157, 356) is the center of her great anxiety and insecurity. In opposition to her is Andromache, who in the first 25 lines describes the two sons she has born and refers to herself as a “childbearing wife”. Her son with Neoptolemus, moreover, appears on stage, so that Andromache's fertility is physically represented to the spectators, drawing even more attention to the absence of any children around Hermione. Dressed in gold and heavy embroidery, young compared to Andromache's more mature appearance, and unaccompanied by a baby, Hermione must look overwhelmingly like a bride, not like the settled *gýne* and mother she aspires to be. Language, costuming, and staging all coordinate to create a strong bridal identity for her.

As her opening speech progresses, Hermione engages with Andromache and the theatrical space more directly. Oliver Taplin (1997) has long since established that all essential action on the Aeschylean stage, in the absence of stage directions, was identified from the language of the characters themselves. While initially restricted to Aeschylean tragedy, his conclusions apply broadly to Athenian drama. Melissa Mueller, drew attention to deictics and their role in illuminating the active role of props and scenery in plays. Deictic pronouns and adjectives have a heightened role within a dramatic production, where they “often actively create the specific features of the dramatic environment to which they simultaneously, or subsequently, refer” (p. 7).

Following in the broad tradition of these two scholars, the following reading of Hermione's initial encounter with Andromache focuses on the moments in which the two women manipulate their positions and gestures on stage. Hermione's deictics do not, I argue, "[gesture] to pre-existing objective realities" but rather, by drawing the spectators' attention to areas of the stage, or an actor's physicality, construct the dramatic narrative (Mueller, 2016, p. 7). These subtle indications of their physical interactions illuminate how the two women contested one another's claims to the shrine of Thetis, the Aeacid household, and the role of Neoptolemus' wife.

During her initial entrance, Hermione's use of deictics collaborated with her assertion of Spartan identity and wealth to distance her from Phthia and her role there. Initially, they reveal her prioritization of Sparta over Phthia and undercut her possessive attitude towards her identity as Neoptolemus' proper wife; however, as her speech continues, Hermione uses deictic pronouns more strategically, to emphasize her physical position on stage, not in possession of the altar of Thetis, and to emphasize what she is actively attempting to do in the scene (trying to pull Andromache away the altar, both literally to kill her and metaphorically), both of which advance her case as the only possible wife candidate to Neoptolemus.

Andromache's occupation of space —the stage, the home, the shrine— prior to Hermione's arrival poses a significant problem for Hermione. By arriving first on stage, Andromache has conditioned the spectators to adopt her perspective on the situation, by preceding Hermione in the home she has had a child with Neoptolemus before Hermione ever arrived, and by arriving first to the shrine of Thetis, she has associated herself with the goddess and laid claim to her protection. Hermione addresses this challenge while attempting to remove Andromache from these spaces. She refers first to the household at line 156-7, where the phrase *δῶμους...τούσδε*, draws the spectators' attention to the *skené* out of which Hermione has just emerged. Although Andromache has preceded Hermione in her occupation of the household, here Hermione takes ownership of the space. She diminishes Andromache's claim by accusing her of "wanting to occupy this house, having thrown me out" and so casts Andromache as usurping a space that Hermione rightly occupies. The aorist participle and the choice of *ἔθελω* situates Hermione as the prior —correct— resident of the house and casts Andromache as only desiring to possess it rather than truly doing so. She attempts a similar gesture at 161 arguing *κούδέν σ' ὀνήσει δῶμα Νηρηίδος τόδε, / οὐ βωμὸς οὐδὲ ναός, ἀλλὰ κατθανῆι* ("There will be no profit for you from this house of the Nereid, neither the altar nor the temple, but you will die"). The forceful *κούδέν σ' ὀνήσει* attempts to undercut Andromache's established position as a suppliant as she speaks her desired future into being. But the reality of the staging here undermines her words, as her own language reveals. Whereas *δῶμους...τούσδε* pointed out the *skené* in order to attach Hermione more closely to it, *δῶμα Νηρηίδος τόδε* reminds the spectators that the house of the Nereid is in fact Andromache's domain. And while here *δῶμα Νηρηίδος* refers to the temple, the term is unfortunate for Hermione, as the "house of the Nereid" could also refer to the ancestral home of the Aeacids, which she claims for herself.

Hermione then shifts her argument from the physical spaces inhabited by the women to their cultural-ethical spaces. Again she relies on deictics for their rhetorical and distancing effects. *ἐς τοῦτο* at line 170 describes the enormous extent of Andromache's supposed ignorance while also stressing the cultural distance that exists between Andromache and Hermione. This cultural distance is made explicit in the lines that follow, where Hermione accuses non-Greeks of incest and family murder as a natural extension of Andromache's relationship with the son of Hector's murderer (170-6). At line 173 Hermione returns to a deictic to stress the extent of the depravity embodied by Andromache and all foreigners (*τοιούτον πᾶν τὸ βάρβαρον γένος*, 173). She concludes this segment commanding Andromache, "Do not bring this among us" (*ἄ μὴ παρ' ἡμᾶς εἰσφέρ'*, 177). Here Hermione makes the contrast explicit —while the previous lines forcefully otherized Andromache, now she refers to the unstated "us" to which she and Neoptolemus belong. It seems reasonable, given the literal situating that Hermione performed in the first half of her speech that this situating —which carries the emotional weight of her unfortunate circumstances— would be accompanied by gestures that supported the impact of *εἰς τοῦτο δ' ἤκεις ἀμαθίας* (170), *τοιούτον πᾶν τὸ βάρβαρον γένος* (173), and *ἄ μὴ παρ' ἡμᾶς*

εἶσφερ' (177) (emphasis mine). She gestures to the customs of others as being far removed from her own in an effort to discredit Andromache and remove her from her essential role both in Neoptolemus' family and on stage. She aligns herself against Andromache and lays claim to Neoptolemus as one who shares her customs, cultural perspective, and home. Given Neoptolemus' absence, Hermione's perspective on their relationship is difficult to challenge, and her costuming and gestures would work as potent symbols to the spectators of her bridal identity and rights.

Unfortunately for Hermione's case, Andromache and her prologue have already established her and her customs as completely normative and consistent with Greek customs. Her relationships to both Hector and Neoptolemus are put in dialogue with Thetis' wedding to Peleus, the model wedding whose commemoration literally takes center stage.

Andromache owns both the theatrical space by laying claim to the shrine of Thetis' wedding and the symbolic territory which the wedding claims in the play. She even goes so far as to agree with Hermione's claims as Neoptolemus' bride when she asks Hermione, "tell me, young woman, what valid reason induces me to oust you from legitimate bridal rituals?" (εἶπ', ὦ νεᾶνι, τῷ σ' ἐχεγγύω λόγῳ / πεισθεῖσ' ἀπωθῶ γησιῶν νυμφευμάτων; 193). Andromache's phrasing contains a wealth of allusions to the early stages of the wedding that Hermione has already used to define herself. To start, she refers to Hermione as a "young woman" and so defines her as someone who has just reached marriageable age in contrast to Andromache's own maturity. Next her decision to qualify τῷ...λόγῳ with ἐχεγγύω seems a deliberate invocation of the *engúe*, the betrothal phase of the wedding that again, Hermione referred to in her entrance. Finally, Andromache refers to Hermione's connection to Neoptolemus not as a *gámos* or by referring to their legitimate marital bed, but rather with the noun *νυμφευμα*, which again explicitly emphasizes the early bridal identity of Hermione. What goes unspoken here, but was made amply clear in Andromache's prologue, is that while Andromache herself may have lacked some of these initial wedding stages in her relationship with Neoptolemus, by having his child she has in fact stepped into the role of and is fully identified as a successful, mature wife. Andromache's meta-theatrical role as the prologue speaker prepared the spectators to center her perspective for the duration of this play and Andromache's position at the altar in center stage physically reinforces her dramatic role. In spite of her best efforts, Hermione cannot distance Andromache physically or metaphorically from Neoptolemus' family and the weddings that formed it.

4. Conclusion

After this exchange, the two women do not interact on stage again. Andromache remains in the shrine while Hermione exits continuing to threaten to remove her (256-73). This sequence, leaving us with Andromache as a solo actor, again pairs staging and motion to the arguments made in the dialogue. While the title of Neoptolemus' wife remains unresolved, Hermione's efforts to distance Andromache from the shrine of Thetis and disassociate her from Neoptolemus' household largely fail. Looking to the end of the play, Thetis' arrival as a *dea ex machina* finally resolves the issue of Neoptolemus' lineage in such a way that supports Andromache's self-styling from her prologue.

Thetis, in her concluding speech, recognizes Andromache's son as "the only remaining Aeacid" (παῖδα τόνδε, τῶν ἀπ' Αἰακοῦ μόνον / λελειμμένον δῆ. 1246-1247) from whom a line of Molossian kings will descend. Her announcement reveals that while Aeacid rule will not continue in Phthia, this boy will essentially operate as his great-grandfather Peleus did and continue the royal family line in a new geographical context.²⁰ Her closing reassurance about the boy also places him firmly within Peleus' family. Without explicitly determining whether or not the boy was or is "legitimate," Thetis' speech is structured to recognize the child as the heir of Neoptolemus and Peleus (οὐ γὰρ ὦδ' ἀνάστατον / γένος γενέσθαι δεῖ τὸ σὸν κάμῶν, γέρον, / Τροίας τε, 1249-1250). Thetis thus secures the social position of Andromache and her child, in essence proving that Andromache's evaluation of her child's value was correct. The child created a family unit out of Andromache's

relationship to Neoptolemus and as a result Andromache did indeed replace Hermione to become the child-bearing partner of an Aeacid like Thetis and Neoptolemus' mother before her. Andromache performs the role of Neoptolemus' wife in a way that Hermione never does.

The initial scenes of *Andromache* depict two women asserting their claims to space onstage and within the conceptual space of the Aeacid household. Andromache and Hermione can each be understood as a wife-figure to Neoptolemus in this play, as they demonstrate in their introductory speeches. By paying close attention to each character's use of deictics, literary devices, and other indications of movement present in her speech, we see how Andromache and Hermione both manipulate their bodies and position onstage, their social positions, and their association with different stages of the wedding ritual in order to make their case. Andromache's role as the prologue speaker centers her perspective from the outset and places her in command of the dramatic space before any other character is present. Although she is vulnerable, she retains this control of this central space throughout her interaction with Hermione, indicating that her understanding of herself as a potential wife and her child as a potential heir to Neoptolemus is valid. Hermione's efforts to dislodge Andromache are forceful and rhetorically skilled. Her use of deictics seeks to assert a possessive dynamic over Neoptolemus' house, the shrine of Thetis, and the stage. Ultimately, her arguments and her self-depiction as a bride-figure, rather than a mature wife, are insufficient and work against her, leaving Andromache in control of the stage literally and metaphorically. Thetis' entrance at the end of the play confirms the results of this initial interaction between Andromache and Hermione and supports the perspective of Andromache as the functional wife and producer of heirs for the Aeacid household.

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Notes

- 1 Translations of *Andromache* are by Michael Lloyd (2005), with some alterations as needed. The text follows Diggle's (1981) OCT.
- 2 A few examples include Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz (1984); Poulcheria Kyriakou (1997); J. C. Kamerbeek (1943). Torrance (2005) focuses on the title of *aichmálotos* to add nuance to Andromache's position, higher than that of a typical enslaved woman, but still lower than a free woman. In the absence of a free wife, an *aichmálotos* could play the role of a wife, but a free woman would supplant her in that role.
- 3 Patterson (1991, p. 60) argues that Athenian marriage is a "composite process" one that looks towards the full span of a household's life-cycle, rather than a single or discrete legal event.
- 4 Oakley and Sinos (1993) provide a detailed discussion of each stage, whether it is represented in vase painting, and any relevant literary evidence for it as a part of the wedding. Vérilhac and Vial (1998) provide an in-depth cross-cultural study of all aspects of and evidence for the Greek wedding from the 6th century BCE – 1st century CE. See Phillips (2013) for all the relevant literary testimonia and associated bibliography regarding the *engúe* and *ékdosis* (pp. 141-146).
- 5 In this she draws from such scholars as Vernant (1973), Loraux (1978), and Redfield (1982).
- 6 This is the term I will use for young women at this stage of life. Although in poetry the terms *párthenos*, *nýmpe*, *kóre* and others could be used interchangeably, for my purposes a *párthenos* refers to a girl who has yet to being the wedding ritual, a *nýmpe* is in the midst of the rite, and a *gýne* has completed it.
- 7 Exactly how long is unclear, but Hermione, Jocasta, Creusa, and Aegeus all are evidence from tragedy of the anxiety that remaining childless for too long can provoke.
- 8 From Lysias 1.6 we see that Euphiletos draws attention to the point at which his wife bore him a child —the sex is not specified— as a sign of his complete trust in her from that point onwards. His choice of words is striking, "considering this (to share a child) to be the greatest family connection" (ἡγούμενος ταύτην οικειότητα μεγίστην εἶναι. 1.6). Cohn-Haft (1995, p. 10) discusses the sole example of a man who divorces his wife because he is infertile and he does not wish to deprive her of the opportunity to have children.
- 9 Mastronarde (2010, pp. 175-6); Allen (2000, p. 52-3, 97); Goward (2004, pp. 125-6).
- 10 Stevens (1971, on 1-55).
- 11 Torrance (2005, p. 53) suggests that the parallelism between *δοθεῖσα* in line 4 and 15 would heighten the spectator's discomfort with Andromache's fairly good relationship with Neoptolemus, the descendant of Hector's murderer.
- 12 Her description of Phthia itself is also centered around the wedding of Peleus and Thetis as the event that shaped the landscape of Thessaly and created its ruling class.
- 13 The more typical *παῖς*, which Andromache uses to refer to Astyanax in line 9 and to Neoptolemus himself in lines 21 and 25 is gender-neutral and depends on context to specify the gender of the child.
- 14 Andromache alludes to this family history in line 47, where she refers to her child with Neoptolemus as "the one who is my only child" (ὅς δ' ἔστι παῖς μοι μόνος).
- 15 Her sons are perhaps similar in another way. Astyanax, who is referred to by that name in line 10, is so called because his father defended Troy (*Il.* 6.402, 22.506-507). Andromache now considers her nameless son the source of defense and protection (ἀλκὴν τιν'...καπικούρησιν, 28) from misfortunes. Both boys are symbols of safety for those that depend on them, the Trojans or Andromache alone.
- 16 The historical present for *τίκτω* acknowledges the continuing consequences of giving birth, namely, being a mother (See Stevens, 1971, on 9). Although the moment of childbirth ends, the change (from a non-mother, a *nýmpe*, to a mother, a *gýne*) does not. The use of the present for both sons also perhaps heightens the sense of parallelism between their two existences, in spite of the fact that Astyanax is no longer alive.

17 This can be taken as part of a pattern of the play reworking events from the Trojan War (as pointed out by Lloyd, 2005, 6).

18 As suggested in tragedy, e.g. Sophocles, *Women of Trachis*, 7-8, *Tereus*, fr. 524 TrGF; Euripides, *Medea*, 231-240.

19 Hermione is the “daughter of Menelaus” at lines 486-7, 897, and 1049. The idea that *Andromache* was written as an explicitly anti-Spartan play goes back to a piece of scholia on line 445. See Allan (2000, pp. 149-160) for discussion of the long-standing history of this perspective on the play.

20 Peleus came to Thessaly after being banned from Aegina for the murder of his half-brother. I thank Haley Bertram, Eric Driscoll, John Gibert, Laurialan Reitzammer, and Håkan Tell for their assistance with early versions of this article. I am grateful to audiences at the 2021 Annual Meeting of the SCS and at Haverford College, Dartmouth College, and the University of Richmond in 2023-2024 for their attention and questions. I am also thankful to the anonymous reviewers.