

The perversion and subversion of both wedding song and ritual are common enough motifs in Greek tragedy. In the wedding enacted by Cassandra in Euripides' *Troades*, however, something less passive occurs. Cassandra here is not cast by the vagaries of fate into the character of the crazed and maenadic bride, as are so many other women in tragedy (see Seaford, 1993). Rather, in the grip of disaster, she trades her madness and her role of priestess for a new and chilling role of ἄλᾶστωρ. Faced with the destruction of her family and her city, Cassandra willingly harnesses the destructive forces unleashed by those who subvert the marriage ritual. Unlike those tragic "brides of death" who meet their ends through a negation of marriage of another's making, to kill Agamemnon Cassandra engineers her own inversions. She begins with her seemingly askew wedding song, but shifts from the vocabulary and imagery of marriage to that of epinician, and ends with her self-transformation into a conquering hero, ready to wreak vengeance upon the destroyer of her household, and, in so doing, meet her own death. Her mantic maenadism, her forced wedding trip, her ritual virginity, the crown she wears as both bride and priestess, her nuptial torches, all of these Cassandra redefines and transforms into what she needs to effect her greatest transformation—her own, from addled prophetess to crowned ἄλᾶστωρ. In so doing, she realigns herself with her family's male line, moving away from her living mother and sisters and toward her dead father and brothers.

Cassandra's centrality to the *Troades* is signaled in the play's prologue. From the start, her sexual status is tied both to the fates that await the Greeks and to the cycle of νόστος. Athena, due to Ajax' attempted rape of Cassandra, would make a νόστος for the Greeks that is δύσνοστος. As with Athena herself, Cassandra's virginity (here preserved and made an aspect of her religious service to Apollo) will grant her passage into the male world of war and victory (Vernant, 1980). Hecuba instinctively recognizes the danger posed by Agamemnon's choice of such a bride (*Tro.*, 253–58). Cassandra too knows this and takes the stage wearing the bride's crown, waving the bride's torches, and singing her own μακαρισμός. In doing so she transforms the symbols of marriage and maenadism to the symbols of the victorious ἄλᾶστωρ, creating a new role she must assume in the absence of her male relatives. In her monologue, she describes her trip away from Troy to wreak her vengeance and her ultimate return to her father and brothers in Hades in terms of epinician νόστος. In what Kurke (1991) has dubbed "the loop of νόστος," the (male) victor must leave his home in search of glory, compete with other men, and return home again. Cassandra means to complete this loop. All women, of course, must leave their fathers' homes, but to them a return trip is not an option. But Cassandra makes the coerced voyage of a warbride the first leg on her road to victory. Again she proves her readiness to appropriate the signifiers of her commodification, whether by Apollo, Agamemnon, or society. Singing of her wedding, Cassandra addresses her mother and sisters. But singing of her glory-bringing return, she addresses her father and brothers. Cassandra knows she has entered a male realm and makes the distinction clear (*Tro.*, 459–61). The marriage torches are both the destructive maenad's torches the messenger believes them to be and the funeral torches that Hecuba would prefer. But it is peculiar to the *Troades'* Cassandra to move beyond the common confluence of marriage and maenadism, or more generally, marriage and death and reclaim them as the torches of the victor, which glow with the fame poets can impart. Cassandra's marital journey will lead her away from home, toward her death and that of her "groom," but she departs in certain knowledge that, like any victor, she will return again to and be received by her οἶκος, although in Hades they may be.