

Echoes of a Timeless Lament: Euripides' *Trojan Women*
as a War Play

by

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The War Play

I was ten years old when the planes hit the Twin Towers. Since that moment, war has had a consistent presence in my life. But although I attended protests against American military action in Iraq and Afghanistan in the years that followed 9/11, the violence of the war has remained a distant menace. Since 9/11 it has not directly touched our shores, but the ideas behind why we went to war and what we are fighting over have become part of my life. The United States' War on Terror has embedded in me knowledge of the cultural, ethnic, and religious differences that are at the root of so many contemporary conflicts. As a theater major, I wish to understand how performance can examine these issues and the consequences of the military action in which we are involved.

I chose to examine Euripides' *Trojan Women* as an example of a theatrical response to war. When I first read *Trojan Women*, I noted that it did not fit the standard Aristotelian model of a classic Greek tragedy. Rather, the play stands as a precursor for modern war plays such as Brecht's *Mother Courage* and Kushner's *Homebody/Kabul*. *Trojan Women* has been performed in America during every major military conflict since 1900, despite the fact that critics throughout history have called it a passive play with little or no true dramatic action (Hartigan 2). *Trojan Women* does not follow Aristotle's definition of tragedy but focuses on questioning the consequences of war. As such, Euripides' masterpiece should be defined as a war play that can stand the test of time to discuss contemporary and future wars.

War plays delve into narratives of national conflict in order to help their audiences understand the devastating consequences of any war. As witnesses of these

performative responses, spectators are moved to question assumptions, perceptions, and reasons to engage in a violent confrontation of extreme and irrevocable proportions. As such, war plays are thought provoking and interesting to study because they call for the audience to question the ideologies that justify or oppose war as well as how should we deal with the consequences for those directly affected by or involved in it.

Though war plays are not limited to any particular theatrical genre, more often than not they reconstruct a tragic experience, in the contemporary sense of the term. Performance Studies scholar Richard Schechner says: “In real life terms, ‘tragedy’ means something horrendous happening that is out of proportion to what was deserved” (Schechner 132) and Professor Elin Diamond calls it “irrevocable loss” (Diamond 137). War plays explore our contemporary relationship to the tragic experience rather than being tragedies themselves. Witnessing the retelling of violent acts that are “out of proportion to what was deserved” and that represent an “irrevocable loss”—rape, the murder of civilians and children, or the annihilation of a city and its people—gives audiences of a war play the opportunity to partake in a contemporary tragic event and question its necessity in society.

In discussing *Trojan Women* as an opportunity for its spectators to question their society’s ideologies surrounding war, it is important to first understand the play’s artistic and historical context. *Trojan Women* was produced in 415 BCE, in the middle of the 27 years of conflicts known collectively as the Peloponnesian War (Easterling 173). The production came approximately a year after the infamous sack of Melos, during which the Athenian army killed all of the Melian men and enslaved

its women and children. The play can, in that way, be read as a commentary on the military actions being taken in Athens at that time.

Artistically, the only two theatrical genres presented in Greek theater in 415 BCE were tragedy and the satyr play.¹ Though *Trojan Women* is referred to as a “Greek tragedy,” it does not follow Aristotle’s definition of tragedy as described in his *Poetics*. Once the historical definition of the classical Greek tragedy is clear, I will discuss the uniqueness of *Trojan Women* and why as a war play it has become especially relevant at the turn of the 21st century.

Aristotle: A Classical Definition of Tragedy

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle defines tragedy as “a representation of an action which is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude—in language which is garnished in various forms in its different parts—in the mode of dramatic enactment, not narrative—and through the arousal of pity and fear effecting the *katharsis*² of such emotions” (Aristotle 37). According to the philosopher, tragedies must have a clear and appropriate beginning, middle, and end to create a strong dramatic structure and understandable narrative (39). These elements serve to distinguish this theatrical genre from its predecessors: literary narrative and the epic tradition.

Aristotle poses that a tragedy comprises six elements: “plot-structure, character, style, thought, spectacle, lyric poetry,” with plot-structure and character taking precedence for the philosopher (37). As Greek tragedy is typically centered on a single tragic hero, his fall, from “prosperity to affliction,” is the basis for the tragedy’s plot (44). These plots can be “simple” or “complex” (42), though for Aristotle the complex plot contains greater tragic potential. Such a plot must include a

moment of “reversal” and/or “recognition” (42). Reversal, or *peripeteia*, is “a complete and startling twist in the direction of a dramatic action” (195). This is the point in a Greek tragedy in which the tragic hero experiences the recognition or realization of a hitherto unknown fact. *Peripeteia* eventually leads to the downfall of the tragic hero. Aristotle’s given example of *peripeteia* comes from *Oedipus*: the messenger brings news to Oedipus that allows him to recognize that he is his father’s murderer and his mother’s husband. The realization sets in motion the final bloody scenes of the play (42-43).

Typically men, tragic heroes should be relatable characters who come to their tragic end through a flaw or mistake. This flaw is tied to innate human imperfection or *hamartia*. For Oedipus, this tragic flaw is the pride, or *hubris*, that prevents him from seeing the truth about his actions before it is too late. It is important that these tragic heroes be neither too good nor too wicked; a story showing good men falling to bad fortunes “is neither fearful nor pitiful but repulsive” and one about wicked men “passing from affliction to prosperity ... is the most untragic of all possible cases” (Aristotle 44). Spectators must be able to empathize with the hero and feel pity for his situation and fear of a similar fate.

The combination of feeling pity and fear is central to our understanding of Aristotle’s term *catharsis*. Though the term *catharsis* is often used in contemporary theater and performance scholarship, Aristotle only refers to *catharsis* once, in his initial definition of tragedy, quoted above. In that context, *catharsis* means purification, and scholars have agreed that Aristotle intended it to mean the

psychological cleansing of emotions after witnessing a tragedy. The pity and fear the audience experiences at the end of a tragedy lead to *catharsis* (Aristotle 191).

The inclusion of the term was almost certainly a response to Plato's claim that watching Greek tragedy could in fact produce heightened emotional reactions in its audience (Plato 65-67). In this regard, Aristotle is arguing that tragedy in fact helps control the emotions of the spectator (Aristotle 90). Due to the lack of concrete knowledge on the subject, however, contemporary scholars cannot truly explain exactly what a cathartic response to a Greek tragedy would have entailed. For the sake of this paper I will be using the contemporary connotation of a *catharsis*: a passionate response to a piece of art that leaves the spectator or performer drained and emotionally exhausted.

Dramatic Elements of the War Play

Trojan Women is best viewed as a war play rather than a tragedy. Aristotle's idea of tragedy, with its focus on the fall of a single protagonist and a strict order of events, cannot hope to encompass the racial, ethnic, and cultural conflicts that are at the heart of contemporary warfare. Professor W.B. Worthen described his attempt to teach a class on the morning of the attacks on the World Trade Center. The day's lesson was on Aristotle and *Oedipus the King*, and he found himself:

... haunted by the violent logic of tragedy and Aristotle's effort to tame it. A secret group of men planned the mass murder of a random group of unknown and unknowing people: nothing could be further from Aristotle's preferred constellation of accident and intention, or his sense of a whole, complete, comprehensible 'action'. (99)

Though Worthen addresses the events of September 11 rather than the war that followed, his observation is applicable to a broader understanding of how Aristotle's view of tragedy has become inadequate to address the questions of war.

The plot of *Trojan Women* is simple by Aristotle's definition: the story does not follow one tragic hero, but rather a chorus of Trojan women who have survived the war and now await a future of slavery. The women are led by Hecuba, the former queen of Troy, along with her daughter Cassandra and daughters-in-law Andromache and Helen. The play, essentially a lament for Troy and those who fell with it, presents the women as they are sent to their fates. As the plot unfolds, the audience learns that the Greeks have determined that Hecuba will be sent with Odysseus, Cassandra with Agamemnon, Andromache with the son of Achilles, and Helen will be taken home with Menelaus.

Scholars throughout history have criticized Euripides' play for failing to conform to Aristotle's definition of tragedy. In Euripides' time, the passivity of *Trojan Women* and its lack of tragically dramatic ending would not have inspired the same kind of *catharsis* as Oedipus's bloody resolution. The laments of these women—for their fallen city, their deceased loved ones, and their dark futures—can certainly provoke an emotional response, but the intention of the play is not to inspire pity and fear but to question the events of war. In the past hundred years it has been revived again and again for this purpose. Its “imperfections” as a Greek tragedy are what make the play relevant as a war play for contemporary audiences.

In modern warfare we do not see heroes in the classical sense: wars throughout the twentieth century diminished the paradigm of the two best fighters of

opposing lands finally coming head to head in a decisive duel. Today, the idea of a single military hero is almost entirely obsolete and the focus has switched to the masses who suffer in war. War has always affected the communities and cultures around which it is fought. Though the Homeric narratives and other Athenian tragedies about the Trojan War focus on the individual heroes, Euripides' play presents the communities who must live on after the military conflict. He focuses on the women, those who did not fight but must bear the burden of the consequences of the war. Euripides presents us with four archetypal female characters in *Trojan Women*: the mother (Hecuba), the good wife (Andromache), the whore/villain (Helen), and the madwoman/wise fool (Cassandra). Though their historical background is relevant to the production, the simplicity of their characters makes them easily relatable in any time or place that understands the devastation of war to the community. Euripides' choice to present a play with no tragic hero and the community of women as the protagonist both lessens its connection to Aristotle's definition of tragedy and heightens its efficacy as a contemporary war play.

Aristotle's need for conclusion in tragedy is also problematic when dealing with the aftermath of contemporary warfare. The endings of Greek tragedies are bloody but resolved: every question is answered, every problem solved, and every character brought to his end. But war is not over when both sides declare armistice. The devastation for its survivors and the land on which it was fought continues for years, or even decades, after the war is technically over.

Scholar Francis Dunn writes about the reversal of end and beginning that is found in *Trojan Women* and how it contributes to a lack of dramatic structure. The

play begins after Troy has been destroyed and the fates of its survivors decided. Over the course of the text the women learn these fates and the destruction is finalized, but the possibility for drama is eliminated at the start (Dunn 110). The end of the play is in fact the beginning of the story of what actually happens to the survivors (stories that are told in Euripides' *Hecuba*, Homer's *The Odyssey*, Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* and more). Dunn is intensely critical of this reversal of beginning and end, saying: "The play, disfigured by a premature end, presents an ugly spectacle of pain without meaning, and in so doing, it casts the viewer in an ugly and unpleasant situation. How can we watch the suffering of others, how can we profit from witnessing their pain, if it has no meaning and serves no end?" (110) Dunn is frustrated by the fact that from the beginning of the play, we know that the Trojan women are doomed. Their stories cannot be properly resolved when they are placed in a completely hopeless situation.

What Dunn does not recognize is that the play's lack of resolution emphasizes its connection to modern warfare. That the women's suffering is not resolved in the play parallels the continuation of suffering for those involved in war. The audience cannot "profit" from the story, i.e. experience *catharsis*, because the play we question the suffering that we have witnessed. Whereas a classical Aristotelian tragedy ends in stasis and relative stability, the war play ends in much the same way a war does: with uncertainty and volatility for all participants.

Aside from the play's lack of resolution and its focus on the collective instead of a tragic hero, *Trojan Women* also presents a sober take on how the devastating consequences of war exist for both the victors and the losers. Euripides, as a citizen of Athens, held a unique perspective on the events of the Trojan War. Though Athenian

ships can be found in Homer's Catalogue of Ships listed in the *Iliad*, Athens did not play a decisive part in the war. Therefore, the connection Athenians would have felt to the Greek characters in *Trojan Women* is reduced (Dué 91). Furthermore, at the time *Trojan Women* was produced, Athens was fighting Sparta in the Peloponnesian War. As Sparta was a primary aggressor in the Trojan War,³ Athenians were in a unique position to sympathize with the Trojans (113). Yet Athenians could also relate to the Greek captors as military aggressors due to the recent events in Melos (107). Though primarily focused on the suffering of the Trojans, Euripides' text is not specifically sympathetic to the Trojans, nor antagonistic toward the Greeks. Both sides are presented with faults, and both sides must suffer the consequences of the war. This perspective means that instead of feeling pity for either side, the spectator is forced to question what led both sides to this violent conclusion (114-116).

A specifically strong example of this unique perspective is Cassandra's whirlwind appearance on stage. Though the prophetess can see that her marriage to Agamemnon will bring about her death, Cassandra turns from her own bloody fate to call attention to the effects of war on everyone involved. She foretells the paths that Agamemnon and Odysseus will have to take, and also talks about the Greek soldiers who have been away from their homes for ten years.

And those the War God caught never again
 Got to see their children, nor had their bodies wrapped
 In winding sheets by their wives' hands.
 They all lie buried in a foreign land
 While at home it goes no better, for their wives

Die widows, and their parents childless. (Euripides and Shapiro 434-39)⁴

Cassandra's speech is one of the prime examples of *Trojan Women*'s ability to tell how a war can become unexpectedly prolonged and bring a high death toll to both sides. Though the Greeks have won the war and have complete power over the Trojan women, Cassandra alone can see their long, arduous, and in some cases fatal journeys home. Cassandra disturbs her compatriot's laments to emphasize that no one, from Odysseus to the families of the soldiers, has won in this war. Euripides' identified war's devastation on both sides of the conflict, creating a play in which the primary goal is questioning that war rather than taking sides in it.

These three elements of the Euripides' text—the collective as protagonist, a plot that lacks resolution, and its unique perspective that emphasizes the widespread consequences of war—contribute to making *Trojan Women* relevant to an audience that understands contemporary war. In the following section of this essay I look at how three recent adaptations of *Trojan Women* utilized or neglected to explore these dramatic elements to draw connections to contemporary wars. I will also discuss the effects of Euripides' choice to draw from archetypal female figures to create the play's characters. I am particularly interested in examining why Hecuba as the archetype of the mother is so crucial in addressing the effects of war.

I will conclude this examination with a discussion of the principles and goals behind my own adaptation of *Trojan Women*, called "Lift Your Head," in which I played Hecuba. Finally, I will examine how the performative quality of historical Greek lament is particularly relevant to the war play genre. I will discuss how it has

proved effective to the adaptations I describe here, albeit altered to best suit the aesthetic goals of each production.

Bringing Euripides into the Present: The Contemporary War Play

Throughout this paper I will analyze three contemporary American adaptations of *Trojan Women*. I will be looking at their scripts as well as audiences' and/or performers' responses to the productions to understand how they used the three dramatic elements set out above to underscore Euripides' text as a war play. The three adaptations are the Balkan Theater Project (BTP), a three year project (1996-1998) based in New York City and run by actress/playwright Ellen McLaughlin; the Classical Theatre of Harlem's 2004 production (CTH), adapted and directed by Alfred Preisser; and the September 2011 SITI Company production, "Trojan Women (After Euripides)," at the Getty Villa in Los Angeles, CA, adapted by Jocelyn Clark and directed by Anne Bogart.

Both the Balkan Theater Project and the Classical Theatre of Harlem's production used the story of the Trojan women to discuss modern wars. In the former, survivors of the Balkan War took the stage and used Euripides' text as a performative response to the devastation of their own war. The latter's script includes firsthand U.N. testimony of women who suffered in the recent civil wars in Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Liberia (Preisser, "Information on The Trojan Women"). The addition of contemporary wartime stories enabled these adaptations to become war plays relevant to a current American audience. Differently, SITI Company's adaptation seemed to value theatricality and a heightened dramatic structure over keeping a

focus on war. In doing so, this adaptation failed to connect with some of its audience members and lessened the impact of the production as a war play.

The choice to utilize the collective as protagonist is a crucial dramatic element in distinguishing a war play from the classical model of tragedy. Preisser's adaptation for the Classical Theatre of Harlem specifically emphasized Euripides' focus on the chorus rather than on a singular tragic hero. Hecuba's role as queen and mother is diminished while her role as leader of the chorus is increased. Her antiphonal exchanges with the chorus and Andromache are underscored by the reduction of her long solo laments (Preisser, "CTH"). The change draws the story even farther into the voice of the masses rather than a single protagonist. It is truly the chorus who leads the play, setting the underlying rhythm and themes throughout.

In the first third of the play the chorus establishes the context for the story with the use of the firsthand accounts of war. These accounts narrate children being taken away and viciously murdered, limbs being cut off, houses and places of worship being ransacked and further violent acts (Preisser, "CTH" 6-12). The collective, in this case, is a group of women from around the world who have shared the experience of suffering through the violent aftermath of war. Hecuba is present to give us a personal, historical figure on which to center the story, but the voice of this community is heard above all.

The Balkan Theater Project, on the other hand, presented the voices of the collective by letting actual survivors of war retell *Trojan Women*. Each role in the play was portrayed by two or three actors, speaking the lines in a multi-lingual canon. This further emphasized the lack of a single protagonist. Each individual role was a

microcosm of the chorus, accentuating how a community can speak more truthfully to the effects of war than can a single individual.

Whereas both the Balkan Theater Project and Alfred Preisser's adaptation lessened the focus on an individual protagonist, SITI Company's "Trojan Women (After Euripides)" chose to heighten Hecuba's role in the text, bringing her character almost to the level of tragic hero. One of the most dramatic changes Clark and Director Anne Bogart chose to make was to replace the chorus of women with a singular Chorus role: one male eunuch, a "Gallai" who serves both Hecuba and the Phrygian goddess of fertility Kybele (Clark 24).⁵ By replacing the female chorus with a single male servant of Hecuba's, the adaptation places a strong emphasis on Hecuba while rejecting Euripides' focus on the choral protagonist (Fig. 1).

Reviewers lauded actress Ellen Lauren's performance as Hecuba, calling it "mesmerizing" (Margolies) and "truly heroic" (Morris). Although her performance may have been impressive, the script's shift of focus away from the collective forcibly detracts from the message of Euripides' play. Instead of presenting the chorus as a voice of the masses affected by war, the singular male Chorus in Clark's adaptation serves to support Hecuba as she mourns her more personal losses. While the Gallai does emphasize the religious and cultural differences that would have been present at the time of the war—both his lack of masculinity and the unrestrained nature of the Trojan's worship ritual to Kybele are cause for derision from the messenger Talthybius (Clark 23-24)—the overall effect is to increase the importance of Hecuba and diminish the collective voice in the story.

The power of the adaptation as a war play is further decreased by the addition of Odysseus to the performance. Odysseus first comes on stage in the second half of Clark's adaptation to engage in a long dialogue with Hecuba, giving her a chance to confront the man she sees as the root of her misfortune. Odysseus challenges Hecuba about her failure to kill Paris as a baby⁶ and states that because she failed to do so, she is the cause of Troy's destruction (Clark 88). This tragic flaw—the inability to kill her son—further paints Hecuba as an Aristotelian tragic hero. By crafting Hecuba as such, SITI Company's production invited the audience to focus on her story and the “excuse” for the war, rather than its cultural background and social implications.

Clark also heightened the play's structure and added conclusive moments at the end of the play, detracting from the second element of Euripides' original text: its lack of resolution. During Hecuba's long conversation with Odysseus at the end of the play, the spectator learns that Helen will be sailing back on the same boat as Menelaus (Clark 87). It becomes clear that Helen has won over Menelaus, a fact that remains unresolved in Euripides' text. The very choice to give Hecuba a chance to confront Odysseus provides much more resolution than Euripides' ending. In the Euripides's text Hecuba spends most of the play cursing an unseen enemy, adding to the hopeless suffering motif which so frustrates Dunn (111). But in the SITI Company's adaptation, instead of spending the end of the play mourning the murder of Astyanax, performing his burial, and watching Troy be burned to the ground, Hecuba discusses the cause and effect of the war with her hated enemy (Clark 88-89, 93). By giving Hecuba this chance to question rather than simply lament, Clark's

adaptation heightens the drama of the story and detracts from Euripides' emphasis on the unresolved suffering that is caused by war.

Ellen McLaughlin's adaptation for The Balkan Theater Project largely follows Euripides' intention for the play's dramatic structure. The play both begins and ends with choral text recalling the greatness of Troy at its height (McLaughlin, "The Trojan Women" 91-94, 113-18). The repetition of this lament at the end, as Troy is burning, reflects the structure of the Euripides' text—it begins at the end. Troy is already destroyed when this story begins. The actions that occur throughout the course of the play do not change the fate of the women, who will mourn the loss of their city and loved ones for years to come.

This lack of resolution was furthermore mirrored in the participants' own lives. An anonymous testimony of one of the actresses who played Hecuba in the 1997 performance of the Project was published in the online journal *Archipelago*. In the reflection, the Balkan woman explains how the Project allowed her to begin the recovery process from the war. Though she understood the idea of the Project and wanted to be a part of recreating *Trojan Women*, she often found it frustrating to work alongside those she would have considered her enemies in Bosnia. However, she came to see that those she shared the stage with also shared her experience of loss. Each participant mourned Troy with a grief based in the reality of losing their own city. The woman began to realize that sharing the story of *Trojan Women* had helped her overcome some of her trauma from the war. "I realized I was cured of so many pains that the war had brought me, so many prejudices that I had born afterward, and

all the vanities that had made me so angry at the first rehearsal” (Anonymous 35).

Performing the adaptation offered some closure to her experiences in the Balkan War.

However, the performance also emphasized that the recovery process was only beginning. Ellen McLaughlin, after watching the 1997 performance, wrote: “I found the piece was almost too heart-breaking to watch. It was as if the release or catharsis was impossible to achieve” (“Assessment 2” 12). She found that while the previous year the group had been proud of their performance, in 1997 anger and despair toward the events of the war was prevalent. Having been in America for another full year had forced the participants to begin to come to terms with the aftermath of the war (2-3). Just as *Trojan Women* ends at the beginning, the end of the Project was the commencement of the long road of recovery that was to come for each participant.

Alfred Preisser also chose to emphasize that the story of the Trojan women is only beginning at the end of the performance. When I emailed him to request a copy of his adaptation of *Trojan Women*, he agreed that the play is “not anti-war, but rather says ‘war exists’ and the human race will constantly be faced w[ith] the question ‘what comes next’” (“Information on The Trojan Women”). His adaptation ends with a reflection from Helen on the years to come for the Trojan women. Seen on a boat on her way to Greece, she looks back at the shores of Troy and reflects that:

Many years will pass

Before you hope to hope again

Swallowed by a foreign land

.....

You may live to live in

Hope again- (Preisser, "CTH" 44).

Though the play covers but a few hours in the lives of the Trojan women, Helen here reflects what any survivor of war can understand, that the devastation will continue for years after the war is technically over.

As Helen is a Greek who is often perceived as the villain in the story, having her give this message underscores the third dramatic element of Euripides' war play: its unique perspective that focuses on the consequences of war rather than taking sides in it. The Balkan Theater Project again embodied this element in the use of participants from all sides of the conflict. The entire process was designed to ensure that the focus of the production was on the devastation each had experienced due to the war, rather than the individual ethnic clashes that may have caused it (McLaughlin, "Assessment 1" 4). Each participant had lost a city, a home, family and friends, and a way of life. In their homeland they were, for the most part, well-off, educated, and content. In America, where they did not speak the language or have the money for the lifestyle they were used to, former filmmakers, journalists, or judges were forced to work as janitors or chambermaids. Each of them had gone through a loss of home and lifestyle in the time they had spent in America since fleeing the war, no matter which side of the conflict they had been on (McLaughlin, "Assessment 2").

The anonymous Balkan woman reflected in *Archipelago* that although she initially had difficulty acting alongside those she once considered her enemies, she came to realize that neither side "is ever made happy, neither killer nor victim. Eventually, all of us lose our hearts and dignity" (Anonymous 32). She played

Hecuba alongside two other women who did not necessarily share her religious beliefs or a common language, but who helped her to realize that the war's devastation had affected them all. Performing the piece with actors who were from all sides of the conflict underlined the text's ability to objectively examine the consequences of war.

The Classical Theatre of Harlem production identified the devastation for both sides in war, but also extended the question to confront both sides' accountability for war. In Preisser's adaptation, the chorus emphasizes their own role in causing the environment of brutality in and after the conflict, though they have also suffered from this brutality. Throughout the play the chorus questions a society in which the kind of violence they have had to experience is expected or even normalized:

I think it was even happening in my own country

(yes I think this happened)

I think people may have been

Used

Sold

Beaten

Hung

Ignored

Bought

Burned

Killed

And put out with the evening trash

.....
 Where brutality is normal/brutality is normal

And having your home burned is normal/normal

And having your children ripped away and raped

Is just the way it is/This is how it is. (Preisser, "CTH" 40)

In mourning their losses, the chorus must also lament for the society they inhabit.

They must acknowledge their part in that society which let these crimes go unpunished for years, even though they are now at the receiving end of them. *New York Times* reviewer Margo Jefferson understands the chorus's question to the audience: "Trojans fought brutally, too: are they innocent because they lost and are victims now?" (Jefferson) The theme is most explicit when Talthybius comes to take Andromache's baby. In Preisser's script, Talthybius is portrayed as a somewhat pathetic diplomat type who, in trying to be sensitive, ends up sounding pretentious and callous. When he comes to take Astyanax away to be murdered, however, he loses his cool outward exterior:

TALTHYBIUS. You think winning and losing is the same, you think

things are supposed to be fair? Someone has to take charge,

someone has to be responsible for driving things forward! ...

We're doing what we have to do, we're doing exactly what your

men would do if they could but they can't ...

HECUBA. You men here, you think you're civilized. Child murderer's

[sic], rapists. That's your civilization!

TALTHYBIUS. It's your civilization too. If you stood where I do you could see that! (27).

Talthybius is saying that each side is equally guilty for the inhumaneness of the war's aftermath. As a pawn in the grander story of the war, Talthybius understands both the gravity of the Trojans' situation and the necessity of the Greeks' actions in a violent society. He would have been an easy casualty had Troy won the war, but his subsequent fate—bringing the Trojan women ill tidings of their new masters and murdering a baby—speaks to the dark consequences for all sides of the war.

In both of these examples, Preisser asks the audience to question their own society and involvement in military conflicts around the world. While Euripides' original text poses the question of who suffers in war, Preisser's adaptation forces the spectator to ask herself who is accountable. If we can somehow be sympathetic to both sides, we must also hold them liable.

SITI Company's production maintained the message of equal devastation for both sides in Cassandra's speech, which held true to Euripides' intention. However, the emphasis on Hecuba as protagonist and the classically tragic qualities of the text diminished the overall story of war in the piece. Therefore, although Euripides' message in Cassandra's speech was maintained, the play lacked connection to either the Trojan War or any contemporary war.

Director Anne Bogart intended to create a reinvention of Euripides' play that could present the Trojan women as intelligent and powerful. She wanted to escape the stereotype that the play only portrays "a bunch of women in rags screaming" (Behrens) and the common critique of the play's lack of action. In doing so, she and

writer Clark heightened *Trojan Women*'s dramatic arc and added elements of Aristotelian tragedy, but lessened Euripides' message of the devastation caused by war. *LA Times* reviewer Charles McNulty said the production "refus[ed] to wallow in the play's pathos" and that:

the collective force of the play—an overwhelming, tribal-like shriek of protestation against wartime inhumanity—is diminished ... the general path ... goes counter to what unifies Euripides' dramatic statement on the immorality of war—its cumulative sorrow.

(McNulty)

That the performance was impressive theatrically and was an interesting and engaging take on Euripides is clear: the same reviews that find issue with the play's emotional power laud its innovation and aesthetic (McNulty; Morris). As a war play however, SITI Company's adaptation lacks a strong connection to war and Euripides' original intention of presenting its consequences.

All three of the adaptations I have discussed above used Euripides' original text differently depending on their aesthetic, intended audience, and perspective. The Balkan Theater Project and the Classical Theatre of Harlem's adaptation did more to highlight the aspects of Euripides' text that make it a war play: the collective as protagonist, the lack of resolution and dramatic structure, and its perspective that emphasizes the underlying questions about the aftermath of war. SITI Company's adaptation prioritized increasing the drama of the play instead of telling a story of war. However, all three adaptations emphasize that almost 2500 years after it was

first produced, Euripides' play is still being revisited to incite discussion about war, and about these characters he created to examine it.

Archetypal Female Characters: Hecuba as the Mother

Euripides' choice to center his play on the women of Troy is one of the most important aspects in the play's survival. The choice enables the very discussion that is the underlying goal of the war play: to question the cause and effect of war on all involved. The female point of view was uncommon when the play was produced. The production of Greek tragedies, like all public events in the Athenian polis, was entirely controlled and dominated by men. Male actors performed the text that a male playwright had written, for male spectators and male judges. Though there is little conclusive evidence as to whether or not women were even allowed in the amphitheater, the primary audience would always be Athens's male citizens (Goldhill 64-66). Neil T. Croally writes about the phenomenon of women as the excluded other through whom a male audience would examine themselves (97). Athens's citizens would portray and examine "this female other" to question their actions as a male driven society (Croally 97).

Croally goes on to explain, "War is the responsibility of men, but war also kills men" (85). The women who suffered through the ten-year war—as they watched husbands, fathers, and sons die—were unable to take action to protect themselves from such violence or save their city. Their innocence in the action of the war enables the play to provide a discussion on the causes and consequences of war for those who did not fight in it. From the perspective of the male spectator, it is a unique

opportunity to observe the part of a military conflict most of them would never be able to witness.

I have discussed above the play's use of the chorus as protagonist: the collection of innocent bystanders who have lost home and family to the war. Although this aspect of the play's construction is crucial, here I will examine the purpose of the named female characters of the play. Hecuba, Cassandra, Andromache, and Helen are archetypes of female characters that represent all women who live through war: the mother, the madwoman/wise fool, the wife, and the villain/whore. Euripides' choice to give his characters archetypal qualities further establishes *Trojan Women* as a war play. The ability to adapt these characters to any time or place of war is crucial to the play's ability to remain relevant.

Nietzsche wrote of Euripides: "While Sophocles still paints whole characters and yokes their sophisticated development to myth, Euripides already paints only large individual character traits which are capable of expressing themselves in violent passions" (47). Though Nietzsche did not intend the statement as a compliment, once again Euripides' imperfections as a playwright have made *Trojan Women* an ideal model for a war play. That his characters are tied not to their specific situations but rather are based on how they react to the general context of war makes them prime for being recontextualized to contemporary circumstances. For example, Cassandra is the archetype of the wise fool: even if ignored, she speaks the truth and understands the consequences of the war. Helen presents the archetype of the villain or the scapegoat; some productions try to redeem her reputation as a whore, some try to further befoul it. Andromache is in perfect opposition to Helen as the unspoiled wife and the

innocent female. And Hecuba is above all the mother: of her famous/infamous children and of her city as its queen.

For the remainder of this section I will take Hecuba as my primary example for why Euripides' use of archetypal female characters has helped *Trojan Women* remain relevant throughout history. That *Trojan Women*'s plot is tied not only to the stories of female survivors but most importantly to the story of a mother is a crucial aspect of the text's classification as a war play. Though each of the archetypes defined above is present in war, the archetype of the mother is the most universally understood. No matter what war at what point in time, the mother always loses the most. The story of a mother devastated by war sends its echoes through time. It is a story that is relevant to any wartime society.

Hecuba, as a mother, suffers through her sons' deaths, her daughters' rapes, and her own fall from power into servitude. Hecuba's story is particularly poignant because she loses all of her children, some even during the course of the play. Jocelyn Clark's adaptation for SITI Company particularly emphasizes her losses:

Kassandra and Polyxema [sic]

My daughters still live.

Aiai! Aiai! Aiai.

Astyanax.

My grandson still lives.

Aiai! Aiai! Aiai.

Troy will rise again.

There is still hope. (10)

Here, although Hecuba mourns for her sons who have died already—the brave Hector and the cowardly Paris—she finds hope in her living children and grandchild. Yet by the end of the play Polyxena and Astyanax will be dead, and Cassandra will be on her way to certain death. Hecuba truly is the “saddest of all mothers” (Euripides and Shapiro 1485) and her enormous losses enable the character to speak for all mothers who have suffered through wars.

She cannot, however, simply grieve her children’s downfall and her own dark fate. Though she must endure the tragedy of losing her children, she simultaneously carries her children’s guilt. Throughout *Trojan Women* Hecuba is accused of being the mother of Troy’s destruction because she gave birth to Paris. Such an argument is central to Helen’s plea for her life: “First, Paris was the cause of all our trouble. / This woman here gave birth to Paris, so she’s / The mother of the cause of all our trouble” (Euripides and Shapiro 1061-63). Paris’s infamy is not only thrown at Hecuba by the Greeks. Andromache also brings up the matter:

Your son eluded death and in a cursed bed

Brought down Troy’s towers. And now

The mangled blood-soaked bodies lie

Sprawled at the feet of Pallas Athena

For the vultures to carry, piece by piece away.

Your son—Paris, alone—yoked Troy to slavery. (Euripides and

Shapiro 687-92)

The mother, though primarily an innocent bystander, carries guilt and responsibility through her children for the events of the war and the consequences thereafter. Her children give her hope but also lead her to further shame if they fail.

As queen, Hecuba is also the mother of Troy. As mother to her children Hecuba can speak to the devastation of family in war; as mother to Troy she can speak to the devastation of city. Furthermore, she is a representative of the city's leadership that led to the brutal nature of the war and its aftermath. Alfred Preisser's adaptation, questioning social accountability for war, highlights this aspect of Hecuba's role. Near the end of the adaptation, when the Chorus wonders how its culture has cultivated the necessity for such brutality, Hecuba responds:

It is awful beyond words what we are.

.....

I knew full well these things were happening

I know I did but

Always somewhere else

Definitely happening but somewhere else ("CTH" 39-40).

As queen, Hecuba holds responsibility for the social conditions that have led to the women's state of desolation. In mourning her personal losses as a mother she must also come to terms with her place in this society as one of its leaders. The position gives Hecuba the unique ability to speak to both the cause and effect of the war's tragedy. Though most contemporary spectators cannot relate to the perspective of a queen, any mother understands the responsibility of raising a child correctly. Hecuba,

as the mother, is responsible for the actions of her children and her city in this time of war, a position which resonates throughout war's history.

Hecuba has a historical foundation in the *Iliad*, but her role in *Trojan Women* as an archetype of the mother in war makes that story applicable to modern situations. William Shakespeare famously wrote the lines in *Hamlet*, “What’s Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba, / That he should weep for her?” (II.ii. 536-37). I first encountered Hecuba through this quote. I was drawn to the reference, in one of the greatest tragedies in the Western canon, to this somehow more tragic historical character. This woman, this archetype of devastated motherhood, has moved men for thousands of years. Euripides’ play may have been ill-received in its own time—perhaps because of the story’s threatening relevance to the Peloponnesian War (McDonald 7), perhaps because of the strong female characters it portrayed (McLure 25)—but that which Athenian audiences did not want to see or hear has brought it back to the stage time and time again. By Shakespeare’s time Hecuba had already become an archetype for misery (McDonald 8). As audience members, we know Hecuba’s place in Greek history through Homer’s *Iliad*, but we understand her to be human in Euripides’ *Trojan Women*. Euripides’ simple character embodies the grief of her situation as a mother who is totally devastated by the events of war. This grief is present in any wartime situation, and thus Hecuba has become the most powerful voice of suffering in the timeless theater of war.

Women in the War Play: “Lift Your Head”

In my adaptation of Euripides’ *Trojan Women*, I sought to highlight the author’s female centered plot and archetypal characters. I did not wish to create a

production that reinvented Euripides' story or characters—as was SITI Company's approach—nor to directly relate my production to a contemporary war—as both the Balkan Theater Project and the Classical Theatre of Harlem did. Rather, I researched a number of other adaptations so that I could select fragments that would emphasize the theme of a community of women attempting to survive after their culture has been destroyed. After reviewing these adaptations and translations, I chose to draw from eight texts to create my script: Ellen McLaughlin's "The Trojan Women" (2008), Alan Shapiro's translation of *Trojan Women*, Karen Hartman's "Troy Women: Adapted from Euripides," Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu*, Chuck Mee's "Trojan Women: A Love Story," Jean Paul Sartre's *The Trojan Women* (trans. Ronald Duncan), Brendan Kennelly's "Euripides' The Trojan Women: A New Version," and Richard Lattimore's translation of *The Trojan Women*.⁷ I assembled my script using American playwright Charles L. Mee's dramaturgical technique of compiling sources to create a new piece.⁸

I aimed to create a production that would capture the relevance of *Trojan Women*: its ability to serve as a vehicle that gives voice to those who have been silenced by war in order to promote discussion about its consequences. I wanted to place particular focus on the women's lives that continue after the war's end. I compiled a script that underscored the collective force of lament while deemphasizing the stories of individuals and any implications of blame for the events of the war. Overall I aimed to reinvigorate the text and dramatic structure without taking the focus away from the timelessness of Euripides' story of war.

I had the opportunity to present “Lift Your Head” at Wesleyan’s Patricelli ’92 Theater on December 8-10, 2011. The piece was performed with three women who were present onstage throughout, taking turns either as main characters or members of the chorus of women. Mica Taliaferro played Cassandra, Andromache, and Menelaus; Emma MacLean portrayed Helen and Talthybius; I acted as Hecuba. When we were not playing these roles, we acted as nameless members of the chorus of women. The choice to remain onstage even when we were not in our named character roles allowed us to be engaged with the action at all times—we watched each other perform, waiting together to learn about each character’s fate. We were constantly present to respond to the events and watch each other’s reactions.

To maintain an objective focus on the consequences of war, I also wanted to remove implications of blame in the story. This was largely a matter of reimagining Helen, who is portrayed as the villain in Euripides’ text. For the Balkan Theater Project, Ellen McLaughlin removed the characters of Helen and Menelaus entirely, not wanting any participant to play a role that could be perceived as villainous or at fault for the events of the war. When the playwright reworked the script for a college performance in 2003, she added Helen but gave her text to illustrate that Helen also loved Troy and mourned its devastation. Though she is still hated by the other women in that version, she is portrayed as a victim of her own beauty and of the men who control her (McLaughlin, “The Trojan Women” 85-87, 94, 101-107). In “Lift Your Head,” I gave Helen text to emphasize that for the last ten years she has been in slavery just as the Trojan women are now. Reviewer Nick Orvis called it an “unusual

and poignant take” on Helen that reminded the audience that Helen is a victim as much as if not more than the Trojan women (Orvis).

Though I decided at the beginning of the process to perform the piece with three actors, the choice to have an all-female cast came after closer examination of the goals of my adaptation. As stated above, I wanted to emphasize the choral protagonist and the uniquely female-centered voice of Euripides’ text, underlining the particular power of the woman to express the devastation of war. By presenting even the male voices in the text with female actors, we were able to truly observe the utility of the female protagonist in the war play. When each of us became a male character, we stepped up on two bricks at one corner of our triangular stage (Fig. 2). Captured in a well of light, the quality of which was sharper than any other light, the men were set apart. Their presence was necessitated by the story, but the focus remained on the implications of their presence for the women. We reversed the norm of Euripides’ time, where all the characters were played by men. In that time, the female characters were only present so that the males could examine their own actions (Croally 97). In “Lift Your Head,” male characters were only present so that the spectator could understand the female characters’ response to their situation.

With only three people, I condensed the long monologues and choral odes so that the play was about half its usual running time. With a more concise story I hoped to keep the play interesting and engaging both textually and visually without losing the central focus on the devastation of war. The majority of the choral passages, laments, or songs were accompanied by ritualized movement. I created a version of this production that could have been done for hundreds of years—that mothers have

passed it down to daughters until it has become a kind of dance. Combining the vividly visual language with physical accents underscored the desolation of the piece: we beat our hands or feet on the ground, we reached for a city that no longer existed, we tore at our hair, or simply fell to the floor (Fig. 3).

From the audience's perspective, these changes were successful in both elevating the piece's theatricality and in keeping it true to its core message. The review in the *Wesleyan Argus* understood: "It is not by any means an easy piece, and it is not a happy one, but it is a brutally honest one and holds a story that grabs your attention and refuses to let go" (Orvis). This honesty about the consequences of war is at the heart of Euripides' work. "Lift Your Head" highlighted the elements of Euripides' play that have enabled it to be relevant in contemporary times of war.

I called my adaptation "Lift Your Head" to emphasize the unusual plot structure of the piece: the reversal of the beginning and end. The entire play is about what comes after the devastation. The first line of Hecuba's opening speech contains "lift up your head" (Euripides and Shapiro 109). She picks herself up off the ground and forces herself to understand how she has come to this place. The play centers on this community of women coping with the loss they have experienced. The title "Lift Your Head" refers to the Trojan women's attempt to find the strength to question the future amidst the constant underscoring of lament.

Lament in *Trojan Women*

Throughout the production, "Lift Your Head" emphasized the form of lament that is present in Euripides' text. Lament is highly ritualistic rather than traditionally theatrical. The emphasis on this ritual both increased the visual interest of the piece as

well as connecting it to how it would have been performed in Euripides' time. For the remainder of this essay I will examine the historical form and structure of lament. By working with the recent adaptations I have already introduced, I will discuss how each adaptation modified the historical form of lament and why these modifications were necessary for contemporary audiences.

Greek lament is a historical genre of rhetoric that is typically assigned to women. Though tragedies often employ the technique, it comes from the style of mourning that was actually performed by women in Ancient Greece. Full laments are usually either for gods/heroes, for the fall of cities, or for the dead (Dué 10). Historically, laments for the dead were the most common and appear most often in tragedy. A Greek tragedy will often end with a lament for its hero (Suter 3).

The traditional structure of a lament for the dead has “a three-part pattern, which consists of a direct address, a narrative of the past or future, and then a renewed address accompanied by reproach” (Dué 10). Laments were accompanied by physical and vocal gestures which set the style apart from traditional speech: the accompanying wails and howls (“*aiai*” and “*ototoi*”) as well as the “tearing of hair, the laceration of cheeks, and the beating of the chest” (McLure 44). These laments were often known to inspire revenge for the dead as they offered accepted form of social protest for women, who held a marginalized position in Greek society. Through laments, they could put forth a strong and unified voice against unfair treatment or affairs of the polis about which they were otherwise banned from (McLure 46).

The danger that this form of female expression posed to the male-based polis caused Athenian lawmaker Solon to pass legislation in the sixth century BCE to limit

women's voices in funerary rites. "Solon's reforms decreed that women under sixty years of age would not be allowed to ... lacerate themselves or wail ... or accompany the funerary procession" (McClure 45). It is noteworthy that Euripides wrote *Trojan Women*, a play that clearly depends on the use of lament, in a time when it was not legal for most women to engage in the act in the Greek social sphere.

Ann Suter's "Lament in Euripides' 'Trojan Women'" provides excellent analysis of how the lament form is inherent to the text's dramatic structure. Working from the definition of the historical three-part pattern of lament, she recognizes the portions of the text that follow the lament form. She cites five partial laments: the first choral ode mourning Troy (Euripides and Shapiro 172-256); Andromache and Hecuba mourning Hector's death (666-729); Andromache mourning for Astyanax (849-95); Hecuba mourning the death of Astyanax (1366-430); Hecuba and Chorus mourning the same (1433-91). These partial laments exclude at least one of the three parts—the direct address, the narrative, or the readdress. Finally, there is one full lament: the final choral ode for the death of Troy (1530-93). Suter indicates that the presence of lament would have been highly noticeable in performance (5-7).

By using elements of lament throughout the text, Euripides grounds his characters in the war they have just lived through (Suter 5-7). By nature, laments capture the tension between past and future for the lamenter. The structure of lament forces the lamenter to revisit the events in the past that have led to the lament and also look to what will come once the mourning period ends (Suter 17). In *Trojan Women*, the characters of Hecuba, Andromache, and the Chorus⁹ repeatedly retell the narrative of the war while attempting to imagine where they will be taken. The women are

helpless on the shores of Troy, having lost their homes already but not knowing what the future holds. As such, they come to embody this timeless quality of lament (Gregory 156). Survivors of war undergo this liminal state in the mourning process, which makes the form of lament an ideal way of expressing the loss caused by war.

Suter also identifies that the entire structure of *Trojan Women* is akin to a lament. Where Dunn takes issue with the plot's lack of dramatic structure, Suter sees the structure as emphasizing the form of lament: "The whole play is a lament for the people and city of Troy and laments are one moment in time" (Suter 17). Dunn complains that the play "begins at the end and remains stuck there" (qtd. in Suter 17), but this structure actually creates the ideal setting for laments which can capture how war has and will continue to devastate the community.

However, the lengthy and verbose form of lament has helped give the play its reputation for being without action. In order for the play to remain engaging, the lament must be adapted to resonate with a modern audience. The reasons for lamenting are still relevant and the ideas are necessary, but the three-part form and accompanying gestures must be modified to fit the aesthetic of the production. The most common piece of the three-part structure that is retained in contemporary adaptations is the "narrative of past and future" (Dué 10). This narrative can serve to ground the play within the adaptation's aesthetic.

Both Alfred Preisser and Ellen McLaughlin used lament's narrative in their opening choral odes mourning the loss of Troy. Both adapted the language according to their production's setting. For both, the text is essentially a list of everything the chorus loved about their city. Preisser added modern images to the list, such as "The

sound those big metal plates make when a bus runs over” (“CTH” 5). The lament reminds the audience that the production is not dealing with a time and a place that is far removed, but something we can directly relate to. McLaughlin adds language that her Balkan performers would have specifically related to, such as “The song of the fishmongers in the early light” and “Cooking smells circling from all the hearth fires” (“The Trojan Women” 92). Both adaptations’ opening laments find relevance for the destruction of Troy in contemporary history.

Many modern adaptations use a list format to recontextualize the lament for Troy’s devastation to the present day. Lists of short words or phrases eliciting sharp visual images can replace the verbose narrative form in traditional lament while keeping true to its intent. In the prologue of “Lift Your Head” we used this technique to define the context of post war militarization.

... you hear the rules that have been set
 anyone who walks away too quickly is shot
 anyone out of line is shot
 anyone who walks too slowly is shot

 Thousands of young men dead!
 Homes destroyed!
 Families broken!
 Blood spilled!
 Broken bodies!
 Broken minds!

Broken hearts. (1-2)

The text for this section was taken from Charles L. Mee's "Trojan Women: A Love Story" and Brendan Kennelly's "Euripides' The Trojan Women: A New Version." Both authors use the technique of sharply visual lists throughout their adaptations to locate the devastation of war in the present time without using words that are too specific to one particular culture. They maintain the place of lament in the play while adapting the text to help it resonate with contemporary audiences.

Though the narrative section of lament is most readily available for adaptation into contemporary settings, contemporary scripts have also found a place for the direct address portion of historical lament. Preisser's text opens with a speech from Hecuba's youngest daughter Polyxena (called Polyxenes in Preisser's script). Polyxena is the daughter killed by the Greeks as a sacrifice to Achilles' tomb. In Euripides' text she is only spoken of, but in this production she makes an appearance to mourn for Troy and condemn those who destroyed her. Preisser's choice allows the character to use the reproach element of lament to speak to the audience.

Understand, I've been taught how to hate.

I can hate so hard and deep it makes my teeth hurt.

I can hate the kind of hate that never goes away.

Remember that the next time you feel safe. (Preisser, "CTH" 2)

In the original text, Poseidon reproaches Athena, who helped the Greeks destroy Troy (Euripides and Shapiro 9-14, 26-27, 55-57). But the gods are not present for CTH's Trojan Women: Preisser's characters curse the other human beings who are responsible for Troy's ruin.

Kybele: “Do you see what the Greeks / Have done to your children?” (105). She goes on to verbally illustrate the destruction of the city and ask for help, following the tripartite structure of a basic lament. The wailing cries of “*ototoi*” and “*aiai*” that are indicative of lament in Euripides’ text are common in Clark’s adaptation. Though in keeping with the style Euripides’ text would have been performed in, the use of traditional lament further served to lessen the adaptation’s connection to contemporary times.

Finally, song can be used to modernize the form of lament. Both Preisser and I employed the use of song in place of or along with the laments in the play. *New York Times* reviewer Margo Jefferson said Preisser’s chorus “chants, sings and speaks, never losing its rhythmic pulse.” She indicates that this “pulse” helped heighten the despair of these women as well as giving the piece a constant, devastating, musical score (Jefferson).

For my production I chose to use folk songs from around the world. The intention was to create a wailing underscore for the play, similarly to the Classical Theatre of Harlem. The *Argus* review specifically highlighted the strength of the music, calling the piece “one long song of mourning for the death of Troy, as well as the Trojans left to rot there” (Orvis). The use of folk songs, particularly from Georgia and Bulgaria,¹⁰ connected to the emotional depth of Greek lament while removing the lengthy and verbose speeches.

Though lament is historically a ritualistic and potentially political act rather than a theatrical one, its effectiveness in *Trojan Women* is due to its relevance to war. All of the subjects that are most commonly lamented—heroes, cities, and the dead—

are all lost in war. Its uniquely timeless state of reflecting on the past and awaiting the future is compatible with the liminal state found in the immediate aftermath of war.

Contemporary adaptations must amend the structure of lament to make it more engaging to their audiences, but its relevance to post-war devastation remains strong.

Along with lament, Euripides' *Trojan Women* features a choral protagonist, an untraditional and passive dramatic structure, a uniquely objective perspective on war, and archetypal female characters. Each of these elements has contributed to the play's ability to recount a timeless story of war. Due to these elements, *Trojan Women* has been used throughout history to provide a lens through which we can attain insight on the cause and effect of war.

Conclusion: Using a War Play to Discuss the Tragic

Nietzsche, in his *The Birth of Tragedy*, claims that Euripides destroyed tragedy. For Nietzsche, tragedy's protagonists must be the larger-than-life heroes of myth or epic history whose actions are foreign to us but who can be understood on the classical stage (Nietzsche 29). He claims that Euripides put the spectator on stage in place of the mythic hero, presenting human problems instead of the superhuman struggles of the other Athenian tragedies. In Euripides' "powerful hands," states Nietzsche, tragedy died an "extremely laborious and violent death" (Nietzsche 30). Yet in creating a more relatable form of social drama, Euripides actually paved the way for theater that forces its audience to ask questions about the way they live. "The mirror in which earlier only great and bold features had been shown now displayed a painful fidelity which conscientiously reflected the unsuccessful features of nature"

(Nietzsche 30). These “unsuccessful features” are the very things theater should reflect if it wants to be relevant.

In questioning the society that he was a part of, Euripides moved away from the attitude of tragedy which relies on fate, inevitability, and human error. He instead focused on the tragic as a result of human choice—the choices that individuals make and the choices that society makes. This genre is both useful and necessary in a world filled with tragic events. Professor Diana Taylor reflects on the events of 9/11 and the rhetoric used afterwards: “All of these events are certainly tragic in the vernacular sense, and the term offers us a language to talk about them. Yet, I think that using tragedy in its aesthetic connotation not only structures the events but also blinds us to other ways of thinking about them” (Taylor 96). Tragedy provides answers and resolution. It enables a cathartic response which allows the viewer to feel “ennobled by having witnessed it” (Kushner 22). Conversely, *Trojan Women* and other war plays confront the audience with unanswered and unanswerable questions about the real life tragic events that occur during war.

The inspiration for this paper came from Tony Kushner’s “Notes about Political Theater,” in which Kushner explains why audiences tend to reject plays that are perceived as ‘political.’ He claims that as a society we are against the pedagogical element of art (Kushner 28). We want to be entertained, not preached at in the theater. As a society we still want to be courted by unbelievable characters and adventurous situations onstage. “The individual is important to us; he gives us something to ‘care’ about. We are apparently incapable of caring about issues, or ideas, or communities” (Kushner 24). *Trojan Women* answers Kushner’s call by using the role of Hecuba as a

character from the epic tradition to draw the audience into a play which at its heart is about ‘issues, ideas, and communities.’ That *Trojan Women* has been successful during times of war in America and elsewhere for so many years proves that despite our resistance to political theater, we also understand its necessity for reflecting the state of our world.

Trojan Women saw its first major production in the United States during World War I, while the country was struggling with the decision of whether to fight in Europe. The play was specifically staged to make a pacifist statement against U.S. involvement in the war (Hartigan 18). Its most notable performance was in Washington, D.C. on May 7, 1915, the day when the *Lusitania* sank. The production was put on by Maurice Browne and the Chicago Little Theater. Browne, who usually introduced the play and explained its relevance to the current war, found the packed house already quite prepared to understand the connection to the day’s tragic events:

You sat motionless and silent, row after row of white numb faces; and
I merely stepped in front of the curtain with an evening paper in my
hand and held up the monstrous headline and said: ‘This play is about
a deed like that.’ You and Euripides did the rest. (Hartigan 19)

The production’s relevance to war was clearly understood on a day when its violence had directly touched the whole country. According to Karelisa Hartigan’s research, writing in 1994, the only time a major production of the play was not well received was in the 1950s, the only decade in which we were not involved in a war (44).

The power of *Trojan Women* is its ability to tell an emotionally gripping story that is always primarily focused on the consequences of war. Adaptations that

increase the play's relevance to contemporary audiences while still utilizing the elements of the war play found in Euripides' text prove that *Trojan Women* is entertaining enough to draw audiences and striking enough to force them to question the vision of war that it presents. Its history of success in wartime America proves that despite social tendencies to stay away from theater that seems too political, the play tells a story that America wants and needs to hear. According to Hartigan:

The emotional impact of Euripides' *Trojan Women* remains and shines through, whether the text is played straight, blended with other cultural traditions, or deprived of intelligible language. Few dramas could sustain such alteration, but the power of the play endures. (Hartigan 48)

I believe that *Trojan Women* will continue to tell its story every time America is at war. Hecuba and Andromache will lament for all they have lost. Cassandra will cry for the victors, and Talthybius will struggle over what this war has forced him to do. These voices will continue to lament in the hope that one day our society will listen to their cries. They will continue to lament until society understands that our ideas of war and violence and its necessity in the world need to change. I hope that when *Trojan Women* is no longer relevant it is because we listened to its timeless lament of the devastation caused by war and questioned how our society handles it. I hope that when that happens, Hecuba and the other Trojan women will never need to speak for any other community.

Notes

¹ Comedic elements were just being introduced at this time. In fact, many comedic elements first appear in Euripides' plays. For examples, see Croally's Euripidean Polemic. These include his portrayal of Dionysus and cross dressing in the *Bacchae* and Menelaus' joke in *Trojan Women* when asking Hecuba why she asks that Helen not go on the same ship as Menelaus: "Why? Has she put on weight?" (Croally 239-41).

² Stephen Halliwell's translation of Aristotle's text uses the Hellenized spelling of *katharsis*. However, throughout the paper I will be using the more common English word *catharsis*.

³ Both Helen and Menelaus are Spartan.

⁴ Throughout this essay I will use passages from Alan Shapiro's translation of *Trojan Women*. Though a poetic rather than literal translation, it captures the style of Euripides' work while using more contemporary language.

⁵ Gallai are the names of the male worshippers of Kybele, or Cybele. Traditionally, in order for them to worship her, they were forced to cut off their male parts.

⁶ The myths of Troy tell that Hecuba dreamed while pregnant with Paris that she was giving birth to a firebrand that would burn the city. Interpreting this, they left him out to die on the mountain as a baby. He was saved by a local farmer and raised with them until Hecuba and Priam recognized him and took him in again. It was Paris

who wooed Helen and brought her to Troy, sparking Menelaus to gather the Greeks and attack Troy.

⁷ For full script text and bibliography, please see Appendix II.

⁸ For more information on ‘the (re)making project’, see Mee’s website here: <http://www.charlesmee.org/html/about.html>. He borrowed his style from Max Ernst’s Fatagaga pieces created at the end of World War I.

⁹ These are the characters who lament almost constantly throughout the play. Cassandra’s and Helen’s texts have elements of lament but tend to be considered different rhetorical styles.

¹⁰ Casey Dué does an excellent study on the connections between “oral epic song” (33) and Bosnian folk songs in her book *The Captive Women’s Lament*. She particularly goes into detail about how the tradition of women’s folk singing in Bulgaria is connected to the formal style of lament (32-39).

Appendix I: Figures



Figure 1. Ellen Lauren (Hecuba) and Barney O'Hanlon (Chorus) in SITI Company's "Trojan Women (After Euripides)" in 2011 at the Getty Villa in Los Angeles, California. Photo by Craig Schwartz.



Figure 2. Emma MacLean plays Talthybius in "Lift Your Head" at the Patricelli '92 Theater in 2011. Photo by Ariella Axelbank.



Figure 3. Sarah Wolfe as Hecuba in "Lift Your Head." Photo by Ariella Axelbank.

Appendix II: "Lift Your Head"

Text taken from versions of Euripides' The Trojan Women translated or adapted by Karen Hartman, Ellen McLaughlin, Alan Shapiro, Chuck Mee, Jean-Paul Sartre, Brendan Kennelly, Richard Lattimore, and Femi Osofisan.

The number next to a character's name indicates the actor portraying that character. Once assigned an actor, this will not change unless indicated by a new number when the character speaks again.

The stage is bare except for a basin filled with water on a stand in the middle of the triangle. One corner of the triangle has two platforms (the "Tower"). The corner to its right has one small platform with two bricks placed about a foot apart on it (the "Man Corner"). The third corner is empty ("Troy Burning").

The Prologue**Song: Farquahars Retreat**

Where ocean's waves with fearful sound, storm fierce upon the shore,
I weary cast my trophies down, for morning has ended the war. (Gay)

1, 2, and 3 perform cleaning ritual at center basin.

1:
The war is ended;
and yet it goes on without end. (Mee 2)

2:
Blood bubbles under the shields of soldiers
runs ripped from the cheeks of women
who tear flesh in sorrow
in sympathy
to stay hot, red, and alive
within cold and conquered stone. (Hartman 25)

3:
...you hear the rules that have been set
anyone who walks away too quickly is shot

1:
anyone out of line is shot

2:
anyone who walks too slowly is shot

3:
anyone who speaks too loudly

1:
anyone who bends down

2:
anyone who turns his head

3:
any child who cries (Mee 54)

1:
these living things
you've cared for,
lying dead
cut open
crushed and trampled on (Mee 16)

3:
Thousands of young men dead!

2:
Homes destroyed!

1:
Families broken!

3:
Blood spilled!

2:
Broken bodies!

1:
Broken minds!

3:
Broken hearts. (Kennelly 193)

How can I live now
silently accepting what they have done
thinking I shall understand

1:
if I

but draw
this pain
inside myself
as though my understanding
would make it right

2:
as though this pain would be erased

1:
if only I could understand

2:
as though all the world's suffering
were only meant to assist me

3:
to attain an understanding
as though some human empathy
could contain it and so make it right (Mee 51)

1, 2, 3:
What should a woman do
when all the men are gone. (Mee 6)

The Play

1 transitions to become HECUBA, putting on a scarf and picking up stick and lying down on the Tower. 2 and 3 watch her then sit facing Man Corner after following speech.

CHORUS (2, 3)
Hecuba weeps.
A mother's nightmare.
Husband, sons, and city gone.
Only mortal, she does not see
the balance of this day. (Hartman 26)

HECUBA (1)
You wretch, lift up your head,
Lift it up off the ground. Look up:
The Troy before you is no longer Troy,
The queen of Troy is queen no longer.
This is the changing fortune
You must bear. Bear it. Sail
With the hard current of the strait,

Sail with destiny,
Don't steer your life's prow back
Into the heaving waves;
Sail as you do, and have, and will
On the winds of chance. (Euripides and Shapiro 34-35)

Rise, stricken head, from the dust
lift up the throat. This is Troy, but Troy
and we, Troy's kings, are perished. (Euripides and Lattimore 131)

They've killed all the young boys
along with the men.
Why was this done?
This is beyond knowing.
I pray that I could
pull it all inside my body
all the murder
all the cruelty
the ruin
the fire
the wounds
broken limbs
bleeding children
my city
bring it all deep inside me
so that I could understand. (Mee 4)

HECUBA transitions to I, leaving scarf and stick by Troy Burning.

CHORUS (1)
I dream of a city.
My home.

CHORUS (3)
I am a mother there.

CHORUS (2)
I am a sister.

CHORUS (1)
I am a wife.

CHORUS (1, 2, 3)
I am a daughter.
I dream of a city.
My home. (McLaughlin 91-93)

CHORUS (2)

No city on earth as splendid as ours.
No city

CHORUS (2, 3)

so beloved by the gods.

CHORUS (1)

The palaces were built of gold.

CHORUS (2)

The streets were wide and lovely.

CHORUS (3)

When the harvest was good they said

CHORUS (1, 2, 3)

Some god has breathed on our fields.

CHORUS (1)

Even when they stormed the city

CHORUS (1, 3)

Even when the battlements were on fire

CHORUS (1, 2, 3)

It was never hot inside the walls

CHORUS (3)

There was always

CHORUS (2, 3)

a cool breeze
And the scent of flowers.

CHORUS (1)

We are blessed.

CHORUS (3)

Troy is blessed.

CHORUS (2)

That's what I always thought.

CHORUS (3)

That's what I was told. (McLaughlin 113-114)

CHORUS (1)

I dreamed there was a city... (McLaughlin 118)

CHORUS (2, 3)

Where will they take me? (Kennelly 150)

CHORUS (1)

Spires glinting in the sun. Stones cool to the touch, even on the hottest day.
(McLaughlin 118)

CHORUS (2, 3)

To some island without a name
where I must lie
under the sun and moon of shame? (Kennelly 150)

CHORUS (1)

And the sky arched blue above it as if to hold it in its gaze. As if it would last forever.
(McLaughlin 118)

CHORUS (2, 3)

Never, never again to see
my own city... (Kennelly 150)

CHORUS (1)

Great in its history. Famous in its exploits. Known throughout the world for its fine
waters, high vistas and the smell of the sea. (McLaughlin 118)

The Greeks take what they want,
toss treasure like fruit into ships

...

They'll dream of my city like a faraway whore:
Fallen, open, and owned. (Hartman 26)

CHORUS (2, 3)

Where will they take me?

...

Shall I live or die? (Kennelly 150-51)

CHORUS (1)

What man? What land? What heart? What head?
What hill? What glen? What house? What bed? (Kennelly 153)

All move at once, 1 becomes HECUBA, 3 becomes TALTHYBIUS by placing feet on bricks at Man Corner, and 2 goes to Tower.

TALTHYBIUS (3)

Hecuba.

My name is Talthybius.

I come to you

as a liaison from the Greeks. (Mee 8)

I am only a messenger, a borrowed mouth. (Osofisan 23)

I don't think of myself as a rude man

or harsh.

And so I would not say it is in my nature

to have to say to you

that the council of my countrymen

has reached some decisions

about how you women have been allotted

each to a man.

HECUBA

Allotted?

TALTHYBIUS

Yes.

HECUBA

How these women are to be

distributed among your soldiers?

as slaves?

TALTHYBIUS

Or wives.

HECUBA

Or wives. (Mee 8-10)

My daughter. Cassandra, tell me, then –

... Who's she been given to?

TALTHYBIUS

King Agamemnon picked her for his prize.

HECUBA

Cassandra, Apollo's virgin, she to whom to gold-

Haired god has given the gift of never marrying?

...

And the wife of Hector, fierce in arms, Andromache,

...what befalls her now?

TALTHYBIUS

Achilles' son has picked her for his prize.

HECUBA

And what of my fate? (Euripides and Shapiro 39-40)

TALTHYBIUS

You shall be slave to Odysseus, lord of Ithaca.

HECUBA

Must I?

To be given as slave to serve that vile, that slippery man,
right's enemy, brute, murderous beast,
that mouth of lies and treachery, that makes void
faith in things promised
and that which was beloved turns to hate. (Euripides and Lattimore 137)

...what of the child you took from me, my little girl?
Where is my youngest? What have you done with her?

TALTHYBIUS

Think of your daughter as happy, free of trouble. (Euripides and Shapiro 39-40)

HECUBA

Is she alive? Can she still see the sky
Or the stars at night?
Tell me.
Your look of shame's your answer.

TALTHYBIUS

We have given her shelter.

HECUBA

Shelter from what?

TALTHYBIUS

The world.

HECUBA

True. (Euripides and Sartre 20)

Hecuba Sings: Tushuri Tirili (Zedashe)

Hecuba performs a mourning ritual for Polyxena during song, then collapses.

TALTHYBIUS (3)

Help to lift her.
Bring comfort.

HECUBA

Let me lie. (Hartman 39)
So many children, and not a single one,
Not one of them, is left to ease my pain.
Yet you would help me to my feet? For what?
What's left to hope for? Guide my shackled steps
That glided once so easily through Troy.
Lead me to the straw mat on the ground,
The pillow of heaped stones where I'll lie down
And cry myself into oblivion.
Never mind how rich a man may be,
Don't call him lucky till he's dead and gone. (Euripides and Shapiro 48)

Hecuba Sings: Tushuri Tirili

She sings a wordless song, head down, as TALTHYBIUS transitions to 3 and 2 transitions to CASSANDRA, doing a dance. CASSANDRA interrupts HECUBA'S song.

CASSANDRA (2)

Why are you crying?
A father dead? City on fire?
I go garlanded,
young bride of desire.

Lift high the flame
this torch is born with pride
a girl sleeps her last sleep.
Enter a bride. (Kennelly 155)

HECUBA

Oh, look on her, and let her break your heart.
It is my mad daughter.
My beautiful Cassandra. (McLaughlin 97)

CASSANDRA

The Greeks are victorious. But what now?
What happens to them?
I will tell you:
they will be beaten, they will be humiliated:

...

They will perish in their thousands,
 Not in defense of a city on their native land
 As our men did:
 They will die for nothing. (Euripides and Sartre 27)

Their children that were babies when they left grew up without them... And while the fathers threw themselves against the walls of our city, as those years passed, sons and daughters forgot their father's face, forgot their father's touch, his smell, the sound of his voice... And they watch their mothers grow old and uncertain. Not knowing if they are widows or not. (McLaughlin 98-99)

Odysseus thinks he's going home.
 By the time he gets there I'll look lucky. (Hartman 38)
 After ten years here, he won't come home
 For ten more years. (Euripides and Shapiro 45-46)
 Shipwreck, cannibals, one-eyed beasts,
 witches who make men pigs,
 lethal singing ladies,
 a vacation in death.
 Then he arrives and the trouble starts. (Hartman 38)
 Listen, Agamemnon, listen!
 Look into my eyes, Agamemnon, look into my eyes:
 the war is over, you are the winner, I am your prize.
 While you are loving in the dark or in the light
 the black axe is singing of your death. (Kennelly 160)
 Lift up your heads: be proud,
 Leave your revenge to me;
 He who embraces me will be destroyed by me. (Euripides and Sartre 29)

Hecuba has transitioned to 1 by this time. CASSANDRA transitions to become 2 again as 1 and 3 begin to stomp. The chorus performs a dance over this next speech.

CHORUS (1, 2, 3)
 Everything that exists
 destroys itself
 when it comes to that.
 The sun in the sky
 like an orgy of frozen light,
 consuming itself
 and dying,
 The stars
 consuming themselves
 in an agony of fire,
 The joy of life that comes into the world
 to give itself
 and be annihilated.

I can imagine the earth projected in space
as it is
in reality
like a woman screaming,
her head in flames. (Mee 12)

CHORUS (1)
Troy! (McLaughlin 116)

She took into her gates an offering:
a victory token built grand
a pride horse.
The belly split, and with it my fragile, childish clarity
that she was a city of cities
an unbreakable girl
my Troy. (Hartman 25)

Sing of the horse...

CHORUS (2, 3)
Yes, sing of the horse...

CHORUS (3)
The way we saw it
So high and silent...

CHORUS (2)
Out on the beach in the early morning.
Dawn streaking its mighty flanks pink...

CHORUS (1)
How tall it was!

CHORUS (3)
Higher than the walls of the city.
And its enormous glittering eyes.
The smile carved on its lips. (McLaughlin 100)

CHORUS (3)
Nothing more cruel

CHORUS (1)
Nothing more terrible

CHORUS (2)

Than hope

CHORUS (1, 2, 3)

Hope

CHORUS (3)

Followed by such darkness

CHORUS (1)

A night we still wander in

CHORUS (2)

Calling the names of our husbands

CHORUS (3)

Our lovers

CHORUS (2)

Our friends

CHORUS (1)

Our children. (McLaughlin 101)

Song: The War's Gone Bad on Me

Oh-wo, the war's gone bad on me.

Oh-wo, the war's gone bad on me.

They marched away with shouts and songs

They didn't think they'd be gone long.

From their homes, and from their families.

It never crossed my mind back then,

That this was how my life would end.

Oh-wo, the war's gone bad on me. (War's Gone Bad On Me)

CHORUS (1)

Did you hear, Lady Helen

that there was a war? (Hartman 56)

CHORUS (1, 2, 3)

Helen, ...

CHORUS (2)

Zeus was never your father—

CHORUS (1)
I'll tell you who
Your many fathers were:

CHORUS (3)
Vengeance,

CHORUS (2)
Envy,

CHORUS (1)
Murder,

CHORUS (3)
Death,

CHORUS (1)
and all the

CHORUS (1, 3)
Pestilence
The earth can breed!

CHORUS (2)
Die! Die, you whose shining eyes
Brought such dark and ugly dying to
The famous plains of Troy. (Euripides and Shapiro 57)

CHORUS (1, 3)
Think, Menelaus, think! (Kennelly 193)

3 pushes 2 towards Man Corner, where 2 transitions to MENELAUS. 3 goes to Tower and transitions to HELEN, 1 goes to Troy Burning and transitions to HECUBA while singing refrain of War's Gone Bad.

MENELAUS (2)
How gloriously bright the sun is shining
On this longed-for day when I finally get to lay
My two hands on that woman, my wife. (Euripides and Shapiro 61)
In that face I once saw the rest of my life
smooth and sweet as fruit. (Hartman 51)

...
I am going to make her suffer as much as she made me.
She'll beg, and crawl in the sand till both her knees
Are in tatters. And then I'll kill her. (Osofisan 46)

HECUBA

Do it, Menelaus.

That's my prayer.

Kill her now.

But look away.

She burns a man's eyes

then his city

leaving a nest of ash.

We know her, you and I,

two casualties of war. (Hartman 51)

She's hell for cities, burning hell for homes. (Euripides and Shapiro 61)

HELEN (3)

Slavery is new to you. No wonder you chafe at it. When you've endured it as long as I have, years and years, you'll learn to stand up to it without so much self-pity. And then you'll know what I have had to bear.

HECUBA

You actually expect sympathy from us? You, who never drew a breath that didn't cause an innocent person pain? ... And you accuse me of self-pity.

HELEN

...you think I would choose this? To be loathed by the entire world? To be the source of so much misery?

I never had a choice. I was the bride of force.

Behind every man who took me stood a goddess

Who steadied his hips and whispered in his ear.

...

I've lost everything.

I alone belonged to both sides of the battle. Have you never thought of that?... There was no winning for me.

I was unique in that.

I could imagine no victory. (McLaughlin 103-05)

Please look, Menelaus.

Yes.

Lover.

I have been stolen like a prize

kept like a beast.

I am human. (Hartman 54)

...

I sink to my knees.

With you I am every kind of girl. (Hartman 57)

Let me ask you one question:

I will never ask another:

What do you want to do to me?

MENELAUS

I?

HELEN

You.

MENELAUS

To kill you.

HELEN

If you, my love, want my death,
then I, my love,
 desire my own death too.
But just let me explain.

MENELAUS

No. I don't want to hear your explanations.
You're going to die. That's all.

HELEN

Are you afraid to listen?

MENELAUS

Aren't you afraid to die? (Euripides and Sartre 54-55)

HELEN

These women want their men
like I have wanted you.
Your soldiers are strong.
I am easy to hate.
But Helen did not hurt them.
They would have you believe there are two kinds of girl
good and bad.
We know it's more slippery.
Yes? (Hartman 57)

MENELAUS

So you have no repentance at all? No shame?

HELEN

Not about you, or what you mean to me, you who raised me
To be a woman, and was the first lover I ever knew.
Even if you hate me now it won't change the truth: Of all
The men who have used this poor body for their pleasure,

You alone, you are the only man I've ever loved. (Osofisan 50)

(to Hecuba) And hatred?

It's all I've ever known.

Bought and bundled one bedroom to the next

To writhe beneath my many conquerors. (McLaughlin 103)

You'll know soon enough. When you rise from your raping beds, wiping your eyes and smoothing your skirts down over your thighs, now purple with your new masters' handprints, perhaps you'll think of me. (McLaughlin 102)

HECUBA

A pleasant journey, Helen.

May you drop dead on it. (Euripides and Sartre 69)

(to Menelaus) ...don't let her sail on the same ship with you. (Euripides and Shapiro 67)

For your own sake. When a man has loved a woman,

The way you have done, that love never dies.

At an unsuspecting moment it will spring awake again,

Like a snake from sleep, and strike... (Osofisan 57)

Over the course of this next piece, 2 and 3 transition out of character and all three form a ship with 3 at the prow, using the scarves.

HECUBA

Ship full of Helen.

CHORUS (2)

Ship full of she

HECUBA

Full of hell

CHORUS (2)

In the sea

HECUBA

I see hell

CHORUS (2)

on the sea

HECUBA and CHORUS (2)

I see Helen go free.

HECUBA and CHORUS
May the ship full of Helen
be filled by the sea
may the sea seep in Helen
may sea sweep that Helen
to hell under sea.
Far under me.
I see Helen go free. (Hartman 59)

Song: Izvor Voda (Vida)

Hecuba leads Chorus in ritual to cleanse the space during song. After song, 3 transitions to ANDROMACHE.

HECUBA
Andromache! Hector's wife!
Brave wife of the bravest man in Troy. (Kennelly 41)
Where are you going?
What do you take with you? (McLaughlin 108)

ANDROMACHE (2)
The Greeks take their things. (Hartman 42)
I take all I have. My son. (McLaughlin 108)

HECUBA
...the son of my son
And the last of his race. (Euripides and Sartre 44-45)
He is hope. (Hartman 46)
From head, from temple
Down to ribs, oh how my body
Longs to rock on waves of grief, the spine-
 Keel tilting side to side,
In rhythm to this long lament (Euripides and Shapiro 35)
O my city, my city forlorn

ANDROMACHE
abandoned, I weep this

HECUBA
miserable last hour

ANDROMACHE
of the house where I bore my children.

HECUBA
O my sons, this city and your mother are desolate of you.

Sound of lamentation and sorrow,
tears on tears shed. (Euripides and Lattimore 149)

ANDROMACHE (2)
I imagine Hector.

HECUBA
Son.

ANDROMACHE
Man.

ANDROMACHE AND HECUBA
Loving and fierce.

HECUBA
Gone. (Hartman 43)

ANDROMACHE (2)
Hector was the only man I ever knew;
 I loved his courage, his wisdom, and
 his gentleness,
The touch of his hands on my body.
And now the thought that this same body
May groan for joy when some other man lies
 upon it... (Sartre 43)

CHORUS (3)
...a woman is only a woman.
They say it takes just one night of pleasure
 to master her:
A woman is only an animal. (Sartre 43)

ANDROMACHE
And that is to be the nature of my punishment. I am given to the son of my husband's
murderer... I am to go to his bed. To let him put his arms around me. I am to find
comfort there. (McLaughlin 108)

Hector, you were my everything.
Wise and beautiful, brave and rich.
Now, in Greece,
I will fail you whatever I do. (Hartman 46)

HECUBA
Forget Hector.
Your tears don't help.

You know how to make a man love you.
 Do that.
 Be hot and sweet for the Greek.
 And raise my grandson to kill him.
 This child will build a new Troy on top of our bones.
 He is hope. (Hartman 46)

*All move at once while singing part of Izvor Voda. HECUBA to Tower,
 ANDROMACHE to Troy Burning, 3 to Man Corner to transition to TALTHYBIUS.*

TALTHYBIUS (3)
 I am sent to get the boy.
 They will throw him from the city wall. (Hartman 47)
 Odysseus. He urged it before the Greeks, and got his way.

...
 He said a hero's son could not be allowed to live. (Euripides and Lattimore 154)
 Please give him to me.
 Cry. We expect you to cry. (Hartman 47)

HECUBA
 We are beaten, lashed, smashed into the ground,
 our men are dead, our women slaves,
 our city burnt, our fields destroyed,
 our hearts broken, our bodies weary –
 and the Greeks murder a boy! (Kennelly 109)
 Bloody Greeks!
 Drunk with power
 yet frightened of a child.
 All that will remain
 will be this little tomb
 standing among these shattered columns.
 On it, it shall bear this inscription:
 “Hear lies a child
 murdered
 because he frightened Greece.” (Euripides and Sartre 73)

ANDROMACHE
 You smell so sweet. My dear baby. My dear baby. You smell so sweet. I knew you
 were coming to me so long before my belly swelled. I thought: My son! My son! He
 will rule the world. And you arrived shining like a conqueror. And through all my
 pain I looked at your face and laughed. Great Hector's shining son! Oh, let me smell
 your downy head once more. My darling boy. Your arms, your belly, your feet, your
 eyes, your lips. There is all the joy of life in you. All the hope. You are all and only
 happiness. (McLaughlin 112-113)

Andromache Sings: Pi Li Li Liu (Sileas)

ANDROMACHE crosses to Tower as she sings and begins to unfold "baby" as TALTHYBIUS speaks to HECUBA.

TALTHYBIUS

Hecuba.

The son of Achilles...

He's gone.

He took Andromache.

She stood on the moving ship

wailing for Troy

calling to Hector's grave.

I wept.

She saw.

Here is what she said:

TALTHYBIUS AND ANDROMACHE

"Take my broken child to Hecuba.

Let her wash him.

If she has clean cloth let her wrap him.

If there are flowers left let her cover my boy,
clipped, and fresh, and dead."

TALTHYBIUS

She said,

TALTHYBIUS AND ANDROMACHE

"Let Hector's shield

be coffin and tomb.

I don't want it on the wall

above my new bed."

TALTHYBIUS

She said,

TALTHYBIUS AND ANDROMACHE

"I plan to forget." (Hartman 60-61)

ANDROMACHE

My arms are empty.

I can walk now,

I am light now

Nothing to carry

I can walk down to the ships
And find the passage away from this cursed place. (McLaughlin 113)

Song: Pi Li Li Liu (2x)

During song, HECUBA crosses to get body from below Tower, then goes to center basin to clean and wrap body in her scarf.

CHORUS (3)
See the women of Troy. (Hartman 66)

CHORUS (2)
The people now women of Troy. (Hartman 28)

HECUBA
The women now ruin of Troy. (Hartman 66)

I was a queen once,
I married royalty, and I had royal sons,

...

And I,
I had to watch them, son by son, brought down
By the Greek spear, and for every one of them
I cut my hair in mourning at their tombs.

...

I saw
The hands of strangers take my daughters,
Daughters I reared for husbands we would choose,
But I raised them only to be stolen from me,
Daughters, the daughters I'll never see again,
Who'll never see their mother. (Euripides and Shapiro 47-48)

HECUBA lays down her stick in transition to 1 and crosses to Man Corner and steps onto bricks.

CHORUS (1)
Burn everything in sight.
Burn everything until all this
is a huge, black, ashen circle
where a future man may stand and say

CHORUS (3)
'There was a city here once!

CHORUS (2)
People lived here!

CHORUS (3)
I don't believe it!

CHORUS (1)
Burn everything until there is no past. (Kennelly 205)

I transitions out of Man Corner.

CHORUS (2)
Troy!
We will track your ashes throughout the world.
And when they ask us where we came from,

CHORUS (3)
We will say "nowhere."
Nowhere. (McLaughlin 116)

CHORUS (1)
I dreamed there was a city...

CHORUS (2)
No city on earth as splendid as ours...

CHORUS (2, 3)
No city so beloved by the gods...

CHORUS (1)
Spires glinting in the sun. Stones cool to the touch, even on the hottest day...

CHORUS (3)
The palaces were built of gold

CHORUS (2)
The streets were wide and lovely.

CHORUS (3)
When the harvest was good they said

CHORUS (2, 3)
Some god has breathed on our fields...

CHORUS (1)
And the sky arched blue above it as if to hold it in its gaze...

CHORUS (3)

Even when they stormed the city...

CHORUS (2, 3)

Even when the battlements were on fire...

It was never hot inside the walls...

CHORUS (1)

As if it would last forever...

CHORUS (3)

There was always

CHORUS (2, 3)

a cool breeze

And the scent of flowers...

CHORUS (1)

Great in its history. Famous in its exploits.

Known throughout the world for its fine waters, high vistas and the smell of the sea.

(McLaughlin 118)

CHORUS (1)

Troy! (McLaughlin 116)

I am taking your dust

to rub eyes and make dreams of Troy.

CHORUS (1, 2, 3)

I am taking your dust

CHORUS (1)

to remember

that

CHORUS (1, 2, 3)

nothing can be quite clean

after Troy. (Hartman 68)

2 and 3 use their scarves to cover center basin, then exit to Troy Burning. Upon exiting, 2 begins to sing Pi Li Li Liu. 1 remains on stage and slowly lifts her wet cloth up and places it on her upturned face and slowly rotates in place. When song is over, she removes cloth and exits to Troy Burning. Blackout.

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