

Edexcel GCE

Unit 6 – Text 2: The Trojan Women by Euripides

**Advanced
GCE
Drama and Theatre Studies
First examination of AL 2002
July 2000**

Edexcel is one of the leading examining and awarding bodies in the UK and throughout the world. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers.

Through a network of UK and overseas offices, Edexcel's centres receive the support they need to help them deliver their education and training programmes to learners.

For further information please call our Customer Response Centre on 020 7393 4500, or visit our website at www.edexcel.org.uk

Note:

Edexcel has produced this edition of "The Trojan Women" by Euripides, for use in conjunction with unit six of the Edexcel GCE Drama and Theatre Studies specification. Centres may reproduce a copy of the text in this format for each student to use as their individual production copy of the play. Students may take their annotated copy of the text into the examination with them. The examination questions related to the play and any page references will refer to this edition only.

Permission must be sought from Edexcel for any copying or performing rights where this material is used for non-examination purposes.

Authorised by Sue Parker

Publications Code UA007584

All the material in this publication is copyright (but see *Note* above)

© Edexcel Foundation 2000

The first performance of this version was by the KDC Theatre Company at the Diorama Arts Centre, London, on April 11th 2000 with the following cast:

POSEIDON	The God of the Sea.	Christopher Lancaster
ATHENA	A Goddess.	Katharine Peachey
HECUBA	Queen of Troy, widow of King Priam.	Lily Ann Green
CHORUS	Women of Troy	Louise Braithwaite
		Cathy Burnell
		Morag Galloway
		Katharine Peachey
		Georgina Smith
		Jo Wilde
		Angelique Winston
		Alice Wright
TALTHYBIUS	Herald of the Greek army.	Lefteris Samaras
CASSANDRA	Daughter of Hecuba.	Clarisse East
ANDROMACHE	Widow of Hecuba's son, Hector.	Cathy Burnell
MENELAUS	A Greek General, husband to Helen.	Richard Jones
HELEN	Wife of Menelaus.	Joanne Brock
ASTYANAX	Son of Hector.	Rory Fear
SOLDIERS	Men of the Greek army	Trevor Ellis
		John Johnston
		Richard Thornton
		Andrew Watson

Directed and adapted by Steve Lewis
Set and costumes designed by Andy Collyer
Lighting designed by Matt Haskins
Sound designed by Neil Brinkworth
Music and movement by Morag Galloway
Assistant director Iona Jennings
Stage Manager Christopher Lancaster

SCENE:

The ruined city of Troy, two days after its capture by the Greeks.

The darkness before dawn.

PROLOGUE

(Out of the darkness, enter Poseidon)

POSEIDON:

I am Poseidon, god of all oceans:
Arisen from the deep Aegean Sea,
Where Sea Nymphs dance to the tune of the tides.
I come to my favourite city- Troy,
Whose every wall was built, stone upon stone,
With Apollo's aid and my own labours.
Troy , my once noble city, lies in ruins:
Ravaged and plundered by warriors of Greece.
All this brought on by monstrous deception:
The goddess Athene's plans brought to life
By Epeius the Phocian. It was he who
Built that beast of timber- a wooden horse-
And lined its innards with Greek fighting men
That spewed forth upon unsuspecting Troy.

The sacred groves are silent, deserted;
The shrines of gods drip blood from gaping wounds;
And upon the altar-steps of great Zeus
Lies the corpse of King Priam. The victors
Load waiting ships with the spoils of war and
After ten long years absent from loved ones-
These conquering Greeks wait for a fair wind
So that they may return homeward once more.
I too must leave, the goddesses have won:
I'm beaten by Hera and Athene.
There will be no one left to worship me:
For when a city dies and all is lost
The honouring of the gods dies also.

By the banks of Scamander, women weep.
The Greek soldiers having drawn lots for them:
They will be shipped to Thessally, Athens
And Arcady. Those remaining are here:
Reserved for the Generals of the army.
Among them, held prisoner, is Helen
And the most pitiable one of all:
Hecuba. Hecuba who lies weeping,
Weeping for her dead husband and her sons.

And yet she knows not about her daughter-
Cassandra, whom Apollo left virgin,
That she will be raped by Agamemnon,
And that her youngest child, Polyxena,
Has just been slaughtered as a sacrifice
Upon the grave of the great Achilles.
Farewell once prosperous city of Troy
That but for Athene's destructive powers
Would still be standing on firm foundations.
Farewell.

(Enter the Goddess Athene)

ATHENE:

Mighty Poseidon- may I call truce and speak to my father's brother in peace?

POSEIDON:

As you are family, Princess Athene, and the bonds of love are strong: you may speak freely.

ATHENE:

I am glad, for what I have to say concerns us both.

POSEIDON:

Do you bring a message from the gods? From your father, great Zeus himself, perhaps?

ATHENE:

No. It is for Troy's sake that I wish to enlist your help.

POSEIDON:

What- Troy? This city whose destruction you have overseen. Why this sudden change of heart?

ATHENE:

Hear me first. I have my reasons. Will you assist me or not?

POSEIDON:

Of course I will, but I would know your plans. Have you come to help Trojan or Greek?

ATHENE:

I wish to favour my former foes- the Trojans- and bring danger to the Greeks on their journey home.

POSEIDON:

How can love for Greece turn so suddenly to hatred?

ATHENE:

Have you not heard how my temple was defiled?

POSEIDON:

I have. By Ajax when he dragged Cassandra from your shrine.

ATHENE:

And the Greeks stood by and did nothing. Nothing to punish this sacrilege.

POSEIDON:

Despite all that you have done to assist them in their conquest of Troy.

ATHENE:

Exactly. And that is why with your help we will make the Greeks suffer.

POSEIDON:

But how? What will you do?

ATHENE:

We'll make their journey home a difficult one.

POSEIDON:

Here in Troy or out at sea?

ATHENE:

At sea. Once they've set sail from Troy.
My father has already agreed to blacken the sky,
Sending down terrible rains,
And to set their ships ablaze with lightning.
And so it falls to you, great god of the deep,
To stir the Aegean Sea into a frenzy,
Creating mountain-high waves and wild whirlpools,
Choking up each inlet and estuary with the Grecian drowned.
From this calamity, let all mortals learn to fear the gods and to revere my temples.

POSEIDON:

It will be done. I will whisk these waters into a turmoil
And the Aegean shores will be littered with the Grecian dead.
Go now, goddess Athene, to great Mount Olympus and
From those heights you may watch the Greek fleet sink into oblivion.

(Athene exits)

Be warned you mortals who violate the temples of the gods
And the sacred tombs of the dead for in these acts lie your own destruction.

(Poseidon exits).

I

(As dawn breaks, the figure of Hecuba is seen.

Hecuba awakens from sleep and begins to lift herself up.)

HECUBA:

Lift. Lift. Lift up your head.

From Troy's ruined earth, look up.

We are no longer the Lords of Troy:

Fortune has flowed against us and

Crashed down upon our City and our poor lives.

What remains but misery?

Country, children, husband: all are lost;

Family, generations, an entire race – wiped out.

Speak: but what can I say?

What words will express my woe?

This hard ground serves as my bed,

There is no comfort for my aching bones,

My head and my heart both pound within.

I yearn to be cradled, to rock to a gentle rhythm,

To cry unending tears, bemoaning a song of sorrow:

Music of misery that no one can dance to.

Oh that dreadful day when those proud Greek ships

Came rushing to Troy,

Oars glinting in the sunlight:

Trumpets and drums sounding

As they weighed anchor in Trojan waters.

They came for that Spartan whore-

For Helen, that loathsome wife of Menalaus.

Because of her, my Lord, my husband, my king

And all of his sons are dead.

She is their murderess;

She is the source of all our sorrows.

Pity me:
A prisoner now:
A slave of our enemies,
An old woman burdened with grief...
But no! No!
Come. Come out.
Come you widows and fatherless daughters of Troy:
Join me in a lamentation for our dying city.

(The Chorus begins to enter at this point.)

Remember how I used to lead
The singing and dancing in the temple-
Leaning on Priam's sceptre;
Those days are gone now.
For we must sing sadder songs
With bitter harmonies.

CHORUS:

Hecuba. Our queen. Why do you call?
Why do you call out for us?
We hear your cries. What do they mean?
Have they come for us? Tell us: we are afraid.

HECUBA:

My children: the Greeks are preparing their ships.
They are awaiting the tide.

CHORUS:

But what does this mean?
Will they take us straightaway from Troy?
Away from our homeland across the sea to foreign lands?

HECUBA:

I know no more than you, but I fear the worse.

CHORUS:

We will hear them summon us:

“Come out you Women of Troy-
The Greeks are setting sail for home.”

HECUBA:

Sshh. Not so loud. Let no one call Cassandra forth.

The Greeks have already driven her mad,

Do not let them shame her any further.

Unhappy Troy- you and your people –

Finished- destroyed.

We are all who remain:

A few living souls left to be prised

From the arms of the dead.

CHORUS:

Hecuba. Hecuba. I cannot remain inside any longer.

Tell me. What have the Greeks decided to do with us?

Am I to live or to die? Or will I be taken by force across the seas?

HECUBA:

These questions will soon be answered.

We will shortly know what is to become of us.

CHORUS:

Will I be taken to Argos or Phthia?

Or to some strange island

Far away from my Trojan home?

HECUBA:

What is to become of these old bones?
What use am I- a weak old woman?
Am I to become a drudge or a nursery maid to the children
Of our old enemies? I - who was once honoured as the
Queen of Troy?

CHORUS:

Your shame is deep and your tears cannot wash away the stain of it.
We may have a home again but not here in Troy.
For the last time I must look upon the graves of my dead sons.
And yet there is worse to come.
These Greeks are like rampant animals.
They will make whores of us all:
That night will be cursed when they rape each one of us.

Am I to become a slave who draws water from the well?
Or might I be taken to Athens: the city they say is holy?
But let it not be Sparta, with its swirling River Eurotas,
To be a slave to our avowed enemy Helen
And to be in the power of Menalaus – the destroyer of Troy.

I have heard that Peneius, at the foot of Mount Olympus,
Is a land of plenty. Please, let me be sent there if I cannot go to Athens.

Or let me go to Sicily, that proud land,
Where the Fire-god hammers at his forge beneath
Mount Etna, mother of all mountains.

I would be content to sail across the Ionian sea and live
In a land that is watered by the gentle river Crathis:
They say its streams can stain a man's hair the colour of gold and
Bring great strength and wealth to those that prosper there.

Look.
Someone comes.
He is moving quickly.
A herald from the Greeks.
What news does he bring?
What can he tell us?
We- who are slaves already:
Slaves to the Greeks.
What are his orders?
We are his to command.

(Enter Talthymbius with soldiers)

TALTHYBIUS:

Hecuba: in my many visits to Troy,
You have come to know me, Talthymbius,
As an emissary from the army of the Greeks.
I come as someone familiar to you,
Bringing the most recent news.

HECUBA:

My children. It has come.
The news we have feared most. It is here.

TALTHYBIUS:

They have drawn lots for each of you, if that's what you fear.

HECUBA:

Then where are we to go? To Thessaly?
To the land of Cadmus? Where?

TALTHYBIUS:

You are to be separated.
You will be going to different places
To serve different masters.

HECUBA:

Who is to go where?

CHORUS:

Tell us. Tell us.

TALTHYBIUS:

Ask me: one at a time.

HECUBA:

Cassandra. My daughter, Cassandra: who has won her?

TALTHYBIUS:

She was already taken. By King Agamemnon as his prize.

HECUBA:

What? As a slave to his wife? Poor child.

TALTHYBIUS:

No: for himself. She is to be his paramour.

HECUBA:

But she is a maiden to Apollo: a sacred virgin.

TALTHYBIUS:

And that is exactly why he must have her for himself.

HECUBA:

Then daughter, discard the temple keys and your holy garments.

TALTHYBIUS:

Is the King's bed, not honour enough?

HECUBA:

And what of the child you took from me a few hours ago?
Where is she?

TALTHYBIUS:

I suppose you mean... you mean... Polyxena.

HECUBA:

Of course I mean Polyxena: which lord is she assigned to?

TALTHYBIUS:

She is to honour Achille's tomb.

HECUBA:

What strange new custom is this?
Since when have the Greeks had handmaidens for their dead?

TALTHYBIUS:

Consider her happy: she is at peace where she is.

HECUBA:

What are you saying? Is she still alive?

TALTHYBIUS:

You need worry no further. She is free from troubles.

HECUBA:

And Andromache? Wife to my brave Hector. Where will she be taken?

TALTHYBIUS:

She is won by the son of Achilles: Neoptolemus.

HECUBA:

And so to my own fate:
Who is to have me as their aged handmaid?

TALTHYBIUS:

You, Hecuba, have been won by Odysseus, King of Ithaca.

HECUBA:

What? I am to be slave to that lawless monster?
To a beast that speaks false with every word he utters:
To an animal that twists each truth to a lie and
That turns every known friendship to hatred?
I would rather tear every hair from my head,
Dig my nails deep into my cheeks
Than become a servant of that vile serpent.
O, women of Troy: weep for me now,
My fate is sealed and I will know nothing but misery.

CHORUS:

At least you know your fate, our Queen: but what of us?
Which Greek lord or general is to have control of us?

TALTHYBIUS:

Enough. Go bring Cassandra out at once.
The King is impatient and is waiting for her.
The rest of you will learn of your futures in good time.
What is that light over there?
Do these women of Troy set fire to themselves?
Would they rather burn to death than be taken prisoner by us?
Quick: get those women out;
For we will be blamed for their deaths.

HECUBA:

There is no fire. It is my child, Cassandra,
Bearing the flames of prophecy!

(Enter Cassandra with burning torches)

CASSANDRA:

See this torch held high!
Flames of majesty
Flicker,
Flickering in Apollo's name.
Hymen, my marriage-god,
I light up your face and
I see you smiling,
Smiling down
Upon my bed of blood
As Agamemnon,
King most royal,
Penetrates this virgin flesh.

Mother:

I see you weeping,
Weeping for my dead father:
Husband. Father. King.
King of our dear country.
Our country, dying, dead.
You have no more tears to give.
I must light up the torches
For my own wedding.
In Hymen's eyes the flames will blaze:
A brilliance that becomes a virgin bride.

Dance. Dance. On.
Dance to the rhythm and sing:
Sing to the sounds of rejoicing.
Remember my dancing,
I danced for my father;
Remember my singing,
I sang for Apollo.
Feet flying,
Voices sighing.

Come. Mother. Come.
Join in the dance.
Keep time with me,
Whirl with me,
Swirl with me.
Sing. Mother. Sing.
Join in the song.
Keep tune with me.
Sing. Sing. Sing. Sing.
Rejoice to the bride:
Sound out the joys
Of a wedding most noble.
Come. Daughters. Sisters:
Ladies of Troy:
Join in the anthem,
To the bride and the groom,
To the groom
Who will wed me
Who will bed me
Who will dread me.
Praise to a marriage
Destined by fate:
Sing. Sing. Sing. Sing.

CHORUS:

Our Queen. Stop her. Stop her before she dances down to the Greeks.
Poor creature. She is out of her mind.

HECUBA:

This torch should be a light of happiness
But see how sadly it burns.
Give me the torch my child
You are too troubled to hold it.
Here, take it someone.
I had hoped to see you wed one day:
But never did I dream you would be a bride
Forced on by the weapons of conquering Greeks.
Rest your head my poor Cassandra: your sad story
Has lost you your mind.
My women:
Your tears shall be the accompaniment
To her bridal song.

CASSANDRA:

Mother: garland me with flowers,
Rejoice in my marriage to a king.
Take me to him:
And if I falter-
Force me onward.
I shall be a deadly wife
To Agamemnon- even more dangerous than Helen.
I shall kill him:
Bringing doom upon the royal line.
This I do to avenge
My brothers' and my father's death.
I could tell of the cold steel
Piercing my throat and the throat of others-
Of the butchery of a mother by her son,
Of the destruction of the house of Atreus.

But no – even though I am touched with madness –
Hear this truth –
That Troy may yet be a happier state than Greece.
For the sake of one woman,
In the name of Helen’s wanton passion,
Thousands of Greek soldiers have fallen in battle:
Needlessly slain.
And this General, this wise General Agamemnon,
Who hated this woman,
Sacrificed his own dear daughter
To retrieve his brother’s wife.
For an adulteress wife,
For a wife who went willingly to her lover
They came to Scamander’s shores
And there did they daily die.
Not to protect their city from attack-
But to die in a strange land,
No wife nor child to bury them.
At home, these widowed wives
Die lonely and old men
Are left without their sons:
No younger generation left to worship
At their graves.
This is the legacy of the Greeks:
A legacy of shame.
But for the Trojans,
They died protecting their country:
An honourable death.
When our soldiers fell in battle
Their corpses were borne home by kinsmen
To be laid to rest in home soil
And given proper burial rites.
Our men that survived
Came home each day to the arms of wives and children-
The Greeks knew no such comfort.

I know you weep Mother, for my brother Hector.
But it is his heroism against the Greeks
That has brought him fame.
Paris too will be remembered
Because he married Zeus's daughter.

It is wise to avoid war at all costs
But if it happens-
It is better to fight and die
For a good cause.

Mother- do not fear for me in this marriage,
In this act will the fate of all our enemies be sealed.

TALTHYBIUS:

If I did not know you to be mad,
You should be punished for
Cursing my lords and sending bad omens
Especially when they are about to set sail.
I cannot understand why one so great in reputation
As King Agamemnon should choose you as his bride-
A girl lost in her wits.
I am a lowly messenger, but even I could make a better choice.

Since you don't know what you're saying
Your words against Greece and your praises of Troy
Are borne by the wind and scattered in the air.
For now you are to follow me down to the ships,
Do you understand?
Our Captain awaits his chosen bride.
And you: make yourself ready for Odysseus,
You will be servant to his wife, Penelope-
A most virtuous woman so they say.

CASSANDRA:

You rat! Vermin.

Why are heralds given such an imposing title?

When everybody loathes your office.

What are you but a menial,

A go-between of Kings and States?

You say my mother is to be sent

To Odysseus' lands when my oracle

Says that she will die here in her homeland.

Odysseus knows nothing of the suffering

That awaits him: the fate of Troy and me

Are nothing compared to his.

Ten long years has he wasted here,

In a foreign land,

And another ten

Will he spend

Journeying homeward

And arrive

Alone.

Yet

What care I for Odysseus?

It is time.

Time for me to be wed

Wed to a dead man:

To this General of the Greeks.

To this spectre of grand designs

Who will be buried by night.

Close to your grave –

King Agamemnon:

Husband: defiler of my body

I will die-

My corpse thrown

Thrown down

Naked

Thrown down into a deep ravine.

I. Priestess to Apollo,
Handmaiden to a god.
Farewell to my robes of office,
Farewell to my days of joy and temple feasts.
Hear me my god of prophecy:
In chastity and purity
I send you my trappings of worship
See them. Take them.
Carried to you by the breeze.

Right. Where is Agamemnon's ship?
Where do I go to get aboard?
Don't just stand there
Waiting for the wind.
The sails are full.
I am but one of three avengers
Who will leave these shores.

Goodbye mother. Do not weep.
Goodbye my country. Sweet in name.
Goodbye my brothers and sisters.
Goodbye father: all of you.
Buried beneath this precious earth.
It will not be long before I greet you.
The house of Atreus,
That brought about our doom,
I will destroy.
And I will die triumphant.

(Exit Talthibius with Cassandra)

II

CHORUS:

The Queen has fallen.
Help me someone. Help me.

HECUBA:

Leave me. Do not be kind just for the sake of it.
Leave me to lie here- for I have suffered
And I am suffering and I will suffer more.
Helpless - I still call upon the gods
Even though they do not hear my weak moans.
I try to think of the happiness that once was
But the glory and the joy of those memories
They only serve to deepen my woes.

I was a Princess married to a King:
I bore princely sons, mighty men,
No other mother in Greece or Troy
Could boast of such sons as these.
And yet, each one, by Grecian sword or spear
Was hacked down. Upon their graves
I laid locks of my cut hair.

I did not hear of their father Priam's death
From the lips of others, but was made
To witness his butchery upon the altar.
I was denied a private grief.
With Troy taken, my daughters that I had raised
For fine husbands were torn from my arms:
They are given to the Greeks,
We shall see each other no more.

And finally: it has come to this:
That in my old age, I am to be sent to Greece
To be a slave, to do whatever tasks they ask of me.
Me. Hecuba. Queen. Mother of Hector become an elderly
Keeper of keys: a porter at the door: a baker of bread.
This body that has known the finest garments,
That has slept between royal sheets:
Reduced to wearing rags and resting on the hard ground.
This is all the future I have to look forward to
And all because of one adulteress woman – Helen.
O my child Cassandra, sweet follower of Apollo,
Your purity and virgin spirit will be ripped from you.
Polyxena, my daughter, what has become of you?
Not one son or daughter remains to help their aged mother.
What hope is left for me? How can you help?
Take me from this tragic place,
Take me as a slave and throw me to the ground
So that I may weep away my remaining days.
No one can be happy until the day they die.

CHORUS:

Sing.

Sing to us, singer of songs.
Sound strange sobbing notes:
The hymn of Troy's ruin.

Remember now:
At the gates of Troy
We saw that golden creature,
The four-footed beast of the Greeks,
Laiden with death's armoury.

From the rocks above Troy
Voices rang out: "Peace is with us,
Our troubles are at an end.
Bring forth the sacred image
Bring it to Athene's temple."
Both young and old sang and rejoiced
Encircling that trap of death.

The children of Troy ran from the city
Bearing gifts in praise of Athene:
Honouring that horse of mountain-pine
Unaware of the ambush inside.
Ropes were tied to that cunning device
And they hauled it like a ship
Into the marble hall of Athene's temple.
It stood on that floor
That floor that would stream
With the blood of our land.

Night fell over our celebrations.
The flutes played on,
Dancing feet patterned the ground,
The singing of joyful songs filled the air.
Burning torches lit up these revels
Shedding their glow upon all around.

We were singing our praises
To Artemis, Zeus's daughter,
Maiden of the mountains,
When cries of "murder"
Shattered our song.
So shrill was the cry
That young infants clung
To their mother's skirts in terror.

From inside the horse,
The enemy hiding within
Burst forth
Upon the altar-steps.
The slaughter began.

Throats cut.
Limbs hacked.
Flesh gashed.
Hearts pierced.
Veins opened.
Heads severed.
Rivers of blood,
Winding, pouring, gushing
Through the streets of Troy.
Victorious warriors of Greece,
Wielding their swords on high:
Ripping out the soul
Of our great nation.

(Enter Andromache. She has her child, Astyanax, with her.)

CHORUS:

The Greeks are returning.
Hecuba. They are returning.
They are returning with Andromache
And with your grandson, Astyanax.
They are bringing all that remains of your family.

HECUBA:

Where are they taking you, helpless wife?

ANDROMACHE:

Our Grecian masters are leading me to bondage.

HECUBA:

O pity you...

ANDROMACHE:

Why do you pity me?

HECUBA:

I pity you.

ANDROMACHE:

For the burden that I carry?

HECUBA:

O Zeus...

ANDROMACHE:

For the pain I feel?

HECUBA:

O my children...

ANDROMACHE:

We are no more.

HECUBA:

Gone is my family. My fortune. Troy is no more.

ANDROMACHE:

We are helpless.

HECUBA:

My sons. My heroic sons. My sons that I bore.

All my sons are no more.

ANDROMACHE:

My brothers: all are dead.

HECUBA:

Can any mother grieve more for so many lost sons?

ANDROMACHE:

I share in your grief...

HECUBA:

Such grief never known.

ANDROMACHE:

Troy is fallen.

HECUBA:

Shrouded in smouldering ashes...

ANDROMACHE:

Where are you now, husband?

Come Hector, defend your wife.

HECUBA:

You cry out for my son who lies in Hades now.

Your husband. My eldest care.

Cut down by savage Greek.

He sleeps forever.

ANDROMACHE:

On that day you gave birth to Paris

Our sorrows began.

He was misery sent to us by the gods.

Our ruin was born of his love

For that Spartan whore – Helen.

I have seen the corpses of our dead friends

Lying on the floor of Athene's temple:

Left there by the Greeks.

Exposed for carrion to feed on.

This city bows down

To be enslaved forever.

HECUBA:

I weep for my country-
Lost.
I weep for my people-
Forlorn.
I am witness to the pitiful
End of my homeland.
Children: mourn the loss of this dear earth,
This place of our beginning,
And the loss of each other...
We weep. Tears upon tears.
They are flowing, flowing from us.
Only our dead are unknowing.
They are already far away.

CHORUS:

Our tears sweeten the bitterness of our souls
Our lamentations lessen our pain.

ANDROMACHE:

Mother of Hector.
Hector: the slayer of countless Greeks.
My child and I are the spoils of war.
Our high birth brought down to servitude.
What a change? What a reversal of roles is this?
How do you account for this endless sorrow?

HECUBA:

It is the work of the gods:
Exalting the lowly and bringing the mighty to heel.
The gods. They continue to drag me down.
Just now my daughter, Cassandra,
Was forced from my arms.

ANDROMACHE:

Poor, poor, childless mother.
For there is worse to come.

HECUBA:

What further sorrows can be measured
Against those already suffered?

ANDROMACHE:

Your child, Polyxena, is slain.
Sacrificed at Achilles' tomb:
A gift for a lifeless corpse.

HECUBA:

Oh now I see. I see the meaning.
The meaning of that riddle,
That meaning so wretched,
Spoken by Talthybius.
Its meaning becomes clear –
Too clear.

ANDROMACHE:

I saw her with my own eyes.
Saw her broken body.
Knelt by her side.
Covered her corpse with robes,
Speaking words of prayer.

HECUBA:

Polyxena. My daughter:
What did she know of life?
My child.
Murderers!

ANDROMACHE:

Even though she is gone from us.
How much more blessed is her fate compared to ours?

HECUBA:

My child. You cannot mean what you say.
In death there is nothing.
Nothing but unending darkness.
At least in life there is hope.

ANDROMACHE:

Mother: to be unborn is not to have lived.
Is this not the same as death?
Those that have not lived
Do not taste the bitterness of life:
Is death then not a better place?
In death there is no pain, no sorrow, no ills;
But in life when we taste happiness
And lose its flavour
We forever seek to regain
Those feelings of blissful remembrance.

Polyxena will know nothing of her ills,
For her it is as if she never lived.
Whereas I have existed and have sought fame.
In the house of Hector, I was mistress of his estate.
I did nothing to bring shame upon his good name:
My reputation across the land was as a good wife.
Our marriage was constant and admired from afar.
But in my virtue lies my downfall.
For hearing of this perfect wife:
That vile Greek, Neoptolemus,
Son to Achilles and slayer of our King,
Sent his men to search for me.
They found me and I am to become his wife.

ANDROMACHE: (cont)

I shall be a slave to my husband's murderers.
I shall be in the obnoxious arms of another.
If I forget my husband: I will be a traitor to the dead.
If I cling to Hector's love: my new Lord will learn to hate me.
It is said that some women forget their first husband
Once they are in the bed of the second:
But I despise that kind of woman.

How can the love of one man
Be so easily forgotten
Just by falling into the arms of another?
In you my loving Hector
Was all the husband I could wish for:
Noble in birth, wise, wealthy, honest and brave.
I was your virgin bride.
But now you are gone. Perished.
I shall be taken across the sea:
A prize of the Greeks.

Do you see now, mother,
Why Polyxena has a happier fate?
She will not suffer such a future as I:
There is no hope for me,
To hope is to cheat the true feelings I feel
Here, in my heart.

CHORUS:

Our sorrow is such as yours:
Your words well up the woes in us.

HECUBA:

I have never been on board a ship before,
But from the stories I have heard
And the pictures I have seen,
I know that if sailors feel
They can weather a storm and survive
They will do everything they can to save their ship.
But if they see mighty waves
And feel the pull of strong tempests,
They will give themselves up to the elements.
Likewise I am overwhelmed by such surging sorrows
That I cannot speak of them:
I am drowning in the torrents
Sent to us by the gods.

Dear daughter. It is time to dry your tears.
Hector is lost to us forever.
Look to the future.
Look to your future without Hector.
Honour your new Lord.
Win him with your sweet ways.
Find happiness there so that your friends everywhere
May bask in the thoughts of your new found joy.
Bring up my grandson, young Astyanax, there,
That in his manhood he may be Troy's hope.
That he may father a line of Trojans
To raise our City up again from the ruins and the dust.

(Enter Talthibius)

Why does this servant of the Greeks return?
What further news has he to bring?

TALTHYBIUS:

Hate me not, wife of Hector.
For it is with great loathing that I bring
The latest command of my Lords.

ANDROMACHE:

What now? What wounds do your words begin to open?

TALTHYBIUS:

It is your child. They have decided.
They have decided that...
That... how can I say it?

ANDROMACHE:

What are you trying to say?
That my son cannot go with me?

TALTHYBIUS:

He can go with no one.

ANDROMACHE:

But he cannot be left here on his own.

TALTHYBIUS:

I don't know how to tell you gently...

ANDROMACHE:

Save your false kindness: what is it you have to say?

TALTHYBIUS:

Your son. Your son must...
Since you must know the worse:
Your son must die.

ANDROMACHE:

How can this be?
This is far worse than slavery.

TALTHYBIUS:

Odysseus persuaded the assembled Greeks...

ANDROMACHE:

O God. O God. What have I done?

Why slaughter the innocent?

TALTHYBIUS:

Odysseus.

He warned them that it would be dangerous,

That it would be dangerous

To allow the son of a Trojan hero

To live.

ANDROMACHE:

May that be true of his own sons.

TALTHYBIUS:

Your son must...

Must be...

Is to be...

Hurled...

Thrown down

From the top of Troy's highest wall.

ANDROMACHE/

CHORUS/

HECUBA:

No. How can you do this?

How can this be?

Barbarians! Murderers! Villains! Animals!

He is innocent.

Oh you gods: spare this child for pity's sake.

TALTHYBIUS:

There is nothing you can do.
Be wise. Let him go.
Bear your pain like a Queen.
There is no where you can turn for help.
Your Lords – all are gone.
You are held in slavery.
One woman cannot fight against a conquering army.
I urge you to accept what has happened.
Quietly. Without protest.
No one will hold it against you.
If you stir up their anger,
By hurling harsh words and screams at them,
Your child will be left unburied,
Left for the crows to scavenge.
If you remain calm,
They will be kinder to you
And allow your son's corpse
To be placed at peace beneath this Trojan soil.

ANDROMACHE:

O my child: my priceless treasure.
You must leave these arms – forever:
Those great deeds of your father,
So admired by others, have endangered your life.
I came to Troy to be Hector's bride,
Princess to a prosperous land,
To bear a future king
Not a babe for Greeks to slaughter.
Son: are those tears in your eyes?
I feel your hands clutching at my clothes.
Why do you cling to me so,
Nestling like a young chick
Beneath its mother's wing?
Do you know what is to happen to you?

ANDROMACHE: (continued)

No one can save you:
No Hector and his mighty sword,
No warrior kinsmen,
No army of Troy
Will rise up to defend you.

You must fall
Fall from the heights
Of the crumbling city walls,
You'll see the rocky ground
Rushing up to greet you-
To dash out your brains
And cut off your life.

Your sweet precious life,
Born of my body,
Will be no more.
Your infant scent
That I have breathed each day
Will fade forever.
I, who gave you life,
Cradled you when you cried,
Rocked you in my arms
Gave you milk from these breasts
Have done all this for nothing.

Kiss me my son,
Throw your arms around me.
Hold me, embrace me – one last time.
Lay your lips on mine
And remember me in the hereafter.

ANDROMACHE: (continued)

This cruelty goes beyond barbarism:
What wrong has my boy done to anyone?
That witch Helen, can be no daughter of Zeus:
She was born of many fathers –
Evil, envy, murder, death and
All the plagues of the earth
Have spawned her.
Her looks, her wantonness, those piercing eyes of hers,
Have brought this desolation upon us.

So – take him - do what you must with him.
Lift him up and throw him down from Troy's tallest tower
And use his flesh as meat to feed on.
Where are the gods, now?
Why can't you save this single child from this cruel death?

TALTHYBIUS:

Undo your mother's grasp, child,
Gently. Gently leave her arms.
You must go to the top of your
Ancestral towers, to breathe
Your last breath of air.
There you must give up your life
As has been ordered. Take him.

ASTYANAX:

Mother...

(The soldiers exit with Astyanax)

TALTHYBIUS:

This is a task for a more hard-hearted
Man than I – for one who is brutish-
For one more merciless than I.

ANDROMACHE:

Take me.

Take me to your ship.

Now.

I am going to a wedding –

I – a mother who has lost her son –

A bride in mourning,

A bride in widow's weeds.

(Exit Andromache and Talthibius)

HECUBA:

What more can I do to show you my sorrow, you gods?

O son of my poor son,

Your life is taken from us –

Heartlessly, needlessly.

What have we not suffered?

What else is left to bring us down?

III

CHORUS:

Telamon, King of Salamis,
You lived on those faraway shores,
In the land of the bees,
Under the hills where the first olive tree sprang,
That olive tree which crowned Athene's city.
Telamon: you too came to Troy long ago,
With Hercules, the archer son of Alcmena,
To raid and destroy our City.
Our king, Laomedon, had promised him
Two immortal steeds
As a gift of gratitude
But went back on his promise.

For this the Greeks set sail.
They arrived and moored
At the mouth of our river Simois.
Hercules took up his charmed bow
And rained down arrows upon Troy's people.
One arrow pierced the heart of King Laomedon:
Hercules' revenge was complete.
But he was not content with this.
Our city walls,
That Apollo had laboured hard to build,
Were set alight
And left to crumble
In the heat of the fierce flames
While the Grecian hoards
Ransacked the land.

So twice
Twice has Troy fallen
Fallen to the bloody hand of Greeks.

Ganymede, lost son of King Laomedon,
In vain you move with delicate step
Among the gods,
Filling their golden goblets
To overflowing.
The land of your birth
Is consumed with fire.
By the salt-sea's edge
If you listen
You can hear
The lone cry of a bird in flight
And below upon the beach
The sounds of sobbing:
All of us are Troy's daughters
Mourning for our dead husbands and sons.
If you look
You will not see
The pools you bathed in as a boy
Nor the fields you ran through:
Our land is wasted.
Yet you, Ganymede,
With your youthful face
Can smile serenely
And at peace
By the throne of Zeus
While the land of Priam
Falls into oblivion.

Troy and Love were once entwined.
The gods in heaven
Heard of Love's affinity with this city
And came down to earth.

Even though Zeus stole Ganymede away
We do not speak against him.
But how could Dawn,
The white-winged angel
Of the morning
Shine her light
On our destruction?

It was here in Troy
That Dawn found her love
And carried him aloft
In a golden chariot
Powered by the stars.
This Prince Tithonus,
Was father to Dawn's children
And hope shone upon us.

But now this light has faded
And the gods have left us in the dark.

(Enter Menalaus with an armed guard)

MENALAUS:

What a splendid day it is today.
The day I take possession of my wife, Helen.
We have suffered much on her account.
But I did not come here just because of her.
No. It is not as many people think. No.
I also came to find that traitor, that pretty boy, Paris,
Who was a guest in my house and stole her from me.
He has paid the penalty, I am glad to say,
He and all his people.
They have been crushed
By the mighty armies of Greece.
And so. To my business.

It is time for me to collect this harlot,
I am loathe to call her my wife,
Even though she once was mine.
She is a prisoner amongst these women.
My valiant comrades,
Who have bravely won this war,
Have given her to me
And I am to decide her fate:
To have her executed here in Troy or
To take her back to Argos and slay her there.
I am of a mind to spare her life in Troy
And to ship her back to Greece.
There she will die
To avenge all my friends slain here in Troy.
Go. Fetch her out. Drag her to this place.
By her hair. That accursed hair.

(Exit attendants)

When the winds fill our sails
I will take her on board ship and
Head homeward with all speed.

HECUBA:

Zeus. Hear me. You whose throne is the Earth.
Wherever you are. Whatever you are.
Whether you are Nature's Law or the Mind of Man:
Hear my prayer.
Hear me as you quietly bring
The deeds of all mankind to Justice.

MENALAUS:

What are you saying, woman?
This is a strange way to pray to the Gods.

HECUBA:

Menalaus. If you intend to kill your wife,
Then this prayer is for you: but do it now.
Do not look upon her.
Do not let her spells charm you.
With her looks she has destroyed cities
And burnt homes: those of us that have suffered,
Including you, know all this.

(Enter Helen forced on by attendants)

HELEN:

Menalaus. Menalaus: is this show of violence
A taste of things to come?
Have you ordered this rough handling
To frighten me?
I know you have untold reasons to hate me:
But tell me: am I to live or die?
What have the Greeks decided
To do with me?

MENALAUS:

Nothing. No vote has been taken on your future.
You have been given to me- the wronged husband-
I am to decide how best to dispose of you.

HELEN:

May I plead with you to listen to me,
For if you kill me it will be an unjust death.

MENALAUS:

I'm here to pass sentence on you, not to discuss it with you.

HECUBA:

At least hear what she has to say, Menalaus,
And then let me speak against her.
What I have to tell of her evil deeds in Troy
Will be enough to condemn her:
She cannot escape death.

MENALAUS:

This is only delaying matters.
However, she may speak.
But let it be known that I grant this
For your sake, not hers.

HELEN:

Whether I speak well or poorly
You probably will not answer me,
To you I am the enemy.
But I have thought about the charges
That you would bring against me
And if you would reason with me
I have prepared my defence.

Firstly- it was she who began all these troubles
The day that she gave birth to Paris.
And then her husband, Priam, destroyed
Both Troy and me by allowing Paris to live.
Priam was warned in a dream
That Paris would bring disaster to his world
But he would not kill the child.

And so Paris grew up to become a judge,
To judge which of those three great goddesses:
Athene, Hera and Aphrodite, was the fairest.

Athene promised him Trojan armies
That would conquer Greece,
Hera offered him command over all Asia
And Aphrodite, praising my beauty,
Said that he would have me
If Paris judged her to be the fairest.

It was Aphrodite who won the prize
And in winning me, Greece was saved
From terrible wars and from being crushed
By the conquering armies of Asia.
From my demise came the salvation of Greece.
For my sacrifice I should be honoured
But instead I stand condemned.

Yet I know there is one burning question
On your mind:
“Why? Why did I leave your home?
Leave it in secret?”
I’ll tell you.
This woman’s son,
Her Paris or Alexander
Or whatever you want to call him,
Came to me with a goddess at his side.
I was alone. At that time you were gone.
You left me alone with him.
You were sailing away to Crete
And I was alone with him.

I have asked myself,
Time and time again,
What made me leave?
To follow this stranger,
Leaving house and home?
I do not blame you but that goddess.

Punish her. Be mightier than Zeus
Who rules over all the gods
For even he is her slave.
Find it in your heart to forgive me.

Even now you have your doubts.
I see it in your face.
I know you're thinking that
When Paris died,
I was free of the god's hold on me
And should have escaped to join your ships.
I tried. I tried to escape.
Ask the watchmen on the walls.
They found me, several times,
Lowering myself down by a rope from the battlements.

How can you say now, my husband,
That I can justly die?
I have been married by force
Treated ill by both Trojan and Greek:
Suffered much in order to save Greece.
How can you go against the will of the gods?
It would be folly to do so.

CHORUS:

Speak out for our children
Speak out for our country, Queen.
We fear this moment
When the words of an immoral creature
Such as she begin to sound some notes
Of truthfulness.

HECUBA:

Let me straightaway defend the good name
Of the goddesses she slanders.
Can you ever imagine Hera or Athene
Doing such things? Would Hera really
Have sold Greece to an alien power?
And why would Athene want to make
Her special city of Athens a slave to Troy?
They had no need to travel to Mount Ida
To play games over their beauty.
Hera can find no greater husband
Than Zeus and Athene has shunned marriage
Begging her father that she remain a virgin.
You cannot hide your own guilt
By making the gods sound foolish:
No one with any sense will believe you.
And to suggest that Aphrodite herself
Was at my son's side when he visited you
In the house of Menalaus is a complete fantasy.
Aphrodite could have spirited you and your city
Here to Troy, without ever moving from her heavenly seat.

It was your own lust that brought you here.
You saw the beauty of my son and your heart stirred.
My brave, handsome young son dressed in his golden robes,
Fired your senses and your greed. In him you saw a better life.
You left Menalaus for the thought of gold and splendour in Troy.
And yet you accuse my son of taking you by force.
Did you scream? Did anyone hear you cry for help?
Your young brothers were close by –
They would have fought for their sister's honour –
But you stole away in silence.
Here in Troy, when the army of the Greeks
Came to claim you back, you delighted in taunting my son.

Whenever you heard of the success of Menalaus in battle,
You would remind Paris that he had a rival for your affections.
But when the Trojan armies were victorious
Menalaus was nothing to you.
Your loyalties switched from side to side as it suited you.

You say you tried to escape
By lowering yourself by ropes
From Troy's towers.
When were you ever a prisoner?
Having lost the husband you say you truly loved
Why didn't you do the honourable thing
And hang yourself by your ropes
Or taste the steel of a sword to end your despair?
How many times did I say to you:
"Leave Troy. I will send you to the Grecian ships in secret.
Leave us. My son will marry a new bride.
Go back to the Greeks. End this war between us. Go back."
But you would not go. You would not leave your luxury.
The courtesies paid to you by our people
Filled you with pride: your vanity would not let you go.

So here you are: you have the nerve,
The audacity, to put on fine clothes
And stand proud before your wronged husband.
You have no shame: you should be on your knees,
Begging for forgiveness-
Your clothes torn, head shaved, shivering with fear-
But you know no sorrow for your past sins.
Remember Menalaus she has betrayed you,
Betrayed you and your country
Honour your country and yourself
By slaying this woman
That her death may be an example
To treacherous women everywhere.

CHORUS:

Be worthy of your reputation, Menalaus.
Be worthy of your royal house, Menalaus.
Punish this woman.
Show us your strength,
Show us your justice.

MENALAUS:

My judgement is much the same as yours.
She left me. Left me for another.
It was her choice to be unfaithful.
She cannot call on Aphrodite
To excuse her adultery.
You will die. Die by stoning.
As the stones bludgeon your body,
Think of the shame you have caused
And know that you are paying
For all those that have died
In these long, long years of war.

HELEN:

Husband. Save me. Save me.
I ask for forgiveness.
I am blameless.
It was the work of the gods.
How can you hold me responsible for things they made me do?
I beg you. Do not let me die.
Have mercy on me. Pardon me.

HECUBA:

Remember Menalaus – all your comrades
Who died because of her.
Remember them and their children.
Do not betray them now-
I implore you.

MENALAUS:

That will do old woman.
I have no intention of listening to her.
Take her to my ship.

HECUBA:

Not on your ship.
Do not let her sail on the same ship as you.

MENALAUS:

Why ever not?
Do you think she would sink it?

HECUBA:

You loved her once.
On the long journey home she could rekindle that love.
You will always have some feeling for her.

MENALAUS:

Not for this women.
She betrayed my love.
But I take your point.
She will not set foot on my ship.
Take her away.

HELEN:

Husband: forgive me.

(Soldiers drag Helen off)

MENALAUS:

I will ignore her cries and when we arrive in Argos
She will die a shameful death for the shameful life she has led.
In her agony let all women feel terror in their hearts
And learn the virtue of chastity.

(Exit Menalaus.)

IV

CHORUS:

Your temple in Troy
Your altar of incense
These you have destroyed.
Why have you sold us to the enemy?
O Zeus in whose holy temples we prayed:
Why have you betrayed us to the Greeks?
Do you remember holy Mount Ida?
Those lush green valleys of hanging ivy?
The rushing rivers filled with melting snow?
Do you remember how the shafts of early morning sunlight
Cascaded down from the wall of the world?
All this, O Zeus, you have given up to the Greeks.

Your altars are cold.
The dancers: silent.
No more celebrations
Long into the night.
The golden images we prayed to
The festival rites of the full-moon:
All are vanished. Gone. Abandoned.
We wonder, O Lord, from your celestial seat,
Does this mean anything to you?
Why has our City been turned into dust?

My husband. My husband whom I loved:
You are dead and remain unburied.
Your soul wanders the underworld –
Your journey there unsanctified.
While I travel in the belly of a ship
Sped on by moving oars
To the land of Argos.

At the gates, our city's children stand in line.
They are with their mothers.
They want to stay with their mothers.
The sound of their sobbing is muffled
As they bury their heads deep in each of their mother's arms.
A little girl speaks:
"Mother. I don't want to be alone.
Don't let the Greeks take me away from you.
I don't want to go without you.
I don't want to go in that dark ship, across the sea
To a strange land."

I pray, god, when that ship
With Menalaus on board is way out at sea,
That you strike its oars with a mighty thunderbolt
Sparking wildfire throughout the ship.
Let your flames fall on that vile Helen,
While she is sitting at her mirror
Prettying herself.
I say this because I am being taken from these
Trojan shores to servitude.

May they never reach their homeland again:
May they never walk through its streets
Or gaze upon its golden temples.
He has taken that whore with him:
If they reach Athens together
She will charm him into saving her.
Then the shame she brought on Argos
And the misery she brought to Troy
Will go unpunished.

(Enter Talthibius and his soldiers carrying the body of Astyanax)

See how more woes afflict us.
Look. Each one of you.
Cast your sight upon this atrocity.
The crumpled corpse of young Astyanax:
The body of a babe
Slung down by the Greeks
From Troy's top-most tower.

TALTHYBIUS:

Hecuba. Hecuba.
One ship remains in the harbour
Waiting to take you and these women,
The remaining spoils of Troy,
To the shore of Phthia.
Neoptolemus, hearing news of trouble in Peleus,
Has set sail already. He would wait no longer.
Andromache. Andromache.
She has gone with him but her parting
Has wrenched at my heart. My tears are for her.
No man, hearing her cries of farewell
To her country and to Hector's tomb,
Could withstand the sadness of it.

Her final act on these shores was to plead
For the burial of her dead son.
That his wrecked body- thrown
From those towering battlements-
Should have a grave.

She prayed to her new lord, Neoptolemus,
To leave behind this symbol of her Hector's might,
So that her son
Could be entombed within it.
Her new Lord was hurrying her along,
She took advantage of his haste.

He agreed that she could entrust you, the child's grandmother,
With preparing a shroud for his little corpse
And see him put to rest. I will help you.
While you are covering his body,
We will shovel the earth to make his grave.
By bathing his wounds and straightening his broken limbs,
I have spared you the worse.
Join me in this funeral task
And the sooner we'll be able to sail away for home.

HECUBA:

Put Hector's shield down over there:
The sight of it chokes my senses.

(Exit Talthybius with the soldiers)

You Greeks; you savages,
Who live more by your spears than your wits,
What had you to fear from this child?
What have you gained from his murder?
You fought Trojans each day
And cut them down,
Even with mighty Hector beside them.
You have taken Troy and slain every fighting man:
We are defeated.
Yet in this little boy: in this innocent:
You saw some kind of dread.
You were frightened, but without any reason:
The worst kind of fear.

My darling child: your death is senseless.
If you had enjoyed your youth,
Tasted the sweets of marriage
And touched the godlike state of sovereignty
Then might you have died saving your city.

But you will know none of this.
Instead, our state has dealt you a savage blow.
These curls your mother softly smoothed
Are tangled and matted with your drying blood;
Your soft skin that I gently kissed,
Is punctured by your shattered bones:
These gaping wounds cry horror to my heart.
O lifeless hands, so like your father's,
Each finger is snapped and broken.
And your tender lips that spoke your childlike thoughts:
Cold. Silent. Hushed.
I remember how you came running to my bed and said:
“Grandmama: when you are finally asleep, I will cut off
A curl of my hair for you and lay it in your grave and I will lead
An army of friends in tribute to you to send you on your way.”
But this is not to be. It is I who am alive to bury you my sweet.
An old, homeless, childless woman.
Was all my love and care for you to be for this?
What will poets say of you in later years?
They will be ashamed to read your epitaph:
“Here lies a child.
In days gone by,
Greeks lived in dread of him,
So they murdered him.”

You go to the next life with nothing.
Your only inheritance is this shield.
This shield:
That kept Hector safe in combat.
See here. This is where he grasped it tight:
See the imprint there.
And round the rim. Faint stains of sweat
That dripped from his forehead in the toil of battle.
May it protect you in the after life.

Gather up those remnants
To cover his poor body.
We have little finery left
But we must try to do what we can.

Anyone who thinks they are secure in their happiness
Is a fool, for Fate has wild changes of mood.

CHORUS:

We are ready with these robes.
All that we could find from the dead of Troy.
We will wrap them gently round him.

HECUBA:

I had hoped to see you honoured,
By your countrymen,
For your success with the bow
And your horsemanship.
Instead your father's mother
Can only adorn you with these reminders of our wealth.
They are all that remain.
She, that Helen: has stolen all our riches,
Taken your life and cut off the royal line.

CHORUS:

My heart aches to hear you say that.
We have lost our royal prince.

HECUBA:

I should have dressed you in splendid robes of Troy
When you were to be married to the loveliest of Asia's princesses.
I dress you now in these sad trappings.
The shield of Hector – held high in so many victories,
Lies here as a wreath to die with the dying.
In death you will be honoured:
Far beyond the reach of Odysseus, that villain of villains.

CHORUS:

Witness this sorrow of sorrows.
The earth shall receive you now.
We will sing you to your rest.

HECUBA:

Hold me someone.
This sight is more than I can bear.

CHORUS:

*Requiem aeternam dona ei,
Et lux perpetua luceat ei.
Rest eternal grant to him:
Light eternal shine on him.*

HECUBA:

I bind your wounds with this linen
But I cannot heal you.
I cannot bring you back to life.
Go: find your father amongst the dead,
Let him tend to your scars.
He will make a better doctor than I.

CHORUS:

Beat the ground.
Sound the drums.
Deep in the earth.
Awake the sleepers there.

HECUBA:

My children. Listen. These thoughts pound in my brain.

CHORUS:

Tell us.
What is it?
Speak to us.

HECUBA:

We have been made a sacrifice by the gods.

All of us. It is their design. Their plan.

To make us suffer.

They have loathed Troy and all its people

Above the rest of the world.

And yet they could have taken us,

Thrown us in the deep to be forgotten.

(The soldiers enter.)

Time will remember us.

They will sing of us in songs:

Troy will be famous.

Go. Take the body. Take him to his wretched grave.

(The body of Astyanax is gathered up and carried out)

We have bathed him and given him our blessing:

What more can we do? It is nothing to the dead:

What care they of rituals? We do it for ourselves:

For the living, to lament our loss.

CHORUS:

Lost child. Where is your mother now?

Such hopes and aspirations she had of you.

You were born the son of a hero;

Born to be a king.

You brought happiness into the world.

And now you are gone.

You died such an awful death: your neck broken.

Pushed from that high place.

Where now. See. There are flames.

The light of burning torches

Held high in the hands of soldiers.

What are they doing now?

What terrible crime will they now inflict on Troy?

(Enter Talthymbius with soldiers bearing torches)

TALTHYBIUS:

You there, charged with flaming this city,
I give the order: apply your torches –
We must finish this job. Burn this Troy to ashes.
And then homeward: with haste we will leave this place.

Take heed of this command.
Firstly: as soon as you hear the ship's alarm
You are to make your way to the harbour
And climb aboard for the journey home.
Secondly: old woman of ill fortune,
You will follow these men here
And leave your land a slave.

HECUBA:

My misery is at its utmost.
It is the moment to leave my country –
My city all in flames.
I must walk to the gates
To bid this helpless place farewell.
Look at it. Look at Troy.
Troy that in this barbarous world
Could stand proud. Your glorious name
Is melting in the heat of the fire –
Burnt to a cinder.
They are taking us away from you.
They are burning you: we are slaves.
O you gods! What is the point?
You do not listen to us.
You there! All of you. Come.
Let's rush to the warmth of the blaze.
We'll die gloriously in the flames of our city.

TALTHYBIUS:

Take hold of her someone. She is distraught.
Her afflictions have overwhelmed her.
She is Odysseus' prize –
It is our duty.
We must deliver her to him.

HECUBA:

Help us Chronos –
Lord of Phrygia –
You who gave birth to our City
In ancient times.
Can't you see our distress?
Can't you see this devastation?
We do not deserve to end like this.

CHORUS:

He is watching the destruction of our State:
He sees what we see:
The pity of it.

HECUBA:

See how the city glows –
Our city, our houses, our homes.
Lashed by the scorching flames.

CHORUS:

Like a mantle of darkness,
The blackening smoke
Clouds the City sky.

HECUBA:

Hear me my children,
Listen to your mother's cries.

CHORUS:

Can the dead,
Hear the sounds
Made by the living?

HECUBA:

Bow down with me.
Claw the earth with your fingers.
Beat the ground with your fists;
They must hear us.

CHORUS:

Groundward. Kneeling.
Nearer to those we have lost.
Hear our cries
Our loved ones
Hear us in the land of the dead.

HECUBA:

I am calling
My Priam...
My Hector...
I am here
My Polyxena
My sons.

CHORUS:

In this voice is the sound of a broken heart.

HECUBA:

I am being forced
Forced from my land.
To be taken away,
Taken away to a life of drudgery.
Where are you, my Lord?

My husband?
You can know nothing of my plight.
They have murdered you and you have no grave.
I cannot grieve by your side:
You have died alone: friendless.

CHORUS:

Death surrounds us here.
I cannot see the light.
The evil hand of the unrighteous
Has blinded our perfect sight.

HECUBA:

Beautiful city: dying before us.
You first received the blows of sword and spear
And now the unrelenting ravishes of fire.

CHORUS:

As the light fades
And the dust settles
Our past will be erased.

HECUBA:

My eyes will never look this way again.

CHORUS:

And the name of Troy will be a lost syllable to the world:
Her children scattered throughout many foreign lands.

(The sound of the city collapsing can be heard)

HECUBA:

The very foundations begin to crack.

CHORUS:

The city towers are crashing down.

HECUBA:

Boulder upon boulder. Stone upon stone engulfs the town:
Our sorrow is complete.

(The signal sounds from the harbour)

My weak limbs must bear me up:
On to my new life.
A captive animal. I must go.
Never to return.
Forward now to slavery.

(Hecuba moves off with the soldiers of Odysseus)

CHORUS:

Troy is no more:
A pile of rubble in the desert.
The ships are waiting –
We must move on –
Down to the shore –
To sail away –
To nothing.

(The Trojan Women are led off by the soldiers.

The fires are dying down.

The sound of the sea can be heard.)

(The lights fade to black.)

Further copies of this publication are available from
Edexcel Publications, Adamsway, Mansfield, Notts NG18 4LN

Telephone 01623 467467
Fax 01623 450481

Order code: UA007584

Issue 1 July 2000

For more information on Edexcel qualifications please contact our
Customer Response Centre on 020 7393 4500
or email: enquiries@edexcel.org.uk
or visit our website: www.edexcel.org.uk

© 2000 EDEXCEL Foundation
This publication may only be reproduced in accordance with Edexcel copyright policy.
Edexcel Foundation is a registered charity and a company limited
by guarantee. Registered in England No 168164.

Edexcel
Success through qualifications

