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The Trojan Women

Troades or The Trojan Women is a play that was written by Euripides in 415 BC. It portrays the aftermath of the Greeks conquer over Troy. The Greeks entered Troy via the “Trojan Horse” where their outward motive was to bring Helen back to King Menelaus. The Greeks had been wanting Troy for a long time and getting Helen was just the excuse for sacking Troy. The Greeks killed all of the men and left the women to be divided amongst the Greeks for slaves.

In the beginning of The Trojan Women, the women turn to Hecuba, the wife of the dead King Priam; she becomes the new leader amongst the women in the absence of her husband. Throughout the play we learn of the fates of the Trojan women: Hecuba was to become the slave to King Odysseus of Ithaca, the creator of the Trojan Horse; her daughter Cassandra, who swore a vow of chastity and had gone insane, was to become the concubine to Agamemnon; her child daughter, Polyxena was killed as a sacrifice on Achilles tomb; Andromache, the wife of her late son, Hector, was to become a slave to Achilles’ son Neoptolemus; and Andromache’s son and Hecuba’s grandson was killed so that he would not rise to manhood and avenge his people. King Menelaus comes for Helen so he can take her back to Greece to be stoned for her sins against Menelaus and her people. The women of Troy hate and despise her because she is blamed for Troy’s downfall due to her affair with Hecuba’s son, Paris. Hecuba begs Menelaus to kill Helen right then and there so that he will not be persuaded by her beauty to let her live. Menelaus decides that she will return on another ship to return to Greece and live out her sentence. After this, the women are boarded onto the ships and taken to Greece as the sound of the crumbling, burning Troy is heard in the background.

It is interesting to me, that in most stories we hear of how Greece was so clever and successful in conquering Troy and taking back Helen and so forth. But this is the first time that I have really seen portrayed the other side of the story. All of a sudden the Greeks are the bad guys and Euripides who wrote this was a Greek! This play shows how horrible war really is and how much it destroys. There is nothing remotely amusing about this play. It is a persuasive play to make people understand the brutality of war at the sacrifice of human dignity. Another point not to be forgotten is what the people believe what the cause and effect of war was. They didn’t believe that it was purely someone being selfish and power-hungry, they believed that it was because of the Gods. The Trojan’s blamed Helen because they felt that they were being punished for her sexual crimes. It was very easy to get the “Why me?” syndrome because they believed that they had been forsaken. It seems very unfair to me that all of these women should pay for the sins of another and that’s what they thought too. That is why this is an effective play—why should so many people suffer because of the actions of a few?