

**THE TROJAN
WOMEN OF
EURIPIDES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649725304

The Trojan Women of Euripides by Euripides & Gilbert Murray

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

EURIPIDES & GILBERT MURRAY

**THE TROJAN
WOMEN OF
EURIPIDES**

THE
TROJAN WOMEN
OF
EURIPIDES

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH RHYMING VERSE
WITH EXPLANATORY NOTES BY
GILBERT MURRAY, LL.D., D.LITT.
REGIUS PROFESSOR OF GREEK IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

NEW YORK
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON, TORONTO, MELBOURNE, AND BOMBAY
1915

THE TROJAN WOMEN

IN his clear preface, Gilbert Murray says with truth that *The Trojan Women*, valued by the usage of the stage, is not a perfect play. "It is only the crying of one of the great wrongs of the world wrought into music." Yet it is one of the greater dramas of the elder world. In one situation, with little movement, with few figures, it flashes out a great dramatic lesson, the infinite pathos of a successful wrong. It has in it the very soul of the tragic. It even goes beyond the limited tragic, and hints that beyond the defeat may come a greater glory than will be the fortune of the victors. And thus through its pity and terror it purifies our souls to thoughts of peace.

Great art has no limits of locality or time. Its tidings are timeless, and its messages are universal. *The Trojan Women* was first performed in 415 B.C., from a story of the siege of Troy which even then was ancient history. But the pathos of it is as modern to us as it was to the Athenians. The terrors of war have not changed in three thousand years. Euripides had that to say of war which we have to say of it to-day, and had learned that which we are even now learning, that when most triumphant it brings as much wretchedness to the victors as to the vanquished. In this play the great conquest "seems to be a great joy and is in truth a great misery." The

THE TROJAN WOMEN

tragedy of war has in no essential altered. The god Poseidon mourns over Troy as he might over the cities of to-day, when he cries:

“How are ye blind,
Ye treaders down of cities, ye that cast
Temples to desolation, and lay waste
Tombs, the untrodden sanctuaries where lie
The ancient dead; yourselves so soon to die!”

To the cities of this present day might the prophetess Cassandra speak her message:

“Would ye be wise, ye Cities, fly from war!
Yet if war come, there is a crown in death
For her that striveth well and perisheth
Unstained: to die in evil were the stain!”

A throb of human sympathy as if with one of our sisters of to-day comes to us at the end, when the city is destroyed and its queen would throw herself, living, into its flames. To be of the action of this play the imagination needs not to travel back over three thousand years of history. It can simply leap a thousand leagues of ocean.

If ever wars are to be ended, the imagination of man must end them. To the common mind, in spite of all its horrors, there is still something glorious in war. Preachers have preached against it in vain; economists have argued against its wastefulness in vain. The imagination of a great poet alone can finally show to the imagination of the world that even the glories of war are an empty delusion. Euripides shows us, as the centre of his drama,

THE TROJAN WOMEN

women battered and broken by inconceivable torture—the widowed Hecuba, Andromache with her child dashed to death, Cassandra ravished and made mad—yet does he show that theirs are the unconquered and unconquerable spirits. The victorious men, flushed with pride, have remorse and mockery dealt out to them by those they fought for, and go forth to unpitied death. Never surely can a great tragedy seem more real to us, or purge our souls more truly of the unreality of our thoughts and feelings concerning vital issues, than can *The Trojan Women* at this moment of the history of the world.

FRANCIS HOVEY STODDARD.

May the first, 1915.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

JUDGED by common standards, the *Troades* is far from a perfect play; it is scarcely even a good play. It is an intense study of one great situation, with little plot, little construction, little or no relief or variety. The only movement of the drama is a gradual extinguishing of all the familiar lights of human life, with, perhaps, at the end, a suggestion that in the utterness of night, when all fears of a possible worse thing are passed, there is in some sense peace and even glory. But the situation itself has at least this dramatic value, that it is different from what it seems.

The consummation of a great conquest, a thing celebrated in paeans and thanksgivings, the very height of the day-dreams of unregenerate man—it seems to be a great joy, and it is in truth a great misery. It is conquest seen when the thrill of battle is over, and nothing remains but to wait and think. We feel in the background the presence of the conquerors, sinister and disappointed phantoms; of the conquered men, after long torment, now resting in death. But the living drama for Euripides lay in the conquered women. It is from them that he has named his play and built up his scheme of parts: four figures clearly lit and heroic, the others in varying grades of characterisation, nameless and barely articulate, mere half-heard voices of an eternal sorrow.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Indeed, the most usual condemnation of the play is not that it is dull, but that it is too harrowing; that scene after scene passes beyond the due limits of tragic art. There are points to be pleaded against this criticism. The very beauty of the most fearful scenes, in spite of their fearfulness, is one; the quick comfort of the lyrics is another, falling like a spell of peace when the strain is too hard to bear (cf. p. 89). But the main defence is that, like many of the greatest works of art, the *Troâdes* is something more than art. It is also a prophecy, a bearing of witness. And the prophet, bound to deliver his message, walks outside the regular ways of the artist.

For some time before the *Troâdes* was produced, Athens, now entirely in the hands of the War Party, had been engaged in an enterprise which, though on military grounds defensible, was bitterly resented by the more humane minority, and has been selected by Thucydides as the great crucial crime of the war. She had succeeded in compelling the neutral Dorian island of Mèlos to take up arms against her, and after a long siege had conquered the quiet and immemorably ancient town, massacred the men and sold the women and children into slavery. Mèlos fell in the autumn of 416 B.C. The *Troâdes* was produced in the following spring. And while the gods of the prologue were prophesying destruction at sea for the sackers of Troy, the fleet of the sackers of Mèlos, flushed with conquest and marked by a slight but unforgettable taint of sacrilege, was actually preparing to set sail for its fatal enterprise against Sicily.

Not, of course, that we have in the *Troâdes* a case of political allusion. Far from it. Euripides does not