

Euripides' *Trojan Women* (published by Methuen)

Hecuba

It's nothing. No fire. Only my child. My mad Cassandra is running towards us.

[*Enter Cassandra*]

Cassandra

Lift up the torches, here take them, I worship!
I light the torch! See, here!
I fill this temple with flame!
Come Hymen, god of marriage,
Bless the bridegroom, bless the bride
Who serves a royal bed in Argos,
Hymen, god of marriage.

You, mother are drowned in mourning,
In tears for my dead father
And sweet land I called home.
But I lift the torches high
Creating light, shining light,
And its flashing splendour,
A tribute to you Hymen.
And you Hecate, bless us with your brilliant light,
As is usual when a virgin becomes a wife.

Dance, dance up to the sky!
Shout yes, and celebrate
The blessed fate of my father.
You Phoebus, lead the holy dance,
There in your holy grove of laurels,
Where I served you as my lord.
Hymen, O marriage, Hymen.

Dance mother, Dance with me,
Whirl your sweet foot with mine,

Shout out a hymn to Hymen!
Celebrate the bride
With blessed songs and cries,
Go maids of Phrygia, dressed in your best,
Sing for my marriage and celebrate my husband
For whose bed I'm destined.

Chorus

Queen, stop your mad daughter,
Before she dances straight into the Greek camp.

Hecuba

Hephaestus, you light torches to celebrate marriage,
but this flame is a grim one for her.
O sweet child, what great hopes I had for you.
How little I dreamed that Argive spears would force you
into marriage. Give me your torches, dear, you can't hold
them straight in your wild dance. All your sufferings have 350
hardly made you wise; my child, you're still the same...
out of your head. Here, women, take the torches; this marriage
needs tears, not celebration.

Cassandra

Mother, crown me with a victory wreath, and celebrate my
marriage to a king! Take me to him, and if I hesitate, force me.
For if Apollo told the truth, my marriage to Agamemnon, leader of
the Greeks, will be more painful to him than Helen's. I shall kill
Agamemnon, and destroy his home; he will pay in blood for what he
did to my brothers and father. I won't talk about the rest: I won't
sing about the ax at my throat, or the murder of the others, or the
agony of matricide that my marriage will set in motion, besides the
overthrow of the house of Atreus.

Now, mother, I shall show you how we are more fortunate than the
Greeks. I've been rambling, but I'll speak plainly now. They sent
thousands to their deaths for the sake of one woman, and one love
affair when they chased after Helen. Look at this clever general, who

destroyed what he loved most, for what was most hated; he gave up the pleasures of his children at home for the sake of his brother's wife who left home willingly: *she* was not raped. After they reached the shore of Scamander they died in droves, protecting neither their borders nor high-towered city. Those who died did not see their children, nor had they wives to bury them properly, and they lie in a foreign land. Same misery back home. Their wives die as widows, and the old men have no sons to take care of them, or when they die, to offer a sacrifice at their tombs. Should an army be praised for this? Better is silence for such shame: this suffering won't inspire my muse to song.

But the Trojans have the true glory, because they died for their country. When they fell by the sword, their loved ones took them home; they lie in their native soil's embrace, and they were buried by the hands of those that should have buried them. The Trojans who were not killed in battle came home each day to wife and children. No Greek had such pleasures.

Look at Hector, whose death was so painful for you. When he died, he was thought best of all the heroes. All this, the coming of the Greeks achieved; if they had stayed at home, no one would have seen his glory.

Paris too married Zeus's daughter, and if he hadn't, his marriage would not have been famous.

A wise man will avoid war, but if war comes, 400
it's best to die fighting for your city; not to do so
would be shameful.

So mother don't weep for your country or my marriage; This
marriage of mine will destroy our enemies.

Chorus

How lightly she laughs at her misery.
And sings of things that are still unseen.