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EDITH HALL

TRAGIC TEMPORALITIES
IN EURIPIDES' *TROJAN WOMEN*

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores the articulation and representation of time
in Euripides' *Trojan Women*, which is of the essence for our appreciation of
various aspects of the play, including its position in the trilogy, its dramatic
action as it develops under the pressure of time, its characters and their atti-
tude to temporality, and its reflection of the ephemerality of live theatre. Tem-
porality in *Trojan Women* develops a theme apparently present in, and even
central to, the previous plays of the trilogy: both *Alexander* and *Palamedes*
seem to foreground historical time as an agent of development and revelation
(of human character, of social conventions, or of cultural achievements, among
other things). In *Trojan Women* itself, dramatic time coincides with real per-
formance time but is complicated by the presence of several 'ticking clocks',
i.e., important events which are represented as imminent (e.g., the departure
of the Greek fleet, or the funeral rites for the murdered Astyanax) and create a
sense of accelerating velocity. Further, mythic time, including the early history
of humankind, is contradistinguished from human temporality as variously ex-
perienced by individual characters in what amounts to a visceral phenomeno-
logy of temporality, with the exception of Hecuba whose vision of temporality
extends beyond the personal. Finally, the paper makes a case for *Trojan Wo-
men* being a study on the ephemeral but memorable temporality of live theatre.

INTRODUCTION

*T**rojan Women* occupied a significant place in the ancient stage reper-
toire, at least to judge from Plutarch's account in his *Life of Pelopidas*
(39.4-6) of the cruel tyrant Alexander of Pherae's unexpected emotional re-
sponse to it.[1] It was very late to be rediscovered after the Renaissance, at
least in performance, a neglect reinforced by A.W. Schlegel's indictment on

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1. Hall (2007) 16-17.

the grounds of its supposed turgidity and disunity.[2] But the play has been central to the modern performance repertoire, at least since 1905, and its modern premiere; this was Harley Granville-Barker's politicised, anti-imperialist production of Gilbert Murray's translation in London.[3] The tragedy's powerful statement of the suffering undergone by women in times of war is so unparalleled that its aesthetic strangeness when considered in comparison with the other remaining thirty or so ancient Greek tragedies has often been overlooked.

One of its most distinctive features is the expression of the subjective experience and anticipated future of its chorus. At the end of the play, the women of Troy proceed to the ships to be separated not only from their menfolk's corpses and their enslaved children, but from each other. They are to be dispersed as a community that has represented their city and civilization and sent off to different places in the Greek world, in Thessaly, Attica, the Peloponnese, and Magna Graecia. This article argues that the representation of time in the play, related to the imminence of the separation of all the women and children of Troy, is crucial to its impact. Temporality is therefore considered here from five discrete but complementary perspectives: the group of plays with which *Trojan Women* was originally performed; Euripides' experiment with writing a real-time drama in which speed and tension mount against a series of 'ticking clocks'; and the individual characters' diverse attitudes to the past and future; the article concludes with a brief discussion of extra-dramatic temporalities in terms of the historical background of the original production, and the connection between the ephemeral nature of live theatre and the image of the annihilated Troy.

TRILOGIC TEMPORALITIES?

Since *Trojan Women* was the third and last tragedy in the group, and the preceding two plays had dramatized Trojan War stories, its temporality is related to the action and contexts of those tragedies. The first play, *Alexander*, had been set perhaps 15 years previously, when Alexander was twenty years old. He had come to Troy to compete in the games which Hecuba had set up in honour of the baby son she had given birth to twenty years previously and believed to be dead. In that play, according to the hypothe-

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2.   Schlegel (1846) 136.
3.   See Hall and Macintosh (2005) 508-11.

sis, Paris was victorious in running and the pentathlon, and also in another event, perhaps boxing, but

> he enraged Deiphobus and his companions who, realising that they had been worsted by a slave, called on Hecuba to kill him. When Alexander arrived, Cassandra became possessed and recognized him, and prophesied about what was going to happen; and Hecuba tried to kill him and was prevented. The man who had raised him arrived, and because of the danger (to Paris) was compelled to tell the truth. Thus Hecuba rediscovered her son.[4]

It is intriguing that the fragments of *Alexander*, despite being exiguous, mention time no fewer than three times, perhaps suggesting that this was a consistently prominent topic throughout all the plays in the group. Fragment 42 reads, simply, 'καὶ χρόνου προύβαινε πούς', 'and the foot of time moved on'. Someone (perhaps Priam) tells someone else (perhaps Alexander) that 'time will reveal' what sort of man he is (fr. 60). And in an ode the chorus of Trojan herdsmen go back in time all the way to the very creation of humans as organic natural beings (fr. 61b):

> Our talk will be idle if we sing the praises of human good birth. For long ago at the beginning, when we came into existence and mother earth produced distinct human beings, she made us all grow up with a similar appearance; we got no special feature. Well-born and low-born are a single breed, but time through convention has made the wellborn proud. Intelligence and understanding make nobility, and god bestows it, not wealth …[5]

Social class, they affirm, is a cultural construction that was invented long after physical humans came into organic being.

The second play, *Palamedes*, was set in the Greek camp at Troy at some point in the war, so in mythical time prior to *Trojan Women*. Since Palamedes may have tried to persuade the Greeks to return home in the play, they may have been at Troy for several years. *Palamedes* took the audience back to the beginnings of other cultural constructions, to Palamedes' invention of arithmetic and writing (T6, fr. 578). So, when Poseidon opens *Trojan Women* with the news that the Greeks have just taken Troy, the audience have been thinking for at least three hours about the history of mankind, the

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4.   *Alexander* T3, translated by Collard and Cropp (2008).
5.   Fragment 61b, translated by Collard and Cropp (2008).

causes of the war and the way it has proceeded. There has been much schol-
arly debate about whether we can call this group of tragedies a connected
trilogy,[6] but they do take place in the same location, with many of the same
cast, and they do follow each other sequentially in linear mythical time.

THE TICKING CLOCKS OF THEATRE IN REAL TIME

Most Greek tragic choruses are space defenders (like the choruses of Sopho-
cles' Theban plays); others are space invaders (Euripides' *Bacchae*) or tem-
porary or permanent visitors (the Oceanids in *Prometheus Bound*, Creusa's
Athenian women at Delphi in *Ion*). Some combine these roles, like the Er-
inyes in *Eumenides*, who begin as space invaders but are forced by Athe-
na to accept a new role as metic space defenders. In his escape tragedies
Iphigenia in Tauris and *Helen*, Euripides experimented with choruses of
Greek women, apparently drawn from varied Greek cities, who have come
together for a time in enforced exile and will be dispersed, happily, back to
their several true Greek homelands. But, exclusively in *Trojan Women* and
Hecuba, the choruses are displaced from their space and their members are
to be centrifugally scattered in different directions across an alien country.

   In *Hecuba* the Trojan women seem already to have been allocated to
their individual Greek masters and emerge from separate tents temporari-
ly erected on the Thracian Chersonese (98-103), in a pause on the voya-
ge to final separation and slavery in Greece; they do not fully understand
which master means which Greek location as yet, asking rhetorically where
in Greece they will end up (444-53). But in *Trojan Women* their situation is
on a knife-edge. Troy was defeated overnight, last night; all the women and
children have been rounded up. The children have been taken from their
mothers and, weeping at the gates, await allocation to separate Greek ships
(1089-93); the bereft women of the chorus emerge from tents where they,
too, are awaiting allocation to a Greek and embarkation on his ship. The
royal women emerge from their palace through the city walls and also await
allocation and embarkation.

   Euripides chooses a precise point in time — the final ninety minutes
before the chorus, already torn from their families, are physically sepa-
rated from their fellow Trojan women, thus having their last remaining
social bond broken. The action feels much more urgent than in *Hecuba*.

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6.   Koniaris (1973) 85-124.

Moreover, Euripides seems, unusually, to have taken care to make it feasible that the action represented in the play could correspond precisely to the time it takes to enact it. Nothing time-consuming happens after the gods' prologue except for Cassandra's strange scene, Andromache's entrance and departure, the Helen agon and the funeral rites for Astyanax: Priam and Polyxena had died before the play began and there is, for example, no offstage military confrontation or journey.

There is however certainly long enough, in real time, between the seizure of Astyanax at 789 and his return as a corpse at 1123, for an infant to be carried up to the top of a wall, thrown off it, and quickly washed in the Scamander by Talthybius; in the period while this is assumed to have happened, Hecuba recites anapaests, and the chorus sing two substantial stasima, book-ending Hecuba's wordy altercations with both Menelaus and Helen. And time even seems to slow down in the acrimonious debate with Helen. As Menelaus points out, granting Hecuba's wish, by letting Helen have her say and Hecuba respond to her, requires a leisurely approach to time (σχολῆς τὸ δῶρον, 911); this seems to be an echo of someone, probably Agamemnon, saying in the trial of Palamedes in the previous tragedy that he has only now found the free time to interrogate the defendant (fr. 579, πάλαι πάλαι δή σ᾽ ἐξερωτῆσαι θέλων, / σχολή μ᾽ ἀπεῖργε).

The minimalist actions of *Trojan Women* take place against what film theorists call the 'ticking clock', which enhances the effect of plays and movies designed to be acted, or actually filmed, in 'real time': the action of *Trojan Women* is represented as an uninterrupted stream, with no syncopations or jumps backwards or forwards except in the form of articulated memories; this structure is similar to those of movies such as Stanley Kramer's *High Noon* (1952), John Badham's *Nick of Time* (1995) or Sam Mendes' World War I movie *1917* (2019); Mendes' film not only depicts real-time action but also gives the impression of having been filmed in one continuous shot, as theatre actors must perform seamlessly, thus escalating the tension considerably.

Poseidon states in his opening speech that the Greeks only await a favouring wind before their ships can sail away (19-20); the screams of the captive Trojan women can be heard as they are being allocated (κληρουμένων, present participle) *right now* (28-31). Some are going to Arcadia, Thessaly and Athens. The royal women await allocation. When Poseidon has agreed with Athena to inflict a storm on the fleet as soon as it sails, he tells her to go to Olympus to borrow Zeus's lightning bolts, and wait expectantly for the precise moment when the Argive taskforce slips its cables

(93-4, *καραδόκει, / ὅταν στράτευμ' Ἀργεῖον ἐξιῇ κάλως*). Like the gods, we now watch events unfold in real time, waiting in anticipation for a wind and those ships to sail.

Cassandra knows that the wind is imminent: 'You would not be premature in looking out for the wind in the sails' (456). Yet, at 882-83, Menelaus says that they are still waiting for the right wind; the ticking clock of the change in the wind, which we perhaps imagine Poseidon rushing to bring into effect offstage, continues all the way through to line 1123. This is when Talthybius arrives with Astyanax's corpse and says that Neoptolemus has already set sail with Andromache. The women need to perform the funeral rites and bury the body with all speed: his orders stress the urgency (1147-50):

> When you have adorned the corpse,
> we for our part will cover it with earth before we set sail.
> Carry out your instructions as fast as possible (*ὡς τάχιστα*).

He has saved Hecuba time by washing the corpse and cleansing the wounds. Now he will go and dig the grave *while* she performs the rites, precisely so that they can make all speed to set sail (1155, *ὁρμήσῃ πλάτην*). The entire funeral episode is thus enacted against a second ticking clock — the remaining Greeks, perhaps even Odysseus, could turn up any time to stop the ceremony and prevent the burial, as Talthybius has explicitly warned (735-36).

The third ticking clock is set off immediately after Hecuba finishes the funeral. Euripides even makes her offer a psychologically plausible explanation for why the ceremony has been so brief: she says that it makes no difference to the dead how elaborate the obsequies are or are not (1248-50). But as soon as the corpse has been removed by Talthybius' attendants, this herald gives the women one last temporal ultimatum — they will imminently hear the trumpet summoning them to the ships, and Hecuba is to be taken off immediately (1265-71). It is therefore under even more intense pressure of time that they perform their last dirge together, the final lament for Troy, as the flames engulf its buildings. Hecuba realizes that this command means that she must say her goodbyes at great speed: 'so come, aged foot, hurry with difficulty (*ἐπίσπευσον μόλις*, 1275) to bid farewell to your unlucky town'. She suggests *running* into the fire (*φέρ' ἐς πυρὰν δράμωμεν*, 1282). In response, Talthybius tells his men to waste no time in taking her off to Odysseus (*ἀλλ' ἄγετε, μὴ φείδεσθ'*, 1285).

The acceleration of the very brief antiphonal dirge she succeeds in leading from 1287 is underpinned by the increasingly short phrases she exchanges with the chorus, and the dissolution of their utterances into jagged antilabe; just thirty-seven very short lines later, Hecuba hears something (ἐμάθετ᾽, ἐκλύετε; 1325), which must mean the trumpet has sounded, although the chorus' response in antilabe suggests that what they hear loudest is the crashing of buildings as they collapse. The play now ends abruptly, with Hecuba and the women directing one another to move towards the ships and their lives in slavery (1328-32).

Much as in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, which, since Coleridge, has been regarded as moving at a headlong speed which differentiates it from his other tragedies,[7] in *Trojan Women* the sense of haste and accelerating velocity is reinforced by a rich vocabulary related to tempo and swift physical movement. Hecuba is aware from the beginning that the Greek oarsmen are already (ἤδη) busying their hands at the ships in preparation for departure (160-61). The chorus, a little later, ask whether these sailors have already (ἤδη) got to the point where they are actually lifting the oars from the sterns to start rowing (180-81), and whether any herald has yet (ἤδη) come from the Greeks with orders (184). Talthybius spends the entire play dashing around trying to keep up the momentum that will secure the whole fleet's swift departure. When the chorus see him approaching, they say he is striding at a swift pace (στείχει ταχύπουν ἴχνος ἐξανύτων) to bring news (230-32). The speed at which their fates are to be decided contrasts with the many long, painful years of the war: Menelaus later articulates this strange type of contrast when he orders Helen to go off to be stoned, compensating for the 'long travails' of the Greeks with a death that will be almost instantaneous (πόνους τ᾽ Ἀχαιῶν ἀπόδος ἐν σμικρῷ μακρούς / θανοῦσ᾽, 1040-41). Hecuba says that the arrival of Talthybius is what she has 'long feared' (ὁ φόβος ἦν πάλαι, 239), an ambiguous wording that could mean either that she has been afraid of enslavement for many years, or for the whole of this dreadful morning: it could represent her emotional state ever since Alexander's birth, thus reprising her experience across the time encompassed by all three tragedies, or merely since she was arrested the night before.

Talthybius is in a terrible hurry to take Cassandra to her new master Agamemnon, and tells Hecuba's attendants to fetch her 'as fast as possible' (ὅσον τάχιστα, 296); Cassandra feels an equally urgent need to get on with her 'marriage' to and death alongside the conquering Greek (στεῖχ᾽ ὅπως

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7.   Coleridge (1836–1839) vol. 2, 235; Marchitello (2013) 425-48.

τάχιστ᾽, 445); as she tears off her priestly insignia, casts them to the swift-ly rushing winds (θοαῖς αὔραις, 455). Talthybius urges Hecuba to get on with Astyanax's funeral because Andromache has already departed on ac-count of the hurry which Neoptolemus was in (τὸ δεσπότου τάχος, 1145). As we have seen, even at the very end, the herald is ordering his henchmen to make no delay in leading Hecuba away (1285), while, as the chorus sing, the remaining Trojan houses are being destroyed by fire and spear with fu-rious haste (1300-1):

> μαλερὰ μέλαθρα πυρὶ κατάδρομα
> δαΐῳ τε λόγχᾳ.

INDIVIDUAL TEMPORALITIES

In the first two sentences of his prologue, Poseidon establishes crucial tem-poral facts. In divine time, he has come from the depths of the Aegean, where Nereids always have and always will dance, an iterative or infinite practice marked by a 'universalising' present (ἐξελίσσουσιν, 3).[8] In human time, conversely, Poseidon himself and Apollo once built Troy, sever-al generations ago (the aorist ἔθεμεν, 6); it has just been conquered and destroyed (the perfect ὄλωλε, 9). The significant act resulting in this was Epeius' construction of the Trojan Horse, which *shall be* so labelled by men in the future (κεκλήσεται, 13). The destruction must have happened very recently indeed, since Priam 'has collapsed' in the perfect tense (πέ-πτωκε, 17) and died.

     The chorus are the main mouthpiece for the history of Troy. After the Cassandra scene, they put into exquisite lyrics their subjective experience of the night before, in a detailed account of the Trojans' joyful reception of the Trojan Horse, and the music and dances while it was installed in Athena's precinct. But then murderous shouting began to be heard, chil-dren clutched their mothers' skirts, and the Greeks initiated their slaugh-ter around the altars; the women were taken captive (511-67). In their great central stasimon, after Astyanax has been taken away to his death, they move far back in time to tell of the earlier sacking of Troy, in Laome-don's day, by Heracles and Telamon (799-819). They also address Gany-mede, Laomedon's son, stepping on Olympus as he fills Zeus' wine-cups

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8.   See Emde Boas, Rijksbaron, Huitink and Bakker (2017) 412, §§ 33.15-16.

(820-39); they allude to Dawn's love for Laomedon's other son, Tithonus (840-56), and the children he sired on her. In their final stasimon, they recall in particular the Trojans' repeated ritual sacrifices and choruses in honour of Zeus, both in his Trojan temple and on Ida, as well as the monthly festivals at the time of the full moon that had taken place, it is implied, repeatedly and at absolutely regular intervals, for the entire length of the city's existence (1060-76).

The individual human characters, however, all seem to live in their own temporal worlds, preoccupied with particular periods or patterns of experiences in the past, or hypothetical futures. The three individual women with whom Hecuba interacts experience time in different ways. Cassandra reprises the history of the war, showing that the Trojans, fighting for the homeland and living and dying in close contact with their loved ones, were in fact more fortunate than the Greeks (365-99). But she is far more focused on the future, gleefully anticipating how her union with Agamemnon will lead to his death, and in a strange *praeteritio* reprising the plot of much of the *Oresteia*, 'I shall not sing of the axe that will enter my neck and that of others, or the matricidal struggles my marriage shall bring about, or the ruin of the house of Atreus' (359-64). She predicts Hecuba's death in her own homeland, and offers a compressed version of the *Odyssey* to outline the hated Ithacan's next ten years (429-40), before returning to the violent fates soon to be met by herself and Agamemnon (445-61).

Andromache's temporal preoccupation is with the period of her marriage; her limited thoughts go no further back than the day she married Hector as a virgin bride, practised all the wifely virtues, and gave birth to and nursed Astyanax (650-56, 675-76, 745-48, 757-60). Her concern for the future is also limited, to the question of how to conduct herself, in a new marriage with a new husband, without being disloyal to Hector's memory.

Helen is preoccupied with time only as it affects the story of her and the men in her life and her attempt to secure her future as Queen in Sparta (an attempt which ancient and modern audiences know from the *Odyssey* was successful). At the beginning of her oration, Helen traces the origins of the war to the birth of Alexander, for which she claims Hecuba must take responsibility, and Priam's failure to have the baby killed (991-93). These allusions take the audience back more than three decades in mythical time, and around three hours in dramatic time, since these events had been central to the first play of the group, *Alexander*. Both Helen and Hecuba recognize the significance of the Judgement of Paris, and the abduction or elopement of Helen from Sparta; these events, too, are likely to have been

predicted by Cassandra in the *Alexander*. But these mutual enemies also both still feel, viscerally, the events of the last ten years, during which the women have been confined together within Troy; they squabble over the details of Helen's behaviour after the death of Paris (951-65, 1002-21).

Hecuba, however, in the course of the play ranges far and wide over her personal history and speculative future. Early in her opening anapaests, as she awaits embarkation on a Greek ship, she imagines the Greek fleet when it first set sail across the Aegean to recover the hated Spartan wife of Menelaus (122-37). But she repeatedly delves further back in time, telling us that she was both born and married into royal houses, that she produced numerous fine children, that her sons and husband have been killed by the Greeks, that her daughters have been taken from her; she envisages her own future, in which she can now expect nothing but humiliation as an aged slave: she pictures herself keeping the keys to doors, looking after children, making bread, and sleeping on the floor in rags (193-94, 474-99). But she also allows herself to imagine less painful futures: before Astyanax's death is decreed, she visualizes men born of his lineage, one day in the future, returning from Greece to re-establish Troy (701-6). After his death, she indulges in tantalizingly regretful fantasies of impossible futures — Astyanax growing to manhood safely in Troy, marrying, assuming the throne and even dying a glorious death in battle (1167-69, see also 1218-19), as well as burying her and laying his shorn locks in her tomb in company with his agemates as he speaks loving words of farewell to his grandmother (1182-85). She has intensely sensual memories of her grandson and son; she recalls embracing the baby and sleeping alongside him (1187-88); she remembers Hector dripping sweat onto his shield as he pressed his little son against his chin (1196-99).

But Hecuba knows her ancient history of Troy, as well; in a grim reference to the building of Troy by Apollo, which Poseidon had mentioned early in the prologue (see above), and to which the chorus have briefly alluded (813-14), she laments that the walls of Troy, fortifications Apollo built, have sliced the curly hair from the infant's head, which she so often kissed (1173-76). In the final dirge, Hecuba traces Troy's origins further back than any other voice in the play, all the way to Dardanus, son of Cronos, Ur-ancestor of the Phrygian people: she demands to know whether he is witness to his descendants' unworthy sufferings (1288-90). Hecuba is the repository of the entire history of Troy as well as one of the principal victims of its downfall.

EXTRA-DRAMATIC TEMPORALITIES

Unlike Poseidon and Athena, who after Poseidon's first two sentences seem temporally focused exclusively on the immediate past (the sacrileges of the night before) and its punishment (the storm to follow within hours), the audience have their own external experiences which they will bring to the action. It was in the later fifth century, the period in which Euripides wrote *Trojan Women*, that passages in Herodotus and Aristophanes suggest that the Athenians became more time-aware, because they introduced the division of the day into twelve parts along the lines of Babylonian time-keeping (see especially Herodotus 2.109).[9] In terms of recent historical time, I have argued elsewhere that the widely assumed belief that Euripides was complaining about the Athenian treatment of Melos in the winter of 416/415 is mistaken. It is not just, as van Erp Taalman-Kip has shown, that Euripides would need to have rewritten *Trojan Women* implausibly fast, on the hoof, in the weeks immediately preceding the Dionysia, if he were really to have been anxious to draw a connection between affairs in Troy and the execution of the Melian men and the enslavement of the Melian women and children.[10] It is more important that the tormented women whom we are watching fear, far less than going to Arcadia, Thessaly or Athens, the fate of being allocated to the forces of the Spartan Atridae. And the malefactors discussed in the play, with the exception of Odysseus, are clearly delineated as Spartans. Athenians are carefully written out of agency in the lives of the women, including the chorus members, whom we are watching, and the very specifically *Spartan* origins of all the aggression and bad behaviour are repeatedly stated by the oppressed and suffering side.[11]

The only reason we think that *Trojan Women* is a passionate protest against *Athenian* war crimes is that Gilbert Murray told us so in *Euripides and his Age* (1913).[12] And the reason Murray chooses to propose that the Athenians watching the play had uneasy consciences, rather than point to the Euripidean stress on the Spartan provenance of the war criminals, was autobiographical: when he translated the play, and it was performed from 1905 onwards, he had been protesting against British war crimes against

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9. Remijsen (2021).
10. Erp Taalman Kip (1987).
11. Hall (2018).
12. Murray (1913) 126-32.

Boer women and children in South Africa.[13] I am not saying that *nobody* in Euripides' audience thought of Melos. But I am certain that just as many will have thought of, for example, the Argive town of Hysiai (Thucydides 5.83.2). The Spartans marched against Argos in the winter of 418-417 and failed to take it, but instead took Hysiai, captured all its free men, and subsequently killed them.

The original audience knew that, besides Helen, Andromache (despite her own personal limited temporal outlook) is the only woman in the play who will enjoy an extended and high-status future. We have no date for Euripides' *Andromache*, but an ancient piece of testimony (a scholion on line 445) suggests that it was performed in the 420s and not originally in Athens. The most probable venue was the court of the northern kingdom of Molossia at Epirus.[14] At the end of the play, the goddess Thetis announces that Andromache's child (called Molossos in the ancient cast list) will go to Molossia and there found a dynasty of kings (Eur. *Andr.* 1247-48). In the 420s the ruling member of that dynasty was the young king Tharyps, who was keen to 'Hellenise' his semi-barbarian country and came to Athens for an education, where he was granted citizenship.[15] It seems to me probable that *Andromache* was intended to pay Tharyps a theatrical compliment. For it enacts a myth which bestows upon him a genealogy going back not only to one of the greatest Greek heroic lineages —Peleus, his son Achilles and his grandson Neoptolemus— but also, through Neoptolemus' 'inter-ethnic' union with Andromache, to the royal house of Troy. Andromache is the key figure in the play who transcends time in a future direction to offer the fifth-century Athenians a genealogical link to their own military alliances.

Euripides' *Trojan Women*, therefore, hurtles its audience through an emergency in enacting about an hour and a half of continuous real-time action against three 'ticking clocks' — the change of wind, getting Astyanax buried before the Greek overlords notice, and the trumpet that signals the final embarkations. Along with the other two trojan War plays of 415 BCE, of which it serves as the culmination, it took the audience all the way back to the biological origins of the human race, the invention of social class, the Ur-ancestor of the Trojans, Cronos' son Dardanus, the building of Troy for Laomedon by Apollo and Poseidon, the earlier sack of the city by Telamon and Heracles, the abductions of Ganymede and Tithonus, the marriage of

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13. See Hall and Macintosh (2005) 508-11.
14. Long ago suggested by W. Schmid in Christ, Stählin and Schmid (1908) 343.
15. See Hall (1989) 181-82 and nn. 70, 74.

Hecuba and Priam, the birth and exposure of Paris, his triumphal return to Troy, his judging of the competition between the goddesses, and fateful visit to Sparta followed by Helen's arrival in Troy. The audience is reminded of the Greek fleet's voyage to Troy, Andromache's wedding to Hector, and the birth and infancy of Astyanax. Events during the war on both sides including the persecution of Palamedes are recalled; in *Trojan Women*, the terrifying events of the previous day and night dominate the traumatized women's consciousness almost as much as their fears for their immediate future. Yet, finally, *Trojan Women* also encourages its audience to think about the temporality inherent in the aesthetics of live theatre.

In the destruction of Troy, but Hecuba's conviction that her city will always be remembered, we have a metaphor for both the ephemerality of live theatre and the indelible marks it can make on our memory. I wish we had the rest of the chorus of *Palamedes* where the Greek soldiers sing about the celebrations of Dionysus and the Mother on Mount Ida (fr. 586); this might have offered a deeper sense of what these Trojan plays have to say about the ontological status of theatre. There is something distinctive about the immanent presence of live performance in the memory. It may be an ephemeral art, but a compelling theatrical experience can leave a deeper impression on the memory than the printed word or painted image.

In 1843 Søren Kierkegaard published *Either/Or*, in which theatre provides a paradigm of the aesthetic consciousness which enters the sphere of the existential. Kierkegaard philosophically legitimises the notions of the selectivity of memory, the aesthetic categories by which it prioritises types of experience, and in particular the cognitive and emotional power of performed language and music (in his case, Mozartian opera). He believed that there is a difference in the experience of theatre between physical and mental time. For Kierkegaard, the immediacy of 'the Moment' of apprehension of a performance transcends time, for the images it leaves on the mind are indelible. The moment of performance ideally gains its emotive force from the 'immanent acceleration' in the representation as well as its sensual wholeness, grounded in the material instantiation of the characters and events. This moment is in one sense lost forever, but even its details can also be held in the consciousness until death.[16] Ibsen was influenced by this argument when he makes the eponymous hero of his *Brand* (1885) observe at the end of Act IV that 'Only what is lost can be possessed for ever.'[17]

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16. Kierkegaard (1987) 42, 68, 117-18, 239, 486-87; Pattinson (1992) 95-124.
17. Translation taken from Ibsen (1972) 194.

Hecuba puts it only slightly differently: if god had not overthrown Troy, the Trojans would vanish, and not become the subject of song for mortals of later time (1243-45):

> εἰ δὲ μὴ θεὸς
> ἔστρεψε τἄνω περιβαλὼν κάτω χθονός,
> ἀφανεῖς ἂν ὄντες οὐκ ἂν ὑμνήθημεν ἂν
> μούσαις ἀοιδὰς δόντες ὑστέρων βροτῶν.

Troy's physical vanishing point, the moment of its material termination, paradoxically secures it an infinite existence in the psychic space of human memory, just like the theatrical medium in which the city's long history and brutal fate have just been so painfully been enacted.

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DURHAM UNIVERSITY
edith.hall@durham.ac.uk

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