

# The Trojan Woman - a memorable anti-war film

By JAN MARONTATE

The Trojan Women is a revolutionary pacifist drama conceived in the womb of a war-crazed nation. No, it's not a new American script but rather a classical Greek drama written by Euripides after the Athenian forces attacked the island of Melos in 414 B.C.

The director, Michael Cacoyannis, remains faithful to the spirit of the great Greek tragedy. The setting is Troy, devastated by the Greek attack which reclaimed Helen. Only women and one child are left alive. The women, vulnerable and trapped trophies of war, do not grovel at the feet of their conquerors but are exemplars of strong willed pacifism. Cacoyannis uses a crowd of women with striking faces as a chorus to set off Hecuba, played by Katherine

Hepburn.

Only Helen, sensuously portrayed by Irene Papas, sells herself to slavery. The rest, led by Hecuba, fight the temptation towards violent revenge and come to realize that victors and vanquished are both senselessly oppressed by war.

The plight of Cassandra (Genevieve Bujold) mad with images of the murderous war, and of Andromache (Vanessa Redgrave) robbed of her child, add substance to the plot. But generally it is a lamentation with little action to break the tension of human despair. It occurs on a hillside outside Troy. The film's beginning is dramatic, with quick flashes of hurrying troops with torches at night and prisoners, which are frozen into black and white stills. The camera work is

consistently excellent. The only moments during which one might wish for more visual variety occur during Hecuba's monologues, when the camera centers unblinkingly on Hepburn's face. This difficulty probably stems from Cacoyannis' close adherence to the original script; he seldom adds dramatic action which is not directly implied by the dialogue.

The sets and costumes create a beautiful and realistic portrayal of ancient Greece. The score, by Mikos Theodorakis, is striking and innovative, employing drums, sitar and occasional electronic sounds well. Occasionally the music seems a little obtrusive or unnecessary; the action scenes in the movie are so well constructed that music is not really needed to heighten emotion.



Katharine Hepburn as Queen Hecuba in The Trojan Woman

Being the adventures of a young man whose principal interests are rape, ultra-violence and Beethoven.



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### "EURIPIDES, WITH TEARS IN ONE'S EYES..." By Eugène Ionesco

"I have just seen 'The Trojan Women', the new Michael Cacoyannis film. The tragic grandeur of Euripides is rendered to the full both pictorially and vocally.

How many directors have gone ahead and demolished the greatest monuments in literature, in dramatic art, in order to 'modernize' them according to their own poor taste. Cacoyannis does not cheat. By being true to Euripides what he shows us, what he makes us understand is the most actual of humanity's tragedies... the most contemporary, the most true of our past and most permanently real.

The film is harsh, simple, true. Cacoyannis leaves the word to Euripides, the text grips us with the same force as the sublime beauty of the images, stark, violent against the nudity of the landscape. It all leaps into our eyes and the greatness of the work invades us, the evidence of our tragic existence is revealed to us, clearly, from the beginning right through to the end.

That our existence should be tragic, that the war that man wages against man should be part of our destiny and at the same time that this eternal tragedy should be so great, is the paradoxical comfort that we draw from watching this film. I came out a happy man."

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