An analysis of modern adaptations of Euripides' *Medea* and *Trojan Women*

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate contemporary versions of *Medea* and *Trojan Women* and to make comparisons and contrasts between the various productions. Data for this study was gathered with the help of the APGRD and the National Theatre archive.

In the first chapter the main focus is on two performances which I viewed live: Headlong's *Medea* written and directed by Mike Bartlett and AOD's *Medea* adapted by David Stuttard. These productions have contemporary settings and manipulate the original considerably. Headlong created a domestic drama which lacked the historical background found in Euripides. AOD created an aerial piece of theatre as they wanted to especially focus on the relationships found in the tragedy and the connections which are either created or lost as the narrative progresses.

In the second chapter the main focus is on two performances which I viewed live and through a professional recording: National Theatre's *Women of* Troy adapted by Don Taylor and a new version written by Caroline Bird. These adaptations have many contrasting features. Mitchell created a generic war scene in which we see upper class women in a trance dealing with their setting in a loading bay at a dock. Bird's version was intimately horrific as it was staged at a women and baby unit of a prison. She modernised the chorus to one pregnant lady and gives Talthybius an AK47.

This study shows the extent to which these ancient tragedies can be altered to still have relevance over 2,500 years later. This thesis hopes to demonstrate that the reception of ancient tragedy both in scholarship and on the stage is essential for the survival of these plays.

Contents

Euripides- A 21st-century Playwright?

Reception studies are often described as a sub-discipline of Classics. Its existence in the 21st-century as a separate discipline stems from a more explicit acknowledgement than in the past of the fact that even those scholars who profess only to focus on the ancient world itself, will have been influenced by its reception in previous generations. As Porter articulates it 'our sense of the past is shaped by *its* sense of its own past'.[1]

Some scholars still profess not to be influenced by reception studies and assert that they only study the so-called 'primary texts'. But these primary texts can also be characterised as secondary, since they are transmitted to us through the process of ancient reception

Thus any analysis of an ancient play will necessarily involve the history of its reception and translation and adaptation for the stage.[2] For instance, the Penguin translations of Vellacott (*Medea)* or Rutherford (*Trojan Women)* cannot be used as play scripts as they are not written for that purpose, but in order to convey Euripides' words as closely as possible in English. Playwrights or scriptwriters often base their 'versions' on such scholarly translations- especially when they do not know Greek, in order to create speakable and performable plays as Hardwick suggests.[3] The study of the performance of any play on the modern stage therefore involves the study of its 'tradition of recomposition in performance'.[4]

The rise of Reception studies has also led to the development of the specific area of the study of ancient drama in performance.[5] The rise of this type of study coincides with the opening of archives such as the APGRD in 1996, which allows scholars to access past recordings and reviews of influential productions.

[1] Porter 2006:19. See Kristeller 1961; Bolgar 1958; Jenkyns 1992.
[2] Mastronade 2010:1.
[3] Hardwick 2003:61.
[4] Kelly 2012:3.
[5] See Wiles 2000; Hall and Macintosh and Taplin 2000; Hall and Macintosh and Wrigley 2004.

However it was not only the APGRD, which was a turning point in this discipline because in 1997 *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy* was published with a chapter addressing Reception.[6] This addition demonstrated the inclusion of reception as a justified field of scholarship within ancient drama. Then in 2005 Blackwell Publishing released their *Companion to Greek Tragedy*[7] with an even larger reception section than the Cambridge companion, firmly establishing the significance of reception as a part of understanding Greek tragedy. Publications and research projects focussing on ancient plays in performance have since then become a strong trend in classical studies.[8]

In the study of ancient drama in modern performance '"faithfulness" to a unified interpretation of an ancient text is no longer a defining criterion', as Hardwick explains.[9] Instead, the focus is now on 'investigating the *nature* of the relationship between ancient and modern, and between these and other mediating texts and contexts'.[10] At the same time theatrical practice has progressed from repetition or preservation of the past to creating original pieces of theatre.

One of the problems facing the sub-discipline of the study of classical drama in modern performance is the move away from 'primary sources' which Hardwick suggests are being 'augmented by the use of the theatrical review and the interview'.[11] These sources offer a biased view of the production as they are not intended only for students of Euripides, but for a certain target audience.[12] With this in mind it is key to note that 'the review has to be subject to an evaluation which draws out its context and purpose, examines its language and style, and

[6] Easterling 1997c:211-227, Burian 1997:228-283, Macintosh 1997:284-323, Goldhill 1997:324-347.
[7] Kovacs 2005:379-393, Halliwell 2005:394-412, Panoussi 2005:413-427, Di Maria 2005:428-443, Henrichs 2005:444-458, Lada-Richards 2005:459-471, Altena 2005:472-489, Woodruff 2005:490-504.
[8] See Hall, Macintosh and Taplin 2000; Wiles 2000; Goldhill 2007.
[9] Hardwick 2003:112.
[10] Hardwick 2003:112.
[11] Hardwick 2003:53.
[12] See L. Hardwick, 'The Theatrical Review as a Primary Source for the Modern Reception of Greek Drama -a preliminary evaluation' at http://www2.open.ac.uk/ClassicalStudies/GreekPlays/essays/Reviews.html (accessed 26/06/14)

considers other types of evidence which can be used to check and complement it'.[13] For this reason I will sparingly use certain reviews and focus more on a script comparison and professional video recordings of the plays which I have not been present at.

To conclude with a statement from Hardwick: 'this mapping of the commonalities and differences between ancient plays and their modern analogues is an essential pre-requisite to evaluative judgements about the receptions and their cultural impact'.[14] In this dissertation I will be focusing on only two plays of Euripides so that an in-depth analysis can be made about particular performances.

Why *Medea* and *Trojan Women*?

The selection of these tragedies came from the focus on female protagonists and the affinity towards the female experience. These two plays lend themselves, because of the strong involvement of women, to feminist groups re-interpreting them. For productions of *Medea* this can be a particular problem as we shall see as her actions are very extreme and she can appear manipulative.[15] *Trojan Women,* on the other hand, comes into its own as a treatment of women's experience of war. In many African countries such as the Congo, Sudan and Rwanda, the theme of women in war has real connotations in the late 20th and 21st century, which is why this play resonates so effectively on the modern stage.[16] The theatrical story played out in *Trojan Women* is an every-day reality for millions of women, in war-zones, who are raped and separated from their children.

[13] L. Hardwick, 'The Theatrical Review as a Primary Source for the Modern Reception of Greek Drama - a preliminary evaluation' at http://www2.open.ac.uk/ClassicalStudies/GreekPlays/essays/Reviews.html (accessed 26/06/14).
[14] Hardwick 2003:70.
[15] See for example Rehm 1994:100.
[16] For African countries see Buss, Lebert, Rutherford, Sharkey and Aginam 2014. For Congo see Baaz and Stern 2013; Rittner and Roth 2012; Kirchner 2008. For Rwanda see Burnet 2012. See Baaz and Stern 2013:1-2 on sexual violence in armed conflict.

In this dissertation, I will analyse aspects of the interpretation and staging of the two plays, focussing on two or three specific productions, after outlining a selective 20th-century performance history for each play. The productions I have chosen to analyse in depth are, for *Medea*, the 2013 aerial production which I saw by the Actors of Dionysus and Headlong's domestic version of *Medea*, seen performed at Warwick Arts Centre in November 2012. For *Trojan Women*, I will be analysing Katie Mitchell's production *Women of Troy* at the Lyttelton Theatre in November 2007 (recording viewed at the NT Archives) and Caroline Bird's production seen at the Gate Theatre in November 2012. These have been selected again for contrasting purpose, both in set and style.

Chapter 1: Medea

1.1 Examples of Performance in late 20th century.

Medea suggests a very wide range of possible interpretations; I will begin by outlining some of the unusual and controversial ways that Medea has been portrayed on the modern stage. Firstly, I would like to consider *Medea: A Sex war Opera,* (directed by Tony Harrison, 1991) which appropriately 'begins with two processions one of marriage and one of execution'.[17] It is vividly described on the Volcano Theatre website as 'a ferocious, blood-sweating sex-war ritual exploring the creation of myth and the bastardisation of the character of Medea as a barbarian princess and infanticidal bitch'.[18] This production combines the play with ideas from the SCUM (Society for cutting up men) Manifesto written by Valerie Solanas in 1967 during the second-wave of feminism; 'the objective "to overthrow the government, eliminate the money system, institute complete automation and destroy the male sex"'.[19] McDonald believes

[17] McDonald 1992:122.
[18] http://www.volcanotheatre.co.uk/304/past-productions/medea-sexwar.html (accessed 18/1/14).
[19] Volcano theatre company programme.

that in *Medea: A Sex war Opera* Harrison 'uses the myth of Medea as a focus of male fears, and we see her punished as a scapegoat for all threatening mothers, wives and women in general'.[20]

Throughout Euripides' original Medea is constantly placing herself above men; we see this particularly in her most famous line 'I'd rather stand three times in the front line than bear one child'.[21](249-250) It is lines such as these which attract radical movement groups such as those who believed in the SCUM Manifesto, to seek revenge for Medea in the 21st century. It is easy to find a speech which Medea delivers that a feminist group could not support, almost all of her lines are anti-men or manipulative of men. Robert Hanks suggested Harrison's reasoning for producing the play was because 'other versions of the story, the Cherubini among them, have made Jason far more a square-jawed, clean-cut hero, Medea far more a Wicked Witch of the East figure, who ends up being burned alive as punishment instead of flying off with her dragons. These are the versions that Tony Harrison attacked in his brashly titled *Medea: A Sex-War* Opera'.[22]

Harrison's version may gain authority compared to some other playwrights, because he 'works directly from the original languages'.[23] However, it is difficult to know whether what Harrison achieved was too radical, for instance in the hints at cross-dressing, suggested by one reviewer ('the four-strong cast thump about in metallic lycra, PVC, leather and huge false eyelashes').[24] Harrison's ending differs markedly from the Euripidean original, by having Medea executed. Constant comparison to Herakles' murder of his children emphasised the feminist agenda of the production.

This is most clearly emphasised in the finale, where a headline from the *Sun* is projected reading 'A FATHER CUTS HIS 4 KIDS' THROATS'.

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[20] McDonald 1992:115.
[21] All English citations and line numbers for Euripides' *Medea* are taken from Vellacott 1963.
[22] http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/medea-the-fatal-attraction-1305049.html (accessed 19/1/14)
[23] Hardwick 2009:171.
[24] Suzi Feay *Time out*, 8 May 1991.

Next in this performance history is Yukio Ninagawa's production of Euripides' *Medea* which was intermittently performed from 1983-1999. For this section I will be heavily relying on the article written by Mae Smethurst.[25] The traditional Japanese theatre style has many parallels with the ancient Greek performance but with some revealing differences. The specific style is called Kabuki which is a combination of the words for 'song' and 'dance'.[26] Because of this similarity to ancient theatre Kabuki is an excellent choice for productions which approximate the vision of Euripides: Kabuki includes masks, singing and dancing, and the use of male actors for female roles- in all these aspects then it is a very clear approximation of ancient theatrical techniques. Western theatre, by contrast, has been dominated by realist traditions, which emphasise characterisation above all else. By contrast, in ancient theatre as Davidson suggests 'the audience never saw the face of the performers, and so facial expression as an enhancement of performance was out of the question'.[27]

It is also a custom in traditional Japanese theatre for men to play the female roles much like it was in the times of Euripides. So, in Ninagawa's production the costumes were an essential part in transforming the male actor into Medea and both the outfits and the make-up play a visual part in the changing moods of Medea. Throughout the performance the character of Medea removes 'several layers of robe, including the attached breasts that had marked Medea's sexuality, this elaborate costume is a visible sign of how restrained Medea has been within her female trappings'.[28] The costume is vivid, much like her make-up which is a painted white face with black lips with strange rows of beads under her eyes named 'tear-beads'.[29] Her face is framed with a blood-red veil. 'The result is a face capable of projecting intense emotions

[25] See Smethurst 2002.
[26] See Fujita and Shapiro 2006; Ernst 1974; Toshio 1971.
[27] Davidson 2005:204.
[28] Smethurst 2002:22. See the description of the costume in Fernau Hall *Daily Telegraph* 25 August 1986 ('enormous cylindrical headdress with silver plaques, a voluminous robe, and large bare breasts… Medea transforms herself into a witch, tearing off her headdress, robe and breasts and appearing in a simple red robe')
[29] Wiles 2000:156.

with great power and ritualistic mystery'.[30] This mask-like makeup was very specific to this particular Medea however the ancient masks 'created representative human beings rather than individuals with facial idiosyncrasies'.[31] So, Ninagawa stayed faithful in using mask-like make-up but added a modern Japanese twist with the facial features added. Nevertheless, Wiles believes that the masking techniques used here 'made it possible for the actor's throbbing hands to interact with the centre of energy in the torso, where we might imagine the thumos to be located'.[32] It would seem that due to the face being covered, the body has to over-emphasize the turmoil of the character, creating a more animated performance. 'One imagines expressions of grief and jubilation to have been accompanied by appropriate gestures on a grand scale'.[33]

I think all of these concepts may emphasise the original idea of Medea as a barbarian, highlighting her difference from the other characters, and perhaps through all of Hira's layers there is also hint to the layers found in Medea's character. She had to be striking and bold as her final act has to be represented in who she was as a person physically. A meek, small, defenceless woman would look incredibly strange butchering her only sons, this characterisation would detract from the devastating action that she must perform. So therefore, throughout the play she must come across as powerful, different and dark- the make-up and costuming achieve this perfectly in Ninagawa's production.

Another aspect worth commenting on is the role of the children in this production. The two boys are present in Euripides as the nurse directly addresses them 'children, do you hear what sort of father Jason is to you?' (80-81). Nevertheless they do not speak on stage with the other characters. However, 'Ninagawa seems to intensify the emotional impact of the murder by bringing the children on stage, allowing them to interact intimately with Medea before she kills them'.[34] This creates a tension towards her final acts, once the boys have been seen, the

[30] Hall *Daily Telegraph* 25 August 1986.
[31] Davidson 205:204.
[32] Wiles 2000:156.
[33] Davidson 2005:205.
[34] Smethurst 2002:25.

audience prays for their safety yet knows their fate. The presence of the children on the stage may be intended to emphasise the monstrousness of the act.

Instead of being confined to a Western stage Ninagawa created space for the characters to stand together, when united and apart, when in confrontation. It was a rectangular long stage from left to right, allowing distance to be created as the audience was not surrounding the stage, creating an angle; they were directly seated facing the stage. In addition, and providing further continuity with ancient performance practice, this was an open-air staging.[35] This outdoor element becomes particularly prominent at the end of the piece, 'the final *coup de theatre*, as Medea rose aloft against the ink-black sky, was a quintessentially Greek moment'.[36] The exit in the chariot of the sun is a rather extravagant aspect of the original *Medea* which is not usually present in contemporary performances. However, Ninagawa wanted to give Medea this escape from justice, as she 'enters from above on a chariot drawn by a pair of dragons… like a Japanese hero, Medea now is superior to all other human beings'.[37] Ninagawa gives Medea the status of a champion, she has been victorious in her task and now she will be worshipped for it as if she were a god.[38] It is possible to view Medea as the equivalent of a male hero, favoured by the gods as they allow her to get away with infanticide. Yet Rehm suggests that 'the horrifying precision with which Medea converts marriage into death and maternity into child murder- shatters the validity of the heroic ideal she uses to justify her actions'.[39] In Euripides, the chorus finishes by saying 'many matters the gods bring to surprising ends. The things we thought would happen do not happen'. (1416-1417) From this line we can see that it has shocked the women that Medea has escaped unpunished by the gods, as she does in Ninagawa's production. As Smethurst suggests 'Ninagawa creates a production that demonstrates… that women, like Medea, can escape from their stereotypical roles by rejecting outmoded convictions and ethical

[35] Peter, J. 'Making a Drama Out of a Thesis' *Sunday Times* 31 August 1986, p.42.
[36] Peter, J. 'Making a Drama Out of a Thesis' *Sunday Times* 31 August 1986, p.42.
[37] Smethurst 2002:26.
[38] See Blondell 1999:163 on Medea as 'heroic male warrior'.
[39] Rehm 1994:107.

norms'.[40] It is this ethical dilemma that decides how the ending of Medea is handled in any production.

The final production which I am going to use for contrasting purposes is the Actors of Dionysus version, performed in 1996. Patrick Marmion gave this review: 'the sumptuous set draped in shades of cream and beige muslin could grace the cover of *House and Gardens*, while the matching costumes wouldn't be out of place in a Laura Ashley catalogue'.[41] AOD have selected a simple, non-intrusive design to reflect the setting: a 'barn like brick building with A-frame roof beams and skylights, a spacious all-white interior which acts as a permanent cyclorama'.[42] The AOD have stripped back the effects and exposed the complex storyline of Euripides. In my opinion this creates a vulnerable side to the performance but Marmion suggests that it 'lacks Euripides' jagged misanthropy'.[43] Whichever opinion prevails, it is still a note-worthy production as a contrast to the more recent AOD performance of Medea which I will be commenting on in the main section of this dissertation, as that could not be described as meek at all.

It was not only the costumes that were negatively reviewed but also the depiction of Medea and Jason's children, who were prevalent in Ninagawa's adaptation, but were described as 'disappointingly affectless and oblivious' in this production.[44] The crux of Medea's final actions converts our sympathies from Medea herself as the abandoned wife at the start of the play where she says 'I am alone…I was taken as plunder' (254-255), to the children as the innocent victims, 'I weep for them; their fate is very hard'. (349) If they have no presence on the stage then is there any point them being there? It is true that, in this scene, they have no words but through the words of others such as the nurse our sympathies are with them, stuck between their mother and father. All that is heard from these boys at the end of the play is there off-stage screams, we are left to imagine the horror which is taking place.

[40] Smethurst 2002:20.
[41] Patrick Marmion *Time Out*, 13 November 1996.
[42] Goetsch 1996.
[43] Patrick Marmion *Time Out*, 13 Nov 1996.
[44] Goetsch 1996.

The two productions just discussed have been selected as a base line for comparison, as they show two extremes that adaptations can follow. The main plays about which I would like to go into much more detail are the more recent productions by Headlong (November 2012) and the Actors of Dionysus (November 2013). The reason I will be specifically analysing these particular versions is because I was present at these productions so instead of relying on newspaper reviews and programme notes I can offer my own observation and analysis. They are also the most recent examples of *Medea*, having been performed within the last two years. [45]

1.2. Headlong's Medea written and directed by Mike Bartlett at Warwick Arts Centre (9-15 November 2012)

1.2.1. Portrayal of Medea and other characters

Headlong could not have produced a more contemporary version of Medea. She was dressed in dirty, scruffy tracksuit bottoms and a stained WWE T-shirt with bright red hair which was scrunched back and messy. She was visually the epitome of a victim. This image was an interesting take on a character which in the original was a barbarian princess, but in their present-day stage setting it did seem to fit their intention of transporting every aspect of Euripides onto the 21st-century stage. It was not only her clothing that portrayed this dishevelled woman but the fact that she smoked numerous cigarettes throughout the performance, every stressful account was followed by a lit cigarette. Links between smoking and depression are well established, so this constant smoking can easily be understood as emphasizing her devastated emotional state.[46]

Her language and tone were updated to modern slang but kept the same meaning as the speeches found in Euripides (809- 818). For example, when she was talking to her next door neighbour, who was the chorus and tutor, the dialogue was short, quick and full of unanswerable questions (What's the matter? Why are you looking like that? It's good news isn't

[45] National Theatre also performed a version of *Medea* on 4 September at Olivier Theatre.
[46] Boden, Fergusson and Horwood 2010.

it? Why turn away? You should be delighted. Isn't this what you wanted?).[47] This emphasises the lack of understanding between the other characters and Medea. It highlights that at this stage Medea is distant from reality as she is mentally trying to find a way to get what she wants. However, she torments herself writhing with this fire within her which Bartlett highlights through these rapid unanswered questions.

An interesting twist which Headlong use is that they get the characters to address Medea with all of these questions but because she does not really value their opinion, she never answers them honestly. Medea is an expert at saying one thing but thinking another, she is manipulative and Headlong showed this well with the different styles of speech used. The most effective rhetorical style is the stichomythia with the neighbour; this created a climactic rise of tension where Medea could plan her terrible schemes.

MEDEA: It's easy for you. What do you know of suffering?

CHORUS: Kill the boys? You'd bring yourself to do that?

MEDEA: He'll feel it.

CHORUS: And what about you? What does that make you?

MEDEA: What I am. Defeated.[48]

Humour is used in this production, and can put the audience in a difficult situation, whether to laugh at the crazy woman having a drug relapse or whether to feel sorry for the sarcasm which she is using to mask her pain. As Gregory articulates it: 'since tragedy concerns serious individuals and is an imitation of a serious action, humour might seem to possess a destabilizing potential, threatening to turn tragedy into something other than tragedy'.[49] Euripides is known for using humour but here it is a breaking of the tragic mood, through

[47] Bartlett 2012:30.
[48] Bartlett 2012:25.
[49] Gregory 2005:266.

familiarisation, which is in keeping with the 'domestic' theme. The light-hearted element found in this particular production was cleverly designed so as not to distract from the emotions but to in fact intensify the madness of Medea, for example when Jason says: 'if I've seen it once I've seen it a hundred times. Bad temper means trouble'.[50] This style also broke up the long monologues between Creon and Medea which can be difficult for modern audiences; for example Bartlett reduces his whole monologue to 'because you frighten me. I'll not mince my words'.[51]

Modern insults such as 'dick', 'twat', and 'bastard'[52] are used emphasising the reading of the play as essentially a modern domestic drama. This was Bartlett's intention, 'I wanted to both update and translate not just the language but the context and dramatic language'.[53] Medea also says this; 'If there's a god which at the moment I doubt, I want you to curse him. If there's any justice, I want them- both of them- in a car crash'.[54] It is interesting here that Bartlett changes Medea's curses from Creon to the gods, as Jason says in Euripides 'you called down wicked curses on the King and his house'. (610-611) Medea then ends with a final curse on Jason, 'but for you, the dirty death that you deserve, with your skull smashed under the Argo'.[55] Also Medea herself does not curse the gods but asks for their assistance in cursing Jason, 'go and get married. With luck, it won't be the wedding-day you have in mind'.[56] The essence and raw emotion of Euripides is still present yet modern idioms are used, this line is directly related to Euripides- 'there is no justice in the world's censorious eye' (218). Gary Raymond suggests in his review that 'Mike Bartlett, who has written as well as directed this new version, has largely dispensed with the poetry and contemplation of Euripides and in place has installed some zinging dialogue'.[57] Phrases such as 'wankers, dads and rapists' can strike a more relatable chord with contemporary audiences. This is an example of a snappier line than the Euripides

[50] Bartlett 2012:15.
[51] Bartlett 2012: 11.
[52] Bartlett 2012: 16.
[53] pers. comm. Mr M. Bartlett
[54] http://headlong.co.uk/work/medea/ (accessed 14/07/14).
[55] Bartlett 2012: 40.
[56] Bartlett 2012:20.
[57] http://www.walesartsreview.org/medea/ (accessed 14/02/14).

version of 'O Zeus! Why have you given us clear signs to tell true gold from counterfeit; but when we need to know bad men from good, the flesh bears no revealing mark?' (517-519). Contempt for the deceit practised by men on women may be expressed in both versions - but it is clear that the emphasis on outward appearance is lost in the modern line, while with the mention of 'dads' abusive fathers, a more contemporary issue, are brought into the equation.

The relationship between Jason and Medea is well portrayed through their costumes, as described above Medea is scruffy while Jason wears a tailored suit with a crisp white shirt and gelled hair. This creates a visual distinction between Medea struggling with her grief of separation and Jason as already moved onto 'better' things. When he says 'well, it's no skin off my nose'[58], it is as if the end of their marriage has not affected him emotionally at all. These differing costumes, particularly Medea dressed in shabby attire can be related to the idea of Euripides 'introducing a series of heroes in rags…caution is needed, however. Our expectations, based as they are on experience of different kinds of theatrical conventions, may not be so readily transferable to ancient Greek dramatic practice'.[59]

In their conversation, friendships are emphasized, Jason's friends are supportive and proud of his upgrade to a younger woman, this can be related to the contemporary 'lad culture', whereas there is a built-in tension about whether Medea gave up her friends for Jason or whether she had any in the first place. Headlong include the character, Pam, she is their equivalent to the nurse. She is a work colleague of Medea, who enters into the friendship debate as all she does is enquire into what has happened, she is not caring or supportive towards Medea, she just wants the gossip- 'where are you to turn? Where do you look for protection? For a welcome or a home?'[60] The addition of Pam stresses Medea's lack of true friendship, enhancing her victimhood and isolation, ('when I'm banished, thrown out of the country without a friend, alone with my forlorn waifs' 511-513).

[58] Bartlett 2012: 15
[59] Davidson 2005:205.
[60] Bartlett 2012: 13.

Jason does not come across well in any of his dialogues with Medea, he is sly and we see how much he affects Medea as she cries after they meet. I felt that this was an effective way of showing that Medea is human, she is not a monster to whom no one can relate. In Euripides, however, she is not a human she is the grand-daughter of the Sun god, as becomes emphatically clear in the triumphant ending. In Bartlett's adaptation this is not emphasised, nor is the original ending kept, as this would clearly contradict the idea of a humane and relatable Medea represented in a sympathetic way.

Throughout the performance there was a gradual progression in the intensity of Medea's emotions, from being happy with Tom (her son), to humorous dancing to Beyoncé 'All the Single Ladies', to crying, to aggressively cooking food and placing her whole hand in a pan full of boiling water, to showing her paranoia, to her final act of infanticide. When Medea placed her hand in the pan of boiling water it was a physical representation of the pain and anger she was feeling inside, using the modern reference to self-harm. Throughout this kitchen scene, there was no speaking, it was as if there were no words to describe her torment, the only way was to make her hand blister in agony. This is obviously something of a departure from Euripides, but it could be related to references Medea makes to her hand in the play ('my hand shall not weaken' (1056) and 'my accursed hand' (1245)).

Headlong articulated her journey extremely emotively, through every interaction we saw a different side of Medea. With each new emotion portrayed we see a new angle on her passions, she is very passionate about her sons, her revenge on her husband and on the female experience. All of these passions are taken to extremes and their escalation is how we end up with the madness of Medea's final act, the murder of her son. Bartlett stays true to the original here and does not try to soften her rage (I must kill the children and make my escape…grasp the sword, vile hand).[61] It is at this point, that potentially her image as a victim is eradicated by her thirst for revenge in this brutal way. Padel best describes Medea's psychology involved here

[61] Bartlett 2012: 36.

with the phrase, 'part of tragedy's horror is the indissoluble linkage between different human beings… the one whose body ends up torn may not be the one whose mind was torn in the first place. Thumos masters Medea; but it is not her body that is burned and stabbed'.[62] The plot arises from the insecurities and fears of Medea, yet it is her son, who is the true victim here. During the course of Headlong's version so far Medea has continually been played as a victim of Jason's crimes yet now, through the steady increase in her rage, she has become the antagonist and her son now becomes her victim.

A significant addition to the original in this production is the silent character of Tom, about 10 years old, dressed in contemporary clothes and constantly playing on his PSP. As in Euripides the child maintains silence on-stage throughout the play but the difference is that he is an only child. He never responds or even looks at Medea who is the only character with whom he comes into contact. The irony of the Euripidean line, 'I will bear my wrongs in silence, yielding to superior strength' (313-314), spoken by Medea is played upon in this adaptation. This line is spoken by Medea yet acted out by Tom. The main scene which they interact in is when she is cooking his dinner, she is chopping vegetables with an extremely large knife which will later become the murder weapon. This scene with the knife is using modern thriller conventions (the presence of the murder weapon) to create the psychological tension created in the original play through words. Throughout this whole scene, the audience collectively were holding their breath, as it was unclear whether this was going to be the murder scene or just another angry episode. The sights and sounds of the kitchen were building the tension, the water boiled over, the oven smoked and Medea was shouting at Tom whilst wielding this knife. They showed the break down in their relationship through the bi-polar nature of Medea, she switches from quietly cooking her son's tea, spending quality time with him, to thoughts of his murder within the space of 20 seconds, it seemed. In this scene it would seem as though she sees the innocent Tom as Jason, she is deflecting all of her anger towards him. Yet, in numerous other scenes we do see her maternal affection, she fondly retells stories from when he was a

[62] Padel 1992:133.

baby and tries to hug him, but as she does his body goes stiff and he strongly tries to resist her, showing no affection at all. One could not call this relationship 'normal', it is forced and one-sided.

Medea's extended agonising over whether to kill the children 'I will kill my sons. No one shall take my children from me', (792-793); 'their young, bright faces- I can't do it… why should I hurt them, to make their father suffer, when I shall suffer twice as much myself?', (1042-1046) is expressed on the modern stage through the protagonist's movements on the stage. As she ascended the stairs to Tom's room she was adamant in her decision to kill him but as soon as she entered his room, she could not do it, so ran back down the stairs, then again toughened her mind and made the ascent. This internal debate was prominent in the psychological realism of this adaptation, and it replaces to some extent the verbal debate performed by Euripides' Medea. The idea of 'a character caught in the throes of passionate indecision, wavering consciously and instinctively in a manner before seen on the tragic hero' is captured, but in action rather than words.[63] Added to this, Tom's presence on stage adds so much more grief for the audience, as a constant reminder of the innocence of the victim. With the rising rate of divorce in the 21st century, everyone in that audience could relate to this situation, where the parents are splitting up and there is going to be a custody case over the child. The poignancy of Tom's constant presence on stage can be seen as an interpretation of the long-standing interest in the role of the children in Euripides' *Medea*.[64] Zeitlin has pointed out that it is not only Medea's children who are involved in this play, as she 'exploits more than one man's attachment to children in order to effect her ends: a son, her brother (Apsyrtus); a beloved daughter (Creusa) and the promise in return for sanctuary of curing infertility (Aegeus)'.[65] Therefore in this production Tom symbolises all innocent children who find themselves at the mercy of their parents. This production highlights the fact that it is the children who are the real victims of the tragedy.

[63] Rehm 2002:264.
[64] See for example Purkiss 1999:63.
[65] Zeitlin 2008:328.

1.2.2. Staging

Figure 1: http://www.walesartsreview.org/medea/

Headlong's set design is a direct reversal of the ancient 'structural opposition of inside and outside, unseen and seen' -which 'became a distinctive feature of Greek theatrical space'.[66] In exposing the interior of the house, it plays with the fact that even though the characters have stepped into their home they are still not private. This style of theatre is 'in the realm of realism, art which tries to mimic very closely the real world around it'.[67] This eliminates the need for the audience having to be told of the action which is occurring inside because now we are able to see it for ourselves and make our own judgements about it. This inspired staging gave the sense of the audience being a fly on the wall in this personal family feud. However, the domestic, inside drama meant that we lost the grandeur of the essentially public characters of Greek tragedy, and their monologues as these elements are not suited to the realistic setting aspired to in this production, as Goldhill says 'Greek tragedy was originally written for a particular style of theatrical space. This space is fully built into the writing of Greek plays. The internal dynamics of each play will be lost in performance if the logic of this spatial organization is ignored'.[68] It is true that the decision to alter the spatial organisation in this version adds to the emphasis on the domestic at the expense of the public, rhetorical character of the original play. But this is in keeping with the realistic, modern tone of the adaptation. The colour scheme of the

[66] Wiles 1997:161.
[67] Fortier 2002:27.
[68] Goldhill 2007:7.

house is an insight into the emotions of conversations and characters associated to these rooms: the kitchen is a dark red room where the knife wielding and erratic rage scene occurs; Tom's room in a natural magnolia shows his helplessness and neutrality in this affair; the patterns and disarray in Medea's room, show how her mind is scattered and confused. However, sometimes it did feel like you were watching East Enders or a generic soap, with identifiable B&Q kitchen units. This soap-aspect is one of the consequences of turning the play into a domestic drama rather than the more 'public' drama it originally was. Sometimes it did distract from the script, as you were so busy watching the oven smoking you lost the real sense of conflict between mother and son. Nonetheless, this domestic style may be for the same reasons when 'in the 1690s the London stage underwent a transformation… the first moves were made towards a more domestic and pathetic drama, for which the cultural causes have been sought in the monarchy's declining interest in the theatre'.[69] So, Headlong's decision to emphasise the domesticity may be because of a decrease in interest in the ancient tragedies. Or an increase in interest in the private and domestic, due to the popularity of reality TV with its relentless intrusion into people's private lives.

Due to the modern style of this adaptation they did not include the final scene of Medea flying off in a chariot but they kept the idea of elevation in, as Medea climbed to the roof of the terrace with her dead son, covered in blood, shouting down to Jason who stood motionless on the street. In the ancient context the crane (or the *deus ex machina*) was used 'when the dramatist wanted to emphasize the separateness of Olympian gods from mortals'.[70] Headlong alluded to this god-like elevation whilst still keeping a realistic modern ending. They kept in the contemporary feel by adding to the drama,

[69] Hall 2000:57.
[70] Wiles 2000:120. Also see: Cunningham 1954, Mastronarde 1990:263-6, Mastronarde 2000.

police sirens which grew in intensity to the final black out. This ending suited the style of theatre which they were intending to produce, but it lacked the Euripidean twist of allowing Medea to triumph at the end with divine assistance. Mastronade notes that Euripides may provide this twist to the end as 'Jason's suffering may be seen as the destruction that is expected to befall a breaker of oaths, since it is a standard formula that the perjurer risks destruction of himself and his posterity'.[71] Therefore, Jason would seem to deserve his punishment as he initiated the breaking of xenia. On the other hand, in Harrison's version Medea is executed for her actions and in this performance it was implied that Medea was going to be taken by the police. Despite this, the production did conclude by presenting Medea raised up as a demonic figure at the finale of the tragedy.

1.2.3. Flaws of this production

The flaws, which as a Classicist viewing this production, were the fact that the characters were made to be very generic; no history or context was given. This non-specific adaptation means that we do not gain Euripides' main theme of the conflict between Medea the barbarian and Jason the Greek. Bartlett's version makes no reference to Medea's previous sacrifices/murders or Jason's real reasons for re-marrying, as outlined in the original play in Medea's monologue (465-518) and in Jason's self-justification 'it was not that I found your attractions wearisome, and I was smitten with a new wife…first that we should live well and not be poor…next, that I could bring up my sons in a manner worthy of my descent', (557-562). These complex reasons for their actions were completely missing, as the characters' history was skipped over with no explanation. This meant that the conflicts were purely domestic,

[71] Mastronade 2010:199.

omitting some of the major themes which Euripides highlighted, such as the conflict between Medea the barbarian, 'a foreign woman, coming among new laws, new customs' (239-240) and Jason the Greek who says to Medea 'that you left a barbarous land to become a resident of Hellas; here you have known justice; you have lived in a society where force yields place to law' (535-537). This is one of the main reasons that Medea feels she needs to kill her sons because as a barbarian she will be exiled in a foreign country where she will find no refuge, she feels she has no option but to save her children from such a fate. Yet there is also the complexity that 'Medea adheres so faithfully to the Greek idea of harming enemies to avoid their mockery that she slays her own children rather than the guilty Jason'.[72] So here there is an internal debate within Medea between her barbaric status in Greece conflicting with her inherent Greek ideals, as she says 'I shall see my enemies punished as they deserve… the laughter of my enemies I will not endure' (767-797). These subtle intricacies of opinions do not come across in this adaptation. We also lose Jason's reasoning for marrying the King's daughter to better the lives of his sons. The key conflicts between the protagonists about identity, history and family ties are lost. All we really see is 'a pitiful stereotype, it seems; a man led by his penis, bored by his wife. Medea accuses him of this, and he has no serious rebuttal; not as in Euripides' play'.[73] They may have removed these details to try and make it seem more relevant to a modern audience so that the story is more generic and not full of specific details, which if you are not familiar with, may be confusing. Yet in doing this, Bartlett's production and text modernised the play to such a degree that much of the original language, emotions and reasoning could not be found and this is a real shame as I did not leave the theatre questioning the morality of the

[72] Rehm 2003:62.
[73] Raymond, G. 'Medea' *Wales Arts Review* 12 November 2012. http://www.walesartsreview.org/medea/ (accessed 14/02/14).

characters or their situations. Medea should 'alternate between sophistic self-control and naked emotion, which differentiates her from the nauseating self-righteousness of her husband'.[74] These two reactions were not inspired in the audience.

As a reception of Euripides it achieves a modern rendition of the insanity which Medea portrays, it effectively highlights the bi-polar nature of her character- her loving nature towards her son and also her murderous intentions towards him. In this production *Medea* is reduced to a domestic drama, where the emphasis is on the main character's emotional turmoil. This theatrical choice bears little resemblance to the original play but it highlights how adaptable and versatile the *Medea* is. It shows us how it can continue to feel modern and relevant even when stripped down to the essential plot. Headlong created a piece of theatre worthy of its place in the history of *Medea.*

1.3. Actors of Dionysus' (AOD) *Medea* adapted by David Stuttard and directed by Abigail Anderson at Rose Theatre Kingston (12-15 November 2013).

1.3.1. Portrayal of Medea and other characters

[74] Rehm 2002:264.

AOD's recent aerial performance of this tragedy offers a striking new exploration of aspects of the play. Aerial theatre/dance has developed from the Circus and then advanced with the increase in popularity with groups such as the Cirque du Soleil performing the acrobatic movements found in this genre of movement.[75] The portrayal of the characters came through their physical actions. All of the actors were wearing harnesses which could be attached to the other people and different structures on the stage. The first movement of the play was Medea stood in the middle with four people stood around her, pulling her in all different directions and wrapping themselves and their ropes around her. We see instead of Euripides' verbalisation of the connections, the metaphors of her psyche pulling her in different directions, the turmoil that is created from the decisions which she faces. The characters which surround her then become her female chorus, still connected to Medea she pulls them forward and they create a triangle shape, as she kneels, they kneel, as she bows her head so do they. The chorus' loyalty and obedience are shown through physical and visual means in this scene, just as throughout this play movements and connections clearly show where the character's allegiances lie. The triangular structure particularly emphasises the line in Euripides: 'tell her we are all on her side' (181). The physical connection in AOD explicitly accentuates their association with her.

http://now-here-this.timeout.com/2013/11/08/medea/

Medea's next major physical interaction is with Jason. In this scene instead of their harnesses directly being attached they used a pulley system from the roof, creating

[75] Bernasconi and Smith 1960:7.

lift. This ingenious staging idea adds motion to a rather static scene between only two characters, it builds the tension, as they increase in speed. Throughout their fight we see who is on top, who is more dominant as they raise themselves up and the other pulls them back down, they are constantly striding around in a circle like vultures swirling around a carcass. This circling was used as a metaphor for the emotional toil of this relationship; the aerial spinning represented the domestic spinning of the circular arguments. It showed how wires can be crossed and get knotted, how Jason's reasons for leaving her are misdirected, how Medea's passion is seen as madness as the nurse says, in Vellacott's translation, 'her mood is cruel, her nature dangerous, her will fierce and intractable'. (103-104) Their swinging became faster as the fight became more physical, until both characters were off the ground and whirling round and round gaining in pace, adding tension, drama, and provoking the question in the viewer: how will they stop? Jason flings her upside down and releases himself from her, Medea is left hanging. Of all the performances of this scene which I have seen I feel that this was the most effective, the original tensions and manipulations unmistakably came through, the loving connection between this once married couple has escalated into pettiness and violence. The circular nature of the discussions could easily be related by every member of the audience. Then, when Jason just left whilst Medea was still evidently in the air, he had his feet on the ground whilst she was still literally suspended, creating a strong image of the suspense surrounding her actions at the start of the play. As in the original play, translated by Vellacott, Medea is an outcast here, with nowhere to go: 'my enemies have spread full sail; no welcoming shore waits to receive and save me' (279-280).

The next unusual character relationship which occurs in this variation is between Medea and Aegeus. It was unfamiliar and abruptly comedic and made a

mockery of this crucial element in the play, the turning point where Medea finds safety in her exile. However, on reflection and having discussed my concerns with Dickon Savage (Aegeus) I feel that it created a pause in the seriousness of the tragedy and created a break to re-build up to the climax, in keeping with Vellacott's view that 'the figure of Aegeus provides the one flicker of relief in the otherwise uniform sombreness of the drama'.[76] Savage suggested that he played Aegeus drunk and bumbling to add a lighter tone as a contrast to the intense, forceful character of Medea.[77] It created discomfort when Medea was seducing him with her ropes, entwining around his body, a physical interpretation of her ingratiating behaviour found in Euripides ('I hope you will get all you long for, and be happy', 692). As he makes the oath she lifts him from the ground and he hangs upside down, confused, as in Euripides. Aegeus is 'bound by oaths' and thus unable to give her up (736). It is possible, however, that this staging rather diminishes Medea's rhetorical skill which Euripides emphasised in the Aegeus scene. Arguably, what Euripides is doing is creating a sense of Medea's masculine powers, when showing her to be able to negotiate with and persuade a serious elder statesman like Aegeus. By portraying Aegeus as a drunken old fool, Medea's power is diminished somewhat. Sycophantic

1.3.2. Staging

The staging used for this production was in place for a practical use, it was the framework which the pulleys and additional ropes could be attached. However, to mask this use they placed a patchwork of red stretched material as a backdrop in front of the

[76] Vellacott 1963:8.
[77] Pers. comm. Mr D. Savage 12/11/13.

structure, immediately adding the colour of blood and revenge to an already uninviting stage. What was interesting about this, which you would assume would be a solid piece of wood, was actually full of gaps which were draped in taut cloth so that it could be used as an entrance. As Tamsin Shasha says 'we decided that the backdrop would be a large wall from which people would appear and disappear and from which the ensemble could fly'.[78] For example Medea's first entrance was through the bottom fabric as she slithered out to an extremely menacing piece of music, this staging allowed for unusual appearances of the characters creating an uneasy viewing as it was so unpredictable. This staging idea is directly related to the ancient concept of bringing the internal action to the public open area of the skene. The fabric here stands in for the ancient backdrop which was the entrance to Medea's palace. It was a solid wall, which was ominous and impenetrable, just as the character of Medea is. The taut fabric was also used to visualise the torture of Glauce, she thrashed around behind the fabric which moulded to her skin to represent the flaming robe, instead of a messenger verbalising the action, again AOD decided to visually interpret Euripides' scene for the audience, gruesomely showing the horror that Medea created. At the same time as this Medea is speaking about the fiery death and Glauce's bonfire of innocence, this directly shows Medea's involvement and enjoyment of the princess's death: 'perhaps I shall engulf their bridal home in fire'.[79]

The aerial addition is best described by Azari who wrote that aerial theatre is 'a new artistic form expressing the most complex states of mind'.[80] The aerial performance was not a random choice of theatre style, it was selected to emphasise the psychological shifts found in this tragedy. It also created elevation for the final scene of

[78] AOD programme 'flying Medea'.
[79] Stuttard 2014:177.
[80] Azari 1970:129.

Medea's exit, without having an unrealistic chariot. Medea entered from the top of the structure with a red cloak and swung round the stage whilst speaking to Jason, knelt on the floor, she then hangs from the red ribbons attached to the frame in the crucifix pose and slides down the ribbons to the stage floor where she then walks off through the audience, into her exile. This ending allowed Medea to not be punished for her actions, compared to the two other adaptations in this performance history. AOD allowed Medea to end the play on her own terms; it was a dramatic and powerful ending worthy of the Euripidean character, which they had created.

1.3.3. Music

It is important to add this extra heading into my analysis of the AOD production as interestingly for a contemporary piece they used music and song throughout their performance. AOD considered the use of music as 'an integral element in the storytelling to explore the pain and anger of Medea's rejection, the relationship with her children and her lust for revenge'.[81] The way they chose to differentiate this style from a musical is that there were no words, it was just vocal harmonies to set the mood of the ode. Music creates a certain atmosphere which words cannot quite reach, as David Stuttard suggested in our interview that the script is there to be spoken and sung, the emotions portrayed by harmony in the odes creates more impact[82]. After all it is a translation and you need to decide what to enhance.[83] What I found interesting about the choice of

[81] AOD programme, 'Flying Medea'.
[82] Pers. comm. Mr D. Stuttard.
[83] Pers. comm. Mr D. Stuttard.

music was that they only used traditional Greek-sounding music which the characters then lamented over or created harmonies over. The most impactful moment was just before Medea decides to kill her children, the music was deep and powerful with a whisper of 'violence of my passion has consumed me'[84] constantly repeating, getting louder as the music sped up, then sudden silence as Medea shouts 'my destiny has overwhelmed me'.[85] The final song was in fact a traditional Georgian song from Colchis. The sounds of the songs created a lot of dissonance as the characters added four or five different layers of sound reflecting the layers in Medea's journey and the clashing of her decisions.[86] The music sounded like a prayer to the gods, it felt like it had strong religious connotations, invoking the gods to take a side in this controversial feud. As in Euripides 'O Zeus, and Earth and Light' (148), 'Might Themis! Dread Artemis!' (160). All of these effects evoked a sense of the ancient ritual or religious performance context.[87]

1.3.4. Flaws of the production

The aerial nature of this production was both its making and its destruction. I understand that it created a lot of dimensions and connections, found in Euripides, between the characters but the clipping and unclipping of pulleys and harnesses distracted from the raw emotions and words spoken. It is human nature when someone is doing something dangerous to wait for it to go wrong. Unfortunately one was so distracted by the thought that the actors may fall that sometimes one lost sight of the plot. Having spoken to Tamsin Shasha I now realise how physically demanding aerial

[84] AOD programme, 'Flying Medea'.
[85] AOD programme, 'Flying Medea'.
[86] Pers. comm. Ms A. Porubcansly.
[87] See Csapo and Slater 1995:103-138.

dance is and although I felt that they coped with these demands extremely well, at times through fatigue the script was lost as they were upside down and had a tight harness around their waist, restricting their ability to articulate Stuttard's faithful translation. Also the logistics of this style relies on counterbalance and weights, so to elevate Medea for her final epilogue, a character had to hoist her up and sit on the edge of the stage as her counter-weight. This created confusion as not all the connections made through the harness made sense to the storyline, which created a distraction. When Medea made her monologues, which were not intended to be heard by any of the other characters, who normally would be off-stage, she had to speak in the presence of her counter-weight. I viewed the production in their initial testing week so these uncomfortable transitions will be smoothed out before the play gets viewed by the public.

This particular production has added numerous dimensions to our understanding of this tragedy and very much deserves its place in the performance history of *Medea.* The main emphasis is on the relationships between the characters and on the struggle for power and domination between Medea and Jason. They make this emphatic through the intertwined ropes and pulleys found in this aerial drama. This theatrical decision highlights one of the key themes in the original play.

Chapter 2: Trojan Women

Trojan Women has often been over-looked in scholarship compared to other plays such as *Medea.*[88] However, it is still finding a place on the contemporary stage. As Walton says there is 'little conflict, less plot, no relief from the parade of misery. Only a great playwright could get away with it'.[89] Suter argues that because the play can be characterised as a lament this provides an explanation for the lack of unity, plot and the ill-conceived prologue.[90] Characters such as Talthybius have not been given the critical analysis which they deserve. Sullivan goes as far as to suggest that 'no critical treatment to date has considered the literary and narrative function of Talthybius in the *Trojan Women'.*[91] This lack of analysis is shocking as Talthybius is interesting when compared to other messengers in tragedy as he participates in the narrative; 'he seems to play a crucial structural and narrative role in the dramatic enactment of the fate of the Trojan survivors'.[92] I would like to begin by briefly commenting on the two main themes which I will be analysing in this dissertation, the gods and the contrasting characterisation of Helen and Hecuba.

2.1. The gods

Trojan Women begins with a prologue, but unusually the god who delivers it has no further influence on the development of events in the tragedy.[93] Poseidon sets a grim scene and offers no insight or explanation. All of Poseidon's statements emphasise the fact that the scene is full of impiety: 'deserted are the sacred groves; the gods' shrines

[88] Lecture by Barbara Goward 1996.
[89] Walton 1984:140.
[90] Suter 2003:1.
[91] Sullivan 2007:472.
[92] Sullivan 2007:472.
[93] See Mastronarde 2010:77 for the use of such prologues elsewhere in Euripides.

run with human blood' [94](13-14); 'worship due the gods also falls sick and loses its accustomed place' (26-27); 'Agamemnon, indifferent to piety and the wish of the gods' (43-44). It is clear that Poseidon is only interested in being worshipped and shows no interest in the women, he does not pity the mortals. These statements could disconcert audiences, as they show that the role of the gods is to be worshipped and as a mortal, even in your ruin you must still be devout. They create an air of disbelief that Poseidon is focusing on himself when he is gazing upon such a wretched sight. He adds no divine reassurance that their lives will not become ruined, so therefore what is his purpose? To be worshipped but give nothing in return? It is only when Athena arrives that we gain some sense of justice for the Trojans. However, it is again from the point of view of impiety:

> 'ATHENA: Are you unaware of the insult done to me and my temples?
> POSEIDON: I do know; it was when Ajax dragged Cassandra off by force.
> ATHENA: And the Greeks did not punish him severely, or even reprimand him!' (67-72)

It is an interesting ploy from Euripides to present the gods in this way as this is the only time they can make an impression on us in the play. They come across as self-centred and vindictive and 'the notion is expressed that the gods betrayed their obligation of reciprocity, and also the notion that the gods may not care about human affairs'.[95] Yet Lefkowitz notes that 'to Euripides' contemporaries, honouring the gods did not mean liking them, or applauding their actions; on the contrary, the Athenian dramatists seem concerned to portray them in all the emotions that the gods manifest towards mortals'.[96] The gods' interest is only in gaining vengeance for the crimes

[94] All English citations and line numbers for Euripides' *Trojan Women* are taken from Davie 1998.
[95] Sourvinou-Inwood 2003:357.
[96] Lefkowitz 1989:75.

committed against themselves instead of the crimes against the Trojan women. The effect of this is to create pity towards the women as they are entirely alone, without divine assistance. And Euripides was accused of atheism and 'is read by most modern scholars as deliberately unsettling the norms of his society, including reverence for its gods'.[97] This is further exacerbated when it becomes clear that the gods' wish to punish the Greeks is not known to the Trojans. The gods' role therefore is not even to inform the women that even though their lives are ruined the Greeks will also pay the price. Their role simply is to gain the revenge.[98] It can also be argued that their tragic situation 'is the result of human folly. No god or goddess is involved in the central action of the play'.[99] I would dispute this as the Trojan War began as Aphrodite promised Helen to Paris, which led to Menelaus sailing to Troy, therefore as a goddess started the war, the gods should assist in the devastating aftermath.[100] However, 'to what extent one's actions are one's own responsibility, and to what extent one can blame the gods is a question raised, debated… and ultimately left open in the play'.[101] Euripides opens up the discussion about divine intervention and allows the audience to be swayed by the story which unfolds, as in the play itself, not in the history of the myth, there is no divine action. Then finally, when their scene ends Yunis suggests that 'the departure of Poseidon (and Athena) stands for the departure of all the gods; they can still hear the Trojan's prayers, but they are no longer present in the city'.[102] The remaining prayers which are spoken in the play fall on deaf ears because the gods are never present on the stage again. The lack of any divine epilogue is distressing as there is no closure to the

[97] Doherty 2001:37, see also Lefkowitz 1989 and Wildberg 1999, 2000.
[98] See Barlow 1986, Croally 1994 and Lefkowitz 1987.
[99] Walton 1984:142.
[100] Sourvinou-Inwood 2003:359 however, goes back even further to suggest that 'the Trojans are presented as responsible for their sufferings, which they brought upon themselves, by ignoring the warning of prophecy and letting Paris live. The gods had given the Trojans a warning, and the Trojans chose not to act on it'.
[101] Sourvinou-Inwood 2003:355-6.
[102] Yunis 1988:441.

play, Euripides does not allow there to be a satisfaction that there will be any recompense for these women.

2.2. Characterisation of Helen

The characterisation of Helen is best described by the chorus who offer this advice to Hecuba; 'Majesty, destroy this woman's persuasive words and protect your children, protect your homeland, for she speaks with fair words from a foul heart; now *that* inspires fear' (966-969). It is interesting that in this situation where the women are being guarded by Greeks and being taken away into slavery, the one thing that scares them is Helen. This clearly shows how her presence in Troy has been treated with suspicion which has now developed into fear, and a scapegoating of Helen, whom the women view as solely responsible for their devastation. As Bassi notes 'Helen occupies a central position in the Western tradition of females who engender suspicion and conflict'.[103] This is the image that we receive of Helen from the other characters but in her own speech she 'formulates a world in which issues of human responsibility have no place'.[104] For example 'punish the goddess and show yourself stronger than Zeus, who rules over the rest of the gods but is that lady's slave; the blame is not mine' (948-950).

Helen is only present in the one scene throughout the play and it is interesting that she is the first to speak in the debate even though she is the culprit. Lloyd notes that 'the order of the speeches is thus irregular in forensic terms, but it has a powerful tragic effect in that Helen must plead for her life against a charge which has not been formally expressed'.[105] As Helen states 'I will reply to the charges I imagine you will bring against me and put forward counter-arguments' (917-918). There are numerous ways of

[103] Bassi 1993:61-62.
[104] Worman 1997:198.
[105] Lloyd 1992:101.

looking at the order of these speeches. The first is that Helen wishes to speak first as she knows that she will instantly be able to persuade Menelaus to forgive her and take her back, which is what both Hecuba and the Trojan women are fearful of. The second is that she feels such guilt that she cannot wait to be accused as she knows that she will then not have any defence for her actions, as Hecuba will effectively condemn her to death. The aspect which is difficult is that 'in Helen's speech, there is the paradox of sophisticated rhetoric being used to advance an argument which relies on a literal belief in myth'.[106] The way in which Helen speaks does not show that she is overwhelmed by grief and is unable to think in a logical and manipulative way. She is extremely articulate and expresses an opinion which in the ancient world would have been irrefutable: Aphrodite influenced my judgment.

However, when Helen speaks scholars have been divided in the fact that her argument is that the gods, in particular Aphrodite, made her do it, this seems shallow and a poor excuse compared to Hecuba's previous rhetoric.[107] Also as Lloyd articulates 'the argument that what is permissible for the gods is permissible for men was sometimes thought to be sophistical, but it was not easy to answer because people were reluctant to argue that men should be better than the gods'.[108] So this in fact was a very skilled and clever argument for Helen to follow. Having said this, it would be unreflective to not acknowledge the fact that Helen is only an excuse for a war that was about other things altogether, as O'Gorman says 'the positioning of women as (authorities for) the cause of war enables the representation of woman… as scapegoat [and] bearer of blame for all evil'.[109] It is easy to focus the hatred of so many on a

[106] Lloyd 1992:112.
[107] Gellie 1986 and Lee 1976.
[108] Lloyd 1984:307.
[109] O'Gorman 2006:195.

cheating wife instead of a power-hungry King. Therefore, Helen's decision to go with Paris became a good excuse for the war in the first place. But as Menelaus says 'it was not, as men think, for a woman's sake that I came to Troy, but to punish the man who abused my hospitality by stealing my wife from my house' (861-4).

2.3. Hecuba's characterisation

Hecuba, particularly in the agon, is a complete contrast to Helen as she 'adopts a view of the gods, combining idealization with reductivism, which is highly distinctive but not wholly adequate'.[110] For example she says 'I will come to the defence of the goddesses and show that there is no justice in what she says' (969-970). Hecuba gains the advantage that Helen has already argued her points so Hecuba now can be precise in counter-arguing what has been said. As Mastronarde suggest 'Hecuba emerges in the arguments as a figure of apparent strength with whom the audience will wish to identify'.[111] This 'strength' may be evidenced in lines such as: 'you should have come out humbly in tattered clothes, quaking with fear, your head shaven, with a modest bearing rather than a shameless air, in view of your past crimes' (1025-1028). This shows the distinction in class between the two characters. Hecuba knows the appropriate and decent way that a woman should show she is in mourning and it is clear that Helen is not in that state. Mastronarde also thinks that Hecuba is 'inspired to skilful rhetoric by the opportunity to retaliate against at least one cause of her sufferings and those of her entire city'.[112] The punishment of Helen is something which would bring justice for Hecuba so therefore she seizes the chance to gain revenge which shows the maternal

[110] Lloyd 1992:112.
[111] Mastronarde 2010:78.
[112] Mastronarde 2010:78.

side in her character. 'Give me the task of putting the case against her. You know nothing of the suffering she caused in Troy' (908-909). This clearly shows her intentions of retaliation. She articulately passes the blame back to Helen from Aphrodite when she says that 'you saw him [Paris] resplendent in his foreign costume and gold and you went out of your mind' (990-991). She starts her attack on Helen by damning her sexual lusts for her son then she moves onto rebuking Helen's suggestion that she tried to escape- 'were you discovered anywhere tying a noose for your neck or sharpening a sword, the course of action a woman of honour would have taken if she yearned for the husband she once had?' (1010-1012).

Hecuba is the main character continually present on the stage, continually tested with new episodes of grief. She is a strong queen but does not shy away from lamenting her sorrows, 'swaying to the ceaseless flow of my tearful refrain!' (119). However, as Valakas suggests, 'the heroine's first lines make it explicit that when the actor raises his chest, neck and mask from the ground it is a somatic expression of being in command of one's senses and finding the courage to endure'.[113] This is one of the main characterisations of Hecuba: her will to survive in the face of such horror is so strong that she is still able to stand after all of the trauma which occurs in the play.

2.4. Examples of Performances in the 20th century

From a rich and varied performance history in the 20th century such as Aribert Reimann's opera in 1986 and Andrei Serban's trilogy in 1974, I have selected two

[113] Valakas 2002:78.

particularly influential productions to discuss here. I would like to begin with Tadashi Suzuki's production which was so successful that it was on the stage around the world from 1974 to 1989.[114] For this analysis I will be relying on select literature as I have personally not viewed the play. As Carruthers states 'with the devastation of World War Two still fresh in many minds and the possibility of nuclear holocaust ever present with the Cold War, Suzuki's production should have tapped a broad and deep vein of feeling'.[115] At the time of its presentation, the themes found in *Trojan* Women were particularly relevant around the globe. This adaptation is a Japanese kabuki-inspired production and was 'intended to express the disastrous fate of women caused by war, which was initiated by men and the complete powerlessness of religion to aid the women or the war itself'.[116] The play's central religious theme is the loss of faith in the gods and their abandonment of the Trojans. Suzuki's production focuses on this theme, making strong connections between the ancient gods found in the original and his own version of Poseidon and Athena whom Suzuki interprets by using 'a Japanese Bodhisattva (enlightened saint, or god equivalent), Jizo…he stands on the stage motionless until 'Andromache' pelts him with a flower, blaming him for not protecting the innocent, particularly children. He doubles over in agony'.[117] The gods are directly held responsible in Suzuki's version, while in Euripides' the mortals still hope for divine support in their hour of need. As Lefkowitz suggests 'despite the frequency with which Euripides portrays in his dramas the gods and their actions, he is thought of as the poet who more than any other asks his audiences, ancient and modern, to question the nature of the gods and even their existence'.[118] Lines such as 'so all that concerns the

[114] Staged at the Iwanami Hall in Tokyo in 1974.
[115] Carruthers 2004:124-125.
[116] Suzuki Company of Toga- Trojan Women Programme.
[117] McDonald 1994.
[118] Lefkowitz 1989:70-71.

gods, then, is that I and Troy should suffer, city hated beyond all others; wasted, then, are the sacrifices of oxen that we made' (1239-1240) demand that the audience think about the responsibility of the gods.[119]

Suzuki selected Jizo to represent the Greek gods as 'originally this deity is said to have been a woman in former lives… Today in Japan both women and children can look to Jizo for aid and compassion'.[120] Jizo is the sole representative of both Athena and Poseidon and is directly related to the two groups of victims found in *Trojan Women,* both children and women. Jizo, like Poseidon and Athena, offers no protection for the victim's only revenge once the play has ended. Therefore the theme of the people turning their backs on Jizo stems from the fact that these women are unaware of the revenge against their enemies which the god is scheming. Suzuki has effectively selected a counterpart for Poseidon and Athena to express the modern-day representation of impiety.

McDonald suggests that this production 'gives us a focus on the changing conditions of our own lives, as well as the lives of ancient Greeks and modern Japanese'.[121] There are many similarities between kabuki and ancient drama, as described above in the *Medea* section. However, this version does add in more contemporary features, such as the backdrop which 'consists of brightly coloured fishnets, and the suggestion is of the tangle that exists in the human mind, as in society'.[122] The set is the ruins of a cemetery just after World War Two, which places it in a specific modern war instead of a generic conflict. This specificity is directly related to the notion that Euripides' audience might have understood the play in relation to the

[119] See also Mastronarde 2010; Wiles 1997; Burnett 1971.
[120] Sosnoski 1996:68.
[121] McDonald 1994.
[122] McDonald 1994.

destruction of Melos, (and so at the point of its original reception it gained a specific meaning), so it is not a generic anti-war play but one with particular connotations. There are allusions in Suzuki's version to World War Two when, for example the 'Samurai soldiers goose-step onto the stage in place of Bronze-Age Greek warriors'.[123] Suzuki uses Euripides to emphasize contemporary themes by creating linkages from the ancient world to the modern-day. McDonald explains that 'just as female prisoners of war in the Greek world became the concubines of their captors, many young Japanese women were forced into prostitution in order to survive post-war horrors'.[124] So Suzuki intended to demonstrate a representation of post WW2 trauma in Japan and naturally across the world.

In his adaptation Suzuki adds in controversial aspects such as the rape of Andromache on stage and the murder of Astyanax with a sword.[125] The rape of Andromache is a very unusual addition to the original script as Talthybius and the guards are surprisingly compassionate towards her feelings as they remove her baby from her ('what is needed for jobs of this kind is a herald untouched by pity, a man more disposed to cruelty in his heart than I am'(787-789)). Suzuki emphasises cruelty instead of compassion, potentially a more realistic representation, and a way of forcing audiences to face the brutality of post-war Japan.[126] It was a time where oppression became the norm as Gordon says 'gender remained a particularly persistent means of differentiating Japanese throughout the post-war eras'.[127] Ironically, it is the survivors who suffer more than those who are tragically lost in the war itself. The on-stage

[123] McDonald 1994.
[124] McDonald 1994.
[125] Macintosh 1997:313.
[126] See Dower 1999; Dower 1995; Goodman & Neary 1996; Gordon 1993 to see the aftermath of the war on Japan.
[127] Gordon 1993:453.

murder of Astyanax is a clear and bold departure from the conventions of the ancient stage.[128]

It would be difficult to comment on the script of this production as 'the traditional Japanese view of the creative role of the actors is given priority over the (modern Western) notion of the primacy of the text. The result is that deviations from the Greek originals abound in Suzuki's versions and that the performance text is not fixed'.[129] In other words, Suzuki's focus for his adaptation was not to present a faithful representation of the text. This is very different from ancient Greek theatre which delivers a rendition of a script with no room for improvisation.

It would also be difficult to comment on the characterisation of Helen in this production as she is not a character in Suzuki's adaptation. However, even though she is not physically on stage she still plays a part in the plot because we see Menelaus' extreme reaction to the utterance of Helen's name- he becomes completely overwhelmed with anger and murders all the chorus members.[130] This is obviously a very different outcome to Euripides' scene with Menelaus, where Menelaus speaks to Helen saying 'off with you now to the place of stoning! I want you to die and pay in an instant for the years of suffering endured by the Greeks; I want you to learn not to bring disgrace upon me!' (1038-1041). It is also difficult to comment on the other people as 'there is much less discussion among the characters of the play than in the Greek'.[131] Therefore we do not see the dynamics between the women working as well so one is unable to comment on their behaviour as just like the script it was chosen by the actors on that particular performance.

[128] On the representation of murder on the ancient stage see Easterling 1997b:154 and Burian 1997:199.
[129] Macintosh 1997:313.
[130] Goff 2013:90.
[131] Goff 2013:90.

In sum, Suzuki's adaptation has largely kept to Euripides' vision of portraying the terrors of the aftermath of war. Through the continual presence of Jizo, Suzuki emphasises that divine presence does not necessarily mean divine assistance.

Next in this performance history is Femi Osofisan's 'Women of Owu' performed in London in February 2004. For this production I will be relying on select literature for analysis as I have not viewed the performance myself. The play is set in Owu in Yorubaland, (now Nigeria) and is a combination of African theatre and the ancient Greek concepts. The stage, which is kept in neutral colours, is constructed with a collapsed structure around the edge and in the middle. Its stark appearance gives the impression it is covered in sand and dirt, and this is by a tree which is stripped of its leaves just like the women are stripped of their dignity. A shrine draws attention to the lack of acknowledgement and worship towards the gods which is a theme of *Trojan Women* as we have seen. This shrine is linked to the god Anlugbua, the protector of Owu who according to Mabogunje and Omer-Cooper was a General who established the city and became a god after he died.[132] In his associations with the city there is a similarity with Poseidon, who remembers building the city of Troy with Apollo. Unlike Poseidon Anlugbua addresses the human characters directly, promising to return from the dead, if his people ever needed his help. Nonetheless, whilst professing his loyalty to the city, Anlugbua, like Poseidon does not help when he is needed, as Budelmann observes: 'Osofisan's gods, like Euripides' are influential and moral, yet pettish, elusive and the target of human attacks'.[133]

[132] Maborunje and Omer-Cooper 1971.
[133] Budelmann 2007:20.

One of the main changes which Osofisan makes is that he 'transferred the dialogue [between the gods] from its original place as a prologue to the third act'.[134] This change alters the dynamic of the play entirely as the gods' discussion at the beginning of the play sets out their loyalties and intentions for revenge. Osofisan opens with 'Anlugbua's obvious ignorance of the situation. He has not been part of the creation of the war and keeps repeating to himself, "I was too late" and "why didn't they call me?"'.[135] Osofisan places these lines in the middle of the play, instead of having the original prologue. This could have disrupted the emotional build-up of the lamentation, however, it could also have provided a break for relief from the emotional nature of *Trojan Women.* Having this additional dialogue with Anlugbua emphasises again that he is too late, half of the trauma found in the play has already occurred and he has not been present to give assistance or guidance. In this way he is like the gods in Euripides who are also not assisting or guiding the mortals.

Another drastic addition which Osofisan's interpretation adds to Euripides is the emphasis on slavery. In Euripides the characters are fearful of slavery as a consequence of the Trojan War, 'who shall have me, a miserable hag, for his slave?' (190). Whereas in Osofisan's adaptation it is the cause of the war; this is of particular relevance to the history of the Yoruba kingdoms- where historically the slave trade facilitated the British colonization.[136] Gotrick notes that Osofisan 'uses the gods as a weapon to criticize the Yoruba people for having allowed themselves to be deceived by the empty glamour of the West in a way that resembles how Iyunloyes's [Helen's] two husbands were deceived'.[137] With this twist in the cause of the War Osofisan moves the

[134] Gotrick 2008:88.
[135] Gotrick 2008:88.
[136] Gotrick 2008:88.
[137] Gotrick 2008:89.

blame from the gods onto the people themselves, just as he does with Anglugbua, who is not to be blamed for initiating the war. Yet in Euripides, Hecuba blames the gods for not supporting her, 'why do I invoke the gods? Even before this they were deaf to our appeals' (1280-1281). This adaptation shifts responsibility from the gods to those humans who were involved in the connection with the British slave triangle. However, the 'statements about slavery open out perspectives, well beyond Yorubaland, onto the black diaspora across the centuries'.[138] What I believe Osofisan to be doing is opening up a discussion over where the responsibility lies for slavery in not only in Owu, but in other parts of Africa. *Trojan Women* is clearly a suitable vehicle for this as these women are waiting to be taken into slavery, (e.g.: 'who has won each of us?' (145); has some herald come already from the Greeks? Who is to have me for his miserable slave?' (184-185); 'What man of Argos or of Phthia will take me away from Troy? Who will take me to an island place?' (186-189) 'Lady, you know what is to happen to you. But what Greek of the Peloponnese or the north controls my fate?' (292-294).

The African influences on this performance create a seamless connection to the singing and dancing found in the ancient chorus, in the form of small groups of two or three actors forming informal chanting choruses.[139] There is music too; 'two standing drums- a *dundun* drum on one occasion- *sekere*, a gong and a rattle are the instruments used to create an atmosphere, to help change the tempo and to accentuate the action'.[140] The singing and music aid the script by changing the dynamics between the scenes, some are more suited to a repetitive slow chant emphasising the

[138] See Budelmann 2007:19.
[139] For more information on the ancient chorus and its modern equivalences see Billings, Budelmann and Macintosh 2013.
[140] Gotrick 2008:84.

lamentation and others build in speed, raising the heart rate towards the stichomythia found in the play between certain characters.

In sum, this production still keeps the loss of faith in the gods found in Euripides, but extends the distance between the characters and the gods as Anlugbua is represented as powerless in the war. One of Osofisan's intentions for this production was also to throw into question the concept of slavery and who can be held responsible for this. Placing this production in Africa highlights this intention in a contemporary war zone and Osofisan uses traditional African music and singing to increase the tension of this controversial play.

The two productions just discussed have been chosen for comparison, as they have emphasised different aspects of Euripides' *Trojan Women*. Each production is set in its own, specific, ethnic and temporal context while being able to effect a sense of the global reach of the tragedy. The main productions about which I would like to go into much more detail are those by Katie Mitchell at the National Theatre in 2007 and Caroline Bird at the Gate Theatre in 2012. The reason I will be specifically analysing these particular versions is because I was present at Caroline Bird's adaptation and I have seen the National Theatre's professional recording of Katie Mitchell's version. Therefore the comments I will be making are not based on secondary sources but on my own observations.

2.5. 'Women of Troy' directed by Katie Mitchell and adapted by Don Taylor at Lyttelton Theatre 2007.

2.5.1. The gods

Katie Mitchell omits the Euripidean prologue (1-100) entirely and begins immediately with Hecuba and the chorus conversing about their fates. The removal of the gods from this modern adaptation means that we lose the essence of the ancient Greek aspect of divine assistance or in this instance, hindrance, as well as Euripides' own questioning of the gods. However, it clearly was not an aspect in which Mitchell was interested in portraying in her adaptation. Transporting the ancient gods, which are not worshipped anymore, into the modern day is difficult if you want to give a realistic performance as Mitchell is, so therefore she has left out this first original scene. The result of the absence of the gods in this production is that the play's concern with the questioning of the connections between the divine and human morality and the resulting challenge to convention is lost.[141]. One might argue that Mitchell understood Euripides to be saying that the gods have abandoned the humans, and so the world she shows, in which the gods do not exist is faithful to that of Euripides. Yet it is interesting that the Japanese and African productions do have the gods played, because there are similar figures which they can draw on in their culture. This adds another reason why Mitchell may not have included the gods as there is no equivalent in Britain. In the end, the adaptations are all different but it is true that in the original no human interacts with any god in the play.

2.5.2. Staging and Costumes

Mitchell's set, - dark and dingy, and very dimly lit, creates an effect of depression and abandonment: a carefully calculated two-storey dirty warehouse at a dock, with a working industrial lift to the upper-floor forms the backdrop for three

[141] See Mastronarde 2005:328.

tables with scattered chairs around them and metal bins in-between. Everything looks scattered but is actually carefully placed for Cassandra's madness scene, which introduces the original Euripidean element of fire in a premeditated, yet seemingly random manner.[142] In Euripides, Cassandra enters carrying a torch, 'raise up the torch! Bring it here, bring me light! I pay reverence to this temple- look, look! - I light it with the blaze of these torches!' (308-310). Mitchell uses this idea and adapts it to her set. Cassandra enters from the downstairs toilet which she has set alight, then as she dances out onto centre stage she then causes havoc and sets fire to all of the bins around the set. Mathew Watkins the assistant stage manager explained that the bins were placed at the end of gas pipes so that a member of the team, off-stage would be able to keep control of the fires.[143] This adaptation of the Euripidean torch is an exciting way of showing the burning of Troy and the distress and madness that this war has created. The fire which was left burning for the majority of the scene created suspense and drama to the already frantic nature of the scene, Cassandra was dancing around setting everything on fire and her mother, Hecuba, was anxiously attempting to put them out whilst trying to restrain her daughter. The aspect of danger and pyromania added excitement to Euripides' original long monologues, which would have significantly slowed down Cassandra's spiralling effect produced by the fire.

The upstairs element of the set is a holding bay in which Helen is continually present, watching the other women. Susie Trayling who played Helen said that it was Katie Mitchell's intention to have Helen continually visible, the idea being that she has been taken from Troy and held in this warehouse for about twenty five and a half hours knowing full well that the longer she is not killed or destroyed the more

[142] See Wiles 1997:120.
[143] http://www.stagework.org.uk/webdav/harmonise@Document@id=WoT41b.html (accessed 11/08/14).

likely she is being saved for some purpose.[144] Until she is brought down by a guard, Helen is a voiceless trapped animal desperately rushing up and down. This is a more sympathetic portrayal of Helen than the usual way in which 'she is revealed with increasing repugnance as a completely odious character'.[145] This is backed up by the fact that Helen is blamed for the war throughout the play (for instance: the murderer of Priam 132-4; Troy's ruin 771-3; abhorred by the gods 1211-3). As O'Gorman suggests 'Euripides' play offers a splitting of the dual role of women in narratives of war, as he shows us on the one hand the pathos of the women deprived of their men's protection and on the other the vituperation of the woman positioned as the cause of the war'.[146] Mitchell effectively shows this dual nature by showing the vulnerable exposed nature of Helen but also having all the other women unite against her. This desperate image of Helen comes from the fact that she is the 'uncontested queen of beauty, every man's wildest dream, encased all the same in hate'.[147]

Mitchell's staging emphasises even more the Euripidean hatred towards Helen in *Trojan Women.* The interesting contrast which can be made here is when one thinks about representations of Helen in myth, where she is treated as a goddess with men falling at her feet. Her segregation from the Trojan women is shocking as Helen is usually represented as the heart of the party. This representation is underlined further when Hecuba screams up to where Helen is trapped on the upper floor, as she is spot-lit as if in a police inquiry: 'I know her, and so do you, everyone who's met her and suffered for it knows her well enough!'.[148]. The Trojan women are now ironically on the side of

[144] http://www.stagework.org.uk/webdav/harmonise@Document@id=WoT65.html (accessed 11/08/14).
[145] Lindsay 1974:143.
[146] O'Gorman 2006:196.
[147] Meagher 2002:2.
[148] Taylor 1991:84.

Menelaus and support his decision for revenge and Mitchell's idea to separate Helen apart accentuates this even more.

The costume selection for this adaptation was extremely modern and elegant, as all the female characters including the chorus were dressed in black evening gowns, wearing evening make-up, with their hair smartly pinned up, holding a sequinned clutch bag. I believe the reason for this costume choice is to show that even in the depths of depression these women wish to appear to maintain their dignity and pride and to show their position in society through their austere formality. Also Wiles suggests that 'the costume of tragedy was highly ornate… emphasizing the status of the performance as a ceremony'.[149] Vicki Mortimer's modern lavish gowns could be seen to portray this sense of ceremony, and of maintaining appearances, which is most evident in Hecuba's sense of her dignity (e.g.: 'I was royal by birth, and I married a King).[150] Alternatively, it is possible to argue that the costuming is ironic in showing that the outward trappings of status have no relation to the actual situation and that somehow Hecuba deludes herself into believing she is still a queen. The ball gowns are also related to the ballroom style of dancing which both Hecuba and the chorus participate in, in their deluded trance-like state.

Mortimer decided to dress Cassandra in a contrasting coloured dress of silver and a silver veil, in association with a wedding dress. As in this scene Cassandra says 'Hymen, god of marriage, hallow the bridegroom and his desire, and bless me, the bride, and my new home, the royal bedroom of Argos!'.[151] Her outfit emphasises again her difference from the other women, she is the first of them to be selected and taken off

[149] Wiles 2000:157.
[150] Taylor 1991:68.
[151] Taylor 1991:61.

and she has descended into a frenzied state where she has dressed herself in a wedding dress to greet her soon-to-be husband. But again we see her forcing herself still to behave like the Queen: 'my legs are trembling, but I won't fall. Old limbs strengthen yourselves'.[152]

The costumes are a viewer's first impression of the type of adaptation which the director wants to portray, and they immediately influence our relationship with the characters, even before they speak. In this case the dresses of the women actually masked their personalities, so as an audience member your opinion of the women changed from rich ladies at a party to women trying to hold themselves together whilst their insides are destroyed through grief. (Eg: 'beat your temples, tear out your hair, let your nails rake your face like a bank of oars).[153]

2.5.3. Chorus and Music

I have placed the chorus and the music together as in this adaptation Mitchell works very closely with Gareth Fry, who is the sound designer. The chorus are difficult characters to intertwine into the action as they are not really directly involved in the play, they do not advance the plot but in *Women of Troy* they are constantly visible on stage. Mitchell herself says that 'in the original play the style of writing changes as it moves from what we would see as fourth wall realism, which is the normal scenes, to when it goes into the choruses, where the language is much more heightened

[152] Taylor 1991:102.
[153] Taylor 1991:98.

and there is a much more formal structure'.[154] So, there is a verbal difference between the acting scenes and those which involve the chorus, also because the chorus deliver their lines to music. Mitchell did not want them sung but did still want to include the musical nature found in Euripides' original. Mitchell says that she has attempted to move from 'realism to abstract dance or abstract speaking'.[155] Unfortunately because this style of drama is rarely used in Western theatre, it seemed to rather lurch into 1940's rigid quickstep dances to distorted swing music, which Struan Leslie says is in association with 'the formality of ballroom dancing'.[156] The distorted nature of the music gave the impression that they were dancing in a trance, as if they were being forced to move their feet as soon as the music began. Also the fact that they were dancing a quickstep without partners emphasised how alone they were, they had no men to lead them in the dance, it was as if they only had the music left, it gave an air of desperation, that the only thing left for them to do was dance. The music left me wondering whether it was linked with the spirit of the Blitz of World War Two, or when the orchestra continues to play as the Titanic is sinking. Again, there is an element of delusion here in that they keep on pretending to dance.

This chorus is very much a united group of women, they react the same to the events and they have the same intention of self-preservation. If they are singled out they will be sent away with different Greek men. As Gilligan suggests 'femininity is defined through attachment… female gender identity is threatened by separation'.[157] But in this situation they are threatened by separation as they will be sent away to

[154] http://www.stagework.org.uk/webdav/harmonise@Document@id=WoT34b.html (accessed 12/08/14).
[155] http://www.stagework.org.uk/webdav/harmonise@Document@id=WoT34b.html (accessed 12/08/14).
[156] http://www.stagework.org.uk/webdav/harmonise@Document@id=WoT85.html (accessed 12/08/14).
[157] Gilligan 1982:8.

different towns, enslaved and deported- the other female survivors are all they have left of Troy (eg: 'Is there any decision? No message from the Greeks about the slave allocation? Who'll be master of my grief?).[158] They represent the mass reactions to this grievous situation, they are not royalty, they are just the ordinary women of Troy and their role is to loyally follow their queen. Their unity is again another way of their delusional state to be emphasized, they still perceive themselves as members of this group, yet in reality they will all end up as individuals in strange lands.

2.5.4. Portrayal of the Characters

The variety of the female experience found in *Trojan Women* is an aspect in which playwrights, directors and translators have to carefully analyse as there are a lot of levels found in their situations and personalities.[159] Hecuba is the Queen, the undisputed leader of the other women, yet she also is the mother, playing a caring, concerned role for Cassandra in her episode of madness. Mitchell strongly emphasised the regal, stiff upper-lip character of Hecuba, the way that she kept her emotions in check even with the sound of the ships, taking away her daughter. However, instead of watching a tragedy it felt like an upper middle-class drama. This posh atmosphere seemed to mask the devastation as you felt like they still had money and their palace and their expensive dresses. However, Hecuba is at the top of the hierarchical ladder, she is the Queen and now will be a slave so one could say that actually her tragedy seems greater as she has the furthest to fall and the most disgrace will be brought on

[158] Taylor 1991:56.
[159] Mossman 2005.

her name. Nevertheless in this production her lack of emotions left the audience only seeing her hard exterior, she did not let us in to feel what she was truly experiencing so there was a lack of sympathy for her. At some stages, when she could not keep up this stiff-upper lip image, she seemed to be having a toddler's tantrum instead of having her heart metaphorically torn out through grief. Mitchell's intentions could have been to show the contrast between this woman of dignity and the common women in the chorus who were whimpering and uneasy throughout. Perhaps Mitchell's intention is to show the extreme opposites of the female reaction to grief, Hecuba and the chorus. The chorus women are very emotional in contrast to Hecuba who is less so. Therefore it is clear to see that this dignified image of Hecuba which Mitchell creates is to show the difference between the common women in the chorus and the Queen.[160]

Helen was a challenge for the production team. Susie Trayling talks about the comparison which she drew with the 'modern figure of Princess Diana and her history of bulimia, fame and tragedy'.[161] It was important for her not to just see Helen as a blonde 'bimbo' but as a beautiful celebrity struggling with the pressure of her fame. She put on a front whilst conversing with Menelaus but there was present a fear that her looks may not get her out of this situation.[162] It is a fine line to walk, whether to play Helen as arrogant and unlikeable as all men swoon over her every movement. And as mentioned before she is still wearing her beautiful clothes and not shorn and despairing as Hecuba would expect her to be. Or, is it better to play her as insecure and damaged due to everyone's expectations of her, before they have even met her. Again, this fragility was put in contrast with the strong-natured Hecuba, who was clearly not

[160] See Goff 1995:157 on the extremes of female emotion in tragedy.
[161] http://www.stagework.org.uk/webdav/harmonise@Document@id=WoT69.html (accessed 12/08/14).
[162] Compare Blondell 2013:1-57.

affected by the stresses of potentially becoming a slave in Greece. She was able to pull herself off the ground to deliver her opinion articulately. Mitchell cleverly puts these female experiences up against each other, to battle and compete over their reactions towards grief:

> HELEN: I'm terrified of what may come next!
>
> HECUBA: There'll be no room for any doubt that she's guilty![163]

To sum up, Mitchell aimed at a realistic and naturalistic version of *Trojan Women*, which is why she removed the prologue. It seemed to be a non-specific setting in a non-specific time period until the World War Two influences became apparent, particularly the music and dancing. This element was particularly effective in demonstrating the deluded mind-sets and almost trance-like nature of the women, it was as if they were suffering from PTSD.[164] This delusional theme was also present in the costumes which Mitchell chose for her production, to have them in such formal ball gowns is to show that they have not come to the realisation of their fate. Her characterisation of the women is very effective as it emphasises their different features, the crazed nature of Cassandra, the strong-willed attitude of Hecuba and the vulnerable side of Helen. It showed the extremity of emotions which women can show in the aftermath of such a disaster.

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[163] Taylor 1991: 84-5.

[164] For the connections between PTSD and tragedy see Healey 2009: http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/12/theater/12greeks.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 and See Edith Hall on Nightwaves discussing PTSD and the heroes of Greek drama with Philip Dodd and Janus Metz, 4th April 2011.

2.6. 'The Trojan Women' written by Caroline Bird at the Gate Theatre, 2013.

2.6.1. The gods

In contrast to Mitchell's interpretation Bird does keep the gods in the tragedy but not as actors on stage. Instead, they deliver their lines to the audience from an old, black and white hospital television screen attached to the wall, creating the effect that they were even more distant than if they were present in person on the stage. It was as if they were watching the reality television show with no consequences, as Poseidon says to end this prologue 'let's see shall we?'.[165] To play these characters, Bird chose Tamsin Greig as Athena and Roger Lloyd Pack for Poseidon, two famous and recognisable actors. While these characters are clearly not Euripidean gods, out of touch with the modern world, their discussion in Bird's prologue is a close interpretation of Euripides' portrayal of cold and distant gods, only interested in mortals as their pawns:

> ATHENA: I want the Greeks drowned on their way home.
>
> POSEIDON: It's not that simple.
>
> ATHENA: Yes it is. When the prisoner transport vans get loaded on the ferries, leave the bow doors open.
>
> POSEIDON: Oh I suppose I could do that. Does that mean no one's going to win?
>
> ATHENA: What do you mean 'win'? Fuck off Poseidon, it's not chess.[166]

The idea that the gods see this tragedy as a game is linked to the idea discussed earlier that actually neither the Greeks or Trojans win, it is devastation for

[165] Bird 2012:21.
[166] Bird 2012:20.

both sides of the war. In Bird's adaptation, as in Euripides, there are no winners.[167] The most interesting emphasis Bird makes to this prologue is the gods' lack of interest and throw-away comments about the lives of these mortals, particularly Cassandra:

> POSEIDON: They've put her in the psychiatric ward on the other side of the prison.
>
> ATHENA: Maybe I'll send her some grapes.
>
> POSEIDON: It's the least we can do.[168]

Bird's portrayal of the gods is put into modern idiom and makes more extreme the underlying contempt for, or disbelief in, the gods which many critics see as characteristic of *Trojan Women*. This lack of belief in the gods is reflected in the characters for example Hecuba says to her husband before he is killed '"don't fight, you're too frail, hide with me behind the altar, beneath this laurel-tree; Zeus will protect us." HA! They speared him on the altar, wiped the splash-back off their faces with laurel-leaves'.[169] We can see here that Bird wants to portray their complete lack of faith in the gods helping them now. In her version, the human characters know theirs is a lost cause and they will have to fend for themselves.

2.6.2. Staging and Costumes

The staging of this production is the most modern part of the adaptation as it is set in a mother and baby unit of a prison. The idea of them being trapped inside a prison adds an extra interpretation to the claustrophobia found in Euripides where they

[167] Easterling 1997b:174.
[168] Bird 2012:21.
[169] Bird 2012:22.

are not enclosed within four walls, but only tents 'look at the seat I occupy here, hard by the tents of Agamemnon' (139-140). The set consists of three hospital beds and one empty cot lined up against a wall with decaying stickers of once-cute animals which now give a more grimacing feel. 'There is a hand-soap dispenser on the wall: every time a character enters, the first thing they do is sanitize their hands'.[170] This realistic touch adds to the hospital and clinical feeling of the place, it is not an environment which is welcoming or inviting. The beds are bleak and accompanied by very little bedding, 'they didn't give me a duvet… only scratchy blankets for her majesty. Lovely. Freeze an old woman'.[171] The temperature and the blankets become a main theme throughout this version to show the bleak conditions that the women face. It is another way again to show the fall from grace which Hecuba has suffered. Some of the poorer Trojans would have been happy for any blanket, however, compared to her lush lifestyle she is not happy that she is being treated in the same way as them and not given any special treatment. This blanket is something which she then clings on to as a symbol of security as that is all she now has left. In much the same way as Mitchell shows Hecuba's delusional attachment to her evening gown, so Bird's Hecuba is attached to the blanket. Both new versions interpret the Euripidean Hecuba's attachment to the outward trappings of queenly status in the midst of desperation in a similar fashion. However, in Bird even this gets taken away from her:

TALTHYBIUS: I need your blanket.

HECUBA: What? Get off! It's freezing in here.

TALTHYBIUS: It's not to humiliate you or make you cold. These can easily be torn and twisted into nooses. They're not … despair-proof.

[170] Bird 2012:18.
[171] Bird 2012:22.

HECUBA: Are you going to turn down the air-conditioning?[172]

These refrigerated conditions remind one of a slaughter house cool-store for the animals awaiting their butchery. At this stage in the play these women do not know to whom they will be assigned, they do not know where they will be going, they are awaiting their tragic future, just like cattle. Also the constant hum of the air-conditioning unit is a continual reminder to the characters of where they are and creates a persistent air of tension in the background to the speeches. This staging interprets the original stationary nature of the tragedy and places it in the modern-day equivalent, so as to make it believable and relatable for a contemporary audience.

The costumes in this production are directly related to the set as Hecuba and the chorus are dressed in thin, shapeless hospital gowns, eroding their individual identities, and turning them into unidentifiable captives in the enemy prison unit, it is only one step away from being assigned a number. This idea is reinforced by Talthybius who says 'there are seventeen cells in this surviving block and each cell contains over twenty women'.[173] All of these women are now a collective unit and their hospital robes are the equivalent to orange prison uniforms.

The next costume scene I would like to discuss is Helen, who 'enters in a towel, as though just out of the shower, with wet hair. She is carrying an expensive-looking sports bag with a change of clothes in it, a pair of high-heeled boots, and a bunch of grapes'.[174] This is the stage direction which describes Helen's first entry onto the stage and could not be further away from the wretched state of Hecuba or the chorus. She has been given special privileges and is not told to wear the hospital gowns. This is

[172] Bird 2012:27.
[173] Bird 2012:28.
[174] Bird 2012:64.

an interesting addition to Euripides' entrance of Helen: Menelaus orders his men to 'drag her here by that murderous hair of hers!' (880-881). It would seem that Bird here does not want her to seem like the victim, she does not want the audience to feel sympathy for Helen, but to hate her arrogance and control over her husband. Her costume begins with a towel, which she drops to the floor as she dresses herself on the stage; she parades around in her bra, knickers and her boots. I believe that this interpretation is directly linked to Hecuba's line in Euripides, 'do not look at her, or she will fill you with longing and make you her prisoner. She ensnares men's eyes, captures cities, sets homes on fire; she possesses such enchantment'. (890-893) It is these enchantments that Helen is flaunting in Bird's adaptation, it is her looks and beauty which will win Menelaus back so it is suitable for Bird to make her costume a towel then lingerie. It provides a severe contrast to the unflattering hospital gowns of the surrounding women. So, one could suggest that Helen, in this adaptation, is objectifying herself as well as being objectified by others.

2.6.3. Portrayal of Characters

Euripides' play surrounds the experience and interactions of Hecuba and Bird emphasizes these different exchanges she has through the dialogue. Bird's dialogue responds to the different modes of speech which critics such as Judith Mossman have identified as crucial to the play.[175] So Bird uses language to exaggerate the class gap between Hecuba and the chorus for example:

CHORUS: I don't think we're from the same area.

[175] Mossman 2005:357. For Hecuba especially see 358-9.

HECUBA: You lived a fine life in Troy. Everyone did.

CHORUS: I didn't.[176]

In Bird's adaptation class differences, are highlighted far more than they were in Mitchell's or others, with the effect that the sense of female community that is sometimes thought of as one of the play's characteristics, is eroded. Bird wanted to show the hierarchy that is found in *Trojan Women*, Hecuba has fallen from grace, thrown into a mother and baby prison unit and she knows it when she says 'I used to swill mouthwash on my balcony every morning and spit it over the rail. My people would have slit their throats to save my little finger'.[177] Bird portrays Hecuba as a once powerful monarch, whose arrogance makes her hard to sympathise with. Perhaps Euripides saw this too, as Athenian democracy did tend to be suspicious of powerful monarchs.

There are no lines found in Euripides where the chorus question or challenge Hecuba, they are united with her as their Queen and leader in this situation, this idea of confrontation is an addition of Bird's. She said in an interview with Henry Stead that she wanted to show the 'hypocrisies inherent in the ruling of Troy, there are a lot of implications of corruption and there is even a hierarchy in the sandwiches'.[178] What she means here is the scene with Talthybius, who tries to soften them up with food, 'we have the very posh Wild Crayfish and Rocket, we have Coronation Chicken (a Queen's favourite sandwich, eh?) and good old-fashioned Egg Mayonnaise'.[179] Through this subtle indication we see the true portrayal of the characters, Hecuba is clearly

[176] Bird 2012:24.
[177] Bird 2012:23.
[178] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4IIXr5DYh4 (accessed 16/08/14).
[179] Bird 2012:26.

suited to the more expensive fancy sandwiches whereas the chorus is quite content with the standard food and is grateful for it.

The chorus in this adaptation are not a separate part of the action as they were in Mitchell and ancient tragedy.[180] Bird has the chorus as a single, pregnant lady who is very much a main character of the play yet she does have a modern twist on a choral ode:

CHORUS: (*Sings*.)

Hush-a-bye baby, your city's in flames,
Daddy's old news and Mummy's in pain,
Sister's a lady who's accident-prone
Brother's a soldier and you're all alone.

Hush-a-bye baby, your cradle is gone,
Mummy's not here and Daddy's moved on,
Sister's a lady who's not coming home,
Brother's a goner and you're all alone.

This is clearly a completely different style of language to the ancient chorus lines, however it portrays the same techniques. Using a lullaby as a choral ode is an ingenious way of bringing an unusual sung element into a serious tragedy. It is the stark contrast of the sweetness of the melody and the harsh reality of the words which gives an unnerving juxtaposition of ideas. The main difference here is obviously that the chorus consists of only one woman, instead of a group of women like in Mitchell's version. We therefore lose their presence as 'a constant reminder of the communal

[180] See Easterling 1997b:176.

disaster'.[181] It makes the disaster seem more intimate between these two characters instead of a group of women who never speak individually and are never treated separately, but have a group identity. It allows the chorus to feel like a more integrated part of the tragedy instead of commentators of the action which has already past.

Caroline Bird created a new and interesting version of Euripides' *Trojan Women*, she has thought about the overall intention of the tragedy and has shown that it is the survivors who suffer most in the waiting game of them being taken as booty. The extra elements which she has added do not hinder the original but highlight certain scenes or relationships which she feels are relevant for the contemporary stage. Her use of the gods and chorus show that she has been faithful to the skeleton of Euripides' tragedy but has evolved his ideas to suit her intentions.

2.6.4. Trojan Women Conclusion

In conclusion, one of the elements which has been focused on in this analysis is the absence/presence of the gods. In the Suzuki adaptation we see the ancient gods being played by one modern equivalent, who is constantly present on the stage yet ironically constantly absent in the lives of the women. We then see Osofisan's adaptation, where also Poseidon and Athena are transformed into a modern corresponding god, Anlugbua. Then the two main plays of this dissertation were analysed and we saw that in the adaptation by Mitchell, no gods were played at all. She took the absence of the gods in the lives of the women, found in Euripides, as literal. Bird, on the contrary, includes the gods within her adaptation, but uses them to include

[181] Easterling 1997b:177.

dark humour in the prologue. She emphasises the idea that the gods see the mortals as a game and as entertainment. This is portrayed through their colloquial, nonchalant language.

The second major focus has been the characterisation of both Helen and Hecuba and their interaction in the agon. Suzuki completely removed the character of Helen and she was only mentioned leading to the murder of all the chorus women by Menelaus. In Osofisan's adaptation less focus was put on the conflict between the women and more on the conflict surrounding the responsibility for slavery. Mitchell creates a very interesting interpretation of Helen as she focuses on her nervousness and vulnerability. This is an alternative reading into the character that is usually played as arrogant and confident. Hecuba feeds off this vulnerability and savagely attacks Helen; she is played in a dominant and dignified way and actively seeks revenge against the women who she fully blames for the loss of her family. In Mitchell's production the costumes played a subtle role in the characterisation of these women, as they showed us the outer layer to be lavishly dressed, whilst the inner layers are crumbling in their mourning. Bird characterised Helen completely differently from Mitchell, as a confident character, showing off her desirable naked body, and using her assets to ensnare her husband, who will again fall in love with her. She is brash and dismissive of the other women, especially Hecuba, she does not see her as a threat at all. Hecuba does not come out of this production in a particularly favourable light as she plays to the hierarchy found in this play and places herself above the chorus. She is not interested in the welfare of the chorus and does not show herself to be a supportive queen in this difficult time.

Each play highlights different aspects of Euripides' *Trojan Women.* They all contribute alternate and controversial features which are worthy of their place in the performance history of this surviving tragedy.

3. Conclusion

Modern productions of ancient tragedies hold an important place on the contemporary stage. They challenge our moral identity and force us to answer difficult questions about guilt in murder, about victimisation and responsibility. Both *Medea* and *Trojan Women* have female protagonists and this dissertation has focused on how the playwrights have handled their portrayal. I have analysed many different styles of theatre from across the globe and they have all addressed the dilemmas, which Euripides poses, differently. Some have stretched the original tragedy so far that it may not be recognisable, such as Harrison's sex-war opera. Some have tried to remain more faithful to Euripides' intentions such as Mitchell's *Trojan Women.* Theatre is a living entity and is ever challenging yet it is astonishing that a play written over 2,000 years ago is still relevant to all sorts of audiences in both the Western and the Eastern worlds. Euripides' plays have been used and sometimes arguably abused to act as a mouthpiece for a modern viewpoint, such as feminism.

The study of modern adaptations of ancient plays is viewed as a sub-discipline of Reception Studies. It is a growing discipline and this dissertation finds itself adding to the analysis of how we, as a 21st-century audience, react to the scenes of violence, grief and the breakdown of relationships. It analyses how playwrights alter and emphasise different aspects of the plays. For example in the *Medea*, do they want our sympathies to lie with Medea or Jason or their children? At the end of the play do they offer Medea

salvation or do we need to see her punished for her sins? Also in the *Trojan Women*, do they include the ancient gods on the contemporary stage? Which of the numerous female characters do we relate to? All of these questions are part of the way in which different people connect with Euripides and in this dissertation I have demonstrated the most modern adaptations of these two plays.

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