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The Trojan Women by Jan Klata – Tragedy on WW III¹

In my paper I talk about my/our work on The Trojan Women directed by Jan Klata in Wybrzeże Theatre in Gdańsk (date of premiere 8th September 2018). I worked as the dramaturge of the play. The show was acclaimed by theatre critics as the best show of the season. It depicts all that Homer did not tell us in his Iliad: what the first morning after the seizure of Troy looked like. In our play, we preserve the poetic style and imagery of the ancient text written by Euripides. In our show we do not present white, classical marble sculpture-like characters: the show depicts the Greeks as cruel barbarians, who could not even make good use of their own victory. In my paper I describe our work on that show, familiarize the reader with our decisions and problems that we had found during our work.

Keywords: Euripides, *The Trojan Women*, Jan Klata, Polish theatre, reception

Jan Klata is one of the most distinctive contemporary European directors and recent recipient of European Theatre Prize (2018). He studied drama directing first in Warsaw and then at the PWST in Kraków. Worked as an assistant to Jerzy Grzegorzewski, Jerzy Jarocki, and Krystian Lupa. On graduation he worked as a copywriter, music journalist, and director of a TV talk show. His first professional production was Nikolai Gogol's *The Inspector General* for the Jerzy Szaniawski Dramatic Theatre in Wałbrzych (2003). A month later Klata staged his own drama, *Grejprut's Smile*, at the Polski Theatre in Wrocław in 2004 his *H. after William Shakespeare's Hamlet* for the Wybrzeże Theatre had its high-profile premiere at the Gdańsk Shipyard. From that time,

¹I discussed this production in my monograph, *Trojanki Jana Klaty* (Kraków 2019) and in the article: *Dramaturg pod Troją – praca nad tekstem „Trojanek” w reżyserii Jana Klaty*. *Meander* 75 (2020) 219–230.

the director has constantly worked with Poland's most interesting stages, including the TR Warszawa, National Sary Theatre in Kraków, Polski Theatre in Wrocław, and Polski Theatre in Bydgoszcz. In 2006 he won the Passport Award of the *Polityka* weekly in the Theatre category for his innovative reading of the classics, and for his passion and tenacity in examining national myths and diagnosing the Polish reality. In 2013–17 Klata was the director of the National Sary Theatre in Kraków, where he directed *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (2006), *Oresteia* (2007), *Trylogy* (2009), *The Wedding of Count Orgaz* (2010), *To Damascus* (2013), *Ubu Roi* (2014), *King Lear* (2014), *Enemy of the People* (2015), and *The Wedding* (2017). After many years Jan Klata has returned to the Wybrzeże Theatre in Gdańsk to stage *The Trojan Women* by Euripides².

“I work with dramaturgs because for me theatre is not a form of illustrating literature.”³

Jan Klata

The history of ancient Greece is the cultural capital of the European civilisation. And although more than two and a half thousand years have passed (and, consequently, we do not feel much of a bond with our great ancestors), we keep repeating all the clichés about the origin of democracy, philosophy, and theatre or that the dilemmas of Sophocles' *King Oedipus* are universal. As if we are too shy to admit that we are now characterised by a completely different cultural metabolism, where our problems and world views are completely different.

² Script: Euripides.

Director: Jan Klata.

Translation: Jerzy Łanowski.

Dramaturgy: Olga Śmiechowicz.

Scenography and wardrobe: Mirek Kaczmarek.

Music: Michał Nihil Kuźniak.

Stage movement: Maćko Prusak.

Cast: Dorota Kolak, Sylwia Góra-Weber, Magdalena Boć, Małgorzata Brajner, Małgorzata Gorol, Michał Kowalski, Katarzyna Dałek, Grzegorz Gzyl, Robert Ninkiewicz, Jacek Labi-jak, Piotr Biedroń, Agata Bykowska, Cezary Rybiński, Magdalena Gorzelańczyk, Antoni Łaciński/ Marcel Pawłowski, Michał Jaros, Katarzyna Figura, Krzysztof Matuszewski.

³ DERKACZEW (2010: 56).

When we speak and think about ancient Greece, we deal with a culture and a language that disappeared. We can only listen to the echo of voices saved on worn and torn papyrus rolls; encoded in a language that is very context-sensitive and, consequently, ambiguous. We are not able to determine exactly what ancient authors wanted to communicate to their community. We cannot define the context in which they wrote their works. We should also not assume that they left a universal message for us. Having written their plays Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides most certainly did not expect them to be read and staged over two and a half thousand years later. Their field of art was just as ephemeral and perishable as Michelangelo's snowman.⁴

In the fifth century BC no one bothered to archive the dramatic texts, neither did anyone record their authors' biographies⁵. I would, therefore, advise caution in making a statement that the works that have survived are masterpieces. It rather seems that the works of authors who were the avant-garde of the literature of the time, written out in single copies, known only to a narrow circle of recipients, did not stand the test of time⁶. The texts we read today were transcribed in the greatest number of copies and therefore constituted the Byzantine school reading canon⁷. As the Ottoman army approached the walls of Constantinople, the fleeing scholars took the most precious manuscripts including the texts of ancient tragedies as we know them today. On this basis, Italian printers prepared editions that spread throughout Renaissance Europe, laying the foundations for modern humanism⁸.

We are, therefore, the beneficiaries of ancient Greece. The founders of democratic Europe probably believed that the modern world would end differently from democratic Athens, which lost the Peloponnesian War and never returned to its former glory. However, it is more for pretension than out of actual spiritual needs that we buy collector's editions of hardly comprehensible

⁴ WALTON (2006: 5).

⁵ The first one to commission the archiving of dramatic texts was Lycurgus of Athens ca. 330 BC. See: REYNOLDS (2009: 20).

⁶ See Agathon's lost play *Anthos*. Aristotle, *Poetics*, IX. 20.

⁷ MARCINIAK (2004: 49).

⁸ WILSON (1992: 133).

philosophers debating the birth of human thought and shadows of the real world flickering on the wall of a cave forgotten by gods and people.

In this context, the contemporary understanding of ancient drama looks particularly interesting. Old texts are used to talk about sexual minorities⁹, innocent victims of the Holocaust¹⁰, emancipated feminism¹¹ and even about the last years of Lech Wałęsa's political activity.¹² These are the best examples of an easily noticeable tendency: each era has its own vision of antiquity and uses it for its own purposes.¹³ The newest productions of ancient texts in Poland which I am referring to are textbook examples of "recycling".¹⁴ Marvin Carlson in his book *The Haunted Stage. The Theatre as Memory Machine* claimed that drama has always been a genre "haunted" by the memory of the past.¹⁵ According to Carlson, its main goal is to present the already well-known stories in a new way. The main task of the authors is to modify the protagonists, events, and sometimes entire narrative schemes – to give them a new perspective and propose new interpretative possibilities thus equipping well-known stories with new meanings.

Since modern languages continue to evolve, each era needs new translations adapting old texts to the changing language standards and enabling further reinterpretations, conditioned by the current historical and social situation. At this point, an individual appears – increasingly compared to the extinct dodo bird¹⁶, also referred to as "bookosaur"¹⁷ – it is the classical

⁹ See: *Frogs*, directed by Michał Borczuch. Date and place of premiere: May 6, 2018, Studio Theatre, Warsaw.

¹⁰ See: *(A)pollonia*, directed by Krzysztof Warlikowski. Date and place of premiere: May 16, 2009, Nowy Theatre, Warsaw.

¹¹ See: *The Bacchae*, directed by Maja Kleczewska. Date and place of premiere: December 7, 2018, Jan Kochanowski Theatre, Warsaw.

¹² See: *Wałęsa at Colonus*, directed by Bartosz Szydłowski. Date and place of premiere: September 8, 2018, Łaźnia Nowa Theatre, Kraków.

¹³ This is why, in this context, the best manifestation of the contemporary understanding of ancient drama recently seems to me to be the vegetable version of Sophocles' *King Oedipus* directed by Jason Wishnow. See: *Oedipus the Movie* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8OkMqp_a188

¹⁴ Recycling – changing the perception of old works of art. See: JOSETTE (2010: 41).

¹⁵ CARLSON (2003).

¹⁶ HANSON (1998: 5).

¹⁷ HANSON (1998: xvii).

philologist. With the postmodern revolution in literary research, the work of a philologist and translator is no longer perceived as a cross-lingual transfer, but rather as a complex and multidimensional space for intercultural contacts¹⁸. The category still in force in the first half of the 20th century, ie. whether or not a translation is faithful to the original are no longer dominant in the eyes of literature researchers. According to this trend, the basic task of a translator is to assume a liminal position between cultures and to facilitate mutual understanding¹⁹. Translation is to be, above all, a “celebration of cultural differences”²⁰, and antiquity offers the horn of plenty filled with those.

Dramaturgs, philologists, translators preparing an ancient text for a contemporary production do not have the opportunity of looking into the mind of the author who after the third dress rehearsal (was there one in the days of Euripides?) would enter the orchestra of the Theatre of Dionysus and look at the still empty seats of audience. *The Trojan Women* were first produced in 415 BC, shortly after the Athenian pacification of the island of Melos. Its inhabitants quite naively assumed that they could withdraw from their military alliance with Athens with impunity. Athens responded by sending a disciplinary troop of soldiers - all the men were killed, the women and children were enslaved, which was supposed to be a clear warning for the other allies.

In response to these events, Euripides wrote a tragedy about what Homer in the *Iliad* failed to tell us: the morning after the Greeks conquered Troy and how the victors dealt with their victims. The Trojan women in the title of the play are representatives of the royal family, who found themselves at the very bottom of human existence and became the sexual slaves of Greek commanders. The victors could not handle their victory. In one night, they wanted to make up for the ten years they had spent at the walls of Troy, far away from their homes and families. The murder of innocent people was at its best, even though the war was already over. It is hard to believe that Euripides came up with such a topic without regard to recent events.²¹ We

¹⁸ HEYDEL (2009: 21).

¹⁹ BASSNETT (1998: 106).

²⁰ BAL (2015: 34).

²¹ However, this is what Hugh Bowden among others claims in his book: *Classical Athens*

can assume with a great deal of certainty that all those sitting in the audience were perfectly aware that the tragedian used a mythological allegory: the actors were talking about Troy, about the Greeks of ancient/mythical times, but in fact everyone thought about contemporary Melos. The Athenians were particularly self-conscious,²² which is why Euripides did not win the tragedy competition. Did he foresee how his art would be received?

The ancient theatre first and foremost asked questions. One of the most important things the Greeks have taught us is to not give straight, clear answers, and to assume different options and consider their different consequences.²³ As a result of the subsequent interpretation Euripides' *The Trojan Women* quickly became a symbol of "Everywar".²⁴

At the beginning of our work, it seemed particularly desirable to portray *The Trojan Women* in the context of the upcoming World War III. Especially since we undertook to stage a text about the collapse of a wealthy port city in Gdańsk, which is a wealthy port city itself. It would be equally easy to rewrite this story as one about the fate of the women on the Wilhelm Gustloff ship or those who fell into the hands of Soviet soldiers on their way to Berlin in 1945. When we read *The Trojan Women*, we first and foremost think of the timeless suffering of women, who have been sucked into the devastating war machine. Why is it so easy for us to forget that the Greeks who murdered them, gave us democracy, philosophy and theatre?

"This is what may be the most fascinating about Euripides' writing. The contrast between the two perceptions of ancient reality. The first one being the one we would like to have: a civilised world, built on philosophy, art, noble democratic politics, the golden age of humanity. Conservative circles are eager to cultivate such a vision, which is a completely untrue half-truth. Thus, in a surprisingly coherent way with Euripides' vision, they implement a certain mechanism of social deception. With this activity the community

and the Delphic Oracle. *Divination and Democracy*. BOWDEN (2005: 52–53).

²² See: Phrynichus *Capture of Miletus* – the tragedian was fined because he publicly criticized Athens for not helping Miletus.

²³ AUDEN (2017: 41).

²⁴ MILLS (2010: 165).

“feels good” by being hypocritical about the past and by giving it a propaganda-smooth image. On the other hand, there is the image of the antiquity that Euripides put in the foreground: Greek heroes as war criminals. I am trying to imagine how much courage it took to say something like that in public, to throw such a production before the eyes of the Athenian audience, intoxicated with imperial visions.”²⁵

The ancient Greeks were far from the nobility of the marble sculptures, which became the basis for Joachim Winckelmann’s canon of ancient beauty.²⁶ Convinced of their own greatness, they considered themselves superior to other nations,²⁷ but they themselves occasionally behaved like the barbarians they despised. The pacification of Melos was not an isolated example. Our primary task, therefore, was to bring to light what Euripides wanted to say and what cost him the competition. By strictly following the text, we went against the popular beliefs regarding classical texts and culture. We used a classical work of art to change contemporary thinking about the ancient times. Rather than recycling mythical stories it is much more interesting and radical to recycle human beliefs and perform a deep surgical procedure on an idealistic image imprinted during high school history lessons.

Therefore, the liminal space between the text and the performance became our battlefield. I do not think there exists a theoretician who can precisely define the role of text in the context of its performance.²⁸ In their work, artists try to negotiate the creation of a new entity between the two dimensions. Or perhaps the safest thing to say is that we use words to carve space for imagination? What complicates matters even more is that, in Jan Klata’s opinion, performing a Greek tragedy is not about performing words. The actor, through his presence, is to create a reality that is, in fact, far from realism. In our production it is, therefore, the norm that actors play *against* the meanings assigned by Euripides: if a character says that he is kneeling before someone in a begging gesture - he remains still, if he speaks of despair - he

²⁵ GULDA (2018: 12).

²⁶ PAINTER (2010: 61).

²⁷ Thuc. 2.34–46.

²⁸ WORTHEN (2010: xii).

remains collected. This is in line with the principle that if you speak about something, there is no use showing it as well. All our work on this production was guided by the principle of not giving the viewer what they expected. Even the poster is misleading in a way as it suggests a comedy, not a tragedy filled with cruelty. An analysis of our work on this production would therefore primarily be a report on what we did *not* present to the audience.

At the beginning of the performance, we see the world from the Greek perspective. Poseidon, Zeus' elder brother, god of the sea and earthquakes and protector of sailors runs onto the stage. With his narration, he introduces the audience to the time and place of the action. Athena inspired Odysseus to build a big wooden horse... And dawn has just broken the morning after the capture of Troy. According to one myth Poseidon built fortifications for the city together with Apollo. It is valid, therefore, that when he stands to look down on Troy made of sand, he does not mourn the people, but the "beautiful walls". Athena, the goddess of wisdom and rightful war, sneaks up behind his back. She pushes him when he least expects it and he falls onto the sand. There is nothing left of Priam's city, which causes her uncontrollable laughing attack. She came to persuade her uncle to join forces. She looks for bloody revenge on the Greeks who have desecrated her temple²⁹ and she presents Poseidon with an attractive vision of an all-encompassing extermination and she wants to make their homecoming a coming home to pain.

The audience should be horrified: thanks to Athena, the Greeks conquered Troy, also thanks to her - they will never return home. The deities in the universe of Homer's epics were created in the image of man. They are, therefore, both unpredictable and vindictive. They are characterised by "Old Testament cruelty". In Klata's production they wear white doctor gowns. It is not entirely clear whether they are residents of a mental hospital or sadistic scientists who have set up their own Westworld - a theme park of violence.³⁰ In Euripides' religious view of the world, gods not only exist they are also

²⁹ Ajax abducted (and probably raped) Cassandra who hid inside Athena's temple. The Greeks decided not to punish the warrior which caused the punishment of the whole Greek 'army'. Sophocles dedicated his lost tragedy *Ajax the Locrian* to this story.

³⁰ *Westworld* – an American science-fiction television series (2016).

interested in our fate. And worst of all, they can interfere with it at any time. Throughout the production, therefore, we will watch the triumphant Greeks, unaware of what awaits them, abuse their power over the victims.

Polyxena, Sophocles' lost tragedy, opened with the ghost of Achilles demanding that the innocent girl be sacrificed at his grave.³¹ Euripides' *Hecuba* began with the appearance of the ghost of Polydorus, the youngest son of king Priam. At the beginning of the war, he was sent back to the court of Polymestor, the king of Thrace and a friend of the family. When the Greeks captured Troy, the traitor killed the child and threw the body into the sea. When Athena and Poseidon descend from the stage high above the heads of the audience, a corpse appears, gruesomely hung from the batten³² – not *deus*, but a *cadaver ex machina*.³³ Its presence introduces the metaphysical level into the performance. It is a child played by an adult man who lets a grudge against his father smoulder because he had not been allowed to die in a heroic fight.³⁴ It prophesies what we are about to witness. His words become a sacred text, not one that can escape the audience's attention. They hide *ananke*³⁵ – the inevitable laws of fate.

The light on the stage does not brighten up until after this prologue when we see the Trojan Women emerging from behind the corpses. At first, we wanted them to be introduced by the sound of electric razors - all women would be shaving their heads. However, in this case a truly powerful effect would only be achieved during the premiere performance. Jan Klata believes that the chorus in a Greek tragedy is absolutely critical. From the very beginning of working on any production the question has to be answered: what is

³¹ MICHELAKIS (2002: 79).

³² Initially, we wanted to vacuum seal it in the same way as meat is sealed for curing at slaughterhouses. Unfortunately, this turned out to be technically impossible because an actor "packed" this way would not be able to say a word.

³³ When we perform outside the Wybrzeże Theatre, it often turns out that there is not enough machinery to allow the actor to be lowered from the ceiling. In such cases, we use an aerial platform which is a rather perverted reference to ancient stage practice. The device referred to as γέρανός – "a crane" was used to represent divine epiphanies.

³⁴ The Little Insurrectionist statue in Warsaw was an important inspiration when we were creating this scene.

³⁵ Gr. ἀνάγκη - necessity.

its ontological status? The Trojan women, members of the reigning family, will be randomly distributed among the Greek commanders as luxury goods. They all wear the same nylon black robe, a symbol of their community and enslavement, which imposed a very precise planning of the stage movement.

The incorporation of Hecuba (the protagonist) into the common self of the chorus is also an interesting formal approach (against the structure of the ancient text). Their one shared costume becomes a neural connection. It also serves an aesthetic function – it completely de-womanises the Trojan women who had become sexual slaves for the Greek soldiers. It is only at the end of the performance, as they “come out of the robe” that we see how beautiful these women are. It makes it possible for the chorus to resonate the actions of the queen not only through the text, but also on a somatic level. The community of suffering they create does not allow for individualisation. All the lines of the chorus are spoken out together, but when the words are no longer sufficient, we reach for the exclamations of pain that have been preserved to our times in the ancient text. We regulate and blend them - from the moment when we can no longer name emotions. The actresses exclaim: *feu feu, ottototototoi, oimoi, popoi*. When working on these scenes we had to overstep our perception of the potential of the sounds which actresses can produce. We had to process them with acoustic machinery to create a “phonosphere of pain”.

Associations with the ancient formula *pathei mathos* spring to mind. Hecuba’s hair turned white overnight. We had to make the paradox of her situation work. The queen of the gold-rich Trojans became a servant. It is a convention in the texts of the Greek tragedy that if the gods doom an unfortunate individual, it means that that individual manifested exceptional *hubris*. What did Hecuba do to make Zeus spare her life only to make her watch her loved ones die? Most importantly, her character is not sentimental about all of this. In the ten years of devastating war, she learned to function in the harsh male world. She has got the strength to one day shift to the side of the oppressors. She takes revenge on Polymestor by killing his children, who are in fact her own grandsons...³⁶ Only then does the chorus leave her.

³⁶ Polymestor was the husband of Ilione, the eldest daughter of Hecuba and Priam.

The Trojan women do not want to be part of the murder she committed. Our task was to stress very strongly that revenge does not erase the evil that has already taken place, it only sets off the spiral of subsequent murders.

The reversed perspective is crucial in *The Trojan Women*. Aeschylus used a similar approach in *The Persians*. History is not written here by the victors but by the defenceless women. The barbarism of the Greeks is embodied by the way they are treated. If we remember that the results of the tragedy competition were decided by men, it is hardly surprising that Euripides lost. The Greek troops appear only at the beginning of the second act, in the scene of the trial of Helen of Troy. They wear outdated costumes and masks reflecting the faces of Greek gods. We look at them and hear the repulsive sounds of male bodily functions. Savageness. For ten years they stayed in tents and looked at the walls they could not conquer. They fantasized so many times about the moment they would walk into Troy with flamethrowers...

Menelaus, Odysseus, Talthybius - all of Euripides' characters are represented against the perception of a common viewer. Menelaus not only failed to control his own wife, but also had to ask his elder brother for help to bring her home. Against his character, he had to play the role of a leader. Although after ten years spent in besieging Troy, the soldiers teased him for having an armour without a single scratch. During the scene of trial, he should kill Helena in front of the whole army so that everyone could see that their efforts were not in vain. The problem is that Menelaus is pathologically in love with her. One look at her and he forgets ten years of war.

We present Odysseus in a similar way. "A brave warrior, a great speaker, a wise advisor, a skilful diplomat, the cleverest of the Greeks"³⁷ – so much for the encyclopaedia. In Jan Klata's interpretation it was Odysseus who came up with Achilles' ghost. A community of winners needed a great ceremony, thanks to which simple soldiers would see that it is worth dying a brave death for their homeland. Ritual killing of the enemy on the grave of the greatest hero seemed like a perfect idea. Therefore, the youngest daughter of King Priam, Polyxena, is going to be sacrificed. And although the au-

³⁷ Encyklopedia PWN online: <https://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/haslo/Odyseusz;3950117.html>

dience hopes until the last moment that a god will intervene, the brave girl is not saved. See the sacrifice of Agamemnon's daughter Iphigenia who is saved last minute by Artemis. Her body is still warm when the Greek soldiers gang-rape her. There is no direct reference or allusion to this situation in Euripides' text. However, this was the best moment to show the scale of the cruelty the Greeks had allowed themselves to inflict on the Trojans.

Odysseus is lying all the time. He is a cunning, grey eminence, who does not have to be the official commander, it is enough that he suggests solutions at the right moments. When he snuck into Troy as a spy, he seduced Hecuba to get as much information as possible.³⁸ But now that the war is over, he no longer remembers that the queen let him go free instead of surrendering him to Priam. He makes her painfully aware that she was merely used to act as a silver bullet, which may open up a new field of interpretation for us. If we are right to interpret from Euripides that something happened between the Trojan queen and the king of Ithaca, it opens up a field for speculation as to whether Polyxena is not his daughter. For some reason, when Hecuba instructs her what words she should use to plead for her life, she says: "Here is your plea: he too has children."³⁹ However, it is more important to form a community around the spirit of the deceased hero than private sentiments.

It was also Odysseus who convinced the Greek commanders that Astyanax, Hector's only son, had to be killed.⁴⁰ Though again the viewers do not get what they expect. Astyanax is not a delightful baby on Andromache's chest. He is a spoiled brat from Young Fathers' *Toy* video. Sent to cadet school early, he is a stranger to his own family. After his father's death, he suddenly became the only hope that one day Troy would come back to life. However, he does not arouse the slightest sympathy.

³⁸ According to the myth it was Helen who discovered Odysseus in Troy. Without a clear answer, the question remains as to why Euripides needed this change. What interpretation and associations did he want to suggest to his audience?

³⁹ *Hecuba*. 340.

⁴⁰ *The Trojan Women*. 828.

Researchers like to consider Talthybius as the only positive character in *The Trojan Women*.⁴¹ At text level, it seems that he is the one who only truly sympathizes with Hecuba's fate. But already ancient tragedy writers knew perfectly well that saying something is one thing, whereas thinking it is quite another. In Jan Klata's interpretation, he is a psychopath who sadistically enjoys every suffering he sees. He waited ten years for this moment. And now that he is the only source of information for the queen about her and her daughters' fate, he has suddenly become reticent. He doses the information to Hecuba, consciously and perversely playing with ambiguities. What does it mean that Polyxena is going to be "free of trouble"? The viewers should be hoping for a happy ending. They cannot suspect that Talthybius has just euphemistically communicated that to die is better than to live in captivity. His words are like bullets. He is fascinated to see the reactions of women who have lost everything in one night. He himself does not believe that the fate of man can change like that.⁴²

Jan Klata dreamt of staging a full tetralogy: three tragedies and one satyr play at the end. Initially, we wanted to combine *The Trojan Women*, *Hecuba*, *Andromache*, and to stage *Helen* as a satyr play. The plot of *Andromache*, however, would have disturbed the whole setting. So we created a dilogy (*The Trojan Women*, *Hecuba* with *Helen* as a satyr play. According to the ancient convention, after such an incredible dose of suffering it was necessary to open the safety valve. Therefore, still during the applause, after the end of the second act (when the audience is absolutely convinced that after the grand finale with Cassandra's rage, the performance is over), they hear a deep, male voice from the loudspeakers reading Euripides' *Helen* in the Greek original. We return to the world premiere version when *Helen* was played by a man and we employ a full range of comedy tricks typical of satyr play. In such an epilogue we tell the story of the Trojan War, which Euripides most probably knew from Stesichorus' *The Cypria*. *Helen* has never been to Troy. Jealous Hera created a phantom kidnapped by Paris. Tyndareus' real daughter was

⁴¹ GILMARTIN (1970: 213–222).

⁴² *Hecuba*. 490.

in Egypt at the court of King Theoklymenos throughout the Trojan War. It is here that Menelaus, a shipwrecked survivor of a ship returning from Troy, finds her. After many years of separation, a happy meeting of lovers takes place. Contrary to everything the audience has seen so far, they start cheering for this love. However, even if the audience starts laughing, such an ending does not bring solace. “Oh, unhappy Troy! Through deeds not done by yourself, you are ruined, and have suffered pitifully”⁴³ is the most painful summary of the story we are telling.



“The Trojan Women” Theatre Poster by Mirek Kaczmarek

⁴³ *Helena*. 365.



“Polydorus (γέγονος)” Photograph by Olga Śmiechowicz



“Polydorus and Cassandra. Rehearsal.” Photograph by Olga Śmiechowicz



"Cassandra" Photograph by Olga Śmiechowicz



"The Trojan Women" Photograph by Olga Śmiechowicz



"Polyxena after the Rape Scene" Photograph by Olga Śmiechowicz



"Agamemnon and Hecuba. Reheasal." Photograph by Olga Śmiechowicz



“Hecuba. Final scene.” Photograph by Olga Śmiechowicz

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