



Grief Lessons: Four Plays by Euripides (New York Review Books Classics)

By Euripides



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Euripides, the last of the three great tragedians of ancient Athens, reached the height of his renown during the disastrous Peloponnesian War, when democratic Athens was brought down by its own outsized ambitions. “Euripides,” the classicist Bernard Knox has written, “was born never to live in peace with himself and to prevent the rest of mankind from doing so.” His plays were shockers: he unmasked heroes, revealing them as foolish and savage, and he wrote about the powerless—women and children, slaves and barbarians—for whom tragedy was not so much exceptional as unending. Euripides’ plays rarely won first prize in the great democratic competitions of ancient Athens, but their combustible mixture of realism and extremism fascinated audiences throughout the Greek world. In the last days of the Peloponnesian War, Athenian prisoners held captive in far-off Sicily were said to have won their freedom by reciting snatches of Euripides’ latest tragedies.

Four of those tragedies are presented here in new translations by the contemporary poet and classicist Anne Carson. They are *Herakles*, in which the hero swaggers home to destroy his own family; *Hekabe*, set after the Trojan War, in which Hektor’s widow takes vengeance on her Greek captors; *Hippolytos*, about love and the horror of love; and the strange tragic-comedy fable *Alkestis*, which tells of a husband who arranges for his wife to die in his place. The volume also contains brief introductions by Carson to each of the plays along with two remarkable framing essays: “Tragedy: A Curious Art Form” and “Why I Wrote Two Plays About Phaidra.”



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Grief Lessons: Four Plays by Euripides (New York Review Books Classics) By Euripides Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #158517 in Books
- Brand: Euripides/ Carson, Anne (TRN)
- Published on: 2008-09-16
- Released on: 2008-09-16
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .70" w x 5.49" l, .85 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 312 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Writing with a pitch and heat that gets to the heart of the unforgiving classical world, Carson, a poet (*The Autobiography of Red*) and classicist (*Economy of the Unlost*), translates four of the 18 surviving plays by Euripides (485–406 B.C.): *Alkestis*, *Herakles*, *Hekabe* and *Hippolytos*. All feature characters trading single lines that somehow contain the essence of human tragedy. Alkestis blunderingly trades his wife's life for his own, then gets her back—but has to live with the embarrassment of having given her up. Herakles returns triumphant from the underworld, only to perform a fate-induced infanticide on his own children. Hekabe, a former queen now slave to the wily Odysseus, is reduced to a vengeful form of will to power. Hippolytos's uncomprehending state as the object of stepmother Phaidra's desire unravels all concerned. Carson is nothing less than brilliant—unflinching sharp in diction, audacious and judicious in taking liberties. In four separate prefaces, she introduces the plays succinctly, picking apart their structures and showing where flaws may be intentional. Worth the price of admission alone is Carson's blistering essay-afterword, written in Euripides's voice, which asks questions like "Is all anger sexual?" This amazing book gets very close to the playwright's enigmatic answers. (Aug.)

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Review

"The amazing poet Anne Carson offers a new translation of four plays by Euripides, each of which unfurls in searing, plainspoken English. Her essays and introductions are priceless." -*Time Out NY*

"In *Grief Lessons*, the contemporary poet and classicist Anne Carson's spare and beautiful new translation of four of Euripides' lesser known tragedies, we have a kind of primer on the intrinsic dangers of blind devotion to ideology." -*The New Yorker*

"An eclectic selection that provides an excellent introduction to Euripides's range. Ms. Carson's Euripides is bleak, moving, and provocative, offering a painful reminder of the resonance of these ancient plays with our own times." -*The New York Sun*

"*Grief Lessons*...reminds us that the difference between competent and inspired translation is more than a matter of even bravura technical competence. It involves a kind of discreet union between writer and translator, a certain convergence of aesthetic impulse and intellectual inclination. The issue of such a union can take a reader's breath away because it just seems so right--a work that stands firmly on its own but is somehow contented to be the sum of its parts. Carson's is, in other words, an altogether worthy heir...It's a reasonable and reasonably provocative contemporary reading." -*The Los Angeles Times*

"Writing with a pitch and heat that gets to the heart of the unforgiving classical world, Carson..is nothing less than brilliant--unflinching sharp in diction, audacious and judicious in taking liberties...Worth the price of admission alone is Carson's blistering essay afterword, written in Euripides's voice...This amazing book gets very close to the playwright's enigmatic answers." -*Publishers Weekly**

From the Back Cover

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questions like "Is all anger sexual?" This amazing book gets very close to the playwright's enigmatic answers."--Publishers Weekly, starred review

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jacqueline Stalling:

Have you spare time for a day? What do you do when you have much more or little spare time? That's why, you can choose the suitable activity regarding spend your time. Any person spent their particular spare time to take a walk, shopping, or went to often the Mall. How about open or maybe read a book called Grief Lessons: Four Plays by Euripides (New York Review Books Classics)? Maybe it is to become best activity for you. You realize beside you can spend your time along with your favorite's book, you can better than before. Do you agree with the opinion or you have different opinion?

Daryl Thurmond:

The knowledge that you get from Grief Lessons: Four Plays by Euripides (New York Review Books Classics) may be the more deep you digging the information that hide in the words the more you get considering reading it. It does not mean that this book is hard to be aware of but Grief Lessons: Four Plays by Euripides (New York Review Books Classics) giving you thrill feeling of reading. The author conveys their point in particular way that can be understood by means of anyone who read it because the author of this book is well-known enough. This specific book also makes your personal vocabulary increase well. Therefore it is easy to understand then can go with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We advise you for having this Grief Lessons: Four Plays by Euripides (New York Review Books Classics) instantly.

Thelma Atkins:

People live in this new morning of lifestyle always try and and must have the spare time or they will get large amount of stress from both day to day life and work. So , if we ask do people have spare time, we will say absolutely yes. People is human not really a huge robot. Then we consult again, what kind of activity do you possess when the spare time coming to you actually of course your answer will certainly unlimited right. Then do you try this one, reading publications. It can be your alternative in spending your spare time, the actual book you have read is usually Grief Lessons: Four Plays by Euripides (New York Review Books Classics).

Valerie Beauchamp:

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