Silence, Song and Speech. Euripidean women finding their voice

Kormakopoulou, Ino-Maria ms

Silence, song, and speech.

Euripidean women finding their voice.

Ino-Maria Kormakopoulou (s3092658)

i.kormakopoulou@umail.leidenuniv.nl

Leiden University, Faculty of Humanities

Classics res. MA

Supervisor: Dr. Tazuko van Berkel

27/10/2023

27.361 words

*The word count includes main text and footnotes and excludes bibliography, headers, summary, cover page and content's page.

Universiteit Leiden

Ino-Maria Kormakopoulou
Thesis

Silence, Song and Speech. Euripidean women finding their voice.

Summary

This thesis explores the way women in selected Euripidean tragedies engage with verbal communication and proposes that this female verbal repertoire can serve as a foundation for a feminist interpretation of the respective plays. Female interaction with verbal communication can be separated into three distinct categories: a) silence, b) song, and c) speech. Following this categorization, this thesis firstly delves into specific verses from *Medea* (259-268) and *Hippolytus* (710-723, 800-805) to indicate that female tragic silence entails a skillful manipulation of speech. Secondly, verses from *Medea* (410-430) and two fragments from *Hypsipyle* (752h 3-9, 759a 80-89) are examined to demonstrate how female tragic song can function as a lyrical form of feminine language. Thirdly, Pasiphae's *apologia* (472e 4-12, 34-41) in the *Cretans* is analyzed to pinpoint how female tragic speech can be rhetorically constructed, serving as a springboard for self-exculpation and female empowerment. Drawing from French feminism and American post-structuralist feminism, this study orchestrates a dialogue between the Euripidean corpus and (post) modern feminist theory and indicates how a reader-oriented approach to the ancient texts can both honor a historically grounded reception of tragedy and suggest how modern audiences can imbue classical tragic texts with fresh meaning.

Ino-Maria Kormakopoulou
Thesis

Silence, Song and Speech. Euripidean women finding their voice.

Contents

Introduction

How do the timeless tragic tales of Euripides and today's feminism intersect, and what can they teach us about the ongoing battle for women's voices to be heard? In this thesis, following the footsteps of the *me-too* movement, which can accurately be described as a female plea to break the silence and speak up, we journey back through time, delving into the timeless dilemma with which grappled Euripides' dramatic heroines – the choice between silence and speech in a patriarchal society. Many scholars, exploring whether Euripides himself was a proto-feminist or a misogynist, have argued that he incorporates misogynistic elements in his plays to problematize and criticize them, mainly by crafting heroines whose actions and psychology reverse social stereotypes about female behavior.[1]

In this thesis, building upon the scholarly tradition of a feminist understanding of Euripidean drama, I will investigate how specific Euripidean heroines, as well as female choruses, engage with verbal communication and how this engagement can lay the groundwork for a feminist interpretation of the respective plays. I claim that female interaction with verbal communication is threefold: a) women staying silent, b) women singing, and c) women articulating assertive speech. Employing the conceptual tools of French feminism, mainly problematizing the phallocentricism of language, I show how the relationship between women and language can be read as symptomatic for society's incapacity to accommodate female experience and for the subsequent need to construct a comprehensive feminine discourse.

Emerging in the late 60s, the second wave of French feminism focuses on the interconnection between patriarchy and language, involving a critical reevaluation of literature and philosophy to uncover their patriarchal biases. To achieve this purpose, French feminism engages with the psychoanalytic principles of Jaques Lacan, who argues that language is characterized by an inherent phallocentricism, which profoundly influences both personal and collective consciousness.[2] French feminist theorists provide a series of significant works on the concept of patriarchal composition of language. Kristeva identifies language as a system of symbols which both encodes and reproduces the societal status quo, a central pillar of which is patriarchy. According to Kristeva, the only way to overthrow the androcentric prejudices integral to language is the creation of a female *poetic language*, meaning a more primal and emotional kind of verbal communication that defies conventional linguistic norms and takes advantage of the liberatory potentials of art.[3]

Along the same lines, Cixous claims that the alternative to male discourse is what she calls *écriture feminine,* a term whose meaning is similar to Kristeva's *poetic language*. *Écriture feminine* constitutes a liberating female form of writing that is not restrictive but open to a multiplicity of meanings and structures, corresponding to the openness of female corporality. Cixous' *écriture feminine* embraces the fluidity and nonlinearity of narrative structures, while also challenging the binary categorization of the world around us, opting for in-betweenness and transience.[4] Further developing Cixous' ideas, Irigaray and Burke contend that women should craft a distinct feminine language, which would not coopt masculine modes of

[1] Wright 1969 and March 1990 on Euripides as a proto-feminist. In most cases, the scholarly debate on Euripides' opinion on women revolves around *Medea.* For a feminist understanding of *Medea*, see Hadas 1966, Knox 1979, Williamson 1990, Foley 2001 and Mastronarde 2002. For a reading of *Medea* that challenges its feminist understanding, see Lesky 1968, Reckford 1968, Rabinowitz 1993.
[2] Schmitz 2007, 180-82.
[3] Kristeva 1984.
[4] Cixous 1976.

expression but present an alternative architecture in terms of syntaxis and semantics, based on the diversity and complexity of female sexuality and subjectivity. This process could potentially reshape societal perceptions of gender, identity, and sexuality, as well as rendering women from objects to subjects of speech.[5]

In addition to French feminism, American post-structuralist feminism will also serve as a conceptual framework for the present thesis, as these two feminist traditions mutually complement each other. One of the main representatives of the latter, Butler, introduces the idea of gender performativity, proposing that gender roles are not inherent to a person but products of social construction. Moreover, Butler views gender identity as something not static but continuously liable to change, depending on a complex interplay of social and cultural factors. Therefore, Butler dismantles the rigid category of "woman", relativizing the French feminist term *écriture feminine,* as feminine language is not something specific and static, but constantly evolves and changes according to the specific parameters of each time's societal environment, just as its subject, "woman", is.[6]

The co-application of French feminist and Butler's perspectives on feminine language proves to be a fruitful approach as it enables us to reevaluate French structuralist concepts from a non-structuralist standpoint. This approach reveals that while the counter-hegemonic structure of feminine language does possess distinct syntactical and semantic attributes, it also offers an opportunity to redefine and reconstruct the concept of woman by actively engaging with and reshaping the cultural constructions of femininity. In essence, the joint exploration of French feminist and Butler's ideas allows us to situate feminine language at the intersection of gender relations and gender performance.

It is now crucial to dive into how scholars have linked feminism with Greek tragedy, encompassing not specifically the French variant but a more comprehensive understanding of feminism as a literary theory. Zeitlin characterized tragic heroines by the term "female other", meaning that female experiences in tragedy were not an end in themselves, but were used as a contrasting foil to male identity, serving as a springboard for a deeper exploration of the male selfhood. Despite that, Zeitlin argues that tragedy is an intrinsically female kind of dramatic poetry, as its main constituents are affiliated with the way society culturally constructs and conceives femininity. Those constituents include corporeal experience and suffering, the powerful and usually destructive forces that reside in the private sphere of *oikos*, the presence of cunning and intrigue and the concept of theatrical mimesis.[7]

Commenting on the special qualities of female tragic speech, McClure underlines that tragic women possess a "bilingual" capability, as they both understand the dominant male discourse and also generate codes for communication among themselves. In this way, female and male tragic speech are distinguished into separate discursive spheres, while female speech, often facilitated by deception and seductive persuasion, infiltrates and permeates the male domain.[8] Exploring the elements that enforce female dramatic powerfulness, Foley observes those elements can be summarized into the following three: lamentation, marriage, and morality. What is more, she also warns that the temporary inversions of the gender hierarchy that occur in Greek tragedy cannot always be translated into a genuine drive for social

[5] Irigaray & Burke 1985.
[6] Butler 1990.
[7] Zeitlin 1996. On a constructive criticism of Zeitlin's opinion, see Wohl 2005, 150, who claims that Zeitlin illuminates how tragedy uses a cultural understanding of femininity to construct its own imagined world but "risks fetishizing tragedy and its fictional women by deracinating them from the society that bore them."
[8] McClure 1999a.

transformation but can sometimes reinforce the dominant public ideology.[9] Unifying the above approaches, Wohl underscores that the representation of femininity in tragedy is neither just a vehicle for the exploration of male selfhood nor an authentic drive for social change, but constitutes a locus of ideological negotiation within the tragic realm, reflecting social discussions and political inquiries of the Athenian society. Women serve as a test case for tragedy's epistemology of the self, revealing the complexities of their agency and the interplay between affirmation of and resistance to the Athenian state's gender ideology.[10]

After summarizing the theoretical underpinnings of my research, it is important to introduce the textual basis[11] to which I will apply them. As mentioned in my research question, the guiding principle of my analysis is the relationship between women and verbal communication in Euripides. Consequently, the chapters of my thesis are divided according to the three facets of it: a) silence, b) song and c) assertive speech.[12] The reason for selecting the following Euripidean tragic passages as text cases for my research is that they stand out as the most intricate and multifaceted examples within the Euripidean corpus, presenting an exceptional opportunity to demonstrate how women in Euripidean tragedy use verbal communication and endeavor to shape a distinct feminine discourse. However, it's important to clarify that my selection does not necessarily focus on the most well-known tragic passages related to this topic. Instead, the inclusion of fragmentary tragedies offers a unique opportunity to scrutinize less explored aspects of Euripides' portrayal of female speech, enriching the ongoing scholarly research surrounding this subject.

In the first chapter, I use specific verses from *Medea* (259-268) and *Hippolytus* (710-723, 800-805) to argue that the silence of tragic heroines and female choruses is not a sign of passivity but a verbal strategy that entails a dexterous manipulation of speech. In the second chapter, I suggest that song can become a lyrical form of feminine language that defies the rules of prose dialogues, using as textual foundation verses from *Medea* (410-430) and two fragments from *Hypsipyle* (752h 3-9, 759a 80-89). In the third chapter, I employ Pasiphae's *apologia* (472e 4-12, 34-41) in the *Cretans* to investigate the rhetorical construction of female *parrhesia* in tragedy and its use as a means of self-exculpation and female empowerment.

My research is conducted through a combination of the following two methodological tools: a) close textual reading and b) linguistic analysis. The results that this research generates are framed by a feminist theoretical approach which defines the interpretative lens of our textual examination. Firstly, I perform a close reading of the passages mentioned above. The purpose is to carry out a textual analysis of *what* is said, meaning the passages' content. In this regard, one important issue of interest is female meta-language, meaning women's reflection on linguistic issues. Topics such as thematization of speech or silence, statements about gendered linguistic choices and implicit or explicit views on the association between female social status and language, are examined.

Secondly, I apply a linguistic analysis on the selected verses to discuss *how* the content is linguistically formulated. This is established upon the technical aspect of the passages' linguistic structure, including analysis of word selection, speech patterns, rhetorical schemes,

[9] Foley 1981 and 2001.
[10] Wohl 2005. See also Rose 1993, for tragedy as a site of active political and ideological struggle.
[11] For the editions of the texts I use, see the respective chapters of this thesis.
[12] In the introductions of every one of the chapters, there is a distinct section concerning the "state of the field" for every one of the instances of verbal communication discussed, namely silence, song, and speech. There, I discuss the work of scholars who relate silence, song, and speech with women in Greek tragedy, as well as specific terms and theoretical inquiries that pertain to every one of those topics.

and metrical analysis. Moreover, issues such as ambiguity of female language, gnomic speech, and the shifting meaning of metaphors are investigated. I expect that this analysis will be helpful in demonstrating that the one-to-one semantic correspondence of male language does not apply on the female discourse.

Overall, I intend to articulate a feminist interpretation of the results that the above study produces. For this purpose, I engage with an interdisciplinary interpretative approach, as I aim to employ the theoretical framework of French and post-structuralist American feminism as an interpretative lens of the ancient textual material, facilitating a dialogue between the classical world and (post) modern interpretations of it. The central question that feminist theory encourages us to explore when examining our ancient material is whether female experience can find adequate expression and representation within the constraints of a predominantly male-oriented public and literary discourse. If not, should we interpret the verbal acts of tragic women as attempts to develop alternative forms of female linguistic expression?

One important methodological issue of this research revolves around the exploration of a distinctively female discourse within the realm of dramatic texts authored by a male playwright. As Rabinowitz argues, there is an authorial level of analysis[13] in Greek tragedy, which is related to what the playwright intended to convey and betoken through the fictional world he constructed. However, there is also another level of analysis, defined by the way tragedy is received and signified by its readers, something which is constantly liable to change and malleability. What Rabinowitz calls "a resisting female reader",[14] is a reader who reads subversively the tragic plot,[15] understanding that, even though the Euripidean drama is crafted through the male authorial perspective, the female characters at display are independent entities, exceeding the confines of their authorship.[16]

Based on the above observations, the dual dynamic that exists in the present research, originating from the fact that the subjects of analysis are female agents, yet in a fictional world crafted by a male author, warrants attention. It prompts us to adopt an analytical perspective that focuses on the reception and processing of the fictional world by each time's readers or listeners, an approach which transcends the limitations that a potential authorial intend of the texts poses. In that way, we can overcome a structuralist approach that views the text as a system of signs with stable meaning and embrace a post-structuralist method of analysis, which deconstructs and subsequently reconstructs the meaning of the ancient text anew, based on the significance and interpretation that each contemporary addressee attributes to the text.

In this reader-oriented approach, a significant challenge lies in the need to consider the reception of the drama from two distinct perspectives: that of its original ancient audience and that of today's contemporary readers. The central research question of this thesis encourages a dialogue between a culturally specific and historically situated method of analysis and a contemporary feminist theoretical framework. Formulating modern inquiries about ancient material implies orchestrating a conversation between the perceptions of the ancient audience

[13] Rabinowitz 1993, 127.
[14] Rabinowitz 1993, 21.
[15] Rabinowitz 1993, 26-27.
[16] On this reader-oriented approach, see also Barthes 1995, 129-130. According to Barthes, every text released into the world has a life of its own, irrespective of the intentions of its author, and the possible interpretations of the text are as multiple as the number of its potential readers, who reconstruct the text's meaning based on their cultural, historical, and social background. Specifically in relation to Greek tragedy, Barthes claims that the tragedy's reader or listener is uniquely positioned to decipher the complexity of its meaning, which always creatively exceeds the one its author intended to infuse in the text.

and our present-day understanding of these dramatic texts. As a result, this thesis's analysis occasionally delves into the reconstruction of the historical context of Euripidean tragedy. However, it also extends beyond this historical context to explore how the texts' meanings can be reconstructed using the theoretical tools available to (post)modern audiences. As a result, this reader-oriented analysis seeks to honor a historically grounded perspective on the reception of tragedy while simultaneously considering how today's audience can invest new semantic value in these tragic materials.

The above observations raise one extra methodological issue that will underlie all aspects of this research, meaning the relationship between the theatrical realm of tragedy and the social realm of ancient Athens. In the popular morality of fifth century Athens, there was a deeply ingrained gender hierarchy that valorized male interest and perspectives over the female and, thus, the hardships of womanhood were most frequently concealed in the public Athenian discourse.[17] Women were restricted into the boundaries of the private sphere of *oikos*. Rarely were their grievances expressed outwardly and publicly.[18] Therefore, their complaints were not usually transformed into political speech and the act of protesting for their rights was often seen as inconceivable.

On this socio-political background, the dramatic representation of female verbal acts and decisions, either pertaining to silence, song, or speech, is politically controversial. All relevant verbal acts that I will present in the following chapters are manifestations of the female attempt to craft a distinctive feminine voice that can provide solidarity to other women, accommodate and convey female experience or even protect oneself from the results that an unequal gender hierarchy entails. As I contend in this thesis, female silence, song, or speech, in the tragedies under examination, are verbal acts always related to the female quest for a voice. Occasionally, this voice is found in the theatrical realm of tragedy, something potentially unsettling for the societal *status quo* of Athens.

However, it is important to always question the extent to which the theatrical realm of tragedy permeates social reality. As Patricia Easterling maintains, it is reasonable "to look to the plays for some kind of refraction of the society that provided the context of production."[19] In that line of thought, tragedy cannot be perceived as a direct reflection of the social circumstances that characterized the society that bore it. It can, though, be seen as a distorting mirror of this society, i.e., as a distorted reflection of the actual Athenian *status quo*, bearing both historical truth and historical inaccuracies or exaggerations. Wavering between those two poles, the engagement of tragic heroines with verbal communication possibly reveals an existent social tendency of women towards an attempt to craft a feminine discourse, but certainly not in the scale and manner presented in the tragic realm.

[17] Fantham 1994, 68-127 and Pomeroy 2011, 57-78 on the social position of women in classical Athens.
[18] Fantham 1994, 74-76, on the effect that Solon's laws had on the relegation of women to the private sphere and the subsequent exclusion of their voice from the public discourse and the governmental affairs of the *polis*.
[19] Easterling 1997, 21.

Chapter One: Silence

The silence of female choruses as a vigilant *cocoon of secrecy.*

The role of the chorus in Greek tragedy has been widely studied by scholars and recognized as integral to the theatrical experience. Zeitlin views the chorus as a collective voice which provides a moral compass to the audience and a reminder of the cultural values and norms that each play is exploring. Doing so, the chorus maintains a balanced position between masculine and feminine perspectives of reality, sometimes problematizing issues of male domination and power.[20] Emphasizing the role of the chorus in civic education, Foley argues that the chorus both expressed and challenged the authority of collective wisdom. She also argues that the identity and proficiency of a tragic chorus was critical for the play's success in the Athenian dramatic festivals, underlining that Euripides increased the prominence of female and other more exotic choruses.[21] Elaborating on the role of feminine tragic choruses, Loraux claims that they served as a vehicle for the audience to experience the emotional force of tragedy, providing an outlet for grief through lamentations and on-stage mourning.[22] Connecting the evolution of the tragic Greek choruses with south Slavic traditions, Dué underscores that the substantial differentiation between male and female choruses fades in Greek tragedy, since choral singing is infused with femininity and the feminine way of lamentation is also adapted by male choruses.[23]

Focusing on the relation between tragic female choruses and silence, which is of central interest to the present chapter, Montiglio discusses how the verbal focalization on and thematization of silence in Greek tragedy has been employed as a way to underline the semantic potential and symbolism of silence, arguing that tragic poets used the opposition between silence and the voice as a medium of poetic creativity. In relation to the chorus, she asserts that its entrance on stage is often accompanied by a request for silence, and this choral silence plays a crucial role in shaping the tragic fate of characters, while also highlighting the recurring dilemma faced by the chorus on whether to speak or remain silent.[24] Deepening our understanding of choral silence, Chong-Gossard proposes that it is an expression of female solidarity, which escalates up to the level of complicity between female heroines and their faithful choruses, even in the case of criminal actions.[25] In this case, choral silence can take the form of either dissemination of information, concealment of secrets and plot devices, miscommunication, half-truths or outright lies. Building onto the above, Munteanu contends that choral silence is a powerful tool which amplifies dramatic tensions and reflects the moral dilemmas of tragic heroines, prompting the audience to contemplate on each tragedy's ethical challenges.[26]

One could contend that secret-keeping is a sort of female silence and, therefore, a befitting behavior to every woman, justified by the female socialization in accordance with the

[20] Zeitlin 1996.
[21] Foley 2003.
[22] Loraux 2002.
[23] Dué 2010.
[24] Montiglio 2000.
[25] Chong-Gossard 2008.
[26] Munteanu 2020.

Athenian social standards. As Pericles declares in his funeral oration,[27] female dignity can only be achieved when every respectable woman does not exceed the limits of female nature and, therefore, remains moderated, muted, and restrained, utterly avoiding being discussed by men, either for positive or negative reasons.[28] Thus, female dignity is equated with silence, which is idealized and perceived as the excellent actualization of female existence.

It is noteworthy that, in this context, female silence can be understood as a multifaceted and nuanced notion, which describes both the concept of avoiding speaking and that of avoiding being spoken of. To pose it even more accurately, Pericles possibly suggests that there is a causative relationship between those two nuances of silence; abstaining from speaking and maintaining a low social profile is the only way women will avoid being the object of discussion and social criticism. Further than that, there is an additional stratum of meaning within the concept of silence that is contingent upon the specific Greek verb employed to denote it. More precisely, there is a subtle differentiation of meaning between the verbs σῑγάω and σῐωπάω, used to denote the notion of silence. The former denotes the mere absence of speech and sound as well as the notion of stillness and passivity, whereas the latter is used to express more deliberate and meaningful silences.[29]

The dramatic silence of the chorus[30] has no commonalities with the silence of invisibility and mediocrity that Pericles exalts. Instead, it is a protective device that women use to weave their intrigues, to deceive and entrap men,[31] and to enforce their secret bonds through connivance.[32] Functioning as a *vigilant cocoon of secrecy*, the silence of conspiracy between women, namely heroines and choruses, can be perceived as a latent, unexpressed δόλος and a site of potential resistance[33] to adverse male behaviors. Offering this shelter of security and robustness, the silence of female choruses is indispensable to the success of every heroine's schemes.[34] This chapter aims to demonstrate that silence, when employed as a *vigilant cocoon of secrecy*, goes beyond mere passivity and muteness, entailing the skillful manipulation of speech and granting a considerable degree of agency to both female choruses and tragic heroines. This will be illustrated through the analysis of specific passages from Euripides' *Medea* and *Hippolytus.*

A. The silence of the female chorus in Euripides' *Medea*.

One salient case of choral silence is attested in Euripides' *Medea*. In the Euripidean corpus, Medea is one of the most prominent tragic heroines who request the silence of the female chorus, comprising of Corinthian women. After delineating the hardships faced by women

[27] Thuc., 2.45.2: "Εἰ δέ με δεῖ καὶ γυναικείας τι ἀρετῆς, […] τῆς τε γὰρ ὑπαρχούσης φύσεως μὴ χείροσι γενέσθαι ὑμῖν μεγάλη ἡ δόξα καὶ ἧς ἂν ἐπ᾽ ἐλάχιστον ἀρετῆς πέρι ἢ ψόγου ἐν τοῖς ἄρσεσι κλέος ᾖ." Edition by Smith 1919, 340-341.
[28] McClure 1999a, 20-22, Munteanu 2020, 903 and Fantham 1994, 79, on a further discussion of this passage from Pericles' funeral oration and its political connotations.
[29] Kazanskaya 2017, 182, 187 on the semantic difference between the verbs σῑγάω and σῐωπάω. See also the works of Krischer 1981 and Heilmann 1955 on this issue.
[30] In the Euripidean corpus, the instances of choral secret-keeping in favour of female heroines are numerous: *Med.*, 259-68, *Hipp*., 710-14, *IT.*, 1075-77, *El.*, 271-73, *Hel.*, 1385-89.
[31] Zeitlin 1996, 356-61, on female secrecy and its relation to fabrication of plots and deception.
[32] Montiglio 2000, 256, on female silence as a bonding mechanism.
[33] Wohl 1998, xxi: "silent female characters, site of potential resistance."
[34] Paduano 1985, 159, on choral complicity as an indispensable element in the fabrication of successful tragic plots.

within marriage and expressing her own distress regarding Jason's infidelity,[35] she demands that the chorus remains silent and loyal to her in case she devises a machination to take vengeance on her husband. The following passage illuminates the linguistic construction of her request for silence and the speech qualities which emphatically underline the decisive role of this request.

ΜΗΔΕΙΑ
τοσοῦτον οὖν σου τυγχάνειν βουλήσομαι,
ἤν μοι πόρος τις μηχανή τ᾽ ἐξευρεθῆι
πόσιν δίκην τῶνδ᾽ ἀντιτείσασθαι κακῶν
[τὸν δόντα τ᾽ αὐτῶι θυγατέρ᾽ ἥν τ᾽ ἐγήματο],
σιγᾶν. γυνὴ γὰρ τἄλλα μὲν φόβου πλέα
κακή τ᾽ ἐς ἀλκὴν καὶ σίδηρον εἰσορᾶν·
ὅταν δ᾽ ἐς εὐνὴν ἠδικημένη κυρῆι,
οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλη φρὴν **μιαιφονωτέρα.**

ΧΟΡΟΣ
δράσω τάδ᾽· ἐνδίκως γὰρ ἐκτείσηι πόσιν,
Μήδεια. πενθεῖν δ᾽ οὔ σε θαυμάζω τύχας.[36]

One of the most noticeable linguistic choices in the above passage is the infinitive σιγᾶν, emphasized by the enjambement that separates it from the previous verse to which it would normally belong. From a metrical aspect, this enjambement creates a *caesura*, a highly emphatic metrical break at the very beginning of the verse. [37] From a syntactical aspect, the infinitive σιγᾶν constitutes the main clause of the conditional sentence ἤν μοι πόρος τις μηχανή τ᾽ ἐξευρεθῆι. This form of syntax is called *infinitivus pro imperativo* and is used to emphasize that the choral contribution – or even agency – to Medea's scheme is silence.

Silence, therefore, is not just passively understood as the absence of speech. On the contrary, the chorus is expected to "perform an act of silence, to do silence." [38] This denotes that the Corinthian women are encouraged to take a deliberate and purposeful decision to remain quiet and actively assist Medea in concealing her revenge plan. The choral endeavor involves a lot of speaking, in the sense that speech can be used as a deception device. For example, ambiguous and indirect language or the dissemination of selective and misleading information can be considered as speech tactics that serve the interest of silence by concealing the truth. Medea herself "inaugurates" those speech tactics through thematizing chorus' silence via her meta-language, meaning her literal linguistic reference to silence. Talking about choral

[35] In Eur. *Med.*, 230-268, Medea describes in detail the hardships that women experience when being married, mainly focusing on the oppression of female bodies, the impracticality of divorce for women, and the confinement of women within a worldview shaped by male perspectives, whether that of their father or their husband.
[36] Eur. *Med.*, 259-68. Med. "And so, I shall ask this much from you as a favor: if I find any means or contrivance to punish my husband for these wrongs [and the bride's father and the bride], keep my secret. In all other things a woman is full of fear, incapable of looking on battle or cold steel; but when she is injured in love, no mind is more murderous than hers." Ch. "I will do so. For you will be justified in punishing your husband, Medea, and I am not surprised that you grieve at what has happened." This thesis follows the edition by Diggle 1984 for all the passages of Euripides' *Medea.* The translation of the passages is by Kovacs 1994 and, if the writer of this thesis adapts specific parts of the translation, it will be mentioned in the respective footnotes.
[37] Mossman 2011, 241, on the enjambement and the *caesura* in verse 263.
[38] Montiglio 2000, 289.

silence, Medea instructs the chorus how to "do silence", how to refer to and achieve silence through the employment of speech. Accordingly, choral silence in *Medea* can be understood not only in a negative way, as absence of speech, but also in a positive way, as intentional and active dissimulation of secrets, lying, deceitfulness or misdirection of one's thoughts.[39]

Another interesting feature of Medea's linguistic choices is the use of gnomic speech,[40] when characterizing the standard female behavior according to the social stereotypes (γυνή γαρ … μιαιφονωτέρα). This gnomic statement, signalled by the generalizing properties and abstraction of the nominal phrase γυνή γαρ,[41] is highly ironic. In particular, Medea falsely co-opts an expression that typically embodies male perspectives on gnomic wisdom and female malevolence in order to exhibit its unsubstantiality. In accordance with her perspective, what makes women malevolent is not their intrinsic nature but the social circumstances of subjugation which they experience. Re-reading the play's tragic plot through Medea's lens, the cause of the infanticide is not her sinister nature but Jason's infidelity and violation of marital oaths, which prompted her vengeful machinations.

By distinguishing the actual cause of the infanticide, namely Jason's disrespectful behaviour, from its mere executor, namely herself, Medea unveils the superficiality of gnomic wisdom about female malevolence, showing that women become vengeful only in response to the male oppression they suffered from. Therefore, the heroine employs the gnomic statement about female malevolence in order to dismantle it, by demonstrating that gnomic wisdom fails to detect the actual cause of social phenomena. Solidified and perpetuated by men, gnomic wisdom is not truth-revealing but, instead, a self-fulfilling prophecy, aiming to always validate a pre-existent negative predisposition towards women, regardless of the special circumstances that characterize each social phenomenon. In this context, Medea's ironic use of gnomic wisdom can be understood as a female mode of expression within male hegemonic discourse. By dismantling gnomic wisdom, a manifestation of male hegemonic discourse, Medea facilitates the emergence of female expression within the framework of this discourse, revealing its limitations in portraying female psychology and behaviour.

When we examine, as modern readers, Medea's argumentation from a feminist perspective, it is intriguing to highlight its shared aspects with Judith Butler's conceptualization of identity as a social construct. Challenging the essentialist notion that nature predetermines and shapes the identity of a person, Butler proposes that there are numerous significations of the term "woman", according to the cultural and political environment in which female identity is established. Therefore, gender identity appears as something not intrinsic to a person but constructed through the influence of dominant social discourses.[42] Reviewed via Butler's perspective on identity, Medea's argumentation seems to imply that female identity is not predetermined, but rather socially constructed and emerges through a complex interplay of various factors, including gender power dynamics. As noted, Medea underpins this idea in a twofold way: by asserting that women cannot be regarded as inherently malicious solely on the

[39] Chong – Gossard 2008, 113, 153.
[40] Lardinois 2006, on an analysis of the polysemy of Ajax's gnomic expressions in Sophocles' *Ajax*. André Lardinois makes a very engaging analysis of the way Ajax uses speech tactics such as *gnômai* and *paroimiai* in order to deceive his 'text-internal and the text-external addressees" (216) regarding his decision to commit suicide or not. Even though, in this case, those speech tactics are used by a male protagonist, it is important to stress that Ajax's impending suicide has effeminized him, as he himself observes: "ἐθηλύνθην στόμα" (651). So, even in this case, gnomic speech is a communicative strategy associated with women. See on this issue Lardinois 2006, 218.
[41] Mastronarde 2002, 217, on the gnomic wisdom that Medea employs here.
[42] Butler 1990, 3, on the social constructedness of identity.

basis of their biological sex and by suggesting that they develop their character traits in response to the maltreatment they experience from men.

The chorus responds to Medea's request with a homophonous δράσω τάδε, which is formulated in future tense, signifying the decisiveness and determinacy of the resolution to support the heroine. In correspondence to the infinitive σιγᾶν, the phrase δράσω τάδε creates a metrical *caesura*, breaking the verse in two. This metrical correspondence between σιγᾶν and δράσω τάδε underlines that choral silence will not result from the chorus' passivity but form an active attempt to conceal Medea's plan of infanticide. Moreover, the phrase δράσω τάδε is greatly commissive, as it solidifies chorus' commitment to fulfill the promise of silence by expressing this commitment through speech.[43] We can deduce by the above that the choral statement δράσω τάδε is profoundly performative, bearing a binding power that equalizes the speech with the enactment of it. As mentioned previously, silence is spoken of and performed, showing again that silence in *Medea* involves communication, activity, and agency.

B. The silence of the female chorus in Euripides' *Hippolytus*.

Another striking example of choral silence is found in Euripides' *Hippolytus*. Taking a path similar to Medea, Phaedra also calls for the silence of the chorus. Captured into the divine machinations of Aphrodite, Phaedra is entranced by her incurable erotic attraction to Hippolytus, the son of her husband Theseus. After the exhortation of her nurse,[44] Phaedra's forbidden love is revealed to the women of Troezen. The revelation of Phaedra's erotic feelings functions as a turning point in the tragedy's dramatic economy, after which her reputation as a wife and a mother is seriously endangered.

ΦΑΙΔΡΑ
ὑμεῖς δέ, παῖδες εὐγενεῖς Τροζήνιαι,
τοσόνδε μοι παράσχετ᾽ ἐξαιτουμένηι,
σιγῆι καλύψαθ' ἀνθάδ᾽ εἰσηκούσατε.

ΧΟΡΟΣ
ὄμνυμι σεμνὴν Ἄρτεμιν, Διὸς κόρην,
μηδὲν κακῶν σῶν ἐς φάος δείξειν ποτέ.[45]

At this point of the plot, the heroine devises a – yet unexposed – scheme with a twofold targeting: to shake the weight of shame off her shoulders and to incriminate Hippolytus before the eyes of Theseus. In order to accomplish her plan, Phaedra counts on the secrecy and complicity of the chorus. Although the phrasing of her request makes use of the typical vocabulary of silence (σιγῇ), the combination of the noun σιγή in dative with the imperative καλύψαθ', implicitly sketches an imagery of silence; silence is pictured as a veil of concealment, as a communicative strategy of covering the truth under the shade of secrecy.

[43] Fletcher 2003, 35-36, on δράσω τάδε as a commissive speech act.
[44] In Eur. *Hipp*., 297-300, Phaedra's nurse motivates her to speak of her hidden erotic desire for Hippolytus.
[45] Eur. *Hipp*., 710-14. Ph. "Noble women of Troezen, grant me this one request: keep what you have heard here a secret." Ch. "I swear by Artemis the holy, Zeus's daughter, that I shall never reveal to the daylight any of your troubles!" This thesis follows the edition by Diggle 1984 for all the passages of Euripides' *Hippolytus*. The translation of the passages is by Kovacs 1995.

Before being fully aware of what secrecy implies,[46] the chorus swears (ὄμνυμι) to the goddess Artemis, the female equivalent of Apollo,[47] to keep the promise of silence. As seen in the case of *Medea*, the chorus answers to the Phaedra's request for silence using a highly performative language. The moment of utterance of the oath predetermines the actual execution of it, even if reprehensible actions are committed later by the heroine.

Through the metaphor ἐς φάος δείξειν, the chorus takes advantage of the expressive potential of metaphorical speech and, thus, enriches the imagery of silence. This metaphor can be decoded by a two-leveled reading, as it creates an analogy exactly by hinting at an opposition. In particular, the chorus identifies light (φάος) with truth, speech and revelation, implying that the opposite of it, darkness, evokes connotations of secrecy and silence. Therefore, the implied contradiction between light and darkness, revelation and secrecy, underlies the analogy between light and truth. On those grounds, the optical metaphor that originates from the word φάος can be perceived as a device employed to visually represent the effect that the verbal choices of the chorus have. Therefore, having as a starting point that verbal communication – revelation or silence – is at stake here, the dipole between silence and speech is seen as a primary opposition[48] which produces many sub-oppositions, such as light and dark, interior and exterior, visible and hidden.[49]

As the dialogue between Phaedra and the chorus unfolds, Phaedra announces to the chorus that, facing this intimidation, she has decided to kill herself in order to rescue her reputation and, most importantly, the well-being and legitimate status of her children.

ΦΑΙΔΡΑ
εὕρημα δή τι τῆσδε συμφορᾶς ἔχω
ὥστ᾽ **εὐκλεᾶ** μὲν παισὶ προσθεῖναι βίον
αὐτή τ᾽ ὄνασθαι πρὸς τὰ νῦν **πεπτωκότα.**
οὐ γάρ ποτ᾽ **αἰσχυνῶ** γε Κρησίους δόμους
οὐδ᾽ **ἐς πρόσωπον Θησέως** ἀφίξομαι
αἰσχροῖς ἐπ᾽ ἔργοις **οὕνεκα ψυχῆς μιᾶς.**

ΧΟΡΟΣ
μέλλεις δὲ δὴ τί δρᾶν **ἀνήκεστον** κακόν;

ΦΑΙΔΡΑ
θανεῖν· ὅπως δέ, τοῦτ᾽ ἐγὼ βουλεύσομαι.

ΧΟΡΟΣ
εὔφημος ἴσθι.[50]

[46] Barrett 1964, 294 and Halleran 1995, 209, on the device of chorus' unaware promise.
[47] Barrett 1964, 294 and Ferguson 1984, 73.
[48] Segal 1988, 268-72, 281, on a different opinion about *Hippolytus*, which prioritizes the visual element (ὄμμα) instead of the verbal (ὁμιλία). Segal also engages with the interconnection between the optical representation of the Phaedra's and Hippolytus' emotions and thoughts and its verbal expression but concludes instead that the verbal component is auxiliary to the saliency of the visual.
[49] Chong – Gossard 2008, 135, on the sub-oppositions that are produced from the recurring themes of silence and speech.
[50] Eur. *Hipp.*, 716-23. Ph. "I have one further thing to add: I have discovered a remedy for this trouble of mine so that I may bequeath to my sons a life of good repute and myself gain some advantage in my present plight. For I shall never disgrace my Cretan home, nor shall I go to face Theseus with shameful deeds against my name, all to

Phaedra's act of suicide is tantamount to the supreme level of silencing, since the physical extinction of a person predetermines both their eternal muteness and their incapability to alter, through their verbal intervention, people's narrative around them, namely their reputation (εὐκλεᾶ). Her scheme to leave a posthumous written confession of her alleged rape by Hippolytus, is an attempt to positively influence her reputation in spite of her physical death and, thus, irreversible (ἀνήκεστον) silencing. In a nutshell, her letter represents the endeavour to change the narrative of the forbidden "love affair" and reclaim control over her reputation.

The issue of Phaedra's reputation is in itself a discursive phenomenon linked to speech since reputation is spread by the power of speech in its repetitive and social dimension. In 5th c. Athens, the social mechanism of female gossip[51] functioned through spreading and widely repeating rumors by word of mouth, decisively affecting every woman's reputation.[52] Being victim of the social precepts for the properness of female behavior, the network of female gossip sabotaged the women who did not live in conformity with those precepts. As Phaedra herself states, the threefold principle of prudence (εὖ φρονεῖν), decency (χρηστά) and modesty (αἰδώς)[53] is the driving force of her reluctance to speak of her desire[54] and, following that, of her realization that suicide is the only means of preserving her reputation. That is exactly because her desire for Hippolytus is radically adversary to being judicious and sensible as a wife, acting according to the common moral values and maintaining a self-effacing profile.

The expectation for women to practice monogamy is so rigorously enforced that, even if Phaedra has not practically committed adultery, the very thought of adultery is "criminalized". Merely thinking about adultery seriously challenges the threefold principle of εὖ φρονεῖν, χρηστά, and αἰδώς. Further than that, the power of gossip to tarnish a woman's reputation is performative; spreading the rumor that Phaedra committed adultery can be so believable that the distinction between the actual action of adultery and its recounting fades. Based on the above, Phaedra's preoccupation with her reputation is more than justified and is expressed through the recurring use of words belonging to the conceptual armory of dignity and shame (εὐκλεᾶ, πεπτωκότα, αἰσχυνῶ).

For a woman, being susceptible to gossip and social criticism can be accurately described as being the object of what Chong-Gossard calls "social gaze".[55] The social gaze, a term that Chong-Gossard coined in response to Goff's "erotic gaze"/"male gaze",[56] can be described as an omnipresent social surveillance that is not only official and civic but is also executed in the micro-level of interpersonal relations. Saturated by the public discourses regarding the properness of female behavior, every citizen can reproduce and perpetuate traces of social criticism through their personal idiom, in which the dominant discourses are incorporated. In the case of Phaedra, her divergence from the socially acknowledged rules of

save a single life. Ch. "What harm past cure do you mean to do?" Ph. "To die. But the manner of it—that shall be my devising." Ch. "Say no more shocking words!"

[51] Dunbar 1996, on the establishment of gossip as a socialization device. See specifically pages 115, on gossip as a means of bonding and 123, on gossip as a way to manage reputation.

[52] Hunter 1990, 304, on the exchange of information between Athenian women and its impact on reputation.

[53] Eur. *Hipp.*, 378: εὖ φρονεῖν, 380: τά χρηστά, 385: αἰδώς.

[54] Chong – Gossard 2008, 137.

[55] Chong - Gossard 2008, 140-42, on the notion of social gaze and on the definition of female dignity as non-availability to this gaze.

[56] Goff 1990, 20-26, defines "husband's gaze"/ "male gaze" as the authoritative projection of a tragic heroine's worth, dignity, and reputation through the eyes of their husband or father, which works as an instrument of power, enforcing gender hierarchies and societal norms.

female decency leads to her being the object of social gaze. As observed, according to Pericles,[57] the most respectable women are the ones who do not attract the social gaze and who are not talked about. Therefore, the ones who are publicly invisible. Phaedra's reputation is endangered exactly by the fact that she becomes socially visible in a negative way; she is set in the centre of public attention because of her spousal infidelity. Not only does she become socially visible, something improper for a woman in itself, but she also acquires a negative reputation as a wife.

In consonance with the above, female value is predicated on a woman's social invisibility, her avoidance of the social gaze, a rule on which Phaedra reneges. More than that, though, women should avoid becoming the object of erotic gaze and sexualize themselves, except if this gaze belongs to their husband.[58] Capturing Hippolytus' attention with her erotic desire, Phaedra lapses into this second "crime" of being the object of erotic gaze. This situation is highly unsettling for the heroine as she is used to only being scrutinized by Theseus' gaze,[59] while remaining invisible to every other man.[60] In fact, her posthumous, false accusation of Hippolytus for rape is her last effort to change the narrative of the events and victimize herself in order to protect Theseus' high estimation of her (ἐς πρόσωπον Θησέως). Exactly because, in the Athenian society, a married women can only acquire legitimization and credibility through male speech,[61] Phaedra can gain her τιμή exclusively by ensuring Theseus' respect and positive predisposition towards her. Posthumously, Phaedra breaks her silence though her epistle only to restore the narrative that is has lived as a quiet woman, invisible to every kind of gaze, social or erotic.

To summarize the above points, the way Phaedra is deeply enmeshed with both speech and gaze clarifies the isomorphism that the dramatic plot creates between the actions of speaking and seeing, namely between discourse and sight. On the one hand, Phaedra is socialized to avoid speaking of her desire and opt for silence, as the more women avoid engaging with language, the more they raise their chances of being socially invisible and therefore respectable. However, as the plot unfolds, the issue of visibility arises, which adds the parameter of gaze to the dipole of speech and silence.

More precisely, Phaedra understands that staying simply silent does not suffice for her to maintain her good reputation, as even if she does not speak, she is liable to being spoken of. The social gaze, in the form of gossip, turns her into an object of speech and attention; the eyes of the society are looking at her, judging her behaviour and harming her reputation. To deflect the social gaze, Phaedra is unwillingly trapped into speaking, as becoming a speaking subject through writing her posthumous letter is her only way of reclaiming – even rewriting – the narrative of her actions. To wrap up, the tragic intersection of speech and gaze makes Phaedra oscillate between agency and objectification and, whatever she chooses between the two can potentially be proven harmful. Given the isomorphism of gaze and speech, we might even say that "women who possess the gaze either of desire or of aggression are viewed as doing harm.

[57] See note 27.
[58] Chong – Gossard 2008, 143-44, on Phaedra and erotic gaze and on the evaluative difference between Hippolytus' and Theseus' gaze for Phaedra.
[59] Chong – Gossard 2008, 143.
[60] Eur. *Med.*, 247: "ἡμῖν δ' ἀνάγκη πρὸς μίαν ψυχὴν βλέπειν." The same narrative about female is found in Euripides' *Medea.*
[61] Goff 1990, 22, on the legitimization of women through male speech and on Phaedra's entrapment into confession because of that, as she needs Theseus' respect to gain her dignity.

Thus, the way tragedy represents women looking can be seen as oscillating between empowering and disempowering them."[62]

As demonstrated, Phaedra's decision to forever silence herself through suicide and to falsely accuse Hippolytus of rape is directed by the following two principles: good reputation and invisibility to social and erotic gaze. The way she phrases this decision when declaring it to the chorus of Troezenean women is also guided by two specific rhetorical strategies: ambiguity and enigmatic speech.[63]

The ambiguousness of Phaedra's speech is mainly a product of its implicitness, as specific words she uses seem to have an unexplored semantic potential that cannot be deciphered by her addressees due to lack of knowledge and information. Being suspicious of Phaedra's decision to kill herself but completely unaware of her plan to falsely accuse Hippolytus of rape, the chorus cannot understand the double meaning of the word εὕρημα. Indicative of Phaedra's aptitude for devising canny schemes,[64] εὕρημα can be both interpreted as an omen of Phaedra's imminent suicide and as a (pre)announcement of her plan to deceitfully incriminate Hippolytus and vindicate herself.[65] The same kind of ambiguity is detected in the phrase οὕνεκα ψυχῆς μιᾶς, as it can both refer to the loss of her own life and to the loss of Hippolytus' life because of her false accusations.[66] Manipulating the limited understanding capabilities of the chorus, Phaedra manages to ironically hint at her plan without uncovering it. Therefore, the fleeting meaning of her speech helps her to remain "silent" about her machination while actually talking about it.

The fleeting meaning of Phaedra's speech is also fueled by the enigmatic character of her linguistic choices. The ambiguity of the word εὕρημα is enhanced even more by the air of mystery that the accompanying particle δή and the pronoun τι create.[67] The specific combination of this particle and pronoun suggests that something previously undisclosed is about to be shared with the listeners, even though Phaedra does not reveal her plan in its wholeness. This enigmatic aura of Phaedra's speech is reinforced even more by her reply to the chorus' direct question about her suicide. While emphatically confirming that she has decided to kill herself,[68] the heroine immediately adds the obscure phrase ὅπως δέ, τοῦτ' ἐγὼ βουλεύσομαι, as if implying that it is not the event of suicide that matters but the – yet undisclosed – manner of it.

In line with this enigmatic atmosphere, the chorus answers to her statement with the oxymoronic, paradoxical phrase εὔφημος ἴσθι.[69] Literally, the exhortation of the chorus to Phaedra means "say only positive (εὖ) words" or, reversely "say no words of bad omen".[70] However, the metaphorical meaning of this phrase is "stay silent". Therefore, the paradox lies in the twist between the metaphorical and the literal meaning of this phrase. Entrapped into

---

[62] Rabinowitz 2013, 205.
[63] See note 40. Deceptive speech can also be used by male tragic protagonists (e.g., Sophocles' *Ajax*). Even then, those characters are thought to be effeminized, as this kind of speech is mainly connected with female protagonists.
[64] Note the meaning of the verb εὑρίσκω as come up with or devise.
[65] Barrett 1964, 295.
[66] Barrett 1964, 296 and Halleran 1995, 210.
[67] Barrett 1964, 295.
[68] As with σιγᾶν in Eur. *Med.* 263, the position of the infinitive θανεῖν at the beginning of the verse and the metrical break that is created by the dot after it, is highly emphatic.
[69] Montiglio 2000, 134, on euphemism: "Replacing a sinister word with a generic euphemism is a common procedure in Greek to circumvent ill-speaking."
[70] Barrett 1964, 296 and Halleran 1995, 210.

unpropitious circumstances, Phaedra's only way of not speaking ill words is to speak no words at all, namely, to stay silent.

It would now be enlightening to examine the response of the female chorus to the insistent questions of Theseus concerning the circumstances of his wife's suicide. The following passage will shed light on the realization of the choral promise to stay silent and the speech tactics that this required.

ΘΗΣΕΥΣ
τί φήις; ὄλωλεν ἄλοχος; ἐκ τίνος τύχης;

ΧΟΡΟΣ
βρόχον κρεμαστὸν **ἀγχόνης** ἀνήψατο.
ΘΗΣΕΥΣ
λύπηι παχνωθεῖσ᾽ ἢ ἀπὸ συμφορᾶς τίνος;

ΧΟΡΟΣ
τοσοῦτον ἴσμεν· ἄρτι γὰρ κἀγὼ δόμους,
Θησεῦ, πάρειμι σῶν κακῶν πενθήτρια.[71]

After Phaedra's suicide, the chorus of Troezenean women faithfully keeps the promise of silence while answering to Theseus' questions regarding the sudden death of his wife. The answers of the chorus vary, in a spectrum ranging from mere dissemination of information up to outright lying. At first, when Theseus asks about the reason of Phaedra's death (ἐκ τίνος τύχης;), the women of the chorus intentionally narrow down the scope of Theseus' question and demonstrate a selective and partial understanding of it. They do not provide information about the *reason* of Phaedra's death but just about the *mode*[72] of her death (βρόχον ἀγχόνης).[73]

As the stichomythia with Theseus continues and he persistently specifies that he needs to know the actual *cause* of Phaedra's suicide, the chorus has no other option but to resort to blatant lying[74] (τοσοῦτον ἴσμεν). For the audience, though, the phrasing of this lie is reminiscent of their promise of silence, while it literally can be decoded as "*until this point* is the access to our knowledge permitted." The narrow and misleading interpretation of Theseus' questions belongs to a rhetorical strategy that can be characterized as evasive speech. According to that, the Troezenean women deliberately choose to sidestep Theseus' questions by entertaining them and obstructing the smooth flow of the stichomythia.[75] The rhetorical technique of evasive speech can be seen as one extra example of the peculiarity of silence in Euripidean tragedies. Silence is not just about the absence of speech, but about the manipulation of speech in a centrifugal way that always diverges from the truth. This description of silence directs attention to the semantic distinction between the verbs σῑγάω and

[71] Eur. *Hipp.*, 801-05. Th. "What do you mean? My wife is dead? But how?" Ch. "She tied aloft a noose to hang herself." Th. "Chilled in her heart by grief? Or for what reason?" Ch. "That is as much as I know. For I too have but lately arrived at your house, Theseus, to mourn your misfortune."
[72] Halleran 1995, 218.
[73] Phaedra kills herself through strangling, causing the physical damage of one of the organs that are responsible for speaking, namely bronchus (βρόχον). Barrett 1964, 316, on the emphatic phrasing of the medium of Phaedra's suicide through an adnominal genitive.
[74] Barrett 1964, 316 and Ferguson 1984, 77.
[75] Mastronarde 1979, 83-84, on the properties of evasive speech and the circumstances of its use.

σῑωπάω mentioned in the introduction of this chapter.[76] Understanding choral silence on this basis, the chorus is not expected to just passively abstain from speaking (σῑγάω) but to intentionally conceal the actual *cause* of Phaedra's suicide (σῑωπάω).

As modern readers of *Hippolytus*, in order to explore the interplay between female agency and verbal strategies such as evasive speech through a feminist standpoint, it is helpful to reflect on the way our observations on choral silence intersect with feminist and phallogocentric theories. Cixous' concept of "aphonic revolt",[77] which refers to female form of rebellion that has taken shape in the realm of though and imagination but has not yet been externalized and articulated in language, resonates with the way choral silence conceals the simmering vindictive machinations of Medea and Phaedra's *eros* towards Hippolytus. However, as we engage with this framework, it is significant to also pinpoint its limitations. While Cixous' concept of aphonic revolt provides a theoretical lens through which to analyze the latent female resistance within choral silence, it might not perfectly encapsulate all aspects of choral agency, as the complicity of the chorus is not only voiceless but also achieved though the engagement with speech.

What solidifies choral silence and complicity with the tragic heroines is the communicative manoeuvres that the chorus employs. That is because choral silence is a "speaking silence",[78] a silence that presupposes an ingenious exploitation of speech to stay impenetrable. Understanding that the power dynamics of language are not favorable to women, the chorus uses devices such as evasive speech to deconstruct or mock the linguistic conventions. To achieve the latter, the female chorus breaks the established liaison between specific words or expressions and their fixed meaning, via manipulating the ambiguity of meanings and undermining the one-to-one semiotic correspondence of words. The employment of this tactic is evident in the analysis of *Hippolytus* provided earlier. The intentional misinterpretation of Theseus' questions through capitalizing on the double meaning of words and phrases[79] is an example of how the chorus relies on the ambiguousness of words' meanings to achieve complicity with the tragic heroine through a "speaking" silence. In that manner, the chorus manages to maintain silence and secrecy *through speech*.

Choral silence, based on an interplay between the absence and presence of speech, is a first step to a rearrangement of language that can be more favorable to women. As witnessed by examining the way the choruses of *Medea* and *Hippolytus* actualize their commitment to silence, choral silence is not a matter of passive quietness. Instead, it involves agency, in the sense that the choruses manipulate speech by deforming the customary uses of language, dismantling the semantics of words and benefitting from the ambiguity of phrases so as to disseminate important information. This interrelation between choral silence and speech tactics aligns with Irigaray's and Burke's idea that women, using techniques such as irony, ambiguity, and wordplay, can engage in a deliberate reshaping of language, deforming the established linguistic norms that often marginalize their voices and have an inherent gender bias.[80] As a framework of our analysis, this idea suggests that choral silence requires knowledge of both the dominant and feminine discursive strategies so as to deform and manipulate the former in favor of the latter. Therefore, despite their alleged silence, the women of the chorus "can be

[76] See note 29.
[77] Cixous 1976, 886.
[78] Vogt 2001, 18, on the encrypted meanings that exist within the silence of heroines and choruses in Greek tragedy.
[79] See for example the interpretation of Theseus' question ἐκ τίνος τύχης which can allude to both the psychological and the physical cause of Phaedra's suicide.
[80] Irigaray and Burke 1985, 137.

considered bilingual, […] engaging in code-switching in order to function in societies in which they are subordinated."[81]

[81] McClure 1999a, 27.

Chapter Two: Song

Singing as a distinctively female expression

In the previous chapter, female silence in Euripidean tragedy, either that of the female chorus or of a female heroine, was interpreted not as a submissive choice but as a strategic attempt to manipulate verbal expression in a way that is favorable for women. The present chapter will continue the exploration of the relationship between women in Euripidean tragedy and verbal communication by focusing on singing, as an intermediary step between staying silent and articulating speech.

Before embarking on an analysis of how and why tragic heroines attempt and potentially manage to become *singing subjects*, it is important to establish the intimate relationship between female verbal communication and singing, which is mainly abetted by the grammatical flexibility and adaptability of lyrical expression. As Hall argues, there is a tendency among scholars, which was also prevalent in antiquity, "to gender song as feminine",[82] mostly based on the female preoccupation with ritual lamentation. If, according to Hall, song is the most fitting kind of verbal expression for women, we may reasonably ask what are the peculiar verbal properties of a song that can be perceived as distinctively feminine. Answering this question, Griffith argues that tragic playwrights attribute to female verbal expression specific speech traits such as emotive expressions, ritual formulations, and agonized exclamations, [83] all of which are mostly linked with lyrics. As the analysis of this chapter will indicate, the speech traits inherent to female singing usually defy the grammatical and lexical rules of dialectic tragic parts, making female song a mode of discourse that markedly refuses to conform with those rules.

Analyzing colloquial verbal habits in Aristophanes' comedy, Willi detects the aforementioned tendency of women to elude the rules of canonical use of language, as employed by men. He shows that in the genre of comedy the grammatical non-conformity of women is mostly expressed in their enhancing Attic Greek with post-Attic linguistic trends and adopting a more cooperative and polite style of conversation.[84] Although not entirely applicable to Euripidean tragedy,[85] those remarks reflect an overall propensity to attribute distinctive verbal habits to women in Attic drama.

Considering the parameter of gender hierarchy in Classical Athens, women's confinement to the domestic sphere[86] and their inferior social status may have led to greater versatility in their spoken communication compared to men. As their perspectives were often marginalized, little attention was given to whether their verbal habits align with linguistic normativity or not. Blundell underlines that women's marginality led to a greater freedom of

[82] Hall 1999, 113.
[83] Griffith 2018, 118-125.
[84] Willi 2007, 193-195.
[85] Willi's remarks are most suited to the comic genre for two reasons: a) the post-Attic dialect's elements detected in Aristophanes' corpus are related to the dating of most of his plays later than the Euripidean ones, at the end of 5th c. BC and the beginning of the 4th. At that time, the tendencies of simplification of the Attic dialect that much later led to the formation of the Hellenistic *koine* were becoming more dominant, and b) the comic genre was mostly directed towards the use of colloquial and less poetic language, due to the comic response that it was intended to stimulate.
[86] Pomeroy 2011, 79-92, on the domestic life of women in Classical Athens. On this section of her book, Pomeroy analyses women's domestic responsibilities and the limitations of their social role, especially in matters that exceeded the sphere of *oikos*.

emotional expression in specific ritual circumstances, such as funerals or the festival of *Thesmophoria*. In those events, the social inferiority of women was overshadowed by the prioritization of their role as facilitators of emotional expression and, thus, a more liberate externalization of their feelings and standpoints was allowed.[87] According to the above observations, the marginalization of women is associated to the development of unique verbal behaviors that diverge from established verbal habits. These distinctive modes of verbal communication are most commonly observed in ritual and lyrical contexts,[88] both within the realm of Athenian society and the fictional setting of Attic drama.

Therefore, the distinctiveness of female verbal expression is mostly manifested in lyrical contexts. According to McClure, quantitively speaking, female characters in Euripides (non-chorus) have twice as many singing verses as compared to their male counterparts.[89] As we will see in this chapter, the frequency, length, and linguistic construction of singing verses for female characters in Euripidean tragedy may indicate a deliberate effort to create a distinctive voice and perspective for these characters, and to highlight their emotional and psychological depth. Moreover, the following analysis will suggest that the tragic potential of female perspective and verbal expression can be seen as a springboard to explore the depths and limitations of human experience on the whole. As Zeitlin argues, female experience is used as a canvas on which male experience is projected and explored in novel and stimulating ways and men – both those of the audience and the ones on stage – can discover themselves anew through observing women to uncover their inner selves.[90]

So, to return to Hall's statement that song can be gendered as feminine, in Euripidean tragedy the female acts of singing are used for a multiplicity of reasons. Chong- Gossard proposes that singing functions as an *aural focalizer*[91] that turns the attention to the singing subject while magnifying the emotional impact of their narrative on the audience, both internal and external. Taking advantage of this function of singing, Euripidean heroines employ the power of lyrics when recounting traumatic personal stories that are not easily understandable by others if phrased using the logical rules of spoken dialogue.[92] Singing acquires an authoritative power for tragic heroines as it offers them the chance to inspire empathy through exposing their vulnerability and to reverse the gender hierarchy in their interest.[93] In particular, by emotionally touching men[94] when singing their sufferings, women acquire an authoritative position as catalysts of an emotional effect that transplants the vulnerability from them to the male listeners. On top of that, when singing, women highlight the *otherness* of their experiences and subjectivity, enclosing themselves to a personal world that is not easily permeable by the opinion of their listeners. Therefore, as Gal proposes, female tragic singers use singing as a means of establishing their subjectivity and creating space for their vision of the world.[95]

To study tragic heroines as *singing subjects*, key passages from Euripides' *Medea* and his fragmentary tragedy *Hypsipyle* will be examined in the following analysis. The present

[87] Blundell 1995, 72, 81, 162-69.
[88] McClure 1999a, 40-47, on the special connection between women and ritual lamentation.
[89] McClure 1995, 40. After a quantitative analysis, McClure concluded that in the Euripidean corpus the number of non-choral male singing lines is 790 whereas the number of female ones is 1,667.
[90] Zeitlin 1996, 363, on women instructing the other (men) through their own example.
[91] Chong-Gossard 2008, 28.
[92] Chong-Gossard 2008, 29.
[93] Chong-Gossard 2008, 35.
[94] The emotional influence of female singing to men, can be understood both in an intra-theatrical and extra-theatrical level.
[95] Gal 1995, 178.

chapter aims to showcase the connection between the unconventionality of lyrics as a form of verbal expression and its employment by women as a means of imposing their own – usually also unconventional – perspectives on past and present reality, attempting to express female experience outwardly and genuinely.

A. Euripides' *Medea*: The quest for a feminine song.

The following extract from the first stasimon of Euripides' *Medea* is a powerful and poignant reflection on the limitations of language in expressing female experience. The chorus laments that despite the numerous songs that have been created throughout history, none of them is able to capture the depth of the pain and sorrow that women face. They argue that the male-dominated world of poetry and music has failed to adequately represent female experience and call for a new kind of song that can serve as a means of female lyrical healing.

ΧΟΡΟΣ
στρ. α
ἄνω ποταμῶν ἱερῶν χωροῦσι παγαί,
καὶ δίκα καὶ πάντα πάλιν στρέφεται·
ἀνδράσι μὲν δόλιαι βουλαί, θεῶν δ᾽
οὐκέτι πίστις ἄραρεν.
τὰν δ᾽ ἐμὰν **εὔκλειαν ἔχειν** βιοτὰν **στρέψουσι**
φᾶμαι·
ἔρχεται τιμὰ γυναικείωι γένει·
οὐκέτι **δυσκέλαδος φάμα γυναῖκας ἕξει.**

ἀντ. α
μοῦσαι δὲ παλαιγενέων λήξουσ᾽ ἀοιδῶν
τὰν ἐμὰν ὑμνεῦσαι ἀπιστοσύναν.
οὐ γὰρ ἐν ἀμετέραι γνώμαι λύρας
ὤπασε θέσπιν ἀοιδὰν
Φοῖβος ἀγήτωρ μελέων· ἐπεὶ ἀντάχησ᾽ ἂν ὕμνον
ἀρσένων γένναι. μακρὸς δ᾽ αἰὼν ἔχει
πολλὰ μὲν ἀμετέραν ἀνδρῶν τε μοῖραν εἰπεῖν.[96]

According to the chorus, even worse than the mere absence of songs that communicate female experience, many songs have been composed which denounce the female gender as being the archetype of cunning and deception, tarnishing its reputation (δυσκέλαδος φάμα). What is stimulating in this passage, is that the thematization of the absence of songs favorable to women is conducted in lyrics. Almost ironically and certainly self-referentially, the Corinthian women of the chorus explore the bias of the singing tradition against women while doing so in song.

[96] Eur. *Med.*, 410-30. Ch. "Backward to their sources flow the streams of holy rivers, and the order of all things is reversed: men's thoughts have become deceitful and their oaths by the gods do not hold fast. The common talk will so alter that women's ways will enjoy good repute. Honor is coming to the female sex: no more will women be maligned by slanderous rumor. The [Muse] of ancient bards will cease to hymn our faithlessness. Phoebus lord of song never endowed our minds with the glorious strains of the lyre. Else I could have sounded a hymn in reply to the male sex. Time in its long expanse can say many things of men's lot as well as of women's." The translation in brackets was adapted by the writer of this thesis as it is more suitable for the analysis below.

This paradox is in itself a first step of their endeavor to change the present situation and restore the position of women both as subjects and objects of singing.

The way this stasimon is linguistically constructed is indicative of the peculiarities that lyrical expression has in comparison to spoken dialogue. According to the chorus, women need to find their own idiom and, as I will show in the following analysis, lyrical expression is ideal for this purpose because it is in itself distinctive, in the sense that it does not comply with the rules of spoken verses. Using lyrical expression, women reclaim their identity as producers of discourse,[97] but they do not coopt a discourse that conforms with the grammatical canonicity but one that distorts it through the medium of song, underlining the uniqueness and unconventionality of their voice.

To begin with, the expression ἄνω ποταμῶν ἱερῶν χωροῦσι παγαί is quite unnatural regarding both its linguistic formulation and its meaning. The phrase ἄνω ποταμῶν is proverbial and indicates the reversal of a given order, usually standing on its own in speech.[98] However, in this passage this proverbial phrase is integrated into a sentence, as the noun ποταμῶν is attached to the adjective ἱερῶν and this syntactic construction functions as an adverbial expression of place which completes the verb χωροῦσι. As a result, the chorus here "playfully quotes the proverb and immediately creates [an alternative] syntactic variation."[99]

As to meaning, this phrase is a characteristic *schema adynaton*[100] which shows that what is described can be actualized only if the cosmic order is radically reversed, something that is logically considered impossible. Interestingly, the meaning of this *schema adynaton* is ambiguous, as it can refer to both the present cosmic reversal resulting from Jason's breaking of oaths, an act typically associated with women, and the impending shift in the singing tradition that will enable women to craft a new narrative[101] celebrating and uplifting their gender, in contrast to the traditional portrayal of women as contemptible beings. Indeed, these two interpretations may complement each other, as Jason's breach of oaths is precisely what could have prompted women to challenge the existing singing tradition.

As Griffith maintains, unconventional argumentative modes, such as the argumentation based on the *schema adynaton* analyzed above, define the distinctiveness of female voice in tragedy and especially in the lyrical parts. Moreover, he underlines that the employment of verbal mannerisms, as for example idiosyncratic expressions and phrases with unorthodox syntactical form, constitute an index of a distinctively feminine use of language. [102] A relevant instance of verbal mannerism in this stasimon is detected in the way the phrases τὰν δ' ἐμὰν εὔκλειαν ἔχειν βιοτὰν στρέψουσι φᾶμαι and οὐκέτι δυσκέλαδος φάμα γυναῖκας ἕξει are connected.

In particular, those two phrases form a complex *chiasmus* which leads to a high level of literary stylization. The first phrase, which comprises of a combination of a singular object (τὰν εὔκλειαν), verb (στρέψουσι) and a plural subject (φᾶμαι), reversely mirrors the second one, which consists of a compound of a singular subject (φάμα), plural object (γυναῖκας) and

[97] Wohl 2005, 150 on the different interpretations of tragic heroines that occur when they are understood either as products or producers of discourse.
[98] Mastronarde 2002, 242, on the phrase ἄνω ποταμῶν as "proverbial for reversals."
[99] Mastronarde 2002, 242.
[100] Page 1938, 103, on the adynaton as a reversal of the "iustus rerum ordo." Also, Mastronarde 2002, 242, on this schema as *adynaton*.
[101] Boedeker 1991, 109, on Medea as *author* of a new discourse.
[102] Griffith 2018, 121.

verb (ἕξει).[103] The above atypical grammatic constructions are suggestive of the distinctive use of language that distinguishes the lyric strophes from the spoken dialogues in Euripidean tragedy. Lyrical expression is an aspect of verbal communication that retains autonomy vis-à-vis the grammatic principles of dialogue and, therefore, is more malleable and linguistically flexible. It holds an open space for the verbal experimentation that women should do in order to define their own feminine voice, characterized, as witnessed, by verbal eccentricities.

Unpacking the meaning of this *chiasmus*, it is important to highlight that its peculiar structure forms a "triangle" that connects the words εὔκλειαν, φάμα and γυναῖκας, as they all alternate in the positions of syntactical objects or subjects of the sentences that are intertwined by the *chiasmus*. Interpreting this connection, it becomes obvious that the purpose of the present song is to inaugurate an era when women will be in control of the singing tradition so as "to replace the ψόγος γυναικῶν with a song of praise for women."[104] As a result, the *chiasmus* clarifies that the central objective of the choral song is the restoration of women's good repute (εὔκλειαν).

Encompassing a broader scope than merely shedding light on good female reputation, the notion of εὔκλεια is evocative of Medea's heroic attributes. Moreover, as the chorus believes that εὔκλεια results from the transformation of women from objects of song to singing subjects, it is also evocative of the significance of female agency.[105] It is noteworthy that Medea's entitlement to εὔκλεια, or positive renown, does indeed tie into her overall portrayal as a tragic heroine who challenges traditional gender roles and appropriates male values, as the pursuit of honor and vengeance is typically associated with the male heroic code of behavior.[106] Connecting the epicenter of the *chiasmus*, meaning the notion of εὔκλεια, with the symbolism of the *schema adynaton*, it can be understood that female εὔκλεια will only be the outcome of a cosmic palinode, which could exonerate women and expose the erotic transgressions of men; a palinode triggered by Jason's breach of marital oaths.[107]

Moving to the first antistrophe of this stasimon, the Corinthian women specify that it is in the kind of music accompanied by the musical instrument of the lyre (λύρας) that women do not have representation and visibility. Even when they have, it is usually a negative representation, aimed at disreputing them. The emphasis that the chorus places on the lyre is not coincidental but highly symbolic and has metatheatrical overtones. In particular, the chorus complains that Apollo has not equipped women with skill on the lyre while singing so accompanied by the music of *aulos*, the double-reeded wind instrument of tragedy.[108] The symbolism of this scene implies that even if women are not gifted in epic and lyrical poetry, accompanied by the music of the lyre, they are certainly skilled at singing the lyrical parts of tragedy, as they performatively prove on stage.

Therefore, the polarity between lyre and aulos is of high symbolic value as it implicitly points to the opposition between the epic world of Apollo and the tragic world of Dionysus. As

[103] Mossman 2011, 257, on the analysis of the *chiasmus*.
[104] McClure 1999b, 379. The phrase ψόγος γυναικῶν (blame against women) is taken by McClure from the homonymous section of Stobaeus *Anthology*, as she mentions on p. 378 of the same article.
[105] McClure 1999b, 389, on the connection of εὔκλεια with Medea's heroism and female agency.
[106] Kirichennko 2022 on the Homeric heroic code of behavior as a male ideal used to enforce and stabilise political power, encompassing notions of honor, virtue, mastery in war battles, and excellence in athletic games. As observed in the first chapter of this thesis, according to Thucydides, women should abstain from this heroic ideal of honor and acquire good reputation only through their silence and public invisibility (cf. note 27).
[107] McClure 1999b, 389, on the "palinode" implied by the *schema adynaton*.
[108] Mossman 2011, 259, on the meta-theatricality of this scene and on the connection of aulos with tragedy and the god Dionysus.

Wilson has shown,[109] in Attic art, both poetry and iconography, there is a "hostility" between lyre and aulos, as aulos is typically associated with Dionysus and *baccheia* and, plausibly, with the genre of Attic tragedy too.[110] Overall, in those verses, it seems that the chorus suggests that the music of aulos and synecdochically the genre of tragedy has the potential to become the feminine song they are seeking. As Zeitlin has argued, tragedy is an intrinsically feminine genre of poetry, as its main constituents, such as the emphasis on corporeal experience and mimesis, are associated with feminine qualities.[111] Even the god of theatre, Dionysus, is according to Zeitlin "a true mixture of masculine and feminine" who "must also take womanish traits."[112]

Moreover, the metre of the first strophic pair of this stasimon underscores even more the antithesis between the epic and the tragic genre. In particular, this first strophic pair is written in dactylo-epitrite, a metre that resembles the epic dactylic metre which characterised the synthesis of epic poetry.[113] The epic register that this metre creates is further emphasized by a number of epicisms in terms of vocabulary, such as the words ὑμνεῦσαι[114] and ἀπιστοσύναν or the phrase θέσπιν ἀοιδὰν,[115] which is an exact adaptation of the line ending Homer applied to Phemius and Demodocus.[116] It can be argued that the creation of this epic atmosphere aims to mimic – probably in an ironic manner – the grandiose poetical genres, such as the epic and lyric poetry, which present women in a misogynistic way, as deceitful and unworthy beings.[117] In addition, it evokes the world of epic martial male values—the kind of values that Medea appropriates and, arguably, perverts throughout the play.

What is paradoxical about this mimicry of epic language, is that it is conducted through the medium of a song, sung by women themselves and accompanied by the aulos, the instrument which refers to tragedy. In that sense, the chorus sings a *meta-song* which comments on the need of a feminine lyrical expression unshackled from the stereotypes of epic poetry, while singing so in an epic meter. Through this *meta-song*, the chorus manages to adopt the lexical and metrical compounds of epic lyrics and dismantle them, via denouncing their ineffectiveness in expressing and healing female suffering.

On the whole, as Marianne Hopman argues, "the revenge of Medea […] is not only evaluated as an adequate retaliation to the offense, but is also envisaged as a palinode that will subvert the earlier poetic tradition."[118] In this sense, the *meta-song* of the Corinthian women, a lamentation over the lack of a song capable of encapsulating and soothing female suffering, is authoritative in that it attempts to overthrow the established status quo in the realm of songs,

---

[109] Wilson 1999, 76.
[110] It is notable that dithyramb, the worshipping song of Dionysus that marked the dawning of Attic tragedy, was accompanied by the aulos.
[111] Zeitlin 1996, 343.
[112] Zeitlin 1996, 344, 343 respectively.
[113] Mossman 2011, 257.
[114] Page 1938, 104, on the Ionic contraction of the word, possibly also referring to the misogynist poetic tradition of Archilochus, Hipponax and Semonides. Therefore, not only epic but also lyric poetry contributed to the perpetuation of stereotypes against female behavior.
[115] The subject of the phrase ὥπασε θέσπιν ἀοιδὰν is Φοῖβος. The chorus mentions the Muses (μοῦσαι) as the guiding force in the creative process of singing, with their leader Phoebus instructing them. However, this relationship could be viewed through a gendered lens, revealing a power dynamic that restricts the artistic power of the female Muses.
[116] *Od.* 1.328, 8.498. Mastronarde 2002, 244 on this phrase and its epic connotations.
[117] Except for the Homeric epic background, the negative portrayal of women is attested in Hesiod (*Theog. 590*), where, starting from a negative depiction of Pandora, he generalizes this view towards the female gender altogether.
[118] Hopman 2008, 156.

mainly represented by epic poetry. Characterized by the belittling representation of women as malevolent deceivers, this status quo amounts to lyrical expression being created *by and for* men, without any preoccupation for the singing exploration of female experience. Motivated by Medea's decisiveness to take revenge on Jason, the chorus employs lyrics to announce that it is about time to infuse a female vision of the world into songs,[119] counterbalancing the perpetual imposition of a male worldview that has dishonored women.

Wohl, commenting on how the psychic conditions of tragic heroines critically define tragic texts, argues that female "desire and fear […] permeate the language and shape the structure of those texts."[120] Based on Wohl's modern gendered perspective on tragic texts, the emotional value that the Corinthian women invest on the creation of a feminine song unsettles the established rules of language both in terms of grammar and meaning and results in the formation of unconventional grammatical phenomena, such as the *schema adynaton* or the complex *chiasmus* of the first stasimon. The grammatical flexibility of this stasimon indicates that if women, as singing subjects, manage to rearrange the grammatical and semantic structures of language, they could start crafting a singing idiom of their own. Irigaray and Burke emphasize on the feasibility of this endeavor, claiming that "language is not of a single thread, a single strand or pattern."[121] According to this claim, the inherent bias of male-centered perspectives within the structures and semantics of language is not a condition with no alternative. Instead, the grammatical rules can be reevaluated and reconstructed in a way that eliminates gender bias and accommodates female interest and experience.

As we noted, this female singing idiom is symbolically connected to the genre of tragedy, through the opposition between the instruments of lyre and aulos. Although women may have lacked opportunities for self-expression within the realm of epic poetry, they are able to convey their experiences through the medium of lyrics in tragedy. According to that, the establishment of separate discursive spheres for men and women[122] is necessary for female lyrics to acquire distinctiveness and identity. As we have seen, this process is complex and demarcated by the following three factors: the medium of discourse, referring to the distinction between dialogue and lyrics, the structure and qualities of discourse, referring to the grammatical unconventionality of female lyrics, and the literary genre of discourse, referring to the differentiation between epic or lyric poetry and tragedy. The female singing idiom can be invented at the intersection of those three parameters, as the *meta-song* of the chorus itself thematizes, either through its grammatical qualities or its meaning and references to issues of literary genre.

As the women of the chorus themselves denote, the quest for a female singing idiom and the process through which this is found, is subversive and it can be stated – or probably overstated – that it has the potential to alter the order of the world (ἄνω ποταμῶν ἱερῶν χωροῦσι παγαί). We may propose that there is a latent meaning to this assertion, alluding to the socio-political impact that a potential female singing idiom can have. Finding a voice and medium to express female experience cannot be merely and harmlessly confined to the realms of art and tragedy but is liable to permeating the political sphere. In particular, granting a platform – even in the context of theatre – to individuals who were previously voiceless in the political realm

[119] Chong-Gossard 2008, 88, on the authoritative use of song by women to "hold to their visions of the world against the dominant opinion."
[120] Wohl 2005, 154.
[121] Irigaray & Burke 1985, 209.
[122] McClure 1999a, 29, on the establishment of separate discursive spheres for men and women in tragedy.

has the potential to offer novel viewpoints and redress an imbalance in civic discourse and participation that has historically favoured male dominance.[123]

The ambiguity of the phrase ἄνω ποταμῶν dramatizes the very fact that the male and female perspective on social reality significantly differ. From the male perspective, this restoring of gender balance in society can be considered as a cosmic reversal since it entails a potential loss of the privileged access to and control over εὔκλεια. From the female perspective, this reversal entails an alternative stream of life's and society's river, which is more ethical and equitable. More precisely, this reverse stream of life, reflected in and represented by female lyrics, imbues female experience with cultural value on par with that of male experience, via the validation of female perspective. Therefore, it is harmonized with female emotionality, conveying and verbalizing it via the medium of lyrics.

B. Euripides' *Hypsipyle*: The feminine song flourishes.

We have observed that the first stasimon of Euripides' *Medea* conveys the yearning for a feminine song, yet ultimately emphasizes its unattainability, while doing so in a song. The inability of Medea, who seeks self-validation in music, to alleviate her pain, culminating in infanticide, highlights this futility and leaves the chorus without a spokesperson for such a song.[124] In the fragmentary parodos of Euripides' *Hypsipyle*, the eponymous character also laments the struggle of finding comfort in music for herself, while expressing a quest for a healing song.

Prior to delving into the analysis of the primary text, it is beneficial to provide a brief overview of the plot of this fragmentary play, with emphasis on Hypsipyle's mythical background.[125] In the prologue, the heroine narrates her personal story, focusing on the massacre of Lemnian men, when she achieved to rescue her father. Unfortunately, this resulted in her violent abduction by pirates. In reminiscing on her past, Hypsipyle highlights her fond memories of her romantic liaison with Jason, who had visited Lemnos during the Argonautic expedition. After her abduction, Hypsipyle was enslaved by the king Lycurgus and queen Eurydice of Nemea.

Upon re-entering the house after her prologue, Hypsipyle encounters her long-lost sons, whom she had borne to Jason, without either of them recognizing each other. In the first episode, Amphiaraus, one of the leaders of the Seven Against Thebes, arrives and request Hypsipyle's help to find a spring. While helping him, Hypsipyle neglects Opheltes, Eurydice's son whom she was supposed to watch over, and he is seized by a serpent. As a consequence, Eurydice attempts to execute Hypsipyle, but ultimately fails. Due to its fragmentary state, the remainder of the play is not entirely clear. Surviving verses suggest that Hypsipyle laments her past misfortunes and eventually reunites with her sons following a recognition scene. There are also indications that Dionysus himself intervenes to safeguard Hypsipyle from Eurydice's fury, secure her liberation, and reunite her with her family.

In the following passage from the play's parodos, Hypsipyle underlines the necessity of a therapeutic melody for women, emphatically using a vocabulary of music. What is different from Medea, is that Hypsipyle's lamentation leaves open the possibility that other

[123] Foley 2001, 18, on the political impact that giving voice to previously silenced subjects has, something frequently observed in tragic plots which revolve around female heroines.
[124] Foley 2001, 265.
[125] The following overview of the play's plot was adopted by Collard & Cropp 2009, 252-253. The reconstruction of *Hypsipyle's* fragments followed is this thesis is the one proposed by the same editors.

women, such as Procris, have had a person who mourned or expressed sorrow on their behalf, even if that entailed their death. Interestingly, the parodos ends with an open question that underscores the agonizing search for a song to alleviate Hypsipyle's pain and, possibly, the hope of finding it.

ΥΨΙΠΥΛΗ
κυναγόν τε **Π<ρ>όκριν** τὰν πόσις ἔκτα
κατεθρήνησεν ἀοιδαῖς […
θάνατος ἔλαχε· τὰ δ᾽ ἐμὰ πάθε[α]
τίς ἂν ἢ γόος ἢ μέλος ἢ κιθάρας
ἐπὶ δάκρυσι **μοῦσ**᾽ ἀνοδυρομένα
μετὰ **Καλλιόπας**
ἐπὶ πόνους ἂν ἔλθοι;[126]

The above extract is Hypsipyle's final strophe in the tragedy's fragmentary parodos, which consists of strophic pairs of singing exchanges between the heroine and the chorus. What is distinctive in this exchange, is that the tragic character of Hypsipyle does not follow the conventions of the tragic genre which dictate that the heroine should sing an antistrophe as an answer to the chorus' strophe. Instead, Hypsipyle uses her antistrophes as a response to her own earlier strophes,[127] in terms of thematical and metrical composition. In the next few paragraphs, I will argue that she uses lyrical expression to differentiate her worldview from the one of the chorus, implying that her interpretation of past events will not be overshadowed by the viewpoints of external figures. By means of singing, Hypsipyle remains connected to her recollections of past events, including the Argo ship and the Lemnian massacre, thereby showcasing her self- absorbedness[128] and her estrangement from the societal context of Nemea.

In the first verse of her last antistrophe, Hypsipyle mentions the name of Procris (κυναγόν τε Πρόκριν), who gained notoriety for embarking on a fatal hunt following her husband to uncover his alleged infidelity.[129] In the case of Procris, her death was a result of misjudgment, unfavorable circumstances and bad luck, as neither her not her husband intended to harm each other deliberately. Especially in Ovid's *Metamorphoses,*[130] the treatment of Procris' myth indicates that neither Cephalus nor Procris is ethically responsible for their tragic fate. Instead, the adverse conditions of their love affair can be vaguely attributed to the spirit of love, which incites feelings of jealousy and woundedness to the lovers. Therefore, no one can be held accountable for the tragic ending of their story.[131]

---

[126] Eur. *Hyps*., 752h 3-9. Hyps. "And the huntress Procris, whom her husband killed lamented with songs, death claimed (her); but my sufferings — what cry or song or lyre's music, lamenting them beside my tears with Calliope's aid, will come to mourn my troubles?" The edition and translation of Euripides' *Hypsipyle* used in this thesis are by Collard & Cropp 2009.
[127] Chong-Gossard 2008, 75.
[128] Damen 1990, 134, on the repetitive reference of female heroines to their dreadful experiences when singing, something which renders them "notoriously self-absorbed."
[129] The variations of the myth are numerous. This version of the myth is first attested at Pherecydes of Athens in his *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum* (3F 34). The above version is frequently referred to by Hellenistic authors (e.g., Apollod. 3. 15. 1 and Call. *Hymn* 3. 209 f). However, there were slight differentiations of the myth in its treatment by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* (7.661-865), mostly related to the manner of Procris death through shooting.
[130] Ovid, *Met.*, 7.661-865.
[131] Saylor 2008, 652, 657-58, on the issues of woundedness and blame in Ovid's treatment of the myth of Procris in *Metamorphoses*.

On the whole, Procris was posthumously mourned by her husband (κατεθρήνησεν ἀοιδαῖς), precisely because she was not accountable for her mistakes, a situation with which Hypsipyle cannot relate. More precisely, Hypsipyle's conscious decision to save the life of her father during the Lemnian massacre resulted in her being abducted by pirates and, later, enslaved in Nemea by the king Lycurgus. What is most important for her, though, is that her abduction caused her age-long separation from the children she had with Jason, when he bypassed Lemnos during the Argonautic expedition.[132] As a consequence, Hypsipyle's present emotional impasse is wholly attributed to her own decision-making, an impasse characterized by the difficulty of finding a receptive audience for a song that portrays her struggles and the lack of beloved ones to lament her situation.

Hypsipyle's grievance about the lack of someone to lament her misfortunes becomes more direct in the question she poses later on, when she wonders what mournful tune would come to her so as to alleviate her suffering (ἐπὶ πόνους). Thus, she seeks a healing musical tune, thematizing her quest through the numerous references to musical motifs that are accumulated in the last four verses of her antistrophe. The way lament (γόος), melody (μέλος) and guitar (κιθάρας) are syntactically used as subjects of the verb ἂν ἔλθοι renders them a sort of personified agents of musical consolation that are expected to come to Hypsipyle's aid.

Allegorically, the noun μοῦσ᾽ can allude to a personification of the lyric Muse,[133] in the same way as the chorus of Corinthian women personified the goddess of lyrical inspiration in the first stasimon of *Medea* (μοῦσαι δὲ παλαιγενέων λήξουσ᾽ ἀοιδῶν). Moreover, through Hypsipyle's specific reference to the Muse of epic poetry, Calliope, a distinction is implied between the lyric Muse (κιθάρας μοῦσ᾽) and the vocal Calliope of epos (μετά Καλλιόπας),[134] something evocative of the opposition between lyre, representing epos, and aulos, representing tragedy, at which the chorus of Corinthian woman hinted in *Medea's* first stasimon. According to Hypsipyle, Calliope and epic poetry can be part of the composing process of a female healing song but only as auxiliary agents; this endeavour can be properly fulfilled only through the healing mastery of lyrics. Using the successive disjunctive ἢ (ἢ γόος ἢ μέλος ἢ κιθάρας), Hypsipyle enumerates the various means by which the lyrical Muse could potentially guide her lamentation, if the composition of a consoling and healing song was attainable.

Overall, through her antistrophe, Hypsipyle conveys that there is a qualitative difference in the intensity of the psychological impact that troubles shared and lamented have on the one hand, and woes isolated and unlamented on the other.[135] By comparing herself to Procris, Hypsipyle underlines that she has no company, either divine or human, to join her in her lamentation or mourn for her. Thus, her misfortunes become doubly unbearable; both because of the absence of a healing song and due to the absence of a company to lament with or an audience to address her lamentation to. Even though the restorative power of music is indisputable for Hypsipyle as a fact, it appears to be an impossibility for her;[136] the heroine has no one to lament her sufferings, neither a beloved, mortal person nor the goddess of musical inspiration, the Muse. Against all odds, though, she still uses the power of her voice to sing.

---

[132] See the introduction of the present subchapter for the context of Hypsipyle's myth and its relation to the play's plot. The events recounted here are not dramatized in the play but are mentioned by Hypsipyle in her past recollections.
[133] Bond 1963, 77, on the personification of the Muse. Alternatively, the reference here can be merely to the musical tune of the lyre, since, according to the editorial choice, μοῦσ᾽ is not capitalized.
[134] Bond 1963, 77.
[135] Bond 1963, 78, on this translation of the verses 6-9.
[136] Chong-Gossard 2008, 78.

What is paradoxical in this case, is that Hypsipyle presents the impossibility of finding a healing song in the context of a song. Exactly as Chong-Gossard poses it, "she sings herself into a paradox, exploring the ineffectuality of song while saying so in a song itself."[137]

In the following passage, a recognition scene with her son Euneus, Hypsipyle engages in an atypical conversation with him, where he interrogates her in spoken iambic trimeters and she answers in lyrics.[138] In her answers, she retrospectively laments her past misfortunes and manages to share her feelings with the son, something which has a deep emotional effect on him. Through the following analysis, I will suggest that Hypsipyle, especially when not literally thematizing the issue of musical consolation, exploits lyrical expression – even unconsciously – in a way that offers relief, both for her and her male listener, namely her son.

ΥΨΙΠΥΛΗ
ἀκτὰς **βαρυβρόμους** ἱκόμαν
ἐπί τ᾽ **οἶδμα** θαλάσσιον, ὀρνίθων
ἔρημον κοίταν.

ΕΥΝΗΟΣ
κἀκεῖθεν ἦλθες δεῦρο πῶς, τίνι στόλωι;

ΥΨΙΠΥΛΗ
ναῦται κώπαις
Ναύπλιον εἰς λιμένα **ξενικὸν πόρον**
ἄγαγόν με
δουλοσύ[ν]ας τ᾽ ἐπέβασαν, <ἰ>ὼ τέ[κ]νον,
ἐνθάδε νάϊον, μέλεον ἐμπολάν.

ΕΥΝΗΟΣ
οἴμοι κακῶν σῶν.

ΥΨΙΠΥΛΗ
μὴ στέν᾽ ἐπ᾽ εὐτυχίαισιν.[139]

In her lyrical verses, mostly dochmiacs and anapests,[140] Hypsipyle elaborately conveys her memories of her past grievous experiences, managing both to share her burden with her male listener and to mitigate her psychological wounds through the aid of music. Employing a series of emotionally and negatively charged words, she describes the experience of violent abduction to Nemea, loneliness, enslavement and deracination from her homeland, Lemnos. She has traversed the loud-roaring (βαρυβρόμους), swelling (οἶδμα) sea of the Aegean, arriving at a land where she could not even enjoy the friendly company of birds (ὀρνίθων ἔρημον), feeling terribly lonely and estranged. As she proceeds her lyrical past recollections, Hypsipyle

[137] Chong-Gossard 2008, 79.
[138] Chong-Gossard 2008, 32, on this tragic communicative scheme as an *epirrhematic amoibaion.*
[139] Eur. *Hyps.*, 759a 80-89. Hyps. "I came to the deep-resounding shore and the swelling sea, the lonely refuge of birds." Eun. "And how did you come here from there, what transport did you use?" Hyps. "Seafarers, rowing, took me on a foreign voyage to Nauplion harbour and sold me into slavery—O my son—in this land, ship-borne, a pitiful piece of merchandise." Eun. "Alas for your hardships—" Hyps. "Don't grieve at what turned out well!"
[140] Bond 1963, 127, on the meter.

emphasizes that she arrived at the foreign harbor of Nauplion (ξενικὸν πόρον), where she was subjected to slavery (δουλοσύνας). The way Hypsipyle recounts her experiences suggests a tendency to view herself as a passive object within her own story, whose fate is decided by external circumstances.

As Patricia Easterling proposes, by exploring the dynamics of interaction among tragic characters, a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of their respective plights and motivations may be achieved as opposed to analyzing them in isolation. [141] In Hypsipyle's case, the dynamic of interaction that is created between her and her son, especially by employing lyrics, is so empowering that the very verbalization of her hardships brings about the overcoming of them, as she herself phrases it, when dealing with the sorrow of Euneus (μὴ στέν᾽ ἐπ᾽ εὐτυχίαισιν). Despite her past sufferings, singing about and sharing her pain helps her to adopt a positive and constructive perspective on it; as she proclaims, the pain belongs to the past and the future is more promising. Hypsipyle's song is the canvas on which the recognition scene with her son unfolds, aiding her in reuniting with her offspring and emotionally approaching her son. As her sons will eventually manage to free her from servitude, with the contribution of Dionysus, this scene serves as a precursor to Hypsipyle's reestablishment in a domestic state within her familial setting.[142]

On his part, Euneus, throughout his conversation with his mother, makes questions about specific aspects of her past, encouraging her to further unravel the narrative of her memories. From a metrical aspect, all his questions are in iambic trimeter, the meter of spoken dialogues, being in stark contrast to the lyrical verses of Hypsipyle. As I will demonstrate, the metrical composition of his verses and his emotional response to Hypsipyle's song indicate that he is not in the position of the speaker but of the listener, while his mother is on the spotlight as a speaker or, more accurately, singer.[143] Interestingly, the only divergence from the canon of iambic trimeter in Euneus' verses is attested in his final reaction to his mother's recollections (οἴμοι κακῶν σῶν). The meter of this verse mirrors Euneus' emotional turbulence and portrays the turning point which his relationship with his mother has reached. This verse signals a break in the symmetrical repetitive alternation between lyrics and trimeters. It is in fact a broken trimeter, as it consists of a part that follows the rules of iambus but stops at the point of the hemiepes and leads to Euneus' uttering only the beginning of a normal trimeter.[144]

This metrical imbalance is reflective of the power of Hypsipyle's lyrics to emotionally move her male listener. On the pretext of her vulnerability as a singing character in comparison to her speaking son,[145] she makes him vulnerable by transmitting to him her own sensitivity and, thus, alters the power relationship between them in favor of her. Through this process, Euneus takes the position of a *lyrical listener* in relation to his mother, as he reflectively and empathetically listens to her sung recollections, making her feel heard and acknowledged. Euneus' position as a *lyrical listener* is reminiscent of the common tragic practice characterized as choral response, according to which the chorus responds via an antistrophe to a protagonist's lyrical strophe. Initially responding in spoken verses and eventually flirting with a lyrical

[141] Easterling 1990, 88.
[142] Chong-Gossard 2008, 54, on the healing power of Hypsipyle's song and on its contribution to the subsequent reunition with her family.
[143] Chong-Gossard 2008, 62.
[144] Bond 1963, 131, on the metrical analysis of the broken trimeter in verse 88.
[145] Cyrino 1998, 82-83, on the association between singing and vulnerability as opposed to the connection between speaking and self-restraint.

utterance, Euneus takes on the mantle of the chorus, responding to Hypsipyle with verses that resemble to mini choral antistrophes.

Overall, in this recognition scene, the emotional contrast that the co-existence of lyrics and trimeters produces,[146] demonstrates the power of feminine singing to emotionally affect a male listener, either an intra or an extra-theatrical one. This metrical differentiation between the female and the male speech marks the creation of separate ways of verbal expression for the feminine and masculine characters. Singing becomes a communicative method affiliated to femininity, as it allows for the release of the sensitivity of tragic heroines. Through this externalization, female heroines reclaim the narrative of their personal history and manage to be visible and heard, while regaining control of their memories and avoiding the risk of having their subjectivity "trespassed" by the male perspective of their story.

The above analysis of Euripides' *Hypsipyle* focused on two extracts of the play where Hypsipyle is an emotionally overflowing singer who – consciously or subconsciously – uses lyrical expression to lessen and share her psychological pain. In the lyrical antistrophe of the play's fragmentary parodos, Hypsipyle acknowledges the restorative power of music but concludes that it is impossible for her to achieve this consolation, even if paradoxically she arrives at this conclusion while singing. Singing a song which thematizes the lack of a healing song is reminiscent of the *meta-song* that the chorus sings in the first stasimon of Euripides' *Medea*. The *meta-song* of the Corinthian women, parallel to Hypsipyle's *meta-song* in the play's parodos, has a similar theme, namely the lack of a healing song for women and the necessity to create one.

In both cases, a song is sung; but this present song is not enough to satisfy the expressive needs of the women who sing it, being devoid of its healing power because it is *not heard* by the desired audience. Without this audience, the act of singing lies on the threshold between presence and absence, as the present song exists, is sung and actualized, but does not have the qualitative virtues that the women need to feel satisfaction. Thus, a song deprived of an addressee or listener is elusive, transitory, and fleeting as it constitutes the praeludium of another song which will manage to reflect, convey, and dramatize the female psyche,[147] namely to heal it.

As modern readers of *Medea* and *Hypsipyle*, consulting Irigaray's feminist theory, we can contend that the *meta-songs* of the Corinthian women and Hypsipyle are thematizing the search of a song that "corresponds to a […] talking of desire which […] remains itself unspeakable."[148] Therefore, to paraphrase Irigaray's words, the purpose of those women's singing acts is to render the healing songs speakable. What is more, *Medea's* and *Hypsipyle's* plots have shown that for female songs to become healing, they also need to become audible. Were tragic heroines to transform their *meta-songs* into actual songs, they would need to stop singing about other, better, and actually soothing songs but to sing those soothing songs themselves, addressing them to their respective male listeners. Only by doing so can those women use lyrics as a vehicle enabling them to act on the tragic stage not as caricatures of themselves but as authentic and conscious dramatizations of their inner selves.[149]

---

[146] Mastronarde 1994, 173, on the emotional contrast that trimeters and dochmiacs create.
[147] Wohl 2005, 154, on tragedy developing a feminine language of the self through the dramatization of female psyche.
[148] Irigaray 2017, 83.
[149] Irigaray 1993, 66, on the creation of autonomous space for women in life based on the acts of free speaking and singing.

In the recognition scene with her son Euneus, Hypsipyle does not sing a *meta-song*, a song centered on the healing potential of singing. Instead, she straightforwardly proceeds onto singing this kind of song, one that is emotionally charged and reflective of her sufferings. Thus, she manages to transform the *meta-song* of the parodos into an actual healing song and address it to its respective male listener, namely Euneus. The healing quality of this song is twofold. Firstly, Hypsipyle incorporates into her lyrical expression all the hardships she has endured in the past and the emotional impact they had, achieving to exorcize them, as the optimistic verse μὴ στέν᾽ ἐπ᾽ εὐτυχίαισιν, which she addresses to her son, illustrates. The positive attitude she adopts, a result of the restorative power of singing, reflects her prospective reunition with her son and her family in Lemnos. Hypsipyle might have thought that the difficulty of finding consolation through music is overwhelming. However, when she does so in an intuitive – almost unconscious – way, she succeeds to own her grief[150] about the past via transmitting her perspective of it in lyrics and, eventually, overcoming it.

Secondly, the healing and influential power of Hypsipyle's song is manifested in her son's emotional reaction to it. Being reunited with his long-lost mother and listening to her past sufferings, Euneus is deeply moved; his mother's song touches his heart and motivates him to recognize himself anew through an emotional lens, something not easily attainable for a man. Immersed in his mother's song, Euneus virtually relives her personal story and has an awakening experience which reconnects him with subconscious and unrecognized nuances of his emotional self. Thus, the female experience of his mother enlarges and deepens Euneus' experience of himself.[151]

The catalyst of Euneus' reconnection both with his mother and his emotional self is the medium of song. As we witnessed, Hypsipyle's song magnifies the emotional impact that her narration has on her son, softening his emotional defenses. Being a woman, Hypsipyle has eluded the male demonization of sentimentality, thus having a more intrinsic relation to singing and its emotionally awakening potential. To pose it as Hélène Cixous does, "in women's speech, […] the element which never stops resonating, which […] retains the power of moving us, […] is the song: first music from the first voice of love which is alive in every woman. Why is this privileged relationship with the voice? Because no woman stockpiles as many defenses for countering the drives as does a man."[152] Captivated by the "first voice of love", his mother's voice, Euneus sympathizes with his mother, as Hypsipyle's song encourages him to freely explore his emotional drives.

[150] Chong-Gossard 2008, 90, on the ownership of grief by female tragic heroines through lyrics.
[151] Zeitlin 1996, 356, on female tragic characters as catalysts for the unfolding and deepening of the masculine self.
[152] Cixous 1976, 881.

Chapter Three: Speech

The *parrhesia* of tragic heroines.

In the previous two chapters, Euripidean heroines and female choruses were explored in terms of their silence and song. Building on this foundation, the present chapter delves into the examination of a Euripidean heroine, Pasiphae, who emerges as a *speaking subject*, exploring the peculiar ways in which she engages with speech. This engagement is mostly characterized by the employment of rhetorical devices that strengthen the argumentative value of female speech, something which has broader social implications in terms of female empowerment.

Such an analysis presupposes a discussion of the concept of *parrhesia*, which has been examined by scholars in theoretical, political terms and in relation to Greek tragedy. Formulating a normative conceptual framework about *parrhesia*, Foucault perceives it as an expression of sincerity and courage, which provides a useful tool for understanding the evolution of truth-telling in ancient Greek and Roman culture, traced in terms of politics, rhetoric, and philosophy.[153] Furthermore, scholarly works on the historical and political interpretation of *parrhesia* are an important contribution to the analysis of this chapter. Carter views *parrhesia* as an attribute of citizenship in Athenian democracy rather than a right and underlines that free speech was in cases restricted by law for the collective well-being of the community. Additionally, he contrasts *parrhesia* to *isegoria*, viewing the former as a by-product of democracy and the latter as a political value based on equality.[154] Adding to that, Konstan claims that *parrhesia* in Athenian democracy was more of an expectation than a right, applying this argument in an analysis of Euripides' *Phoenician Women*.[155]

As the present chapter aims to investigate an example of how female *parrhesia* is employed by tragic heroines in Euripidean tragedy, it is useful to review the work of specific scholars who use *parrhesia* as an interpretative lens to Greek literature. Sluiter and Rosen interpret *parrhesia* as a concept of frankness, underlining the performativity of free speech in terms of its political use. However, they argue that *parrhesia* was also negatively thought of in antiquity, as shown by passages of Euripides' *Orestes* and Plato's *Phaedrus.*[156] Moreover, Roisman discusses the female use of candid expression as a weapon against tyranny, analyzing the role of female *parrhesia* in tragedies such as Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* and *Agamemnon*, Sophocles' *Antigone* and *Electra* and Euripides' *Electra.*[157] Also relating *parrhesia* to Greek tragedy, Mossman scrutinizes female *parrhesia* focusing on the characters

[153] Foucault 2001. See also Butler 1997 who offers a more negative conceptualization of *parrhesia* as a potential agent of violence, especially in legal contexts. Balancing Foucault's positive and Butler's negative conceptualization of *parrhesia*, van Raalte 2004 focuses on Socratic *parrhesia* as a concept closely intertwined with the principles of dialectics.
[154] Carter 2004.
[155] Konstan 2012. See also Radin 1927 and Landauer 2012 who analyze the concept of *parrhesia* both in relation to and irrespective of the democratic political environment of Classical Athens. Radin 1927 explores the notion of free speech in ancient Athens by drawing comparisons with other Greek city-states. Landauer 2012 discusses the role of *parrhesia* both in democratic and autocratic regimes, mostly serving as a counterweight to flattering rhetoric.
[156] Sluiter and Rosen 2004.
[157] Roisman 2004.

of Electra and Clytemnestra in Euripides' *Electra* and demonstrates how they employ rhetorical strategies more associated with men to create a more powerful female character.[158]

As Sluiter and Rosen note, *parrhesia* "is associated with the courageous expression of one's beliefs, however unpopular they may be. It always involves frankness, and the full disclosure of one's thoughts."[159] Therefore, *parrhesia* involves freedom of speech, straightforwardness, honesty, and fearlessness. Concisely, *parrhesia* can be defined as the speaking status of courageously and openly verbalizing one's opinion. Elaborating on the risk that *parrhesia* entails, Foucault argues that "*parrhesia* is a verbal activity in which a speaker expresses his personal relationship to truth and risks his life because he recognizes truth-telling as a duty."[160] So, according to Foucault, *parrhesia* constitutes a conscious verbal choice that presupposes the agency of the speaking subject and its commitment to truth-telling. Especially when performed by speaking subjects whose opinions and attitudes are not in conformity with the socially dominant ones, as for example when performed by women, *parrhesia* can acquire a revolutionary value. Female commitment to freedom of speech is revolutionary in the sense that it involves the verbalization of a worldview that is usually different from what is widely acknowledged as valid and legit and, despite that, this verbal activity is still performed.

Nonetheless, it remains to be examined if the concept of *parrhesia* can be really seen as descriptive of female speech, a question that touches upon the distinction between *isegoria* and *parrhesia.* Carter argues that *parrhesia* was mostly considered as an attribute of speech that characterized the political environment of the Athenian democracy, meaning a predisposition towards freedom of expression that applies to every speaking subject, regardless of their social status, and entails the expression of any opinion, both good and bad. On the other hand, *isegoria* described the formal right of legally acknowledged Athenian citizens to express their opinion publicly, usually in the Assembly of the Athenian *demos*.[161] Therefore, *isegoria* constituted the legal validation of freedom of speech, whereas *parrhesia* expressed the uncensored tendency of every person under democracy to speak freely. This quality of speech differentiated democracy from tyranny, did not need legal recognition to exist as a social phenomenon and had both positive and negative consequences at times.

Even if women were deprived of the right to *isegoria*, they were still entitled to the democratic freedom of openly expressing their opinion. Despite not having a political platform to vocalize their thoughts, women could have had other opportunities to actualize their *parrhesia*, such as in ritual occurrences or in the private context of *oikos*.[162] According to the democratic principles of the Athenian public status quo, prohibiting a free-born Athenian woman from speaking freely and openly could be characterized as something unjustified and undemocratic.[163] Therefore, *parrhesia*, as an attribute of democratic speech, was applicable to every social category that the political entity of democratic Athens contained and hence to women.

As I will show in this chapter, the female engagement with *parrhesia* in Euripidean tragedy is usually performed using rhetorical techniques that can render women's speech

[158] Mossman 2001. See also Lardinois 2011 who demonstrates how the *parrhesia* of female choruses in lyrical poetry reflects the communal acknowledgement that female perspective has validity, especially in relation to marriage, motherhood, and love.
[159] Sluiter and Rosen 2004, 6.
[160] Foucault 2001, 19.
[161] Carter 2004, 198, 201-02, 206.
[162] Roisman 2004, 94.
[163] Henderson 1998, 257.

persuasive and can prevent a potential rebuttal of their arguments by their male interlocutors. As McClure underlines, "ancient critics complained, about Euripides in particular, that the tragic poets created women who were *too* heroic and brave, *too* rhetorical, or *too* philosophical."[164] Apparently, in the eyes of ancient critics, female *parrhesia* in tragedy was thought to violate the social standards of female behavior in terms of attitude, manner of speaking and content of speech.

Euripides' portrayal of female attitudes towards *parrhesia* does not totally lack a basis in existing social reality.[165] Were Euripides to depict a female attitude towards speech that lacked any basis in existing social reality, he would have created unrealistic heroines who lacked psychological consistency and would be difficult to identify with. It is possible that ancient critics' charges against Euripides did not refer to the mere fact that women possessed the attributes of bravery, rhetorical skill, and philosophical aptitude in their speech, as they probably demonstrated those speech traits both inside and outside the theatrical realm. Instead, ancient critics may refer to the extend (*too* heroic) to which women exhibited those traits in Euripidean tragedy. In that case, it can be argued that the traits of female *parrhesia* depicted in Euripidean tragedy were not entirely invented by Euripides, but characterized female speech, albeit in a potentially more subdued or covert manner. Through possessing those parrhesiastic traits of female speech in a heightened manner, women in Euripidean tragedy thematize issues of female engagement with speech, scrutinize them and provoke social discussion.

In Euripidean tragedy there are numerous instances of female *parrhesia*, where women speak assertively in situations where their words may be seen as dangerous or subversive. In Euripides' *Medea*, Medea speaks openly to the chorus about her feelings of betrayal and desire for revenge against her husband Jason.[166] Similarly, in *Trojan Women,* Hecuba fearlessly speaks to the chorus of captive Trojan women about the ill-omened destiny of captive women in Greece,[167] while Clytemnestra in *Iphigenia at Aulis*, addressing Agamemnon, openly challenges her husband's decision to sacrifice their daughter for the Trojan War, as the seer Calchas proposed.[168] Moreover, in *Hippolytus,* Phaedra confidently announces to the chorus and the nurse her decision to sacrifice her own life in order to protect her good repute and that of her offspring.[169] In *Electra*, Electra openly hurls abuse at the dead body of Aegisthus, blaming him for his shameful deeds and for plotting against her father, while asserting her own desire for justice and revenge.[170] Through the above examples,[171] it becomes obvious that the list of instances of female *parrhesia* in Euripidean tragedy is difficult to exhaust.

Among the plurality of examples of female parrhesiastic speech in Euripides, the present chapter will examine a less popular case of female *parrhesia*: Pasiphae's apologetic

---

[164] McClure 1999a, 25. For those instances of criticism, McClure refers to Arist. *Poet.* 1454a23-24, Plut. *Mor.* 28A, and Origen *C. Cels.* 7.36.34-36, respectively.
[165] On a note on how social and theatrical reality intersect, see the introduction of this thesis.
[166] Eur. *Med.*, 214-266.
[167] Eur. *Tro.*, 98-152.
[168] Eur. *IA*., 1146-1208.
[169] Eur. *Hipp.*, 373-430. For the relationship between Phaedra and *parrhesia* see Foucault 2001, 30-31 and Gentile 2015.
[170] Eur. *El.*, 907-956. For the relationship between Electra and *parrhesia* see Foucault 2001, 33-36, Mossman 2001 and Roisman 2004.
[171] In the above examples, Medea, Hecuba, and Phaedra engage in dialogues with the tragic female chorus, while Clytemnestra and Electra direct their speeches towards male figures, namely Agamemnon and Aegisthus, respectively. Although one might find it more convenient to craft a parrhesiastic discourse when addressing the women of the chorus, it is imperative to bear in mind that both the intra-theatrical and extra-theatrical audiences contained male listeners.

speech in the fragmentary play *Cretans*. This instance of female *parrhesia* was selected due to its underexplored status, offering the potential to enrich the body of existing analysis on the subject. The fragmentary state of the play it belongs to, complicates the overall assessment of Pasiphae's *parrhesia* in terms of its morality and efficacy. However, the blurry evaluation of Pasiphae's speech can incite a novel perspective on *parrhesia*, illustrating that *parrhesia* can serve as an end in itself, transcending conventional categorizations as negative or positive. This study aims to analyze Pasiphae's speech as a compelling illustration of female involvement in uninhibited and assertive communication. It emphasizes the strategic implementation of rhetorical and sophistic techniques by women in structuring candid verbal expressions.

A. Euripides' *Cretans*: Pasiphae's *parrhesia* as a means of exculpation of the self.

Based on Apollodorus' and Hyginus' narration,[172] the mythical background of Euripides' *Cretans* revolves around Minos, the ruler of Crete, who prayed to Poseidon for a confirming sign of his rule. Poseidon sent him a bull, which Minos vowed to sacrifice to the god in exchange. However, he ultimately kept it for himself and sacrificed another animal in its place. As a punishment, Poseidon caused Pasiphae, Minos' wife, to develop a strong sexual attraction to the divine bull. With the help of the skilled craftsman Daedalus, Pasiphae concealed herself in an artificial cow and mated with the bull, resulting in the birth of the Minotaur—a creature with the body of a man and the head of a bull. Following oracular advice, Minos and Daedalus crafted a labyrinth to imprison the Minotaur. Later, Minos discovered that Daedalus helped Pasiphae and imprisoned him. Pasiphae freed Daedalus, who then crafted wings for himself and his son Icarus to escape. Arranged within the framework of this myth, the extant fragments of the *Cretans* cover the following scenic events: Minos' brief lyrical greeting to the chorus of Cretan priests of Zeus, the beginning of the choral parodos addressed to Minos, a choral invocation to the gods, a stichomythic interrogation about the Minotaur and, finally, Pasiphae's self-defense speech and her imprisonment by Minos.[173]

After the revelation of her sexual encounter with the Cretan bull, Pasiphae faces the accusations of her husband Minos and attempts to deflect them. Her defensive speech can be separated into two halves in accordance with the argumentative strategies she employs.[174] More precisely, in the first half she attributes her behavior to the influence of divine intervention, while in the second half she transfers the responsibility of her bestial adultery to Minos, claiming that her divinely inflicted action was Minos' godsent punishment for not sacrificing the Cretan bull. The following passage belongs to the first half of Pasiphae's *apologia* in Euripides' *Cretans.*

ΠΑΣΙΦΑΗ
ἀρνουμένη μὲν οὐκέτ᾽ ἂν πίθοιμί σε·
πάντως γὰρ ἤδη δῆλον ὡς ἔχει τάδε.
ἐγ[ὼ] γὰρ εἰ μὲν ἀνδρὶ προύβαλον δέμας
τοὐμὸν, λαθραίαν ἐμπολωμένη Κύπριν,

[172] Apollod. *Bibl*., 3.1.3–4 and Hyg. *Fab*., 40.
[173] Collard 1995, 54-55, on the plot of Euripides' *Cretans* based on Apollodorus' and Hyginus' narratives and on the reconstruction of the extant fragments of the tragedy. The plot line and reconstruction proposed by Collard is followed in the present chapter.
[174] Battezzato 2020, 185, Dolfi 1984, 135, Sansone 2013, 58, on this division.

ὀρθῶς ἂν ἤδη μάχ[λο]ς οὖσ᾽ ἐφαινόμην·
νῦν δ᾽, ἐκ **θεοῦ** γὰρ **προσβολῆς ἐμηνάμην,**
ἀλγῶ μέν, ἐστὶ δ᾽ **οὐχ ἑκο[ύσ]ιον** κακόν.
ἔχει γὰρ οὐδὲν **εἰκός**· **ἐς τί γὰρ βοὸς**
βλέψασ᾽ ἐδήχθην θυμὸν αἰσχίστηι νόσῳ;[175]

The first few verses of Pasiphae's speech are indicative of its affiliation with the rhetoric devices used in judicial rhetoric. Consulting the rhetorical principles that Hermogenes presents in his work *On Staseis*,[176] Minos' allegation that Pasiphae had a sexual affair with the bull can be perceived as a conjecture (*stochasmos*), meaning a subject under juridical examination. Admitting her wrongdoing,[177] Pasiphae shows that the subject is clear (*phanes*) and complete (*teles*), since she accepts both the truth of Minos' allegations and the illegal – or more accurately immoral – character of her actions. Having clarified that, Pasiphae will proceed, in the rest of her defense speech, to delineate the specific qualities (*poiotes*) which characterized her overall behavior, thereby substantiating her contention that those qualities sufficiently exonerate her from culpability for her actions.[178]

More precisely, Pasiphae's intention is to illustrate the unique conditions under which she acted involuntarily and, thus, that "the blame for her behavior lies elsewhere than with herself."[179] Applying the rhetorical technique of self-victimization, Pasiphae claims that her attraction to the Cretan bull was the result of a violent attack from the gods (ἐκ θεοῦ … προσβολῆς), which caused her alienation from her personal moral standards and her psychological insanity (ἐμηνάμην). Through attributing her blameworthy action to the influence and will of a divine agent,[180] Pasiphae displaces the blame from herself to the gods and dissociates her present, conscious self from her past actions,[181] not acknowledging them as a willingly conducted crime. In particular, the heroine underlines the contradiction of experiencing emotional distress (ἀλγῶ) for an action that was not performed voluntarily and was not provoked by her personal agency (οὐχ ἑκο[ύσ]ιον κακόν).[182]

Consequently, Pasiphae's argumentation of self-defense revolves around the employment of the alibi of divine machination, distinguishing her action from her agency; the action is dishonorable but the agent not. Returning to Hermogenes' juridical theory on *Staseis*, Pasiphae's aforementioned strategy aims to underline that one of the special qualities (*poiotes*) that marked her behavior is that it was unintentional (*antilepsis*) and, because of that, the blame

[175] Eur. *Cret.*, 472e 4-12. Pas. "Denials from me will no longer convince you; for the facts are now quite clear. If I had thrown myself at a man in love's furtive commerce, I should rightly now be revealed as lascivious. As it is, because my madness was a god's onslaught, I hurt, but my trouble is not voluntary. Why, it has no probability! What did I see in a bull to have my heart eaten away by a most shaming affliction?" The edition and translation of Euripides' *Cretans* used in this chapter are by Collard and Cropp 2008.
[176] Karadimas 2014, 219 (note 3), on Hermogenes' four-part system of *staseis*, which includes: *stochasmos* (conjecture), *horos* (definition), *poiotes* (quality) and *metalepsis* (objection).
[177] Pasiphae's phrase ἀρνουμένη μὲν οὐκέτ᾽ ἂν πίθοιμί σε indicates that a potential attempt to disprove Minos' allegations in terms of their factuality would be unsuccessful, precisely because of their validity.
[178] Kennedy 1983, 74, 82-84, on an analysis of Hermogenes' theory on *Staseis*, which is applied in this paragraph.
[179] Sansone 2013, 58.
[180] Rivier 1958, 63-67 and McClure 1999a, 128, on Pasiphae's argument.
[181] Battezzato 2020, 193.
[182] Battezzato 2020, 188, on Pasiphae not acting willingly due to the gods' interaction with her mind.

should be transferred (*metastasis*) from herself to the gods, who "mutilated" her personal judgement and imposed their invincible divine influence.[183]

Another element that underscores the association between Pasiphae's speech and the intellectual milieu of sophism and oratory, is the heroine's emphasis on describing erotic feelings as a kind of divine madness (θεοῦ γὰρ προσβολῆς ἐμηνάμην) that is triggered by viewing one's physical appearance (ἐς τί … βλέψασ' ἐδήχθην). A similar argument is employed by Gorgias in his *Encomium of Helen*, through which the sophist defends Helen in the same way as Pasiphae does for herself, namely by denying her agency regarding her actions. Gorgias maintains that "Helen's eye" was enchanted by Paris' physical appearance[184] and this feeling is labelled as "human malady", which should not be "blamed as a fault but considered as misfortune."[185] Thus, Helen is not blameworthy for her actions because Paris' physical beauty influenced her physical desire in the same powerful way as the persuasiveness of *logos* sculpts the soul.[186] What happened to Helen has not been a personal choice but a result of a malady of the body and mind, one that is caused by unfortunate circumstances, such as the omnipotent influence of *eros*.

Further developing this argumentation, Pasiphae invokes a reasoning based on probability. Exactly as Gorgias does, Pasiphae focuses on the power of appearance (*opsis*) to affect physical desire, but she does so in a reversed way. More precisely, she maintains that the bull's physical appearance bears no resemblance to what is thought to be a handsome man[187] and, therefore, there is no likelihood (οὐδὲν εἰκός) that she has willingly fallen in love with him. Calling upon the εἰκός-argumentation, Pasiphae establishes an even more obvious contextual link between her speech and the discursive apparatuses of Athenian rhetoric. The notion of εἰκός[188] refers to what is reasonable and likely to happen according to everyday life human experience, offering a framework for contemplating issues pertaining to plausibility, hypotheticality and factuality. Εἰκός-arguments are "at once a logical operation, a rhetorical trope, and a literary device",[189] used to outline the realm of ethical and socially acceptable behavior without, though, being solidified into an absolute principle; εἰκός represents a theoreticization of common sense.

Athenian orators have frequently utilized the notion of εἰκός in their speeches. Both Gorgias in his speeches *Encomium of Helen* and *Palamedes* and Antiphon in his *First Tetralogy* employ the εἰκός-argumentation as an argument based on the elimination of the less probable causes of an action with the purpose to find the most probable one.[190] In particular Antiphon's *First Tetralogy* is an exercise on εἰκός-arguments, underpinned by the principle that a meticulously organized crime leaves scarce direct evidence and, thus, the verdict should be issued based on probabilities, a method still having certain limitations in terms of its truth

[183] Kennedy 1983, 83-84, on the rhetoric *poiotes* of Hermogenes' theory on *Staseis,* some of which are applicable to Pasiphae's rhetorical strategy.
[184] Barney 2016, 14, on *eros* being induced by *seeing* according to Gorgias' reasoning in the *Encomium of Helen*. Also, Segal 1962, on the correspondence between the power of *opsis* and *peitho*.
[185] Gorgias, *Encomium of Helen*, 19. The translation of this work used in this chapter is by Laks and Most 2016.
[186] Segal 1962, 104-105, on the correspondence between the influence of the *nosema* of love to the body and the influence of *logos* to the soul.
[187] In the lines that follow the quoted passage of her apologia, Pasiphae scrutinizes the characteristics of a handsome man, which were missing from the bull (472e 13-18).
[188] Wohl 2014, 1-3, on her definition of εἰκός, which is described in this paragraph.
[189] Wohl 2014, 1.
[190] Gagarin 1997, 14, on the method of argument by elimination, used by Gorgias and Antiphon.

revealing value.[191] Except for its allusions to oratory, the εἰκός-argumentation that Pasiphae employs has also meta-theatrical value, referring to the plausibility that should characterize her behavior so as to be believable both as a fictional persona and as a tragic heroine. As Aristotle maintains in his *Poetics,* tragic myth is successful only when it revolves around what might occur κατά τό εἰκός καί ἀναγκαῖον,[192] according to the principles of probability and necessity.[193] Therefore, were Pasiphae to have a sexual affair with the bull voluntarily, she would have not been believable and successful both as a person and as a tragic heroine, as she would have violated the principle of εἰκός, governing both life and tragedy.

One more passage from Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen* can further illustrate the argumentative process through which divine intervention is presented as a common sophistic alibi for reprehensible human actions, emphasizing once again the connection between Pasiphae's reasoning and sophistic argumentative strategies.[194] More precisely, Gorgias, in the penultimate paragraph of his *Encomium of Helen*, poses the following inquiry: "How then ought one consider the blame for Helen as being just, given that, whether she did what she did because she had fallen in love or had been persuaded by speech (logos) or had been seized with force or had been constrained by divine constraint, on every count she is acquitted of the accusation?"[195]

According to Gorgias, it is improbable that any person acts self-consciously in a destructive and unreasonable manner; when somebody does act so, it is only due to external coercion.[196] In the scenario of divine intervention, Helen's agency is separated from her actions and she is sketched as a plaything[197] of the gods, being the object of divine volition and not the subject of her own, and therefore, incapable of accepting the responsibility of her actions as they are not *really hers*. Were we to assume that Helen was seduced by the persuasive capacity of Paris' *logos,* then she is still not considered morally culpable, since the persuasiveness (*peitho*) of speech is "an active force, coming into the *logos* and forming or molding the psyche as it wishes."[198] Thus, Helen was by nature incapable of deflecting or combating the impact of Paris' speech on her soul. In the scenario of Helen's genuine *eros* towards Paris, a similar mechanism is enacted, which also absolves her from responsibility. As we witnessed above, physical appearance (*opsis*) affects corporeal desire and the psyche in the same powerful way as the persuasiveness of speech (*peitho*).[199]

As observed to this point, Pasiphae's speech in the *Cretans* bears extensive similarities to Gorgianic rhetorical argumentation in favor of Helen, as in both cases excuses such as irresistible *eros,* lack of self-consciousness and volition, divine coercion and logical deductions according to εἰκός, are employed as means of denying agency regarding specific actions. On

[191] Gagarin 1997, 124-125, on the use of probability reasoning for the demystification of crimes by Antiphon in his *First Tetralogy*.
[192] Arist. *Poet*., 1451a36–b1.
[193] Wohl 2014, 142-145, on the relationship between the fictional realm of tragedy and the historical realm of facts based on Aristotle's theory on εἰκός as an indispensable trait of poetry.
[194] Reckford 1974, 319 and Rivier 1958, 58-59, on this connection.
[195] Gorgias, *Encomium of Helen*, 20.
[196] Barney 2016, 18-19, on this principle of Gorgias.
[197] Gorgias uses the word plaything (παίγνιον) in the end of the *Encomium of Helen* (21). Kim 2010, 76, on the use of this word by Gorgias to characterize his speech as "a short composition as a playful game."
[198] Segal 1962, 105.
[199] See notes 184 and 186.

this basis, Pasiphae's speech can be understood as a close contemporary[200] to Gorgias' argumentation and is inscribed in a broader tradition of sophistic thought, which aims at relieving humans from responsibility by attributing the accountability of their behavior to overpowering forces and by showcasing the omnipotence of *logos* in influencing or shifting human volition. However, it is not necessary to infer that Pasiphae entirely perceived herself as a plaything of the gods or as a woman lacking personal agency. Instead, the focus should lie on her conscious use of sophistic argumentative strategies and her intelligent manipulation of parrhesiastic speech to absolve herself of accountability for her actions.

In the second half of Pasiphae's speech, she directly accuses Minos as the true cause of her sexual encounter with the bull. In the following verses, Pasiphae asserts that the gods incited her sexual attraction to the bull as a punishment for Minos' refusal to sacrifice the Cretan bull to Poseidon.[201] This accusation serves as a powerful indictment of Minos's leadership, implying that his arrogance and disrespect towards the gods led to Pasiphae's disgraceful act. Through her speech, Pasiphae not only seeks to absolve herself of blame but also to expose Minos's faults, laying bare the corrupt and unjust nature of his rule and disreputing him as a husband.

ΠΑΣΙΦΑΗ
σύ τοί μ᾽ ἀπόλλυς, **σὴ** γὰρ ἡ ᾽ξ[αμ]αρτία,
ἐκ σοῦ νοσοῦμεν. πρὸς τάδ᾽ εἴτε ποντίαν
κτείνειν δοκεῖ σοι, κτε[ῖ]ν᾽· **ἐπίστασαι** δέ τοι
μιαιφόν᾽ ἔργα καὶ σφαγὰς ἀνδροκτόνους·
εἴτ᾽ ὠμοσίτου τῆς ἐμῆς ἐρᾶις φαγεῖν
σαρκός, πάρεστι· μὴ ᾽λλίπῃς θοινώμενος.
ἐλεύθεροι γὰρ κοὐδὲν ἠδικηκότες
τῆς σῆς ἕκατι ζημ[ία]ς ὀλούμεθα.[202]

From a rhetorical point of view, the second part of Pasiphae's speech is reflective of a legal rhetorical strategy called *counter-accusation* (ἀντέγκλημα),[203] which is employed by the defendant in order to reverse the indictments and prove that the accuser has also committed an objectionable act. According to Hermogenes' treatise *On Staseis*, *counter-accusation* can be understood as a method employed by Pasiphae with the intention to attribute specific qualitative traits (*poites*) to her malefactions, traits that will challenge her culpability.[204] Via this method, a deplorable act of the accuser is presented as the cause of the defendant's

[200] The date of the *Cretans* is not certain; the play is usually dated between 455-428 BCE (Battezzato 2020, 182). The date of Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen* is also very uncertain; Ussher (1999, 5) speculates that it was published at approximately 393 BCE. It is important, though, that Gorgias has started developing his argumentative techniques already from 427 BCE (Gagarin 1997, 14). According to these chronological data, the traces of sophistic argumentation detected in Pasiphae's speech render it a close contemporary to the sophistic tradition that followed.

[201] Pasiphae adopts the same argument in Eur. *Cret.*, 472e 23-26, addressing directly Minos.

[202] Eur. *Cret.*, 472e 34-41. Pas. "It is you who have destroyed me! Yours was the wrongdoing! You are the cause of my affliction! So either, if you have decided to kill me by drowning, go on and kill me—indeed you understand acts of foul murder and the slaughtering of men! —or, if you desire to eat my flesh raw, here it is: don't go short on your banquet! Because of the punishment upon you, we are to die, who are free and quite innocent of wrongdoing."

[203] Duchemin 1968, 207-208 and Battezzato 2020, 187-190.

[204] Kennedy 1983, 83-84, on Hermogenes' theory on *Staseis*, which contains the technique of counter-accusation.

blameworthy behavior, as if his behavior was inevitably symptomatic of the accuser's chain of actions. In Pasiphae's case, as analyzed above, the interdependence between the first and second section of her speech shows that "the *counter-accusation* is in fact necessary for the ethical and philosophical logic of Pasiphae's argument, and cannot be dismissed as a simple rhetorical artifice: her argument would collapse without it."[205] It follows that Pasiphae utilizes a rhetorical device that is commonly considered to be surface-level or deceptive and, while adeptly harnessing the technique's rhetorical potency, she endows it with genuine meaning and logical force in the context of her reasoning.

Pasiphae's engagement with *parrhesia* in her *counter-accusation* is verbally manifested through specific communicative patterns and strategies.[206] The repetitive use of second person antonymies referring to Minos (σύ, … σὴ, … ἐκ σοῦ) is a rhetorical technique which leads the *counter-accusation* to a climax,[207] emphatically underlining that a male agent, Minos, is responsible for Pasiphae's malefactions. Another communicative strategy that Pasiphae employs is the repetition of simple, everyday words to elicit a direct emotional response from her audience. In its entirety, the passage of Pasiphae's *apologia* under discussion is directed towards Minos, hence it is articulated in the second person. All its antonymies and verbs are conjugated in the second person (e.g., ἀπόλλυς, δοκεῖ σοι, ἐρᾶις, μὴ ᾽λλίπηις), reinforcing the impression that Pasiphae's accusations are targeted to Minos *ad hominem*.[208] Additionally, Pasiphae's predictions about Minos' future behavior are mainly subjective speculations. Despite that, she phrases them as certain, already realized truths and endows them with the concreteness of facts.[209] On top of that, Pasiphae uses shorter and less complex sentences, frequently separating verses into two different sentences and employing numerous enjambments,[210] further emphasizing the direct and unvarnished nature of her speech.

Finishing her self-defence speech, Pasiphae "reiterates her claim of innocence and her assignment of blame to her husband",[211] freely arguing that she has not committed any injustice (κοὐδὲν ἠδικηκότες) and that Minos is the cause of her personal devastation (τῆς σῆς ἕκατι ζημ[ία]ς ὀλούμεθα). Doing so, Pasiphae presents herself as the victim of either divine intervention or Minos' wrongdoings and, by victimizing herself, she invalidates and reverses the stereotype of evil, malevolent Cretan women.[212] According to her perspective, it is not the Cretan women who are naturally inclined to violate ethical standards and commit transgressions but the social circumstances which force them to do so, mainly monitored and

[205] Battezzato 2020, 187.
[206] Griffith 2018, 127-128, on the strategies of female tragic speech mentioned in this paragraph. Griffith conducts a similar analysis of the verbal patterns that Antigone's speech has in Sophocles' homonymous play, some of which are blunt direct questions, short sentences, simple vocabulary, repetition, judgements *ad hominem* and intuitive apprehension.
[207] Collard 1995, 76.
[208] The dramatic context of this speech is not perfectly clear due to the fragmentary state of the play and, therefore, it is possible that the chorus is also present on stage, having the role of an additional "judging" stakeholder. However, as Collard argues (1995, 72-73, 472e), the focus of Pasiphae's speech is her self-exculpation through the incrimination of her husband and, thus, the primary addressee of her speech is Minos.
[209] See the use of the verb ἐπίστασαι, which has a cognitive modality that reveals certainty and the sentence εἴτ᾽ ὠμοσίτου τῆς ἐμῆς ἐρᾶς φαγεῖν σαρκός, πάρεστι, which is formulated in present tense, presenting Minos' intentions as something definite and not as Pasiphae's speculation.
[210] See verse 36, where two verbs from different sentences are contained in one line (κτε[ῖ]ν᾽·, ἐπίστασαι) and verse 35, where the sentence πρὸς τάδ᾽ εἴτε ποντίαν / κτείνειν δοκεῖ σοι, κτε[ῖ]ν᾽· begins in the middle of the line and continues to the next one, forming an enjambment.
[211] Sansone 2013, 58.
[212] Sinha 2017, 117-118 and 188.

arranged by male agents. Similarly, in Euripides' *Hippolytus*, Pasiphae's daughter, Phaedra,[213] does not apologize for her ethical lapse but she defends her ethical principles, which in light of the situation,[214] now necessitate her suicide.[215] In those two cases, we witness a creative and innovative tragic portrayal of those two Cretan women; conventional and established myths are treated in an unconventional way and the heroines shed light onto the depth of female psychology and the social circumstances which prompt blameworthy female actions. In that way, female psychology is presented in a more multifaceted, nuanced, and intricate way, having a greater degree of ambiguity and complexity.[216]

Furthermore, Pasiphae uses her *parrhesia* to criticize the overall attitude of Minos as a ruler, characterizing his violent behavior as a trait inherent to his male identity. In particular, the heroine labels her prospective murder by Minos as σφαγὰς ἀνδροκτόνους, implying that violence and abuse of power is intrinsic in the way male rulers are socially educated to actualize their power and take vengeance on innocent people. Interestingly, Pasiphae's allegation against Minos is ambiguously phrased and possibly entails a double meaning. Except for referring to her own punishment by Minos, the word ἀνδροκτόνους might also allude to atrocities associated with the Minotaur, meaning the annual sacrifice of adolescent Athenians to the creature. Pasiphae is probably implying that it may be Minos, rather than the monster itself, who should be held accountable for this horrible tradition.[217] Additionally, if this claim is combined with the way Pasiphae predicts to die (εἴτ᾽ ὠμοσίτου τῆς ἐμῆς ἐρᾶις φαγεῖν), her implication against Minos becomes even more clear. Cannibalism and bloodthirstiness seem to be a common practice of Minos, manifested both in Pasiphae's mode of death and in the sacrifice of Athenian boys and girls for the sake of the Minotaur in the labyrinth.[218]

Aligned with the preceding observations, the dual connotation of Pasiphae's utterance σφαγὰς ἀνδροκτόνους serves as a platform for denouncing Minos' authoritative misuse in its entirety, originating from her individual experience and expanding to the wider actions of Minos against defenseless individuals and the public. Therefore, through Pasiphae's eyes, Minos is depicted as an egocentric and self-absorbed monarch who utilized the Minotaur as a political tool to advance his own, Cretan, interests against the Athenian *polis* and showed disrespect against the lives of both his wife and the Athenian adolescents.[219] On this basis, Pasiphae's parrhesiastic speech is not just a declaration of her personal blamelessness but an implicit political criticism to the tyranny of her husband Minos.[220] Employing her personal experience as a springboard of this political criticism, Pasiphae manages to use candid expression and freedom of speech to verbalize crucial public concerns against Minos' leadership.

Overall, Pasiphae's self-defense speech in the Cretans presents a self-contradictory nature that warrants examination. In her arguments, Pasiphae relies on a fragmentation of self

[213] In Eur. *Hipp*., 357, Phaedra herself mentions the connection between her illicit love for Hippolytus and her mother's unwholesome love for the Cretan bull, implying that it is a form of intergenerational curse.
[214] As observed in chapter one, the so-called "situation" is that the very thought of adultery by women was criminalized in the social context of Athens. Feeling an erotic attraction to Hippolytus, Theseus' son, she was forced to kill herself to as to rescue her reputation.
[215] Halleran 1995, 180, on Phaedra's self-defense speech in *Hippolytus* (373-430) and its interpretation as an *apologia* in which the heroine explains her moral standards.
[216] Sinha 2017, 118.
[217] Sinha 2017, 217.
[218] Collard 1995, 77, on Minos' cannibalism.
[219] Sinha 2017, 218, on this portrayal of Minos by Pasiphae.
[220] Roisman 2004, 111-113, on *parrhesia* as a means of opposition to tyranny.

that distinguishes her present, consciously speaking self from the self who engaged in bestial adultery.[221] According to this logic, she absolves herself of responsibility for her actions, as she was not an active agent but rather a passive object of the volition of others, such as the gods or Minos. However, Pasiphae's engagement with *parrhesia* to defend herself and refute Minos' accusations does not completely align with the profile of a passive, obedient woman, who becomes a mere plaything in the hands of others. Through her speech, Pasiphae emerges as a woman who rhetorically manipulates language to defend her interests and fearlessly counter-accuses her male husband for his ruthless and tyrannical behavior. Thus, it is possible that her arguments, which rely on her passivity and fragmentation of self, are merely rhetorical techniques used to vindicate herself and not reflective of her actual psychological state.

Assessing whether Pasiphae can be negatively characterized as an unreliable "sophist" who exploits rhetorical techniques to portray her subjective perspective as an objective reality, demonstrating indifference towards the truth, or positively regarded as a rhetorically proficient woman who asserts her right to publicly defend herself through the development of substantiated arguments, presents a challenging task. That is mainly because of the fragmentary state of the *Cretans*, which makes it difficult to solidly assess the reaction of the tragedy's internal audience to Pasiphae's speech, as for example the reaction of the chorus.[222]

Usually mirrored by the choral reaction, the way the external Athenian audience processed and evaluated Pasiphae's *apologia* is also difficult to appraise. It can be quite safely speculated that they regarded Pasiphae's speech as something uncommon and potentially subversive. However, the exact nature of their response presents a challenge in determining whether they were impressed by the mere persuasive power of her rhetoric and, further than that, if they used her female otherness as a point of departure for contemplating the hypothetical scenario of a male figure possessing similar rhetorical traits, be it a historically recognized individual or a fictional construct. Nevertheless, the evaluation of Pasiphae's speech and personality according to the audience's opinion is not necessarily a prerequisite for assessing the quality and powerfulness of her *parrhesia*. The ambiguous assessment of Pasiphae's discourse can offer a fresh vantage point on *parrhesia*, demonstrating that it can function as a purpose in its own right, surpassing traditional classifications as either negative or positive.

As contemporary readers of Pasiphae's speech, we can undertake a feminist analysis of her *parrhesia*. It is enlightening to examine how the heroine employs the rhetorical devices analyzed above in order to emerge as a *speaking subject* and dislodge herself from the position of object, either of the speech or volition of others.[223] As observed, Pasiphae wittingly adopts the following rhetorical strategy: she portrays herself as feckless, passive object, which is manipulated by Minos and the gods, satisfying the social expectations for the average female behavior, while consciously using this self-portrayal as a platform for self-exculpation through a parrhesiastic *apologia*. In a nutshell, Pasiphae manipulates the rules of patriarchal discourse by satisfying the male expectation of female passivity in order to reverse another expectation, meaning that of female silence.

---

[221] Battezzato 2020, 196-197.

[222] The overall assessment of the choral reaction to Pasiphae's speech is difficult, as only four lines of the choral response are extant. According to Collard's reconstruction of the *Cretans* (1995, 66-67), those lines are: "It is clear to many that this misery is sent from heaven" and "My lord, hold back: the matter deserves reflection; no one <...> is well-advised" (472e 42-43, 472e 50-51 respectively). Judging by those lines, the chorus seems quite persuaded by Pasiphae's excuse regarding divine intervention and pleads Minos to rethink her punishment.

[223] Irigaray 1993, 203, on the necessity for women to abandon the position of objects, in which patriarchy has placed them, and become subjects capable of speech.

Therefore, Pasiphae emerges as a speaking subject by exploiting the social stereotypes for female personality and position with the intention to construct a rhetorically consistent speech which implies that, if women are raised and treated as objects of male volition, then the responsibility for their actions weighs on men. In line with this, Pasiphae presents herself as a victim of a series of external and uncontrollable circumstances, such as the godsent punishment for Minos disrespectful behavior concerning the sacrifice of the bull, so as to prove that a victimized and allegedly feckless woman is ultimately absolved from personal responsibility.[224] On top of that, as examined, Pasiphae utilizes common rhetorical techniques harvested from the male sophistic tradition. In that way, the heroine demonstrates how the structure and argumentation of hegemonic, male discourse can be adopted in the marginal, female speech as an auxiliary tool in the process of articulating a deliberating, candid and parrhesiastic verbal expression.[225] Thus, Pasiphae illustrates how subordinate voices can utilize dominant discourses to articulate their viewpoints.

In relation to Minos, Pasiphae employs her *parrhesia* to challenge his accusations and subvert his one-sided and prejudiced narrative regarding her intimate encounter with the Cretan bull. The way she chooses to linguistically formulate her speech indicates that she intends to present Minos' masculinity as the source of his arrogant and inconsiderate behavior towards her. As analyzed above, Pasiphae's persistent reiteration of second person antonymies referring to Minos (σύ, … σὴ, … ἐκ σοῦ) demonstrates her attempt to underscore that the blame for her wrongdoings is not attributable to a female agent, namely to herself, but to a male agent, namely to her husband. Adopting a gendered lens for her reasoning, Pasiphae implies that Minos' disrespectfulness towards the gods is symptomatic of the illusive impression of omnipotence which characterizes male rulers.

Three lines of Pasiphae's speech, which have not been previously examined, serve as an additional indication of the gendered perspective through which she filters the situation. More precisely, in her *counter-accusation* against Minos, the heroine states the following: "σὺ δ', εὐπρεπῆ γὰρ κἀπιδείξασθαι καλά, τῆς σῆς γυναικός, ὦ κάκιστ' ἀνδρῶν φρονῶν, ὡς οὐ μεθέξων πᾶσι κηρύσσεις τάδε."[226] We can possibly interpret Pasiphae's assertion as an implicit reminder that the injustice she experiences stems from Minos' failure to accomplish the role of a proper husband and protect the reputation of his wife. Thus, she infers that this injustice can be traced back to the inherent power dynamic that arises from the husband-wife relationship, thereby revealing the underlying power dynamic between men and women. By putting forth this contention, she implies that the power imbalance inherent in the marital relationship perpetuates and reflects the broader societal power dynamics between genders.

Further than that, Pasiphae's *parrhesia* contests Minos' privilege "of being the sole safeguard of speech, truth, intelligence [and] reason",[227] by demonstrating that multiple perspectives on reality, including feminine ones, can hold comparable validity. As a result, Pasiphae's *apologia* can be seen as a form of counterhegemonic speech. By making her narrative of the events heard, Pasiphae disrupts Minos' "monologue" and reclaims her right to define her personal history and future reputation, something which destabilizes the existing power dynamics of the tight-knit Cretan society. Via her outspokenness and boldness, Pasiphae

[224] Pomeroy 2011, 110-111, on the victimization of women by patriarchy in Athenian society.
[225] Wohl 2005, 158, on the liberatory potentials that exist within the structure of the hegemonic discourse.
[226] Eur. *Cret.*, 472e 31-33. "You — fine and splendid things to put on show! — you proclaimed them to all as if you want no part in your wife, you worst of men in your intention!"
[227] Irigaray 1985, 219. Irigaray uses this phrase to characterize Creon's behaviour in Sophocles' *Antigone*.

attempts to carve out a space for herself in a social environment that seeks to deny her voice and autonomy.

Accordingly, Pasiphae's *parrhesia* sheds light on the divergence between her point of view and that of Minos. More precisely, it reveals, as Foley poses it, how "the gendering of ethical positions permits the public exploration of moral complexities that would not otherwise have been possible."[228] Interpreting Pasiphae's and Minos' perspectives through the lens of Foley's reasoning, it becomes apparent that they have contrasting backgrounds of social and ethical education based on their gender. Minos, being a male and therefore educated as a subject with agency, places personal responsibility for one's actions as a fundamental principle. In contrast, Pasiphae, having been educated as a female and thus seen as an object vulnerable to the beliefs, volitions, and speeches of others, approaches the issue of responsibility with a more nuanced perspective. For Pasiphae, personal accountability is not a straightforward or linear matter, but rather one that is influenced by a range of factors, including power dynamics between genders, power relationships within society, and the power relations between humans and the gods. Thus, her perspective highlights the complex nature of responsibility, particularly for women, who are often exposed to external forces beyond their control.

Consequently, Pasiphae's female perspective, according to Zeitlin's terminology, assumes the role of the "radical *other*" in relation to Minos' male perspective. With the term "radical *other*" Zeitlin refers to the interplay between the masculine and feminine worldviews in Greek tragedy. She claims that female heroines, despite being portrayed as autonomous personalities, in reality, they function as mirrors of the male self. Their tragic experiences are mainly crafted to delve into and enhance the process of male self-discovery.[229] From this respect, Pasiphae's *parrhesia* unfolds a female worldview that qualifies to become the "radical *other*" to Minos' world perception. Not only is it fundamentally contrasted to Minos' viewpoint due to their difference in social and ethical education, but it also illuminates the depth and complexity of responsibility. This complexity is not easily conceived by the superficial male conceptualization of responsibility as a one-to-one relationship between an agent and their actions. As a result, Pasiphae's feminine *otherness*, as opposed to Minos' masculinity, is defined both in terms of contradiction and enrichment, as Pasiphae's perspective serves to deepen and broaden that of Minos.

As we witnessed before, Pasiphae's unorthodox and perverted love for the Cretan bull represents an abnormal emotional condition, prompted by divine powers. Despite its divine origin, this emotional situation was realistically experienced by Pasiphae. As Sinha highlights, Pasiphae's *apologia* reflects a "marginal landscape of mind", since it describes and defends emotions and memories that are rarely explored by an average woman, lying on the fringes of one's consciousness.[230] It follows that Pasiphae's *parrhesia* legitimizes the outward verbalization of *otherness* and suggests that female experiences, even if they convey challenging psychological situations blemished by aberrant passions, deserve to be heard. Publicly speaking of those experiences is constructive for both genders; women feel that they are entitled to self-defense and expression and men benefit from the instructive and psychologically enriching value of the marginal female standpoints.

---

[228] Foley 2001, 172. Much like Irigaray, Foley, analysing Sophocles' *Antigone*, employs this argument to highlight that Antigone introduces an alternative framework for ethical reasoning, contrasting with the one Creon follows.
[229] Zeitlin 1996, 346-47.
[230] Sinha 2017, 110. Sinha highlights the marginality of female behaviour that is manifested through Cretan female characters such as Pasiphae and Phaedra.

Following that, the mastery of Euripidean tragedy in sketching the psychological profiles of women is highly reliant on the choice to retell the traditional, Bronze Age myths through the female perspective, contributing to a broader, deeper and more inclusive understanding of them.[231] Despite not always aligning with the female perspective, Euripides provides to his heroines a platform of self-expression that becomes beneficial to both genders in the sense that it illustrates the subtlety, intricateness and multifaceted nature of reality. Focusing on the *Cretans*, Pasiphae's *apologia* disrupts the superficial reading of the Cretan mythology as a manifestation of illicit, unwholesome and doomed female attitudes and, instead, demonstrates that those attitudes possibly result from a series of social circumstances and divine interventions that illuminate the complexity of human existence on the whole.

To conclude, viewing the *Cretans* in a dialogue with feminist theory, Pasiphae seems to verify Irigaray's and Burke's assumption that "if, as a woman, who is […] in public, you have the audacity to say something about your desire, […] you are disputing the order of discourse."[232] Defending and exculpating herself in public through her parrhesiastic speech, Pasiphae is seen as an anomaly that obstructs the perpetual reassertion of the masculine perspective's authority. She possesses the audacity to speak up for herself and not only disrupt but also enrich the male "order of discourse", by indicating that the masculine narratives are in some cases restricted and one-sided, developed under the illusion that reality is easily governable and disciplined. Pasiphae elucidates how the verbalization of female perspective, deepened by the existential insights that the experience of female subjugation generates, can offer a more precise understanding of the position of human subjects in the world. This understanding highlights the fact that individuals are enmeshed in a complex web of power relations and social circumstances that are not always readily discernible and, thus, concepts such as responsibility can be relativized as being more nuanced and subjective.

[231] Pomeroy 2011, 107, on the retelling of Bronze Age myths through the female perspective in Euripidean tragedy.
[232] Irigaray & Burke 1985, 145.

Conclusion

Through my research I intended to make plausible that an analysis of the vehicle of language is indispensable to a feminist reading of the Euripidean corpus. In the tragedies that I examined, the female *modus loquendi* accurately reflects the endeavor of Euripidean heroines to challenge an established gender hierarchy and defy the expectation of a stereotypical verbal behavior on their part, meaning one that entails passivity and muteness. Overall, we could contend that the common ground of Euripides' *Medea*, *Hippolytus*, *Hypsipyle* and *Cretans* in terms of plot construction and climax, is that they all thematize and performatively indicate on stage the powerfulness and unconventionality of female language and the potential impact it can exert on gender power balance and relations. In Euripidean drama, language can have multiple interrelated functions in terms of its influence to gender hierarchy; it can represent, (re)shape, rearrange and criticize it, as it incorporates and transmits into words the social constructs of masculinity and femininity. Taking advantage of this power of language, women in Euripidean tragedies weave the threads of gender hierarchy anew, by establishing their verbal agency and creating their feminine verbal idiom from scratch.

To specify the aforementioned remarks, it is fruitful to connect them with the central conclusions that can be drawn from each chapter of this thesis. The exploration of female silence in chapter one mainly showed that the silence of the female choruses in *Medea* and *Hippolytus* is not a sign of passivity and voicelessness but encompasses a skillful manipulation of speech. In that sense, the chorus "does" silence, meaning it performs speech acts that disseminate wittily selected information so as to conceal other facts, potential harmful to female protagonists. For this purpose, the chorus engages with verbal tactics such as evasive speech, which playfully unsettle the structural and semantic rules of language to which a male listener is used, rendering him an easy target of deception.

Moreover, Phaedra's suicide in Euripides' *Hippolytus*, accompanied by her posthumous letter, is seen as the heroine's attempt to protect her reputation through reclaiming the narrative of her feelings and actions. The interplay of speech and social gaze, in the form of gossip, constitutes a crucial interpretative lens of Phaedra's realization that speaking and being spoken about by others are equally important trajectories of verbal interaction. Having this realization as a point of departure, Phaedra transforms her physical death into a speech act by becoming the subject of a verbal act, namely her posthumous letter, that is verbalised prior to her death and is revealed after it. Oscillating between silence and speech, Phaedra ultimately opts for speech, as it is the only choice that can guarantee the rescue of her social esteem.

The second chapter of this thesis investigated how the medium of song can become a distinctively female form of verbal expression in Euripidean tragedy. In Euripides' *Medea*, the chorus of Corinthean women sings a *meta-song*, observing the absence of a singing tradition that can express, accommodate, and alleviate female experience, stressing the subsequent need for women to inaugurate a novel kind of lyrical expression that conveys female subjectivity. The linguistic construction of the choral stasimon is in itself unconventional in terms of syntactical patterns and semantics, performatively showing how female lyrics should deviate from the normative rules of prosaic language. The discussion of this stasimon points to three specific parameters that define the distinctiveness of female discourse; lyrical expression, non-normativity of syntaxis and semantics and intrinsic affiliation with the tragic genre.

In Euripides' *Hypsipyle*, the recognition scene between Hypsipyle and her son Euneus indicates the attainability of the undertaking to craft a female song that conveys the psychological pain of women's experiences. Finding a male listener for her song, namely her

son, Hypsipyle manages to transform the *meta-song* of the Corinthean women in *Medea* about the lack of a healing song into an actual healing song, which encapsulates female experience and shares it. In the song that she addresses Euneus, Hypsipyle achieves to reclaim the ownership of her grief and the control over the narration of her past experiences. Therefore, she becomes the subject of a lyrical expression that asserts her female perspective on past and present reality, empowers her, and emotionally touches her son, deepening his understanding of the intricacies of female subjectivity. Ultimately, through the vehicle of female singing, Euneus manages to unlock unexplored potentials of his own male self, mainly revolving around a more emotional and intuitive approach towards reality.

Chapter three of this thesis tackled the issue of female *parrhesia* in Euripides' *Cretans*, demonstrating how Pasiphae in her *apologia* employs female assertive speech as a means of self-exculpation. The analysis of this chapter indicates how Pasiphae establishes the assertiveness of her parrhesiastic speech by engaging with verbal techniques harvested from the field of rhetoric and sophist argumentation. Through her *apologia* her main objective is to re-signify the concept of responsibility for one's actions by examining it via a gendered lens, claiming that if women are socially treated as objects of male volition and agency, then the responsibility for their actions can always be transmitted to male agents. Unfolding this idea in a rhetorically proficient way, Pasiphae wittingly exploits the stereotype of obedient, passive women, so as to overthrow the stereotype of female silence by standing up for herself, using the verbal weapon of *parrhesia*. Pasiphae's *apologia* is shown to be an example of a brave female endeavor to employ speech as a means of validation of a female perspective and behavior that is considered unwholesome and intimidating according to the public consensus.

The innovativeness of this research mainly lies on the dialogue it attempts to open between issues raised by Euripidean tragedy, focusing mostly on female tragic language, and the theoretical underpinnings of a movement of modernity, namely that of French feminism. This interdisciplinary approach reinvigorates the interpretation of Euripidean corpus from a novel perspective by encouraging a reevaluation of the intricate relationships between gender, language, power, and societal norms within the tragedies under examination. In particular, the emphasis that French feminism places on language as a field where gender roles, conventions, and hierarchies are solidified, institutionalized, and reproduced but also contested and challenged, prompts us to view language not as a neutral tool but as a powerful apparatus of Euripidean tragedy that densely represents and, conversely, can potentially overthrow and subvert gender norms and expectations.

Exploiting this double function of language in relation to gender issues, Euripidean women, either with their "speaking" silence, songs, or speech, try to dismantle or exploit to their benefit the structural and semantic norms of the male-dominated epic, lyrical, rhetoric and sophistic language, so that they can start crafting a feminine linguistic idiom that deviates from these norms and expresses female subjectivity. Butler's post-structuralist perspective on feminism provides valuable insights into how we can apply French feminist ideas in a less rigid, structural manner. It illustrates that the creation of a distinctive female language entails reconstructing the notion of femininity, as well as devising a novel way of performing gender relations on stage, all with the aim of advancing women's interests and female agency. Central to this endeavor is the utilization of a feminine linguistic idiom inspired from the voices of Euripidean women, harnessed for their own empowerment and self-expression.

It is important to underline that this thesis does not suggest that the examined instances of female verbal acts propose a linear progression of women's verbal attitude, starting from a

position of silent subordination and culminating in the outward articulation of speech. On the contrary, our research indicates that a complex interplay of empowerment and disempowerment can be attested within every one of the verbal strategies that women employ. Choral silence emerges as an ostensibly passive yet effective means of support for heroines such as Medea and Phaedra, ultimately ineffective, though, in preventing Medea's infanticide and Phaedra's suicide. The protection of Phaedra's reputation through her posthumous epistle tragically presupposes her physical death. In terms of song, the Corinthean women use lyrics to articulate the desire to establish a musical tradition capable of addressing female suffering, yet this aspiration fails to be actualized. On her part, Hypsipyle manages to utilize singing as a form of solace but still grapples with feelings of isolation within the society of Nemea, distant from her homeland, Lemnos. In a different vein, Pasiphae articulates a rhetorically proficient *apologia,* but her efforts fail to sway Minos and avert the imposition of death penalty upon her.

When endeavoring to craft a feminine discursive sphere that will provide them with the verbal weapons to defend themselves and their interests, the above tragic women oscillate between success and failure, as they navigate the intricate terrain of gender hierarchy and try to destabilize and subvert it. This conclusive observation is crucial as it points to the nature of tragedy as a potent medium for the negotiation of social ideas and interests. The tragic narratives that Euripides presents in the studied tragedies do not offer a clear resolution of the conflicts they portray but rather invest in ambiguity and problematization, allowing for a multiplicity of conflicting perspectives to be heard. The negotiation between the masculine and the feminine perspectives is constantly ongoing and inherent to the tragic narrative, with each of them presenting instances of domination and concession. As Wohl insightfully poses it, "tragedy neither imposes nor opposes ideology; rather, it is engaged in an ongoing and contentious process of formulating, reformulating, articulating, and interrogating an ideology that itself, like tragedy, contains the possibility of its own critique."[233] Tragedy's role is to contest both hegemonic and subordinate ideologies, serving as a platform for social criticism, reflection and education, as well as broadening the scope of the ideological inquiries of Athenian citizens.

Certainly, this function of tragedy is actualized within the context of state-organized theatrical festivals, the City Dionysia, which aim to celebrate civic ideology.[234] Therefore, even if tragedy contested aspects of this ideology, it would be too optimistic to claim that it truly succeeded in challenging or stigmatizing them as unjust on the whole. As the analysis of this thesis is reader and addressee-oriented,[235] it occasionally engaged with the Athenian audience's response to the attempts made by Euripidean women to subvert or undermine the gender hierarchy. Summarizing the remarks that our research generated, the possible ways to approach the Athenian audience's response are the following. Firstly, the audience might have faced the subversive potential of Euripidean heroines' verbal actions with disapproval and skepticism, and it is also probable that the exaggerated rebelliousness and dynamism that those women demonstrate did not trigger a reevaluation of the Athenian state's gender ideology, but rather reinforced it,[236] showing the potential dangers that would lurk for the social coherence, if the established gender hierarchy was to be challenged.

[233] Wohl 1998, xxiii-xxiv.
[234] Seaford 1981, Segal 1982, 158-214, Griffith 1995.
[235] On the methodology that I follow in this thesis, see the respective section of the introduction.
[236] Foley 2001, 333.

Secondly, the theatrical representation of women's seditionary verbal actions may constitute an embellishment or a heightened expression of an existent female behavior that women harbored but could not always enact in their daily lives, providing a glimpse into the aspirations and struggles of Athenian women, which may have remained largely unspoken. This possibility is also underlined by the reaction that the female choruses show to the endeavors of the tragic heroines. From a metatheatrical point of view, the chorus can be understood as an audience internal to the theatrical realm, which mirrors or even incites the reactions of the external Athenian one. Serving as a metatheatrical conduit for the audience's own reactions, a choral positive or neutral response to the tragic heroines' actions may amplify or validate the sympathy felt by the actual Athenian audience for these heroines. Thirdly, Zeitlin's concept of the "female other", according to which female tragic experiences are often portrayed as a means for the creative exploration of the male project of selfhood,[237] can also indicate another possible way to explain the audience's response to the undertakings of Euripidean heroines. If tragic heroines are seen as "antimodels as well as hidden models for the masculine self",[238] then their moments of dynamism and assertiveness could have served in a twofold way for the male Athenian audience; either as a tabula rasa onto which they projected their own male dynamism or as a platform to delve into emotional areas and social contexts unexplored by their male self.

Overall, this thesis explored the multifaceted and often ambivalent ways in which female characters in Euripidean tragedies utilize language as a powerful tool to challenge and negotiate established gender hierarchies. Through their silence, songs, and speech, tragic women navigate a complex terrain of empowerment and disempowerment, shedding light on the complex dynamics of gender, language, power, and societal norms. Ultimately, this research underscores the enduring relevance of Euripidean drama in provoking critical discourse on gender and language and the fertile way in which modern feminist theory can be employed as an interpretative framework of the Euripidean corpus, contributing to a deeper understanding of Euripides' engagement with gender issues and female language, as well as showcasing the relevance of Euripidean narratives in contemporary discussions about feminism.

[237] Zeitlin 1996, 346-49.
[238] Zeitlin 1996, 347.

Bibliography

Primary texts

Aristotle, Longinus, Demetrius & Halliwell, S., Fyfe, H., Innes, D., Roberts, R., Russell, D. (1995). *Poetics. Longinus: On the Sublime. Demetrius: On Style.* Loeb Classical Library 199. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Euripides & Collard, C., Cropp, M. (2008). *Fragments: Aegeus-Meleager.* Loeb Classical Library 504. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Euripides & Collard, C., Cropp, M. (2009). *Fragments: Oedipus-Chrysippus. Other Fragments.* Loeb Classical Library 506. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Euripides & Diggle, J. (1984). *Euripides Fabulae, Vol. 1: Cyclops; Alcestis; Medea; Heraclidae; Hippolytus; Andromacha; Hecuba.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Euripides & Kovacs, D. (1994). *Cyclops. Alcestis. Medea.* Loeb Classical Library 12. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Euripides & Kovacs, D. (1995). *Children of Heracles. Hippolytus. Andromache. Hecuba.* Loeb Classical Library 484. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Laks, A. & Most, G. (2016). *Early Greek Philosophy, Volume VIII: Sophists, Part 1.* Loeb Classical Library 531. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Thucydides & Smith, C. (1919). *History of the Peloponnesian War, Volume I: Books 1-2.* Loeb Classical Library 108. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Commentaries

Bond, G. (1963). *Hypsipyle.* London: Oxford University Press.

Collard, C. (1995). “Cretans.” In Collard, C., Lee, K. H., & Cropp, M. J. *Euripides: Selected Fragmentary Plays I.* United Kingdom: Liverpool University Press, 53–78.

Euripides, & Barrett, W. (1964). *Hippolytus.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Euripides, & Ferguson, J. (1984). *Hippolytus.* (2nd ed.) Bristol Classical Press: University of California.

Euripides, & Halleran, M. (1995). *Hippolytus.* Warminster: Aris & Phillips.

Euripides, & Mastronarde, D. (2002). *Euripides: Medea*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Euripides, & Mossman, J. (2011). *Medea.* Warminster: Aris & Phillips.

Euripides, & Page, D. (1938). *Medea.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Halleran, M. (1995) *Euripides: Hippolytus*. Warminster: Aris and Phillips.

Secondary Literature

Barney, R. (2016). "Gorgias's Encomium of Helen." In Schliesser, E. (ed.) *Ten Neglected Classics of Philosophy.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1–25.

Barthes, R. (1995). "The Death of the Author." In Burke, S. (ed). *Authorship: from Plato to the postmodern: a reader*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 125–130.

Battezzato, L. (2020). "Fragmented Self and Fragmented Responsibility: Pasiphae in Euripides' Cretans." In Finglass, P. & Coo, L. (eds). *Female Characters in Fragmentary Greek Tragedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 179–197.

Blundell, S. (1995). *Women in ancient Greece*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Boedeker, D. (1991). "Euripides' *Medea* and the Vanity of ΛΟΓΟΙ." *CP* 86(2):95-112.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge.

Butler, J. (1997). *Excitable speech: a politics of the performative*. New York: Routledge.

Carter, D.M. (2004). "Citizen Attribute, negative right: a conceptual difference between ancient and modern ideas of freedom of speech." In Sluiter, I. & Rosen, R. (eds). *Free Speech in Classical Antiquity*. Leiden: Brill, 197–220.

Chong-Gossard, J. H. (2008). *Gender and communication in Euripides' plays: between song and silence.* Leiden: Brill.

Cixous, H., et al. (1976). "The Laugh of the Medusa." *Signs*: *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 1(4), 875–893.

Cyrino, M. (1998). "Sex, status and song: locating the lyric singer in the actors' duets of Euripides." *QUCC* n.s. 60,3: 81–101.

Damen, M. (1990). "Electra's monody and the role of the chorus in Euripides' *Orestes* 960–1012." *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 120: 133–145.

Dolfi, E. (1984). "Su I Cretesi di Euripide: passione e responsabilità." *Prometheus* 10: 121–38.

Duchemin, J. (1968). *L'ἀγών dans la tragédie grecque*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres [1st edn 1945].

Dué, C. (2010). *The Captive Woman's Lament in Greek Tragedy*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Dunbar, R. (1996). *Grooming, gossip, and the evolution of language.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Easterling, P. E. (1990), "Constructing Character in Greek Tragedy." In C. Pelling (ed.), *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 83-99.

Easterling, P. (1997). "Constructing the Heroic." In Pelling, C. (ed.), *Greek Tragedy and the Historian*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 21–37.

Fantham, E. (1994). *Women in the classical world: image and text*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Fletcher, J. (2003). "Women and oaths in Euripides." *Theatre Journal* 55: 29–44.

Foley, H. (2001). *Female acts in Greek tragedy*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Foley, H. (2003). "Choral Identity in Greek Tragedy." *Classical Philology*, 98(1), 1–30.

Foucault, M., & Pearson, J. (2001). *Fearless speech.* Los Angeles, CA.: Semiotext(e).

Gagarin, M. (1997). *The speeches*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gal, S. (1995). "Language, gender, and power: an anthropological review." In Hall, K. & Bucholtz, M. (eds). *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*. New York: Routledge. 169–182.

Gentile, J. (2015). "Parrhesia, Phaedra, and The Polis: Anticipating Psychoanalytic Free Association as Democratic Practice." *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly,* 84(3), 589–624.

Goff, B. (1990). *The Noose of Words: Readings of Desire, Violence, and Language in Euripides' Hippolytus.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Griffith, M. (1995). "Brilliant Dynasts: Power and Politics in the *Oresteia*." *Classical Antiquity*, 14(1), 62–129.

Griffith, M. (2018). "Antigone and Her Sister(s)." In Lardinois, A., & McClure, L. (eds). *Making Silence Speak: Women's Voices in Greek Literature and Society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 117–136.

Hadas, M. (1966). *Introduction to Classical Drama*. New York: Bantam Matrix.

Hall, E. (1999). "Actor's Song in Tragedy." In Goldhill, S. & Osborne, R. (eds). *Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 96–122.

Heilmann, L. (1955–1956). "*Silere/tacere*: nota lessicale." *Quaderni dell'Istituto di glotto-logia dell'Università di Bologna* 1, 5–16.

Henderson, J. (1998). "Old Comedy, Frank Speech, and Democracy." In Boedeker, D. & Raaflaub, K. (eds). *Democracy, Empire, and the Arts in Fifth-Century Athens*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 255–273.

Hopman, M. (2008). "Revenge and Mythopoiesis in Euripides' *Medea*." *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 138(1), 155–183.

Hunter, V. (1990). "Gossip and the Politics of Reputation in Classical Athens." *Phoenix* 44: 299–325.

Irigaray, L., & Burke, C. (1985). *This sex which is not one.* Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

Irigaray, L. (1985). *Speculum of the Other Woman.* Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

Irigaray, L. (1993). *Sexes and Genealogies.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Irigaray, L. (2017). *To be born*. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Karadimas, D. (2014). "Hermogenes' "On Staseis": rhetoric as legal philosophy." In Emilsson, K., Maravela, A. & Skoie, M. (eds). *Papers and Monographs from the Norwegian Institute at Athens*. Athens: The Norwegian Institute at Athens, series 4o, vol. 2, 219–228.

Kazanskaya, M. (2017). "On Greek and Latin silences: a study of σιγᾶν, σιωπᾶν, silēre." *Historische Sprachforschung*, 131(1), 179–200.

Kennedy, G. (1983). *Greek rhetoric under Christian emperors*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Kim, N.-D. (2010). "The Power of Logos in Gorgias' Encomium of Helen." In Pernot, L. (ed). *New Chapters in the History of Rhetoric*. Boston: Brill, vol. 1, 73–89.

Kirichenko, A. (2022). "Homer and the Heroic Ideal." In Kirichenko, A. *Greek Literature and the Idea: The Pragmatics of Space from the Archaic to the Hellenistic Age.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 27–62.

Knox, B. (1979). *Word and action: essays on the ancient theater*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Konstan, D. (2012). "The Two Faces of Parrhêsia: Free Speech and Self-Expression in Ancient Greece." *Antichthon*, 46(2012), 1–13.

Krischer, T. (1981). "σιγᾶν und σιωπᾶν". *Glotta* 59, 93–107.

Kristeva, J. (1984). *Revolution in Poetic Language*. New York: Columbia University Press. [original French ed. Paris 1974].

Landauer, M. (2012). "Parrhesia and the demos tyrannos: frank speech, flattery, and accountability in democratic Athens." *History of Political Thought*, 33(2), 185–208.

Lardinois, A. (2006). "The polysemy of gnomic expressions and Ajax' deception speech." In Rijksbaron, A. & de Jong, I. (eds). *Sophocles and the Greek Language*. Leiden: Brill, 213–223.

Lardinois, A. (2011). "The parrhesia of young female choruses in Ancient Greece." In Athanassaki, L. & Bowie, E. (eds). *Archaic and Classical Choral Song*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, vol. 10, 161–172.

Lesky, A. (1968). "Psychologie bei Euripides." In Schwinge, E.-R. (ed). *Euripides*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 79-101.

Loraux, N., & Rawlings, E. (2002). *The mourning voice: an essay on Greek tragedy*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

March, J. (1990). "Euripides the Misogynist?" In Powell, A. (ed). *Euripides, Women, and Sexuality*. London: Routledge, 32-75.

Mastronarde, D. (1979). *Contact and discontinuity: some conventions of speech and action on the Greek tragic stage.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Mastronarde, D. (1994). *Phoenissae*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McClure, L. (1995). "Female speech and characterization in Euripides." In De Martino, F. & Sommerstein A. (eds). *Lo Spettacolo delle Voci.* Bari: Levante editori, 35–60.

McClure, L. (1999a). *Spoken like a woman: speech and gender in Athenian drama.* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. (Digit. repr. d. Ausg. 1999).

McClure, L. (1999b). "The Worst Husband: Discourses of Praise and Blame in Euripides' *Medea*." *Classical Philology*, 94(4), 373–394.

Montiglio, S. (2000). *Silence in the Land of Logos.* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Mossman, J. (2001). "Women's Speech in Greek Tragedy: The Case of Electra and Clytemnestra in Euripides' *Electra*." *Classical Quarterly*, 51(2), 374–384.

Munteanu, D. (2020). "Chapter 38 Women's Voices in Euripides." In Markantonatos, A. (ed). *Brill's Companion to Euripides.* Leiden: Brill, 889–910.

Paduano, G. (1985). "In assenza sel coro, l'azione." *Dioniso* 55: 155–167.

Pomeroy, S. (2011). *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves.* Westminster: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.

Rabinowitz, N. (1993). *Anxiety Veiled: Euripides and the Traffic in Women*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

Rabinowitz, N. (2013). "Women as Subject and Object of the Gaze in Tragedy." *Helios (Lubbock), 40*(1), 195–221.

Radin, M. (1927). "Freedom of Speech in Ancient Athens." *American Journal of Philology*, 48(3), 215–230.

Reckford, K. (1968). "Medea's First Exit." *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 99, 329-359.

Reckford, K. (1974). "Phaedra and Pasiphae: The Pull Backward." *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1974-), 104, 307–328.

Rivier, A. (1958). "Euripide et Pasiphaé." In Anex, G., Bonnard, A., & de Céos, B. (eds). *Lettres d'occident: de l'Iliade à l'Espoir; études et essais offerts à André Bonnard*. Neuchâtel, 51–74.

Rose, P. (1993). "The Case for Not Ignoring Marx in the Study of Women in Antiquity". In Rabinowitz, N. and Richlin, A. (eds). *Feminist theory and the classics*. New York: Routledge, 211-37.

Roisman, H. (2004). "Women's Free Speech in Greek Tragedy". In Sluiter, I. & Rosen, R. (eds). *Free Speech in Classical Antiquity*. Leiden: Brill, 91–114.

Sansone, D. (2013). "Euripides, Cretans frag. 472e.16—26 Kannicht." *Zeitschrift Für Papyrologie Und Epigraphik*, 184, 58–65.

Saylor, C. (2008). "The Gifts of Procris." *Mnemosyne,* 61(4), 651–658.

Schmitz, T. (2007). *Modern literary theory and ancient texts: an introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Seaford, R. (1981). "Dionysiac Drama and the Dionysiac Mysteries." *Classical Quarterly*, 31(2), 252–275.

Segal, C. (1962). "Gorgias and the Psychology of the Logos." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 66, 99–155.

Segal, C. (1982). *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae: Expanded Edition* (1st ed.). Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Segal C. (1988). "Confusion and Concealement in Euripides' *Hippolytus*. Vision, Hope, and Tragic Knowledge." *Mètis. Anthropologie des mondes grecs anciens*, vol. 3, n°1-2, 263-282.

Sinha, B. (2017). *The Crete and Cretans of Euripides: Perceptions and Representations.* ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Sluiter, I., & Rosen, R. (2004). *Free Speech in Classical Antiquity* (Vol. 254). Leiden: Brill.

van Raalte, M. (2004). "Socratic parrhesia and its afterlife in Plato's *Laws*." In Sluiter, I. & Rosen, R. (eds). *Free Speech in Classical Antiquity*. Leiden: Brill, 279–312.

Vogt, E. (2001). "Die Sprache des Schweigens in der Tragödie des Aischylos." In Jäkel, S. & Timonen, A. (eds). *The Language of Silence*, vol. 1. Annales Universitatis Turkuensis 246, 18–30.

Willi, A. (2007). *The Languages of Aristophanes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Williamson, M. (1990). "A Woman's Place in Euripides' Medea." In Powell, A. (ed). *Euripides, Women, and Sexuality*. London: Routledge, 16-31.

Wilson, P. (1999). "The *aulos* in Athens." In Goldhill, S. & Osborne, R. (eds). *Performance culture and Athenian democracy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 58–95.

Wohl, V. (1998). *Intimate commerce: exchange, gender, and subjectivity in Greek tragedy.* Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Wohl, V. (2005). "Tragedy and feminism." In Bushnell, R. (ed). *A Companion to Tragedy*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 145–60.

Wohl, V. (2014). *Probabilities, hypotheticals, and counterfactuals in ancient Greek thought.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wright, F. (2019). *Feminism in Greek Literature from Homer to Aristotle*. Project Gutenberg.

Zeitlin, F. (1996). *Playing the other: gender and society in classical Greek literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.