Revision of Euripides' Tragedies by Contemporary Women Playwrights

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Mina Choi, M.A.

Graduate Program in Theatre

The Ohio State University

2013

Dissertation Committee:

Lesley Ferris, Adviser

Joy Reilly

Beth Kattelman

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Abstract

The issues addressed by the writers of fifth-century B.C. Athens continue to have great relevance for the contemporary world. This research focuses on the gender dynamics of the plays and how contemporary revisions by women offer new ways of considering these classic texts. Greek drama is known for its strong and vibrant female characters. I use Euripides' three Greek tragedies--*Medea*, *The Trojan Women*, and *The Bacchae*--as the source texts for new versions of the plays by women writers. I draw on Lynda Hart's triad of dramaturgical sites that define a feminist dramaturgy: women's bodies, language, and theatrical space.

Chapter two focuses on four revisions of *Medea*: Franca Rame's *Medea* (1981), Jackie Crossland's *Collateral Damage* (1991), Deborah Porter's *No More Medea* (1990), and Marina Carr's *By the Bog of the Cats* (1998). Unlike the character of Medea in Euripides' play, who discusses Greek honor with heroic language, Rame's Medea uses a dialect of central Italy, and Carr's Hester, a stand-in for Medea, uses an Irish dialect illustrating that Medea is not an icon of monstrous motherhood but a particular woman suffering in the patriarchal world. These versions of Medea enter the stage to tell their side of the mythic story of maternal infanticide. Instead of a conventional *deus ex machina* saving Medea from her miserable circumstance through divine intervention, these contemporary Medeas show the potency of female action and declare their own destiny.

In chapter three I consider three works all written and produced in this century based on *The Trojan Women*: Christine Evans' *Trojan Barbie* (2010), Caroline Bird's *Trojan Women: After Euripides* (2012) and Kaite O'Reilly's *Peeling* (2002). These works symbolically stage women's bodies as imprisoned and wounded by war, using various props and settings: broken dolls' bodies and a confined wild tiger in *Trojan Barbie*, a single pregnant woman tied to her hospital bed as the Chorus in *Trojan Women*: *After Euripides,* and disabled actresses trapped in their multi-layered costumes and confined to an unlit backstage in *Peeling*. All three playwrights suggest a similar message: if babies cannot be protected and if powerless mothers are expected to take responsibility for these vulnerable children against the violence of male-initiated and maintained conflict, tragedy is the only possibility.

I examine three works by British writers in chapter four who use *The Bacchae* as their source material: Maureen Duffy's *Rites* (1969), Caryl Churchill and David Lan's *Mouthful of Bird* (1986), and Bryony Lavery's *Kitchen Matters* (1991). These playwrights are interested in issues related to possession and madness as a means for empowerment under social oppression. In these plays the writers utilize the theatrical space in diverse ways: the female characters in *Rites* experience divine possession as a group in an isolated place, the women's lavatory; in *A Mouthful of Birds* each character goes through transformative madness within a two-level set composed of small box-like rooms; *Kitchen Matters* is at once a domestic kitchen and at the same time the literal stage of Gay Sweatshop during a funding crisis, ending this work with an analysis of the role of mothers in many of the plays.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, my husband, daughter Christine, and especially my brave and strong mother.

Vita

1996.....B.A. Creative Writing, Chung-Ang University

2001.....M.A. Theatre, Dong Guk University

2006.....M.A. Theatre, Binghamton University, State University of New York.

2008 to present .....Graduate Teaching Associate, Graduate Associate, Department of Theatre, The Ohio State University

Fields of Study

Major Field: Theatre

Table of Contents

Abstract ii

Dedication vi

Vita v

Chapter 1: Introduction 1

Chapter 2: *Medea* 21

Chapter 3: *The Trojan Women* 71

Chapter 4: *The Bacchae* 113

Chapter 5: Conclusion 156

Appendix A: Playwrights 163

Bibliography 167

Chapter 1: Introduction

> She is providing words, emotions, and an imaginative structure for others to inhabit and create anew onstage. A playwright—in this theoretical sense---thus makes other people speak and act---. . . .No wonder, then, that even the woman playwright with the mildest of messages is bound to be seen as an anomaly, if not an actual threat. Who knows what she will say once she gives voice?
>
> ---Michelene Wandor, *Carry On, Understudies: Theatre and Sexual Politics* (1986, qtd. in Hart)

Inspired by the Greek tragedy the Women's Experimental Theatre (WET) staged *Electra Speaks*, written by Clare Coss, Roberta Sklar, and Sondra Segal, between 1977 to 1980. The heartbreaking myth of Agamemnon's selfish demand for the sacrifice of his own daughter Iphigenia and her subsequent death was deconstructed and rebuilt into "a series of transforming physical and vocal images" (Malnig 207). WET used the unequivocal image of Electra's moving lips and the repeated sounds of her voice on the stage to suggest Electra's refusal of the conventional methods of portraying her own story. Electra, who recovers her own voice by realizing her subjectivity, actively declares her personhood as a political statement:

> I am a separate person
>
> This is my body

These are my thoughts

This is my mouth

My voice

These are my words

I speak for myself. (qtd. in Malnig 201)

This revolutionary piece, the culmination of the trilogy *The Daughters Cycle*, was meaningful not only because the classic story was reinterpreted for a contemporary audience, but also because it used a "woman-identified perspective" to explore the themes, forms, and language of the original Greek drama (Sklar 317).

WET's *Electra Speaks* was influenced by the women's movement of the 1970s, which was in turn spearheaded by the sexual liberation of the 1960s, and it reflects its specific theatrical, cultural, and historical milieu. Similarly, since the 1970s, many influential directors have created memorable adaptations of classical Greek dramas, which soon became part of a popular repertoire. Richard Schechner's sensational version of the *Bacchae*, titled *Dionysus in 69* (1968), provided inspiration and created controversy for both the audience and theatre practitioners and is today considered a landmark of American experimental theatre. Andrei Serban, working with Elizabeth Swados as composer, conceived and directed *Medea*, *Trojan Women*, and *Electra* under the title *Fragments of a Greek Trilogy* at La MaMa in 1974. In the 1985, Lee Breuer's award-winning *The Gospel at Colonus*, based on *Oedipus at Colonus*, transformed this lesser known play by Sophocles, into an African American gospel experience and was performed on commercial stages worldwide. In 1986, Peter Sellers directed his

controversial version of Sophocles' *Ajax*, set in a post-Vietnam military trial, to great acclaim. Later Sellers adapted Aeschylus' *The Persians* (1993) using the setting of the Gulf War, evoking a heated debate and applause at the same time.

For several decades, Greek dramas became favorite works for both theatre artists and audience. Marvin Carlson argues that in theatre, artists cannot free themselves from the memory of their predecessors and their works. He states that actors who play historical characters have to confront the past: the "ghostly reappearance of historical, and legendary, figures on the stage has been throughout history an essential part of the theatre experience" (Carlson 7). Charles Mee, who has written plays using classic texts says, "There is no such thing as an original play" (Mee 9). Using Mee's concept, even ancient Greek dramas and early modern theatre such as the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries cannot be defined as "original" when they all draw on stories and myths in their particular culture; such narratives dwell in people's lives as a part of cultural and historical memories. The ability of an audience to enjoy familiar stories and characters has become a theatrical tradition affording spectators the added benefit of witnessing a contemporary and different perspective. For directors or playwrights, the issues addressed by the writers of fifth-century B.C. Athens continued to have great relevance in the twentieth century and continues into the twenty-first century.

In ancient Athens, the poet-playwrights were regarded as the teachers of their society, and their plays reflected their ideas, which in turn supported the existing society. The notion of the 'hero' put forward by Plato and Aristotle suggests a tendency toward perfection; it is clear that in the Aristotelian model heroism is "simply the fulfillment, and

nothing more, of the individual hero's capacity to be heroic" (McDonald 5). Scholar Helene Foley mentions that when she taught ancient texts and their modern versions in the classroom, she realized that the students were deeply loyal to the original works (Foley 9). Such allegiances to the first plays have the potential problem that people believe Greek dramas' authenticity even though their plays and theatre is imbued with misogynistic elements whereby female characters always cause men's suffering, and all misdeeds originate from women's sexual attitudes (Millett 52). It is not surprising that McDonald argues, "Throughout this century, the notion of what precisely constitutes 'the classics' has more become a political issue" (2). The components of Greek drama, its mentality, ideas, and structure are deeply embedded in Western culture, and the patriarchal tradition in Greek drama has unconsciously influenced the minds of readers or spectators in many ways.

As Greek theatre became established as a central and abiding theatrical canon, political and social agendas throughout various time periods may have been a factor in reviving Greek dramas, encouraging the audience's engagement. Confirming the role of politics in Greek dramas, Irish playwright Colin Teevan claims, "audience is a character," which indicates the audience's support and involvement (qtd. in Svich 410). As Wiles also points out, "The unique qualities of the Greek dramatic writing are bound up with the uniqueness of the Greek political experiment, which engaged the public as participants in rather than spectators of all public events" (3). In the fifth century, playwrights dealt with prevailing issues and conveyed their opinions through their characters. Theatre was a site for entertainment and, at the same time, a place for

discussion about important political and ethical issues. Most importantly, it was a place to confirm the ideas of the male citizens. Therefore, the audience's role was to support and confirm Greek ideas reflecting their society. In contrast to the Greeks, in our contemporary Western world, the audience's role is to act as a challenging, conscious critic who can scrutinize the themes and ideas of the play.

The Emergence of Adaptations of Greek Dramas

Scholars have divergent opinions about the emergence of the Greek dramatic revival. Amy Green claims that since the 1960s, classical revivals can be attributed to three causes: firstly, the evolution of directing brought the idiosyncratic theatrical expression of the directors' responses to the text; secondly as the authority of a language or an author was challenged, numerous artists including playwrights and directors attempted to recreate the classics, claiming their artistic control and ownership; and thirdly, as American popular culture started to dominate globally, American artists increasingly wanted to create their own idioms based on their culture, rather than following European theatrical traditions (Green 8). Helen Foley also points out that for Americans, the lack of a rich mythical tradition of their own perhaps prompted them to borrow from other traditions. Providing Walt Disney's *Hercules* as an example, she explains the familiarity of classic Greek drama, stating that "myths that rely on a pagan tradition are linked with no major organized religion and thus in a sense belong to the public domain, can be appropriated without offending anyone with clout, and even thrive on misleading"

(Foley, *Modern* 6). On the other hand, the playwright Caridad Svich[1], who has been interested in rewriting Greek dramas, thinks that the trend to revise Greek classics was caused by the emergence of a neoclassical movement in the U.S. (12).

In fact, Greek drama offers great possibilities for playwrights or directors who have artistic ambition and political opinions. Foley believes that Greek adaptations using masks, dance, music, rituals, and poetry in Eastern and other world theatre traditions bring to life "those aspects of ancient drama that are alien to the tradition of Western nineteenth-century realism" (2). Moreover, she claims that the Brechtian sense in avant-garde productions is connected with Greek drama, allowing "distance in relation to disturbing psychological and historical events" (2). In her book, *Greek Tragedy on the American Stage: Ancient Drama in the Commercial theatre, 1882-1994*, Karelisa Hartigan shows that according to the social needs and cultural situation, directors or playwrights preferred certain Greek plays to convey their messages. For example, many scholars, including Hartigan herself, argue that Euripides' *The Bacchae* was the essential play for the generation of the 1960s. Due to the violence and disturbing scenes, some directors started to attempt stagings on college campuses, which is a friendlier environment in which to take on such a challenge and has minimal financial risk compared to the commercial stage. In 1963, Greek director Minos Volanakis created a unique *Dionysus*, which suggested a combination of the pop singers Mick Jagger and John Lennon, on the stage of the Carnegie Institute of Technology (Hartigan 83). During the 1960s, people sought new ideas about religion and society and explored freedom in

[1]Caridad Svich wrote *Iphigenia Crash Land Falls on the Neon Shell that was Once Her Heart (a rave fable)* (2004) and *Wreckage* (2009) based on the story of Medea.

nature, instead of following traditional values and social standards; some even advocated anti-intellectualism, in their celebration of the god of wine, Dionysus (82).

The god of religious possession and wine, Dionysus, appealed to 1960s audiences, yet some viewers who wanted to affirm certain values preferred a character with strong moral beliefs, like Antigone. In particular, Jean Anouilh's 1944 adaptation of *Antigone*, set in Nazi-occupied France, was hailed as transformative by audiences. Like *The Bacchae* or *Antigone*, often such plays offer possibilities for various artistic interpretations by directors and playwrights and can be understood differently in different historical eras. When people face extreme situations or need a political response to irresolvable issues, adaptations of Greek drama often allude to topical issues, providing a fresh approach to searching and finding solutions.

Women Playwrights' Re-vision: New Visions and a New Canon

Although WET's *Electra Speaks* introduced many new opportunities for women playwrights to revise and adapt Greek drama, women playwrights' revisions were not frequently staged or published until feminist theatre gained momentum. Sharon Friedman states that feminist re-visionary theatre appeared "from the intersections of experimental performance, the tradition of literary and dramatic adaptations of the classics, and feminist theatre and theory" (1). Particularly, in the 1970s and early 1980s, many women playwrights attempted to find models of inspiration and strength from mythological and heroic female figures (Malnig 28). In *Making a Spectacle: Feminist Essays on Contemporary Women's Theatre* (1989) the editor of this collection Lynda Hart, explains

the necessity of women playwrights in finding new ways of staging women characters. Referencing Hélène Cixous' own theatrical concerns about theatre's potentials for women, Hart says:

> Such a transformation in attitude signals the emergence of strategies for foregrounding women's reality on the stage. By appropriating certain dramatic conventions and methods, subverting their customary usage and turning the lens of 'objectivity' to re-present women through their own looking glasses, the women playwrights discussed in this book and the authors who call attention to their disruptions are cancelling and deforming the structures that have held women framed, stilled, embedded, revoking the forms that misrepresented them. . . (3).

It is Hart's and Cixous' articulation of women playwrights' strategies of intervention that are my focus in this research.

Certainly, breaking basic canonical concepts and creating new perspectives might be understood as the main purpose of many women playwrights' work. The nature of live theatre allows women's stories and voices—presented by women—to make a powerful impact in the public space of the theatre. Friedman believes, "Feminist theatre, in particular, challenges the notion that the classic, having attained almost mythic stature, contains transcendent truths to be applied uncritically to ever new historical conditions and that canonical texts represent links on a cultural continuum" (2).

Many scholars do not distinguish between "adaptation" and "revision" because both are created by "historical currency," have various layers of meanings, and offer open-ended meanings, encouraging the audience to join in the process of interpretation (Friedman 8). However, Friedman points out that the clear difference between the two terms, adaptation and revision, is in the way they interpenetrate "contemporary circumstances and contingencies with earlier histories and values" (9). In my dissertation, while agreeing with Friedman, I will use the term "revision" instead of "adaptation." My reason for this is that the playwrights I consider use the Greek play as an inspiration and/or a jumping off place for their dramatic purpose. Especially for women playwrights, the narratives and values in classics can be reconsidered not only through the prism of contemporary circumstances and perspectives, but also from the women's point of view, finding a frame for women's untold, hidden histories and reflecting women's issues in the contemporary era.

There is no doubt that for women playwrights and directors, Greek serves as a creative vehicle to infuse new ideas and content into classical forms. In particular, Euripides' dauntless female protagonists challenge traditional ways of thinking and give inspiration to many audiences and theatre artists. As "objects of debate," Euripides' heroines raise central questions about "human life-family bonds, sexual desire, loss of country, dignity and death," and specifically female conditions that might be the critical reasons for numerous women playwrights' many favorable reinterpretations of Euripides' plays (Vernant qtd. in Warner 11).

David Leveaux, director of Sophocles' *Electra* at the McCarter Theatre in Princeton in 1998, explains his interest in staging Greek drama: "It's unusual to find a play that pits that number of ferociously powerful women against each other. You can see in characters like Electra and Clytemnestra the antecedents of other great female roles in later Western drama, from Hedda Gabler to Lady Macbeth." Compared with other modern plays, Greek dramas certainly offer plenty of opportunities to see strong leading female characters. Such roles provide actresses with the opportunity to play the role of a determined woman rather than the "stereotypical machination and manipulation" evident in other roles (Leveaux, *New York Times,* 1998). Mature actresses can find roles for themselves in Greek dramas. For example, the challenging role of Medea offered outstanding actresses like Diana Rigg, Fiona Shaw, and Isabelle Huppert an important opportunity. As Edith Hall points out, Greek drama offers "extensive use of female subject and interiority, which are explored in virtuoso speeches," and this is one of the reasons why Greek drama is significant for feminist theatre (14). Since the women's movement of the 1970s, women began to reconsider their ancient counterparts in Greek tragedies as women who had family issues similar to their own, such as marital breakdowns, relationships within stepfamilies, and emotional ties with children and siblings (Hall 13). These female characters' audacity and honesty with regard to their issues prompted a realization in women playwrights that the stories in Greek drama could be their stories and, similarly, their personal stories could be both public and political.

All the female characters to which Leveaux refers are indeed compelling female characters in theatrical history, with a mythic significance in Western culture. As we

know Greek theatre was male-only and the absence of Greek women in this most public of art forms established a historical trajectory of prejudice and omission. While the characters in the Greek canon offer women actors today exciting opportunities, the points of view of women playwrights make available insights into women's lives that were simply not possible in fifth century Greece. Such revisions provide opportunities to consider stories of "real women" through the prism of courageous and furious female characters in Greek dramas.

In the early 1990s, Greek drama came to be interpreted more personally, since women's experiences were being described in more complicated ways, and the concept of a universal female experience was challenged by notions of race and class differences. The black, lesbian, and working-class feminists could not agree with a totalizing "female" experience that was often defined as white, heterosexual, and middle class. Reflecting feminist movements and shifts in women's ideology, Greek revisions have embraced a variety of women's voices: women's personal stories could not be apolitical because their political opinions were presented through their personal stories.

In WET's *Electra Speaks*, Electra, directly calling to Agamemnon "Hey, Daddy, Hey, Daddy," confronts male authority and control. Electra is no longer a mythical character confined to the patriarchal world; instead, she straightforwardly begins to speak about herself: "She's tugs/ she lugs/ she lurches/ she heaves…she stands firm" (127). Using "fast talk," spitting out words in an uninterrupted flow, Sandra Segal's mobile face shows all kinds of different emotional expressions one after another: "pain, hatred, shyness, tenderness, confusion, tentativeness" (Malnig 210). Furthermore, she speaks

about herself in the third person, claiming the right to have such authorial ownership to her own story. Electra, who was forced to remain silent by male authority figures, finally has a chance to express her various feelings, and she reveals diverse aspects of herself rather than the fixed images created by others. WET's collective work and dramaturgic strategy, which became characteristic of feminist theatre, made Electra a bridge between her world and the contemporary world; she speaks for herself and for every woman.

When Loretta Greco became the artistic director of the Women's Project[2], she announced that the new mission of the company would be "mentoring a new breed of women artists and delivering them to the front line where they will continue the vital tradition of telling stories and revealing voices that would otherwise remain unheard" (Martin qtd. in Friedman 81). Much like Greco's mission that suggests the importance of appreciating women artists' works, this study explores how women playwrights refused the biased perspective in canonical works and attempted to infuse old forms with new ideas and content via their own cultural and aesthetic viewpoints. My dissertation examines how women playwrights have connected Greek drama to our contemporary world, what questions they raise about our society, and in doing so how they push back the boundaries of theatre.

Scholarship on revision of Greek drama in the United States is relatively recent and specifically research on women playwrights' revisions has only recently been published. As noted early, revisions in the U.S. followed European productions in the late

[2] The Women's Project was founded in 1978 by Julia Miles after a survey shows that only 7 percent of the plays written by women playwrights were produced nationwide. In 2004, Loretta Greco became the artistic director of the Women's Project.

1960s and occurred as a result of various cultural and political shifts combined with strong interest in theatrical experimentation. Several books published in the 1990s deal with Greek dramas' revival and delve into the ways that new productions or plays incorporated their own era and circumstances. *The Revisionist Stage: American Directors Reinvent the Classics* (1994), written by Amy S. Green, focuses on directors who emerged in the 1980s as certain directors embraced concepts established by Derrida and Barthes. Barthes' 'death of the author' paved the way for directors to take full control of productions, eschewing the playwright as sole arbiter of a script's meaning. In contrast, Karelisa Hartigan's *Greek Tragedy on the American Stage: Ancient Drama in Commercial Theatre, 1882-1994* (1995) is not focused on new interpretations of Greek tragedy or the intentions of a playwright or a director, but serves as record of how Greek tragedy appealed to the American audience by incorporating the social and political background of the time. In *Ancient Sun, Modern Light: Greek Drama on the Modern Stage* (1992), Marianne McDonald offers a more expansive perspective, and her choices of adaptations delve into a cross-section of various cultures and contemporary issues, clearly showing some directors' desire to transcend society's imperialistic perceptions of Greek drama.

Kevin J. Wetmore's *Black Dionysus: Greek Tragedy and African American Theatre* (2002) which examines theatre artists' various adaptations based on Greek myth and tragedy. His focus examines specific works by African American playwrights that embody African American history and identity. *Dionysus since 69: Greek Tragedy at the Dawn of the Third Millennium* (2004), edited by Edith Hall, Fiona Macintosh, and

Amanda Wrigley, offers an overview of revival practices. This collection of essays examines the ways in which the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides are still applicable to a plethora of contemporary issues in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, and they espouse a multitude of cultural and aesthetic perspectives, expanded to include opera, dance, television, and film. Using the insights of classics scholars, theatre scholars, and playwrights, this book approaches the Greek revival from a broad spectrum of viewpoints, ranging from social, political, and rational perspectives to discussions of performances' aesthetic achievement.

Unlike the previously mentioned works, Sharon Friedman's groundbreaking book *Feminist Theatrical Revisions of Classic Works*, which focuses entirely on women playwrights' diverse and steady approaches to the classics, was published in 2009. In the introduction, Friedman, agreeing with Amy Green's postmodern perspective that re-visioning serves "the production as catalyst, reference point, or fertile ground from which directors and their collaborators may cultivate new theatrical works," claims that liberty of revision provides great sources for considerations of gender (Friedman 7). Friedman also points out that some of the feminist theatrical revisions that have the quality of "thought-provoking theatre" might be considered "postmodern feminism" or "feminist post modernism" in the way that they handle their core themes and aesthetic approaches (3). The essays are categorized according to the period and genre of the re-visioned source text, and each essay suggests diverse possibilities and questions regarding gender within a historical and cultural context.

The most recent work on women's revisions is *Re-visioning Myth: Modern and Contemporary Drama by Women* (2012) by Frances Babbage. Babbage explores within a theoretical framework how conceptions of myths have been changed and how these changes could make an impact on the theatre as a medium for revisions of myth. Delving deeper into the realm of ideological perspectives, Babbage examines selected plays prominent from the early 1960s to the beginning of the millennium in European countries, such as Sarah Kane's *Phaedra's Love* (1996) and Hrafnhildur Hagalín's *Easy Now, Electra* (2000), which illustrate dramaturgical approaches from two very different cultures, British and Icelandic, respectively. In each chapter, Babbage examines diverse women playwrights' works, which extend and shift the ideological aspects of myth, and based on that foundation, she analyzes their methods of communicating with the contemporary audience.

While Friedman's and Babbage's works on women playwrights' revisions serve as good models for defining "woman" in ancient Greek tragedies, two pioneering classics scholars, Froma Zeitlin and Helen Foley, provide a central theoretical foundation for this dissertation by demonstrating how these tragedies connect with contemporary experiences. They examine gender dynamics in ancient Greek literature and society and guide the reader to realize misogynistic bias in the canonical works of Greek literature and thought. In her essay *Bad Women: Gender Politics in Late Twentieth-Century Performance and Revision of Greek Tragedy* (2004), Foley defines the term "revision" by referring to Adrienne Rich's definition of revision, which "is an act of looking back, entering an old text from a new critical direction…We need to know the writing of the

past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us" (Rich qtd. in Foley 79). In particular, Zeitlin's impressive book, *Playing the Other: Gender and Society in Classical Greek Literature,* demonstrates abroad range of knowledge in anthropological, historical, and linguistic areas and attempts to understand gender categories and the role of the feminine in Greek dramas written by men. She suggests that gender is an import way to explore the trend of Greek dramatic revival.

The goal of this dissertation is to explore how Greek dramas, as canonical works, can be reinterpreted from women playwrights' points of view, and to investigate the possible meanings their revisions bring to contemporary audience. In *Making a Spectacle*, Lynda Hart frames her argument for feminist theatre as follows: "Language, space, and the body are loci for the woman playwright to dramatically challenge the images of women determined in dominant discourse. Not one, but all of these sites must be re-visioned for the feminist enterprise to succeed onstage" (13). Women's bodies, language, and theatrical spaces are the critical sites for new frameworks available to women playwrights in order to create a women-centered theatre. Hélène Cixous in her essay "Aller à la mer," points out the absence of women's experience in the theatre, rejecting the powerless female characters that male playwrights have created, such as Antigone, Portia, and Nora, all of whom disappear to the grave, the asylum, oblivion, and silence. She believes that theatre reflects "the dictates of male fantasy" and does not portray any "living woman or her body or even her unconscious" (546). Thus Cixous emphasizes a relationship between women's bodies and the stage, wherein female

subjectivity can be expressed and women's presence will be revealed. As a solution, she metaphorically suggests her ideal theatre in which the stage is 'woman'. For Cixous, this theatre can be understood as the theatre of the woman's body, a theatrical site that truly expresses women themselves. Even though women's bodies have been misread and politicized in systems of exchange, as Hart points out, "the physical body…the virtual corporality of the text" has uniqueness and potentiality (Hart 5). Besides, it could also be understood to mean any theatre that has a creative stage usage or scenic design rooted in the female 'body-presence,' and which breaks the traditional norms that men have established.

Moreover, I believe that women playwrights have a particular sensibility that allows them to capture the zeitgeist of feminist moments; their voices have the ability to express themselves and speak for their own generations. Therefore, I will engage in a broad exploration of women playwrights' perceptions of the issues they are dealing with and their various expressions through the female characters. Through scripts written by women playwrights, I will try to approach the aesthetic aspects of revisions, which illustrate certain characteristics of women's writing and esthetics. Josette Feral claims a feminine discourse is an attempt to "express the porous, uncentered nature of women; it is a policy favoring the fragment rather than whole, the point rather than the line, dispersion rather than concentration, heterogeneity rather than homogeneity" (qtd. in Hart 12). As Feral acknowledges, many scholars believe that feminist writers work to develop new dramaturgical methods of staging women. A number of women playwrights have

refused linear storylines and a realist style in the belief, often contested, that such traditional dramaturgy is a patriarchal stranglehold.

I have divided the revisions into Euripides' three Greek tragedies that are most frequently reinterpreted by women playwrights: Euripides' *Medea*, *The Trojan Women*, and *The Bacchae*. In each chapter I provide various references to Euripides' original tragedies and deal with significant themes that draw women playwrights' attention and that relate to issues of sexuality. I examine how the playwrights connect past and present and I use Hart's three arenas for feminist dramaturgy-- woman's body, language, and theatrical space-- to guide me in my analysis. In chapter two, I explore Greek ideas, values, and the gendered division of the Greek world as it is critically reflected in *Medea*, based on the Euripides' original text translated by Rex Warner[3]. After analyzing Euripides' themes, I discuss the works of four women's revisions of *Medea*: Franca Rame's *Medea* (1981), Jackie Crossland's *Collateral Damage* (1991), Deborah Porter's *No More Medea* (1990), and Marina Carr's *By the Bog of the Cats* (1998). In particular, women playwrights provide distinctive perspectives on Medea's infanticide and look beyond and underneath the image of a stigmatized and problematic mother in order to discuss Medea's emotional journey. Moreover, suggesting a new possibility for women's autonomy, in this chapter I deal with women playwrights' the use of language and diverse interpretations of *deus ex machina*.

[3]*Complete Greek Tragedies.* Trans. Rex Warner. Dover Publications, 1993.

In chapter three, using Gilbert Murray's translation[4], I briefly analyze Euripides' distinguishable traits in *The Trojan Women*, such as the gods' appearance at the beginning and specifically, Euripides' unusual strategy of giving voice to the enemy, in contrast to other Greek dramatists' stories of war. Focusing on how women's bodies are colonized by war, I examine three plays: Christine Evans' *Trojan Barbie* (2010), Caroline Bird's *Trojan Women: After Euripides* (2012), and Kaite O'Reilly's *Peeling* (2002). I discuss how these writers utilize theatrical setting and various props in order to portray women's ruined bodies and their seeming passivity as spoils of war. I am also interested in the playwrights' characterizations which often depict intense clashes and struggles between women.

In chapter four, I discuss revisions of *The Bacchae* which looks at some lesser known plays (the exception perhaps is Churchill's play) by established writers, one of which, Bryony Lavery's, is only available in manuscript. This chapter is unusal in the sense that the central characters are men, unlike the works I consider in the previous chapters, but this is one of the reasons I made this decision. I discuss numerous scholars' different perceptions of the conflict between Pentheus and Dionysus, referencing Euripides' *The Bacchae*, translated by Paul Woodruff.[5] As one of these male figures is Dionysus, the god of theatre, who engineers Pentheus's cross-dressing as a woman, the gender dynamics of this play are attractive to women writers. These works reflect a variety of issues from the women's libration movement in the 1970s and the socio-political situation in the United Kingdom: Maureen Duffy's *Rites* (1969), Caryl Churchill

[4]*The Trojan Women*. Trans. Gilbert Murray. Fireside Theatre, 1937.
[5]*The Bacchae*. Trans. Paul Woodruff. Hackett Publishing, 1999.

and David Lan's *Mouthful of Bird* (1986) and Bryony Lavery's *Kitchen Matters* (1991). By embracing the limited theatrical space and actors' body in particular, women playwrights' revisions mainly deal with the issue of women's madness and how violence is related to social circumstances and problems. I examine the forced concepts of gender stereotypes and the social pressures piling up in the people's psyches, which eventually results in the frenzied violence by women in the Euripides' play and in these revisions.

Chapter 2: *Medea*

There is no easy escape. . .
—Euripides, *Medea*[6]

> A long time ago, I saw *Medea* in a theatre production in my native Korea. Medea, wearing a white Korean traditional dress, did not say any words but danced. In a black and empty space, through her slow, passionate, and sometimes violent dance moves, Medea expressed her sorrow and agony. At that moment I realized that Medea is still alive, beyond time and space.
> ---Mina Choi

Multiple Medeas

In 1992 at Warwick University a group of women artists and scholars with a special interest in Euripides' character Medea gathered for a panel discussion. Two years later an introductory essay was published documenting the event with a transcription of the discussion that considered the multiple versions of *Medea* that were part of the theatre scene in London. As Susan Bassnett, the panel moderator and editor of the transcription "Reflections on Medea in the 1990s," explains in her introduction, "There have been Medeas right across Europe and North America, Medeas in main house theatres, in alternative theatres, one woman show Medeas and multi-media Medeas" (1). Nearly ten years later Jennifer Jones published *Medea's Daughters: Forming and Performing the Woman Who Kills* (2003), a book that examines a range of plays and television dramas

[6] *The Complete Greek Tragedies*, trans. Rex Warner: 8.

that address murderous women. Jones describes Medea as "one of the most prolific murderers in Greek tragedy" becoming "an icon for feminine criminality" (ix). The interest in Medea has not diminished in recent years. In the following chapter I will give an overview of productions that have used her story.

Contemporary interpretations of Medea have portrayed her in a variety of media: in 1946 Martha Graham choreographed a ballet based on *Medea* called *Cove of the Heart*, in 1987 Japanese director Ninagawa Yukio created a Kabuki version of *Medea* with an all-male cast, and in Pier Paolo Pasolini's film version of *Medea* (1970), Maria Callas portrayed Medea as an earth mother in contrast to a worldly Jason. Recently, in her play *The Hungry Woman* (2001) Chicana playwright Cherríe Moraga created a Mexican Medea who is a lesbian heroine struggling to protect her teenage son in colonial America (Wren 60). In Silas Jones' *American Medea: An African American Tragedy* (2002), Medea is an African princess married to a white man from Greece named Jason who is betrayed by her son (Wren 25). These different versions show that Medea is not only a tragic and titanic female figure we only can find in ancient Greek drama but also an accessible person we can encounter anywhere. Because the plays explore the psychology of women, these texts give their audiences many opportunities to think about women's sexual and familial conflicts within their respective historical and social situations.

In his book *Black Dionysus,* Kevin J. Wetmore, Jr. mentions Kentucky painter Thomas Satterwhite Noble's work *Margaret Garner, or The Modern Medea*, painted in 1867. This painting is based on a real incident that occurred in January of 1856, when

Margaret Garner, an African American slave who failed to escape from her owner, killed her "practically white" daughter using a butcher knife. Although Garner did not kill her child for revenge or jealousy, but instead because she feared her daughter would have to endure the horror of slavery, her image alludes to "the myth of the African American," which implies that blackness and madness are equivalent (Wetmore 132-135). Recalling this historical incident, Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* (1987) presents the story of a mother who escaped slavery before the American Civil War. When the mother faces her former captor, who tries to recapture her, she kills her two-year-old daughter rather than have the child live as a slave like herself. Bassnett says, "It is an act of liberation and it is the act of a slave mother freeing the child from a future of horror and deprivation" (9). Like the mother in *Beloved*, Medea commits infanticide, which can be interpreted as her strong determination to reject a miserable life for her children, her way of making "the ultimate sacrifice," or it can be understood as "achieving freedom through children's death" (Bassnett 5).

However, in spite of a positive consideration of women's issues and the continuing fascination of artists and audiences with Medea, as a bad mother who murdered her children, Medea also figures as an archetype that offers a troubling and dangerous image of a woman, which limits interpretations of her character. According to Carl Jung's archetype theory in which women's femininity is linked with nature, fertility, emotion, irrationality, and destruction (Harris 17), "the concept of archetype is derived from the repeated observation that, for instance, the myths and fairy-tales of world literature contain definite motifs which crop up everywhere" (Jung 392). Because

audiences witness Medea's act of infanticide performed on stage, seeing her bloodied children and hearing her furious words, these audiences might have trouble understanding and accepting Medea and her actions.

Avant-garde director and playwright Robert Wilson's *Deafman Glance* presents an archetype of the bad mother, potentially referencing Medea. In the opening scene of the 1971 Paris stage premiere, an African-American actress in a long black Victorian dress pours a glass of milk, gives it to her son, and then takes a knife and slowly stabs him as he falls to the floor.[7] These disturbing images of the murder scene make a strong impression on the audience and evoke Medea and the archetype of the bad mother killing her own children. Even though the performance is not explicitly about Medea, the violent image of a mother's infanticide implicitly references Medea's cruel murder of her own children. For many audiences, watching the scene of a mother killing her children on stage might be much more powerful and horrible than reading the story on the written page, especially because in Euripides' *Medea* the actual scene of the murder is not represented on stage. Wilson might not have intended to refer to the myth of *Medea*, but surely his imagery calls up *Medea* in some audience members' minds. Furthermore, in his play he explores the intersection of motherhood and betrayal and expresses a long-held unconscious fear about mothers: a mother who feeds and nourishes her children can also kill them.

[7] Wilson explains that the work was inspired by the drawings of an eleven-year-old black child who is a mute and deaf. Wilson said he structured the play around silent pictures and abstract sounds, subverting linear narrative progression (*Deafman Glance* video installation. Paula Cooper Gallery website. 24 Sep. 2010).

Medea's violent acts are described not as a crime any person could perform but rather as a gendered crime that could only be committed by an unstable female. She is seen as an unstable female who overreacted—as a woman who let emotion control her rather than reason. Moreover, Medea's status as mother emphasizes the fact that women are capable of impulsive murder against a vulnerable family member who trusts her. Jennifer Jones points out that "the woman who kills a member of her own family has not only broken the law but has also violated gender expectations" (Jones ix). Thus, women's subordinate status has been tacitly assumed by those representations of women (x). As Jones explains, this construction of gender ideology allows that people perceive independent women as criminals and considers criminal women to be monstrous (xi). Even though the story of Medea certainly contains much more than the murder of the children, Medea's actions are negatively linked with feminine nature and perpetuate a problematic archetype of women beyond time, place, or even ethnicity.

The Greek World in which Medea Lived

Scholarship on Greek theatre acknowledges theatre performance as "a sexually exclusive ritual" in which only men could participate. Tragedy was by its nature an exclusively "male experience" and performed "an important civic-political function," as Zelenak explains (18, 21). David Wiles agrees, "The theatre of Athens was created by and for men" (66). It is one of the great ironies of the classical Greek era that their ground-breaking male-only theatre developed at the same time as their equally innovative notions of democracy, an evolving political system that established the concept of "rule by the

people" despite the fact that the "people" were exclusively male. "Tragedy was a device which allowed the Athenians to come together and collectively think through their problems" (Wiles 66). Thus Athenian tragedy envisioned the city as a place where "democratic" ideas can be actualized. In the Greek poets' imaginations, male and female characters of all statuses could temporarily but liberally express their opinions and thoughts with the same rights, which demonstrate "equality in the right to public speaking" (Hall 126). When a character who was usually prohibited from public speaking because of his or her gender or class delivered a speech on the stage, Athenian citizens enjoyed the character's "democratic right" to free speech, which they recognized could not happen in reality (125, 126). This imaginative world in tragedy offered male citizens the opportunity to exercise their rights in a democratic society and created a "cathartic purgation of the gender and social guilt they were denied in real life" (Zelenak 29). The world of tragedy is thus a kind of Athenian fantasy that produces "poetic justification for the control of women by men" (Hall 125).

As Athenians' ideas and values permeated Greek tragedy, Greek society's gender conflict is symbolically revealed in theatrical space. In fifth-century BC Athens, as the idea of the private sphere was developed as separate from the public sphere, tragedy reflected this development of separate spheres on the Greek stage. Greek theatre was structured along gendered lines so that the private sphere, a hidden place, was assigned to women, whereas the public sphere, the stage space, was for men, which symbolically illustrated the established social order. Classics scholar Froma Zeitlin, who analyzes Greek tragedy from a feminist perspective, claims that, within the structure of a house,

which clearly has an inside and an outside, a private and a public sphere, there is a clear power struggle for control between men who continuously attempt to demonstrate their dominance and women who are perceived as "a subversive threat" (347). It is not surprising that historically the woman's realm within the theatrical space was implicitly restricted.

Theatrical space in tragedy was the intersection between inside and outside, private and public, and the use of space is closely associated with characters. In order to explain Medea's corresponding change in language and space, Margaret Williamson refers to Sally Humphrey, who interprets tragedy as a discourse on the public-private divide. According to Humphrey, tragedy produces strong female characters like Medea who "belong to a discourse on the relation between public and private life rather than a discourse on the relations between the sex" (Humphrey qtd. in Williamson 16). For example, at the beginning of the play, a vulnerable Medea cries out offstage against Jason's betrayal at her private place—her house—but when she enters the public space—the stage—, her language and behavior change and become resolute and controlled, like the male characters (16-17). As Medea enters the public space—the male sphere—the conflict of the play develops more seriously.

Besides the private–public divide, Euripides developed the plot of the play utilizing several other important Greek dichotomies: mortal/divine, masculine/feminine, and Greek/barbarian. According to these dichotomies, Medea is portrayed as an outsider: divine, feminine, and barbarian. In Greek society the concepts of masculinity and femininity are defined by mutual opposition, thus women were mostly described as what

men are not (Roger 154). Zeitlin explains that in the Greek theatre, "the self that is really at stake is to be identified with the male, while the woman is assigned the role of the radical other" (346). In order to portray the self, Greek males needed others who were inferior and limited: women. Including Euripides' play, most Greek tragedies describe "'the relations of men with women' and not of that other truly democratic possibility: 'the relations of men and women'" (Ferris 131). The focus of Greek dramas is a man—not a woman—who cannot be equal with women, and all perspectives and stories start from these men. Thus, a woman is only needed to assure the men's world view.

Euripides, who meticulously built a fictional world to deliver his message, seems to have sympathy for women because through Medea's voice, he delivers the various tragic fates of women in his plays. As a daughter and as a person without rights, a woman was subordinated to her father and husband for her entire life. Women's enslavement, the oppressive state of marriage, and their unequal status within society are addressed through Medea's speech.

> We women are the most unfortunate creatures.
> Firstly, with an excess of wealth it is required
> For us to buy a husband and take for our bodies
> A master; for not to take one is even worse.
> And now the question in serious whether we take
> A good one or bad one; for there is no easy escape
> For a woman, nor can she say no to her marriage.
> (*The Complete Greek Tragedies*, trans. Rex Warner, lines 231-237)

Imagining women's struggles and difficulties, through the play Euripides obviously demonstrates that women were unfairly treated in this male-dominated society. The Greek dramatists believed that the conflict within the female character and the conflict with her surrounding world were useful tragic instruments that provided a perfect image of suffering (Padel 16). Euripides' intention might not have been to advocate for or emancipate contemporary women, but as a dramatist, he needed to create a suitable persona whose suffering elicits sympathy from the audience. For the audience, women are "perilously, self-destructively vulnerable to daemonic passion" and therefore perfect figures to represent the unjust system through an expression of their pain and resentment. Moreover, women's status as natural victims in the human system paralleled human beings' status as natural victims in the divine world (16).

Bad Woman Medea

The edited collection *Medea in Performance 1500-2000* (2000) provides a broad perspective on the performances of *Medea* in different times and places, including Renaissance England, modern Greece, Central Europe, and Japan, as well as in diverse media, including theatre, opera, and film. In the introduction, one of the editors, Fiona Macintosh, categorizes the five modes in which the character of Medea is presented in various productions: a witch, someone who commits infanticide, abandoned wife, proto-feminist, and outsider. In fact, Medea was neither a real woman nor a reflection of any specific Greek woman in the fifth century but a unique and masculine female figure created by Euripides based on myth. Greek dramatists like Euripides believed that the

tragic situation for human beings might be life invaded by divinity, and they searched for a useful vehicle "to explore the susceptibility of all humanity to divinity" (Padel 16). In order to create the specific aesthetic pleasures and emotional catharsis, Greek dramatists portrayed certain kinds of suffering. When a tragic hero or a heroine is "feminized," or in other words, victimized, the audience feels tragic pity for them and experiences their fear (Zelenak 38-39).

The Greek dramatists created female characters who suffered from daemonic passion and self-destructive tendencies as a result of a male-dominated system. Most female characters have been negatively mutated to portray a radical aspect. They are emotionally unstable and exaggerated to become more "hyped" or "hyperfeminine" rather than traditionally "feminine" (Zelenak 38-39). Moreover, they are always dark, dangerous, and sexually driven, characteristics that generalize all women. Women's unpredictable features, frivolity, and vulnerability became stereotypically associated with them and therefore are suitable for creating tragic situations in the plays. Zeitlin explains female character's functional aspect in Greek drama:

> [Women] play the roles of catalysts, agents, instruments, blockers, spoilers, destroyers, and sometimes helpers or saviors for the male characters. When prominently represented, they may serve as antimodels as well as hidden models for that masculine self and concomitantly, their experience of suffering or their acts that lead them to disaster regularly occur before and precipitate those of men (347).

These tragic female roles show that a female character cannot exist by herself but exists to create problems and to support male characters.

When Aristotle read *Medea* and realized that the play did not follow Greek literary tradition, he pointed out two problems: Aegeus's arrival and Medea's escape in the dragon-drawn chariot (Rabinowitz 131). In fact, Medea is not just a woman but a unique woman from her particular birth. As a granddaughter of the sun god Helios, she is divine, but her divine status is not significantly dealt with in the story. At the end, after she murders her children, all of a sudden, the seemingly human woman is transformed dramatically into the divine and disappears with the sun god's dragon chariot, which is a key example of a *deus ex machina* in Greek drama. Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz argues that these problems could remind the audience that they are watching a play, "a conventional life of the theatre," and symbolically means that Medea's escape on the sun dragon chariot returns the story to "the realm of the fantastic and supernatural" (131). Rabinowitz assumes that the divine Medea would not be a threat to the Greek male audience, but the problem is "everything that might mark her as divine is ascribed to femaleness" (142). The Greek male audience might have believed that in order to achieve their goals, women can feign powerlessness. In addition to woman's deception, women's sexual desire is also considered problematic. Medea interrupts Jason's Athenian marriage, which is a 'normal' marriage when compared to a marriage with a foreigner; the eruption of Medea's desire, or in other words, women's sexuality, is depicted as extremely dangerous (141-3).

From a Greek perspective, Medea is a foreigner and barbarian who comes from Kolchis, but from a Kolchian perspective, Medea is not a foreigner, an exotic, or "a barbaric." Rather, she is a well-educated and eloquent woman from the first Egyptian settlement, Kolchis. Medea is a woman of color and "a member of a well-established civilization" (Rabinowitz 137). It might be natural that as a princess of Kolchis and partially divine, Medea considers herself to be a citizen like Jason. While in Greece, women did not have a right to choose their spouses, and marriage was arranged by a woman's father (who owned their daughters until marriage), Medea chooses her partner by herself. In contrast to Jason, who carries his present status simply by being male, Medea gives up her status in Kolchis, betrays her father, kills her brother, and steals the Golden Fleece for Jason. In *Medea,* Jason can be seen as an ordinary man who struggles to survive in society and who makes an excuse to obtain his boss's daughter and then discards his wife for his own benefit and future. He does not demonstrate any sublime moment or heroic speech or behavior. In addition, although he is a male Greek citizen, he is also a powerless and defeated man who cannot control his wild and jealous wife.

The contrast between Jason and Medea is noticeably revealed in Euripides' use of language. Euripides' *Medea* was performed on the Greek stage in the fifth century with male audiences watching a male actor playing Medea. It would not have been odd for the audience that a male actor playing Medea talks about Greek honor using heroic language because the audiences knew that Medea was a man acting a woman's role and therefore was able to use a male's oratorical skill and rely on the notion of the masculine ideal of honor and glory. Although Medea is a female character, she behaves more like a man.

Williamson points out that Medea's language is noticeably changed when she steps out of the house. Using lyric anapests, Medea expresses her rage, misery, and hate within her house. When she comes out from the house, her language becomes controlled, abstract, and intellectualizing, like Jason, Creon, or any other man in the play (Williamson 17).

Like Athenian men, in order to regain her honor, Medea decides to harm Jason because she is not an ordinary woman but instead considers herself a warrior fighting in a battle—the "Sophoclean hero," speaking heroic language such as "the deed must be done," "I must dare," and "I shall kill" (Knox 275). She is resolute, so it is hard to find evidence of any struggle to reverse her decision to kill her children. As Medea describes her plans for revenge, particularly the death of the children, she does not use "feminine" language. Rather she ignores emotion and focuses on the rational and heroic motivations for her revenge (Foley 76). Even when she advocates for the rights of women, she speaks with heroic (Sophoclean) language. Marianne McDonald claims that Euripides recognized "[men's] corruption in the elaborate language learned from sophists, language used to deceive rather than as a sacred repository of truth" so that the virtue (*arete*) found in the Homeric hero needed to be embodied by a woman (148). Therefore, Medea's language is closer to the gods and the sanctity of language as oath familiar to men (MacDonald 149).

Another critical contribution that *Medea* makes to dramatic history, the theme of infanticide, which I briefly discussed earlier, creates Medea as an incarnation of "the deconstruction of the private, domestic, traditionally female world of the family" (Ann Jones xv). Rabinowitz claims that Medea pays the price for murdering her own children

in order to get her freedom, calling her infanticide "a form of self-mutilation" because Euripides created a woman who has "a warrior sensibility" and who values honor above all (150). Cherríe Moraga points out the social circumstances of Medea's actions: "[T]here was a strong relationship between women's enslavement and infanticide" (qtd. in Wren 60). Agreeing with Moraga's assertion, Celia Wren argues that the reason that Medea murders is not just because of her jealousy or her desire to seek revenge for Jason's betrayal, but because "in a society that doesn't allow wholeness for women, perverted acts take place" (60). The society Euripides created in the play is not for Medea or other women, but for men like himself. Since Jason dishonors her, she counts him as her enemy. Her heroic passion causes her to commit infanticide, which could be considered a perverted act. She does not want her children to become second-class citizens who end up like her betrayer Jason, so she looks for the best way to wound Jason. By killing her children and Creon's daughter Glauce, she ruins Jason's present lineage as well as the possibility of a future lineage. Rush Rehm interprets Euripides's intention for Medea's murder:

> The horrifying precision with which Medea converts marriage into death—and maternity into child murder—shatters the validity of the heroic ideal she uses to justify her action. When doing harm to enemies so as not to be laughed at becomes the reason for killing one's loved ones, when an abused woman inverts her traditional roles at weddings and funerals and so converts her home into a battlefield, then the play challenges the ideological roots of the culture. (107-109)

Medea's infanticide implies that her revenge creates not only a personal effect but also a political and social challenge to the society. If one of a society's basic assumptions (that mothers will nurture their children) is shattered, then the society itself should be reconsidered (Johnson 44).

Through Medea, Euripides delved into the gendered conflict in Athenian society, which was controlled by men, revealing the masculine gender-framework of Greek society. Therefore, what Euripides might have attempted to portray is the men's world and their problems. As Medea is "violated by Jason, used by him as a tool to further himself, then discarded" (McDonald 150), Euripides violates Medea as well, offering a male lesson because she daringly questions her rights within a male-dominated society and claims her autonomy (Ferris 130).

Franca Rame and Dario Fo's *Medea (1977)*

> Tremble, tremble, the witch is back[8]
>
> —Babbage's commentary on Fo and Rame's *Medea*

Franca Rame directly and intimately embodies Medea in *Female Parts: One-Woman Plays*, a one-woman show co-written with Dario Fo. In fact, in 1977, Rame retired from the stage to focus on social and political activism, particularly addressing contemporary women's issues such as motherhood, birth control, pre-marital sex, and abortion (O'Donnell 91). In collaboration with Fo, she wrote several monologues and a one-

[8] Baggage 71

woman show in 1977, "*Tutta casa, letto e chiesa* (*All Home, Bed and Church*) derived from a proverb about Italian women's lives: "It's all about home and church" (91). Rame's plays challenge gender relations in a fundamental set of everyday social spheres (sexuality, work, and the family) and traditional assumptions about men's and women's interactions are inflected by historical, political, and socioeconomic issues (Günsberg 203).

Female Parts: One-Woman Plays is translated in two versions by Stuart Hood and adapted by Olwen Wymark (1981) and Gillian Hanna (1991). As the title of the play implies, it depicts diverse female characters repressed by patriarchal institutions: alienated mothers, whores in mental institutions, political prisoners, seductresses, and survivors of rape. Through Rame's body and voice, these female characters, resisting in their own ways, are embodied on the stage, and the final piece is *Medea.* The play does not deal with the whole story of the Medea myth and only captures the moment when Medea, here a 1970s housewife, becomes aware of Jason's infidelity and debates her course of action with the chorus. All characters are performed by Rame alone. Because of Rame's status as an Italian actress, activist, and playwright, it is not easy to separate her characters from herself in her works. When Rame creates a script, the way she approaches the issues and characters is influenced by her own personality and life experiences, which in turn affects her audiences (Günsberg 206). Fo describes their working process of reshaping a script:

> Most of the working out of the text took place directly on stage. Night after night Franca, using input of the audience, which is always our

> greatest collaborator, would vary the rhythm and structure of sentences, speed up passages, put in or leave out remarks, etc. In that way, after a couple of months, the text seemed to us to be completely transformed, almost unrecognizable compared to the original text. (Fo 1989)

Maggie Günsberg believes that the text is continuously re-written by Rame's involvement as an actress, and during the performance, the role is re-created by her; each time she performs, she produces a new version. Therefore, Günsberg claims, the play is more about Franca Rame's female parts (onstage roles) than simply the female characters she portrays onstage (207).

One of the features of Rame's play is that a female character occupies the whole stage alone, developing the character's complexity and responding to other's perspectives. In her theatrical review of Rame's play, Elin Diamond describes Rame playing Medea in performance:

> Wearing a simple black crocheted shawl…Rame crosses the stage defiantly, her gesture is strong and clean. Words boil and explode from her lips as she cajoles Jason, then catapults from protest to triumphal, tragic howl—the final "a" sound of "donna nova," becomes a full-rotated musical note. (105)

Rame's black costume is reminiscent of funeral attire, which creates a foreboding image, but, at the same time, the costume presents a dignified and confident figure by alluding to her restrained emotions. By enjoying freedom of movement across the stage in her performances, Rame seems to utilize all of the theatre space without any interruption or

hindrance, whereas in Greek theatre a female character's space was limited or excluded. Without separation between domestic and public sphere, minimal *mise-en-scène* and empty space grant liberation to Rame's moves. This lack of separation between spheres also symbolically means this Medea cannot be confined to the domestic sphere anymore.

The play begins as the chorus worries about Medea's demented state and preaches about the patriarchal demands placed on women: "You'll sacrifice yourself for [your children]. Think like a good mother, not like a proud woman" (Rame, adapted by Olwen Wymark and translated by Stuart Hood, 36). This chorus, played by a single woman, sympathizes with Medea in her misfortune: "Don't you know that we've suffered the same fate as you and wept the same tears? Our men have betrayed us too" (36). After playing the chorus, Rame shifts into the role of Medea, who faces the difficult and painful situation. Medea's response to Jason's betrayal is not to worry about her children but instead to pity herself, recalling her youth and comparing herself with her husband's new woman. She clearly remembers her "silky" young body and their mutual attraction, which unmasks Medea's sexuality despite her status as a mother. As Sydney O'Donnell claims, this moment suggests that "human life emerges not from self-sacrificing prudery and denial, but from desire and indulgence in mutual sexual pleasure" (93). For women, it does not matter who you are or what kind of person you are. If people ignore the complexity of femininity, motherhood can be simply defined within a patriarchal system as the bearing of children for a man and for society. Without any indignation, a chorus explains to Medea about "the law of life": "Our men will always go searching for new flesh, new breast and a fresh young mouth" (37). However, Medea cannot accept "the

law" men "created to use against women" and the double standards of patriarchy which explains why "men ripen with age" and "gain power," whereas women "wither" with age and are judged by their appearance and their female bodies (37). She shouts, "He's trained you to respect the law but he's made whatever he wants become the law! Appease him. Ask his pardon and then he may allow you to stay in your house" (37).

As most solo performers, Rame, who is the "medium for all of the voices," plays all the characters, including the abandoned wife, the selfish husband, and the everywoman of the chorus (Jones 98). Using the characters she directly communicates to the audience and conspiratorially shares the story, revealing the "personal as political" with each individual, delivering a direct call from the stage (Hanna xviii). With the intimacy of sharing space and stories, the language of Rame's play shapes Medea into an understandable woman, rather than an enigmatic and mystical character. Pointing out Rame's use of a dialect in *Medea*, which "produces a woman rooted in the earth, in reality," actress and translator Gillian Hanna, who played Medea in 1989, suggests that "each performer [who plays Medea] should use any regional accent with which she feels most comfortable and adapt the text using regional colloquialism as necessary" (xviii). In doing so, Medea's marginalized status as an outsider in culture and society can be highlighted. In addition, Medea could be recreated as a modern Medea, who can tell her motive and story in her own words, instead of the notoriously larger-than-life Greek Medea, who keeps insisting on masculine honor.

Medea wants to subvert "the law" invented to oppress women and then decides to kill her children: "I have to be alive for that and the only life that I have is my children!

The only life I can take is theirs," even though Medea realizes her children are "her flesh, her blood and her life" (39). Medea knows that children are used to subjugate women; in order to shatter Jason's "shameful laws," she must kill them (40). Although she knows that people will call her "cruel and evil, a wicked mother, a woman insane with pride," she thinks that it would be better to be remembered as "a wild beast than a goat" (38).

There are no major differences in the two versions, but in comparison to Wymark's adaptation (1981), Hanna's version (1991) seems to have more delicate, detailed descriptions for the characters' lines, particularly at the ending:

> Don't shudder when they [the children] scream: "Mother…have mercy…Mother!" And terrible howl will echo round the world: Monster…unnatural, cruel mother…she-devil! And through my tears I will whisper: (almost under her breath). Die, die, so your blood and bones can give birth to a new woman! (*At the top of her voice*) Die! You must give birth to a new w-o-o-ma-a-an!! (*the last syllable turns into a musical note which dies as the light fades*)." (Rame, translated by Hanna 67)

In this modern setting there is no *deus ex machina* that brings a dramatic resolution by the gods. Instead, at the beginning, the powerless and devastated housewife Medea, revealing part of her mythical identity, is transformed into a new and empowered woman. For the final speech of Medea, Lizbeth Goodman asserts that "the language is empty, does not say what the character needs to say" (Goodman xxiii). Her final speech and the echo of the musical note at the end seem to be mixed with a striking declaration and incantation. Frances Babbage remarks that this ending might be reminiscent of the popular slogan of

1970s Italian feminism protesters: "*Tremate, tremate, le streghe sono tornate* (Tremble, tremble, the witch is back)" (Babbage 71). In order to break the foundations of beliefs so deeply embedded, only an extraordinary act—which could perceived as transgressive and wields some kind of transformative power with which the mythical symbol of the witch is associated—is essential (71).

Rame's strong message is suitable for her one-act monologues, which allow the audience to investigate a variety of subject positions and their progress. In order to create the simultaneous representation of multiple alternatives, Rame's version of Medea uses the methods of fragmentation and montage (Babbage 54). Moreover, Medea's language, performed by Rame with a central Italian dialect, implies that Medea is not an icon of a monstrous mother but one particular woman suffering under the male oppression. Refusing the traditional concept of motherhood, Rame opens the door for a real distinction which provides a new reading of Medea's motives for killing her children. For Rame, Medea's murder is "as an act of conscience against a patriarchy that uses children as social blackmail, an excuse to 'mount' and 'milk' a woman" (Diamond 106). Medea's crime is not revenge for Jason's betrayal, but "the conscious choice of a woman who is aware of the way that her status as a mother is being used to silence her critique of the patriarchal system" (O'Donnell 92). In order to exist outside of a patriarchal order, the death of her children should signal the birth of a "new woman" (94).

Jackie Crossland's *Collateral Damage: The Tragedy of Medea* (1991)

Mothers and daughters/ Never stop moving,
Never shout your mouths full of honey and words[9]
—Singers, *Collateral Damage*

Crossland, who worked in Canadian alternative theatre, explains that she took the military term "collateral damage" from its use during the 1991 Persian Gulf War to highlight her concerns in the title of her play. Collateral damage means unintended damage resulting in civilian casualties during a military operation; the bombing of Iraq killed many such unintended targets: thousands of civilians, mostly powerless children, women, and old people, who had no control over the bombings or their cause. By referring to the tragic situation of the Gulf War with the use of the term "collateral damage," Crossland portrays the vulnerability of the women and children who cannot control or avoid cruel circumstances. Medea in *Collateral Damage* is not a mythical character but an ordinary woman who suffered the abuse of her father and brothers and who dreams of a new life. Rather than Medea's emotional utterance and revenge, the play focuses on Medea's life journey as a vulnerable young girl leaving her home of Kolchis with Jason to become an isolated wife in the new land of Corinth and later a foreign woman unfairly exiled and accused of the murder of her children.

The play was first performed at the Vancouver International Fringe Festival in September 1991, and subsequently produced at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre in

[9] Jackie Crossland, *Collateral Damage* 74.

December 1991; both productions were directed by Crossland herself. As an ensemble piece, stressing "a great deal of simultaneous overlapping action," Crossland suggests that all performers including musicians and singers should be on the stage throughout the play (12). In the first production, the main characters wear masks to play four members of the Chorus and other parts as well. Crossland specifically emphasizes that "the idea of CHORUS characters transforming into other roles is important," which implies that playing other roles might give the actors an opportunity to understand other perspectives in different positions (13). In order to depict Medea's life before she meets Jason, Medea's family is added as characters and the Chorus consists of four women, the Chorus leader's friends and family, who comment on Medea's story. Crossland sarcastically and symbolically re-creates the king of Corinth by naming him "Crayon," the name of the popular children's drawing implement, instead of "Creon," his name in the original play. The other fascinating character is Cleo, the Chorus leader, who provides "a consistent frame of reference" as the play's storyteller (9). Crossland, who worked in a storytelling company called Random Acts, believes that "telling stories is a familiar thing, like coming home. It is an empowering act because the listener has as many stories as the teller and they can easily trade places" (77). Through the play Cleo becomes a go-between, connecting past and present—Medea and the late-twentieth-century audience. It seems that Cleo is named after Clio, the muse of history and Clio's mother Mnemosyne is the personification of memory in Greek mythology. This naming might symbolically mean that Crossland's intention was to rewrite the distorted histories and memories originally written by men.

The set of Crossland's play is not an ancient Greek city, but an ordinary kitchen, Cleo's kitchen, a space that reveals a part of the routine of her daily life. Above the stage over the deck area, an inflatable globe of the world is hung, which reminds the audience of global issues closely effecting on people's lives. Pointing at this globe Cleo says, "I mark [the wars] on this globe with little red dots that you buy in packages in stationery stores. Hot spots we call them nowadays. Why red? Red is for hot. Red is for blood" (25). The little red spots on the globe illustrate the fact that the areas on the other side of the world where people are heatedly fighting and dying at war.

In contrast to its serious title, the tragic story is performed as a theatrical comedy with music, masks, and puppets. As Crossland states in the playwright's note, she considers the mundane setting of the kitchen "an important element in the whole, not … a dreary fact of existence" because people's lives are surrounded by the mundane and the point of the play is not "to glorify the heroes, the villains, or their victims" but to tell "a woman's story, with men presented as a woman sees them" (9). In the second production, the kitchen was filled with utensils, toys, chairs, a table, and a kitchen cabinet. The deck and the yard area were used for acting out Medea's story, and for the simple transformation of the Chorus, masks were stored in the kitchen cupboard (12). Throughout the play Cleo talks about her household and her experience working as domestic help, sympathizing with Medea's Maid: "Meals were a big ordeal. There was always a question of where you would eat" (55). She offers the Maid's different point of view as a person of a different social class.

Another similar example of the use a kitchen as a theatrical space is British

performance artist Bobby Baker's *Kitchen Show,* in which the literal domestic space is used as a stage space and the audience are guests witnessing her creation in Baker's own kitchen. As one scholar explains, "the kitchen space becomes a site for sharing, telling, demonstrating, enacting her fantasies of chaos and violence" (Ferris 175). A private and intimate space provides an inviting setting and gives the audience the opportunity to experience the subjective consciousness within this female community. Subverting the conventional image of the kitchen as a space always associated with women's domestic work, the kitchen-as-stage suggests that women separated from society and culture can reveal their personal and political stories and—with their guest-audience—turn the private into the public. Thus Cleo's kitchen also serves as a private site, but it is one in which issues such as war and peace take center stage.

In *Collateral Damage,* Medea does not have a magical power or a divine status from a special birth. However, a different kind of magic takes place: the ghost of Medea's mother appears on the stage as a large puppet figure visibly present throughout the play, sitting among the musicians, watching over the whole story and trying to guide her daughter, Medea, as well as Crayon's daughter, Princess. When Medea tries to escape from her father with Jason, Mother approaches Medea, tells that she was murdered by Medea's father, who hates women, and warns Medea "to never turn your back on your father" because "he will try to fuck you. That goes for your brother, too. He is learning his moves from his dad" (32). Like Medea's father and brother and like Crayon and Jason, the men's violence is handed down from generation to generation as a tool to control the household as well as the patriarchal society. As Cleo says, "one thing about

wars is that rape and pillage are always part of the picture… This story is always told to show how the enemy side is just a bunch of animals. And also, I think, to scare women so they don't step out of line while the men are away" (25). Jason, in order to be seen as a "regular guy," rapes women routinely as "a part of his job" and confidently believes, "if the terrified woman fights back, she sometimes can get away from him" (26).

Crossland portrays male characters in a comical and satirical mode. Jason is a low-class soldier possessed by a phallic fantasy, not a hero. When he first meets Medea, he worries, "you do not laugh at me even though I believe my penis is smaller than average size" (30). He does not think much and selfishly pursues objects like the Golden Fleece to satisfy his own desires. Even though Jason knows that the Golden Fleece is a valuable treasure for Medea's family, he kills Medea's brother after Medea leaves her home in order to give the fleece to Crayon as soon as he can without hesitation. Crayon, who already knows Jason's achievement in war, wants to use him to protect his country. Crayon gives Jason advice that reveals his male-centered ideology by defining women's inferior existence: "They're not the same as us. They're a different animal together. Best just play along with her" (51).

> Crayon: Confidentially, I could use man like you…fight off pirates…maybe consolidate a few territorial disputes…nothing I can't handle myself, you understand, but hey, there's a job to do and a man for the job. I say let's go…what do you say?
>
> Jason: I don't quite follow you, big guy.
>
> Crayon: You got a family coming…

Jason: Yeah…

Crayon: You scratch my back. I scratch yours.

Jason: Right. (…)

Crayon: Fight fight fight, right?

Jason: Right.

Jason and Crayon: One, two three four. Let's have a thumb war. Hug, kiss, get back, fight.

Crayon: Deal?

Jason: Deal. (52)

Although in the scene Crayon offers a job to Jason, their dialogue reveals their shallow personalities are comically simple and infantile. Expressing their intimate relationship to each other, Jason calls Crayon by familiar and fond nicknames: "a pretty big hero-dig" (51) and "a big-buddy-king-guy" (51). The way they act is closer to the behaviors of immature children who want to be seen as heroes than as adults. But it also suggests the kind of male camaraderie prevalent amongst male athletes. They only think about what they want and how others perceive them without consideration for others. Despite his male-buddy behavior, Jason keeps his homosexual relationship with the cabin boy a secret and denies Medea's suspicion about it.

It is difficult to find the larger than life and daring Medea of Euripides' play in Crossland's version. Just an ordinary oppressed woman, Medea does not have any power to fight back nor is she capable of expressing murderous rage. As the Maid says, "Medea was a woman more or less like any other who depend[ed] on a man and got no thanks for

it" (74). Medea, as a princess of Colchis, has been taught to "comfort" people but not to take care of herself and naively believes that, as people say, "a woman can't expect much," even though she already notices that Jason "pays more attention to his muscles than conversation" with her (31). Although she was abused by her father and brother, she does not take action before she meets Jason and might not have escaped from her father if Jason had not asked her to leave with him. Even when she got Crayon's message ordering Medea's exile from Corinth, she kept making excuses for Jason, defending him: "he would go along with the king's plans. Maybe without realizing what it meant" (68).

Medea is repeatedly forced into exile by the men who take advantage of her status as a woman and outsider, as well as her weak, naïve personality. Unlike Euripides' script, in Crossland's play Jason murders Medea's brother, not Medea, as in Euripides' play. But when Medea leaves Colchis with Jason, her furious father fabricates a story about Medea: "Medea cast Jason under a spell, because she is a witch. She killed her own brother and dismembered the body and threw the pieces out of the back of chariot to confuse pursuers" (36). Her father lies about the murder of his son as a way to maintain his reputation as a king and to seek revenge against Medea, who betrayed him for another man and escaped from him. It is interesting that Medea's father avenges Medea instead of Jason, his son's murderer. This suggests, perhaps, that the king of Colchis' reaction against his daughter's betrayal is not a personal and familiar matter but a transgression that threatens the established patriarchal order of society.

Medea's father is not the only person to contribute to Medea's notoriety. As Medea disappears with her children, the cabin boy, who is jealous of Medea because he

loves Jason, also makes up a story about Medea: "she bewitched him by growing larger than normal size and hypnotizing him with a supernatural stare" (45-46). The cabin boy uses Medea's position of otherness against her, because her otherness—her outsider status—makes her an easy object of people's curiosity and opens her to potential attacks. People do not care whether the cabin boy's story is true, and they are not interested in finding out the woman's side of the story. Instead, they have questions like, "what has been done to her to make her so full of rage that she could do such a thing?" or "what really happened to her mother?" (36). They accuse Medea and decide to believe Medea's father, a powerful man and a male authority figure. Since her mother was dead, Medea was isolated from people and was wearing "dead rats on her head" to make her appearance ugly so that she would distract people's attention away from her. It might be her way to protect herself, but it seems very odd to others. When Medea arrives at Corinth, "a crowd of curious onlookers" wants to see Medea because for them she is not civilized and is "the Greek hero's witch who has a green thumb" (46). People hear that Medea is a witch, a crazy and merciless woman, and a monster, all of which are rumors circulated by the men around her who want to manipulate her and control the narrative.

In *Collateral Damage*, Medea does not demonstrate violence or rebellion and does not murder her children. In spite of that, in the end, people still talk about her, saying "she killed the king's daughter with poison and murdered her own children" (73). In her book *Medea's Daughters: Performing the Woman Who Kills*, Jennifer Jones claims that in contemporary media representations, in contrast to the criminal cases of men who killed their wives, mistress, or daughters, women who are charged with murder

receive more public attention and are dramatically exaggerated because their crimes make them appear to "threaten the institutions of marriage, motherhood, and filial duty" (xiii). After all, the truth is that Medea's story has been fabricated by men she trusted and, even though Medea's children, living with Maid somewhere else, never met their mother, Medea is accused of being her own children's murderer and is "living to be an old woman"(73).

The female character Princess also has a tragic fate, but she is a brave and triumphant character who neither ignores problems nor behaves passively like her mother, Queen. Unfortunately both mothers in the play, Princess' mother and Medea's mother, fail to protect their daughters. Queen, neglecting her situation, adapts to her privileged life in the patriarchal system and the ghost of Medea's mother cannot guide her daughter when Medea needs her mother's help. Calling her "my princess, the darling of my heart, my baby girl," Crayon keeps reminding her that "you were born Princess and that's who you are…you can't get away from it by changing your name" (60). Despite her patriarchal education and the privileges she would receive as royalty, Princess does not want to "start making babies to consolidate [her father's] position" and refuses to marry Jason. Even though she makes herself look ugly, "cover[ing] herself with desiccated field rats" (70) as a way to express her resistance to social norms, Crayon locks her in the dungeon and forces her to marry Jason (64). For the confined and isolated Princess, there is no way to fight back against the patriarchal order, except by remaining silent. In the name of marriage Jason rapes Princess, but Princess executes her plan, remembering the advice of Mother: "tell them nothing. Then strike when they least

expect it. That's the law of the land" (71). As a rejection of the institution of marriage in patriarchal society, she sets fire to the marriage bed, gets help from the women's temple, and leaves to find her own life. It is her way to fight back against her father and Jason, and to prove, as Cleo says, that women "*can* get away from" them (26).

In order to resist the dominance of the patriarchal world, Medea and Princess both seek help in the women's temple, where "[women] go when things get tough" (49). When a pregnant Medea first arrives at Corinth, wandering the streets, she goes to the women's temple, and although Medea cannot speak their language, she can communicate with only few words, so the woman let her stay there to rest. Because the women at the temple are also struggling under male oppression, they also need a place for the heart of women's solidarity to get consolation and assistance, and they can understand what Medea has been through. However, the male-dominated society does not allow women to be together and burns down the temple because these men believe that the women's community could pose a threat to them.

The characters' lives do not have heroic or spectacular endings involving divine intervention: Jason dies in an accident involving a rotting ship, Crayon dies from septic shock from a sword wound, and Maid raises Medea's children, while Medea lives "lonely without her children" (73). They live and die just like other, ordinary people. The play shows how women's stories are often neglected by historians or fabricated by men and suggests that women dream they are larger than life, but in reality they are smaller than others. The play questions the meaning of the title *Collateral Damage*: what would be incidental damage here? Or after all, might women be the main target? Men, perpetrators

of war, enter combat armed with weapons, while women and children are exposed vulnerably without any protection. Crossland shows that this kind of tragedy "happens every day" (74) to any women under male oppression: without committing any wrongs, Medea was separated from her children, forced into exile to live alone, missing her children, to be marked as a child murderer forever. Instead of saving Medea from her miserable circumstances by divine intervention, the Princess escapes from male authority and seems like she might start new life as a strong woman, and Medea's children survive with Maid and remember their mother's struggles and pains. Implying a new future for the next generation different from their mother's, Crossland's message is sung by Medea's Mother commands, "Mothers, make your daughters strong. That's all I've got to say" (74).

Deborah Porter's *No More Medea* (1990)

The monster walks the street-and in the end is just a woman. A survivor.[10]

—Medea, *No More Medea*

While *Collateral Damage* begins with the moment before Medea meets Jason, when she is suffering from abuse by her father and brother in Colchis, Deborah Porter's *No More Medea* mainly portrays Medea's life after she murders her children. Stigmatized as her children's murderer, Medea is sent to a wasteland and meets another mythological figure, The Virgin Mary. In this dark and barren place, they become friends and through debates and a trip to Earth, they try to figure out their real selves rather than the fabricated identities they have lived with their whole lives. Porter does not specifically describe the stage setting, but it seems to require a minimal setting and the sound effects of wind and thunder, which are used for the scene changes and to indicate the mood of a desolated wasteland. A screen needs to be installed above the stage because a video segment projected between the scenes portrays a young woman's story.

The play begins with a statue Pan/dora coming to life and speaking an ode about Medea's story: "All is well—till Jason, tiring of his foreign mate. Forsakes her to marry the daughter of the Corinthian king. Alone, cast off, this woman of great powers (Some say Black Magic) (*thunder*) Ponders her imminent exile" (94). In Greek mythology Pandora is the first human woman created by gods, who had the beauty and cunning that men think women should have. In fact in the Hesiodic myth, Pandora can be perceived as

[10] Deborah Porter, *No More Medea*:119.

the first bad wife who brought disaster to her husband and the world: Pandora cannot hold her curiosity so she opens a jar which Zeus gave to humanity in order to punish them for Prometheus' stolen gift of fire and releases all the evils of humanity. Pandora, who was supposed to be the perfect product of the gods, eventually turns into an imprudent woman through the gods' scheme. The beginning with Pandora's speech implies that it is the women's turn to speak out about their stories rather than being fabricated by men's stories about them.

Following this surreal scene, Porter stages the fighting between Jason and Medea. Showing a patriarchal dichotomy of unenlightened women and civilized men, Jason claims that he "rescued" uncivilized Medea from a "barbaric land," an "uncharted shore," (97-98) and criticizes her, saying that she was "overcome with passion" and "acted without thinking" (96). Jason's lines are similar to modern versions of Euripides' text but in modern language: "All men know that reason rules best," and "[i]t's a cruel trick of nature that man alone cannot bestow the gift of life!" (96). Medea creates her plan to kill their children and shouts, commenting on her "role" as an inescapable archetype, an unchangeable mythic image, "Many women take this kind of treatment as their due and are forced to, in a world that hates our sex…. Now, History: Come. Plot my course. I'll be the monster for your books and plays. So be it. Seal my fate" (99).

The next scene moves to The Place of Battered Legends, "where an exclusive collection of saints and sinners" reside, according to Medea's explanation (101). Here Medea encounters the Virgin Mary, who is exactly the opposite image of Medea. Medea is called a "Harpie, harridan, most cruel and unnatural mother, witch, virago, she-wolf"

(112), whereas Mary is described as Jesus's mother: a "particularly sanguine legacy, Immaculate conception, Virgin birth" (116). Medea and Mary do not understand why they become a pair, but this binary of women with opposite reputations provokes various imaginative possibilities. Besides the fact that both women are icons from history, they both tragically lost their children and watched their murders, for Mary as a witness at the foot of the cross and for Medea as the actual murderer of her children. Medea assumes that their iconic images are fabricated by male mythmakers, saying, "They'll keep dredging your name up whenever possible. They use your name and your story to suit their own ends…. without any thought to what it puts us through" (103). It is not easy for them to escape from their images, frozen through centuries and recycled over and over again.

After their exploratory trip on Earth, they compare what they bought from the shopping mall. While Mary buys a blue veil for herself, Medea acquires a sword with an ornate belt. They are accustomed to the symbolic objects and at the same time, they are performing their expected roles with those accessories. Medea admits, "I'm a victim of Fate, the Gods and Euripides.... That was the myth. It wasn't me…. All I am is what people choose to see: Medea the Murderer" (112, 114, 116). They realize that even though they both want to escape from the myth, but unconsciously, as Mary says, Medea "embraces" the myth and "feeds on herself" (116). Mary must also contend with her mythical status: "To see reality swallowed into myth, myth into canonical law, law into subjugation. My icon on the standards of Crusaders, my image burned into mortified flesh at the Inquisition. My name the shackles that bind a thousand, million, countless

women" (112). Mary received glory and honor from people because of her image of purity and goodness, but the play questions this image and shows that her true personality and thoughts have been ignored, erased from historical accounts. She is trapped in her role as "man's perfect creation" (112).

In addition to shopping, Mary and Medea enjoy movies and talk about one particular scene from *Sophie's Choice*[11], a 1982 American film that deals with the story of a Polish immigrant. In the Auschwitz concentration camp, Sophie must choose between her son and her daughter; she can save only one child. Medea and Mary easily, aloofly, and objectively analyze what Sophie did wrong, judging her and arguing about what she should have done. Medea says, "People find themselves in a horrific situation. Do what you have to do and get over it" (109). Mary criticizes Sophie's behavior, saying, "Sophie was an opportunist and it backfired on her" (110). To prove Mary's claim, they decided to re-enact the crucial scene from *Sophie's Choice*. When Mary plays Sophie, she chooses her son to live, and Medea shouts "Murderer! Unnatural mother!" as if she were waiting for this moment, as if she had not been in that situation herself. Medea recalls that she, like Sophie, was forced to make an impossible choice (110). In Sophie's shoes, Mary finally realizes Sophie's suffering as a mother who allowed her daughter to be killed by choosing her son in the unfair system. Yet, this scene is warped by the question about why Sophie commits suicide. While Mary believes that "the weight of all that guilt" makes Sophie kill herself, Medea does not agree because Medea knows that

[11] *Sophie's Choice* (1982), directed by Alan J. Pakula, is an American film based on the novel of the same name by William Styron. Actress Meryl Streep, who played the role of Sophie, a Polish immigrant, received the Academy Award for Best Actress. Actor Kevin Kline played Sophie's unstable lover, Nathan Landau, and Peter MacNicol played Stingo, a young writer and the narrator of the movie.

there is a harsher circumstance than a guilty feeling, people's harsh judgments and criticisms (111).

The reenactment of *Sophie's Choice*, serving as a kind of feminist consciousness-raising session, helps Medea and Mary realize their personal and social responsibility in society. Mary realizes that she herself was infatuated by her own myth, the "impossible tyrant placed on a pillar of your suffering" (112). Mary lets Medea explain her past and her personal memories. Fulfilling audience expectations, Medea perpetuates her myth as she did before by killing her children, bemoaning their death, and pitying herself. During this reenactment Mary and Medea both find out that their pasts are not just their memories or experiences but their present and future, which is and will continue to be colonized by male mythmakers. Mary reminds Medea that she called herself "a victim of circumstance" and argues against the notion, telling her, "you are a woman, not a political statement" (116). The image of Medea has certainly been used as a way to discuss gender politics. However, Medea and her life are not merely political statements. As Mary tells her, she is just herself, a real woman, and an everywoman.

When sound and lights change, another woman without a name or any spoken lines appears on the video screen. This young woman could be Medea's alter ego, an everywoman, or she could be a ghost from women's history. Her video segments are inserted between the scenes and are not dramatic incidents, nor do they contain a clear storyline. The audience watches her every move as if they are voyeurs, and the camera zooms in to a close-up of her face and body. The audience does not know if the woman is unaware of being observed or if she is trying to ignore the public gaze or if she clearly

recognizes the audience's gaze. In an intimate place, she prepares her bath and then in the next segment, fully dressed, she lies at the bottom of the bathtub filled with water. After the scene in which Medea suffers from the memories of her painful past in which she killed her children, the woman in the video bleeds, and the water in the tub turns red, as if Medea's inner agony and sorrow were being expressed through the anonymous woman's actions.

At the end, Medea states, "Medea is around us everywhere. The monster walks the street—and in the end is just a woman. A survivor" (119). At the moment Medea realizes who she is now—a woman, naked and gleaming—the woman in the video does not allow the audience to watch her anymore. Instead, she looks straight at the camera as if she is not scared of anything, faces the reality she cannot avoid, tries to see who is watching her, and lets the world see the real her, unlike Medusa trapped in the myth, who people did not want to see. In *The Medusa Reader* Teresa De Lauretis cites Hélène Cixous, who says, "You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she's not deadly. She's beautiful and she's laughing" (199). De Lauretis claims that the narrative role of women is confined by classical myth:

> The problem is that to look at the Medusa "straight on" is not a simple matter, for women or for men; the whole question of representation is precisely there. A politics of the unconscious cannot ignore the real, historical, and material complicities, even as it must dare theoretical utopias. (199)

At the end, Mary throws her veil away and Medea throws her sword into a suitcase, locking the case. As De Lauretis explains, to look at the myth "straight on" is not an easy path. For Mary and Medea, it is hard to escape from their extreme mythic images, and for readers and audiences it is not easy to resist taking up unconscious prejudices against these female characters.

Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats* (1998)

I watched her walk away from me across the Bog of Cats.
And across the Bog of Cats I'll watch her return[12]
—Hester, *By the Bog of Cats*

In *By the Bog of Cats*, Irish playwright, Marina Carr, portrays archetypal vengefulness and violence and examines women's subjectivity using mystical and supernatural elements in Irish rural midlands life. Women characters created by previous generations of Irish playwrights are commonly depicted as mother figures or as wild and mysterious parts of nature. Although Carr's female characters are often associated with nature, there are certain traits that set them apart from traditional depictions of women in Irish plays. As Brian Singleton points out, in the previous generation, Irish women were portrayed as "the essentialized icon and mythical women by the early nation's male imagination" (186). However, contemporary playwrights, including Carr, create "women who reject male authority, seek new lives beyond the structures of the family unit, and refuse to be

[12] Marina Carr, *By the Bog of Cats*: 43.

haunted by the sick, dying and dead patriarchs in their lives who left traumatized the women of the previous generation" (Singleton 186). Carr, who acknowledges the impact of the classical Greek canon on her work, explains, "I love the whole Greek idea of tragedy, that it's all uncontrollable and that there's a destiny. It's about the journey, rather than the event itself… There's a discovery in it." Using *Medea* as her model for her vision of Irish female violence, Carr's play pushes her notion of 'discovery' to new depths.

Carr's protagonist, traveler Hester Swane, who waits for her disappeared mother, finds out that her daughter's father and former lover, Carthage, is going to marry a daughter of the wealthy landowner. Moreover, even though Hester still waits for him return to her, Carthage plans to evict Hester, to move his new bride into Hester's house, and to take custody of their daughter Josie. Furious and hurt, Hester tries find a way to take revenge on him. As the plot moves forward, this play becomes the myth of *Medea* reframed by an Irish place and sensibility, revealing the female protagonist's emotions of passion, love, and desire for revenge. In contrast to the Greek version, in which Medea's fate is determined by a man, Hester attempts to find her own destiny. Carr's heroine symbolically refuses the social order of a patriarchal structure by living in an alternate space, the bog, which blurs the distinctions between real and surreal, the past and the present, substance and absence. Hester's destiny emerges in her struggle to plot her revenge against Carthage, in order to remain in her home by the bog.

Carr intentionally creates Hester's doubly marginalized status, explaining in an interview, "I chose to make her a traveler because travelers are our national outsiders,

aren't they?" (Battersby 15). Hester's suffering is caused by her status as a woman, an outsider, and others' perception of her as a weak-minded person. Anne F. O'Reilly explains women's emotional restrictions in Irish society: "Women are certainly permitted to express emotions relating to compassion, tenderness, nurturing but not so readily allowed to express anger, discontent, frustration and rage" (O'Reilly 151-2). From the moment Hester expresses her feelings as an abandoned woman, the moment she refuses to leave the bog, as her husband demands, and the moment she dreams of her vengeance, the whole situation is transformed into turmoil and chaos for the community. However, this chaos is not new to her and already existed well before she opens her mouth. When her husband's mother, Mrs. Kilbride, proudly insists that she has always lived by rules, Hester asks her, "What rules are they? Teach them to me and I'll live by them" (40). For Hester, the rules she does not follow are themselves a form of chaos in which she cannot live, so she seeks to create her own sense of order. Her intention to subvert existing rules poses a danger for her and for the community.

Even though the definition of a bog is "an area having a wet, spongy, acidic substrate composed chiefly of sphagnum moss and peat," in the play it has a unique characteristic that does not even have a clear geographic definition. The bog has been used as a metaphor and symbol of the Irish psyche in its literature. Irish poet Seamus Heaney, who often uses its imagery, offers a sense of the bog and its geographical understanding:

> Quagmire, swampland, morass:
>
> the slime kingdoms,

domains of the cold-blooded,

of mud pads and dirtied eggs.

But bog

meaning soft,

the fall of windless rain,

pupil of amber. (Heaney, *North*)

In an interview Heaney describes a bog as "a sort of Jungian as well as a geological memory-bank" and as "a dark casket where we have found many of the clues to our past and to our cultural identity" (Broadbridge). In Carr's play, the bog functions as the physical place of Hester's home as well as her psychological space, similar to the public-private split in Greek theatre. As male is always associated with the outside world, *polis*, and female is confined in the inside private place, *oikos*, Hester stays in a bog, her private territory. When Hester begs her husband Carthage to stay in the bog, she expresses her feelings as if she and the bog were one, "I know every barrow and rivulet and bog hole of its nine square mile. I know where the best bog rosemary grows and the sweetest wild bog rue. I could lead yees around the Bog of Cats in me sleep" (41). Enrica Cerquoni points out that the bog is a place isolated from the community that has meaning for Hester: "these locations are both real and imagined, present and absent, familiar and unfamiliar, home and not-home" (175). Overlapping with the visual image of dark chaos, the bog provides a tumultuous image of Hester's consciousness.

The main reason Hester cannot leave the bog is that she has to wait for her mother. Waiting for her mother's return, Hester says, "I watched her walk away from me

across the Bog of Cats. And across the Bog of Cats I'll watch her return" (43). Melissa Sihra interprets Hester's mother, Josie Swane, as a figure who stands for the god who does not return and does not respond to Hester's crying and screaming but who is nevertheless her only hope. However, Hester's feeling for her mother is not just simply longing but an obsessive attachment that develops into anger. Hester expresses her furious rage with evocative language: "Spit in her face, I'd box the jaws off of her, I'd go after her with a knife, I'd make her squeal like a cornered badger" (63). The reason Hester killed her brother seems to be because of his money but underneath, there is jealousy for her mother's love for her brother and a desire for revenge. Their mother also abandoned Hester's brother, yet Hester believes that he spent more time with his mother than her and this perception fuels her rage. She is abandoned again by her husband; her guilty feelings about the murder of her brother made her husband's decision to leave her even more painful. She feels hurt and angry. Despite the extremity of her suffering, the dictates of her community demand her to be silent, passive, and accepting of her fate. Anne F. O'Reilly insists, "Bringing this level of unconscious anger to consciousness and unleashing it in violent destructive behavior is not at all acceptable to the status quo, especially when it is performed by a woman" (156-7). Hester's verbal threats and abuse combined with her refusal of the community's adherence to patriarchal orders but has the temerity to claim her own territory and create her own rules.

Waiting for her mother, Hester prepares a ritual that could give peace and order to her and her community. Her neighbor Monica says, "You up on forty, Hester and still dreamin' of storybook endin's, still whingin' for your Mam" (65). This ritual is not part

of Hester's normal daily rituals, which involve her mother or her community. Instead, it is a personal rite of passage wherein she gives up being a wanderer and creates new meaning and order in her life. Certainly she implies that she is going to choose a different way than Big Josie Swane: "Was it somethin' I done on her? I was seven, same age as me daughter Josie, seven, and there isn't anythin' in this wide world Josie could do that'd make me walk away from her" (60). As an abandoned child, Hester's guilt, hatred, and love cause her difficulty, but so does her inherent damnation by Josie Swane, who was different from others, so she was not accepted by them, which makes Hester unable to adjust to the community. Hester confesses her dark side: "And yes, there's things about me yees never understood and makes yees afraid and yees are right for other things goes through my veins besides blood that I've fought so hard to keep wraps on" (55). Realizing her identity as the outsider and her destiny as a person who cannot be included in her community, she decides to subvert the authority of the community that constrains her emotions, behavior, and even her place to live. This ritual embodies the struggles of her situation and also the processes of discovering her past, present, and future.

The only person who acknowledges Hester's past, present, and future is Catwoman, the guardian of the bog, who can be compared to Tiresias, the soothsayer in *Oedipus Rex*, and Cassandra in *Trojan Women*. Although they both have inner vision and can predict the future, unlike Tiresias, who was considered to be a wise man and receives respect from his community, Cassandra was pointed out by people for her insanity. No one believed her and people ignored her warnings about Troy's collapse and the death of Agamemnon. Catwoman's uncanny and grotesque quality also cannot find favor with

people; on the contrary, people are afraid of her ability and at the same time consider her contemptible. She wears a coat of cat fur, has catlike eyes and paws, and has mouse fur stuck between her teeth, which symbolizes her primitive and transformative status that allows her to communicate between the spirit and human world, as a shaman does. Although the community invites her to a wedding because if they do not, they believe they will have bad luck, Catwoman keeps her distance from the center of the community. Remaining in the marginalized space of the bog allows her to be the eccentric instead of conforming to the community's standards.

At the wedding, Catwoman and Father Willow, who stand for two opposing religious traditions, pagan and Catholic, sit together. By contrasting the two characters of Catwoman and Father Willow, Carr mocks the religious authority of the patriarchal community. While the blind woman prophet Catwoman can heal people with herbs as well as predict the future, Father Willow is exposed as a hypocrite when he reveals that he is wearing his pajamas under the holy ecclesiastical uniform while he flirts with Catwoman. Father Willow complains about people's distrust of his authority: "They've never listened to me, sure they even lie in the confession box. Ya know what I do? I wear earplugs" (42). Religious authority is no longer respected or trusted by this community. Instead, people recognize the existence of the mysterious Catwoman and believe in her potency, despite not wanting to acknowledge it.

Carr's play opens with a striking image: "Hester Swane trails the corpse of a black swan after her, leaving a trail of blood in the snow" (7). The contrast of colors, red blood and a dead black swan in white snow, paints a violent image on the stage and

portends the tragic ending. Black swans, known for cursing those who interfere with them with bad luck, serve as a parallel of Hester's threatening character. Mother Josie named Hester after a swan, and like Catwoman, Hester also reveals her savage and hybrid nature, which lies somewhere between a human being and an animal. Catwoman recalls a memory where Hester's relationship with the black swan is revealed: "Sure the night ya were born she took ya over to the black swan's lair, auld Black Wing ya've just buried there, and laid ya in the nest alongside of her" (14). Moreover, Hester's inherent dark side and her image as a scapegoat are symbolized in the figure of the black swan.

Hester's revenge against Carthage begins when she appears on the stage in her burned and muddied wedding dress. It is the wedding day of Carthage and Caroline, and the community is supposed to celebrate their marriage, but Hester attends their wedding wearing her damaged wedding dress. Her ragged wedding dress suggests that she mocks the patriarchal wedding ceremony and furthermore, the social system and rules of the community. In this desecrated gown, she prepares her own ritual, burning all the animals and the farm. For Hester, a proper sacrifice is the farm she shared with Carthage, which is a symbol of their sin, the murder of Hester's brother whose money built the farm. The flames from the burning farm seem horrifying, but at the same time, it creates a festive spectacle. From Hester's perspective, this kind of emotional explosion and destructive behavior provides a sense of purification and creates a feeling of peace while also restoring as nature's harmony. On the other hand, from a conventional perspective, Hester's actions and anger are shocking to the audience and disrupt their psychological involvement. About her behavior, she insists, "Only an auld house, it should never have

been built in the first place. Let the bog have it back. In a year or so, it'll be covered in gorse and furze, a tree'll grow out through the roof, maybe a big bog oak. I never liked that house anyway" (63).

While the burning of the farm acts as a sacrifice to the patriarchal community, Hester herself also becomes a scapegoat for her ritual, as does her daughter, Josie, who wears a white Communion dress. Although Hester acknowledges that her ritual of burning will end in her exile, she decides to take Josie with her into exile because Hester has suffered her own mother's absence and knows how difficult it is to grow up without a mother. Additionally, Hester recognizes that her daughter Josie would be rejected by the community, much like Hester were displaced and suffered as a result of her mother's abandonment. The scene in which she kills Josie does not mean to be disturbing or disruptive but is poetically staged in "gently, protective, motherly terms" (Bourke 141). Killing a daughter is surely judged as morally inappropriate behavior or some kind of hysteria. However, this violence is based on Hester's belief that her exile is not to end Josie's life but to start another life together. Hester implies that she will leave this world, but she will stay in the bog: "You won't forget me now, Carthage, and when all of this is over or half remembered and ya think ya've almost forgotten me again, take a walk along the Bog of Cats and wait for a purlin' wind through your hair or a soft breath be your ear or a rustle behind ya. That'll be me and Josie ghostin' ya" (80). Bernadette Bourke explains the meaning of Hester's suicide: "Hester's death at the end of the play is the carnivalesque enactment of its opposite, representing renewal in a return to the great nurturing womb of nature, giver of life, death and continuity" (Bourke 139).

At the play's end Hester confronts the Ghost Fancier, the otherworldly messenger, who she does not recognize at first. Dancing with him, a possible dance of death, and calling out for her mother, her ritual is now complete. Carr presents a *deus ex machina* differently than the original play's *deus ex machina*, in which Medea is saved by a god: Hester dies and her lifeless body conveys the message of how a powerless female presence can be the strongest object on the stage. As Hester's neighbor Monica says, reminiscent of the black swan at the beginning of the play: "She's cut her heart out—it's layin' there on top of her chest like some dark featured bird" (61). This imagery creates the cyclical pattern of the play, which is connected with Hester's salvation both in this life and in the life to come.

In this play, Hester's journey to find her peace and truth has certain ritual elements charged with meaning: chaos and suffering as a woman and traveler, the wait for her mother and her lover, the burning of all the property she shares with her lover, and her offering of herself as a scapegoat. Hester's subversive ritual against patriarchal society implies her struggle as well as her recognition of the power of motherhood and the many women who suffer under the restrictions of male authority. Instead of repeating the Greek play *Medea*, Carr creates a deep emotional explosion on the stage and attempts a psychological attack on the audience by using languages, symbols, and visual images. Katherine H. Burkman explains Carr's intentions: "The most significant modern playwrights still deal with the sacrificial rites that have traditionally promised renewal both outside and inside theatre" (17). With strong images, violent actions, and destructive emotional bursts, Carr suggests that women's rituals, which subvert traditional rituals in

patriarchal society and reveal the potency of female action, happen inside the theatre as well as outside.

Subverting traditional narrative structures, women playwrights have used various strategies to portray female characters and their stories. Without any restrictions, women playwrights utilize the theatrical space for their diverse imaginations. Whereas Carr follows the relationship of the inside domain (feminine) to the outside world (masculine) in Greek theatre, by presenting Hester's own territory of the bog, Crossland's *Collateral Damage* creates the kitchen as the set, turning private space into public sphere and implying that the slogan "the personal is political" is still effective. Occupying the whole stage, Rame's Medea declares her right to refuse patriarchal demands through the New Woman's birth.

One of the interesting traits of these revisions of *Medea* is the humor used by the characters and language. In spite of discomfort with the theme of infanticide and Medea's emotionally distraught personality, women playwrights do not always deal with the story with a heavy or serious tone. Depending on the staging of the play, it is questionable whether the audience will find humor in Carr's play even though she intended it: "I wouldn't dream of attempting to write a comedy. I know it would be a disaster. But I do think my plays are funny, that they find the humor in the tragic. I am quite surprised when critics only see the doom and gloom" (Carr qtd. in Garner). Crayon and Jason's farcical characterization and childish dialogue in Crossland's version and the comical portrayal of Mary and Medea and their witty debates in Porter's version offer new

perspectives on the interpretation of this tragedy. Tragedy is usually the consequence of a fatal lack of self-knowledge, yet the versions of Medea by these four characters reveal a fatal *excess* of self-knowledge. They have always known that they would kill and be killed under male authority. Recreating Euripides' tragedy *Medea* as comedic, women playwrights challenge the genre of tragedy itself, which reflects, questions, and often upholds the ideology of male-dominated society.

Instead of underscoring the negative aspects of female infanticide, these playwrights interpret the act in various ways, implying that it is not a private matter but instead a social and political concern and suggest that men and the society should share blame and responsibility as well. In these revisions Medea is not scared to be a bad woman and suggests that all women should speak for themselves rather than relying on male characters to speak for them. Moreover, without any divine intervention, the playwrights stage their own *deus ex machina,* delivering the message that each of us has Medea in us: woman, mother, wife, and outsider.

Chapter 3: The Trojan Women

Giving Voice to the Enemy

Numerous authors of ancient literature take up one of the world's oldest, most well known conflicts: the Trojan War. As a tragic commentary on the inhumanity of war, Euripides' *The Trojan Women* has long been recognized for its critique of and protest against war. This tale continues to inspire people because war used as a strategy to achieve human selfishness continues to threaten people's lives and cause suffering and sorrow. Moreover, the manifestation of colonial imperialism in the play still strongly appeals to people.

In fact, stories of wars often fascinate people who are establishing a history of their own. In the *Iliad*, Homer illustrates admirable heroes and their celebration of winning a war, which affirms "a man's value and identity" (McDonald 84). The Greeks built their identity based on democratic ideals and created a version of history that stressed how they rebelled against the tyranny of their enemies by conquering them and then establishing their own civilized society. When Euripides' *The Trojan Women* was performed in the spring of 415 B.C., Athens had been struggling for sixteen years with the Peloponnesian War and was attempting to gain power over Sparta. Athens' hostilities led to their invasion of the neighboring island of Melos, and in this process, the Melians

surrendered and the Athenians massacred the men and enslaved their women and children. Moreover, briefly before the annual theatre festival began, an Athenian military expedition to Sicily was the center of debate in the Senate, and a majority of Athenians agreed to send ten thousand men to accompany the Greek fleet. As a result of the expedition, Sicily defeated Athens, and Athens lost thousands of soldiers and over two hundreds ships, which accounted for Athenians' painful struggles for another decade.

Reflecting the Greeks' circumstances, a number of Greek classical plays thematically dealt with war: Aeschylus portrayed their enemies in a sympathetic way in *The Persians* (472 BC) and described the cruelty of war by portraying two brothers' tragic fight in *Seven Against Thebes* (467 BC). Aeschylus' plays depicted traditional values for honor in war, yet it seems that he did not consider the price and he was "willing to pay that price in pursuit of a cause that he felt deserved his loyalty" (McDonald, *War* 90). Sophocles' *Ajax* (circa 450-430 BC) illustrated the renowned hero Ajax and celebrated war and honor. In his other war play *Philoctetes* (409 BC) with all male characters, he questioned the different moralities of each man by contrasting two characters: the truthful Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, and the practical Odysseus, who "claims that the end justifies the means" (93). Sophocles, a respected warrior himself, speculated how they achieved their victories but paid little attention to the cost of war. His plays did not fully depict war atrocities involving rape and the slaughter of captives cruelly committed by both sides. Rather, they stressed vengeance, which explains a sense of Greek honor and justice for the characters themselves and their actions so that forgiveness cannot be permitted and the enemy must pay.

Using Women's Voices

In contrast to Aeschylus and Sophocles' plays, Euripides's *The Trojan Women* focuses on the enemy's view, particularly the fallen Trojan women attacked by the Athenians. In the prologue, lamenting Troy's fall and the dead heroes of Troy, the gods Poseidon and Athena make a pact to cause the Greeks sorrow on their voyages home from their long war. The next scene begins with Hecuba, queen of Troy, and the Chorus, the women of Troy who lost their men and their homes, lamenting their fate. The Greek herald Talthybius, the only male character who appears on the stage, delivers the news that Hecuba has been assigned to Odysseus as a slave, Hecuba's daughter Cassandra will leave as Agamemnon's concubine, and Hecuba's other daughter Polyxena will be an attendant at Achilles' tomb. Yet, later, Andromache, Hector's widow, tells the truth that Polyxena' has been killed as a sacrifice and finds out from Talthybius that Odysseus has decided to kill her infant son Astyanax, in order to eliminate the line of the great Trojan hero, Hector. As Talthybius brings the broken body of Astyanax, Hecuba laments her grandson's tragic death. At the end, Hecuba and the women of Troy get onto the Greek ship and watch Troy—their city, their home—burn.

As many of the Greek tragedies include legal trials or debates featuring an *agon*, or verbal contest, *The Trojan Women* presents this typical scene of Greek tragedy: the four main characters Hecuba, Cassandra, Andromache, and Helen come on stage to debate a woman's role in a good marriage. In each case, according to their position, they appeal to what their suffering has been and what part each has played and will play in the

continuing saga of the families of Greece and Troy (Goldhill 145). When Helen's husband Menelaus arrives at Troy, he explains that he started the war not because he loved Helen but because wanted to take revenge on Paris, who has fallen in love with Helen. Menelaus said he planned to kill Helen. During this scene the debate between Helen and Hecuba is structured in formal terms, with Menelaus as judge. Using the specific language of debate, Helen asks, "what decisions have the Greeks and you arrived at…?" (899-900. *The Trojan Women,* trans. Gilbert Murray). When she hears of the death penalty, she begs for the right "to contend in argument that it would be an injustice to execute" her (903-4). Hecuba agrees (907-10) that Menelaus should "grant her the right of reply…A full established debate will mean her inevitable death" (145-6). These women speak as if they are men involved in some kind of a legal case, and most of the Trojan women reveal within their speeches the Athenian values of honor and revenge and the ideology of democracy.

However, aside from these typical aspects of Greek tragedies, Euripides' *The Trojan Women* has distinctive aspects in comparison to other tragedies. One of the anomalies in *The Trojan Women* is that the gods are not involved in the mortals' lives. Usually in Greek tragedy, human beings' actions are combined with interventions from a divine or superhuman sphere. However, in the beginning scene of *The Trojan Women*, Athena and Poseidon only predict how the Greek fleet will be destroyed *after* the play is finished. After this prologue in which *a deus ex machina* appears briefly, the gods then disappear for the rest of the play (Dunn 105-6). The gods do not have any responsibility for what happens in the war, and all the tragedies and savageries are derived from human

actions. When Helen defends herself as a victim and accuses the goddess Aphrodite of causing the war, Hecuba retorts, "Don't blame the goddesses for your own wickedness…Aphrodite is nothing but people's lust" (981-81, 989). Therefore, the play suggests that all blame should be placed on human beings, who have the free will to make their own decisions.

The Trojan Women is about the Athenians' enemy, the Trojans. Through this inherited epic, the Athenians learned "a particular appreciation of the universality of wartime suffering" and could explore their own sorrows by experiencing that of their enemies" (Dué 5). In her book *Ancient Sun, Modern Light: Greek Drama on the Modern Stage,* Marianne McDonald suggests that perhaps it was useful for the Athenian audience to watch cruelties in the reflection of tragedy. As Nietzsche believes that tragedy offers an opportunity to the audience to confront their fears through indirect experience, the Athenian audience would not "be turned to stone" when they faced their own war (McDonald 85). In fact, the Athenians' very complex relationship to the Trojan War provided them various opportunities in which they could distance themselves from the Greek collective and interpret the significance of the sack of Troy from the perspective of the defeated Trojans (Dué 5).

Moreover, Euripides gives voice not only to the Athenians' enemy but also to its female characters, instead of the men who caused war and have the actual power to change the situation. Ironically, in *The Trojan Women* the Greeks seem more barbaric than the Trojans. While the Greeks drag women away into slavery, tear babies from their mothers' breasts, and rape women in their enemy's beds, the women of Troy act with

nobility and decency. In this disturbing and tragic circumstance, Troy's queen Hecuba tries to maintain her dignity and nobility. As Cassandra points out, the Trojans have more glory because they were fighting to defend themselves, whereas the Greeks revealed their brutality and aggression without mercy. N.T. Croally points out that the play is mainly about "the dreadful effects of war" and "the great tragedy of society" but underneath it may have deeper meaning: "it may be a condemnation of purposeless and excessive bellicosity; more arguably, it could be interpreted as a drama of 'total nihilism,' an anti-war, anti-expansionist harangue with Euripides using the voice of Cassandra to preach his message. The willingness of critics to reduce the play to these slogans is evidence of the power of some of its voices. Yet one could and should say more" (Croally 253). As Croally claims, Euripides challenged the nature of Greek cultural supremacy through the voices of the enemy and the weak.

By displaying the women's emotions, the play effectively illustrates the horror of war and the despair of captives. Rather than presenting a male vision of heroism and victory, Euripides portrays war itself from the perspective of the women left behind, who suffer more than the men and even envy the dead men, who do not experience the women's misery. The women express their sorrow for their lost city and their dead husbands and sons, as well fear and anxiety about their future as captives. In the men's songs about Troy, admired heroes kill their enemies and finally both sides gain their fame, or *kleos*, whereas in the women's songs in *The Trojan Women* children are mercilessly slaughtered, women are taken captive, and their houses are burned (Dué 18). Euripides does not idealize heroes or provide a justification of war, but the women's

laments help the Greek audience visualize the events, letting them experience the misery through the eyes of the other side—both as Trojans and as women. The emotions of tragedy function so that "Athenians at times identify with and at others react with pity to those who should be least like them" (Dué 7).

Laments have been interpreted as powerful speech-acts, capable of inciting violent action. In recent years, many scholars have pointed out that in the context of a lament, women can voice subversive concerns, and speak in ways that they cannot under normal circumstances. Female characters use the "language of lament" to manipulate their listeners and achieve various goals (Dué 8-9). Anna Caraveli-Chaves believes that lament creates a bridge between the living and the dead, the powerful and the oppressed, as well as women and men. According to Caraveli-Chaves, "It is the oppressed women of the 'patriarchal' Greek village world who is the manipulator of the magical language of the lament, which can draw bridges across these disparate realms, transforming lamentation into equipment for living"(157). Similar to this traditional method of self-preservation by Greek women, in tragedy the captive women's laments act as only a medium to speak on their behalf and as a "sanctioned public voice"; these women "manipulate this form in order to speak out and elicit the sympathy of the other characters and the audience" (Dué 16, 20). Thus, laments not only reveal emotional wounds but also provide an opportunity to speak in public and plead for their sake as a means of political action.

The Trojan Women's structure is similar to Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* in which an immobilized hero faces a series of visitors who have their own stories to tell.

Like Prometheus, Hecuba is confined to the stage and receives the news about the death of her children; her limited position causes her deep sorrow and pain. Even though Prometheus antagonizes the gods, his suffering, which he endures on behalf of inferior human beings, is portrayed as a heroic gesture. In contrast, Hecuba does not defy the gods and does not reveal her excessive pride. In spite of her loyalty to Troy, she cannot do anything but continue to encounter numerous misfortunes. While Prometheus' suffering gives him fame and makes him a great example for mankind to follow, Hecuba's anguish remains simply meaningless pain that mankind should seek to avoid.

From the Greek's perspective the Trojan women are interpreted as barbarian women—the perfect characters to keep a safe distance from the Athenians so that it might be easy for Euripides to convey his message to the audience. In particular, Hecuba's suffering cannot be described in words but instead is shown: she saw her daughter Polyxena killed in front of the grave of Achilles and her grandson Astyanax snatched from his hiding place and dashed against a rock. At last, without any hope or future, she collapsed in front of the burning of Troy, which was destroyed as a result of the Greeks' attack. At the beginning, Hecuba seems to be a morally fair and mature woman who had experienced tragedy, but by the end of the play she compromises her moral principles to get revenge. She even begs Agamemnon to pay her back for having her daughter Cassandra in his bed. Finally, what she wants to ask is for him to close his eyes "to her revenge" (McDonald 101). As the story develops, Hecuba is changed by brutalized suffering and demonstrates how far a human being can fall. Yet, underneath the Trojan

women's misery what Euripides might have intended to say is that the Greeks' hubris caused the war.

Froma Zeitlin says that in her work *Playing the Other*, "Greek tragedy uses the feminine to explore the masculine and thus both the actors onstage and the spectator in the audience experience 'playing the other'" (164). Casey Dué explains that a group of young men who wanted to be soldiers to fight for Athens had to dance and sing as a chorus, which enhanced the dramatic effect. During the period of time that the Greeks were full of hostilities because of the Peloponnesian War, these young men will attack cities or fail to defend their city and lose their children, wives, and mothers. According Dué, they experience "pride and self-reflection, pity for the victims of war, and fear for their own potential losses," which these young men transmit to the audience. Dué asserts, "in this way the educational, initiatory, civic and personal aspects of the choral experience come together most acutely in the role of captive women during this time period" (Dué 28). However, I argue that by "playing the other," these young men learn about the miseries they would experience if they did not achieve victory, and it might reinforce their masculinity as soldiers, rather than helping them assimilate the captive women's position and share their pain.

Women's Bodies and War

As in theatre history, the representations of women created by men have been used for men's purposes and distorted by men's perspectives. Helen, as a symbol of beauty and a cause of Trojan war, is the perfect example of a Greek archetype misrepresented by men

and used completely for their purposes. Francis M. Dunn claims that Helen's body is closely related to the ideology of war and conquest. When Menelaus takes Helen, the Greeks have justice on their side; until the Greeks find a way to retrieve her body, the war will not be finished: "In *Trojan Women*, Helen's body is very real and is the object of a bitter debate involving Hecuba and Menelaus. The conflict is not between two male factions disputing ownership of the women, but between Helen and a female protagonist [Hecuba]" (Dunn 114). After the war ends and Troy is burned, Helen's body is finally returned to Menelaus, teaching the lesson of chastity to all women: "As she leaves we realize she is not worth our attention. It is not the empty promise of the beautiful Helen but the brutal reality of the suffering and disfigured Hecuba that claims our reluctant and offended attention" (114). Therefore, the men's fighting and dying at war are seen as honorable deeds, yet the critical cause of the war is a woman and as a result of the war, the persons who suffer the most are women.

Just as Helen's body is a cause of the war and she loses ownership of herself to men, Cassandra's body is completely ruined by men due to the war. Before the fall of Troy, as many ancient sources affirm, Cassandra was subsequently beaten by her father and brothers, an action not portrayed in the play. Because of these hardships, she was loved by Apollo, who gave her the gift of being able to see the future with the condition that no one would believe what she said. After the war, Cassandra is repeatedly raped by the Greeks, as if to indicate that her ownership has been handed over to the Greeks. Her body becomes a battle site itself and demonstrates women's own history of being left behind and never shown to anyone.

Women Playwrights' War Stories

Unlike Euripides who used female characters to reflect his perspective through the women, contemporary women playwrights attempt to convey their own struggles and emotions in relation to war by using women's stories in parallel to those of the ancient world. Christine Evans, who wrote a revision of Euripides' play entitled *Trojan Barbie,* explains her attraction to Greek dramas to Gideon Lester, Director of the A.R.T.'s 2008-2009 Season:

> The longer I spent with Euripides' plays the more foreign they seemed to be. The Greeks were obsessed with honor and revenge; their values and emotions were very differently organized than ours. I loved that sense of strangeness, of our distance from the past. I came to realize that this strangeness is contemporary to our own postmodern experience, where different cultures and ways of thinking and living are smashed together without any intermediary softening. (Evans qtd. in Lester)

This sense of strangeness gives her the opportunity to create a new world that the contemporary audience can understand and enables them to have conversations between the past and present.

Playwright and actress Ellen McLaughlin says, "I suppose I'm interested in redefining the concept of history from a female perspective" (Andreach 379). In her play, *The Trojan Women,* there is no villain, and Helen, Menelaus, and Talthybius have their own stories and struggles. In every aspect they are all victims and survivors of the war.

Without heroic gestures or spectators, McLaughlin interprets Greek drama personally: "The sacrifice of Iphigenia is the aspect of the Trojan War which everybody forgets about. It's like, 'Oh, there's this little incident… Yeah, but we got to go off and have the Trojan War, which is the great heroic saga of Greek literature to which all the myths lead'" (Gener). In this revision, McLaughlin locates the Trojan women's struggles in the women of Serbia and Croatia who escaped the chaos of genocide. For the refugees, every line from the Greek tragedy was understandable, and it was easy to sympathize with the characters who also had lost family and country, just like they had. Through the processes of staged readings at the Classic Stage Company in New York with refugees, McLaughlin realized that with the notion of "the loss of a great city," they felt sympathy for the Trojans' homesickness, and the play helped them to cope with it (82). In the final script, she created each role with a triple cast: Serbs, Croatians, and Albanians, represented by more than one voice, ethnicity, and experience, leading to the international, universal flavor of the piece—as if it were written in different languages (87).

McLaughlin links the ancient text with the group's experience with contemporary issues, real people, and their own languages, whereas Karen Hartman's *Troy Women* faithfully follows Euripides' language in the script, without changing the myth. Moreover, she maintains Euripides' grand scale with Hecuba's hundred children dying and the gods abandoning Troy in order to show this world to be larger than life. However, she focuses on extending the range of the characters' emotion and modernizing their language so that the characters are more recognizable to the contemporary audience. The

female characters are recreated as women who have a sense of the contemporary world and express their thoughts and emotions in vivid language.

For example, realizing other people's judgmental gaze, Andromache confesses that she was fostered within a patriarchal frame: "They say a woman who walks will stray. So I kept home...They say man is ruler so he ruled" (45). Helen, perceived as the cause of the war, also explains her emotional and physical wounds using frank language: "Once Paris died and no god cared for me… I would climb the city walls. Wind a rope around my body, tight, tie this rope to a jutting stone and lower myself. Bare toes searching out holds… They caught me again and again. Then there was a man who took what Troy didn't want. Kept me in his house. Raped me again and again" (53-54). Helen denies her mythical illusion and exposes her vulnerability in experiencing war. Cassandra's powerful speech also makes a strong impact on the audience. Even though she is powerless as a captive and mad woman, she is free to speak and even mocks the patriarchal order. As if madness is her way to live with atrocity of war, her insanity makes her speak out boldly with sarcasm toward the male-dominated world. She shouts: "We don't personally cause disaster, but then we get all the blame. Sucks" (38).

Christine Evans' *Trojan Barbie*

"I'm marrying disaster! Soon as he's in me we're gone
Washed in a bloody tide—
Bring flowers for the bridegroom and medals for the bride!"[13]

—Cassandra, *Trojan Barbie*

As the title implies, *Trojan Barbie* (2010) portrays two coexisting worlds, past and present, colliding. The tragic image of legendary Troy and the childhood image of a Barbie doll create an incongruity that reminds audiences of the effect of war violence on women and children, both a historical and contemporary reality. Christine Evans presents two fascinating characters from the contemporary and ancient worlds: Lotte Jones, a doll repair expert, expecting romance and adventure, travels to modern-day Troy, where she unexpectedly experiences the Trojan women's tragic reality as if she travels to the past and confronts all the characters from *the Trojan Women*. On the other hand, Princess of Troy, Polly X (Evans' updated name for Polyxena), like other teenagers, enjoys loud rock music and dreams of becoming a famous sculptor. These two characters have the desire to have adventures and the passion to give life to their creations. Particularly, in comparison with Polyxena in the original text, who laments her situation but passively has to accept her fate to be a sacrifice at the tomb of the Achilles, Polly X in *Trojan Barbie* is a vivid character who attempts to tell her story and to deliver her message to the unjust world.

[13] Christine Evans. *Trojan Barbie*: 39.

The incongruity caused by the collision between the world of Lotte and the world of the Trojan women is humorously but bitterly depicted on the stage. Before the trip, Lotte checks the list for her travel and looks through pieces of dolls, while after the Greeks' attack, Hecuba sorts through dead bodies, looking for her children. Ironically both women grumble about "hair, heads, legs, fingers…," trying to find "limbs hopelessly mixed up..." (14), although Lotte refers to doll anatomy, whereas Hecuba refers to her dead children's body parts, which of course signals completely different values of the two women. For Lotte, who repairs broken dolls every day, dolls' bodies can be fixed and replaced with new ones. However, for Hecuba who agonizingly lost her five daughters, these dead bodies mean an impossible recovery and an endless despair. When Lotte first meets Andromache in Troy, Lotte, worrying about dehydration, asks, "Have you lost your tour group?" (27). Andromache's response is too heavy for Lotte: "burning bridges, a dragging boy by solders, solders' invasion to the palace, death of animals. My broken city. Raped by the sword and flame. Ash and dust your shroud" (27). The absurdity of this scene is reminiscent of the images of Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Gaza Strip and implies that the wounds of war have existed over the centuries and remain fresh and brutally real for some people. While Queen Hecuba fully realizes the brutality and savagery of war, revealing her genuine emotions, Lotte can never understand the despair of Hecuba. Like Lotte, some people might be unable to understand that someone living on the other side of world could be devastated by losing their children or husbands in war in another part of the world because in their part of the world, their lives are peaceful and comfortable.

In this play, the dolls' bodies are used as symbolic objects, reminding the audience of broken dead human bodies in war zones. Christine Evans explains the doll theme: "The dolls are living and dead. So when Lotte goes to the detention camp, what to her look like broken dolls, to the women of the camp are real corpses. The dolls allow me to set up a sort of double vision onstage. And I think also it speaks to our distance from other people's suffering. It's not quite real" (Evans qtd. in A.R.T. website). As Evans argues, the image of broken dolls give a glimpse of violence, wounds, and painful memories caused by wars. For Lotte, the violence Trojan women have experienced is some kind of a historical tale of other people's unforgettable memories, not her own struggle. She can talk about it easily because she did not experience their discomfort.

However, for Trojan women, this is their reality, which they cannot escape and have to face every day. They have to prostitute themselves, or they could be killed someday. One of the Trojan women, Clea, figuratively describes herself and other Trojan women as "ghosts in the dead zone at immigration" (37). The Trojan women talk about the Iranian man who has been living in Charles de Gaulle airport for fourteen years because he is "allowed to land, see, but not to leave" (37). Like this Iranian man, the Trojan women have lost their homes but cannot find a new one and their stagnant positions do not allow them to think of their future as something they "could stitch together" (37). Another Trojan woman compares her broken future to her body, herself: "now it's like someone tore up a map and that map was my body" (37). If they cannot have their future or do not know where they should go, their existence cannot have any meaning.

In addition to being compared to a doll's body, a woman's body is also used metaphorically throughout the play. The Trojan women who have been left behind cannot claim ownership of their bodies anymore. Their bodies are the first things conquered by men and like dolls they are easily traded and treated like lifeless objects. Polly X creates a huge heart-shaped pink cardboard made of smashed up dolls and calls it "Trojan Barbie," which acts as the central image of the play. All she can find are pieces of rubble and broken dolls from the prison camp, and the women around Polly X are similar to the broken dolls. The chaotic world is not beautiful but brutal for Polly X. The soldiers kidnap Polly X for a ritual sacrifice for the dead Achilles and get her drunk on beer in order to rape her before they kill her. For a girl who has not yet become a woman and wants to believe in the existence of decency in the world, this is a cruel and cold-blooded experience of death and the extreme violence that men and war bring to women.

In juxtaposition to the captured women at the camp, Evans brings a wild tiger in a cage onto the stage. Before Polly X is sacrificed to Achilles' tomb, the soldiers bring her to the zoo, which is "the only place away from barracks where [they] can have a beer without getting shot at" (23). Moreover, a tiger in a cage that has lost its freedom is entertaining to the soldiers because their ability to control a wild animal helps them realize their empowerment. Demonstrating their power in front of the tiger and Polly X, the soldiers attempt to manipulate the tiger's wildness using food. Just as the soldier irritates Polly X in order to rape her, the soldiers stir up the tiger. Finally, the tiger attacks one of the soldiers, so he kills the tiger with a gun. Polly X cries, "No-one else could keep them alive in captivity," realizing that the Greek men deal with the oppressed

people who resist to them by taking their freedom, just as they do to the tiger. At the moment she gets a life lesson, Polly X realizes that the end of her life will soon come (47).

However, when Polly X faces her last moment, in her own way, she fights back against the world that oppressed her. She tears off her shirt, shows her bare breasts, and shouts, "see what you're missing out on, corpse-fuckers! TROY RULES!" (53). Even though she becomes a sacrifice at the tomb of Achilles, she wants to declare that she owns her body, which is fortunately not violated by the Greek men. Whereas in this revision, Polly X's strong resistance is emphasized, in other adaptations Polyxena's death scene is either not staged or her powerless status is illustrated by demonstrating the horror of violence. For instance, the well-known director of various adaptations of Greek dramas, Andrei Serban, presents the contrast between Polyxena's miserable death and Achilles' atrocious power in his epic opera *The Trojan Women*, staged in 1996. As a sacrificial victim, the naked body of Polyxena is vulnerably exposed on the stage and the ghost of Achilles mercilessly lifts the virgin's lifeless body with a roar. Yet, the violence does not end here, and Polyxena is again brutally gang-raped by his army (Lamont 363).

While Polly X defiantly struggles against her situation, Polly X's sister Cassandra powerlessly accepts her destiny, aware of Troy's tragic future:

> Cassandra: I think History's a wave. I think that's it.
>
> It rolls and sucks at you and drags you under.
>
> It smashes you into the future
>
> right when you think you're on solid ground.

Like stepping on a landmine.

I think I'm pregnant with guns and bombs.

And the first man I'm with,

soon as he's in me—

that's it.

The world's going to blow. (30-31)

Through repeated rape, Cassandra's body is brutalized and her mind is further damaged. In spite of her insanity she fully acknowledges the atrocity of war with her pregnant body, which proves that the violence of war is continuously perpetuated from generation to generation.

As Evans states, the doll's broken body puts the audience at a safe distance from the reality of war in which dead people's disturbing bodies are exposed just like dolls' bodies. This safe distance generously allows Lotte and the audience to deal less uncomfortably with other people's suffering in war zones. Moreover, the encounter between the past and the present sometimes provides humorous and entertaining moments, yet this absurd moment is not always comfortable for the audience. Finding the characters from the ancient world alive in the present lets the audience experience the strangeness and the familiarity at the same time. For example, in order to get daily supplies such as Tylenol, Perrier, or sunscreen lotion, Helen of Troy seductively approaches the camp guard. Commercialism is everywhere in Troy. As a part of the title of the play, "Barbie," a little girl's toy, a symbol of commercialized femininity, implies that the Trojan women are not free from the system of commercialism in the camp in

which they must secretly trade for daily supplies. The guard uses daily supplies in order to manipulate the women at the camp, demanding their submission in return.

As the Trojan women face the cruelty of war, their responses and their ways of dealing with the circumstances differ. Polly X aggressively resists, Andromache is stupefied, Cassandra passively admits, and Helen uses people and the circumstances to gain power. Specifically, Helen of Troy uses her beauty and sexuality, which she believes are the best tools to manipulate men, to acquire conveniences and other things that she wants. Her way to survive in war and to fight oppression is to use men. Rather than being exploited by men, on the contrary, she displays her body as a survival weapon. To the Trojan women blaming her, Helen suggests, "This Wailing Women routine: We're in a camp. For *just women*. Ergo, we will be dealing with men. And if I might point out from my fairly extensive experience: You'd do a lot better with a smile on your face and a dab of lipstick" (18). When Helen gets an opportunity to meet her husband Menelaus, wearing an evening gown and ridiculously creating the mood of a 1940s movie set, she lures him in and eventually gets a temporary reprieve. It seems that by reminding the audience of the image of a spiritless Barbie doll, she demonstrates a kind of convenient and reasonable feminism in her way.

Even though the value of their words differs, at some point the Trojan women's world and Lotte's world seem to become one. After the Greeks decided to kill Hecuba's grandson and drive over his skull with a tank, Hecuba bitterly deplores her grandson's death. Lotte tries to help, saying, "I have quite extensive experience with this kind of repair work…I'll do what I can for the face. At least his Mama's going to recognize him

now, that's something" (62). As other women join the doll/corpse repair work, which is played as "a quiet tableau," this moment is portrayed as a women's ritual that "they have done for thousands of years" (62). The repair scene provides the illusion that the past and the present overlap and suggests that the women's solidarity is built beyond time and place.

About the message she attempts to convey to the audience (aside from her message about war's violence), Evans states, "I also wanted to celebrate the resilience of women and find the joy in small moments—Lotte's everyday dreams of romance; the fierce desire of young girls to live and create; the comedy and hope that spring up like common weeds in the cracks of history's ruins" (Evans qtd. in A.R.T. website). However, because of the heavy memories of the war, it seems that the women's hopes and dreams are meaningless and Lotte's voice sounds trivial and vain. Moreover, it seems unfair that suddenly a British Officer, like some kind of a *deus ex machina*, appears and saves Lotte from the moment of exile. As if she were just waking up from a strange and horrific nightmare, she returns to her normal life. But like ghosts from the past, the Trojan women appear in front of Lotte, wondering why "Nobody asked anything about the women" (65). Hecuba, wearing soaking wet contemporary rags, searches heartbreakingly for her grandson's broken bodies, and Polly X, saluting with her hand, shouts, "I don't care about History. It's full of dead people. I just wanted to live!" (68). The question is asked of Lotte and of the audience: should the still-existing dream-like stories of Trojan women, other women's suffering and other women's dreams, be forgotten or retold?

Caroline Bird's *The Trojan Women: After Euripides*

> We are not here to seek pleasure, we are here to give it. That is how a woman finds true humanity, and if a woman is not humble, she becomes insidious. Like a toxic gas[14]
>
> —Hecuba, *The Trojan Women: After Euripides*

For the audience, one of the pleasures of seeing a Greek revision is finding the contrasts between the past and the present. Through these contrasts, Caroline Bird in her play *The Trojan Women: After Euripides* (2012) approaches contemporary issues by creating a modern setting and distinctive character personalities, which deepen conflicts between characters. From the beginning, the modern elements that one does not expect from the ancient Greek world become a part of Bird's narrative and similarly follow the plot of Euripides' *The Trojan Women.* Appearing on the video screen, Athena and Poseidon illustrate that their divine plan is completely separate from the horrible situation of Troy, and they do not care about mortals, which reflects Euripides' concept of divine power. Hecuba, Queen of Troy, frequently drinks out of a plastic cup to demonstrate that she believes that only water from a dispenser is safe in prison. Talthybius uses a gun and receives orders through a smartphone. Over the speaker, Menelaus' language seems too modern, frivolous and careless for a king: "Fee Fi Foo Fum, I smell the blood of a slut. A joke. The streets are heaped with bodies… Prepare yourself honey, I'm coming" (64). These contrasts—the mixture of the old gods and the new technologies, the old characters

[14] Caroline Bird. *The Trojan Women: After Euripides*: 45

and the new character—offer both freshness and familiarity, reminiscent of Euripides' modernity, which startled the Greek audience.

A noticeable feature of this revision is the Chorus, a single pregnant woman handcuffed by her wrist to a metal bed. Historically, the Chorus in Greek tragedy is a group of people who speak with a collective voice, commenting about and setting the tone for the drama, and often asking questions to the audience in the middle of a dilemma. However, the Chorus in Bird's *Trojan Women* is a single character who does not have a name and mainly leads the drama rather than assisting a chief character. According to Bird, "she is the voice of the people in a society deaf to individual voices…we are the chorus: every single one of us" (14). In fact, while other characters come from the original drama and partly maintain the characteristics given to them by Euripides, the Chorus' personality is newly invented. Her modern sensibility is easily understandable to the audience, and as a commoner her perspective reflects the contemporary audience's thoughts and questions. Due to her pregnant and immobilized condition, the audience can have sympathy for her, and in comparison to other characters, the Chorus' pain seems fresher and more real to the audience.

By revealing the clash between social positions, Bird shapes emotional contrasts to illustrate the women's downfall and their inner struggles. Hecuba is not a generous and graceful queen but a woman full of herself: "My people would have slit their throats to save my little finger" (23), but she soon realizes, "now I'm nothing" (23) and will become "a slave to the Greeks who massacred my people" (22). The contrasting emotions among the characters emphasize the class distinctions and reinforce their conflicts as

well. When the Chorus, a pregnant woman, hopefully says, “I’ll be able to keep my baby,” Hecuba smashes the Chorus’ slight hope: “I wouldn’t say ‘my baby’ too much. It’ll make it worse” (24). It implies that Hecuba, who has a strong personality with monarchical attitude, will come into conflict with the Chorus. Andromache begs Talthybius to save her son’s life, saying, “This boy is not the symbol of Troy. He’s my baby” (59), yet, the Chorus immediately asks, “Mine’s going to be a girl so she’ll be okay won’t she?” (59). The Chorus desperately wants to hold on to the hope that her baby will be saved, which makes her unable to see anyone else’s despair or hope and rather focuses her on her own baby’s life.

The Chorus’ pregnancy, an effective element of the character’s identity, has diverse implications for the play. In Marilyn French’s *The Women’s Room*, she compares childbirth to fighting a war: “You’re like a soldier in a trench coat who is hot and constricted and hates the food, but has to sit there for nine months. He gets to the point where he yearns for the battle [that is, the delivery of the child], even though he may be killed or maimed in it…Pregnancy is the greatest training, disciplining device in the human experience. Compared to it, army discipline…is soft” (69-70). Like the Trojan men who fought at a war, the Chorus is engaged in a battle to give birth under inhuman circumstances, facing fear as a captive woman. Yet, her vulnerability as a pregnant woman is never addressed by anyone, nor is it considered to be a significant matter. Even when she implores Talthybius to take off a handcuff, screaming because of her physical pains, Talthybius ignores her and treats her like a harassing animal. Whereas men fighting at the battle are recognized for their honorable deeds, women in the battle of

childbirth are made vulnerable and can be easily attacked because of their reproductive efforts.

With her exposed pregnancy body, the Chorus' physical struggle and the emotional turmoil, which influences the overall tone of the play, are paralleled by the dramatic development. For instance, in the scene in which Helen attempts to take back Menelaus' heart, as their debate gets heated, the Chorus's contractions become more painful, and her screams get louder as well. Maintaining tension throughout the play, finally at the end, the Chorus almost reaches the point of delivery and starts screaming again. The process of her painful childbirth is reminiscent of the violence all the Trojan women have been through and their sparse hope and doomed future. Even though the Chorus is just one individual, by emphasizing and focusing on an individual's suffering, the play illustrates the Trojan women's victimized situation in a new way, using the powerful metaphor of childbirth.

The inevitable nature of violence and the women's victimized situation in war create unspeakable horror and fear, which encroaches on them. The violence they see and feel is different than men's ideas of violence. Cassandra's description of violence seems poetic, yet it sinks deeply and slowly into her mind and suppresses her:

> Violence is a thing that starts in your head. It starts in perfect stillness. If you think you found yourself standing in a bar with a broken bottle in your hand, and you think you just snapped, or you think you were in a crowd and things kicked off and you were forced to defend yourself, if you think

> the snarl just erupted across your face like a lightning flash hitting a duck pond… (41)

This image of the violence reminds the audience of the three shadowed figures at the beginning who take some woman's baby, clap her mouth, and drag her to somewhere in the mother-and-baby unit of a prison. For a woman it is fearful to express violence because the shadowed figures have dealt a fatal blow and taken everything she had: her baby, her freedom, and herself.

Unlike the women's expressions, men's ideas of violence in the play are portrayed as irritating and sexual. Criticizing women's weakness, Menelaus explains the image of violence in his mind:

> Women—are superfluous. They are repelled by violence because their brains are too tepid to imagine true horror, so when it arrives—like horror always does—they are shocked. A train is going through me. My hand is on fire. I have my mother's bleeding eyeball on a plate. My spanner is tinkering an open wound… Rolex is rubbing a woman's clitoris and with my other fist I'm punching her in the face. I just did all those things in my head. (69)

These contrasting images of violence imply that for an assaulter and an oppressor, the expression of violence, which reveals their aggressive and coarse attitudes, assures their power, whereas for a sufferer, the oppressed, her description of violence exposes her fear, misery, and passivity.

Even though the woman's expression of violence seems unrealistic and vague, Bird depicts a woman's pains sensibly. As a survivor, Andromache deplores the meaningless feeling of her life: "I feel torn apart. Over. Spent. Useless. I feel like all blood has drained down from my eyes to my heart to my knees and then bled out through my shoelaces" (52). Women's pains and horrors cannot be described enough, but the women feel them through all parts of their bodies. When Hecuba hears that Polyxena was murdered, she expresses her grief and agony: "If I bite my thumb—like this—a sharp…um…a sharp…It's not a nice feeling, to feel toothache. I don't like it. I want to get rid of my mouth" (53). The women's emotional wounds are deeply related to their bodies, which are viscerally palpable to them and allow them to realize their powerless status.

In the performance, using a female body, Bird weaves her feminist message into the narrative. In the production in November 2012, directed by Christopher Haydon, actress Louise Brealey played three roles: the prophetess Cassandra, Hector's wife Andromache, and Helen of Troy. Cassandra appears in red-striped pajamas, delivering the madness with "a rapid-fire speech about fire and violence, almost at a whisper," according to Laura Silverman's review. Silverman explains that Brealey reappears as Andromache with her son and in order to show lust for Helen, bluntly exposes her own nude body. About the intention for this strategy, Bird explains, "It's back to this idea that women try to categorize each other as wives or whores or Virgins. I want to play with those stereotypes. It felt natural for one actress to play the virgin and the mother and the whore" (Bird qtd. in Masters). Although it could cause confusion for the audience or give

an impression of "a surreal sketch show," the striking contrast between each character allows the audience to contemplate women's images as historically invented, confined, and perpetuated by men (Silverman).

In the play, each character is imprisoned by the woman's image that they have learned and people have come to expect from them. The Chorus' line conveys that women struggle with the gap between a real self and "the idea of a woman": "Sometimes, I think I'm not a woman. I'm just the idea of a woman. I hear a woman screaming and realize my mouth is wide open and I'm screaming, but then I ask a question and it's like I'm just spitting silence" (32). Although the women want to unfold their feelings and share their stories with others, "the idea of a woman" keeps them silent. Andromache, even though she had privileges as a monarch, is not different from other women and is even more strongly forced to be a perfect wife: "When Hector plucked me out of that inbred village, I became the greatest wife alive: Carer, Chef, Escort, Friend, Mentor, Servant, Mother, Doll" (54). However, she realizes that like a prized possession, her body can be a great trophy for the enemy: "Now the girls I went to school with, their bodies are laying naked across hay-bales back in Thebes, and I'm enslaved to Achilles' son. Who's worse off?" (54). Andromache thinks that it would be better to die so that she does not feel disgraced by her enemy.

On the other hand, Hecuba has a different point of view: "Our attitude to men shapes our personalities. We strengthen or distort according to our respect towards the male species. Some women reject—they choose to listen their own hearts, as if they were the rulers of themselves. They become sexually perverted. Adulteresses. Lesbians.

(*Disgusted*) Intellectuals" (45). Whereas with all loss, other women have a chance to rethink who they really are without men, Hecuba does not deny her belief that a women must belong to men with soul and flesh, and, on the contrary, affirms it, which seems her way to protect herself.

In war, the female's body is easily bartered as if it were a belonging. It is not surprising that Hecuba, who believes that women belong to men, uses her daughter's body as barter. Believing that "the omission of burial rights is an insult to human dignity," Hecuba exchanges Polyxena's living body for Hector's dead body in order to bury her son's corpse (29). As the Troy war was started because of Helen's body, Cassandra believes that her own body could have saved the people of Troy: "It's my fault. I knew about the Trojan Horse. (*She taps her head*) I saw it. It's my fault everyone's dead. I should have let Apollo rape me. He's a God! What was I thinking! So selfish" (39). As if Cassandra's body were separate from her mind, in the play Bird requests that Cassandra's lines, which are loaded with rage and violence, should be delivered ironically with sweetness and compassion (33). For Cassandra, delirium might be her way to survive in the moments in trauma and chaos.

While the Trojan women in the original play have no conflicts among themselves except with Helen and are united in dealing with the Greeks as an external conflict and problem, Bird's revision portrays continuous tensions between the women in spite of an external attack by the Greeks. In the limited space, with their horror about the violence of the war, their grief over their lost loved ones, and their fear of the future keep pushing them to the edge. In addition to all the mixed feelings, a hierarchy also interrupts the

women's union. Hecuba, depicted as a noble character in Euripides' play, is perceived as a complicated character mixed with bitterness, haughtiness, and yearning. Bird explains in her "Playwright's Note" how she exposes women's issues through the characters: "'Feminism' is not in the dictionary here, yet strong women exist—operating inside a paradox, bursting with power in a society that grants them none" (Bird). With the characters' strong personalities, this imprisoned circumstance intensifies the women's conflicts and allows them to realize their issues within the social structure.

From the beginning, even though they share the same prison, Hecuba, who is still attached to the previous privileges of rank, treats the Chorus and Andromache poorly. Hecuba does not care that Andromache is anxious about her son's safety, nor does she care about the Chorus' pregnancy. After the Chorus utters the horrific statement, "my husband was killed in front of me, just like yours," Hecuba viciously responds, "my husband was the king" (25), which implies that the king's death cannot be compared with the Chorus' husband's death. The Chorus clearly recognizes that they cannot experience that same suffering because of their different class status.

> The Chorus: Look, I'm very chuffed for you that you're finding such meaning in your sadness, but I'm a real person.
>
> Cassandra: I'm a real person.
>
> The Chorus: No, you're a princess. You saw battle from the inside of your palace, surrounded by twenty times as many soldiers as we had defending our entire village.
>
> Cassandra: I saw a lot of death.

> The Chorus: It was a war. We all saw death.
>
> Cassandra: I was raped by a Greek soldier.
>
> The Chorus: I was raped by five Greek soldiers, at the same time. Next to my husband's dead body. (36)

Because of the gap between the social classes, it is not easy for the women to build solidarity in the aftermath of the war. Tom Black of the *Croydon Citizen* explains the unexpected women's clash: "[Hecuba]'s interactions with the Chorus shatter any illusions of sisterhood or women's solidarity that we might hope to find in the darkness of the play's surroundings. Caroline Bird has crafted a scathing critique of the class barriers which we often ignore." The clash that Trojan women encounter is not only the external hardship of war, but also their internal struggle, the conflict between classes discovered as a result of the war.

Although the men who fought the battle have all the responsibility for the war, the women blame each other. Hecuba believes that Helen of Troy is the cause for the war and defends her son Paris as a victim with whom Helen eloped. Andromache blames Hecuba because even though the soothsayers told Hecuba to kill Paris, Hecuba did not listen to them, which eventually causes the deaths of Andromache's husband and her son. For the Chorus the women in the ruling class are a disappointment: "I thought Troy fell because of something. But all I've seen…is a bunch of mice fighting in a box. You're not leaders. You couldn't run a bath" (79). Bird points out that the truth is hard to tell and sometimes, people avoid it: "You might have three characters in a scene who are all wrong, but the truth is somewhere in the middle, in what's not being said" (qtd. in Masters). Because of

the clash between the women, their reality and future seem more despairing and miserable, although they are not the ones who caused this mess of a war.

Ironically, when Hecuba performs the ceremony for the corpse of her grandson Astyanax, the Chorus' baby is born in the desperate situation. During a war, humanity and faith seem to be subverted, yet a baby's arrival usually means hope for the future. Finally, Talthybius takes the body from Hecuba and the Chorus' baby is taken by the three shadowed figures. Bird's message is clear but harsh at the end: If babies cannot provide hope for people because they cannot be protected, it will be a real tragedy for the world, leaving people to face a doomed future.

Kaite O'Reilly's *Peeling*

> My body is crisscrossed with scars like a railway track.
> Like Crewe Station, seen from the air:
> Single tracks, with no apparent destination.[15]
>
> —Coral, *Peeling*

The story of Kaite O'Reilly's *Peeling* (2002) unfolds in an interesting theatrical setting, a play within a play. Instead of the tragic Trojan women lamenting their lost city and dead men, three disabled actresses, Beaty, Coral, and Alfa, play the role of the Chorus in a modern-day production of Euripides' *The Trojan Women*. They are literally immobile, stuck at the back and unlit on the stage not because of their disabilities but because of

[15] Kaite O'Reilly. *Peeling*: 28

their multi-layered, preposterous frocks. Alfa, who is deaf, uses sign language and during the show stage directions and sporadic sign interpretations support her ability to communicate with other characters and the audience. Beaty is described as a four-foot tall woman, and Coral is confined to an electric wheelchair. With their disabilities, their voluminous hoop skirts and their cynical and humorous dialogues create both a comical and tragic mood. They sometimes play the characters "on stage" and then "offstage" gossip and bicker to each other in the shadows. As they shift their positions from the characters to themselves or vice versa, their pains and struggles are intertwined with the characters' in *The Trojan Women.*

It seems that their lives do not differ from other women's lives. Waiting for the cue for the performance, they gossip about celebrities, share food, and talk about their jobs as actresses. Bragging about her "gorgeous" boyfriend, Beaty prepares her evening attire for him. They do not sugarcoat the realities of their everyday lives, and they openly talk about their disabilities. Alfa complains about the stage manager who did not bring them any refreshments, saying, "I'm sure he thinks 'deafness' is catching" (26). They all acknowledge that playing the chorus in the play does not mean "social inclusion" for them. "Playing the disability card" is a kind of tokenistic casting to show equal opportunities, which are never actually given to the three women. As actresses, the enthralling moment for them is not playing their roles in the Chorus, but lip-syncing for the actors in the dark of the backstage, believing they could do better than the actors.

Like the original play *The Trojan Women,* the characters in *Peeling* are not developed in dramatic incidents or through a clear plot structure. According to theatre

critic Lyn Gardner in *The Guardian*, the characters are similar to the characters in a Samuel Beckett play. As in Beckett, the characters are tragic and comic, heartbreaking and ridiculous. The visual contrast of these disabled women clothed in outrageously over-sized dresses somehow creates piteous image rather than a comical image. Moreover, their situation, in which the characters cannot leave the confined space and keep waiting between scenes wearing huge costumes they cannot handle, is similar to Beckett's portrayal of inertia.

According to O'Reilly, "the impaired body has often been used as a metaphor for the human condition/a disability perspective, or performed by disabled actors" (qtd. in the Forestforge website). As is O'Reilly's intention, throughout the play, the powerless Trojan women's bodies soon become possessions for Greek men, offering a parallel with these disabled women's bodies. At first, as the huge costumes and the setting imply, it seems that the inertia is caused by the characters' impaired bodies. The impaired women's bodies cannot reach the standard of "perfection" in image, form, or function. They are perceived as "the social stereotype of women in general as being weak and passive" and described as "the epitome of the incompetent female" (Galler 167). In fact, these female actresses recognize that as objects of art, audiences are judging them every moment, so they rarely stare at the audience because of fear. On the contrary, they also acknowledge that some men are afraid of them, as the stage manger is terrified of them (26). Robert Galler points out the unconscious social prejudice against the disabled: "Disability is often associated with sin, stigma and a kind of 'untouchability.' Anxiety, as well as a sense of vulnerability and dread, may cause others to respond to the

‘imperfections’ of a disabled woman’s body with terror, avoidance, pity and/or guilt” (167). Moreover, because historically many male artists created images of female nudes like Venus’ perfect body and were “against the irrationality and chaos of the body—particularly the female body” (Davis 57), the male-dominated society defines these disabled women as defective.

Reminiscent of the Trojan women’s wounds, Coral confesses the trauma left on her body: “My body is crisscrossed with scars like a railway track. Like Crewe Station, seen from the air: single tracks, with no apparent destination; major interlocking junctions, where intercity, sleepers and local lines all connect. Puckering scar tissue, hand-sewn with careless, clumsy stitches. I like to finger it, trace the journeys” (27). For these three women, their bodies are the evidence and marks of their painful memories and the trauma they have been through, similar to the Trojan women’s trauma. The women’s inertia allows them to stay in shadow and to be “the passive recounter of doom” rather than being “full of action” (36). As the story progresses, it is revealed that their inertia is due to societal constraints rather than their fixed bodies. They remember that when people in the theatre escaped because of a false alarm, they were abandoned. The theatre manager, realizing that they were being left behind, runs to them and says, “This why ‘handicaps’ are a health and safety risk” (36). The society constantly pushes them to the edge and confines them “behind screens” or keeps them “away from the action” (36). As actresses they are seen as unsuitable for certain roles and are only used when they are needed for decoration.

In order to portray themselves and their stories, the characters use the devices of the theatre such as narration, a form of audio-description, choral speaking, and sign interpretation. Audio description particularly comes through other characters' points of view; each character's behavior or inner feeling is described as if a narrator were explaining a situation in a formal or neutral tone. As Coral explains, audio-description is "like painting the scene in visual images that the listener can absorb and internalize and—from spoken words—build that special visual world right inside their own head—in the heart of their imagination" (19). But, unlike its original purpose, this device cannot help them to understand each other or to communicate with the audience. Little by little, on the contrary, the audio-description limits the characters' thoughts and actions. Moreover, later the characters ironically use this to comment or deliver their own opinions to others.

At the moment the lights come up, the three women turn into the Chorus in a new modern version of *Trojan Women*. The war they depict is still as horrible as it was in ancient time. Rape is used as "a war tactic," and mutilation serves as a "reminder" that war could be cruel to people, especially women and children (23). Their enemy is "taking the women for / entertainment and pleasure / and preferably impregnate[s] them and kill[s] off the line" (23). A woman's body is ruined by violence and power and is stepped on "as [a] battlefield" (23). One woman regrets that she suffocated her child with a nursery pillow herself "rather than leave [her child] to bleed dry on no-man's land" (50). One thinks that she should have crushed her child before the child is pulled out "rather than let [her child] die by suicide bomb in a crowded discotheque" (50). Watching their "babies' heads split like conkers" (33), all mothers *can* do is to teach their children to

dance "until there [is] no more land to dance on" and then finally to let them, "tripp[ing] on air," die without horror and fear (34). Beaty sadly points out the dilemma mothers face, "spared pain, delivered to safety, a happy ending, stopping our minds from imagining the broken, mangled bodies—bones splintering on impact, children's screams as they realize Mamma isn't to be trusted, after all—"(35). The mothers' only choices are to kill their children by themselves or to let them be killed by their enemy. Either way, mothers cannot escape from guilt because mothers do not have the strength to protect and save their children from execution.

By unfolding these women's issues, the three actresses' stories are juxtaposed with the larger issues of war. For the three actresses, their mothers are not to be trusted either. At the point where they begin talk about their mothers, they gradually reveal their personal stories of tragedy and their secrets. Describing Alfa as "damaged goods" and forcing her to remain a virgin, Alfa's mother says, "He'll [a future boyfriend or husband] not want you if you're second-hand, thumbed through and used already" (28). On the other hand, Beaty's mother teaches her daughter to entice men, saying, "God knows you have little enough. Put yourself on special offer, girl" (29). Beaty recalls that her mother, without knowing that she is hurting Beaty's feeling, complains about aging by stretching back the wrinkles on her own face, saying, "you're so lucky you'll die when you're young…you'll never live to be old" (30). Their feelings for their mothers are closer to betrayal and hatred than love. Beaty confesses her suppressed feelings at her mother's funeral: "when they buried her, I had the greatest temptation to laugh down into that hole

they were putting her in" (29). However, they believe that their mothers somehow "got [a] way with words" (29) and wanted to prevent from meeting a worse fate.

Their struggles for their relationships with their mothers are an ongoing issue for them even though they have each dealt with motherhood themselves. Coral remembers that her mother told her, "I'll tell you what you're like: a disappointment. A let-down. And after all my sacrifices…" (48). On the contrary, Coral has a fear of having a child like herself who needs a lot of help and requires a sacrifice from others. She is afraid of ending up just like their mother and asks, "If we had kids, would we make the same mistakes?" (47). Beaty is pressured into giving up her child for adoption because she has a rare genetic disorder, and Alfa had an abortion because she was afraid it would be "an exhausting child" (67). Although it seems that they made their own decisions, saying, "we don't want any more special babies born because they're expensive, a drain on limited welfare resources" (55-6), in fact, there were no right decisions for them. Alfa recalls her painful experience of abortion: "What destroyed us was trying to decide where to put the blame" (67). However, they are aware that all the blame was for them as mothers. As disabled children, they saw from their own experiences with their mothers that society treats them like "sterile mule[s]" (60).

Although the three women have in common their profession and disabled status, they often quarrel and criticize each other, but it seems to be because of the pressure they feel from the society, not because there is any real conflict between them. Beaty does not avoid their problems and without any hesitance, points out others' weaknesses or even her own. Her straightforward speech irritates the others, especially Alfa.

Beaty: I've had a child. But I've not been a mother. I've had a child. But it's not the same.

Coral: Isn't it?

Beaty: It doesn't count. I had all the biology…the physical sensations—that new life moving under my hand—

[…]

Coral: But you haven't mothered?

Beaty: No.

Alfa: And it's not the same.

Beaty: (*to Alfa*) And you know about that, would you?

Alfa: I know a sad woman when I see one.

Beaty: Know all about babies? About carrying them and giving birth?

Alfa: Ugly and sad. It's there, in your mouth. (55)

Even though Alfa bothers Beaty, and Beaty fights back against Alfa, deep down in their hearts they truly can understand each other's tough lives and how hard it is to live in the world. It might be that they burst out angrily to each other instead of to the society that considers them to be a burden and prevents them from having children. After Alfa confesses her memory of her abortion, they realize that they are forgotten and left alone backstage. Beaty starts a small ritual for Coral's baby who is going to be born soon. She covers the floor with the baby clothing that Alfa knitted and adds the white vest she has been sewing for a newborn baby. Alfa and Coral join this ritual as well, as if they are

trying to remember and mourn the babies they could not keep, as if they are preparing to celebrate the birth of the new baby together.

The women's heartbreaking truths are gradually revealed, peeling away their layers of pretense, along with the layers of their clothes. At the end they take off all their huge costumes and become themselves. They do not play the role of Trojan women, but instead, become the Trojan women. For them, war is to survive in this world. As Trojan women lost their children in the war, they lost their children as victims of eugenics. After losing their children, the Trojan women realize what children mean for them: "All men know children mean more than life. Which is why they kill them" (61). Like the Trojan women's despair and bleakness, when the society takes away reproductive freedom from these women, they lose hope for the future. As the Trojan women decided to teach their children to dance in order to cover the brutality of the slaughter of their children, these women try to believe that their decisions were made for their children. However, finding their guilt and trauma that never be healed, they still question: What we could do, then?

Women playwrights' revisions of *The Trojan Women* use women's points of view to focus on the primal victims of war: women and children. In order to capture women's experiences of the brutality and savagery of war, they symbolically illustrate women's ruined and restrained bodies: Evans' *Trojan Barbie* uses broken doll bodies to show that both the women's physical and psychological wounds have been caused by war, and in Bird's *Trojan Women,* the Chorus is a single pregnant woman handcuffed to her bed, which reveals her vulnerable status. Three disabled actresses in O'Reilly's *Peeling* are

stuck in their costumes and cannot move. Their immobile positions imply that the social constraints imposed on and the prejudices held against these women's bodies isolate them from society.

The women's visceral struggles are effectively visualized particularly in the confined theatrical space. The set of Bird's *Trojan Women* is a mother-and-baby unit of a prison in which the clash between the Chorus and queen of Troy Hecuba is heightened, showing the characters as they experience the death of Hecuba's grandson and the birth of the Chorus' baby. For the three actresses in O'Reilly's *Peeling*, the stage is the place they share their lives together, facing their hurtful past and present and acting out the Trojan women's dilemma. In these intimate spaces the women vividly reveal their emotional depth and complexity through their clashes with each other as well as with the other characters. Moreover, the limitations of the space demonstrate that as spoils of war, the women's freedom has been stolen and their futures are constrained by the enemy.

In these plays, women playwrights do not rely on the traditional Greek theatrical device of divine intervention. In Evans' *Trojan Barbie*, intervention comes not from gods but from human beings. At the end a British officer serves as a *deus ex machina*, appearing to save Lotte from the Greeks. As a god in a Greek drama who helps mortals and fixes a situation or a problem, Lotte has the power to fixes broken dolls' bodies and the capacity to help the women in the future. In *the Trojan Women*, Bird creates the gods Athena and Poseidon, who do not about care about mortal matters and sarcastically joke about the mortals' tragedy. Eventually the gods' absence or the detachment from gods in

the revisions of *the Trojan Women* implies that all responsibility for war lies with the human beings who cause war.

Chapter 4: *The Bacchae*

Women's madness and power

In *Greek Tragedy on the American Stage: Ancient Drama in the Commercial Theatre 1882-1990,* while discussing the various productions of *Bacchae,* Karelisa Hartigan quotes Thomas Disch's review in the *Nation* (12 September 1987) of the Guthrie Theatre's 1987 production directed by Dennis Behl: "The ladies of the chorus did not appear to pose any discernible danger to the civil order of Thebes. They swirled their heavy gypsy skirts and shook their bangled arms at the balcony and declaimed their fortune cookies, but the effect was rather of a feminist rally than of women mad for Bacchus" (Hartigan 88). It is interesting that by appealing to the women's power, the scene of the Bacchants received attention from the critic rather than Euripides' portrayal of the madness of the women. The director might not have intended to emphasize the Bacchants' scene, but one thing is clear: the scene of the women being together was threateningly noticeable to the audience and the critic who might see some kind of relationship between the insane chorus of women and their empowerment.

As Colin Teevan explains, Euripides' *Bacchae* is "not a debate between excluded women and authority but between authority and a vengeful god of liberty" (Teevan 81). In other words, the women are not the central character in the play; instead it is a play

about Pentheus and Dionysus. However, even though no female characters specifically appear until late in the play, the Bacchants and the women in Thebes function as critical and problematic agents. The women who went to the mountain to worship the foreign god are portrayed as a threat to society, and eventually they are punished. Ironically, the survivor of this tragedy is Agave, who unknowingly kills her son, the king of Thebes. Although the main conflict centers on a clash between Dionysus and Pentheus, this duality is fractured by the presence of the women. When we turn our sight from these male characters to the minor roles played by the female characters, many questions emerge. What message was Euripides delivering to the Greeks, through these uncontrollable and maddened women? What is the meaning of the isolated women's ritual in the Greek world? Despite Pentheus attempts to end the worship of the god, why were the women used as the vehicle for his punishment? For the contemporary audience, how are the notions of the women's power and value perceived in relationship to the power struggles between two powerful men? What makes women playwrights interested in this play?

Euripides' *Bacchae* and Scholars' Diverse Views

Before exploring the female characters and their functions, which broadly effect the theme and reveal Euripides' intention in the play, it is important to consider the narrative: The god of wine, Dionysus, in the guise of an attractive mortal, comes to Thebes, where he was born, to vindicate his mother Semele and to spread his cult. In spite of his attraction to Dionysus, Pentheus, the young king of Thebes, denies Dionysus' divinity

and power and attempts to lock him up. Yet, because of Dionysus' spell, the women of the city are possessed and compelled to go to Mount Cithaeron, abandoning their homes and families. Dionysus gradually manipulates Pentheus to dress as a woman to spy on the maenads. The mad women worshipping in the mountain believe that Pentheus is a young lion and in their frenzy they tear Pentheus' body to pieces. Taking part in ecstatic worship, Pentheus' mother Agave joins in, killing her own son unwittingly and bringing home Pentheus' head as her trophy.

The *Bacchae* deals with the confrontation between the two Theban cousins, the semi-divine Dionysus and the human Pentheus. As the play progresses, the clash unfolds between the authorities of the state and religious freedom. The unknown and foreign god, Dionysus, disguised as a mortal, attacks the orderly, civilized world ruled by Pentheus. Pentheus cannot accept the new perceptions of the world that Dionysus brings and thus Pentheus's downfall is inevitable. Not knowing his tragic fate, Pentheus naively insults Dionysus' ethnicity, appearance, manliness, and even his higher godly status. Eventually, Dionysus entices Pentheus' voyeuristic desire to see women dancing in a woman-only ceremony; he brings Pentheus to the mountain where the maenads worship Dionysus. Pentheus, at the suggestion of the god, voluntarily dresses in female garments, so he can secretly witness his mother, Agave, and other women in their annual ritual. His transformation into a "woman," which destroys "his own identity as a male, as a ruler, and upholder of conventional religious practices" signifies the god's divine power and invasion into Pentheus' realm (Barry 18). At the same time it gives Pentheus the opportunity to realize the feminine aspects of his nature.

The encounter with a god on the stage might be fascinating to the ancient Greek audience and likewise to our contemporary theatre-goers as well. In *The Bacchae*, the audience confronts the choice between two characters: the ruler and the god: Pentheus, who "seeks to imprison the god as he tries to repress and conceal his own instinctual nature" and the god Dionysus, who "Agave claims went too far since 'gods should not equal man in their passions'" (McDonald 62). Therefore, this tragedy is eventually explained by "the gap that develops between the Dionysiac vision and the strictly human and sane imagination" (Foley, *Ritual* 208). According to the Greek myth, Semele's pregnancy by Zeus inspires Hera's jealousy. Hera deceives Semele and convinces her to see her lover as he really is. Semele asks Zeus to reveal himself to her in his true form to prove to her his divinity. For mortals to see a god in his true form, they witness over-powering flames which leads to a tragedy in which Semele turns into ash. In order to rescue his son from the pregnant Semele, Zeus grabs the unborn child and sews him into his thigh. Months later, a fully-grown Dionysus is born from Zeus' thigh. Dionysus's birth from Zeus' thigh gives him the ability of physical transformation, and being born twice (Semele and Zeus) implies Dionysus' chaotic sexuality, a gender blending of half woman and half man. As part god and part human of Asian descent, Dionysus reveals his androgynous nature, disrupting the boundaries and creating confusion about culturally restricted gender roles.

Pentheus is attracted by Dionysus' appearance as well as afraid of his transgressive behavior. Foley explains that "by using language on multiple levels and exploiting the physical accoutrements of theater and/or Dionysiac cult, [Dionysus] can

manipulate and transform the world to create an upside-down festal experience" (243). According to Foley, Dionysus' ability to manipulate the world seems to reflect Greek mystery cults prevailing at that time, such as the use of riddling language, symbols, and certain kinds of dramatic performance (243). Many critics claim that in presenting Athenian mystery cults, Euripides could be defending Dionysus as exacting justified divine retribution; other critics suggest instead that Euripides was criticizing the worship of the god, a position that most Athenians favored (243).

The critic Arthur Evans believes otherwise. For him and others the celebration of the Dionysiac element itself is not what Euripides attempted to deliver to the audience in his own day. The playwright's intention might have been to illustrate how the polis responds and embraces the Dionysiac elements in spite of their hostility to it (James 1). Dionysus' ambivalent sexuality and presence is surely a threat to the foundations of ordered society and at the same time, provides a new possibility for realizing new values. In her essay analyzing three recent versions of *The Bacchae*, Elizabeth Winkler introduces Charles Segal and Arthur Evans' views that Euripides revealed his critical view of Athens' patriarchal society through *The Bacchae*. According to Segal, the play was created as "a radical criticism of the 'great Athenian experiment' of the polis" (Winkler 220). Evans insists that "in social terms the cult of Dionysus represented a subversive counter-culture," which offers a realization of a different way of looking at nature, sexuality, religion and gender roles (220). These views suggest that Euripides was attempting to show his criticism of patriarchal restrictions and of Athenian misogyny (221).

Contemporary scholars' understanding of the play focuses on human beings' psychological aspects and specifically an inescapable human irrationality. Considering Dionysus in *The Bacchae* as a nature god or a god of religious ecstasy, claims are made that the god helps people in Thebes find "an outlet both in religious cult and in the mob violence of Athenian democratic politics" (Foley, *Ritual* 205). This perspective is reflected in *The Bacchae*'s adaptations by numerous contemporary playwrights or directors and women playwrights' revisions, such as Caryl Churchill and David Lan's *A Mouthful of Birds* and Maureen Duffy's *Rites*, which present women's psyches through this psychological approach.

The Women's Madness and Ritual in *The Bacchae*

Dionysus' invasion of Thebes emerges from his vengeance against Pentheus in order to restore Dionysus' mother's honor. Even though Dionysus' mother Semele insisted she was impregnated by Zeus, her sisters (including Pentheus' mother Agave) did not believe her and insultingly implied that it was a mortal man's baby. Furthermore, in order to hide Semele's shame, Semele's father lied about the fact that Zeus was angry at Semele for her lies about her love affair with Zeus, so Zeus burned Semele as punishment (Barry 10). In order to attack the stability of the city, Dionysus only makes the women leave their homes as punishment for the city of Thebes. He acknowledges that the women are a fundamental part of the men's activities in the polis, and by subverting its basic unit, the *oikos*, he effectively destroys the established order of the city.

Michael Zelenak explains that like the female characters in the play, real women were confined in the *oikos* by the Greeks' patriarchal system: "Restrictions upon women's lives and activities were at least partially intended to protect the parental status of the patriarch. Women worked, slept and dined only in the company of other women. Each Athenian *oikos* (household) was divided into sexually segregated quarters. Women never ventured unescorted outside" (Zelenak 27). Reflecting this issue of confinement, Greek tragedy always has an obligatory explanation about the reason female characters are outside the home and Greek plays do not have scenes that take place within buildings (27).

Respectable Athenian wives participated in Bacchic rituals, which offered one of the few outlets for brief freedom from restrictions (Winkler 220). Despite this sanctioned momentary release, women who chose to leave their houses and stay outside the city to collectively worship a god were viewed as radical and aggressive in the polis. As Richard Seaford points out, the Maenads' actions are considered "antithetical in obvious respects to the state of marriage" because they demonstrate resistance to male power (221). Evidently the anomalous nature of women's religious activities in the ancient world is caused by the conflict within the political structure in which "women's activities are believed to be confined to a privatized, secluded sector, the *oikos*, [which is] believed to be controlled by the all-important activities of men in the public sector of the polis" (Zeitlin 121). Colin Teevan claims that in *The Bacchae* "the women are no longer the excluded victims of a male patriarchy—they are agents of destruction of a male patriarchy that by its own intransigence has brought itself to such a point" (Teevan 81).

However, the women's cultic activity is not presented as "a representation of women's independent contributions to their various communities" but instead is easily considered to be "a problem for the male citizens to solve or as an issue for them to address" (Goff 294). In fact, the women are possessed by Dionysus—controlled by him—so that they cannot be agents of their own destiny.

In *The Bacchae*, the women's madness is depicted as a form of cult behavior, but also it indicates their weak and inferior position in the polis. As the society defines madness, it is always associated with the issues of power and control, which affect decisions about legal, proper, or sane action. When a human being cannot fit into society's codification of acceptable behavior or norms, this behavior can be considered to be mental illness (Winkler 217). The madness of the women in Thebes is their possession by Dionysus, which indicates that the women do not have power to control themselves. Thus, the female characters' sensual ecstasy and animal instinct are immediately regarded as madness. In the female-only rites, the asexuality of Dionysus, which blurs social boundaries of language, the role of sexes, and classes, links to his role as one who offers the women a temporary escape from male domination (Jameson 61).

During the rite, diverse reversals of the cultural order occur: Pentheus, who loathes Dionysus' femininity, disguises himself as a woman to spy on the women and his mother Agave. The women, who are not normally allowed to hunt, kill Pentheus as a sacrifice for the ritual. Douglas explains that through ritual, the potential for a reversal and hidden truth can be revealed: "Ritual recognizes the potency of disorder. In the disorder of the mind, in dreams, faints and frenzies, ritual expects to find powers and

truths which cannot be reached by conscious effort. Energy to command and special powers of healing come to those who can abandon rational control for a time" (Douglas 114). According to Douglas, Agave and the women are amazed by their energy and strength to hunt and they are able to attack Pentheus with enormous power. In the history of patriarchy, hunting existed exclusively for men because it was regarded as an activity that required physical stamina and mental alertness, and women were not considered suitable for it. Moreover, Greek society ignored and repressed women's aggressive impulses and physical aptitudes by confining women to the indoors (Doherty 99).

Another reversal is a transformation of Pentheus' position of leadership and military authority. As the ruler of Thebes, Pentheus finds his status drastically diminished when he becomes the beast for sacrifice at the ritual. Additionally his position as a hidden spectator voyeuristically watching the women on the mountain suddenly changes directions when he himself becomes the spectacle, watched, hunted and killed by the women. Since he wears a female garment, his position and gender role are completely reversed into the Other (Foley 243).

Euripides illustrates that when women's minds and bodies are far away from the norms of the society, their madness can destroy the civilized polis. Most of all, it cannot change their lives or the society but eventually helps to sustain the patriarchal society. Froma Zeitlin insists that the ultimate purpose of Greek tragedy is to educate male citizens in the democratic city in order to reinforce the patriarchal system, demonstrating masculine initiations (qtd. in Winkler 221). Thus the hidden message underneath the depiction of the women might be the men's assertion that women can be completely

manipulated—body and mind—and it is through the women's experiences that Pentheus goes through, the male society can be purged and reestablished.

At the end, the scene of Agave's realization about the murder of her son successfully illustrates the message of the play, which reinforces Greek patriarchy. Possessed by her worship of Dionysus, after killing her son Pentheus, Agave returns to the polis. In order to get her to snap out of her possession, Agave's father, Cadmus, a figure of authority in the household and Thebes, questions her about her identity:

> Cadmus: When you married, what house did you go?
>
> Agave: You gave me to Echion—a Sown Man. So they say.
>
> Cadmus: And who was the son born at home to your husband?
>
> Agave: Pentheus, from my marriage to his father. (1273-6 trans. Paul Woodruff)

After this dialogue, Agave finds that in her arms, the head she is carrying is not a lion's but that of her son Pentheus. Evoking the horrors of Dionysiac ritual, this scene might suggest that Agave and the people in Thebes should realize her positions as wife of Echion and mother of Pentheus and remember that marriage is a normal and productive ritual (Goff 351-2). Unfortunately, Pentheus is brought to a tragic death for his error of judgment and refusal to accept the women's worship of Dionysus. However, the painful struggle of Agave serves as a lesson about the importance of patriarchy.

The Emergence of *The Bacchae*'s Contemporary Revisions in the United States and the United Kingdom

Due to its violence by women and its controversial figure of Dionysus as half-man, half-woman, *The Bacchae* was not produced on the American stage until the 1960s. At that time Dionysus was interpreted as a god celebrating " free love united with a back-to-nature life-style" (Hartigan 89). The era's youth was enthusiastic about the legendary festival and rock concert Woodstock, while also experiencing the tragedies of three political assassinations: President John F. Kennedy (1963), Senator Robert Kennedy (1968), and Martin Luther King, Jr. (1968). The undercurrent of this period was the ongoing horrors of the Vietnam War, which began to escalate in the early 1960s. Tiring of a rigid power structure, young people at this time were attracted to the figure of Dionysus, who they recognized as a mysterious and pre-Christian god suggestive of the new, radical values in their lives.

When *The Bacchae* was staged by director André Gregory at the Yale Repertory Theatre in the spring 1969, the drama critic for the *New York Times* (23 March 1969) celebrated the play as representative of the era's transformations: "Every age, I suppose, searches among the classics for those works which seems most particularly to mirror its own nature; and our age has found *The Bacchae*… *The Bacchae* is important to us because Dionysus, especially as Euripides here depicts him, is for better or worse the god of our times: the god of intoxication, of frenzy, of release-your-inhibitions and blow-your-mind… the god who makes you dance" (qtd. in Hartigan 83-4). William Shephard thinks *The Bacchae* reflected a time of radical social transition with diverging social

values in gender, race, age, class, and particularly diverse disputes about the war in Vietnam (Shephard 238-9).

As the 1960s progressed, the drastic cultural shifts also changed the role of women; women entered the paid workforce and expressed their desire for equal pay for equal work, an end to sexual harassment, and the sharing of responsibility for housework and child rearing. In 1961, President Kennedy established the Commission on the Status of Women and the Federal Government amended the Equal Rights Act, which prohibited sex-based wage discrimination between men and women in the same work establishment in 1963. The National Organization for Women (NOW), founded in 1966, pursued women's full participation in the mainstream of American society. Gradually Americans began to realize the importance of acknowledging that women's positions were in no way equal to that of men's by the end of the 1960s (Walsh). In spite of these cultural and social changes related to women's issues and many theatre artists' interest in *The Bacchae*, there were no memorable revisions of the play by women that contain feminine discourse and narratives or women's perspectives in the United States.

Similar to the generational changes in the United States, Great Britain went through political and social upheavals at the end of the 1960s, actively dealing with issues of sexual and cultural politics in diverse ways. David Rabey describes the ways that cultural and political commentators in Great Britain had to admit that its days as "a freebooting major imperial power" were lost and a new national self-consciousness was emerging, reflecting "a less secure, deferential age in which traditional underpinnings were questioned and actively loosened" (62). Yet, as personal rights were politicized,

women's liberation, racial equality, and the sexual revolution were increasingly accepted with "the widespread availability of the contraceptive pill, promising a voluntary sterility on terms then considered biologically harmless, and the legalization of homosexual acts between private consenting adults in 1967" (63). Lizbeth Goodman believes that the political and social changes of this period are closely related to the evolution of feminist theatre: "Theatre censorship was abolished by Act of Parliament in 1968, and the first British National Women's Liberation Conference was held in Oxford in 1969… The rise of the women's movement in this period influenced the first specifically gender-oriented political demonstrations since the era of the suffragists" (Goodman 24). The political and social shifts brought the growth of the women's movement, and this cultural change stimulated the development of feminism and alternative theatres as well as women playwrights and directors who attempted to create their own stories and to reinterpret women's images (25-26).

Maureen Duffy's *Rites* (1969): A Ritual for Themselves or for Others?

> You think you can get away with murder, that we've no place we can call our own. Coming down here to see what we get up to when we're alone. Bastard Men![16]
>
> —Ada, *Rites*

In the introduction to her book *Look Back in Gender: Sexuality and the Family in Post-War British Drama*, Michelene Wandor suggests that if in Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*, the main character's gender were changed to Hamlette, the character's familial, political, and sexual relationships might have been shifted, radically changing the structure and meaning of the original play. Thus, she claims, "the gender of a character defines not only his or her biological sexual characteristics, but also implies imaginative and social assumptions about her/his personality, power and place in the world" (Wandor xiii). Like this exercise of gender shifting, Maureen Duffy's *Rites* explores gender politics in a contemporary context by asking two questions about the Greek character Agave, who was punished in the Greek world: If Agave were alive in the contemporary world and could have a voice for herself, what would she tell us? If she could resist the world, what she would do?

Rites is a play with all female casting in contrast to the original in which the women appear only in the final scene. Where as in *The Bacchae*, Agave and the Bacchants gather on the mountain for the Dionysian ritual, the women in *Rites* come to

[16] Maureen Duffy, *Rites*: 34

the confined space of a lavatory, where they share daily rituals and tell stories about their lives. *Rites* begins with workmen who are not listed in the casting, but indicated as men in the stage direction, dressed in white overalls, building the set of the play. Without any words, little by little, they fit and hang the walls and doors, and then bow to the audience and exit the stage. They` return, build, bow, and this process is repeated several times as if they were performing a rite in front of the audience. This initial rite performed by male workers demonstrates that "it is men who construct the world in which women perform these functions, a silent statement about women's relationship to the world" (Wandor 98). It seems that the male construction of the site for performance provides the women's own isolated place, and the women are eventually confined within this limited space. It is particularly ironic that the place in which women can talk liberally and privately is a ladies' lavatory built by men, suggesting that the women cannot escape from this patriarchal world.

The lavatory attendants, Ada and Meg, start their day at the lavatory, whereas the office assistants and old ladies with large bags join the daily ritual one by one: applying make-up to their faces, talking about trivialities in their lives, and singing secular songs. Their ritual is meaningless, superficial, and trivial. Ada acknowledges that how she presents herself to the world through her make-up is an important part of her daily ritual. For Ada, sex is "a mercantile product to be sold at her advantage to the highest bidder" (Winkler 222). As Ada says, "you've got to tart it up a bit to sell it high" (Duffy, 11). Frances Babbage points out that, in order to resist a patriarchal society, Ada's self-adornment is a kind of strategy, a "duplicitous endorsement of idealized feminine"

practices (105). However, ironically, it seems that Ada's strategy does not have power; she is depicted as the most well-adjusted of the women, because she follows the societal standards exactly by doing what the male-dominated world expects from women.

In *Rites*, the women try to confirm their existence by sharing their stories as a part of their rituals. Norma complains about her boss's repeated orders, saying, "I'm sick of old Villars and his, 'Type this Miss Smith, file that Miss Smith, take it down Miss Smith, lick it, stamp on it, post it'" (19). One of the old ladies, Nellie, confesses to a lack of communication with her husband: "I never knew how much he [my husband] earned but he give me my money regular as clockwork every Friday night, after he'd put his shoes on before he ate fish" (18). Third Office Girl brags about her satisfaction with her work, saying, "there's four of us and when he [boss] goes out of the room we have a laugh and a chat" (20). The constant theme in their complaints, jokes, and gossip centers on the men in their lives who have power over them. These women's daily rituals in the lavatory is their own making, conducted for the women themselves, yet they do not intend for it to have any purpose or bring about any positive results beyond the walls of the lavatory. As a ritual place, the lavatory itself is the space where the women discharge their undigested feelings and share their complaints. In fact, just as their territory, the lavatory, is constructed by men at the beginning, which symbolically implicates the male-dominated world, their rituals are consciously and unconsciously maintained in order to support the patriarchal system.

The overall tone of the play is sarcastic, cynical, and even comical. Duffy suggests to the actors that they adopt a "black farce" style, "a style of drama that

originated with the medieval morality play in which the devil and all his works can be seen as "funny as well as fearful" (6). Babbage claims, "what is revealed once when the men depart is a world both farcical and realistic, disorientating and familiar: a slice of 1960s Britain through a distorting lens" (105). Duffy believes that "tragedy is denial for the truth" (5). Using Aristotle's definition, I would argue that *Rites* is a tragedy, and in order to perceive the truth and to realize a hidden reality, this farcical style could be described as something between "fantasy and naturalism," which suits Duffy's intention (6).

As the women gather, the lavatory turns into chaos and a series of conflicts between the women continuously occur. In many other plays dealing with women's issues, women in a predicament eventually join together in solidarity, discovering their future together in spite of the difficulties and uncertainties. However, in *Rites* the women become each other's enemies, alternating with other times when they become allies who sympathize with each other about their unfair situation as women. Meg and Ada are work mates in the lavatory in charge of cleaning it, but even here within their close relationship a hierarchy exists. Waiting for Ada's promotion, Meg keeps begging that she be transferred with Ada once Ada is promoted: "You'll take me with you, won't you?" (10). The visitors to the toilets, called "Three Office Girls" in the script, represent the Greek chorus, commenting on every moment and creating a dynamic mood in the play. After finding vulgar writing on the wall of the bathroom stall, Second Office Girl says, "I've never been so disgusted!" and Third Office Girl threatens Ada, "we could report you having blokes in here" (13). It seems that according to each woman's job position, a tacit

hierarchy has emerged among the women. One of the old ladies, Norma, says, "I dunno how you can do a job like this" (20). She wonders about the differences in their job environments: "In winter you mustn't never see the day light" (20). Norma sees the daylight from her office located well above the lower-level lavatory, saying, "We've got a big window we can look out of. We're high up" (20). Throughout the play, rather than sympathizing with one another as women, the women brag about their positions or express their disdain for the others, which illustrates the gaps between their social positions.

Space is a central concern in the play. Often women's stories are portrayed in domestic settings such as kitchens or bedrooms somewhere inside a house, yet in this play the setting of a lavatory offers a space both private and public. This lavatory in a place of daily work is far removed from the women's homes and relationships with their family members. Their roles as mothers or wives are not the focus of the play. Only the two old ladies, Nellie and Dot, reflecting the firm patriarchal structure of the older generation, talk about their lives as wives. Moreover, when they speak about their experiences and difficulties as women, it is hard to see their true emotions. The women in *Rites* are presented only as themselves with their own identities, although often female characters' identities are defined by their relationships with men. It seems that these characters seem confident and firm in their conventional position in their families. Yet, this does not mean that these women have an independent status or a sense of agency; rather, this illustrates their isolated status both in their families and society and highlights the lack of communication between the sexes.

Duffy thinks that the turning point of Euripides' *The Bacchae* is when Dionysus asks Pentheus, "Would you like to see those women?" (Euripides, line 811) and this question triggers Pentheus' curiosity and hidden desire. From this moment, the truth is no longer important to him; instead, what he believes becomes the truth. In fact, he is convinced that he will see his own mother making love, breaking taboo, which is "something titillating, shocking, different" (Duffy 5). Pentheus also knows that he will be pained because of what he sees. In his mind, Pentheus has imagined that his mother Agave commits "shameful behavior," and he believes that he can catch her in such a moment (5). Thus, this voyeuristic desire finally fortifies the rupture between men and women in both plays *The Bacchae* and *Rites*.

Like Pentheus with a strong belief in his own rule, Ada in *Rites* maintains a solid belief system. As the inverse of Pentheus peeping at the women's ritual, Ada watches over the women's lavatory. Her suspicion that a man is peeping at them in a lavatory is caused by her enmity against men. In ancient Greece, the tragic hero Pentheus of *The Bacchae* is obsessed by his voyeurism and is killed by his own mother, whereas in the modern United Kingdom the heroine Ada in *Rites* is paranoid about men watching them and mistakenly murders an innocent woman who looks like a man, as if this enmity has been building throughout history and is distorted by the contemporary world.

Duffy's revision nevertheless challenges the audience to interpret the new setting and new characters in relationship to the Greek play. In *Rites*, Dionysus is not a god trying to manipulate people and to punish Pentheus and the maenads but a powerless life-size boy doll. Using a doll, Duffy attempts to create many layers of meaning: "A doll is at

once more terrifying, more enigmatic and more appropriate, artistically to the dream idiom like the impossible crematorium/altar incinerator, and psychologically—little girls play with dolls, 'women worship images'" (Duffy 6). The entrance of the Dionysus doll creates a farcical and sinister moment: two women enter with a boy doll dressed in real clothes. Ada undresses the little boy doll to see whether he is really a boy or perhaps subconsciously she fears that its maleness might be a threat to the women's territory. As if the women are executing a religious ritual for the phallus of the boy, Ada's undressing of the doll is careful and slow and the women look at him in awe:

> Ada: Looks so harmless all quiet there. A pity they ever have to grow up. Snaps and sails and puppy dogs' tails.
>
> Dot: Cause all the trouble in this world they do.
>
> Ada: Never still. Always have to be up and doing. (*She puts out a hand*.)
>
> First Woman: Don't touch!
>
> Ada: I was only seeing.
>
> First Woman: He is my boy.
>
> Meg: What was you seeing Ada?
>
> Ada: It'd be so easy, and then nobody'd know the difference. (26)

In contrast to the doll's "cherubic and blandly smiling face" (26), the women make sexual comments and demonstrate overbearing behavior. Like Dionysus, who blurs gender, this boy doll does not have clear genitalia, but when the women see the phallus of the boy, instead of being afraid of him as they might be of a god, the women play with his phallus and even mock it, joking about castration as "nobody'd know the difference"

(26), which implies they share Ada's hostility against men and her desire to subvert the male-dominated world.

Ada is the protagonist but in contrast to Euripides' play,and she seems in many ways to suggest the character of Agave. Unlike Agave, it seems that Ada is not a mother, nor is she sent into a frenzy by Dionysus; furthermore she aggressively resists the expectations of society. However, like Agave, who denies the truth about her sister Semele's life and Semele's son Dionysus, Ada denies life within the patriarchal world "by translating sex and love into money and revenge" as Duffy comments in the play's introduction (6). Duffy creates Ada as a leader who has power in her territory and determinedly rejects the world of stereotypes and attitudes. Yet, like Pentheus, who refuses Dionysus and suppresses the feminine aspects of himself, Ada attempts to create order by objectifying those around her as Duffy explains, "all reduction of people to objects, all imposition of labels and patterns to which they must conform, all segregation, can lead only to destruction" (Duffy 350-351). Duffy's play then, like the male and female characteristics of Dionysus, combines elements of both Pentheus and Agave in the character of Ada

As the story develops each character has an opportunity to expresses irrational violence and Ada in particular continuously reveals her bitter and vengeful feeling against society. As the Girl from cubicle two slashes her wrists but fails to commit suicide, saying just one word, "Desmond!", Duffy prepares the audience for the climactic moment. The declaration of the man's name—Desmond---provokes the women's collective anger caused by their own personal painful memories created by men even

though they do not know who he is. Ada's immediate response is expressed through an aggressive and violent language that captures her own troubled relationship with men:

> Bastard men! … I've got him; caught, clenched as if I had teeth in him. "Come in," I say all soft and I squeeze him tight, loving as a boa constrictor. And they're wild for it. They swoon and cry and die in my arms and come back for more. "Screw me," I whisper and they pound and pant in their pitiful climaxes they think so earth shaking. "That was a good one," they say and then I make them pay for it. (31-2)

Ada does not care who the man is and just waits for the moment her fury and enmity can burst. While there is no man in the lavatory and her antagonism is expressed to and against the other women. Ada's first target is the old, helpless woman from cubicle one and Ada utters, "Old Mother Brown that's who she is. That's how we all end up" (33). At that frightening moment, with Ada encouraging their anger with her own fury, the women start to dance together and chant in a disparaging way: "Knees up Mother Brown, knees up Mother Brown, Under the table you must go, Ee aye, ee aye, ee aye o! If I catch you bending, I'll saw your leg right off" (33). Ada and the women look for a scapegoat that they can blame and against whom they can express sexual antagonism. They find their second target when what appears to be a male intruder enters their space and their anger is redirected towards him.

The women in Euripides' *The Bacchae* are possessed by Dionysus.but the women in *Rites* are not driven by the wrath of the god. Nevertheless their dancing and singing reference Euripides' chorus of women. Their violence and madness is shown as a

reaction "against their situation as women," caused by "the pent-up anger and frustration of their everyday lives" in their male-dominated society (Winkler 221). From the beginning, the women's daily rituals at the lavatory are not for themselves but a kind of strategy for survival in a sexist society. As their antagonism grows stronger, their ritual becomes an act of agency, their own way to achieve some kind of empowerment. They eventually discover that the intruder who looks like a man has been spying on them but is actually a woman disguised as a man, an inverse of Pentheus and one of their own kind. Just like the maenads' divine possession in *The Bacchae*, they turn their attention to the intruder who invades their private, secret ritual. Even the Old Woman, the first target of Ada's hostility, joins in. The women's onslaught against the disguised intruder becomes uncontrollable.

Unlike Greek tragedy, in *Rites* the women's frenzied activities—known as *sparagmos*—unfold on the stage in full view of the audience: the attack causes the woman's body to become bruised and broken. It is wrapped in bloody clothing, and, using an incinerator, the women turn her body into ash, Duffy's climax of the women's hatred, and a possible reference to Dionysus' mother Semele being burnt to ash when she sees her lover Zeus in his true form. Acting as if nothing had happened to them, and the women show no regret or guilt. Looking in the lavatory's mirror, Nellie asks, "Is my hat straight?" Ada fixes her make-up, and Meg asks Ada, "What's he like your Friday feller?" (36). This sudden return to a ritualized normality seems to suggest that the women will not be punished for their action once the corpse disappears. One by one the women return to their daily lives, but the women's "modern sterility" as "a form of

madness" remains as "the total perversion of the Maenads' divine possession" (Winkler 222). Duffy explains the ending of the play: "In the very moment when the women have got their own back on men for their type-casting in an orgasm of violence, they find they have destroyed themselves and in death there is no difference" (Duffy, *Plays* 351). Returning to their daily lives, the women do not realize what destroy them and what are destroyed in them and again, the women's resentment and murderous anger are sealed.

Caryl Churchill and David Lan's *A Mouthful of Birds* (1986)

> It seems that my mouth is full of birds which I crunch between my teeth. Their feathers, their blood and broken bones are choking me.[17]
>
> —Doreen, *A Mouthful of Birds*

One of the United Kingdom's best-known playwrights, Caryl Churchill, considered by many to be the preeminent feminist voice in British theatre, has written many plays about social and political concerns using different kinds of theatrical experimentation. She often uses mythic figures and themes, as well as parallel historical moments, to deal with contemporary issues. In *Vinegar Tom* (1978) Churchill examines the role of the "witch" and the historical persecution of women. *Thyestes* (1994) is her version of Seneca's play, in which a man unknowingly eats the flesh of two of his children. *A Mouthful of Birds* (1986), co-written with anthropologist David Lan and produced in the Joint Stock

[17]Caryl Churchill and David Lan, *A Mouthful of Birds*: 71

production as a collaborative project with co-direction by Les Waters and choreographer Ian Spink, uses the actors' diverse improvisations to tell a variety of stories about possession, drawing on material from *The Bacchae*.

A Mouthful of Birds sketches seven characters' lives, revealing their professional and social positions in fragments. Using an episodic structure, it does not present coherent narratives but instead offers a multi-vocal script. According to their diverse social roles, the seven characters experience different kinds of possession by Pentheus, Dionysus, Agave, or the Bacchantes. The characters, played by both genders in *A Mouthful of Birds*, explore the possession on an individual level, whereas Euripides' Bacchantes and the women in Maureen Duffy's *Rites* experience the possession as a group in an isolated place: in the former the possession is offstage on a mountain and in the later onstage in a lavatory. In *A Mouthful of Birds*, the set has two levels representing a dilapidated house in which each room looks like a small box, each box depicts different people's lives.

At the beginning of Part One, Dionysus, wearing a white petticoat, dances with an uncontrollable and irrational power. After his dance, a brief scene in each character's life is presented that reveals their daily struggles: Lena is afraid of touching a dead rabbit; Marcia, a switchboard operator, keeps changing her voice to speak with either a West Indian accent or a "neutral" telephone voice; Derek, an unemployed man, works out hard at the gym; Yvonne, an acupuncturist, gets angry because a client falls asleep during treatment; businessman Paul plays chess and makes deals with his mother-in-law; Dan, a

vicar, continuously encounters spiritual, political, and pragmatic questions he cannot answer; Doreen cannot explain to an angry partner the reason why she ran away.

In Part Two, these everyday characters experience radical transformation: they are "overtaken by passion, obsession, habit, such that law, sovereign reason, strict regulation of gender roles—all the ballasts of patriarchy—are dislodged in a violent release of psychic and sexual energy" (Diamond 95). This process of possession is portrayed in the form of a dance that expresses the eating of fruit, which "emphasizes the sensuous pleasures of eating and the terrors of being torn up" (Churchill 28). Through a series of movements, the characters lose themselves and transform into other identities. Rather than being limited by verbal language, the actors use their dancing bodies to powerfully express the irrational phenomenon of being transformed and the unexplainable feelings that accompany their transformations. According to Sean Carney, "This dance is expressed in vacillation, equivocation, ambiguity and duality" (211). The seven characters' stories are interwoven with movement, mime, and dance, revealing what Carney calls "the play's image of the tragic human as inhabited by difference" (211). Before the various characters, taking on the action of Agave, murder Pentheus, the whole company dances in which "moments of extreme happiness and of violence from earlier parts of the play are repeated" (66). Because of the madness, their lives are disrupted and the social divisions created by patriarchy are blurred, yet the characters ironically realize extreme pleasure with a certain sense of terror through the cruelty of the violence.

Dance also plays a crucial part in the character of Dionysus. He has no spoken lines but instead expresses himself with his body. Elizabeth Winkler claims, "It is a

symptom of patriarchy in its late stages that the androgynous god is still fragmented and without voice" (224). In fact, symbolically the dance scene reveals Dionysus' unavoidable effect on and destructive power over people, while simultaneously serving to stress that the god Dionysus cannot be explained with words but only with his physical presence. When Dan, the vicar, is possessed by Dionysus, Dan questions the god's sexuality, saying, "I don't believe god is necessarily male," and starts to dance (37). After Dan transforms into Dionysus, the social boundaries between male and female, institutionalized by the patriarchy, are no longer clear anymore. After a male prison officer sees Dan after he is convicted for committing multiple homicides, the officer is confused about Dan's sexual orientation: "it was him when we admitted her" (37). When Dan dances, his dance is seductive, attracting others to him thus evoking Pentheus's attraction to Dionysus as if the mythic and modern world are fused: Dan says, "You see someone attractive at the other end of the bar. But you're shy. I'm not shy. What would you like? What would you really like? I can get you anything you like" (39). The Man who watches Dan's dance dies of pleasure, which reminds the audience of Dionysus' dance at the beginning, which connects ecstasy to death.

In this play, race and class politics exist not only in the contemporary world but also in the spiritual world. Marcia, a switchboard operator, also makes money as a medium but Sybil (referencing the Greek prophetess, Sibyl), a spirit that has the appearance of a white upper-class woman inhabiting her, does not want to share Marcia's body with Marcia's god, Baron Sunday, so Sybil gets rid of Marcia's West Indian accent and her gods as well. Marcia's body is continuously dominated by a post-colonial power:

Marcia does not want Sybil staying in her body and cries out in agony. Marcia first loses her voice, and then finally Marcia's body is ruled by Sybil. The passionate struggle of the characters in some cases emerges in a conflict within a single body.

Getting away from social responsibilities and constraints, the characters experience liberation and realize their new identities by being possessed by the disorderly Dionysian spirit. Derek says that he does not mind what his father says to him, but Derek keeps reminding the spirit, "he [my father] thought he wasn't a man without a job" (20). Derek says that there are many activities for him rather than working out, but it seems that the reason why Derek works out so hard at the gym is because he wants to reassure himself of his manhood, which he feels has been threatened by his unemployment. In the presence of Dionysus, Derek encounters the nineteenth-century French hermaphrodite, Herculine Barbin, played by an actress dressed as a man and becomes confused about his sexual identity. In historical actuality Barbin was born female, the male sexual organs developed in her body when she was growing up in a convent, giving her much confusion and pain. Later Barbin changed her name to Abel Barbin and French law redefined her as "male," but after struggling between her two selves, Barbin eventually committed suicide (Ferris, *Acting* 168). In front of Derek, Herculine's fragmented life story unfolds through her monologue, which is filled with both her pain and pleasure. When Herculine was with her lover Sara, "mysterious pains" accompanied her pleasure; when in their happiest moment, they were given a daughter, Herculine had to see Sara's grief because Herculine could not ask her to marry her. Diamond explains that the visual image presented on stage of a two-headed hermaphroditic body overlaps with the moment in which the

actress playing Herculine kisses Derek's neck as she stands behind him (Diamond 97). Herculine asks, "Sara's body, my girl's body, all lost, couldn't you have stayed?" (Churchill 52), yet, as Diamond explains, an "impossible object" like "a Mobius strip, a Medusa's head, or an unheard song," cannot be accepted in the civilized world because it is disorder and resistance itself (97). Anyone who tries to question or redefine social gender definition will meet a tragic ending, as even Pentheus was torn apart for wearing women's clothes (Ferris 168).

In the "Author's Notes," Churchill explains, "*The Bacchae* is about a violent murder done by women; it is about the pleasure of physical power, the exhilaration of destruction, and finally a recognition of its horror" (5). In order to recognize the different perspectives on the capacity of men and of women, Churchill attempts to subvert the traditional stereotype of passive women and aggressive men. Moreover, her particular interest in issues surrounding women and violence focuses on two questions in the play: how has women's violence been repressed throughout history, and what is the meaning of violence for women? At the beginning of the play, Lena seems easily frightened by violence but later possessed by a spirit's command, she drowns her child, which is difficult to understand. In Part Three, Lena describes her transformation after her violent behavior:

> I'm not frightened of anything, I walk alone at night, throw him over my shoulder if I have to… Every day is a struggle because I haven't forgotten anything. I remember I enjoyed doing it. It's nice to make someone alive

> and it's nice to make someone dead. Either way. That power is what I like best in the world. The struggle is every day not to use it. (70)

Instead of feeling guilty, Lena struggles with her remembrance of having the power to give life to her child and to take it away as well. Through the violence, she understands her need for empowerment and finally gains strength as a woman.

Co-author David Lan explains how the play's creative team decided to define forms of possession in the contemporary world: "We chose to see possession as any form of behavior that is not entirely under one's control, because of alcohol, because of love, or because an old-established pattern has re-asserted itself allowing the past, either personal or general, to speak directly to the present" (6). The character, Doreen, experiences her possession because of her old-established pattern of passivity and her squeamish personality. For Doreen, who always wants peace and quiet, it is hard to face any kind of trouble, so she usually avoids it or runs away from it, which illustrates the conventional stereotype of a weak woman. The house Doreen lives in is arranged into small box-like spaces on the second floor, and she has to face her housemates every day. The intimacy of such a small space continuously bothers her: her housemates continuously barge into her room, and their noise irritates Doreen. Doreen's repressed anger and hysteria burst out, and she finally slashes one of her housemate's faces with knife and slams a man against a wall, which illustrates the incredibly violent power of which she is apparently capable.

In the following scene, the violence becomes extreme and climactic: Doreen, possessed by Agave, tears off Pentheus' body with other women possessed by the

Bacchants. As Churchill states in the "Author's Note," even though Euripides used the Greek concept of *sparagmos*, "the violent dismemberment of Pentheus" (5) by the women, he did not put this violent act onstage. In Euripides' play, the audience hears from a messenger how terrible and cruel the maenads were on the mountain and reports the women's shocking behavior. However, presenting "the ambivalence of Dionysian multiplicity," *sparagmos* in this revision means that, unlike Euripides, the authors can provide "the ultimate expression of jubilant cruelty" by putting the triumphant and ecstatic violence on the stage (Carney 213).

In Part Three, each character's short speech reveals their new lives, how the possession by Dionysus has affected those whose lives will not be the same anymore. Carney argues, "Within England of the mid-1980s, the emergence of Dionysus is as close to an experience of alienation as it is an embracing of difference" (214). The experience of change and confusion revealed anxious fears and anger against the government, which were often expressed throughout the 1980s. After a Conservative victory that elected Britain's first woman Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, the government cut public subsidy to the arts, which initiated a steady erosion of support for many arts organization (Wandor, *Drama* 3). Industrial paradigms were inappropriately applied to education and the national health system, powers for police and security forces were increased, and restrictions on press and media were strengthened (Rabey 167). All these changes in daily life in Britain could be said to contribute to the anxiety and violence depicted by the characters.

Through violent behaviors and obsessions, the characters experience their Dionysiac double identities drawn from their own pasts and Euripides' text, and they eventually discover different selves and embrace their differences. Marcia, who struggled between two spirits, seems to find her own strength: "hearing voices gives me pain but to test my strength sometimes is good" (71). Derek, confused about his sexuality, becomes a transsexual and seems at peace with himself and his body: "My skin used to wrap me up, now it lets the world in" (71). As Frances Babbage points out, surely their transformation offers new perspectives on their lives and their values: "For some, this realization provokes a kind of liberation: not in the overthrow of some external authoritative power but in subtler counteraction of essentialist ideologies through newly found identifications with generative, democratic values and a deepened ethical awareness" (123). Against the reality of Thatcher's dictatorial notions, Churchill expresses personal longing and hope and proposes new possibilities through individuals' transformation and a new sense of self.

However, for some characters this realization is still full of confusion and struggle. Doreen confesses, "My head is filled with horrible images… It seems that my mouth is full of birds which I crunch between my teeth. Their feathers, their blood and broken bones are choking me" (71). Diamond says that "flying is woman's gesture," referencing Cixous' claim: "[women] fly the coop, take pleasure in jumbling the order of space, in disorienting it, in changing around the furniture, dislocating things and values, breaking them all up, emptying structures, and turning propriety upside down" (258). In Greek mythology, the Siren is historically considered to be a symbol for the dangerous

and abnormal creature embodied by women with large women's heads and bird wings. Like the Siren, flying is associated with temptation, disorder, and threats to the male-dominated society. The destructive images of broken birds in Doreen's head might mean she is facing an ongoing struggle and a reality she cannot swallow.

The women's violence means not the end of tragedy but the realization of women's capacity and possibility. Doreen does not want to return to her old life: "there's nothing for me there. There never was. I'm staying here" (70), and her decision encourages the other women to stay together as well. Compared with the ending of Duffy's *Rites*, Churchill's play is optimistic about the women, despite the moments of extreme violence. *Rites* does not show any hope of a positive future for the women, but instead portrays the sterility of the contemporary world: after the murder, all the women return to their daily routines as if nothing had happened. However, although there are not impressive changes for the women at the end of Churchill's play, the women stand together, which means they can make a new beginning, leaving behind the old place where difference was not permitted and where it was difficult to find a comfortable sense of self.

Churchill's revision does not simply depict Dionysian transformation through madness, hysteria, and frenzy, as the myth might suggest, but instead, as Babbage claims, acts "as metaphoric expression of a culture already fractured, hallucinatory and consuming" in the contemporary world (Babbage 117). The play ends with Dionysus dancing like he did in the opening scene. As Diamond claims, "repression of ambivalence, self-division and difference is also violent, and tragic" in society (97); the

perception of an ordered and harmonious society might be an illusion that we can never fully realize. Writing, producing, and staging this play at the height of Thatcher era was a clear reference to the Pentheus-like repressive Thatcher government and the need for a liberal frenzy to find one's self.

Bryony Lavery's *Kitchen Matters* (1990)

> Who says theatre never changes anything?
> —Bryony Lavery, the preface to *Kitchen Matters*

In an interview with Lizbeth Goodman, Lavery explains that "[*Kitchen Matters*] showed our 1990s god and mortals and their interchangeability" (Goodman 42). In *Kitchen Matters,* the characters in the play are gay and lesbian actors who are playing roles in Euripides' *The Bacchae,* and at the same time struggling with their difficult reality as gay theatre artists. In Lavery's revision, the "1990s god" is the goddess Trixia who changes her form into a lesbian and comes to the kitchen to avenge people who killed her mother (referencing Semele), and the mortal Pentheus is portrayed as the homophobic villain Penny. Like the conflict between Pentheus and Dionysus in Euripides' *the Bacchae*, the tension between Penny and Trixia dominates the dual plot of the play, which alternate between the fiscal dilemma which is the reality of the Gay Sweatshop[18] and the characters' theatrical world. The play begins in the kitchen, with the Writer's voice, who

reminds the audience of Bryony Lavery herself. It seems that the Writer is having a hard time writing a play for "a Gay, Poor Beleaguered Touring Theatre Company" (1). Even though the audience cannot see the Writer, but can only hear the Writer's voice, during the performance the Writer's existence is continuously referred to as if the Writer had control over the production.

Because the play is advertised as an "Epic Comedy," the overall tone of the work is not as serious or dark as the original Greek tragedy, but in contrast remains light, witty, and sassy. By using her "comedy feet," which she believes is one of her assets, Lavery wrote this comic take based on the famous tragedy that features the god of theatre and wine, something she says that she always wanted to do (42). Moreover, when the play was written, the Gay Sweatshop was undergoing a crisis in which the Arts Council tried to withdraw the funding which was critical for their continued work and survival. In contrast with their depressing, potentially doomed situation, Lavery attempted to "keep the company alive, by showing the excitement of live theatre" (Goodman 41) in order to overcome the threat creatively as well as financially. Elaine Aston recalls that "this show was of an anarchic, celebratory performance, adored by the Sweatshop audience; an event where people could come together to commiserate and to celebrate" (101), which seems a cheerful party rather than a portrayal of the company's crisis.

The Gay Sweatshop, founded as a touring company of queer theatre and performance in 1975, formed a separate Women's Group in 1977 to give voice to women's stories and issues. However, the Women's Group, which regularly produced all women's shows, did not last long; in 1984 it was purchased by a mixed management

company, and then eventually they closed the Gay Sweatshop in 1997 due to funding cuts (Goodman 74). Aston describes the relationships between women playwrights and theatre companies according to the social circumstances in Britain:

> Women's playwriting also finds a small outlet in the few surviving companies, mostly formed in the more liberal climate of the 1970s, who are dedicated to producing theatre committed to a programme of social change, sexual politics or feminism… Casualties of funding cuts at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s include, for example, the lesbian theatre company, Siren, and Monstrous Regiment, which had regularly commissioned plays by British and European women writers. (Aston 13)

For Lavery, who worked as an artistic director and writer for the Gay Sweatshop, it provided a great opportunity to express her artistic passion, talent, and political opinions.

In Lavery's revision, the set is described as "an epic, blasted kitchen with modern appliances"(1). Trixia, the Dionysus stand-in, recalls how her mother was isolated in the kitchen: "Folks here put her in this kitchen… it killed her…he [my father]…enshrined her and entrapped her in this kitchen" (2). For Trixia's opponent Penny, the kitchen is also an oppressive place for women: "They tell me some tart's trolling about enticing young girls with her Sapphic sludge…says kitchens kill [sic] women. Domesticity makes them die. Marriage makes them moulder. Spouts all this goddess goo" (16). In spite of women's isolation in the kitchen, Penny wants to occupy the kitchen and attempts to confine Trixia to the kitchen to prevent the Sapphic rite.

One of the characters, Felicity, who seems like a dissatisfied wife from British comic playwright Alan Ayckbourn's plays, appears and complains about her life. Her line implies that a woman's place is limited to the domestic area, and they are always expected to be a good mother and wife, but "the role of women has not been changed nearly enough" (Lavery, quoted in Goodman 41): "My husband made me a lovely fitted kitchen! It's got so many identical fitted cupboards that I once couldn't find my orange squeezsher [sic] for four years!" (32). Thus, the domestic space of the kitchen is presented as Penny and Trixia's battle zone and historically a confined place for women at the same time as a performance place where Gay Sweatshop fought for funding for gay and lesbian theatre.

Lavery script is meta-theatrical in order to convey double meanings, which challenge the audience to realize the differences between history and reality, and to find new possibilities or solutions for the future. Trixia, instead of performing a rite, tries to throw a party offstage to see "who turns up to celebrate the stuff I hold" (5). Her appearance is depicted as "a cross between a sad goddess and a gangster's moll" with "make-up, long cigarettes and divine power" (1), showing a dangerous and ambiguous quality as a divine and mortal. On the other hand, Penny the Poison is identified as a stereotype when a member of the chorus, Pam, holds up a placard that says, "in order to provide a villain, a lesbian in the cast agrees to be a straight, hateful woman-and-homosexual-hating monster who will get big big hickey" (12). As a divine figure—Penny—and mortal Trixia have a conflict over the issue of sexuality. Their back and

forth dialogue slips in and out of their character roles and the roles of actors in Gay Sweatshop as demonstrated in the following scene in which their conflict deepens:

> Trixia: I warn you…I share your dressing room!
>
> Penny: I warn you…I give you your lift home after the show! …
>
> Trixia: I warn you…your type of theatre
>
> is in for Big Big Hickey!
>
> They will call you 'Soapbox'
>
> They will say you are 'Preaching to The Converted'
>
> They will replace you with musicals about cats and roller skates…
>
> Marti Webb will play you in your life story!!! (26)

They fight over their personal conflict as actors, but Trixia criticizes Penny's homophobia, her stubborn mind, and furthermore, the theatre Penny symbolically represents, which tries to teach the audience, does not communicate with them in any viable way, and is not inspirational. Penny is described as being "from Propagandist Theatre, well-versed in alienation technique" (26) and someone who "performs the well-known Brechtian classic" (12). For Trixia worrying about the future of theatre, Penny's theatre which tries to stick to vestiges of the early feminist theatre, does not hold value anymore and cannot make theatre alive.

In extreme contrast to *The Bacchae*, the clash between Penny and Trixia in *Kitchen Matters* is not serious; it is a comic romp, full of innuendo and irony. Trixia as one of the two protagonists struggles to follow the play written by the Writer. She disagrees with many of the choices made by the Writer and does not want to be a violent

goddess as portrayed in the script. Trixia wants to be is an ordinary person, but the Writer's stage directions force her to follow a certain path that includes prejudice against women and "the idea of a safe, predictable theatre" (Goodman, *Feminist* 40).

Like Agave in Euripides' play, who is confined by history and myth, Penny's mother, Agatha is no different. After a Messenger from the future delivers the news about Penny's death by Agatha to other characters, describing every detail of the horrible murder scenes, Agatha wearing a headscarf, appears. Without knowing what she really wants to do, Agatha just sorts out dead Penny's body parts and anxiously cleans the kitchen as if she were a stereotype female character "from Kitchen Sink Drama" who hides her anger by cleaning the house and cooking dinner for the family (24). When Agatha opens the cooker to clean, she surprisingly finds dead Penny's head. The head humorously starts to speak and encourages Agatha to talk about herself, trapped as she is within her sexual and social prejudices. Finally Agatha speaks in a strong working class accent: "I were full to't crop wi being in scenes in supermarkets and hospital wards and washeterias!!! I ad a cob on about my sexuality…that's a posh word for me int it…if I were young I'd have a bun in me oven, live oer't brush, if I were middle-aged I were old …I were menopausal or frigid…but I were never a lesbian" (25). Through Penny's positive responses to her mother's complaints and their mutual sympathy, Agatha, punished for the murder of her child, never had a chance to express her sexuality, gets back her voice.

Agatha's struggle is reminiscent of Lavery's awareness of the limitations on women playwright's being produced and getting recognition. In an interview, Goodman

mentions Lavery's essay in *Women and Theatre: Calling the Shots* (Susan Todd, ed., 1984) in which Lavery compares herself with a cleaner at the museum who powerlessly follows male curators' directions and orders: "[A]t the moment the theatre seems too much like a great museum run by male curators. The glass exhibition cases are opened up and historic exhibitions taken out and shown to us all, if we can afford the entrance fee… I am tired of my role as cleaner in this museum. Most of the rubbish is dropped by men" (qtd. in Goodman, *Feminist* 41). Lavery's cleaner metaphor explicates that women are always the behind scenes of history watching men rule the world on their behalf while they still struggle to live in and to work for a male-dominated world.

Although even though these main characters who have privilege and power are aware of their situations and problems, they do not change anything but instead follow the story set out for them by history and the Writer. But the Chorus, who have their particular names as actors and unique personalities as well as sexualities, continuously voice their frustrations, express their opinions, and try to find a solution. As the chorus they sit on the sidelines and "watch the action with growing concern" (5), yet in reality and with a certain sense of irony their participation in the show serves as an example of direct political action to sustain and support their theatre company, which changed the history of the Gay Sweatshop. After the show closed, the Arts Council of Great Britain reversed their decision to cut their funding. Goodman believes that "the theme of the play is doubly ironic as a statement about the powers playing with the lives of ordinary people, when we remember that the theatre itself is seriously under threat at this particular point

in history, and that Gay Sweatshop has had more than its share of problems in securing adequate funding" (Goodman, *Feminist.* 42).

Toward the play's end, the mythic world of the play combines with the reality of the Gay Sweatshop's loss of funding and as such its future survival. Revealing herself as the goddess of theatre Trixia questions the Chorus and the audience: "My maw…was Theatre!!! My paw…was Money!!!...They stopped valuing her, okay…My paw stopped loving her…stopped putting money in her, starved her and she died. What kinda world is this?" (26). Coming to terms with biased theatre history and the companys's fiscal crisis, Trixia refuses to kill the characters, which is what the Writer expects her to do, and instead, she blesses each of the characters: "(*To Penny*) go back and be the heroine not the villain…and learn to keep your head while others all about you are losing theirs!...Ya think they're gonna have a easy time out there tryna break back into Mainstream?" (27-8). Trixia declares herself as a "soft goddess," rejects the Writer's directions and stops her own dictated vengeance.

Kitchen Matters begins with the voice of the Writer functioning as a god who has the power to create the story and to manipulate the characters. As the play moves forward Trixia and the Chorus act according to the Writer's story, but eventually they refuse to follow it. This refusal serves as a kind of *deus ex machina,* not one that saves them from their difficult situation, but one that establishes the ordinary people as a collective, a chorus, who have ability to change the story, and by implication, the world by themselves. When the Chorus calls Trixia "Miss Goddington," Trixia realizes that she has become the ordinary sensible person for whom the Chorus is waiting. Thus this comic

rendering of a Greek tragedy gives center stage to the chorus, the everyday folks who have the ability to make change, to give power to the people. By interweaving political messages from the world of arts funding with the old horrors from Greek tragedy, Lavery presents new stories for and by an ordinary people with her hope for the future of theatre.

These women playwrights' revisions explore the relationship between women's madness and social oppression in the contemporary world. In Euripides' *The Bacchae*, Pentheus' cross-dressing, wearing woman's clothes to disguise himself as a woman, depicts the divine power of Dionysus as well as Pentheus' hubris, which eventually causes his death. Judith Butler compares choosing clothes with deciding gender, she says "… that gender is a choice, or that gender is a role, or that gender is a construction that one puts on, as one puts on clothes in the morning, that there is a 'one' who is prior to this gender, a one who goes to the wardrobe of gender and decides with deliberation which gender it will be today" (22). Using gender performativity, the women playwrights place the theme of cross-dressing as a transgressive behavior to challenge the gender norm and social control.

In Duffy's *Rites,* the women exist in the limited space of a lavatory, complaining about unfairness and their unending manipulation by male-authority figures, until they explode with anger and frenzy, killing a 'man' who invades women's private place. After the women murder this man, they find out that the man is a woman wearing man's clothes. The women's struggle and simultaneous desire to fit into the requisite stereotypes forced on them by society create their madness and antagonistic feelings

about men. These insane women only cannot see the woman underneath of the male clothing. Similarly, in *A Mouthful of Birds* Churchill uses cross-dressing to make visual the character confined by social gender definition: Herculine Barbin was biologically born female and later became male. Through an actress dressed as a man, Barbin's confused gender identity and dissonant body are staged. In Lavery's *Kitchen Matters* when homophobic Penny, a stand-in for Pentheus, first appears on the stage, she is described as an aggressive woman wearing a blood-red glove with a kitchen knife. But later when Penny attempts to go Trixia's party to look at homosexual people, she disguises herself as a lesbian "dressed as a very obvious sapphic devotee" (Act 2, 6), a form of cross-dressing for Penny. After she changes clothes, Penny begins to have a different perspective of the world, saying to Trixia, who Penny hates, "Before you looked…vile…evil… / Now…you look…nice" (Act 2, 6).

In these revisions, control and manipulation of society to create ideal gender identities are depicted as social forces of oppression. At the moment the characters cross-dress, they choose their gender identities, and they experience freedom. However, according to their transgressive cross-dressing behavior, they are eventually killed as punishment, which signifies social exclusion, because of their violation of the gender norms.

Conclusion

> The theatre is the sphere most removed from the confines of domesticity, thus the woman who ventures to be heard in this space takes a greater risk than the woman poet or novelist, but it may also offer her greater potential for effective social change.
>
> ---Lynda Hart, *Making a Spectacle*, 1989 (2)

Euripides' female characters, by acting and speaking publically, challenge gender ideology, not only in the ancient Greek world but also in our contemporary world. These women—Medea, Hecuba, Cassandra, Agave--- boldly deliver their opinions and thoughts without fearing societal rejection. However, their voices, as numerous scholars claim, eventually are taken from them and their role in the end supports male power and authority and confirms the ideas of the world that men created. In the plays considered here these familiar classic roles are reconfigured: some female characters have powerful personalities, whereas others are just ordinary women. These women do not exist only for others and instead speak up for themselves and tell their personal stories of existing in a male dominated world.

Revising a play itself is challenging, but when a play is as well known as an ancient Greek drama it is not easy to make the audience rethink the well-known and familiar work. But as Marina Warner suggests, "Myths convey values and expectations which are always evolving, in the process of being formed" (Warner 14). The women playwrights in this study have embraced Warner's notion of mythic evolution and their

plays, like their characters, give voice to a women-centered viewpoint which demands a reconsideration of history as changing and evolving.

Lynda Hart's ground-breaking book on women playwrights helped me to think through the issues of revisions of classical Greek drama. Her concept of language, space, and the body are guiding principals for this work. Hart quotes scholar Josette Féral who "describes of feminine discourse as an effort to 'express the porous, uncentered nature of women; it is a policy of favoring fragment rather than whole, the point rather than the line, dispersion rather than concentration, heterogeneity rather than homogeneity.'" Hart goes on to say that "diversity and simultaneity of voices is a strong feature of this language" (12).

In order to challenge audiences and refine women's theatre, giving a voice to the female characters in Greek dramas, the women playwrights subvert traditional methods of using language, body, and theatrical space and create their own strategies to shape and re-shape women's theatre. In chapter two on Medea, the writers relocate Medea's place by emphasizing her position as a woman, foreigner, and outsider. Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats* situates the classic narrative in modern day Ireland. The heroine Hester lives in a bog that has long been used as a metaphor and symbol of the Irish psyche in Irish literature. Revealing her vulnerability and determination at the same time, Hester claims a bog as her territory to declare her own rules. Deborah Porter in *No More Medea* places Medea in a dark and barren wasteland to confront another mythological figure, the Virgin Mary, and shows both Medea and the Virgin Mary searching for their real selves and refusing the image people invented for them. Portraying these women with such crucially

different reputations provokes Porter to imagine new possibilities for these old feminine archetypes. Jackie Crossland and Franca Rame recreate characters that explore the possibilities of language. Crossland, in her play *Collateral Damage*, uses the narration of a familiar story to deliver Medea's side of the story, which is drastically different from the original male-authored text. The male characters Jason and king Crayon are humorously portrayed as immature and cartoon-like men revealing the comical and sarcastic nuances of the play that reject the idealistic heroism of the Greek world. Contrary to the portrayal of the plain and ordinary Medea created by Crossland, Rame's Medea is a modern-day, determined and strong woman from Greek tragedy, and her clear, often angry, often sorrowful words express her emotional journey while serving to assure the meaning of her existence.

The revisions of *The Trojan Women* focus intensely on women's bodies, which are tactically and immediately invaded by the enemy in war and used as a symbol of colonial imperialism. Demonstrating war's atrocity, ruined women's bodies are metaphorically presented in the revisions. In Christine Evans's *Trojan Barbie,* the images of broken dolls body parts are overlaid with women's psychological and physical wounds, all of them result of male conflict and combat. Caroline Bird in *Trojan Women: After Euripides* embodies women's burdens, pains, and restrictions by representing the Chorus as a single heavily pregnant woman who is tied on the bed waiting for delivery with fear and anxiety. Bird's use of a woman's pregnant body as a battlefield implies that woman's reproduction is used by men to manipulate women. In *Peeling,* Kaite O'Reilly confronts prejudice against disabled women's bodies by using three actresses who have

disabilities who are trapped by their preposterous multi-layered costumes. Using a form of audio-description, choral speaking, and sign interpretation that are supposed to aid the audience to understand the play, the characters express their conflicts. These three actresses' immobility on the stage parallels the Trojan women's incapacity in war, raising questions about a gender system that builds women's limitations into the very fabric of society. These three writers insist that the women in the Trojan War do not simply exist in the past but are emblematic of women's struggles with war and violence today.

In *The Bacchae* in chapter four, the playwrights ask that another kind of violence be considered. In order to express the relationship between women's experiences and the social structure institutionalized by patriarchy, the plays stage confined, prison-like spaces for the female characters. Maureen Duffy in *Rites* uses the daily rituals in a women's lavatory to depict women's marginalized positions in society. The women's antagonism against men eventually provokes a kind of madness and extreme violence. Dffy's stage space itself demonstrates a ritual when silent men build the lavatory in real time implying that the man-made world is critically responsible for the women's distorted acts. Caryl Churchill and David Lan's *A Mouthful of Birds* stages diverse expressions of the body—screaming, shivering, dancing, and possessed bodies—around a small box-like, two-level house. The confined space of each room signifies the characters' repressed psyches and the boundary of the social and cultural constraints which causes the characters' violent outbursts. In Bryony Lavery's *Kitchen Matters* the kitchen serves not only as a performance space but also as the place where the audience and the actors meet, the site where the past encounters the present. The kitchen, historically a women's

workspace, is opened to the public and becomes the place to change history for the theatre company struggling for funding.

Another significant aspect to all of these plays is their staging of the mother which includes mothers experiencing torment, such as angry Medea, a mother who seeks revenge for her husband's betrayal by murdering her young children, the harrowed Hecuba mourning for her dead son killed by the Greeks in war, and the possessed Agave unwittingly killing her son. For Medea and Agave who murder their children under very different circumstances and for Hecuba must stand by as her son and grandson are killed in war, their children's deaths catapult them to extreme emotional states. Rame's Medea refuses a motherhood fixed and determined by a male-dominated society. In *Collateral Damage*, Crossland contrasts two mothers: first, the ghost of Medea's mother, murdered by her husband, helps Medea to survive under the male oppression and second, Princess' mother, who is silently submissive to male authority while educating her daughter to obey her father Crayon. Porter in *No More Medea* also presents two distinctive mothers: Medea stigmatized as a murderer of her children and Mary, the mother of the founder of Christianity, worshiped by people as having given a virgin birth. Through their humorous conversation, Medea and Mary express their sorrow for loss of their children and struggle with their iconic images fabricated by male mythmakers.

Bird's *The Trojan Women* shows Hecuba as an unwilling survivor of war whose situation unravels arrogance, misery, and fear, revealing a wide range of emotional failing. O'Reilly's *Peeling*, a play within a play, has three impaired actresses, Alfa, Beaty, and Coral playing Mothers in *The Trojan Women.* They illustrate their painful past

and their struggles for achieving motherhood: Alfa was forced to have abortion for her physical ability; Beaty had to give up her child for adoption because of a rare genetic disorder; and the pregnant Coral, with painful memories of her own mother is terrified to birth. These women blame their mothers who hurt their feeling with careless words and could not protect them from the world, yet they also know that their mothers wanted to support them but did not have power to against a world filled with such hostilities and conflict.

Pentheus' mother Agave in *Bacchae* is recreated as Agatha, the female protagonist Penny's mother in Lavery's *Kitchen Matters*. Agatha is portrayed as a stereotypical mother from kitchen sink drama who does not express her real feeling and is trapped in the kitchen focusing domestic works. Agatha fully realizing social prejudice and her limitation in society, never speaks up for her sexuality and suffers all her life from anxieties. Like Agatha, Doreen, in Churchill's *Mouthful of Birds*, exemplifies a typical type of a weak woman who has a passive and squeamish personality. Yet, after Doreen's possession by Agave, she is transformed into a mad woman bursting with repressed anger and violence. Doreen's alteration provides her an opportunity to gain empowerment and strength as a woman and eventually she decides not to return her old life.

Recreating these violent, harrowed, and crazy mothers from Euripides' plays, women playwrights raise a question to the audience: beyond framing them as bad, inappropriate mothers, why have they become these irrational and abnormal mothers? Women playwrights are aware of the fact that in traditional family values mothers are

devalued and rejected. Their revisions embody these mothers as individuals, women who are trapped within a society that restricts and defines their role. Their bodies are the ultimate bodies: they are the ones who keep the human race alive. Their portrayal in these plays is central to exploding the myths of the ancient Greeks as well as the ways in which Greek mythmaking continues to infiltrate and invade contemporary culture. Writing against the historical imperative—telling Agave's story instead of Pentheus', for example--women playwrights, in Hart's words at the beginning of this conclusion, demonstrate "the potential for effective social change."

Appendix A: Playwrights

Bird, Caroline. *Trojan Women: After Euripides* (2012)

Bird, a British poet, playwright, and author, was born 1986 and is currently one of the writers-in-residence for the charity First Story. She was one of the five official poets for the London Olympics 2012. Her poem, "The Fun Palace" which is about celebration of the life and work of English Theatre director Joan Littlewood, is now erected on the Olympic Site outside the main stadium. Her plays include *The Trial of Dennis the Menace* (2012), *Chamber Piece* (2012).

Carr, Marina. *By the Bog of the Cats* (1998)

Irish playwright Carr was born in 1964 and grew in County Offaly. She was Writer-in-Residence at Trinity College and taught as Heimbold Professor of Irish Studies at Villanova University in 2003.Several of her plays are revisions of classical Greek myths and dramas with Greek allusions. Her plays include *Mai* (1995), *On Raftery's Hill* (2000), *Woman and Scarecrow* (2006), *16 Possible Glimpses* (2011).

Churchill, Caryl. *Mouthful of Bird* (1986)

Born 1938, English playwright Churchill wrote a number of plays for BBC radio and in her plays, dealt with feminist themes and explored sexual politics, using non-naturalistic techniques. She was Resident Dramatist at the Royal Court (1974-5) and spent much

of the 1970s and 1980s working with the theatre groups Joint Stock and Monstrous Regiment. Her plays include *Vinegar Tom* (1976), *Top Girls* (1982), *Cloud Nine* (1979), *Far Away* (2000), Seven Jewish Children (2009).

Crossland, Jackie. *Collateral Damage* (1991)

A theatre actor, writer, director, administrator, and visual artist, Crossland was born in 1943 in Barrie, Ontario, and at age 69, died in 2012 in Vancouver. *Collateral Damage* was selected as Best of the Vancouver Fringe, and with her partner Nora Randall, as a Canadian alternative theatre pioneer, she toured the province and staged stories at many labor gatherings.

Duffy, Maureen. *Rites* (1969)

Duffy, born 1933 in Worthing, Sussex, is a contemporary British poet, playwright, and novelist. She published a literary biography of Aphra Behn, and *The Erotic World of Faery*, a book-length study of eroticism in faery fantasy literature. Her plays include *Solo* (1970), *Old Tyme* (1970), *A Nightingale in Bloomsbury Square* (1974).

Evans, Christine. *Trojan Barbie* (2010)

Evans, originally from Australia, is a core Member of the Playwrights' Center of Minneapolis, a Women's Project Playwrights' Lab alumna, and a member of the Dramatists Guild2012. She teaches at Georgetown University as an Assistant Professor in Theatre and Performing Arts. Her work *Trojan Barbie* was developed and premiered at

the American Repertory Theater in 2009. Her plays include *My Vicious Angel* (1998), *Slow Falling Bird* (2005), *Weightless* (2009).

Lavery, Bryony. *Kitchen Matters* (1991)

British playwright Lavery, born in 1947, has written for television and radio shows, worked as an actress, and taught playwriting at Birmingham University. She was founder of Female Trouble and More Female Trouble, and an artistic director of Gay Sweatshop. Her plays include *Her Aching Heart* (1992), *Frozen* (1998), *A Wedding Story* (2000), *Illyria* (2002), *Dirt* (2012).

O'Reilly, Kaite. *Peeling* (2002)

As a dramaturg, playwright, and tutor, O'Reilly extensively focuses on disability arts and culture in her works. *Peeling* was staged for Graeae Theatre in 2002, two national and European tours, and the British Council Best of British showcase at Edinburgh Fringe 2003. O'Reilly currently teaches writing for performance at the postgraduate level at a number of universities and is Honorary Fellow at Exeter University. Her plays include *Speaking Stones* (2002), *Henhouse* (2004), *Persians* (2010), *Leaner Faster Stronger* (2012), *In Water I'm Weightless* (2012).

Porter, Deborah Taylor. *No More Medea* (1990)

A writer, director, and teacher living in Mexico, Porter toured the state as an actor and works to create theatre crossing frontiers of discipline, language, and culture as a part of a

group. Her play *Flowers* (2001) and *No More Medea* (Particle Zoo, 1990) has been produced around the world, including in Canada.

Rame, Franca. *Medea* (1981)

An Italian theatre actress, playwright and political activist, Rame, who was born in Parabiago, Italy, in 1929, expressed her critiques of the Italian government, the Roman Catholic Church, and the status of women through her performances. She was married Dario Fo, the Nobel Prize-winning playwright, who often collaborated with her in their political and theatrical works. She died 2013 at the age of 83 at her home in Milan. Her plays include *It's All Bed, Board and Church* (1977), *The Rape* (1983), *A "Woman Alone" and Other Plays* (2001).

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