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RECONSTRUCTING THE IMAGES OF WOMAN AND PATRIARCHY IN  
SARAH KANE'S *PHAEDRA'S LOVE* AND MARTIN CRIMP'S *CRUEL AND  
TENDER*

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## ONAY

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## YEMİN METNİ

Yüksek Lisans olarak sunduğum “Reconstructing the Images of Woman and Patriarchy in Sarah Kane’s *Phaedra’s Love* and Martin Crimp’s *Cruel and Tender*” adlı çalışmanın, tarafımdan, akademik kurallara ve etik değerlere uygun olarak yazıldığını ve yararlandığım eserlerin kaynakçada gösterilenlerden oluştuğunu, bunlara atıf yapılarak yararlanılmış olduğunu belirtir ve bunu onurumla beyan ederim.

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## ÖZET

Bu tez Sarah Kane ve Martin Crimp'in İngiliz tiyatro tarihinde popülerleşen Yunan tiyatrosunu revize etme amacıyla, istek üzerine yazdıkları *Phaedra's Love* ve *Cruel and Tender* oyunlarını feminist teori ile inceleyip, özellikle ikinci dalga feminist akımla öne çıkan radikal, liberal ve sosyalist feminist bakış açılarıyla kadın imajının ve erkek egemenliğinin belirtilen oyunlarda nasıl tekrardan inşa edildiğini gözler önüne serer. Batı dünyasında savaş sonrası kadınların baskıya, cinsel tahakküme, kürtaj haklarına ve bedenlerinin üzerinden yapılan politikalara karşı çıkarak örgütlenmeleri ve kişisel olanın aynı zamanda politik olduğunu da ifade etmeleri üzerine gelişen 1970 yıllardan 1990'lı yıllara uzanan feminist diskurun tiyatrodaki da nasıl ele alındığı, kadınlığın nasıl temsil edildiği belirtilmiştir. Ayrıca bu tez şiddet, tecavüz, kadın intiharları gibi erkek egemenliğinin kadınlar üzerine kurdukları baskıyla gelişen ve feminist teoride sık sık tartışılan konulara değinip bu konuların antik Yunan kültüründe ve Yunan tragedyasında nasıl işlendiğini analiz eder. Sophocles'in yazdığı *Women of Trachis* ve Seneca'nın oyunu *Phaedra*'yı erkek egemen toplumda yaşayan kadın karakterlerin gözünden ele alıp, trajedinin asla kadınların trajedisi olmamasından, kadınların yalnızca diğer yahut bir hikâye unsuru olarak oyunlarda bulunmasından bahseder. Daha sonra *Phaedra* ve *Phaedra's Love* oyunlarını karşılaştırmalı olarak analiz edilip, kadının ve egemen erkek kültürünün Kane tarafından nasıl inşa edildiğini açıklar. Son olarak bu tez, *Women of Trachis* ve *Cruel and Tender* oyunlarında Crimp'in ironik bir şekilde kadın karakterleri nasıl birey olarak ve çok yönlü inşa ettiğini tartışır. Belirtilen oyunların detaylı bir incelemesiyle, bu tez feminist öğelerin kendini feminist oyun yazarı olarak tanımlamayan ancak kadını merkeze alan yazarların antik Yunan oyunlarını modern bir dokunuşla nasıl ele aldıklarını keşfeder ve şiddetin, tecavüzün, intiharın hala kadınların üzerinde bir baskı unsuru olarak var olduğunu ancak kadınların sadece "diğer" olmadığını vurgular.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Şiddet, Yunan tragedyası, Sarah Kane, Martin Crimp, Feminist Teori

## ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes the plays *Phaedra's Love* by Sarah Kane and *Cruel and Tender* by Martin Crimp, which were commissioned with the uprising trend of staging Greek plays. While scrutinizing the plays, it is revealed how the image of women and patriarchy is reconstructed within the context of feminist theory, with a special emphasis on second-wave feminisms, namely the radical, liberal, and socialist feminist theories. Also, this thesis explores how post-war Western women's revolt against the patriarchal and sexual oppressions, abortion laws, and the politicization of their bodies led them to unite under the motto of "personal is political", and also explores the emergence of feminist theory since the 1970s to 1990s, which established a presence as a discourse in theatre. Furthermore, the thesis delves into the feminist concerns that are highly enunciated such as violence, rape, and women's suicide in ancient Greek culture and Greek tragedy. The thesis posits the idea that the tragedies are never women's tragedies but the heroes, women only serve as other or a mere plot device in the plays of *Women of Trachis* by Sophocles and Seneca's *Phaedra*, which are dissected through feminist lenses. The plays *Phaedra's Love* and *Phaedra* are comparatively analyzed and it is explained how Kane reconstructs the patriarchy and the image of women. Lastly, this thesis discusses how Crimp reconstructs the women characters as multifaceted and ironically criticizes them in his play by comparing them with the characters in *Women of Trachis*. Through a meticulous examination of these theatrical texts, this thesis explores how playwrights, who do not label themselves as feminist but position the women characters in the center of their plays, reconstruct the patriarchy and image of women with a modern touch and highlights that gender-based subjugation, rape, and violence still exist as an oppression apparatus, however, women are no longer "the others", they have found themselves a central place in theatre stage.

**Keywords:** Violence, Greek Tragedy, Sarah Kane, Martin Crimp, Feminist Theory

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# INTRODUCTION

The intersection of gender dynamics, the power balance in deeply rooted dichotomies, oppression, and its reflection in society with the portrayal of women on stage present an invaluable artistic expression with theatrical narratives. The transformative power of drama, taking its ideas from preeminent playwrights and critique from the audience, initiates a trajectory to new forms and expression on societal and artistic concerns. The longstanding relationship between feminism and theatre has been fostered through the portrayal of women on stage, even though in ancient times there were no women on stage, only their portrayals exist in play texts. However, as women do exist and are a part of life, their representation in theatre has been an indispensable constituent.

Across the epochs from ancient Greek to contemporary times, the theatre transformed, and so does the representation of women with the evolution of culture and societal norms. Since artists reflect the predominant facets of culture and society, a discerning analysis of their creation and re/construction, the authentic change may be observed and analyzed. Considering that theatre as an art form, has a deep-rooted history since ancient Greek times, observing a change in the representation of women can reveal ample ideas, thus contributing to feminist discourse and feminist theatre. Regarding that, this thesis aims to conduce to the feminist discourse on theatre by closely analyzing the plays of Martin Crimp, *Cruel and Tender*, and Sarah Kane's *Phaedra's Love* in order to unravel how the images of women and patriarchy are reconstructed with the comparison of their adapted plays, *Women of Trachis* and *Phaedra*. This thesis is organized into five interconnected chapters, each delves into theatre and feminist discourse with a special emphasis on the image of women and patriarchy.

The first chapter explores Martin Crimp and Sarah Kane's life as a playwright while putting a special emphasis on their writing styles in the context of in-yer-face and post-dramatic theatre. Their major plays are scrutinized by focusing on the themes such as violence, rape, power plays, marriage, and troubled self, which will be discussed thoroughly in the following chapters. While referring to their major plays, the reviews of theatre critics and scholars are displayed. Furthermore, Kane's plays are reviewed through the lens of in-yer-face theatre, which is coined by the theatre critic Aleks Sierz. Then, within the cultural context of the post-Thatcher era, the commodification of theatre and how it is regarded as a

product for the audience to consume is criticized, with an emphasis on Crimp's theatre. Ironically, with the affluent economy, theatre, as well as other art forms, are sponsored more which leads to emerging new forms and representations with the freedom of expression. I exemplify these emerging new forms in Crimp and Kane's theatre even though the overall trajectory of their theatre is against the idea of a consumerist society.

In chapter two, the feminist discourse and feminism as a literary theory are assayed with an emphasis on second-wave feminism, through which Kane's and Crimp's plays are analyzed. After a brief mention of the history of feminism, first-wave feminism, and second-wave feminism are explored. Then, the pioneers of second-wave feminism are referred to by offering concise descriptions of their prominent books and essays in a chronologically ordered manner. Furthermore, the present-day feminisms known as the third wave, post-feminism, or intersectional feminism are explored briefly as their theoretical discussion is ongoing. Later, since the plays of Martin Crimp and Sarah Kane will be analyzed through the lens of second-wave feminism, radical feminism, liberal feminism, and socialist feminism is scrutinized by giving reference to the vanguards of aforementioned feminisms. Lastly, feminist theatre is explored by highlighting the definitions and comments of feminist theatre critics and academics.

Chapter three explains how feminist elements are perceived in ancient Greece by evaluating it within the culture of fifth-century Athens. Women's representation, violence, oppression, and patriarchal forces in Greek theatre are inspected. Major Greek plays that involve women whose archetype goes as others, monsters, beasts, or helpers are scrutinized within the context of being sexual violence victims. Later, since the reconstruction of the image of women and patriarchy is explored throughout the thesis, the Greek/Roman version of the two plays, namely *Phaedra* and *Women of Trachis* are analyzed by referring to the culture of ancient Greece with a focus on rape, violence and representation of women. Further, the women characters in Greek theatre and their presentation as a plot device or a narrative technique are criticized. Even though the plays are written by Greek Sophocles and Roman Seneca the patterns related to women characters are connected since ancient Greek myths constitute the plots of the plays. The interconnection of the characters in *Phaedra* and *Women of Trachis* is revealed as the plays are based on mythological characters reflecting the ideology of ancient Greece. The following subchapter examines the very same feminist elements in Contemporary British Theatre by referring to certain contemporary plays. Since

Kane and Crimp are a part of Contemporary British theatre, the feminist elements adhered to feminist discourse such as sexual violence, oppression, and suicide pointed out in their works as a common motif. Thus, the contribution to the feminist discourse by analyzing selected works from ancient Greek and Contemporary British Theatre and highlighting the reconstruction of women's image is put forward.

Chapter four, comparatively explores how Kane adapts Seneca's play and reconstructs the images of women and patriarchy. Later, Kane's deconstruction of male characters by overthrowing their mighty hero, high moral chaste virgin images are scrutinized while Kane shocks the audience with gore and unbearable violent scenes in order to reflect the real violence that is happening everywhere but behind closed doors. Moreover, while Kane exposes how heroes are actually a force of oppression, a rapist who condemns rapists just because the revealing of the act would bring shame to the family, her reconstruction is delved into by giving myriad examples from *Phaedra's Love*. Lastly, this chapter reviews Kane's reconstruction of women characters by distinguishing their miseries and adhering the logic to the female characters, unlike the Greek version of the play.

The final chapter, chapter five delves into Crimp's ironic perspective while reconstructing the characters in *Cruel and Tender* compared to *Women of Trachis*. The focus of this chapter is how Crimp eludes dichotomies such as hero/antihero, male/female, oppressor/victim, which can be observed in Sophocles' play-text and also how Crimp reconstructs the women characters more humanely with their broken morals, compassion, assertiveness, and determination. Firstly, the main character Amelia, who refuses to be a victim, then Laela, who is given voice by Crimp compared to its silent counterpart Iole in the Sophoclean play is explored and lastly, how Greek women chorus is reconstructed by turning them into working-class women is analyzed. Since each part of the play opens with women characters, Crimp's focus on them as being a profeminist is examined as he reconstructs them with multifaceted personalities, who have flaws that the audience cannot possibly sympathize with them easily.

This thesis offers comparative analysis of Sophocles' *Women of Trachis* and Seneca's *Phaedra*, alongside their contemporary British adaptations, namely Sarah Kane's *Phaedra's Love* and Martin Crimp's *Cruel and Tender*. By highlighting the representation of gender, oppression, and sexual violence in these plays, this thesis intends to contribute to the understanding of how Crimp and Kane challenge traditional gender norms and address

issues pertaining to women, while interrogating the patriarchal structures prevalent in society and theatre. While feminist criticism of Greek and Roman plays has been widely disseminated, there exists a gap in the scholarly exploration of *Women of Trachis* and *Phaedra* from a second-wave feminist perspective. Moreover, the limited availability of publications discussing Crimp's *Cruel and Tender* and Kane's *Phaedra's Love* through second-wave feminist approaches has prompted the emergence of this thesis as a valuable contribution to the existing literature.

The plays *Cruel and Tender*, *Phaedra's Love*, *Women of Trachis* and *Phaedra* are subjected to a close analysis employing second-wave feminist approaches, including radical, liberal, and socialist feminism. This choice of theoretical lenses stems from the resonance between the recurring themes in the 1960s and 1970s feminist movement such as reproductive rights, bodily autonomy, sexual and domestic violence, gender roles, and the oppression perpetuated by patriarchal systems. These issues bear striking resemblance to the struggles faced by the women characters within the aforementioned plays, thus the application of these specific feminist frameworks to the plays and comparing them with their adaptation shed light on the image of women and construction of patriarchy in theatre.

This thesis only explores the play-texts of the aforementioned plays by referring to literary critics, theatre reviewers, feminist theatre scholars, and academics and aims to reveal how the image of women and patriarchy has changed since ancient Greek times to contemporary times by analyzing the plays *Cruel and Tender* and *Phaedra's Love* comparatively and their Greek and Roman originals. The performances of the plays are not reviewed in that regard, the analysis is limited to the play texts only. Further research and analysis can be conducted by focusing on the representation of women in the production and staging and the effect of performance on the audience.

## CHAPTER I

### 1. SARAH KANE AND MARTIN CRIMP AS CONTEMPORARY BRITISH PLAYWRIGHTS

#### 1.1. Sarah Kane's Life and Work Affecting her In-Yer-Face and Postdramatic Theatre

British contemporary playwrights Sarah Kane (1971- 1999) and Martin Crimp (1954-...) have distinctive perspectives on art. Their styles have been discerned as versatile, challenging, and aesthetically prolific, leading to a search for new forms of expression in drama. Kane's tragic suicide at the age of twenty-seven brought an end to her search for potential new forms of expression yet her legacy and oeuvre never fail to demonstrate a neoteric perspective of staging and a new look in her play-texts.

Sarah Kane was born on 3 February 1971, Kelvedon Hatch, Brentwood, Essex and was brought up by evangelical parents. Her father was a journalist who worked for *Daily Mirror* and her mother was taking care of Sarah and her brother. Her brother, Simon Kane is now the executor of her intellectual property (McKinley). She was raised as born-again Christian but in her teenage years, she rejected the idea of God and disliked the values of suburban south-east England. Kane attended Shenfield High School and she read Drama at Bristol University. Later she attended play-writing courses of David Edgar's at Birmingham University (Ravenhill). Ravenhill quoted from Kane in her obituary indicating why she was hating so much the values of suburban life. He quoted Kane and noted "there is an attitude that certain things could not happen here. Yet there's the same amount of abuse and corruption in Essex as anywhere else, and that's what I want to blow open". This quote might be revealing the reasons why Kane wanted to show the violence in people's daily lives is so common and should be addressed to in her plays.

She developed an interest in theatre at a young age, performing in plays during her undergraduate degree at Bristol University. Furthermore, she directed plays by Shakespeare, Caryl Churchill, and Samuel Beckett (Urban 305). During that time, she began writing and her earliest piece *Comic Monologues*, detailed a rape scene including a violent man. Kane performed the play first. In Fringe Festival, *Comic Monologues* became a part of *Dreams, Screams, and Silence*, which involves a bisexual person torn between two lovers. This piece was directed by Kane and when she returned to Edinburg Fringe Festival the following year, 1992, her monologue *Starved* was performed as a part of *Dreams Screams 2*. At the same

festival, she saw the performance of *Mad* by Jeremy Weller and was highly influenced by his experiential approach to mental problems. In 1993, all pieces of her monologues were performed in a combined work named *Sick* at the New End Theatre. After her graduation, Kane registered for the playwriting program at Bristol University (Royal Opera House). In the first year of her postgraduate studies, she completed the first draft of *Blasted*, her notorious debut work that premiered at the Royal Court.

Following *Blasted*, Kane wrote and directed *Phaedra's Love* (1996) at the Gate Theatre. Next year, Kane returned to Gate Theatre to direct Büchner's *Woyzeck*, perceived by Kane as one of the greatest plays. In 1998, she developed and produced *Cleansed* and *Crave* at the Royal Court, which shifts the opinions of theatre critics. Even though her work was seen as successful, she was depressed and committed suicide in 1999 at King's College Hospital. Her latest work *4:48 Psychosis* was staged after her death in 2000.

### **1.1.2. The cultural context of Kane's theatre**

The economic growth, social, political, and cultural change after the Thatcher era in the 1990s, lead to a new wave of theatre in Great Britain. Especially with the commodification of theatre and the cuts in government subsidies open ways to a "DIY theatre culture" according to Rickson (Sierz, *Modern British* 39). Since most of the young generation who lived in the Thatcher era is coming out of age in the 1990s, their oppressed ideologies come alive in a commodified, relatively affluent yet politically diverse atmosphere. This young angry generation in the post-Thatcher era did not rely on government subsidies to proclaim their ideologies on theatre, moreover, they were angrier and more proactive compared to their predecessors. They were able to use their theatre as a voice of protest (Armstrong 12). As Lacey indicates in *The Cambridge History of British Theatre*, one of the main achievements of post-war theatre is to challenge assumptions about race, gender, and social class (441). The social movement has already been deployed after the second world war but liberal, monetized economy policies brought the change that was observed in the 1990s. Yet the affluent economy was mostly the result of privatization and liberal economic policies in which companies and shareholders had a huge impact on social and cultural norms.

Lacey observes the impact of commodification on theatre and he draws attention to the contradictory benefits of commodification. He concludes that "commodification was not likely to have made theatre generally more independent in a free market, but ironically it "may have provided conditions for the fulfilment of some of the political objectives of

companies that opposed it, by partly redrawing the space in which a politically and culturally oppositional theatre could operate" (441). This opposition was hyped up with the "Cool Britannia" policies, aiming to label London as the capital of arts and culture. In the mid-1990s, the theatre was hyped by publications like *Newsweek* and *Le Monde*, indicating that London is the theatre capital and coolest city of Europe (Sierz, *Modern British* 49). In this atmosphere, no consensus aligns with a particular political movement, rather there was individual opposition and resistance which is directed towards to audience in an "in-yer-face" format (Armstrong 12). Sierz portrays the essence of the period and adds that while this young generation was being brought up intellectually, the Tories were in charge of the government and everything seemed stagnant. During this period, they met the 80s dance and ecstasy culture. Unlike their predecessors, they saw no difference between heterosexual or homosexual relationships. At the same time, this generation figured out that the best way to protest, make music or reflect on their art is to do it by themselves. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, they understood that metanarratives and old ideologies were dissipated. Trust in the politicians is not existing therefore they were not voting because they acknowledged every system as corrupted. That is the world the playwrights of the 1990s were showcasing their works (237).

In that context, Kane's theatre is not appealing to the capitalist norms but instead depicts society as a "psychological, figural and literal gore-fest of excessive behaviour" (Armstrong 13). Instead of giving a general "moral" lesson on the consumer-driven society, Kane illustrates what it is to be an individual living in this society and reflects the violence, psychological illness, war, and cruelty as it is to shock the audience and put a mirror on the stage.

### **1.1.3. 1990s soul, in-yer-face theatre representing Kane's work**

The new sensibility of dramatic arts in the nineties was cruelly direct, detached, and experimental in form. Reflecting the zeitgeist of the period, in-yer-face theatre identifies a group of young British playwrights like Sarah Kane, Mark Ravenhill, Anthony Neilson, and Philip Ridley. The term "in-yer-face", coined by Sierz, becomes the terminology that has been mostly used by the critics even though many labels were proposed for the 1990s drama such as experiential theatre, cool theatre, new brutalism, and avant-garde theatre. In an interview with Sierz in her book *British Theatre of the 1990s: Interviews with Directors, Playwrights, Critics, and Academics* Aragay directs the question of labeling the drama of that time and how other labels do or do not propose the zeitgeist of the 1990s. He responds

and declares that “in-er-face” is the correct label that makes sense even though the terminology is not a production of his, he only coined it.

Many critics tried ways of describing this sensibility and suggest names such as Neo-Jacobian, new brutalism, theatre of urban ennui, in-er-face theatre, and sometimes cool theatre. Sierz rejects "new brutalism" since its focus is merely the content of some plays of that period and indicates that playwrights deliberately aim to brutalize the audience. He exemplifies this by demonstrating that Sarah Kane's plays are not only about sex and violence but also love and tenderness as well. He also rejects "theatre of urban ennui" because it misses the point of being a revolt against the system not just an anger, he claims. The young generation of the 1990s was not bored but trying to get on with their lives. He also refuses the term "cool" theatre and finds himself responsible for this label since he had published an article with "Cool Britannia" in its title. Yet, Sierz believes that regardless of the playwright's "cool" personality, their plays are not cool, they are cynical, detached, and postmodern.

Sierz explains why he believes 1990s theatre in Britain should be called in-er-face theatre and states in-er-face depicts a connection among the stage and the audience, the writer, and the society. The small number of spectators in cramped spaces may seem like a hindrance to performing yet 1990s writers turned this powerlessness into a strength. Studio spaces led to greater intimacy, cohesion, and shocking element in the 90s theatre (*In-er-face* 143). Sierz disagrees that only sex and violence should be coming up to minds while describing in-er-face theatre. He argues that its main focus is emotional core, whether these emotions are falling under a challenging category, like suffering, humiliation, and abnormal behaviours. Sarah Kane's theatre includes themes of explicit, vulgar scenes but as Sierz indicates, her main focus is the emotional bond and connection in lieu of in-er-face theatre.

#### **1.1.4. The themes in Kane's plays and her works as a negative review magnet**

The oeuvre of Kane centralizes over the ethically corrupted, isolated characters suffering from mental disorders. Yet her work is not a mere glamorization of violence, sex, and drugs. On the contrary, her plays portray violence as a lifestyle in which the reality is harsh and stark. She dramatizes the cultural and social problems behind the displayed violence. Her work presents the political as a lived experience. Armstrong comments on Kane's work and concludes that her work is not moralistic yet offers a critique of modern problems like consumerism, sexual and chronic violence, exploitation, and abuse (16). She



also states that, “Kane’s plays question political and ethical norms, presenting themes that repeatedly surface like a recurring nightmare: the destabilizing nature of transgressive sexuality, the social role of violence, the ethics of suicide, the increasing frequency of repetitive memory as postmodern experience, and its attendant results of trauma and social alienation” (21). Moreover, Biçer comments on Kane’s style and themes in his work and he claims that comparing Kane’s work to her contemporaries, Kane’s oeuvre is more radical, deliberately showing the ills of society to the audience by focusing on sexuality, violence, love, and pain, drug addiction and the posttraumatic results of the consumerist lifestyle. She almost touches upon all the taboos in her period as being one of the representatives of in-her-face theatre (24).

Kane’s first play to be performed at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs on 12 January 1995, *Blasted* received a torrent of negative reviews, and Kane was accused of exposing violence to her audience. Newspapers like *Daily Telegraph*, *Guardian*, and *Independent on Sunday* not only denounced her work but also commented on Kane’s style of writing, indicating that she is naïve and not a good writer, lacking the logic of a simple dream (Urban 305). Yet, after *Blasted* was revived on Royal Court stages, it is acknowledged as one of the best plays of the 2000s. Unlike the reviews, claiming that the play imposes unnecessary violence upon the audience, Kane uses violence as a tool. Armstrong asserts that *Blasted* enacts the representation of violence perpetually in order to create a numbing effect on the audience, just as the shocking war in Bosnia (1994) numbs the senses of people. Furthermore, Armstrong adds that the traumatized effect of violence may portray human degradation (40). Even the name of the play suggests a sudden realization, a detonation caused by an unnatural, inhumane, and violent action, which may be random yet traumatizing to many. In her play, Kane simply re-enacts the traumatizing effects of war to have her audience feel the same trauma and violence by destroying the settled conceptions of society, war, and violence.

Set in Leeds, the play begins with the arrival of Ian, an old racist journalist, and Cate, a young woman. First, the play looks as if the story fixated on the toxic relationship of Ian and Cate, yet towards the end of scene two, a bomb blasts the hotel, turning the site into a violent civil conflict area. A soldier bursts into the then-hotel now a ruin, and the soldier rapes Ian, gauges, and eats his eyes to avenge his dead girlfriend. Col reflects the same violence that has been exposed to her. To overcome his grief, the soldier becomes the perpetrator of the violence however, he blows his brain out. Cate returns to the hotel with

food and drink for Ian, offering a simple act of generosity among the appalling violence and conflict. The play ends with Ian thanking Cate.

Kane's initial intention was to interrogate and reflect on the relationship between Ian and Cate, yet the attack on Srebrenica caught her attention while she was watching TV, leading her to write about the war by drawing a parallel between a couple's relationship and a war. Urban draws attention to this parallelism and notes that "Kane's play dramatizes how Ian's treatment of Cate fore-shadows the behavior of the Soldier, and rather than imagining that violence happening in some distant country, the play brings the 'foreign' conflict to Leeds" (309). By bringing the violence "closer" to the British audience and drawing a parallel between the everyday violence occurring among couples as the oppressor and oppressed- mostly women- and the horrors of war, Kane invokes the realness of war and violence.

Sarah Kane's second play *Phaedra's Love* is a loose adaptation of Seneca's classical play *Phaedra*, which is based on the Greek myth of Phaedra and Hippolytus. Whilst Seneca's version focuses on Phaedra, Kane's perspective on the play is to reflect the nihilist attitude of Hippolytus in a brutal, almost comical way. Critics argue over its explicit vulgar scenes, which pose a contrast to classical plays in which death and suicide are only implied and never shown on stage. In *Phaedra's Love*, the classical themes of love, revenge, suicide, and death were kept whilst a common feature of classical plays; gods' intervention in human affairs was disregarded by Kane (Armstrong 98). The plot, demonstrates a myriad affinity with the original play yet "it is the characterizations, the emotional tone and the setting that are predominantly different in Kane's retelling of the Hippolytus myth, rather than the plot itself" ("Didaskalia").

Unlike the original chaste virgin Hippolytus, Kane's Hippolytus has innumerable sexual partners whom he spurns after sex since no one "burns" him (Urban 309). He is portrayed as a nihilist who "fills time" in life rather than living it. Unable to fulfil her desire to be with Hippolytus, Phaedra commits suicide and blames Hippolytus for rape to take revenge on her unrequited love. Hippolytus does not rebut the rape that he did not commit, even though he is fully aware that the royal family's dignity will degrade. However, the accusation symbolizes the long-lost will of living life with meaning. As Urban states, "this accusation gives meaning to his existence. He does not refute it because he is, in essence, responsible for Phaedra's death, and to deny the rape would make him as hypocritical" (309).

Venturing to be blamed for Phaedra's rape, Hippolytus consents to the death penalty. The play ends as Hippolytus submits himself to the ferocious crowd that disembowels him and barbecues his genitals. Hippolytus' father Theseus is among the crowd in disguise, who rapes and kills Strophe, her stepdaughter, in a moment of anger directed at Hippolytus. Ironically, Theseus commits the crime that Hippolytus is falsely accused of, yet the ultimate irony lies in the last scene when Hippolytus says: "If there could have been more moments like this" (Kane 103) in his last breath. Hippolytus finds meaning in life whilst dying in the hands of a crowd who go berserk during the attempt of bringing justice to an ineffable crime. Kane dramatizes the commonality of acute violence in society and exposes the traumatic effects that shocks the audience and the critics.

Furthermore, Kane's third play *Cleansed* which was directed by James McDonald, premiered at the Royal Court Theatre on 30 April 1998, criticized as being one of the most lavish plays in Royal Court history and averred that it can be an art gallery installation. The myriad number of stage directions in the play attest to the art installation critique.

The play opens with a drug dealer, Tinker, shooting heroin into an eyeball of an addict, Graham. After Graham's death, Tinker takes over the role of the guardian of the university, some sort of a correction center for unwanted young males. The correction center is specified as a university by Kane. Aston indicates how this positioning of the university as a source of oppression in her book *Feminist Views on the English Stage: Women Playwrights 1990-2000* that "[t]he idea of a university as an institution that regulates, represses and regiments, rather than encourages the creative, the imaginative and the unorthodox, haunts the play's central concerns with the regulation of sexuality, staged through a series of encounters and love relations that unfold between inmates" (89). Tinker tortures the university inmates: Rod and Carl, punished for involvement in a gay relationship, and Grace, sister of Graham, who arrives at the university to collect his brother's belongings. As much as Tinker tortures the inmates, he also suffers from the control and domination of the university he serves. Inside a peep-show booth, Tinker tries to connect with the stripper he watches and calls her Grace. Regardless, Tinker advances his torture techniques and tests the boundaries of love between Rod and Carl. Whilst Tinker torments Carl, he promises he would die for Rod, yet he cannot keep his promise and begs Tinker to kill Rod instead. Tinker cuts Carl's tongue so that he could not apologize for his perfidy. Whenever Carl tries to apologize for his behavior, Tinker punishes him and mutilates his hands and feet. Understanding that love needs a sacrifice, Rod accepts to be killed instead of Carl. After

that, Tinker cuts Carl's penis off and grafts it into Grace. By doing so Tinker indicates that she craves to be her brother Graham. At this point, everything loses its meaning, Grace thanks her torturer and endeavors to reach Carl. "In their blurred gender identities (Grace looks like her brother, Carl wears Grace's clothes), there is a communion between the pair, suggesting that love can exist even in such horrific circumstances" (Urban 312). Even though the world that Kane reflect is violent, authoritarian, and transgressive, she ends her play with a hope adhered to love.

Yet again, Kane was criticized for using excrescence violence in this play as well. Aston and Reinelt clarify the role of violence in the play and add "*Cleansed* is also designed to re-awaken audience perception of our violent world through a theatrical style which 'shows', rather than 'tells' of, the persecution of a socially 'unacceptable' group of people whose bodies are variously injected with heroin, beaten, raped and hacked to pieces" (1).

Kane's fourth play, *Crave* features four characters designated by single letters; A, B, C, and M. Each character represents perspicuous and individual struggles through their minds to go behind the darkest corners of their minds. Their voices enunciate "the memory of love, loss, pain, and silence" (Armstrong 139). In midst of echoes of voices, direct lines from Kane's early work and references to the Bible, Shakespeare and T.S Elliot's can be heard as well. Unlike her previous plays, *Crave* is a static play that lacks the depiction of graphic violence. Criticism against her early works may have led Kane to respond with a poetic piece of work rather than a performative play. The play got favorable reviews after being performed at the Edinburg Fringe Festival. London's debut of the play was performed at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs in 1998 and got positive reviews from the British press.

The play unfolds with the dialogues of characters speaking to each other and frequently to the audience. The letters designated to characters may signify their traits: A is the abuser and a paedophile obsessed with C, C is the child, traumatized, and finds herself in a hospital ward. M is the mother-to-be who has a relationship with B, B is the boy, much younger than M, and only wants a sexual relationship. There are no stage directions and no indication of who addresses whom. In the early performance of the play, the characters sit on a chair directed to the audience and articulate their thoughts as if they were sitting on a psychiatrist's chair. The characters may represent Kane herself inward-looking, confession-like style, which she would pursue in her next play. The irregularity of the voices reflects the inner turmoil and emotional chaos. Aston comments on this emotional turmoil and what

the characters crave. She states that “psychology of character and development of narrative gives way to individual outpourings in which, if anything is shared, it is the 'craving' for a center or core out of which to make meaning” (95). What is desired, what is craved emulated in the vague memory of the characters to fill their hollow selves.

Kane’s last play was staged at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs in 2000, posthumously. She drafted and delivered her play before she committed suicide in 1999. The press and reviewers made a connection between the play and Kane’s life itself, calling the play a 75-minute suicide note (Billington). Nevertheless, identifying the play merely as a suicide note may underestimate its complex structure of it, which can be analyzed in regard to the post-dramatic theatre (Rees). Furthermore, Urban adds that the play is “carefully crafted”, inspired by myriad works of art by many artists, including Artaud and Barthes (315). The pieces of monologues, scenes, and performances assemble to reflect a psychotic breakdown.

Providing a synopsis to 4.48 *Psychosis* is a challenging work yet, the play does not devoid of meaning or content. Even though there was no character description, it can be deduced that a patient suffers from a mental breakdown after developing an affinity toward their doctor. The play switches between the scenes of the patient and the doctor enabling the audience to experience the fragile state of mind as if they were in the mind of the character. The openness of the playtext and almost no indication of the character traits led to different staging and performance of the play. In the first production, three actors take on the stage to represent the Victim, Perpetrator, and Bystander, which is a line from the play (Urban 316). Following productions staged the play as a monologue, leaving the character of the doctor in the shadow.

## **1.2. An Enigmatic Playwright: Martin Crimp and His Plays**

Martin Crimp has been a vanguard of new writing for British drama, having created breakthrough plays such as *Attempts on Her Life* and having plays staged by directors like Katie Mitchell, Luc Bondy, and Simon McBuray, he has not been a regular at the Royal Shakespeare Company. Journalists and critics label him as mysterious and his plays as enigmatic. Sierz indicates the reason might be that Crimp's work is difficult. His plays are experimental in their form and challenging in their content. The audience faces moral ambiguity and riddle-like endings. Furthermore, his subjects vary from abduction to child abuse, war, violence, and dysfunctional families including unpleasant people. Media

manipulation, consumer culture, and mass culture were highly criticized in his plays and as Sierz claims in his book, *The Theatre of Martin Crimp*, Crimp “has deconstructed gender and he’s criticized the War on Terror” (2). Crimp's work challenges naturalism and social realism in British Drama.

Martin Crimp was born on 14 February 1956 in Dartford, Kent. Due to his father's job, he had to move and change schools yet his aptitude for languages, literature, theatre, and music has not changed. He read Beckett and Ionesco, by whose work he would be inspired later. He studied English at St. Catherine's College, Cambridge from 1975 to 1978. He staged his first play *Clang* whilst studying. He graduated from St. Catherine’s College intending to be a writer but he managed to land jobs in different areas. He worked as a clerk, a worker in a factory, and a transcriber. He rediscovered his propensity for theatre and participated in the writer's group at the Orange Tree Theatre (Sierz, *Theatre of Martin* 3). He also performed as a musician, played piano, and taught music. Furthermore, he wrote radio plays and became Thames TV-Writer-in -Residence at Orange Tree from 1988-1989.

His debut work *Dealing with Claire* was first performed in 1988. He began his association with the Royal Court Theatre and staged two plays; namely, *No One Sees the Video* (1990) and *Getting Attention* (1991). Later on, he was a writer-in-residence at New Dramatists in New York and produced *The Treatment* (1993), which won John Whiting Award in 1993. He gradually becomes an important influence on young writers such as Sarah Kane and Mark Ravenhill. In 1997, he was a writer in-residence at The Royal Court Theatre, and since then he staged his plays *Attempts on her Life* (1997), *The Country* (2000), *Face to the Wall* (2002), *Advice to Iraqi Women* (2003), *Fewer Emergencies* (2005), *The City* (2008) and *In the Republic of Happiness* (2012) at the Royal Court. He staged *Cruel and Tender* (2004) at Young Vic Theatre, *Play House* (2012) at the Orange Tree, and *When We Have Sufficiently Tortured Each Other: 12 Variations on Samuel Richardson’s Pamela* (2019) staged in National Theatre. His last three plays were staged in various places in Europe and Canada. *The Rest Will Be Familiar to You from Cinema* (2013), which is inspired by Euripides’ *Phoenician Women* and *Man Asleep* (2018) staged in Hamburg Germany, and his latest play *Not One of These People* (2022) premiered in Québec. Crimp has also translated myriad plays and he wrote texts for opera.

### **1.2.2. The cultural context of Crimp's theatre**

Crimp began his career in the 1980s, during the Thatcher era. Thatcher's ideology parallels monetarism and her party valued patriotism, low taxes, private ownership, entrepreneurship, and vastly a liberal market. Thatcher's morality can be rephrased as returning to Victorian values. Aside from economic changes in Britain, with TV, the media was holding a strong position in which it has the power to affect the mass. During this time, Thatcher also had to use the influence of media and check her personal image. According to Sierz, the theatre played a crucial role in her transformation. She had a tutor from the National Theatre, teach her how to lower her voice and speak slowly in order to look less aggressive and approachable (8). Also, globally the fall of the Berlin Wall, abolition of regimes, War on Terror, and 9/11 attacks coincide with the social and economic changes in Britain. Furthermore, on an intellectual basis, this period discerned the traditional modernist ideas and postmodernism.

The 1980s theatre was affected by Thatcherite commercialism. Instead of being an artistic experience, productions became the product and the audience became the consumer. During that time, Crimp wrote and produced intriguing plays that are found enigmatic yet clearly scrutinize the British culture, family relations, consumerism, war, and violence rather than contributing to the dominant social-realist theatre of that time. Crimp's early works are almost rebellious acts filled with irony. During the 1990s, the elements of post-dramatic theatre, and in-her-face theatre can be observed in Crimp's plays. After the 2000s, with more focus on suburban life, family as heaven and hell, striking, abrupt dialogues among family members, perception of safety, and violence Crimp created a Crimpland, as Sierz claimed. He notes that "Crimpland is British suburbia seen through the eyes of a satirist and a skeptical modernist. Suburban subjects are Crimp's dramatic universe" (157). Therefore, Crimp's plays are about the broken families, domestic violence, supposedly happy marriages in suburban areas.

### **1.2.3. Post-dramatic theatre showcases in Crimp's works**

The theatre researcher, Lehmann published *Postdramariches Theatre* in 1999, which led to a huge ground for discussing the elements of new theatre, and with its translation to English in 2006, the discussion has been enormously influential. Under the subtitle "Text-space-time-body-media" Lehmann discusses how the text is replaced by the nonverbal features in drama. He states that

[i]n post-dramatic theatre, breath, rhythm and the present actuality of the body's visceral presence take precedence over the logos. An opening and dispersal of the logos develop in such a way that it is no longer necessarily the case that meaning is communicated from A (stage) to B (spectator) but instead a specifically theatrical, 'magical' transmission and connection happen by means of language (145).

Boyle, Cornish, and Woolf comment on Lehmann's work and highlight that post-dramatic theatre concerns first and foremost with the form. It can be a historical shift in theatre toward form and away from drama. What is meant by drama here is not an opposition against the form but it may refer to the relation between form and content that emerged under historical conditions (qtd. in Lehman 19).

Sierz also denote that as humanity is living in the postmodern era, post-dramatic theatre is the proper response by art since people live in plotless times. Postdramatic theatre "exists independently of text and does not attempt to locate itself within a specific location, social theme or display any concern for mimesis" (164). In Crimp's plays like *Attempts on Her Life*, *Fewer Emergencies*, *In the Republic of Happiness*, and *Not One of These People*, the line between reality and fiction is blurred whereas the form of the plays indicates no traditional acts. The characters are not clearly identified, nor does the stage direction indicate who gives which line yet the silence, breaks, and repetitions between the lines tell more than what is intended to be said.

Middeke also comments on Crimp's work and notes "no matter whether one adheres to the term 'post-dramatic' or not, Crimp's plays highlight the performative aspects of both language and identity-construction; in fact, Crimp's work self-reflexively turns these aspects into major topics" (98). On the other hand, Sarah Kane's *Crave* and *4:48 Psychosis* also can be analyzed through the lens of post-dramatic theatre since there is no location or context nor do they offer any social commentary. The characters are not distinguished, even in *4:48 Psychosis*, there is no attempt to break the lines and dialogues.

#### **1.2.4. The themes in Crimp's plays and reimagining reality in his works**

In Crimp's oeuvre, even the ones fairly grounded in reality, the direction of the speech is ambiguous, the dialogues are cruel, surreal, filled with irony, and innuendos, never conclusive but always disturbing almost menacing sceneries that focus on a slice of life of a vaguely real/unreal ambiguous character.



Sierz in his book, *The Theatre of Martin Crimp*, analyzes the work of Crimp and reveals that consumerism, cruel relationships, problematic marriages, victimized children and women, power games, gender issues, the male gaze, and populist media are major themes of his plays. Gender and identity are contextualized in Crimp's plays as institutionalized repetitions of bodily acts rather than being ontological categories. Either in its dialogues or demeanours, Crimp's work is all about repetitions. The aesthetic of his work does not rely on the obvious moral norms but on an ethic of incoherent art with repetitions and satire.

Crimp's debut *Dealing with Clair* (1988) centers around an estate agent Clair, who is driven, successful, and trying to find a place in the men-led market of the 1980s. She is trying to close a deal of selling the house of Mike and Liz to an elderly couple, yet a cash buyer, James emerges during the deal and as a result, both Mike and Liz get greedy and wanted to sell the house to James contrary to their desire to act honorably. Their greed reflects the house buying and selling craze during the Thatcher era. Satirically written, witty dialogues reveal the state of consumerist society, which then turn the plot into a mystery and thriller with the vanishing of Clair. In order to get the house, James preys on Clair, violates her privacy, and has a phone call with Clair's mother, highly likely indicating to have murdered her.

Clair's disappearance has a real-life connection with the case of Suzy Lamplugh, an estate agent who was reported missing and presumed murdered in 1986. The satire of Thatcherite England valuing liberal market and consumerist society melds with the murder mystery and greed in the play.

His second play which set in New York, *The Treatment* centres around the story of Anne, her husband Simon, who likes to tie and silence Anne with a piece of tape. Anne decides to break up with Simon, later on meets film producers Jennifer and Andrew. They want to make a film about Anne's story, yet they disclose that Anne's story is not interesting enough to market, so they hire a professional writer Clifford. To make Anne's story more film-worthy, Andrew seduces Anne while Clifford watches them. More people are involved in the production and change Anne's story to something more market-worthy. Anne is disturbed by Clifford's voyeurism, contacts Simon, who in revenge gauge Clifford's eyes. After a year, during the launch of the film, Andrew searches for Anne and seeing her gagged

and bound. Andrew frees Anne, Simon enters the room. Anne makes a sudden move to run but she bumps into Jennifer, shot her to death accidentally.

Most of the critics appreciated the play, finding it harsh, elegant and sardonic. Anne is at the center of the play, yet her character is vague, mysterious and unpredictable. She is defined by others around her. From this perspective, *The Treatment* is a frontier for *Attempts on Her Life*, which has a character named Anne, also defined by others around her.

*Attempts on Her Life* (1997) is an original and distinctive play including seventeen scenarios exploring various aspects of a woman called Anne (as well as Anya, Anuskha, and Annie). She is many things in these scenarios. She is an actress, a victim of war, a megastar, a particle, a porn star, a car, an artist, a victim of aliens, and the girl next door. Anne is never seen on the stage, instead, people are talking, speculating, and inquiring about Anne. Her mom and dad, interrogators, police, advertisers, doctors, lovers, and friends comment on Anne's life.

The form of the play is revolutionary in its time. There are no assigned names, except for Anne's name and its versions, or gender indicated; neither there are strict stage directions. The ontological questioning of the essence and absolute truth is rendered and reversed in the play since the "subject" Anne is nowhere to be seen yet still exists. The theme of the play is summarized by Sierz "[a]s in *The Treatment*, the border between life and art is trampled, leaving lingering images of terror and suicide, violence and violation. His characteristic themes- the social construction of images of women and the relationship between art and life- come at you with a dizzying speed, yet always with a linguistic pleasure and with tantalising intelligence" (53). Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life*, was an inspiration for new playwrights such as Kane. Kane explains and describes the work of Crimp in *The Guardian* which asked playwrights to choose a favorite playwright and comment on their work. Sierz indicates a significant part of the text. He points out Kane's description of Crimp's work by noting "[h]e's remorselessly unsentimental and has some very hard edges. His work doesn't scream for attention, but he's one of the few genuine formal innovators writing for the stage. He's constantly refining his language to find more accurate theatrical expression, marrying rhythm and skill with real beauty. His precision compels" (qtd. in Sierz, 55-56). *Attempts on Her Life* last to be a masterpiece of contemporary drama in its ground-breaking form and content.

Martin Crimp's *The Country* (2000) is an enigmatic, bewildering play that uses subtle wordplays to empower the character that speaks and uses language as a tool of power-plays. *The Country*, which was staged in London in 2000, "challenge[d] the audience through dramatic ellipses, disturbing innuendos, subtle power games, and a profound sensory impact exerted by evocative words and props" (Capitani 299). The play unfolds in five acts and revolves around the story of a middle-aged suburban couple, Corinne and her husband Richard. The couple moves to the country from the city with their kids to get away from the problems of it and establish a new life in that picturesque place. Richard brings an unconscious woman to their house in the middle of the night, leaving her to rest whilst Corinne interrogates Richard about this unexpected event. Richard has to leave for an urgent call, leaving Corinne with the unconscious woman. Later the rhythm of the dialogue fastens thus giving room for the secrets to be revealed. Corinne learns that unconscious woman, Rebecca has been a lover of Richard and their sole purpose of moving to the country is not their wish to leave everything behind but Richard's desire to be with Rebecca after she moves to the country. Cutting back to two months later, Corinne's birthday, everything seems resolved and Richard gives a pair of shoes to his wife as a birthday present. The play ends as Corinne tells she left the house one night to see the track but unable to see any tracks, needle, or proof, she turns to the stone. She only discovers her feelings on top of that hill whilst looking at the stone. She says she feels as if the stone on the hill devours her heart, making her question if she can stimulate a love for the rest of her life.

The play, likewise his other plays, got revived by the critics as enigmatic and full of raw emotions. Unlike *Attempts on Her life*, *The Country* has a traditional form in writing with certain acts and characters; yet the playfulness of language lingers even in the themes of marriage, adultery, love, and addiction.

The uprising trend of staging modernized Greek plays lead to various products coming alive in the mid-2000s. Crimp was asked to read a couple of Greek plays and work on the play of his choice. He rewrote Sophocles' *The Women of Trachis*, as a loose adaptation to evoke the issue of War on Terror. In his interview with Aragay, he explains why he chose Sophocles' plays and what themes invoked his curiosity. He admits that he is not choosing any side in The War on Terror, yet the war in Iraq should have happened to relate the play to the current time. He concedes that it was interesting for him to emphasize with the people, like a soldier and soldier's wife, normally he would not empathize. He takes a more universal approach towards the war by putting individual's experience in the center and adds "focusing

on women, who are victims of war by being left and abandoned; men, who are victims of war in being the tools of politicians; or soldiers who are accused of acts of cruelty which seem in fact to have been endorsed by the management higher up – they are not going to get any medals, even if that was what they were asked to do” (Aragay and Zozoya 61). Having these concerns, Crimp dramatizes Sophocles’ *Women of Trachis*, fracturing the classical narrative of Herakles, his wife Deianeira, and their son Hyllus and Herakles’ prisoner of war Iole in a global context of War on Terror. Even though the plot parallels with *Women of Trachis*, Crimp sets the play in a temporary home close to the airport, indicating they may have to run anytime, at present time with his unique narrative and character change.

The play opens with Amelia, talking to her chorus; a housekeeper, a physiotherapist, and a beautician sharing her marriage story and opinions on the war. Amelia’s husband, the General is under investigation for an alleged war crime. He sends Laela and a young boy to the house where Amelia and her son James reside. Amelia discovers that Laela is not one of the two survivors of a destructed city, but the General’s mistress, for whom the General destroyed the whole city. To get revenge, Amelia deliberately -unlike Deianeira- sends a pillow immersed with poison to the General, causing his body to wreck. Amelia commits suicide and the General is taken to be judged for war crimes, offstage.

The play was commissioned by the Chichester Festival and the Young Vic and staged by Luc Bondy. Crimp’s modernization of a Greek tragedy, combined with his unique, satiric, and almost electric- buzzed dialogues got overall positive reviews from the critics and spectators.

Furthermore, *The City* (2008) opens with an epigraph by Fernando Pessoa, from *The Book of Disquiet*, and it epitomizes the metatheatrical elements in the play that is represented by Clair, a character heading towards the forties, who is also rewriting the characters in the play by discovering the city inside her. In *The City*, it is observable that Clair struggles to create characters, a family, and a city that is well functioning. Nevertheless, the result becomes a mere imperfect copy of her intentions.

The play illustrates the metropolitan life “defined by despair, and that there is a grisly continuum of collective unhappiness” (Billington). The play unfolds in five scenes and depicts a fraction of a couple’s life, living in an urban area, heading towards the forties. Clair, being an intellectual and a translator keeps a diary that revealed eventually poses as a source of all characters that materialize including her husband, Chris, her neighbour Jenny

and her children. Chris suffers from depression caused by being unemployed, Jenny complains about the noise their children make, reporting that she works as a nurse mostly on night shifts. Clair attends a conference in which she meets a famous writer Mohamed, learning that after all that suffering and terror he endures, he lost his daughter. The last scene reveals that Clair is the author of all these circumstances reflected as reality and “as a kind of artistic apology, Clair’s diary, passages of which are read aloud at the end, explains that she failed in her efforts at invention: the characters are inconsistent, unstable subjects, and the things that would traditionally appear in a city – gardens, shops, children playing – have all been ground down into a fine grey dust” (Borato 319). The attempt of creating a story within the story indicates Crimp’s aesthetic, drawing “the line between dramatic and post-dramatic play in its metatheatrical unravelling” (Borato 313).

Crimp’s second adapted play from Greek tragedy is *The Rest Will be Familiar to You from Cinema* appeared at the Avignon festival in 2019 after it debuted in Germany in 2013, entitled *Alles Weitere kennen Sie aus dem Kino*. The play is the adaptation of Euripides’ *Phonocian Women* and focuses on the tragedy of Oedipus. Yet, Oedipus only appeared at the very end, Crimp’s version put women at the center. The mother/wife of Oedipus, Jacosta, her daughter Antigone and their sons are locked in conflict. The Greek chorus and Shakespearean Witches foresee the baleful fate of the family and ask riddles at a set of modern-day school.

Dickson from *The Guardian* reviewed the play and added “Crimp’s text is as violent and sly as ever, full of lacerating swipes at the management-speak of contemporary warfare, but events are static, and Jeanneteau’s statuesque production doesn’t help. With long tracts of reported action and speech, it often feels like an animated prose poem.” The play, on the other hand, got myriad positive reviews from the German debut.

Martin Crimp’s latest play, *Not One of These People* premiered in Québec, made up of 299 lines from 299 artificially rendered people. Crimp himself speaks the lines sitting under dim light with a tablet in his hand and the faces of those “not actual” people, created with visual imagery known as deep fake, mimicking Crimp’s facial gestures and speaking the lines. The play addresses issues of representation, diversity, and identity politics. Brown reviews the play and notes that “Crimp’s text is phenomenally diverse, impressively erudite and, occasionally, laugh-out-loud humorous. The work is composed, like a piece of music, of long and short phrases, and of variations on themes” (Brown).

In conclusion, Crimp's theatrical work embodies a spirit of theatrical innovation, weaving together intricate narratives, subverting dramatic conventions, and engaging with heavy-on social issues. His plays compel audiences to inquire their assumptions, challenge dominant narratives, and reimagine the possibilities of theatrical representation. By navigating the intersections of postmodernism, feminism, and social critique, Crimp establishes himself as a distinctive voice in contemporary theatre, leaving an indelible mark on the landscape of dramatic literature.



## CHAPTER II

### 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: FEMINISM AND FEMINIST THEORY

#### 2.1. Feminist Theory

Addressing the question of “what is a woman”, and “what is womanhood” is not an easy task since feminism is fractured and can be described from various perspectives. Still, to understand feminism, gaining knowledge of its history may shed light on this theory since it is not just a theory but a compilation of discourses (Tolan 319). The history of feminism is divided into two waves, namely the first wave and the second wave of feminism. The first wave of feminism dates back to the suffragette movement and the fight for women’s rights. However, there are some precursor books that discuss the problems of women in society and give solutions to those problems. Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), Olive Schreiner’s *Women and Labour* (1911), Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) are some precursor books that lead a path to a discussion of womanhood, marriage, unequal pay, mistreatment and educational rights (Barry). Even though there are some reforms accomplished, mostly the uprising was individualistic considering the number of publications that refer to women’s rights.

Sanders comments on the early period of the feminist movement and notes that at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “major reforms had been accomplished, but the terms ‘feminist’ and ‘feminism’ had only just begun to be used. This seems emblematic of the discontinuous, sometimes hesitant and inconsistent pattern that campaigners for women’s rights established in the period under review” (15). The term “feminist” was used for the first time in history in 1895 in *Athenaeum* to depict the new generation of women that did not convey the traditional marriage roles and desire to gain independence (Saunders 23). During these times, the leading discussion of not having the same rights as men while voting was verbalized by women, especially in the 1830s and onwards and women got their rights to vote in 1928, which was the result of women verbalizing their issues regarding the matrimonial law, educational rights, work opportunities, and ownership (Sanders 23). Furthermore, with the suffragette movement, women could find new areas for work, educate themselves or at least demand public education.

The second wave of feminism dates back to the 1960s to the present date and according to Barry, this movement has a huge importance on literature since the image of

women is questioned in literary works. Women fight with the idea of authority and women's perception in public and personal spaces. Barry underlines the significance of feminist discourse in literature and states

feminist criticism should not be seen as an off-shoot or a spin-off from feminism which is remote from the ultimate aims of the movement but as one of its most practical ways of influencing everyday conduct and attitudes (116).

Since the portrayal of women in literary works is a crucial means of indicating what is the accurate version of femininity and what is the feminine goals and desires of women and men, feminist criticism plays a certain role in literary criticism.

Simone De Beauvoir's *Second Sex* (1949) forms a bridge between two waves of feminism and brings a crucial significance to women's oppression. Her work examines women's relegation to the second, subordinate sex in biological, psychological, historical, and cultural contexts (Sanders 320). With her book, De Beauvoir takes first-wave feminism, which demanded civil and educational rights for women, one step further and provided a foundation for second-wave feminists seeking to proceed beyond the opportunities first-wave feminism brought.

The roots of second-wave feminism and its divisions have complex origins. In the USA, the second wave mostly came with the slogans like "Equal pay for equal work", which reveal the frustration of housewives of 1950s America. Betty Friedan amplifies the secret sufferings of housewives in America in her book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), then founded National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966. She becomes one of the leaders of the equal rights movement (Tolan 320). On the other hand, the Women's Liberation Movement in America was instigated by the student and left-wing movements of the 1960s. Women's Liberation group had no hierarchal and organizational order unlike NOW. They mostly organized and shared their thoughts in radical communities, underground press, and free universities (Thornham 26). The key concepts of those speeches are about reproductive and abortion rights, equality in the workplace, fighting against gender discrimination and male oppression. Thornham states that in Britain, second-wave feminism emerged differently in the context of equal rights. Industrial unions of working-class women, and sewing mechanists went on strike in 1968 for equal pay and this led to a socialist feminist movement unlike the USA, where liberal and radical feminism was dominant.



The feminist works that influenced literary feminist criticism by shaping the discourse and offering insights on the issues of patriarchal norms, power relations, gender, and women's experience in personal and public spheres are still highly referred to and discussed in literary criticism. From the 1970s, when the explosion of feminist theoretical writing commenced with Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1970) to the 1990s, Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity* (1990), many works of feminist theory published. To name some major works of feminist discourse; Germaine Greer's *Female Eunuch* (1970) explores women's sexual oppression and discusses the liberation of sexual freedom. Juliet Mitchell has a psychoanalytical approach to feminism and explores the intersection of the two in her essay "Psychoanalysis and Feminism" (1974). Later, *New French Feminisms* offered a new look to the debates of second-wave feminism. By combining linguistics, philosophy, and psychoanalysis, French feminisms challenged the norms of masculinity and femininity (Tolan 323). Luce Irigaray comments on phallocentrism and highlights the ways of redefining feminine desire in her work "Speculum of the Other Women" (1974). Moreover, Hélène Cixous focuses on linguistics and women's writing from their own perspective in her work "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1975). Later in 1986, Julia Kristeva delves into the norms that may break the boundaries of gender and identity in her work "The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection". While Adrienne Rich examines motherhood and its reflection on women in her work "Of Women Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution" (1976), American feminist Mary Daly criticizes patriarchy and focuses on the male-established language habits, suggesting the phallocentric worldview should change in her book *Gyn:Ecology* (1978). Elaine Showalter showcases a feminist literary history by giving examples from renowned British women writers in her book *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* (1977).

As a response to the limited perspective of second-wave feminism, third-wave feminism emerged in the mid-1990s as an intersectional and multi perspectival version of feminism (Snyder 175). Since postmodernism embraces fractured narratives, eclectic approaches, and diversity, third-wave feminism is entwined with similar ideologies. The inclusive and non-judgemental position of intersectional feminism on the issues of sex work, and gender fluidity distinguishes it from second-wave feminism. On the difference between the two, Snyder comments "third-wave feminism continues the efforts of second-wave feminism to create conditions of freedom, equality, justice, and self-actualization for all people by focusing on gender-related issues in particular, even as it offers a different set of

tactics for achieving those goals” (192). The third-wave feminism's desire to address the issues of economic and racial inequalities adhered to women's issues.

Myriad feminisms and feminist discourse proceed to be prevalent branch of literary criticism. The concern for classifying feminisms may be regarded as misleading, indicating there might be "better feminisms" but the idea behind this categorization is merely a starting point to approach recent feminisms. As Bryson indicates in the 1970s, this classification of feminism was mostly accepted as the ideas proposed, they were suggesting gender equality and revolt against the oppression in their own ways (139). The commonly accepted categories are liberal, radical, and socialist/Marxist feminism.

## **2.2. Radical Feminism**

Defining radical feminism, likewise, other feminisms can be challenging due to their ongoing positions as social structures and differences in their acknowledgment, globally and locally. Still, some definitions of radical feminism may provide insight, therefore indicating why radical feminism as a theory is a valuable approach to scrutinizing literary works. Meger and Duriesmith (359) discussed the travail of defining radical feminism and offer myriad definitions from many feminist critiques. They noted that some see radical feminism as a social movement that began in the 1960s. It is believed that, it was seen as the continuation of first-wave feminism and more of a historical event that has a linear development. Some define radical feminism based on the shared beliefs of radical feminists and their individual experiences underlining the importance of forming conscious raising groups and rejecting sex work. Other critics define it as a doctrine, accentuating the radical element in it by implying that oppression stems from sexism. Some critics also define it as the end goal of radical feminism, which is the eradication of domination. Finally, some define radical feminism by indicating what it is not, compared to other feminisms. An overall broadscale definition of the feminist movement can be found in the *Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, edited by Disch and Hawkesworth. The editors and also the writers of the chapter “Transforming the Known World” of the aforementioned book, state that

Grounded in the investigation of women’s and men’s lives and convinced of the arbitrariness of exclusion based on sexual difference, feminist theory has flourished as a mode of critical theory that illuminates the limitations of popular assumptions about sex, race, sexuality, and gender and offers insights into the social production of complex hierarchies of difference. (2)

Furthermore, they add that all feminist theories are diverse and contentious due to the fact that they reflect the common conditions of their emergence. Moreover, Donovan comments on the central ideology of radical feminism and states that at the very core of radical feminism, there is the idea of personal is political. Following that she declares:

[P]atriarchy, or male-domination—not capitalism—is at the root of women's oppression; that women should identify themselves as a subjugated class or caste and put their primary energies in a movement with other women to combat their oppressors—men; that men and women are fundamentally different, have different styles and cultures, and that the women's mode must be the basis of any future society. (Donovan 156).

Radical feminism emerged as a critique of phallocentrism and similar to other second-wave feminisms, its core notion is the oppression women faced/have been facing. The shared and/or individual experience of women is an apparatus that can be a path to assay women's oppression. The systematic oppression of gender is a political issue; therefore, the individual experience becomes a political ground, which is materialized in interpersonal relations. On the other hand, feminist criticism applies to various areas of culture, society, and art both as praxis and theory and the broad definition of it may be narrowed down to its realization in a specific piece of work, as it applies to a certain field.

### **2.3. Liberal Feminism**

Liberal feminist agenda demands equal rights and equal pay and claims women are as good as men. The Women's Movement of the 1960s developed and spread in different directions, especially in the United States, liberal protests occurred demanding the independence of women and their self-expression, which is essential to the American dream (Bryson 139). Betty Friedan might be the pioneer of this movement since she argues that after Second World War, the demands to be educated and gaining civil rights of housewives in America have been altered and manipulated. They are persuaded to fulfill their identity in domestic areas. In her book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Friedan argues that American women's life is to become a servant to her husband and take care of the children. The expression of themselves is not allowed, therefore American women do not live in the real world, outside the house. Furthermore, Bryson comments on Friedan's views on the independence of women and adds "simply the fact that American women were denied any opportunity for independence or self-development; its most dramatic effects were the rise in

mental illness, alcoholism, and suicide among women, but it also had a highly damaging effect upon the next generation” (141). Women's independence posits a great role in their mental health and the next generations' upbringings since their label of housewife imprisons them to the house and domestic areas.

Moreover, theatre critic and playwright Michelene Wandor refers to the liberal feminist movement as Bourgeois feminism and explains that mostly in the 1980s, it became visible and respectable. She criticizes Bourgeois feminism and denotes that it embraces the world as it is, therefore liberal feminism consents to the male oriented world and its rules (136). Wandor proceeds to explain further and notes that bourgeois feminism and radical feminism are alike in regards to their take on solidarity and sisterhood. While radical feminism struggles to demolish male oriented patriarchal system, which subordinates women, liberal feminism accentuates the individual effort of women. In a male-dominated world, if a woman works hard enough, they can be a part of their successful world. However, this creates token women, who are encircled by men and assisted by other working women.

The criticism against liberal feminism follows the very question of “Equality for who?” Bryson highlights that liberal feminists encounter criticism for their emphasis solely on legal and political rights. The individualistic struggle to gain power disregards the oppression in economic, cultural, and sexual exploitation of all women. Furthermore, liberal feminism predominantly showcases the concerns of middle-class white women, who are already privileged in many areas of life except for their gender and legal rights (152). The disparity between men and women caused by the oppression of race and class is disregarded, thus, the liberal feminist approach is criticized by another form of feminist discourse; socialist or Marxist feminism.

#### **2.4. Socialist/Marxist Feminism**

Derived from Marxist criticism, socialist feminism or material feminism hypnotizes that class is the main determinant for all people in capitalist systems. Economic, social, and cultural institutions should be considered within the dynamics of class consciousness (Case 82). Furthermore, Dolan explores the discourses of feminism in her book *The Feminist Spectator as Critic* and notes that materialist feminism centers its ideology around the social constructs shaped by gender, race, class, and sexual orientation and regards the power relationship between these as a potential to transform and evolve (16). The class dynamics create a hierarchal system and crucial disparities between upper-class and working-class

women, therefore the sisterhood of women does not exist as the working-class women are oppressed by the privileged women. Furthermore, the major focus of socialist criticism is the critique of labor and production, which is related to women's working rights as well as motherhood as the producers of a new generation (82). Therefore, socialist feminism highlights the unseen domestic labor of women, which underestimates women as the workforce and also emphasizes the men's control of women's reproductive rights. However, as Donovan states class consciousness necessitates class members regard the system from their true class, not from the oppressor class (81). This means women need to develop a social class consciousness as well as a consciousness of acknowledging them being the oppressed group under the norms of patriarchy. The combination of the two may lead women to truly analyze their oppression.

The history of social feminism is rooted in the 1970s and emerged without any party association or a united organization. Marxist feminist theory can be categorized as dual system theory since two intermingled and interconnected reliant systems of oppression, namely the patriarchy and capitalism would dissect class analysis and feminist analysis of oppression (Henessy 57). The critique of the Marxist discourse refers to insufficient analysis of women's issues such as rape, domestic violence, objectification of women's bodies, and the male gaze in relation to power balance and gender. Therefore, to analyze women's issues in relation to class oppression discloses the oppression of women clearly (57). Wandor comments on the limitations of certain feminist discourses and critiques radical feminism and liberal feminism. She states socialist feminism analyzes the oppression of women in relation to power dynamics and production. Following that, she notes liberal feminism emphasizes the social power of women in a male-defined world and their individual success and the critique lacks reference to class issues. Moreover, she argues that radical feminism values solidarity among women but discredits men (138). Both radical and liberal feminism may offer specific changes and renovations for women but this may be limited.

Nevertheless, Wandor notes that "only socialist feminism can offer an analysis which provides for genuine, revolutionary change" (139). Even though, socialist feminism seems embrative, there is an assessment that displays the hindrance of it. For one, Wandor claims that it is more challenging for socialist feminism to give clear tactical steps unlike radical feminism, which suggests all women should unite and demolish patriarchy, and bourgeois feminism suggests individual ambitions should be taken to climb the ladder of success. Wandor further indicates why it is challenging for socialist feminism to design tactics and

asserts “socialist feminism has to ring the changes on the tactic of relative autonomy for women and the tactic of working together with men, and this is easier asserted in theory than outlined in practice” (139). Moreover, Bryson notes that social feminism may offer insights into women's control over their reproductive process however, advancements in reproductive technologies transforms into a controlling apparatus rather than a liberating one. Therefore “woman has become a packaged, feminised, marketable commodity, and has thus become alienated from her own self and her own sexuality” (66). Thus, analysing capitalistic norms adhered to patriarchal oppression may offer a better understanding of women to have a more intimate relationship with themselves, which enables them not to be a commodity for the male gaze.

## **2.5 Feminist Theatre**

Regarding the need to analyze drama from a feminist ideology, well-known British and American feminist theatre critics' interpretations of early feminist movements, especially the second-wave feminist movement in theatre will be denoted. Even though there is a significant contribution to feminist theatre research and publishing, there are some prolific critics and writers whose books are cited highly. Such names include Michelene Wandor, Sue-Ellen Case, Elaine Aston, Helene Keyssar, Lizbeth Goodman, and Andrew Wyllie.

In her book *Carry on, Understudies*, Wandor refers to radical plays before 1968, which stages the crises of femininity and female issues by mentioning leading plays and playwrights. Then she refers to male playwrights in the 1970s, by pointing out how the plays deal with social and political issues mostly. After that, in a chapter called “The Forth Phase: Women Playwrights in the 1970s and early 1980s”, she commemorates many female playwrights and refers to their works. She mentions Pam Gems, Caryl Churchill, Mary O'Malley, Nell Dunn, Claire Luckham, Olwen Wymark, Victoria Wood, Louise Page, and herself, Michelene Wandor.

Aston explores feminist theatre history and comments that contemporary feminist drama and performance have reconstructed the modern theatrical canon with its division from the mainstream theatre. Feminist playwriting deliberately refuses the conventional writing forms, thus feminist playwriting needs a separate division. Aston states that feminist theatrical practices emerged in the United States and Britain with women's theatre groups around the 1970s. Aston defines radical feminism and adds that “radical feminism locates

the oppression of women in the patriarchal domination of women by men and advocates the abolition of manmade structures which reinforce the genderbased inequality” (Aston, Introduction). Then, she shares the views of critics, such as Janet Brown who describes the rhetorical devices of feminist drama and notes that feminist theatre reverses gender roles, presents historical figures as role models, criticizes traditional gender roles, and depicts women in oppressive environments (56). Embarking these theatrical devices, the performance of the early feminist drama is collaborative in its writing, scripting, and workshopping as Aston notes (59). The collaboration of women is reflected in the women's culture and early theatres such as the Women's Theatre Group.

In her book *Subversive Female Voices in the plays of Timberlake Wertenbaker and Pam Gems*, Erkan defines and explores the emergence of early feminist theatre and she notes that the lack of true representation of women in theatre stage led women to express their discontentment as they are excluded from the mainstream theatre. This is not only a change in the stage but also an overall cultural change considering the second-wave feminism's effect on culture, art, and society. Erkan further proceeds to comment on this radical cultural change and states that this change and

transformation become agenda of feminist playwrights. The playwrights such as Caryl Churchill, Timberlake Wertenbaker, Pam Gem, and Sarah Daniels gave voice to women's theatre and they made significant contributions to change the social positions of women, especially after the second wave feminism. (7).

These female playwrights' contributions to Western feminist playwriting affected the future generation of feminist writing.

Case defines early feminist theatre in her book *Feminism and Theatre* as a revolt against the patriarchy, which is the main cause of oppression. She highlights that radical feminism has created a "women's culture", separate from the culture of men. This notion led to an alternative for women's literature, theatre, art, sexuality, and technology. She also notes that putting too much emphasis on patriarchy and women's culture makes radical feminism an approach that most of its practical and theoretical work either pinpoints the oppression of male-gender or indicates the strength of female-gender (64). She then, mentions the Consciousness Raising (CR) groups, whose aim was to give a voice to women that have been silent for too long. These CR groups were influential in the foundation of one of the earliest feminist theatres, named It's All Right To Be Woman Theatre, established in 1970.

The goal of that theatre was to validate women's experience (Case 64). Women's theatres back then are actually more of a dramatization of CR groups' aims. Yet, the dramatization of it met with the audience and constitute an intimate bond between the performers and the audience by breaking the fourth wall between them. As a result of this, "a new dramaturgical dynamic that matched the feminist sense that the personal is political" (65). Meeting with mostly women audience led to a discovery in radical feminist theatre that the relationship between theatre and audience was fundamentally different than it occurred with men. Another discovery of feminist theatre according to Case is that "historically, the feminist theatre has constituted a contradiction to the all-male composition of classical theatre, provoking a break with the codes of the dominant culture" (66). Scrutinizing the plays from Greek and Roman Theatre and seeing them from a feminist perspective and finding the link between old and contemporary oppression of women by analysing the works of contemporary British Theatre may reveal how the image of the woman on the stage was reconstructed.

On the other hand, Lizabeth Goodman mostly highlights the difference between the notions of American and British radical feminism. She defines the early feminist movements in detail and claims that American feminism revolted against the patriarchy in the street and scholarly whereas British feminism constitutes mostly theoretical works (33). Goodman also refers to the issue of labels such as feminist playwright and a playwright who is a feminist. She notes that even though the means of expression are different, the focus is on women and intent is similar among feminist playwrights and playwrights who can be feminists as well. On that issue, Kane distinctively expresses that she is not a women writer, but just a playwright. Yet, the theatre scholars such as Aston, indicate that her work is an invitation to feel differently since it includes a unique political and aesthetic perspective, thus she includes Kane's works in her book *Feminist Views on the English Stage* (Urban 317). Furthermore, Sierz argues that Crimplyland, a terminology he uses for the enigmatic oeuvre of Crimp, is pro-feminist. Frequently, the protagonists in his plays are women and when they are the victims, the sympathy of the audience is on the women's side (150). Thus, to link Goodman's idea with the given statements, it can be asserted that to analyze a work from a feminist perspective, it may suffice that the issues related to women are in the center of the plays, or their oeuvre consists of women protagonists.

Helene Keyysar asserts that the essence of feminist drama is to give women a significant stage role. Moreover, in those roles there needs to be a reference to their gender



roles in society and the women's world should be explored as well as the politics of women's sexuality (*Modern Dramatists* preface). Then, she analyzes the disparity between radical feminism in the United States and Britain and claims that radical feminism is understood as a dichotomy of two oppositional forces, namely, men and women. These opposing forces are driven in society and can be observed in power relations between two genders. For radical feminism, patriarchy should be dethroned. Whereas in Britain, the feminist movement mostly conjoined with class analysis as well as gender analysis (126-127).

Lastly, Wyllie defines women's writing for theatre in his book entitled *Sex on Stage* and adds that women's determination on defying the existence of their rights overextends to certain themes like the celebration of motherhood, powerful aspects of womanhood, exploration of the potential of women in both public and private places and finally sexual liberation for women. He also adds that tracing the effect of women writing in theatre includes a notion between theatre and social attitudes (22).

Overall, there are various definitions of feminism from a myriad of scholars, but the common ideology behind it can be narrowed down to the revolt against the patriarchy and male oppression, which includes violence, rape, the male gaze, and assertion. Women's revolt in the streets and their demand to occupy more places in a man-dominated world led to various representations of women in art, including theatre. Women believed whatever their personal problems are also political issues stemmed from the oppression of men.

## CHAPTER III

### 3. LITERARY BACKGROUND: FEMINIST ELEMENTS IN GREEK TRAGEDY AND CONTEMPORARY BRITISH THEATRE

#### 3.1. Violence, Rape, and Women in Greek Tragedy

In lieu with the common themes in Kane and Crimp's works such as violence, family, women's sexuality and rape, in 1970s and 1980s, Greek tragedy was rediscovered by feminists since Greek plays posit similar notions in relation to women's siblings, parents, family, lovers and husbands. As Wilmer claims in his book *Women in Greek Tragedy Today: A Reappraisal*, that many academics revisited the ancient texts to point out the misogynistic values that put forward to in those plays. Those plays comprise a high number of women that murder men, either accidentally (like Deianeira) or deliberately (110). Wilmer also notes that, Ancient Greek drama attributes many roles both to men and women and provide an insight to both genders' behaviours (107). Especially women characters stand out more as challenging ones due to the fact that their morals are posing as an opposing stance to the men/heroes. Revisiting their roles and analysing motherhood, sexuality, oppression and patriarchy in Greek plays from a feminist approach enriches the feminist literature and perspective. Characters such as Medea, Hecuba and Electra can be reread and represented as empowered women. They were victims but also, they retaliated against men and their oppression (Wilmer 108). These characters, although often seemed as women with flaws, are full of ambitions or they are just the victims of the god's curse.

Furthermore, Greek plays may offer a feminist analysis since the relationship between female characters and solidarity among them to stand against the oppression is a prevalent motif of Greek tragedy (Wilmer 109). Characters Like Medea, Antigone, Hecate were revisited in regards to analysing themes of kinship, marriage, women empowerment, sexuality and gender roles. Moreover, another form of "young girl tragedy" is highly studied from a feminist perspective. It is a mythical pattern in which a girl is raped by a god and consequently gets pregnant and suffers from the misconceptions of that unfortunate event. Dramatization of this myth pattern in plays of Euripides and Sophocles' can be observed, such as *Tyro*, *Antiope*, *Melanippe the Wise* and *Ion* (Coo and Finglass 8). Either by gods, by husbands, by stepfathers or any incestuous relations, rape is common in Greek tragedy. To name a few; Cassandra is raped after the sacking of Troy, Philomela is raped and mutilated by Tereus, Creusa is raped by Apollon, Iole's city is sacked and she is raped by Herakles,

and many other female characters who have been taken from their father's land forced into marriage and have been raped. As Greek plays might reflect society, it is a must to read through Athenian society's laws and position against rape. *Rape in Antiquity*, edited by Deacy and Pierce, offers a collection of meticulous articles focusing on the sexual violence and rape in Greek and Roman worlds. Through the articles, it can be inferred that in ancient Greece, rape was considered a serious crime and was punished under the law. However, the punishment for rape varied depending on the specific circumstances of the case and the social status of the victim and the perpetrator. In Athens, for example, the punishment for rape varied depending on whether the victim was a citizen or a slave. Exile or even death can be a punishment for rape if the victim is a free citizen. However, the punishment can be less severe if the rape victim is a slave. The perpetrator pays a fine for the damage done to the slave owner, since the slaves are seen as commodities in ancient Greece.

The social stigma and ostracism upon the rape victims is another issue in ancient Greece apart from the legal punishment. Generally, the women who were raped also considered bringing shame to the honour of the family.

Similar to the social status of slaves, women's position in ancient Greece society goes no further than them being a commodity. Social, economic and political oppression of the women is the result of patriarchy which regards women as inferior to men. Women were assumed to be subservient to men and they were frequently treated as property and commodity rather than as individuals with their own rights and autonomy. The patriarchy created a society in which men had almost all the power, and women were consigned to secondary roles. This power dynamic was depicted in Greek theatre, where male characters were often shown as powerful and dominant, while female characters were displayed as weak and subservient.

In Greek theatre, the theme of rape was a commonly used to explore the issues of power, gender, and ethics. It was generally used to portray the violent and oppressive features of the patriarchal society in ancient Greece, where women were regarded as objects to be controlled and used for the comfort of men. Some well-known plays that deal with the theme of rape include *The Rape of the Sabine Women*, *Medea*, *Oedipus Rex*, and *Hippolytus*.

The portrayal of rape in Greek theatre varied depending on the playwright and the context of the play. In some cases, rape was depicted as a violent and traumatic event that had lasting consequences for the victim. In other cases, it was used as a plot device to

advance the story or explore complex moral issues. In Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, the threat of rape is used as a way to highlight the oppressive nature of the patriarchal society in ancient Greece. In this play, the chorus of oceanids sympathizes with Prometheus and urges him to be patient, but also express their fear of being raped by Zeus if they anger him. This shows how rape is seen as a common threat for women in ancient Greece, and how it can be used to enforce patriarchal power structures. Considering the plays illustrating the sufferings of women and analysing them through radical feminist approach makes sense because these women set an example of a strong, diligent women who subvert the gender roles. Moss comments on the topic and notes that “many notable women of the past showed that heroic qualities were not monopolized by men. Yet these spirited, intelligent women usually found it possible to make their assertions only through radical, distressed, or unnatural activity” (530). Therefore, their actions could only be radical towards an unjust patriarchy. This revolt against the oppression on the other hand, is a justified act since women need to have a saying on their own body. As Erkan indicates, in patriarchy “female desire is destructive whereas male desire has a controlling power on the female body” (113). In order to have a true control over their desires, unlike men, women need to showcase an unnatural struggle, which is seen as assertion.

Apart from the plays, the concept of rape in Ancient Greece is analyzed by Harrison in the book *Rape in Antiquity*'s last chapter entitled “Heradotus and the Ancient Greek Idea of Rape”. It emphasizes how modern day understanding of rape is different than ancient Greek's concept of rape. Rape can be described and analyzed through many forms yet in Herodotus' *Histories*, the direct reference to rape is when he mentions Persians. He explains how Persian soldiers killed women by violating them to death. Here it is clearly seen that rape and sexual violence is perceived as an evil doing and cruel to the women (188). Yet, the mentioning of rape and sexual violence in non-fiction writing such as historic documents and court verdicts is not as common as it is mentioned in the plays. The reason for that might be the plays survived till modern times since they are acted and performed, rather than being a mere written document.

To conclude, as being lucky to have the plays survived till contemporary times, dramatists like Kane and Crimp reimagined what it is like to be a woman in our times with an ancient plot. Rabinowitz, mentioning the Greek plays involving sexual violence, claims that “to read (and teach) these plays with attention to the complexities of the sexual dynamic does not detract from their value; rather, it might add to our understanding of the ways in

which sex, desire, and rape interconnect with power and gender” (12). The contemporary adaptations of Greek plays demonstrate the enduring relevance of these classic works in conversations about gender roles, patriarchy, and violence. By reimagining these plays through a contemporary lens, playwrights and directors are able to explore these important issues in new and innovative ways, engaging audiences in important conversations about the complexities of gender and power.

### **3.2. *Phaedra and Women of Trachis* as Fate-Bounded Women**

Phaedra and Deianeira’s fate and “being acquaintances” have an intriguing story line since both women are bound to suffer from a patriarchal force, namely their husbands; Theseus and Herakles. While analysing both plays comparatively, several connections can be traced since the myth of Hippolytus (and Phaedra) and myths about Herakles (and Deianeira) stem from the same geography, making the characters acquaintance with each other. Interestingly, the patriarchal power and their violence is the common point where Tereus, the King of Athens and Phaedra’s husband and Herakles, husband of Deianeira meet.

Phaedra’s unrequited love and desire to her stepson Hippolytus lies in the curse uttered by the goddesses. In order to understand her desire, the myth of Athens and Crete should be scrutinized. Since Kane bases her play, *Phaedra’s Love* on Seneca’s play *Phaedra*, it is compulsory to shed light on the reasons why Seneca presents Phaedra with an unnatural desire, unlike Euripides’ *Hippolytus*. In Euripides play, the focus was on Phaedra’s stepson Hippolytus and his tragic end, whereas in Seneca’s play, the focus is on Phaedra and her tragic end.

Phaedra’s mother Pasiphae is cursed to have an unnatural desire to a wild bull. It is not Pasiphae’s own doing and consequently being cursed but rather, it is her father and husband’s wrongdoings that led to Pasiphae’s therefore Phaedra’s unconventional lust. Pasiphae’s father Sun, warns Vulcan that his wife Venus has a sexual relationship with Mars. Upon learning this, Venus curses all the offspring of Sun with bad sexual relationships. Thus, the first reason on why Phaedra has an unnatural desire, comes from her grandfather, a patriarch. Second, Pasiphae’s husband, King Minos promises sacrificing the bull that Neptune has sent to him yet he fails to do so and Neptune turns the bull into an object of desire for Pasiphae. The bull, Minotaur is imprisoned inside a labyrinth, which is constructed by Daedalus. Each year, to feed the bull Minotaur, fourteen young women and men are sacrificed by the selection of Aegeus, father of Theseus. Theseus volunteers to be among the

sacrificial victims and kills the Minotaur with the help of Pasiphae's daughter Ariadne. Theseus then promises to marry Ariadne yet abandons her on the Naxos Island. While the women do nothing against the gods and goddesses, their fate is bound to suffer from all the misfortunes that men create.

Furthermore, Theseus and Herakles' fate get tangled with each other when Theseus decides to pillage Amazons. He sails with Herakles to go on rampage on Amazon lands. Theseus has a sexual intercourse with the queen Antiope of Amazons and she births a son, Hippolytus. Even though the reason why Theseus kills Antiope is vague, some versions of the myth declares that Antiope gets angry and jealous when Theseus wants to marry Phaedra, daughter of Pasiphae and sister of Ariadne, whom is marooned on Naxos Island by Theseus. When Antiope goes berserk, Theseus kills her, and leaves with Hippolytus.

Not only Theseus goes on pillaging for his desires, but also, he helps his friend, Pirithous to abduct the queen of underworld, Proserpina. They cannot succeed in their attempt to abduct her and they are captured instead. While Theseus is on this expedition, Phaedra falls in love with her stepson, Hippolytus. Being the son of men-hating Amazons and devotee of Artemis, Hippolytus is a chaste virgin, disparages the very idea of having sex with a woman, let alone his stepmother. Even before the play commences, Phaedra's fate was already bounded to suffer from a great affliction. Phaedra's mother and her offspring are cursed because of her grandfather and father, thus Phaedra is stricken with a perverse desire. On top of that, her husband's promises, pillaging and historically leaving the women he promised he would be together, set an unbalanced husband and wife relationship, leaves Phaedra no choice but to be free of her fate by committing suicide. In light of this background, Phaedra's actions can be analyzed better and the behaviour of patriarchal characters with their influence on Phaedra's life can be dissected considering the women's position in Greek theatre as discussed in the previous section.

Seneca's *Phaedra* starts with Phaedra's questioning of her fate. The complex plot and drama needed to deploy tragic elements already exist and she is aware of them. She asks to Crete, her hometown,

PHAEDRA: -so why do you allow me, a woman handed over as hostage to a hateful house, married off to the enemy, to live out my life in tears and misery? My husband has gone off and left me here, exhibiting the sort of commitment for which he is known. Right now, he's bravely making his way through the deep shadows and the

infernal waters from which there is no return, marching under orders of a bold suitor. The mission? To remove the king of the underworld's wife from her throne by force and haul her away! He presses on, the ally of his friend's mad love, and neither fear nor shame deters him. He's gone to the deepest quarter of hell to search for illicit, adulterous affairs. (Seneca I).

She mourns her atrocious fate, well knowing that her marriage is unhappy and she is *given* to this hateful house like a commodity. As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, women in ancient Greece were seen as inferior to men and subjected to oppression. They were treated as a property not as an individual. Since Phaedra is subjected to her illicit fate, she is portrayed as weak and subservient. Even though later on, she acts like an insurgent woman by trying to have an adulterous relationship with Hippolytus, actually it is again an act of subservience. She has to follow her father's orders, has to marry Theseus, has to serve to her husband and has to follow her fate. In that sense, patriarchal oppression and fate merge and leaves no room for Phaedra to truly be herself. Therefore, I believe, Seneca's Phaedra is not a rebellious woman who goes against the norms of ancient Greece, rather, since her fate commands her to be "the licentious woman" she has no choice but to follow it. Her acts only serve as plot device, that bring tragedy to a noble family. She yearns that her fate cannot be changed and she is the victim. She is the victim of the fate as she is the victim of patriarchy.

PHAEDRA: Venus loathes the descendants of the Sun, her hated enemy; I am the victim of her revenge, revenge taken for the chains that bound her in the embrace of her lover Mars. All of Phoebus' offspring she afflicts with unspeakable indecency. Love never touches Minos' daughters lightly – it always involves some wickedness. (Seneca I).

While Phaedra suffers from her predetermined fate, Nurse, advises her not to follow it. Nurse, represents the voice of reasoning of that time, yet her advises cannot be followed because there will be no tragedy if Phaedra did not follow her fate. Nurse advises her to go against her desires and reminds her that patriarchy, her father and husband, will always know what she does.

NURSE: [...] But if you think that your actions are safe and you will escape unpunished because your husband does not look upon the land of the living, you're wrong. Suppose Theseus is buried, held fast in the depths of hell, and must endure the underworld forever – what about that man who holds the wide seas beneath his

fist and commands a hundred cities, your father? Will he fail to uncover such an awful offence? A concerned parent is perceptive [...] (Seneca I).

Here, actually it is emphasised that even though women are victims by fate or by patriarchy, they are blamed for the wrongdoings and were regarded that they bring shame to themselves and their families. Nobility and family's honour are more important than what happens to the woman as indicated in *Rape in Antiquity*.

In Act II, Phaedra is aware that her husband's and family's honour is more eminent than herself. She is well aware what the ancient Greece norms are regarding woman's position. She wants to get rid of the nobility, the norms that bound her. This part might be read as an act of rebellion against patriarchy.

PHAEDRA: Slaves, take away these robes dyed in purple and gold. I'll have nothing to do with those expensive Tyrian reds or the fine threads harvested tree-branches by the distant Chinese. Just tie a thin belt to hitch up my clothes and keep them out of the way. (Seneca II).

She wants to free herself of the boundaries of societal norms of that era. She believes her happiness does not rely on the act of fulfilling her unnatural desire but to set herself free from the boundaries. Yet, she fails to do so, and commits suicide. When she admits her love to Hippolytus, she admits that she cannot control her actions. Her wicked act needs to be completed so as to create a tragic end to the family.

PHAEDRA: Even I recognize my family's destined fate: we pursue what we should avoid. But I'm not in control of my actions. I would pursue you even through fire, through raging seas, over rocky crags, through rivers swollen into springtime torrents [...] (Seneca II).

After this act, it becomes clear that Phaedra is following her fate, her actions are bound to the double curse brought by her father and grandfather.

In Act III, when Theseus returns, he learns that Phaedra is about to kill herself and tries to convince her not to. Phaedra accuses Hippolytus of raping her and wants him to suffer for her unrequited love. As stated in *Rape in Antiquity*, the violation of women through rape is not solely viewed as an act of victimization, but rather as a social disruption that brings shame and dishonour upon a noble family, resulting in the ostracism of the women involved.



PHAEDRA: Creator of heavenly gods, I call upon you to be my witness, and you, shining beam of heavenly light, from whose seed our whole family descends: I tried to resist his advances with pleas, I swear, but he threaten me with this sword. Though my mind never submitted, my body nonetheless suffered the violence of rape. My blood will wash away this stain on my honour. (Seneca III).

Theseus goes after Hippolytus, not only to seek justice for rape accusation but also to protect his family's honour by killing his son. The accusation of rape has been used as a plot device in this play, whereas it is a crucial issue in current times, concerning feminist movement, policies, law making, social ostracism, victim blaming, and social media involvement. In the following chapter, when comparing Kane's *Phaedra's Love* and Seneca's *Phaedra* in detail, this issue will be discussed thoroughly.

On the other hand, in *Women of Trachis*, the issue of rape is not used as a plot device but implied in a cultural context when Iole is brought to Herakles' home as a war trophy. In *Phaedra*, the tragic event that set the motion of the play is Phaedra's unusual affection towards her stepson and rape accusation. This is an important turning point which leads to the death of *Phaedra* and Hippolytus. However, in *Women of Trachis*, the rape is mostly implied as Iole's city ransacked by Herakles. The plotting device that set the tragic events is actually when Iole was brought to Herakles' home and introduced as a slave girl. Deianeira pities her since Iole's fate takes a horrible turn and makes her a slave. As referred earlier, the book *Rape in Antiquity* explains that the punishment for rape could depend on the social status of the victim and perpetrator. Even though Iole is a daughter of a noble man, she becomes a slave when her city is pillaged by Herakles. Therefore, in this play, rape is not a plot device that sets the tragedy in motion but it is mentioned just in a cultural context, since it is a common thing to conquer a city and have all the material richness of it as well as women living there as war trophies. The tragedy that brings Herakles's death is his greed and seeing women as objects. Deianeira is aware that she is like a commodity as she was planned to be given to Achilleus, her previous suitor before Herakles. She does not want to be given and dreads from it yet she knows she has to obey patriarchal norms.

DEIANEIRA:

I had the most painful fear of marriage,

more than any young girl in Aetolia. (Sophocles 9-10)

[...]

When I expected him, I always prayed,

in my unhappiness, that I would die

Before I would ever come to his bed. (Sophocles 19-21).

It is evident that while women's exchange as a commodity to their future husbands may be culturally acceptable, their suffering and emotions do not conform to cultural expectations. Deianeira's plight in *Women of Trachis* exemplifies the oppressive nature of forced marriages and underscores the gendered expectations imposed on women. Despite expressing her discontent, Deianeira is ultimately compelled to yield to patriarchal oppression.

Deianeira's dilemma reveals the tensions that existed between cultural norms and individual agency. On the one hand, cultural expectations reinforced the patriarchal power which structures subjugated women. Nevertheless, Deianeira's resistance to these norms highlights the potential for women to challenge and subvert these oppressive structures.

Yet her oppression proceeds even though she does not marry her first suiter. When she marries Herakles, she says she is the “chosen wife” of him and she sleeps anxiously since Herakles is always away for his duties.

DEIANEIRA:

For even though I am the chosen wife of Herakles,

I still nourish fear after fear for him,

and each night brings me new anxiety,

which the next night's worries drive away.

We have children, but he only sees them

from time to time, like a tenant farmer

who only visits his distant grain fields

when he sows the crop and at the harvest. (Sophocles 27-41).

Deianeira's lament here can be interpreted through the avoidance of Herakles. As a hero and a male figure in ancient Greek society, Herakles occupies a position of power and privilege, which often takes him away from his family and his responsibilities as a husband. This absence and neglect of his familial duties create a void in Deianeira's life, which is compounded by Herakles' indifference towards her emotional needs.

Furthermore, Herakles' affair with Iole, his captive and lover, represents a further manifestation of his avoidance of his marital responsibilities. His extramarital affair not only violates his commitment to Deianeira but also undermines the emotional intimacy that should exist in a marriage. Therefore, this brings the turning point in play where Deianeira gets the robe from centaur, Nessus in order to evoke the love in their marriage. Yet the robe poisons Herakles and bring his tragic end. The chorus in the play indicates the reason why Deianeira sends the robe to Herakles. As being the sound of reason and common sense of their time, Chorus also acknowledges that Deianeira is helpless in her marriage.

CHORUS:

She only had a sense that his new marriage  
would quickly cause distress inside her home.

And so she acted, following advice

a stranger at that fatal meeting gave. (Sophocles 844-847).

Deianeira's desire to keep Herakles faithful can be seen as a reflection of the fact that her worth as a woman is tied to her ability to maintain a successful marriage. At the same time, Deianeira's actions can also be interpreted as a rebellion against the patriarchal norms of her society. By taking matters into her own hands and attempting to control her husband's behaviour, Deianeira is asserting her agency and challenging the patriarchal power structure that seeks to limit it.

### **3.3 Violence, Rape, and Suicide in Contemporary British Theatre**

Feminism in theatre plays as a reflection apparatus, taking its writing from society and critique from the audience. Thus, sharing the ideas of theatre scholars on feminism and feminist theatre may serve as a more direct approach to analyze contemporary British Theatre. The feminist playwrights stage the issues of women, put gender-based oppression into question and reflect their views in light of the feminist discourse. Among those, there

are playwrights who do not label themselves as feminists, yet their work may include issues that adhered to women and their oppression.

Some examples of violence and oppression in British Theatre are the play of Caryl Churchill's *Vinegar Tom* (1976), which is about witches who are not actual witches. The play dramatizes the witch-hunting practices of the 17<sup>th</sup> century but the subplot is actually about women's oppression, discrimination, humiliation as well as ageism. The character Alice is blamed to be a witch, who actually is a poor woman trying to free herself from the sexual boundaries and moral norms of the era she lives in. Her neighbour, a sexually impotent Jack, tries to violate her and when she does not allow him to do so, Jack calls Alice a witch. Alice's mother, Joan who is poor and old also is rumoured to be a witch since she has no appealing look that feeds the appetite of the male gaze. Another woman, Ellen also is accused of being a witch, just because she tries to heal "uncurable women" and operates an abortion. At the end of the play, Alice, Joan, and Ellen are persecuted and burnt to death as punishment for being witches (Churchill 178). Their otherness and disobedient attitudes are punished by the patriarchy with an exposition to violence.

Sarah Daniels' *Masterpiece* (1983) is about violence against women in Daniels' own words (Erkan 51). The play displays a woman named Rowena, who pushes a man to the rails and causes him to die whilst the man is trying to show pornography to her. In *Marginal Women in Theatre*, Erkan explores the transgressions in Daniels' plays and claims that *Masterpiece* is like a "sledgehammer", which shocks the audience, and according to Erkan the play is about "marginal women and marginal issues like pornography, the male gaze and subversion to patriarchal power with an emphasis on the empowerment of the women" (51). The play reflects the controversies around self-defense, violence, and pornography and how women are subjugated in a male dominant system.

Rona Munro's *Iron* (2002) explores the relationship between a mother and her daughter as well as the destructive nature of prison and the judicial system. Having killed her abusive husband, Josie desires to rediscover her past by leaving the trauma, violence, and mental problems that confinement brings. Billington comments on the play and comments that, from his perspective the play posits an intimate human relationship with the background of abuse and violence leading to questioning the crime and punishment.

*Splendour* (2000) by Amy Morgan displays scenes from four different women's perspectives as Billington discloses. The play is set in a war-torn country, four women's lives

unravel with the gunfire sounds in the background. The theme of violence, power, and female friendship can be observed throughout the play.

Furthermore, Alice Birch's *Anatomy of Suicide* (2017) is striking, with a sharp writing on suicide and trauma that transcends through the generations. Billington observes that "Birch has a gift for a radical experiment in the style of Caryl Churchill and Sarah Kane" (par. 3). Three generations of women's stories are told simultaneously and their trauma is displayed.

Nina Rine's *Consent* (2017), directed by Roger Mitchell, is a commentary on the sexual politics, rape, and consent presented in modern-day relationships. Haynes reviews the play and states that *Consent* is clever, bleakly funny, and provides no certain response to the inquiries of justice and vengeance (par. 6).

On top of these contemporary British plays, the feminist elements such as violence, rape and suicide can be observed in Kane and Crimp's plays. As *Cruel and Tender* and *Phaedra's Love* are loose adaptations of Seneca's *Phaedra* and Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*, it is plausible to analyze the works through a feminist perspective since they form a bridge between the women of Greek/Roman times and current times. In a chapter entitled "*Predicting the Past: Histories and Futures in the Work of Women Directors*" in the book *Feminist Futures* by Aston and Harris, it is claimed by Monk (88) that re-presenting has been a vital factor that links the past and future of the feminism all together as it gives a voice to silent women of the past, attempts to constitute an alternative history. Therefore, I believe these works shift the perspective from the subject to the "other", from oppressor to the oppressed, and from the patriarch to matriarch. To shed light on how Greek women are portrayed in *Phaedra* and *Women of Trachis* through the lens of feminism may reveal how women have become the protagonist of their own stories in current times as their position juxtaposes the old versions.

Therefore, it is plausible to claim that acknowledging and re-staging the plays of the past with a contemporary look, which Kane and Crimp did in *Cruel and Tender* and *Phaedra's Love*, constitutes almost a laboratory of humanity in which unrealized oppressions of the past is re-analyzed from the perspective of women. This may avail to acknowledge the unrealized oppression of the present, thus creating another layer of conscious raising similar to radical feminist consciousness-raising groups.

Yet, the radical feminist approach is not the only way of indicating and analysing the oppression of women; there are other feminist approaches to reveal and interpret the body of work. As well as radical feminism, the plays putting women as the protagonist can be scrutinized through the perspective of liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, poststructuralist/postmodern feminism, lesbian feminism, intersectional feminism, ecofeminism, and so forth. *Cruel and Tender* and *Phaedra's Love* stage a story of women who are exposed to violence, war, rape, submission, and oppression similar to the Greek/Roman versions of *Women of Trachis* and *Phaedra*. Since second wave feminisms were born in the 1960s with the revolt against the oppression of men; namely domestic violence, rape, control over women's bodies, male gaze, objectification of women through pornography, and sexual abuse; it poses as a strong benchmark of overall feminist/women movements and clears the path to other feminisms and other women movements to analyse art and culture from this perspective.

Sarah Kane's plays frequently employ violence as a vehicle for examining the dire impact of power and desire. Her characters are frequently embroiled in acts of excessive violence, either as perpetrators or victims. Kane's treatment of violence may be interpreted as an observation of the manner in which power dynamics can lead to mistreatment, as well as the ways in which people can be both culpable and victimized in a sequence of brutality.

Similarly, Martin Crimp's plays often use violence to explore notions of authority and dominance. His characters struggle for power, with violence serving as a means for gaining and preserving control. Crimp's depiction of violence can be considered as a comment on the methods in which individuals resort to violence in order to yield power over others, and the ways in which this can contribute to a cycle of mistreatment and distress.

Kane's works involve excessive violence for some critics and she is accused of exploiting trauma and violence for the sake of dramatic effect. In *Blasted*, *Cleansed*, and *Phaedra's Love*, the rape scenes were shown on the stage. Through Radical Feminism lenses, it can be claimed that making the sufferings of women more visible is an act of social awakening. Violence and rape generally happen behind closed doors and according to *the Female Victims of Sexual Violence 1994-2010* special report, only 15 percent of sexual assault happens outdoors and in public areas (Planty et al. 4). Therefore, staging the sexual assault either stems from power plays or pure violence, this is a feminist act since it makes

violence more visible and shocks the audience as the real act of a sexual assault should shock any person.

On suicide and troubled self, both Kane and Crimp explore the darker aspects of the human psyche, frequently delving into issues such as mental illness, isolation, and societal pressure. Kane's plays are known for their raw, confrontational style and intense emotional impact, while Crimp's plays often use irony and satire to critique modern society and its values. Crimp's characters are troubled in a way that they lack certain characteristics, they are mysterious and do not reveal much. Therefore, their troubled self and disturbed personality can be observed through the actions of others and their reflections. Sierz comments on the troubled selves in Crimp's works and adds that "the typical Crimpian self is a lonely hollow, what typically happens is that their mutual obsessions lock them into master-slave relationships. Hollow selves are also mysterious selves- they cannot be truly known" (p. 127). In *Dealing with Claire*, James tries to cope with the stress of his job and marriage and becomes suicidal whereas in *The Treatment*, Anna contemplates suicide since she cannot bear all the dehumanizing effects of the entertainment industry. Furthermore, in *Fewer Emergencies*, Gordon has everything yet he is struggling with depression and considering committing suicide.

Moreover, Sarah Kane's plays explore the themes of depression, self-harm, and suicide. Suicide is a recurring motif throughout much of her work, and several of her plays focus on characters who are struggling with suicidal tendencies. In *Blasted*, for example, the soldier who is haunted by his own atrocities ultimately takes his own life. In *Phaedra's Love*, Hippolytus commits suicide in a way by letting people kill him as he accepts the rape accusation whereas Phaedra commits suicide due to the sufferings of the unrequited love. Other plays such as *Crave*, *4.48 Psychosis*, and *Cleansed* also explore themes of suicide or suicidal thoughts. The theme of suicide is often intertwined with complex, multi-layered themes such as power dynamics, sexuality, and the nature of human relationships in her plays. Suicide poses as a powerful act in Kane and Crimp's plays whereas it serves as a plot device and a part of cultural context in *Phaedra* and *Women of Trachis*.

## CHAPTER IV

### 4. RECONSTRUCTING PATRIARCHY AS A RESPONSE TO THE OPPRESSION IN *PHAEDRA'S LOVE*

#### 4.1. Turning *Phaedra* To *Phaedra's Love*

From Seneca's *Phaedra* to Sarah Kane's *Phaedra's Love*, the portrayal of women's suffering and the oppression of patriarchy has gone through a transformation. However, despite these changes, the underlying themes of patriarchal oppression and the subjugation of women remain prevalent. By reimagining the play within a contemporary cultural context, Kane's adaptation highlights how the image of women is reconstructed, and how patriarchy responds to these new representations.

Having written the play-text in the 1990s, Kane's portrayal of the characters is more brutal, direct, and darkly comedic as she is influenced by in-her-face theatre. Even though Kane reimagines the character in an unknown time where television and monarchy coexist, she adheres to the overall plot that leads *Phaedra* to her tragic end. While she is transforming Seneca's *Phaedra* into *Phaedra's Love* and shifting the focus from the character *Phaedra* to *Hippolytus*, she purposefully makes considerable changes to the language, behavior, and underlying motives. Kane does not include the Chorus of Athenian Women and the Chorus of Huntsmen in her play, instead, she adds a non-existing character to Seneca's version. She includes Strophe, daughter of *Phaedra*, whose biological father's origin is unknown. Also, instead of an old nurse, Kane adds a doctor, who might be a male. Yet, Kane's work is in lieu with Seneca's regarding the plot. On choosing Seneca's *Phaedra* rather than Euripides' *Hippolytus*, or Racine's *Phédre*, Kane admits that the choice is arbitrary and the play is commissioned by the Gate Theatre after her success in *Blasted*.

So in the end it was the Gate which suggested something Greek or Roman, and I thought, 'Oh, I've always hated those plays. Everything happens offstage, and what's the point?' But I decided to read one of them and see what I'd get. I chose Seneca... I read *Phaedra* and surprisingly enough it interested me. (Saunders 72).

*Phaedra's Love* shares many similarities with Seneca's work according to Perris. He adds that both plays use *deus ex machine* in the prologue and *Phaedra* admits her love to *Hippolytus* in person. However, in Euripides' *Hippolytus* *Phaedra* writes a note that blames *Hippolytus* for rape before she commits suicide as in Kane's play. In that regard, Perris



summarizes the views of many critics and concludes that Kane might have read the Euripides play maybe during her studies and remembers crumbs of it, therefore includes some parts of it to her play (256). Following Saunders' translation of Kane's interview with Nils Tabert, it can be observed that Kane admits she has read Seneca's *Phaedra* once and Euripides' work after she finishes her play. She adds that she has never read Racine's *Phédre* (72). Since she amalgamates Euripides and Seneca's work, according to Perris, critics such as Brusberg-Kiermier, Cambell, Urban and Baxley refer to her play as 'revision of Greeks'. In her interpretation of Seneca's Roman play, *Phaedra*, Kane approaches the classical concerns of Greek theatre such as love, hate, death, revenge, and suicide, through a contemporary poetic style that reflects the urban setting and concerns of the modern age. Kane believes that writing is poetic but should not be styled in verse. Therefore, she does not write in verse, however Kane believes she forms the sentences poetically (Perris 266). By doing so, Kane's play can bring many visions to the surface according to Perris who states:

In any case, *Phaedra's Love* potentially brings about a kind of double (triple? quadruple?) vision in anyone familiar with Euripides, Seneca, or Racine. Brusberg-Kiermeier puts it well: 'Phaedra's Love can be described as (1) a post-modern re-write (2) in an Elizabethan light (3) of a Roman re-write (4) of a Greek play.' (qtd in. Perris 266).

Since Kane puts violence and gore into her plays, it is quite interesting that all violence happens on stage in *Phaedra's Love*, yet Phaedra commits suicide offstage. Kane might have given tribute to the traditional theatre while still using in-her-face elements in her play. Since this quadrupled layered play has myriad façades, the characters and language changed accordingly as well as the representation of violence. Due to the fact that violence, especially sexual violence is a concern of feminism, the characters, remarkably women characters' subversion of gender roles gain importance while analysing Kane's play.

#### **4.2. Reconstructing Patriarchy and Male Figures in *Phaedra's Love***

First of all, the change in the character of Hippolytus is rather drastic considering the chaste virgin representation of the original myth. In Seneca's *Phaedra*, Hippolytus is a pure man who appreciates being free of desire and untainted with sex. He disparages the material wealth and status of kings. He is also against violence, as he appreciates the harmony with nature. In a long monologue, Hippolytus states the features of a good man who lives a good life. While doing so, he also states his virtues and therefore his character.

HIPPOLYTUS:

Whoever dedicates himself to a life of simple innocence along mountain ridges never feels the fires of maddening greed and cares nothing for reputation, for the mob, that undoing of good men, for noxious envy, or for the brittle backing of the crowd. He does not play slave to kings, nor in the hopes of kingship does he pursue meaningless honors or momentary riches. He is free of desire, free of fear, unaffected by the sinister sting of Spite's ignoble bite. He knows nothing of the crimes sown among peoples and cities. He doesn't dread every noise because of a guilty conscience. He doesn't make up lies. He doesn't feel the need to live beneath roofs supported by a thousand columns as a show of wealth or gild his roofbeams with lavish gold to prove his superiority. His altars aren't drenched with great bloodshed to show his piety – no hundred head of snow-white bulls lower their heads, sprinkled with sacred grains, to the knife. (Seneca II).

Hippolytus represents a pure human being, who is humble, free of sexual desire and status. These characteristics attributed to him seem positive, still today. On the other hand, his hatred towards women could be acknowledged as a part of his purity, yet, I believe Kane reconstructs his masculinity by recreating Hippolytus as a sex-indulgent man who still hates women. In *Phaedra*, Hippolytus admits that he regards women as the 'architects of crime', and not only a few “deranged” ones enhance his hatred towards women, all of them are a matter of hatred for him. While talking with the Nurse, he declares that he does not know the exact reason why he hates all women. Hippolytus states,

HIPPOLYTUS: But the leaders of wickedness are women. These architects of crimes lay siege to our mind, and it is because of these creatures' adulterous ways that so many cities lie smouldering in ashes, so many nations feel the sting of war, so many nations lie crushed beneath the ruins of their once mighty kingdoms. I'll mention only Aegeus' wife Medea: all by herself she proves women to be a vile bunch.

NURSE: Why blame them all for the wickedness of a few?

HIPPOLYTUS: I loathe them all. I shun them, spurn them, scorn them. I don't know if it's rational, just my nature, or some terrible madness, but I want nothing to do with them. (Seneca II).

Here Hippolytus' virginity and pureness are emphasized by indicating that he has nothing to do with women. Yet, he concedes that he does not know the root of this enmity. Nevertheless, his background might reveal the reason why he detests women. Since his mother Antiope, was the leader of man-hating Amazons, is killed by his own father, he is brought up without a mother. On top of that, Theseus is almost always away from home, conquering other lands, and helping his friends to abduct women, which leads Hippolytus to raise himself without a mother and a father figure. At that point, a stepmother's otherness constitutes an opposing position, even a source of a tragic end for Hippolytus. In *Female Acts in Greek Tragedy*, Foley explains this problematic family union with an emphasis on a secluded Greek mother and her sexually ambivalent stepson. She claims "the social and political seclusion of the Greek mother makes her alternatively hostile to her more liberated son and seductive to him in the absence of a father rarely at home. The adult male—narcissistic, pedophilic, and obsessively competitive—thus remains uncertain of his sexual identity and abnormally ambivalent toward mature women" (10). Hereby, the setting for tragedy emerges with Hippolytus' hatred for women, his nonchalant behavior towards them, and Theseus' absence.

Kane's Hippolytus is foul-mouthed, dirty, addicted to sex, and dissolute against anything. He is even violent at some point, unlike Seneca's Hippolytus. While in Seneca's *Phaedra*, grandiose acts filled with long aureate speech are shown even if Hippolytus is acting violently. Contrary to that, in Kane's play, Hippolytus displays ill-tempered actions towards Phaedra. Hippolytus in *Phaedra* hauls her, and brings her to the altar of Goddesses, whereas in *Phaedra's Love*, he grabs her by the throat over a mention of an undesired person. When Phaedra admits her love to Hippolytus, he drags her to the altar.

HIPPOLYTUS: Remove your impure hands from my pure flesh! What's this?

You rush to my embraces still? A drawn sword will exact the punishment  
you deserve. [*Seizing PHAEDRA and hauling her to DIANA's altar*] Behold,  
goddess, I have bent back her impure head, gripping her hair in my left  
hand. O goddess, queen of the bow, never has blood more justly been  
spilled on your altars! (Seneca II).

In *Phaedra's Love* however, Hippolytus responds to Phaedra's admission of her love nonchalantly. He does not display any sort of emotion, rather he gets angry and violent on miniscule issues.

PHAEDRA: I love you.

*Silence.*

HIPPOLYTUS: Why?

PHAEDRA: You're difficult. Moody, cynical, bitter, fat, decadent, spoilt. You stay in bed all day then watch TV all night, you crash around this house with sleep in your eyes and not a thought for anyone. You're in pain. I adore you.

HIPPOLYTUS: Not very logical.

PHAEDRA: Love isn't.

*Hippolytus and Phaedra look at each other in silence.*

*He turns back to the television and car. (Kane 4, 79).*

Kane reconstructs the notion of masculinity by taking Hippolytus' grandiose and royal acts and imbuing them with a nonchalant demeanor. Rather than depicting a noble and honorable man, she portrays Hippolytus as an apathetic and ill-tempered character whose violent actions stem not from a sense of honor, but rather from his inherent flaws. This subversion of traditional notions of masculinity, which have long been tied to royal acts of violence committed in the name of honor, is significant in Kane's play. By stripping away the layers of performative masculinity disguised as honor, Kane reveals apathy and ill temper lie at the core of these masculine acts.

This commentary may be more obviously observed in the lines when Kane's Hippolytus displays sudden violent acts towards Phaedra when she asks Hippolytus about other women, who might be 'burning' him with desire.

PHAEDRA: Lena, weren't you -

HIPPOLYTUS: *(Grabs Phaedra by the throat.)*

Don't ever mention her again.

Don't say her name to me, don't refer to her, don't even think about her, understand?

Understand?

PHAEDRA: *(Nods)*

HIPPOLYTUS: No one burns me, no one fucking touches me.

So don't try.

*He releases her.*

*Silence.* (Kane 4, 83).

It is evident that Hippolytus does not get angry or show grandiose emotions when he learns Phaedra loves him, yet he gets angry over just a mentioning of a name. This may indicate that Hippolytus' masculinity embroiled with his honorable and pure character has been transformed by Kane into a problematic man who has a nihilistic approach towards life yet does not hold himself back from indulging himself with sex, food, and presents. On top of that, he has sudden bursts of anger when it comes to his life whereas he is indifferent to the real sufferings he has seen on TV. While Kane transforms *Phaedra* into *Phaedra's Love*, even in the title she shifts the focus from Phaedra to her love, Hippolytus. Consequently, the change in the character of Hippolytus makes a quintessential difference from Seneca's play. In order to do this change, Kane draws almost an opposite character of a chaste virgin with honorable acts and puts a sex addict version of Hippolytus who has no high purpose in life.

Moreover, Hippolytus' indifference towards Phaedra may indicate that he actually knows that she is fate bounded, therefore by acknowledging that they are just puppets of Gods and Goddesses, he becomes nihilist and indifferent towards anything, well knowing that nothing will make a difference. In Seneca's play, Hippolytus is presented as pure, honorable, and oblivious to Phaedra's destiny. Even though he acknowledges that this desire comes from Phaedra's mother, he believes that she can disobey Gods' wishes. The contradiction here is that obeying Gods and Goddesses is an act of moral devotion but if Phaedra submits to her God's written fate, she would be acting immoral. Seneca's Hippolytus cannot see this dilemma and cannot figure out why Phaedra commits suicide. On the other hand, Kane's Hippolytus acknowledges that this unrequited love is not about Hippolytus, it is about Phaedra and her fate. After Phaedra performs oral sex to Hippolytus, she sees this action as a sort of bonding whereas Hippolytus is well aware that this desire is Phaedra's curse and it cannot happen again.

HIPPOLYTUS: It's dead now. Face it. Can't happen again.

PHAEDRA: Why not?

HIPPOLYTUS: Wouldn't be about me. Never was.

PHAEDRA: You can't stop me loving you.

HIPPOLYTUS: Can.

PHAEDRA: No. You're alive.

HIPPOLYTUS: Wake up. (Kane 4-84).

During Scene Four, Hippolytus repeatedly tells Phaedra that this passion is not about him. He demands her to "wake up" and realize that she is cursed therefore she hates the very being of herself. Maybe, that is why Hippolytus tries to make Phaedra hate him. When Phaedra commits suicide, Hippolytus feels contented because he understands that Phaedra breaks her fate and commits an act that can at least end the curse. Therefore, Kane reconstructs Hippolytus' character in a way that it aligns with the 1990s fast-living, angry but nihilistic youth while giving him the consciousness of Seneca's Hippolytus lacks. Kane's Hippolytus finds meaning in death itself because it is an act against the bounded fate. When Hippolytus is questioned by the Priest about whether he has any remorse, he responds

HIPPOLYTUS: No. No remorse. Joy, in fact.

PRIEST: At your mother's death?

HIPPOLYTUS: Suicide, not death. She wasn't my mother.

PRIEST: You feel joy at your stepmother's suicide?

HIPPOLYTUS: No. She was human. (Kane, 6,92-93).

At last, Hippolytus now cares about Phaedra and corrects the Priest about the suicide/death. In Seneca's play, Hippolytus dies in a terrible accident gaining no insight towards Phaedra's dilemma because he dies before Phaedra (Seneca II). Kane reconstructs the male character by reinventing his consciousness, yet positioning him as a nonchalant male. Kane mostly adheres to the patriarchal forces and their representation of Theseus, therefore Hippolytus' change in character is mostly related to his awareness and apathy towards fate rather than his masculinity.

Theseus on the other hand, represents a patriarchal force that barely changed from the Ancient Greece /Roman times until the current era. He still represents the norm and brutal force behind the events. Seneca's Theseus is displayed as a brutal hero who suffers from a family tragedy. Though he is portrayed as noble, frank, and a brave king, he is actually the

root of all tragedy. First of all, he is almost never at home, leaving Phaedra and Hippolytus a kingdom and therefore responsibilities and expecting them to rule the country. When the Nurse asks Phaedra, what would happen if her husband finds out about her unrequited love towards Hippolytus, Phaedra responds

NURSE: Your husband will be here –

PHAEDRA: – you mean Pirithous' companion? (Seneca I).

Phaedra acknowledges that Theseus is rarely at home and when he is away, he is on a mission. This part is particularly important since Phaedra knows the mission, which is abducting a woman for Pirithous. Theseus was supposedly fighting in noble wars and missions yet he is away to assault a woman. On top of that, he is clearly showing violence towards women. He admits that he killed his Amazon wife, Antiope. When confronted with Hippolytus, he concedes the murder.

THESEUS: [...] Oh how I thank the heavenly powers above that your mother Antiope fell by my hand, that when I was heading down into the caverns of hell, I did not leave her for you. (Seneca III).

Furthermore, he looks down on Antiope due to her status, calling her inferior blood, even though Theseus purposefully wed her. While cursing Hippolytus, Theseus inquires why he could enact such an awful act. Theseus puts the blame on Hippolytus' bad blood, coming from his mother Antiope. He is not aware that his absence might have led to a family tragedy. He also cannot foresee that his murder of Hippolytus' mother may have caused a broken family. Instead, he blames Antiope's bad blood and states

THESEUS: [...] Breeding always reflects one's ancestors, inferior blood a sign of a second-rate pedigree. This is, without doubt, the madness of that warrior nation, to reject the bonds of Venus and remain chaste for so long, only later to prostitute their bodies to everyone in town (Seneca III).

On top of that, he is cruel to his familiars. He asks Phaedra why she cannot speak of the evil act that happened, he insists that if she does not speak, he will torture the old Nurse.

THESEUS: [*aside*] She refuses to confess. But whips and chains will force her old nurse to reveal what she will not. [*To his attendants*] Bind the old woman in chains! Let blows to her back extract the secrets from her mind.

PHAEDRA: No, stop! I'll tell you. [*Starts to weep*] (Seneca III).

He represents the patriarchal forces that only respond to events with violence. He pillages cities, abducts women, kills his wife, and threatens his familiars with whipping yet he is portrayed as a noble king whose suffering only stems from Phaedra's lust. Furthermore, his view on rape is a violation of his royal family, reflecting the values of Ancient Greece as referred to in the book, *Rape in Antiquity*. As soon as he hears the rape accusation of Phaedra, he does not ask how she feels, instead he demands to know who disgraced his family name.

THESEUS: Who – tell me! – who brought ruin on our good name? (Seneca III).

However, Kane reconstructs Theseus' character by reinforcing the patriarchal terror he deploys. She displays Theseus' violence on stage, highlighting that he is not a noble, brave man only but a rapist as well. I believe this reinforcement of his cruelty is a way of underpinning the patriarchal forces that are still relevant today. While most of the feminist re-representation of ancient Greek plays empower the women characters and tell the story from their perspective, Kane demolishes the illusion of male heroes. She discerningly recreates two main male characters in the play by revealing their sex-addictive, violent, abusive, and rapist tendencies. I think, highlighting these problems in the play that are embodied in Theseus and Hippolytus' characters, Kane offers a feminist look to the play.

Furthermore, quite interestingly, Kane adds to *Phaedra's Love* three non-existing characters in *Phaedra*. Instead of a nurse, she adds a doctor, Phaedra's daughter Strophe and a priest are included in her play. The choice of having a 'male doctor' instead of a nurse is intriguing. Moreover, when the play premiered in 1996 at the Gate Theatre, three characters, namely Theseus, Doctor, and Priest are played by the same male actor, Andrew Maud (Kane 64). If the premiere of *Phaedra's Love* was not directed by Kane herself, I would say that having a male or female doctor is a choice of the director, therefore the Doctor could be a woman as well, yet Kane decided that the Doctor, Priest, and Theseus should be played by a male actor. The following performances of the play have chosen similar casting, giving the role of Doctor, Priest, and Theseus to one male actor. Of course, the doctor's gender is not mentioned by Kane and it can be played by a woman, yet according to a survey among Britons, when people picture a doctor, 95% of them picture it as male (Vogel). Thus, the following performances of the play will highly likely include a male doctor. The reason for this choice might be highlighting that the Doctor, the Priest, and the King are all the same cog in the patriarchal array of the world.



Lastly, since Kane does not include the Chorus of Athenian Women and the Chorus of Huntsmen in her play, she wisely reimagines them as the embodiment of different characters. The voice of reason and storyteller Chorus of Athenian Women and Nurse find themselves in the character Strophe while the Chorus of Huntsmen is represented by the angry crowd which curses the royal family and disembowels Hippolytus. Since they are huntsmen, they hunt Hippolytus and kill him. The alterations done portraying the male characters reveal their true side and let the audience contemplate that the 'blame' of this tragedy does not only lie in Phaedra's hands, but all male characters contributed to this tragic end.

#### **4.3. Reconstruing Female Representation in *Phaedra's Love***

When it comes to the female characters, Phaedra's change and re-representation might be a focal feature of the play considering the transformation of theatre since ancient times. Yet Strophe's creation and chorus' embodiment of her character is also a crucial point to analyze Kane's work from a feminist perspective.

To begin with, even the choice of her name, Strophe may be a clue about her role in the play. Strophe means "a rhythmic system composed of two or more lines repeated as a unit" (Merriam-Webster). Her name represents the rhythmic lines that are sung by the Chorus. As the Chorus of Athenian Women represents the voice of reason due to the fact that they observe everything, Strophe may represent them in *Phaedra's Love*. She advises her mother to suppress her lust and desire because she observes Phaedra and can foresee what could happen if she follows her passion. Furthermore, she might be representing a less rigid, less devoted but more open to the needs of modern times version of the Nurse. In Seneca's *Phaedra*, the Nurse talks in long monologues and advises Phaedra to fathom the situation thoroughly. She acts like the voice of reason but her suggestions only align with what patriarchy, the general norms of the era demand. The Nurse endeavours to dissuade Phaedra by indicating how her husband and her father would learn the truth and how her royalty would be defaced.

NURSE: It's best to have upright desires in the first place and never to slip from the path, but the next best thing is discretion, knowing where to draw the line when you err. How far will you go, my poor girl? Why add to the disgrace of your house? Will you outdo your mother? Moral failings are worse than monsters. You can ascribe the latter to fate, but the former to

character. But if you think that your actions are safe and you will escape unpunished because your husband does not look upon the land of the living, you're wrong. Suppose Theseus is buried, held fast in the depths of hell, and must endure the underworld forever – what about that man who holds the wide seas beneath his fist and commands a hundred cities, your father? Will he fail to uncover such an awful offence? A concerned parent is perceptive. (Seneca I).

While reinforcing the patriarchal values, she actually gives a realistic future of the events that might occur. She is well aware that male authority and the honour of the royal family come before a woman's desires. Seeing that, Kane may have wanted to separate this character into two different ones; a male doctor who fortifies the patriarchal values, suggesting not to act against it, and Strophe, who embodies the acumen of the Nurse but not her subordination. Strophe desperately tries to deflect her mother's madness by trying to convince her.

STROPHE: Mother. It's me. Strophe, your daughter. Look At me. Please. Forget this. For my sake.

PHAEDRA: Yours?

STROPHE: You don't talk about anything else any more. You don't work. He's all you care about, but you don't see what he is.

PHAEDRA: I don't talk about him that often.

STROPHE: No. Most of the time you're with him. Even when you're not with him you're with him. And just occasionally, when you remember that you gave birth to me and not him, you tell me how ill he is.

PHAEDRA: I'm worried about him.

STROPHE: You've said. See a doctor.

PHAEDRA: He –

STROPHE: No. For yourself, not him. (Kane 3-72).

Strophe seems like she is well aware that the long bonding curse coming from their ancestors is affecting Phaedra and quite interestingly, she is not affected by that. She argues with

Hippolytus, gives both Phaedra and Hippolytus logical solutions, yet she is still a woman and cannot escape from the abuse of patriarchy. During the inquiry of the rape accusation, Strophe asks myriad questions to Hippolytus and he responds very shortly and wryly.

STROPHE: Did you have sex with her?

HIPPOLYTUS: I don't think so.

STROPHE: Was there any sexual contact between you and my mother?

HIPPOLYTUS: Sexual contact?

STROPHE: You know exactly what I mean.

HIPPOLYTUS: Don't get stroppey, Strophe. (Kane 5, 87).

When a reasonable woman inquires him, Hippolytus calls her stroppey, he means she is presumptuous. Considering Seneca's Hippolytus admits that he hates all the women and cannot stand them, evidently, Kane's Hippolytus cannot bear a reasonable woman. Yet the difference is, Hippolytus in *Phaedra's Love*, finds no meaning in life and most of the things seem boring to him, he still enjoys being questioned, eventually being accused, and punished.

However, Strophe embodies being the voice of reason and tries to prevent a tragedy to happen, she still becomes the victim of patriarchy. While Hippolytus is brought to trial, the angry crowd is gathering around to watch his trial. Theseus and Strophe walk among the angry mob in disguise and she tries to assist Hippolytus when he falls into the arms of Theseus and the angry crowd. The crowd in Kane's play, similar to the Huntsmen in Seneca's *Phaedra*, cheers for Theseus while he is raping her. A real tragedy happens as Strophe is getting raped and killed by her stepfather.

STROPHE: No! No! Don't hurt him, don't kill him!

MAN 2: Listen to her.

MAN 1: Defending an in-bred.

WOMAN 1: What sort of a woman are you?

THESEUS: Defending a rapist.

*Theseus pulls Strophe away from Woman 2 who she is attacking.*

*He rapes her.*

*The crowd watch and cheer.*

*When Theseus has finished he cuts her throat. (Kane 8,101).*

Kane plainly describes Strophe's violent death, even though she puts all the violent acts on stage. By adding this non-existing part of the original play, Kane might have wanted to emphasize the public's hypocrisy regarding violent behaviors against women. Theseus is portrayed as a noble king in *Phaedra* yet in *Phaedra's Love*, he is the only true criminal who actually rapes and kills a woman, therefore his patriarchy and royalty are ruined by Kane. The irony of blaming a person for rape and killing him for it blends with the crowd's vigor in watching an actual rape and killing. Hence, by creating an additional character, Strophe, to the play Kane discerningly points out the real culprit of the women's sufferings; the absolute patriarch, the king, and a rapist, Theseus.

Phaedra on the other hand, is quite similar to her representation in *Phaedra* since the plot of the two plays parallel in regards to events leading Phaedra to commit suicide. In Greek Theatre, the female descriptions are utterly consistent by involving simple, ordinary, side characters women. Yet Phaedra falls into another category: a woman with a feckless ego, positioning herself opposite of the male hero by destructing the social norms of the era. Moss discusses the position of female characters in tragedy in detail and states that stereotypical female characters are all similar in tragedies. They are there to assist the hero and reflect the norms of ordinary fifth-century life in Athens (516). On the other hand, to define a noble hero whose manhood is revered, there needs to be an immoral woman who epitomizes all the qualities he should not have. Therefore, these women's destructive energies require to be controlled and subordinated by male heroes. These women do not align with the social or religious codes, so their existence poses a threat to the common ideology; patriarchy. Moss identifies the roles of female characters in Greek Tragedy in four categories and states "summarizing an attitude held by most characters in the tragedies, relegates females to the status of servants, children, beasts, or monsters"(516). In *Phaedra*, she epitomizes the monster archetype due to the fact that she demolishes the whole noble family by causing insufferable pain to Hippolytus and Theseus with rape accusations. She is following her desire, which is against the norms of society and still, she proceeds because if she did not, there would not be a tragedy or an opposing position for a hero to fight and show his virtues. Likewise, in *Phaedra's Love*, in order to have tragedy, Phaedra needs to follow

her desire and lead the family to their tragedy. Nevertheless, Kane may have chosen to represent Phaedra like most feminist writers do, yet I believe, she portrays her quite similarly to Seneca's Phaedra. Most feminist writers embrace portraying those "evil, monster" women of Greek Tragedy as assertive, strong-willed, and capable yet Kane reconstructs and makes major changes in the representation of male characters rather than female characters. Maybe the only difference in Phaedra's representation is that the implication of being able to have sex with other people besides Theseus diminishes her passion. Strophe advises her to stay away from Hippolytus and adds

STROPHE: Stay away from him, go and join Theseus, fuck someone else, whatever it takes.

PHAEDRA: I can't.

STROPHE: You can have any man you want. (Kane 3,72).

In *Phaedra*, the Nurse advises her to suppress all her feelings and contemplate what could happen if her passion is heard, yet in *Phaedra's Love*, Strophe reminds her of the options she has. This difference may have emanated from the soul of the 1990s, even though the exact setting and time of the play are not mentioned.

The last point to emphasize of divergence between the two plays from the perspective of reconstructing women is the language Kane uses. In *Phaedra's Love*, Phaedra averts all the questions the Doctor asks and takes a blind eye to the implications.

DOCTOR: Are you in love with him?

PHAEDRA: I'm married to his father.

DOCTOR: Does he have friends?

PHAEDRA: He's a prince. (Kane 2,67).

Furthermore, since she has to respond to her daughter Strophe, she answers Strophe's inquiries, yet quite shortly. On the other hand, in *Phaedra*, she talks in long tirades referring to the familial curse and Gods in fifth-century Ancient Greek fashion.

Nevertheless, both Phaedra accuses Hippolytus of rape and commit suicide offstage. Intriguingly, Kane's Phaedra commits suicide offstage even though she embraces showing violence and gore onstage to the audience in yer-face manner. This may be a tribute to

Seneca or traditional plays yet the reason why both Phaedra choose to commit suicide might be diverse considering the representation of women in ancient Greece and the representation of women in the 1990s.



## CHAPTER V

### 5. RECONSTRUCTING FEMALE CHARACTERS IN *CRUEL AND TENDER*

#### 5.1. The Men that Destroy, the Women that Build, Crimp that Merges

Having worked together in the play *The Country*, Luc Bondy, the director, asks Martin Crimp to read two Greek plays, namely *The Madness of Herakles* and *Women of Trachis*. Crimp favours the latter more as it feels strange and fits his mentality. The play was staged during the times of War on Terror yet Crimp admits that he did not wish to reduce the play to an anti-war denunciation. (Sierz 106-107). Therefore, while rewriting the play, he points out many commonalities of Herakles' demolishing, sacking, patriarchal characteristics, by revealing the brutality of war; nevertheless, he also elegantly addresses the violence in domestic life, getting the highlight from victorious Herakles to tender yet cruel Amelia.

The marriage and its secluded, supposedly safe box of walls is often a Crimpian theme as much as nuclear families and victimized children. *Women of Trachis* involves all these elements presenting a chance for Crimp to subversively modernize the play with his wry remarks and ironic dialogues. Here, he modernizes the play with a setting of a home, close to an airport and shifting the Chorus with working-class women. He also shifts messengers as modern-day journalists and government officials. Sakellaridou emphasizes the radical change in Crimp's play and asserts in *Cruel and Tender* compared to Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*, regarding the structure and the ethics, Sophocles adheres to more conservative forms. The family is a microcosmos that upholds high values like honour, adjunct to hierarchal ideals of authority. All habitants of the house, Deianeira, female chorus, Iole, two messengers and Herakles' son Hyllus have to comply with the hierarchal and patriarchal code of conduct. The violence is outside. However, "Crimp brings in his most radical transformation. The domestic space, which is so much defended and sanctified by the classical author, is shown by the modern writer to be physically invaded by the outside evil world of military action and political manoeuvring" (Sakellaridou 369). By combining the striking authority and infused violence in both public and personal spheres, Crimp reconstructs the gender roles of war victim Laela and the matron of the General's house, his wife Amelia.

Deianeira, like fate, bounded Phaedra, knows that her fate is in the hands of Gods and Goddesses since she is aware of the oracle's prophecy. Yet, she tries to defy the prophecy and goes against it but fails eventually. When she is informing her son, Hyllus about the prophecy she declares:

DEINEIRA: My child, his fate is on the balance scale.

Will you not help? If Herakles survives,

then so do we—if not we die with him. (Sophocles, 104-106).

The women's portrayal in Greek Theatre, as mentioned in the previous chapters, is to oppose the hero in order to reveal his values and commence the set of events that assess his true heroic values. Even though she is informed about the prophecy, her struggles going against it are the onset of the tragic events. Still, she struggles to save Herakles and regain his love by sending the poisoned robe, therefore leading to his tragic end. If it was not for Deianeira, there would be no opposition and no tragedy. Her portrayal complies with the fifth-century Greek women whose values should submit to the patriarchal norms. Deianeira similar to Phaedra is given to a mighty hero, living far away from their land and left alone by a husband whose "heroic" duties command them so. In her long monologue Deianeira mentions how she is afraid of marriage and adds "I had the most painful fear of marriage, more than any young girl in Aetolia." (Sophocles, 9-10). Then, explains even in her supposedly happy marriage, she is alone due to the fact that Herakles is always away, completing his duties.

DEIANEIRA: We have children, but he only sees them

from time to time, like a tenant farmer

who only visits his distant grain fields

when he sows the crop and at the harvest. (38-40)

[...]

For since he killed the mighty Iphitos,

we have been driven into exile here,

in Trachis, living in a stranger's home,

and no one knows where Herakles has gone. (47-50).



More than Amelia, Deianeira's fate resembles to Phaedra considering how their initial sufferings are similar. They both represent the opposing force in the play but still reflect the ordinary women of Ancient Greece. Like Phaedra, Deianeira's husband Herakles is rarely at home, leaves the child-raising duties to them, and is off duty, serving a not so much high-value cause. Theseus is away to assist his friend to abduct a woman and Herakles is away to serve to Queen of Lydia since he cannot control his rage and then kill Iphitos. As his punishment, Oracles command him to serve Omphale, Queen of Lydia for a year. Both Herakles and Theseus' quests reveal how their heroic duties are actually not noble and not epic. On the contrary, their rage, impulsive behaviors, and violent acts are the reasons for this task. Regardless, Deianeira endeavours to build the family bonds that Herakles regularly breaks. She welcomes Iole like a sister even though she is dreading that Iole might replace her. She tries to regain the love of Herakles by sending him a love charm-induced robe, but it turns out to be poison.

DEIANERIA: And you also know how I received her—

that foreign girl—because you witnessed it.

I welcomed her as if she were a friend. (Sophocles, 763-765).

[...]

I'm not sure. But I'm desperately worried.

Though I was hoping I would make things better,

I may have made a terrible mistake—

that's how it will look. (801-804).

On the other hand, Herakles' choice of words while talking about Deianeira, implies his destructive and condescending behavior.

HERAKLES: But now a woman, a feeble woman,

whose nature is not masculine at all,

has overpowered me all by herself.

She did not even use a sword! My boy, (1241-1244).

[...]

I never cried, but in this wretched state

I find I've now become a whining woman. (1258-1259).

Herakles' tragedy commences as he is wrongfully poisoned with the intention of Deianeira's love charm to get him back. Yet, this is not a tragedy of Deianeira's whose husband is almost always away and brings a concubine, a war trophy to her house. It is never "her" tragedy to begin with even though she suffers and eventually commits suicide. It is the hero's tragedy that brings his mighty position to an end. Therefore, it can be observed that Sophocles adheres to the dichotomies of woman/man, hero/antihero, and public/personal with the embodiment of these in Herakles and Deianeira. However, Crimp modernizes the play, combining those dichotomies in the portrayal of Amelia, naming the play *Cruel and Tender*.

First of all, Amelia dismisses the very idea of being a victim in this marriage and she is highly smart as she comments on the issues of war and marriage. Crimp accentuates Amelia's stronghold position even at the beginning of the play. She is not only a dichotomy to the heroic values, she is not a victim, she purposefully chooses the life and marriage she wants.

AMELIA: There are women who believe  
all men are rapists.

I don't believe that  
because if I did believe that  
how—as a woman—could I go on living  
with the label 'victim'?

Because I am not a victim—oh no—  
that's not a part I'm willing to play—believe me. (Crimp 1).

She intends not to play the role of victim woman and admits that she cannot continue to live as she believes all men, including her husband is a rapist. Quite interestingly, Amelia cannot continue to live as she commits suicide, well knowing that General, her husband, raped Laela and sacked her country. Sierz (150) comments on Crimp's politics and claims that he is pro-feminist since his protagonist are mostly women, and when they are the victims, the spectator's sympathy is on the women's side. However, in *Cruel and Tender*, Amelia is not

the victim that can be sympathized with, it is Deianeria. Amelia is violent, smart and does not comply with patriarchal norms only. When reconstructing Amelia, the gender roles adhered to her do not align with Deianeira's. Amelia desires to build her life, not just her marriage. She is not either a victim or a criminal, she is not just a docile woman or an antihero. Crimp blends all in his portrayal of Amelia. Amelia admits that she is not career driven yet she is content that she has all the means at her young age, which can be criticized from a liberal feminist perspective that underlies the importance of the success of individual women in a patriarchal environment. Thus, it is not possible to claim that Crimp depicts a feminist rewriting of the character Amelia, however, through her complex, blended illustration it can be asserted that she is depicted with a humane portrayal, not just a dichotomy to serve the values of heroes. Amelia drops out of college to have a more comfortable life, admitting that it is her choice, she is not given to her husband like Deianeria.

AMELIA: I am eighteen years old and I have a house

a husband and a bed—

a bed with white pillows—

and a child.

I abandon my course at university

to become the mother of a child— (Crimp 1).

Furthermore, contrary to Deianeria, Amelia responds to cheating with betrayal and clearly states she had an affair with Jonathan, a government minister when demanding the truth about the General's affair with Laela. She uses her sexuality towards men and insults Laela physically and verbally. Moreover, she declares her open disgust toward children calling them tiny terrorists. Eventually, she commits suicide, before trying to find out what makes her a cruel person (Sakellaridou 369). While doing so, Amelia becomes “the deplorable epitome of the terminal despair, the abysmal emptiness, cruelty, and anaesthetisation of ordinary citizens and minority groups in the contemporary world, whose lack of humanity she seems to deplore” as Sakellaridou (369) comments. On the other hand, according to Angelaki, she also reveals her tender side, exhibiting concurrently fierceness and vulnerability.

Overall, Angelaki comments on how Crimp merges the cruel and tender in Amelia's portrayal, quite differently from Sophocles'. She declares that entanglement of personal and political realms is pursued in *Cruel and Tender* and the individual inferences to public events can shape the collective histories as well as their personal lives. For Crimp, the institution of marriage, filled with power plays, desire, and ambition comes into a central position for transgression, leading to destructive outcomes. Yet beyond this portrayal of a doomed union, Crimp's text goes further as subverting the gender stereotypes beyond social and institutional norms that accompany them. Finally, Angelaki adds that with the embodiment of those values in women characters, "the unfair expectations and limitations society and institutional structures impose on women, which, as the play invites us to consider, ought to be decisively dismantled" (15). Thus, it can be observed that Crimp reconstructs Amelia by leaving out the binary oppositions that are valued and depicted in Sophoclean writing and highlights the cruelty and tenderness in her, revealing her humane side.

## **5.2. Violence, War, and Women as War Trophies in *Cruel and Tender***

Violence represented in the play can be scrutinized by shedding light on two female characters Amelia and Laela. The play is not only a staging of a violent world of wars but a violence of people's inner side. Aragay notes that "*Cruel and Tender* is not so much about a play about terrorism per se, as a play about ourselves, our own civilization and its violent underside, a reflection of our own anxiety" (86). Throughout *Women of Trachis*, no line of Iole's is heard as she does not utter a single word. Her desires, wishes, passions, and disappointments are lying in an unknown, non-verbal place in which she suffers in silence. Along with Iole, there comes a group of women from the sacking of the city of Oechalia, who appear before Deianeria, waiting for their destiny. Their words or presence is merely a background for Iole's story since she is the reason why all women are there. Deianeria intervenes in the introduction of the women that are brought by Lichas and questions the identity of Iole, due to the fact that she has a striking appearance among the rest. Lichas admits that he has been lying to Deianeria about the identity of Iole, revealing that she is the daughter of Eurytus and Herakles yielded to Eros, sacked the city of Oechalia for the sake of having her. Deianeria displays sympathy towards Iole, admitting that the beauty of hers has destroyed her fate.

DEIANERIA: When I looked at her I felt real pity,

because her beauty has destroyed her life

and because against her will the poor girl

has ruined her country and enslaved it. (Sophocles, 574-577).

Referring back to *Rape in Antiquity*, the punishment for rape depends on the status of the victim women in Athenian society. Since Iole is a war trophy, her abduction only becomes a family problem that creates tension. Both Deianeria and the Messenger blame Eros, for Herakles' desire towards Iole.

DEIANERIA: So anyone

who, like a boxer, raises her two fists

in a fight with Eros is a thoughtless fool.

For Eros rules the gods as he desires—

and he rules me. Why not another woman,

someone just like me? It would be madness

for me to blame my husband or this girl

if this disease now has him in its grip. (Sophocles 543-550).

Even though Deianeria does not hold any grudge towards Iole, she also does not consider her husband Herakles to be the responsible party of this tragedy. The only compassion for Iole is a pity. While Iole is suffering, she keeps silent. Coe and Finglass comments on the silence of Iole and indicates that her silence has a thematic significance (96). If Iole has spoken, the terror that Herakles created might have been revealed, thus leading Deianeira not to mistakenly poison him but rather give up regaining his love. Her silence prompts the events that bring tragedy to the family. The concept of female powerlessness here, depicts Iole as a victim whose ability to speak up for herself is also abducted by the patriarchy. She is enduring the violence passively yet this actually led to an ambiguity of actions propelled by Herakles.

However, Laela in *Cruel and Tender* is not a silent victim. Part two of the play opens with Laela, showing how she learns to read in English. I believe, this start both visually and metaphorically is really striking since it is depicting how Laela becomes an individual and finds her voice. She struggles to read certain words such as individual and with the aid of the Physiotherapist, she pronounces the word accurately. Nevertheless, she is not reading

any text that is related to oppression, war, or women's sufferings, on the contrary, she is reading a women's magazine providing advice on sexual relationships. She seems content with her life, stealing Amelia's jewelry and having Physiotherapist, Beautician, and Housekeeper on her side, she enjoys the affluent life offered by the General. Crimp gives voice to Laela but ironically the spectator hears a sound of a woman who is on the side of patriarchy and seems like she is not affected by the atrocities she has been through. While discussing with Amelia about the marriage, Amelia regards it as a cultural difference, whereas Laela openly states her own beliefs.

AMELIA: The General is my husband, Laela. D'you understand what that means?

LAELA: One man can have many wives.

AMELIA: Of course, of course—but here—where you are now—when a man marries a woman, he stays with that woman.

LAELA: Just her?

AMELIA: That's what marriage is.

LAELA: (laughs) I don't believe you. That's what they tell girls at Tuseme Club. (Crimp 2).

Laela regards marriage as an opportunity to live a wealthy life, shedding the idea that she can only be a victim in the play. In that regard, she is quite similar to Amelia who takes an oath not to play the victim role. Nevertheless, the way they choose not to be victims is utterly divergent. Amelia fights to stay in an unhappy marriage, has revenge sex, and manipulates the system. Laela on the other hand, favors the ideals of patriarchy and delegates the stereotypical gender roles for the sake of her own comfort. When her son grabs a toy gun, Amelia gets angry and states that no gun will be allowed in the house. Laela loses her control and claims boys need to fight, empowering the stereotypical gender norms.

AMELIA: What I mean—Laela—is that the choice has already been made. I am his choice. I am the mother of his child. When he wakes up in the bed screaming, I am the person who switches on the light and fetches the glass of water. (Sees the Boy has a toy gun.) What's this? I thought I said no guns. (No one speaks.) I said no guns.

HOUSEKEEPER: It's only a toy, Amelia.

AMELIA: But I specifically / asked.

LAELA: (soft) Boys need to fight.

AMELIA: What did you say?

LAELA: (*with growing intensity*) Boys need to fight—they need to learn—they need to kill. Boys need to kill. Boys need to fight. Boys must fight. Boys must kill—must learn to kill. Boys need to fight—they need to learn—they need to kill. Boys need to kill. Boys need to fight. Boys must fight. Boys must kill—must learn to kill. Boys need to—

*Amelia hits Laela. Laela for a moment is stunned—then leaves the room.* (Crimp 2).

Apparently, Laela values the patriarchal norms that may turn out to be a benefit for her. In that regard, Laela's portrayal might be a representation of liberal feminist criticism, which appreciates the individual success of women, even if they need to gain success in a patriarchal society. Liberal feminism asserts the advancement of women's position in society without any amendment in politics, society or economy (Aston Introduction). Iole's silence is vocalized by Crimp yet Laela is not a victim. She stands against the ideals of Amelia, whose portrayal also may be a criticism of radical feminism. Her struggles are about marriage, the patriarchy, and violence itself and she tries to leave out of this system by taking Laela to the airport with her. From this perspective, Crimp does not pity and depict female characters as one-sided victims or others but reconstructs them as multi-faceted with a wry irony that showcases the different approaches of feminism. This multi-layered personality of Amelia and Deianeira depicts a profound depth of character, encompassing a range of conflicting attributes. Their thoughts and interactions manifest in a multi-faceted manner, revealing a captivating amalgamation of strengths, vulnerabilities, contradictions, and idiosyncrasies of womanhood regardless of their "victim" status.

Amelia runs off with Laela, like a radical feminist who tries to save herself and other women from the oppression of patriarchy, creating a sisterhood bond. A month later, the General comes into a wretched situation, displaying the effects of poisoning on his mental and physical health. Laela comes back and Amelia has committed suicide. Laela is still content with her life, ignoring the General's comments and wishes yet like a property, very similar to Iole, Laela is given to the General's son James. However, the play does not end with Herakles/General's wish to have a detailed funeral but with Laela's reading of the book. As Crimp visualizes giving a voice to Laela by displaying her trials to learn reading, he

eventually comments on her fully developed character as a woman who desires not to be a part of this patriarchal system.

*Laela reads aloud from her book.*

LAELA: (reads) 'I wish I was not of this people. I wish I was dead or still unborn. We are the people. We are the people of iron. We work by day and in the night we grow sick and die. Our babies will be born with grey hair and god will destroy us. Father will not respect son and son will ...'

JAMES: ... despise his father.

LAELA: 'Son will despise his father and hurt his father with cruel words. The children of the people of iron will cheat their parents of what is owed to them, condemn them, and disobey their wishes.' (Crimp 3).

Laela's wish to not be part of "this people" may reflect a rejection of the patriarchal norms and expectations placed on her. She demands liberation from the constraints imposed on individuals, particularly herself, by the dominant power structures. The mention of children despising and hurting their fathers can be regarded as a challenge to traditional gender roles and family dynamics which questions the inherent power imbalances within the family units. This critique aligns with feminist perspectives that seek to dismantle oppressive power structures and advocate for greater agency and autonomy for individuals. Therefore, by reconstructing the portrayal of women in *Cruel and Tender*, Crimp ironically comments on the feminisms that are embodied in different characters and give them a modernized voice who are still struggling with societal norms yet raise their voices against them.

### **5.3. The Function of Greek Women Chorus as a Reconstruction of Modern Working Women in *Cruel and Tender***

The chorus consists of a group of Trachinian women who traditionally serve as a collective voice that interpret the events in *Women of Trachis*. As well as commenting on the events, the chorus dispenses guidance to Deianeria without affecting the choice of hers. When Deianeria is not sure about sending the robe which she assumes is infused with the love potions, the chorus encourages her to do what she believes is true.

DEIANEIRA: But if this love potion somehow helps me  
prevail against the girl and if its charms



do work on Herakles, then I am ready—

unless you think my plan is much too rash.

If that's the case, then I will end this.

CHORUS: No, no. If there's any reason to believe

this charm will work, as far as we're concerned

what you're proposing is not wrong at all. (Sophocles, 711-718).

They also emphasize that Deianeria does not foresee the outcome of her sending robe to Herakles, blaming goddess Aphrodite whom they consider responsible for Herakles' lust towards Iole. The Sophoclean chorus traditionally follows the commentator role in the Greek drama whereas Crimpian chorus is revolutionized by turning into a triplet of women; a physiotherapist, a beautician, and a housekeeper, all in the service of Amelia. With the replacement of the chorus with characters who embody specific female occupations, Crimp might be emphasizing the labour and experiences of women within capitalist systems. This substitution can be seen as a conscious effort to shift the focus from abstract, disembodied voices to tangible, working women who represent the often undervalued and invisible labour performed by women in society. Still, these women are not just mere one-sided victims of both capitalism and patriarchy but they have their own personality which mingles with their occupations.

The Beautician, Physiotherapist, and Housekeeper also offer advice to Amelia but not on her choices, rather they offer advice on her looks and beauty, which demonstrate the objectification of women's bodies in terms of capitalistic values.

PHYSIOTHERAPIST: She ought to jog, she ought to be out there running, she ought to be taking more / exercise.

BEAUTICIAN: She waits for the light. She says she just lies there waiting for the light. She's depressed: she misses her / husband.

PHYSIOTHERAPIST: Because I refuse to believe this is psychological.

BEAUTICIAN: Don't move, Amelia: it's still wet.

*Pause. They move away and lower their voices.*

Of course it's psychological: she's like a bird in a box—look at her. (Crimp 1).

The modern chorus is well aware that Amelia is actually trapped in a doll house, playing the role of wife to a husband who is almost always away yet as workers they keep doing their jobs. First, they serve to Amelia, and then to Laela who starts to resemble Amelia, and then to the General who is also abusing them. On top of the triplet, Billie Holiday's voice also contributes to the role of the chorus. When Amelia gives Jonathan the poisoned pillow to take to the General, Billie Holiday's 1936 recording of "I Can't Give Anything But Love" plays, and when she dances with Richard, 1938 recording of "My Man" plays, which is quite similar to the lyrical odes of the Chorus in *Women of Trachis*.

In part three, the Beautician, Physiotherapist, and Housekeeper open the act. They are chatting and polishing their nails as they talk about Amelia's suicide as if nothing happened. Their nonchalant attitude towards her death may be reflecting their position in the feminist discourse. They are the working women who actually take care of myriad issues yet their sufferings are not the leading tragedy in the play. They observe, they assist, and they give advice yet they do not talk about their personal lives or their anguish. When they are inquired about the death of Amelia, even though they have seen the signs of her declining mental health, they choose to stay out of it. The Housekeeper even amusingly provokes the inquisitors by telling them that she was off the house, spending her night in a restaurant called Star of İzmir, a hotbed for terrorism when Amelia committed suicide. Their staying out of Amelia's death might be a metaphor for how working-class women have no time to aid or help the cause of the radical feminist agenda. They ignore Amelia's sufferings and proceed to work for the General even if the General physically hurt them. When the General is in a wretched stage, he is getting help from the women in the house but still does not avoid displaying his violent manners.

BEAUTICIAN: You're hurting me.

GENERAL: I'm doing what?

HOUSEKEEPER:(calmly) Let go of her hair. Please. She doesn't know the answer.

GENERAL: (releasing her) Doesn't know the answer.

BEAUTICIAN: No—sorry.

GENERAL: I've hurt you.

BEAUTICIAN: I'm used to it.

GENERAL: Pain?

BEAUTICIAN: Yes.

GENERAL: (smiles) Used to pain? Oh really? (Crimp 3).

This scene might be representing how working-class women are used to suffering yet still proceed to work since they have no other option like Amelia or Laela. Furthermore, the General's violent behaviour may stem from his rank in the army since he gets used to being treated exclusively and obediently. Agusti comments on the General's behaviour and notes "the General channels his narcissism through the high status his position within the hierarchy of the army affords him, and keeping an African mistress increases his sense of omnipotence" (244). This indicates the General demands to be the authority both in public and personal spaces and proceed to benefit from his higher rank.

Crimp reconstructs the all-seeing chorus with a trio of working women in the house, who have a chance to observe all the tragedy but ironically these women are not the victims again since they are used to pain. Ironically, Crimp might be criticizing the socialist feminist approach by giving these women an individualistic persona and not collectively categorizing them as workers. They are again a group of women whom the audience cannot possibly sympathize with easily since they turn a blind eye to Amelia's death, they gossip, and make fun of the family as they continue to work.

All in all, every part of the play, *Cruel and Tender* commences with a woman on stage whose agonies, desires, and fate are different from each other. I believe, subtly Crimp criticizes feminist discourse with the embodiment of three groups of women; Amelia, Laela, and the chorus as the Beautician, Physiotherapist, and Housekeeper. From my perspective, if Amelia's portrayal and reconstruction are scrutinized from a radical criticism, her sufferings, her stance on the marriage, familial and patriarchal oppression of her, and her suicide as a way of rejecting fate can be analyzed better as radical feminism presents stronghold perspectives on those issues. Furthermore, Laela's reconstruction can be analyzed through the light of liberal feminism and radical feminism, but overall from a feminist perspective, as she only tries to save herself and goes on to find her individual comfort even though she suffers maybe the most from patriarchal norms. Moreover, she is the victim of the oppression since she is raped and regarded as a war trophy. Lastly, as well as scrutinizing from an overall feminist perspective, the role and the reconstruction of the Housekeeper, Beautician, and Physiotherapist can be dissected through the lens of socialist

feminism and radical feminism regarding their role as working-class women and being the subservient of the patriarchy, namely the General.

However, Crimp does not portray these women as one-sided characters who play the role of other, monster, evil, or helper as traditional Greek theatre displays. He reconstructs these women not like heroines or antiheroes but with an amalgamation of myriad drive and emotions as they are closely related to reality with a pinch of irony. Regardless, analysing his plays from a feminist perspective may contribute a lot to the overall discourse and it can be claimed that Crimp, in this play, focused on reconstructing the women characters by adding a humane perspective to their partial representation in *Women of Trachis*.



## CONCLUSION

This thesis has analyzed the representation of gender and power dynamics adhered to the image of women and patriarchy in the plays of Martin Crimp and Sarah Kane with a feminist lens. The chosen plays of Kane and Crimp reflect a trend; revision of the Greeks in British Theatre, therefore, focusing on *Phaedra's Love* and *Cruel and Tender* may provide a better analysis since the analysis involves a comparison with the Greek/Roman versions of the plays. In order to scrutinize the changes in the culture, representation of women in theatre, and the oppression of patriarchy, the Greek and Roman versions of plays serve as a benchmark, which enables a thorough comparison.

The analysis of women characters, as well as the chorus in Seneca's *Phaedra* and Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*, has revealed that they are actually bounded to their fates weaved by Gods and Goddesses, thus their actions mostly serve the traditional norms of fifth-century Greece. However, since the women characters are the focus of those plays, in their own time, the plays can be regarded as ground-breaking considering gender politics. Still, as discussed in this thesis, it is never the women's tragedy, their sorrows stemmed from the patriarchy, and are never the initiator of the tragic events. They are either monsters or helpers but never the heroines in *Phaedra* and *Women of Trachis*. It is Herakles' tragedy, who dies because of a "feeble" woman, that tries to regain his love and it is Theseus' tragedy, whose son dies because of the rape accusation. Therefore, it is claimed in this thesis that the Greek/Roman versions of the plays represent women in theatre as a reflection of women in Greek life, but also depicted in dichotomies in order to reveal the heroic values of the men. Through a close reading of the characters, it is argued that *Phaedra* actually serves as a plot device, which sets the tragic events so that the hero would be challenged. *Phaedra's* uncontrollable lust towards her stepson brings tragedy to the noble family, yet long before, *Phaedra* and her mother were cursed with lust because of their male ancestors. Thus, it is evident that *Phaedra* cannot break her fate but follow it, which leads to the tragedy. If it was not for *Phaedra*, there would be no tragedy and no binary opposition for a hero to highlight his morals. Likewise, *Deianeira* from *Women of Trachis*, tries to regain the love of Herakles that brings a concubine, *Iole*, to their house. Herakles was doomed to die in the hands of an already dead according to a prophecy and he dies with the poison prepared by *Nessus*, a centaur, that is given to *Deianeira* as a love potion. *Deianeira* again, serves as a plot device

by following her fate and leading a tragic end to Herakles. It is discussed that both women serve as a plot device and since they are fate bounded, it is their almost duty to initiate the events that lead to the tragedy of Theseus and Herakles. Yet, the plot of the plays is intriguing considering they are about marital problems, violence, women as war trophies, rape accusations, and suicide, which might appeal to Kane and Crimp since their drama involves these as well.

It is argued in this thesis that Kane, who depicts the violence as it is and shocks the audience by emphasizing the omnipresent violence, reconstructs the male characters in *Phaedra's Love* and therefore contributes to the feminist discourse by revealing the oppression of patriarchy. She modernized the language and the setting but still, Phaedra dies and accuses her stepson of rape. Kane reconstructs the character of Hippolytus as a deviant, sex addict, nihilist, and consumerist instead of a chaste virgin. Also, with minor changes in the plot, she depicts Theseus as a rapist. The almighty hero in Seneca's play becomes a rapist and a murderer of his stepdaughter. Even though Kane is criticized for using gore and immense violence in her plays, she actually reflects the violence as it is, therefore by reconstructing the image of men and patriarchy, she contributes to the feminist discourse.

Martin Crimp, on the other hand, ironically reconstructs the women characters and saves them from the weaves of fate which make them one-sided characters. It is claimed in this thesis that Crimp rather focuses on the women characters but strips them out of the monster, helper, and victim stereotypes and gives them multifaceted personalities that challenge the dichotomies in *Women of Trachis*. Crimp not only reconstructs the image of women but also does not victimize them, therefore he contributes to the feminist discourse as he depicts more realistic images of women. However, it is argued that Crimp wryly criticizes certain feminist perspectives in the embodiment of characters Amelia, Laela, and a trio of working women at Amelia's house. By illustrating Amelia as a woman who rejects being a victim, who first revolts against the patriarchy, I believe, her struggle is similar to the radical feminists. Yet, she belittles the working women in her house and tries to bond a sisterhood with Laela, the concubine, and still fails, Crimp criticizes the elements of radical feminism. Furthermore, with the portrayal of Laela, it is evident that she represents the values of liberal feminists, who support individual success in a patriarchal world. Laela is unbothered by her oppression by the General, she is content with the materials and wealth she gains through the General. Lastly, the Beautician, the Housekeeper, and the Physician

are represented as curious yet nonchalant to the death of Amelia, because I believe, Crimp criticizes the long-lost link between radical feminism and socialist feminism.

Therefore, it is claimed in this thesis that, even though Kane and Crimp do not label themselves as feminists, it is evident that their plays can be analyzed through a feminist lens since they involve violence, rape, oppression, suicide, power, and gender dynamics, which is discussed within the feminist discourse.

This thesis has analyzed the reconstruction of women and patriarchy in *Phaedra's Love* and *Cruel and Tender* and suggested that while Kane is reconstructing the patriarchy she reveals the omnipresent violence is always in women's life. Whereas Crimp reconstructs the image of women, revealing that they are not just a plot device or a dichotomy for men to polish their high morals. Both British playwrights have distinct dramatizations of the Greek/Roman plays but this thesis is only limited to the analysis of the play text, not the performance or the visual staging.

As future research unfolds, it is imperative to proceed to interrogate existing power relations, oppressions, and forms of violence by involving the critique of performance and audience reactions in order to amplify the marginalized voices and create an equal theatrical landscape.

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