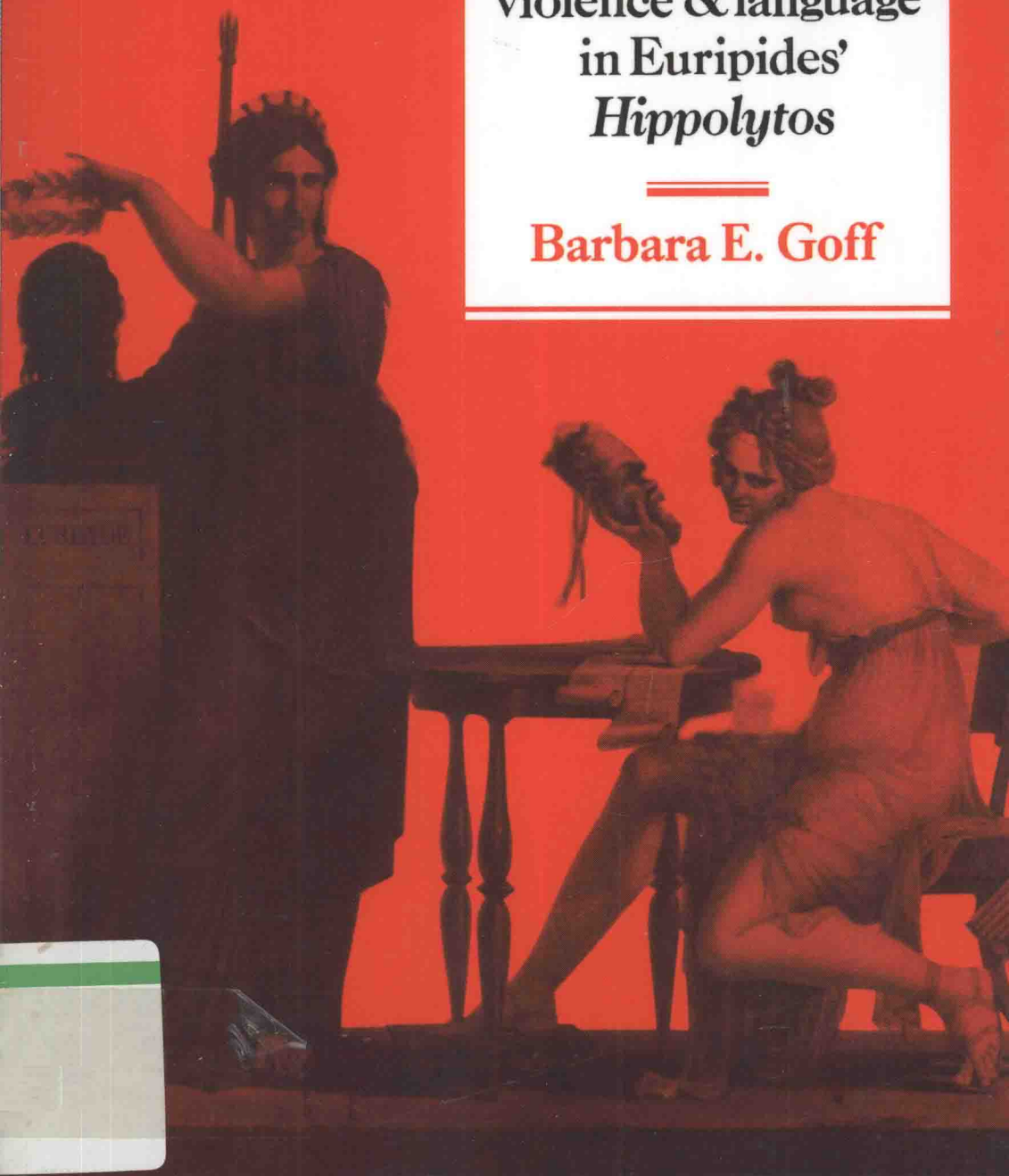


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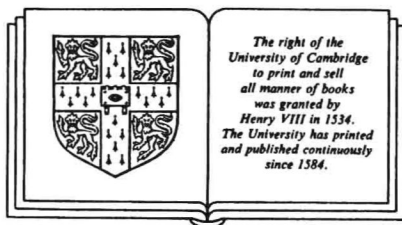


The noose of words

Readings of desire, violence and language
in Euripides' *Hippolytos*

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PREFACE

This is a study of Euripides' *Hippolytos*, 'one of the most-loved and most-studied of Euripides' plays' (Michellini 1987: xiv). Each of the five chapters elaborates a different focus of analysis, and together they construct a reading of the *Hippolytos* that differs significantly from other available treatments, both in detail and in its overall allegiances. Connections among the chapters are provided by the notions of speech and silence as they are debated throughout the play. In the first chapter the opposition of speech and silence is read to articulate relations of gender and of power. In the second, third and fourth chapters this opposition provides a heuristic to construct the play's related discourses on desire, violence and language. In the fifth chapter, which concerns itself solely with the ending, the play is read to turn its gaze inward, so that speech and silence, desire, violence and language reappear as problems not only for the society within which the play emerges and which it addresses, but also for the play's internal representation of its external achievement.

My study differs from other recent treatments in that it does not rely on one argument or term of analysis but adopts a plurality of approaches to the text. Such multiplicity is afforded not only by present-day critical practices, about which I shall have more to say later, but also by the historical context of the play in fifth-century Athens. The issues in the *Hippolytos* that I have isolated for debate – gender, desire, violence, language, the status and authority of poetry and drama – can all be seen to be matters of pressing concern in contemporary Greek sources of all genres. Throughout my work I have tried to make the *Hippolytos* meaningful by siting it in the contexts of Euripides' *oeuvre*, of Greek tragedy, and of Athenian society; I have tried to make the *Hippolytos* reverberate through the culture that produced it, and thereby to make the culture reverberate through the play.

At the same time, it will be obvious that my readings of the *Hippolytos* are conditioned by the critical practices of the period in which I write. The critical context of classics in the late twentieth century might be broadly characterised as produced by the theoretical disciplines of psychoanalysis and anthropology; by the dismantling of traditional accounts of 'meaning' within structuralism and

post-structuralism; and by the radical perspectives of feminism and Marxism. The institution of classical literary criticism is still deeply divided over how to react to and make use of the claims and practices of contemporary theoretical activity. It is still possible for a critic to invoke 'the author' as sole source of a text's meaning and sole legitimate term of analysis (Kovacs 1987). Other classicists, however, such as Zeitlin and Segal (who have written at length on the *Hippolytos*), Foley, Pucci and Goldhill, recognise that modern theoretical debates can generate productive accounts of a text's relation to itself, its internal consistencies and inconsistencies, and also provide more sophisticated accounts than were previously available of a text's relation to the society and culture that produced it. The latter concern is particularly associated with Vernant, Vidal-Naquet and Loraux. My own allegiances will be evident in my writing; I hope that they will render my work on the *Hippolytos* useful to those outside the discipline who have an interest in Greek tragedy as well as to classicists across the discipline. Similarly, I hope that I have contributed not only to the study of a single play, but also to the wider debate on what the project of classical literary criticism can and should be.

Since this work is designed for readers who do not know Greek, as well as for classicists, I have tried to translate and transliterate throughout. For lengthy quotation from the *Hippolytos*, I have used the translation by David Grene in the Chicago series of translations of Greek tragedies, edited by Grene and Lattimore. Where it failed to make the point needed for my argument, I have resorted to the Penguin translation. For quotation of other Greek works I have used the Penguin editions, except in a very few cases that are noted in the text.

The text of the *Hippolytos* used throughout is that of Barrett (Oxford 1964). I have tried to keep the use of Greek font to a minimum, and have translated any Greek words or short phrases that do remain in my text. Certain words appear only in transliteration; these are terms like *polis* and *oikos* that may be considered familiar even to the Greekless reader. A glossary of all such terms may be found after the acknowledgements. In transliterating Greek names, I have generally, although not always, preferred the Greek to the Latin spelling.

It is a pleasure to thank all those associated with this work throughout its long and tedious gestation. My attachment to Euripides dates from my final year as an undergraduate at King's College, Cambridge, and it is to Geoffrey Lloyd, John Henderson and Michael Lynn-George that I owe my best conceptions of what work in classics can be. My PhD dissertation for the University of California at Berkeley, of which this book is the much-mangled remnant, was directed with patience and care by Donald Mastronarde, and encouraged in its initial stages by many friends and colleagues. On my return to King's as a Junior Research Fellow I profited on many occasions from conversations with Kostas Valakas, Simon Goldhill and Neil Croally. The Department of Classics at Dartmouth

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Special thanks go to Pat Easterling, who read much of the final typescript and who shared her time and insights at earlier stages with unfailing generosity, and to Stephen Hinds, who was not only a painstaking and sympathetic reader but also a devoted friend in a less than promising period. Thanks too to the officers of the Press, Pauline Hire, Nancy-Jane Thompson and Trudi Tate, for their hard work and encouragement.

Leaving the best till last, I thank Michael Simpson, whose gaze was never absent. He has enthusiastically discussed my problems and clarified my ideas. He has read vast quantities of my typescript scrupulously and improved it out of all recognition. He has brought me coffee and lent me chewing gum. He has shown me the limitations of my work and taught me its strengths. In the last three years he has given a new meaning to everything I read and write.

This book is dedicated to my parents, who knew I could do it.

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'The Women of Troy', from *The Bacchae and other Plays* by Euripides, translated by Philip Vellacott (Penguin Classics, Revised Edition, 1972).

'Hippolytus' from *Three Plays* by Euripides, translated by Philip Vellacott (Penguin Classics, Revised Edition, 1974).

'Medea' from *Medea and other Plays* by Euripides, translated by Philip Vellacott (Penguin Classics, 1963).

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Greek Lyrics, translated by Richmond Lattimore (University of Chicago Press, 1960): 39-60.

GLOSSARY OF GREEK TERMS

<i>agon</i>	contest, scene of confrontation in a drama
<i>aidos</i>	sense of shame, modesty, respect (untranslatable, and a problem for the play)
<i>bia</i>	violence, force
<i>charakter</i>	mark, distinguishing sign
<i>charis</i>	grace, favour
<i>ephebeia</i>	period of adolescence, particular Greek representation of adolescence
<i>eros</i>	love, desire, god of love and desire
<i>eukleia</i>	good repute
<i>grammata</i>	letters of the alphabet, writing
<i>graphe</i> (pl. <i>graphai</i>)	anything written or drawn, a letter
<i>homilia</i>	conversation, company
<i>kairos</i>	time, occasion, moment
<i>kakos</i> (f. <i>kake</i> , pl. <i>kakoî</i>)	bad, evil
<i>kalos</i> (f. <i>kale</i> , pl. <i>kaloi</i>)	good, beautiful
<i>kaluptomenos</i>	hidden, covered, veiled (title of the first <i>Hippolytos</i>)
<i>kleos</i>	fame, reputation
<i>logos</i> (pl. <i>logoi</i>)	word, speech, story, argument
<i>manteia</i>	divination
<i>mechane</i> (pl. <i>mechanai</i>)	device, machination
<i>mechanomai</i>	I machinate
<i>miasma</i>	pollution
<i>muthos</i> (pl. <i>muthoi</i>)	word, story, myth
<i>nomos</i>	law, custom, convention
<i>nosos</i>	disease
<i>oikos</i>	household
<i>parodos</i>	first song sung by Chorus

<i>parrhesia</i>	freedom of speech, right of speech in Athenian assembly
<i>parthenos</i>	virgin, young girl
<i>peitho</i>	persuasion
<i>phaino</i>	verb 'show', in passive 'seem'
<i>pharmakon</i> (pl. <i>pharmaka</i>)	drug, either healing or poisonous
<i>philein</i>	to love, be a friend of, be a relation of
<i>philia</i>	love, friendship, family relationship
<i>philo</i>	I love
<i>philon tekmerion</i>	a test or proof of friends
<i>philos</i> (pl. <i>philoï</i>)	friend, family member, lover
<i>phronein</i>	to think, to think rightly
<i>polis</i>	city, state
<i>saphes</i>	clear
<i>saphestatos</i>	clearest, very clear
<i>semnos</i>	august, haughty (a problem for the play)
<i>sophos</i> (f. <i>sophe</i> , pl. <i>sophoi</i>)	wise, clever
<i>sophron</i>	chaste, virtuous, prudent, self-controlled
<i>sophronein</i>	to be <i>sophron</i>
<i>sophrosune</i>	chastity, virtue, prudence, self-control (untranslatable, and a problem for the play)
<i>tekmerion</i> (pl. <i>tekmeria</i>)	proof, test
<i>theoros</i>	spectator or consulter of an oracle
<i>time</i>	honour, glory

CONTENTS

	<i>Preface</i>	page ix
	<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xii
	<i>Glossary of Greek terms</i>	xiii
1	Speech and silence	1
	The house	2
	Concealment and revelation	12
	The gaze	20
2	Desire	27
	Desire speaking and speaking desire	30
	<i>Sophrosune</i>	39
	The <i>pharmakon</i>	48
3	Violence	55
	Death in the meadow	58
	Dissolutions	65
4	Imitation and authority	78
	Divine and human	81
	Myth	90
	Writing	95
5	The end	105
	Artemis	106
	The brides	113
	Ritual	117
	<i>Bibliography</i>	130
	<i>Index</i>	137

Speech and silence

At *Hippolytos* 293–6 the Nurse says to Phaidra, as part of her attempt to persuade her mistress to speak, ‘and if you are sick with some one of the unspeakable [*aporrheton*] evils, these women [are here] to help with the disease; but if your condition [*sumphora*, also meaning misfortune, calamity] can be carried out towards the men [lit. if it is *ekphoros*], speak, so that it may be revealed to doctors’.¹ Several pairs of oppositions are at work in these lines. Certain diseases are called ‘unspeakable’, and are said to be the concern exclusively of women. The unspeakable diseases may be dealt with only among women, in a place which we can define as the ‘inside’, as opposed to where the men are; others may be taken outside, to the men, and spoken of openly. Significantly, the word *menuo* which the Nurse uses when speaking of the doctors and which I have translated as ‘reveal’, is repeated by Phaidra at 520 when she expresses her fear that the Nurse will reveal all to Hippolytos. The masculine realm seems to be that of the exterior and of real speech; women and women’s realm are defined as unspeakable, so that their speech among themselves can almost be considered a form of silence. If this seems an over-interpretation, I would argue that it is borne out later by Hippolytos’ tirade, in which he deploys the same pairs of oppositions. At 645–50 he declares of women:

We should not suffer servants to approach them,
but give them as companions voiceless beasts,
dumb, . . . but with teeth, that they might not converse,
and hear another voice in answer.
But now at home the mistress plots the mischief,
and the maid carries it abroad.

The prescription that Hippolytos desires to make is a more drastic form of the status quo as described by the Nurse, in which women are confined and silent, while men are both ‘outside’ and vocal. Hippolytos imposes his perception of these polarities on a situation that has already reversed them; he suggests that Phaidra’s attendant ‘carries abroad’, whereas in fact Phaidra ‘plotted’ outside

¹ Line numbers refer to the Greek texts rather than to English translations.

and the revelation of the plan took place inside the house. Such a transgression of the dominant structures underlines the paradox of a play which, as I shall argue, concerns itself with female silence and yet is motivated by female speech. The relation between speech and silence is set up by the play as an opposition analogous to that operating on a social and sexual level between male and female, on a spatial level between exterior and interior, and on a dramatic level between revelation and concealment.

In this opening chapter I investigate how these polarities are articulated in action and how the play both confirms and confuses their lines of demarcation. I consider exterior and interior in terms of the house, and revelation and concealment in terms of sight as well as of speech. I also examine the role of witnesses and of the gaze of the other in its various manifestations throughout the play, as well as the role of the speech and silence of the other in bestowing or withholding *eukleia* (good repute). It will be evident at all points how central to my discussion is the underlying polarity male/female. In the course of the chapter I hope to show also that in its deployment of interior and exterior, concealment and revelation, and the gaze of the other, the text highlights the importance of its theatrical conditions as elements of its signifying resources; it can in part be read as a meditation on its own conditions of production. But it is the play's advertisement of its anxiety about its own speech that will be the chief concern of this study.

The house

I will consider first the dialectic of interior and exterior, which focuses on the figure of the house. The Greek for house, *oikos*, also means 'household', and encompasses not only the immediate family but also its dependants, slaves, moveable property and land. Slaves and land together constituted the 'visible' property (*phanera ousia*) of the *oikos*, and ideally, the amount of land in the possession of the *oikos* was sufficient to support all its members. The *oikos* was a persistently powerful ideological formation not only in the fifth century; the correct behaviour of *oikos* members towards one another is a constant concern of the legal speeches of the fourth century, and Aristotle's *Politics* takes the *oikos* as the first term of the analysis of the *polis*. Aristotle's account lets us see that a significant feature of the *oikos* is the series of hierarchical relationships that constitute it, in which male takes precedence over female, parent over child and free citizen over slave. The *oikos* was crucial as the locus of patriarchal continuity; it functioned as the means whereby structures of authority reproduced themselves in the descent of material property from father to son. The other members of the *oikos* – women, children and slaves – had, of course, no recognised existence in the public sphere of the *polis*, so that their activities were confined almost entirely to the private sphere of the *oikos*. Religious and ritual practices, however, provided a context for the public participation of women, children and even slaves, and were also prominent among the activities of the

oikos; cult observances and occasions brought all the members of the *oikos* together as a social group. Religious practices were also important in that they perpetuated the continuity between living and dead members of the *oikos*.²

Given the centrality of the *oikos* to the Greek understanding of society, it is perhaps not surprising that tragedy should ceaselessly represent it and investigate the conditions of its failure and deformation. The conflicts which might arise between the claims made on the citizen's loyalty by *oikos* and *polis* can also provide urgent subjects for tragic representation, most notoriously in Sophokles' *Antigone*, but also in other plays such as Euripides' *Phoinissai*, but as the *polis* as such is absent from the action of *Hippolytos*, at least until the return of Theseus, the relation between *polis* and *oikos* will not form part of my present investigations.

The *oikos* is present on the tragic stage both as a physical stage-building and as the 'brooding presence' of family history and anxiety. Taplin writes of *Agamemnon* that 'Aeschylus exploits the association in Greek society between the house and the household, the family and the family property, to make the house itself a brooding presence, an integral and fixedly disturbing background to the drama' (1978: 32). Among troubled Euripidean *oikoi*, one could cite as examples of such 'background' the empty house of the *Alkestis*, the poverty-stricken and infertile house of the *Elektra*, and the irretrievably shaken palace of the *Bakchai*. In plays such as these and the *Hippolytos*, the stage-building that dominates the acting area also has acute relevance for the working-out of the drama. One particular theatrical function of the *oikos*, in the works of all the tragedians, is to be the scene of violence; the climactic act always takes place off-stage, and usually inside the house. Tragedy can use this dramatised inner space to investigate the tension between seen and unseen, reality and appearance, which is also frequently the motivation of its plots. This tension between inside and outside can be related to the dramatisation of revelation that tragedy undertakes: 'the stage conventions . . . suggest an analogy to the tragic world itself, which in the course of its plot and actions inevitably reveals its hidden and unknown dimensions' (Zeitlin 1985b: 72).

In the *Hippolytos*, as is made clear in my first two quotations from the speeches of the Nurse and Hippolytos, the house is depicted as the site of the struggle between the sexes. The struggle focuses here on the possession and appropriation of speech. This situation is complicated by the fact that, although each character has a socially defined relationship to and claims on the house, each is also estranged within it. The house seems not to belong to any of the visible characters, but rather to the absent Pittheus (24). Theseus is here only because he is exiled from the *polis* of Athens for the killing of the Pallantidae (325), and it is when he looks to the house to reflect and confirm his position of power and authority (792) that he is most betrayed. Hippolytos leaves the house before the beginning of the play to see the mysteries (24–5). As he is illegitimate and not the

² On the various significances of the *oikos*, see Lacey 1968: 15–32. Humphreys 1983: 1–21 provides a more detailed and critical account, but focuses on the relation between *oikos* and *polis*.

heir, he has at best a tangential relationship with the paternal house; he is most closely associated with the outdoor spaces of the forest where he hunts, and with the meadow where he worships Artemis. These pursuits and places are central to the Greek understanding of the liminal condition of adolescence; by these practices, and especially the hunt, Hippolytos prolongs his pre-social and pre-sexual state, increasing his estrangement from the *oikos* and from the adult male responsibilities and occupations which it would enjoin on him.³

Phaidra is most closely identified with the house but also most estranged within it by the disjunction between her prescribed role and her proscribed desires. The centrality of the house and of interiority to the very conception of Greek womanhood has long been recognised, and the association between house and woman is one that operates on many levels. We may consider first the actual physical seclusion and invisibility of fifth-century Athenian women, which functioned as a means of controlling female sexuality and thus of ensuring a legitimate succession. Even if not all women were actually secluded, such as those who had to go out to work, seclusion was an integral part of the representation of women, and a respectable woman was perceived as one who kept to her house. Even on the tragic stage, where women are quite obviously not secluded since they are exposed to the public gaze, they make frequent reference to seclusion as an ideal state of affairs and an index of their respectability. Andromache in the *Trojan Women* says (647–50):

First, since a woman, however high her reputation,
Draws slander on herself by being seen abroad,
I renounced restlessness and stayed in my own house;

and Makaria in the *Herakleidae* expresses similar sentiments (476–7).

Confinement inside the house not only ensures female respectability but actually signifies female identity, for the sexes are strictly differentiated in terms of inside and out.⁴ This differentiation is perhaps most clearly articulated in Xenophon's *Oikonomika*, where Isomachos explains at length to his new wife how their essential complementarity rests on the fact that one of them is suited to an indoor, the other to an outdoor life (7.21). The converse of this rigorous alignment is that men who stay inside or in the shade, for whatever reason, are considered effeminate and generally worthless (*Oikonomika* 4.2, 7.30; one might compare Euripides *Bakchai* 457–9 and Plato *Phaedros* 239c–d).

Greek tragedies can often be read in terms of a transgression of this polarity, when the male exaggerates the claims of the *polis* so that the existence or security of the *oikos* is threatened; the woman then rushes to the defence of the *oikos*, 'intruding' into the public sphere and presenting a threat to the integrity of the

³ On the defining characteristics of Greek adolescence see Vidal-Naquet in Gordon 1981: 147–87. Hunting is a necessary activity in the Greek conception of male adolescence (its actual incidence may have been different), but it is necessary only as part of a transition; Hippolytos' perversity is displayed in his refusal to move on from hunting to the normal amatory and political pursuits that characterise the adult male.

⁴ But see Easterling 1988 for important qualifications.

man.⁵ This reading can be productive, but it may be overly schematic, particularly when one considers that women played a significant role in the public religious life of the community, if not in politics as such. It is also important to remember that men are strongly identified with the *oikos* as owners and heads of households; the woman inside is as much a part of the husband's property as is the interior itself. Moreover, the woman often seems to be considered an intruder not only into the *polis* but also into the *oikos* itself. A passage in the *Oikonomika* attributed to Aristotle (I,4,I 1-344a) instructs a husband not to wrong or injure (*adikein*) his wife but to treat her as a suppliant raised from his hearth, i.e. as a defenceless outsider. The bride from outside is necessarily a potentially disturbing presence, for it is impossible to know the extent of her loyalty to the husband's *oikos*, since her paternal *oikos* may still have claims on her.⁶ In the *Hippolytos*, Phaidra's notional adultery constructs her as another kind of threat to the *oikos* and as a potentially dangerous intruder within it.

Phaidra is described as inside (131-2), darkening her bright hair with her veil (132). This double seclusion within house and veil can be read, paradoxically, as a sign of Phaidra's proper position as modest matron, wife and mother, but it is also a symptom of her sickness, as are her silence and starvation. Seclusion and silence are here a form of withdrawal from interaction and speech, as starvation is a withdrawal from food. Once desire has entered her (like a weapon, 530-2), it is as if Phaidra blocks all the channels of her body that might connect her to the world outside, or allow her catastrophic desire to escape as speech or gesture. This 'blocking' corresponds to the Greek representation of woman as a being especially open to influences that attack or penetrate. The physical interiority or 'permeability' of woman is interpreted within Greek culture to mean that she is also particularly susceptible to other forms of possession, erotic, demonic, or prophetic.⁷ The Chorus indeed represents the possible causes of Phaidra's sickness as instances of invasion. She is vulnerable to attack on several fronts; from divine possession (141-50), from a rumour reaching her from her familial home (155-60), or from a secret affair of her husband's in her own house (151-4). The irony of this last reference is painfully evident; it is not her husband but herself who has the secret love in the house. Instead of becoming a victim of her more powerful and less accountable husband, such as Hektor is in Euripides' *Andromache* (222-5), Phaidra threatens the existence of the house as a potential adulteress. Yet conversely, the Chorus's phrasing shows that the house may present a threat to the woman placed inside it, despite the ideological associations between house and female. Moreover, the woman's own womb may menace her (161-9), a menace that is also expressed in terms of the house:

⁵ On the 'female intruder' see Shaw 1975. Foley 1982 provides a pertinent reply.

⁶ On the wife's difficult relations to paternal and marital *oikoi*, see Vernant 1985: 127-75.

⁷ On female vulnerability to possession, see Padel 1983. Plato *Phaedros* 244a-245b lists four types of madness; the mantic, the Corybantic, the poetic and the erotic. Except for the poetic, women constantly appear in Greek sources as prone to all of these.

Unhappy is the compound of woman's nature;
 the torturing misery of helplessness,
 the helplessness of childbirth and its madness
 are linked to it for ever.

The word that is translated 'linked' is *sunoikein* (163), derived from *oikos* and meaning 'to dwell together'. A woman's interior and exterior are perceived as more discontinuous than a man's, and this discontinuity is understood to render her particularly fragile. The possession of an interior, a womb, defines the feminine, so that a woman may thus be constantly threatened by that which constitutes her as a woman.⁸ House, woman and womb appear as a set of Chinese boxes, as enclosed spaces that are the seats of potential violence and that become ever more unknowable and disturbing. The threat from within is thus several times duplicated – house to woman, woman to house, womb to woman – and all three are characterised by sexual treachery, darkness, silence and death.

Phaidra's exit from the house sets the play in motion; Hippolytos' first scene, in contrast, seeks to deny the possibility of movement and plot (87). Since seclusion of women is the rule, the appearance of a female outside the house often heralds the fact that something is wrong inside.⁹ In the *Hippolytos*, what is wrong is the woman's psychic and physical inner space, which infects her house. Tragedy frequently seems conscious of its impropriety in bringing women into the open and before the public gaze; in this play Phaidra, as Medea in her play, is brought on stage only after a lengthy introduction which establishes their exotic and even monstrous natures. This is the first revelation of Phaidra's body, the seat of desire; the second will be when she is discovered dead.

Once Phaidra is out, the Nurse complains, she wishes only to be in (179–82). The play will eventually ensure her complete containment in the interior – the suicide in the bedroom – as it ensures Hippolytos' complete exclusion in Theseus' order of banishment; the status quo will be restored but with fatal consequences. Phaidra's oscillation between exterior and interior can be read as one between life and death as well as between speech and silence, for while the interior of the house secures continued silence and secrecy, for Phaidra it also and ultimately spells death; conversely, the outside offers a suggestion of life but is dangerously provocative of speech. Phaidra's refusal to be confined in the house suggests that her speech, and hence her desire, will also resist containment.

⁸ In the Hippocratic writings this discontinuity is both disease and cure; the alarmingly mobile and destabilising womb can be tamed by being entered and fertilised. See e.g. *Peri parthenon* and Plato *Timaios* 91c–d. On hysteria generally, see Lefkowitz 1981: 12–25, Lefkowitz and Fant 1982: 94–6, and King 1983. The womb is represented in Greek culture as rendering the woman less stable, more liable to states of possession, and more suited to deal with those parts of religious practice that bear on darkness and concealment (Padel 1983). On the association of Greek women with all kinds of interiority see Zeitlin 1982: 143, 1985a: 68–79, and 1985b: 69–74. For more general speculation see Erikson 1964.

⁹ On this aspect of the female presence in tragedy see Padel 1983: 15.

Similarly the loosening of her body (199) and of her veil (202) act as preludes to the 'loosening' of her language in the delirium. This physical loosening can be seen first and foremost as a manifestation of the power of Eros in his capacity of *lusimeles*, loosener of the limbs. As well as an erotic charge, the metaphor of loosening has a more general significance for female identity, since the woman 'loosened her girdle' at the defining moments of defloration and childbirth. The 'loosening' of Phaidra precedes, and eventually necessitates, the defining female death which is that of strangulation or hanging.¹⁰

In the erotically suggestive loosening of her language, Phaidra finds the compromise between speech and silence that is the delirium. In this delirium she goes even further 'out', in that she longs for spaces that are far beyond the house, the asocial spaces of Hippolytos' adolescent pursuits. Zeitlin (1985a: 74) writes that the delirium 'demonstrates how far from domestic territory is the site assigned to female desire', but we might want to add that there can be *no* site for female desire, just as in the *Hippolytos* there can be no coherent language for its expression. Phaidra's denial of her place and role within the *oikos* is reflected in the consequent temerity of her speech; her return to her veil (243–6) signifies an attempt to correct both derelictions, of status and of speech.

The Nurse is only able to break down Phaidra's obstinately renewed silence by referring to Hippolytos (310). The context in which she mentions him is one of power and property; if Phaidra chooses to die, warns the Nurse, she will betray her children by leaving them a master (*despotes*) in the shape of the Amazon's son and by not passing on to them their paternal house (305–10). The children, unprotected by any mother, will have their rights usurped and be deprived of their inheritance. Phaidra's position here with regard to the house is one shared with fifth-century Athenian women; without any economic stake in the house herself, she is nonetheless vital for its transmission to the children.¹¹ Like Alkestis, in Admetos' words, she is ὀθνεῖος, ἄλλως . . . ἀναγκαία δόμοις, 'foreign, but necessary to the house' (533). Later on, she describes herself as being in an analogous position with regard to speech. At 421–4 her children will inhabit the city, flourishing in *parrhesia*, because of her good name. Phaidra will be the means for passing on to them *parrhesia*, the political right to free speech, which is exactly what she herself does not possess; she is excluded from speech within the *polis* by her gender and within the *oikos* by her secret. The same point is made in Euripides' *Ion*, where Kreousa, who like Phaidra is forced into silence or evasive language by her impossible position, is still crucial to Ion's political identity as possessor of *parrhesia* (672). While language eventually comes to pose

¹⁰ On these lines see Zeitlin 1985a: 59; on loosening and binding as metaphors for female life-processes see King 1983; on male and female deaths, see Loraux 1981b and 1987. See also Zeitlin 1985a: 60 where she analyses the binding and loosening imagery of the play in terms of Aristotle's metaphors of plot construction.

¹¹ On actual legal practice see Gould 1980: 44–5, Lefkowitz and Fant 1982: 33–40.