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Ships and Female Choreia *in Euripides' Plays*

Abstract
This paper examines the relationship between ships as objects described by women in Euripides' plays and female choral song. Ships are not only linked in these contexts to female *choreia*. They are the means to the mobility of women that has as an implication the loss or the restoration of their identities as performers of choral songs. Women brought by ships, or taken to ships by force, are presented as displaced chorus leaders or chorus members. They cease their previous *choreia* and resort to silence, loud cries, or lamentation, a form of *choreia* that is often described as unmusical. In less dire circumstances, the ships are also the means of restoring their previous status and choral identity in some of Euripides' plays.

Questo articolo esamina la relazione tra le navi, così come sono descritte dalle donne nelle tragedie di Euripide, e il canto corale femminile. In questi contesti, le navi non soltanto sono collegate alla *choreia* femminile, ma rappresentano anche il mezzo della mobilità delle donne, mobilità che comporta la perdita o il recupero della loro identità come esecutrici di canti corali. Le donne condotte dalle navi, o trascinate a forza verso di esse, vengono presentate come corifee o membri del Coro sradicate dal loro ruolo. Esse interrompono la *choreia* precedente e ricorrono al silenzio, alle grida o al lamento, una forma di *choreia* spesso descritta come priva di musicalità. In circostanze meno drammatiche, le navi sono anche lo strumento attraverso cui, in alcune tragedie di Euripide, le donne possono recuperare il loro precedente status e la loro identità corale.

1. *Introduction*

An ancient ship is an object that «traverses the sea and makes of the ocean a bridge rather than a gulf between lands»[1]. A ship is a boundary crosser[2] and one of the most common objects encountered in Greek epic poetry. Ships bring the Achaeans to Troy and back to their homeland, and men, such as Odysseus, can build ships (Hom. *Od.* V 234-53). The *Iliad* contains a catalog of the ships that sailed for Troy (II 494-760). Ships in ancient Greek literature are often related to war and conflict. In ancient Greek poetry, women are not usually associated with ships[3]. They cannot build one, and they rarely enter ships to cross boundaries without consequences. This is because ships are linked to arrivals and departures and according to ancient Greek beliefs, the departure of a

[1] See HARDIE (1987, 164).
[2] See HARDIE (1987, 164).
[3] In Greek epic poetry, there seems to be a distinction between objects associated with men (''male'' objects) and objects associated with women (''female'' objects). Ships are associated with men. See CANEVARO (2018, 102, 119, 159f., 169f.).

maiden or wife is equated with the loss of her previous status[4]. Nonetheless, in Euripides' plays, women are often linked to ships and ships are associated with war and male expeditions. Moreover, as Battezzato has observed, there are metaphorical links between the performance of music and war[5].

Female Choruses and heroines often talk or sing about ships and bring them before the eyes of the audience through their descriptions[6]. Ships in Euripidean plays allow women to be transferred from one place to another. What is more, ships seem to be related to female *choreia*[7]. As Weiss argues, choral descriptions of naval travel in Euripides often involve highly choreographic language, indicating a great degree of correspondence between seafaring and dance in the orchestic imaginary of the tragedian and his audience[8]. Ships influence the content of the songs of women or their ability to sing. Several Euripidean Choruses of women link ships to the loss of their previous status which has resulted in the end of their previous *choreia*[9]. However, ships do not always have ominous connotations. Euripidean heroines or female Choruses often enter or wish to enter ships and link them to their return home. Their homecoming is equated with the restoration of someone's choral identity. This paper focuses on the descriptions of ships by women[10]. It aims to look into the relationship between ships, objects often used in war contexts, and female *choreia* on the one hand. On the other hand, this paper aims to examine whether ships as objects play any part in the construction of female agency in Euripidean plays[11]. In Euripides, ships are not just passive signs having a symbolic meaning. Ships can affect their social surroundings through their actions.

[4] See SCHEER (2018, 139-43). Biffis also remarks that women could only travel once: to their husband's house after their wedding. See BIFFIS (2018, 1).
[5] See BATTEZZATO (2005, 88, n. 67).
[6] The term *deixis am phantasma* has been used to refer to the ability of language to bring imaginary settings before the reader or listener's eyes. See BÜHLER (1934).
[7] *Choreia* is first defined by Plato in the *Laws* (654b) as the combination of dance and music (song and accompaniment). Modern scholars frequently use this term to describe the performance of a song by a chorus. For the term *choreia* see, for example, MULLEN (1982); NAGY (1990, 339-381); HENRICHS (1994-1995, 90f., n. 1); WEISS (2020).
[8] See WEISS (2018, 78f., 109f., 181).
[9] Nonetheless, the Chorus of *Iphigenia at Aulis*, Greek women of Chalcis, imagine the ships that will reach Troy and will end the previous *choreia* of the Trojan women (lines 751-800).
[10] On the impact that described objects in Greek tragedy have on the spectators see MUELLER (2016, 3); COMBATTI (2020, 5-7).
[11] I follow Gell's definition of agency. I assume that agents are those who initiate actions, that are caused by themselves, by their intentions, and not by the physical laws of the cosmos, in other words, agents cause events to happen in their vicinity. See GELL (2013, 16). For other applications of Gell's model in classics see CANEVARO (2018); GRETHLEIN (2020).

2. *Ships Disrupting Female* Choreia

Several Euripidean heroines have been eloquently described as «displaced chorus leaders»[12]. Especially royal women, who have been the victims of war, had a past offstage status as leaders of choral performances. The loss of their previous status has resulted in the end of their previous *choreia*. While they are in their new situation, their last resort is to resolve to lamentation, a form of music often regarded as anti-musical[13]. Their references to ships frequently mark the loss of their previous status. The loss of a woman's status due to sea travel is sometimes related to a male expedition or quest and, most of the time, to war.

Andromache, in her initial dialogue with her maidservant in the eponymous tragedy, makes clear her intention to mourn (lines 91-93)[14]:

> χώρει νυν· ἡμεῖς δ', οἷσπερ ἐγκείμεσθ' ἀεὶ
> θρήνοισι καὶ γόοισι καὶ δακρύμασι,
> πρὸς αἰθέρ' ἐκτενοῦμεν
>
> Go then! For my party I shall feel heaven
> at great length with the laments and groans and tears
> to which my life is devoted

and lists all the things she has to lament for (lines 96-99):

> πάρεστι δ' οὐχ ἓν ἀλλὰ πολλά μοι στένειν,
> πόλιν πατρῴαν τὸν θανόντα θ' Ἕκτορα
> στερρόν τε τὸν ἐμὸν δαίμον' ᾧ συνεζύγην
> δούλειον ἦμαρ εἰσπεσοῦσ' ἀναξίως.
>
> I have many things, not one to lament,
> my native land, the death of Hector,
> and the hard lot to which I have been yoked
> when I was cast undeservedly into slavery.

Andromache's intention to perform a song close to ritual lament is clear. She proceeds by singing a monody, which has affinities with this genre, in the following lines (103-

[12] See MURNAGHAN (2013, 160).
[13] According to Murnaghan, a tragic lament is a form of «skewed, provisional chorality found within the tragic plot». See MURNAGHAN (2013, 175) or «a form of music that lacks the attributes of music». See MURNAGHAN (2011, 251). For tragic lament as anti-dance see also BATTEZZATO (2005, 80f.). For lament in Euripides as «negated music» see SEGAL (1993, 16-19). For lament conceptualized as a highly skillful song and inarticulate noise see WEISS (2017). Barker also argues that in Greek tragedy, there is a sharp distinction between lamentation and music. See BARKER (1984, 69-71).
[14] For *Andromache*, I use the text and the translation of KOVACS (1994-2002).

16). Although she does not refer to her previous choral activities, the heroine explicitly mentions the means that changed her life and transformed her into a mourner. These were the Greek ships that sacked Troy (εἶλε σ' ὁ χιλιόναυς Ἑλλάδος ὀξὺς Ἄρης, «the keen warcraft of Greece, its ships a thousand strong, captured you»: line 106). According to Andromache, the ships performed the action required to capture her. The heroine was forced to show passivity. She was dragged to the same ships (lines 109f.):

> αὐτὰ δ' ἐκ θαλάμων ἀγόμαν ἐπὶ θῖνα θαλάσσας,
> δουλοσύναν στυγερὰν ἀμφιβαλοῦσα κάρᾳ.
>
> I myself was led off my chamber to the seashore,
> wrapping hateful slavery as a covering around my head.

Similarly, in the first *stasimon* of *Hecuba* (lines 444-83), the Chorus of Trojan women sing of the fate that awaits them, that is, their future servitude in Greece. They address the sea breeze (αὔρα, ποντιὰς αὔρα, lines 444f.)[15] and ask where it will lead the ships (ἅτε ποντοπόρους κομίζεις θοὰς ἀκάτους, «conveyer of the swift seagoing ships over the swelling deep»: lines 445f.) that will carry them to Greece. They have no choice but to be carried to a foreign land by the Greek ships (ἢ νάσων, ἁλιήρει κώπᾳ πεμπομέναν τάλαιναν, «sped on my way in grief by an oar plied in the brine»: lines 455f.).

The women of Troy regard that they might be taken either to the Peloponnese (line 450), Phthia (lines 451-54), or the Aegean islands, especially Delos (lines 455-65), and Athens (lines 466-74). They seem to imagine that their main activity during servitude could be their participation in certain religious rites at Delos in honor of Artemis (lines 462-65) and Athens in honor of Athena (lines 468-74)[16]. Therefore, the servitude that they have in mind is a choral one. They explicitly mention that they might have to sing along with the maidens of Delos in praise of Artemis (lines 459-65):

> ἔνθα πρωτόγονός τε φοῖ-
> νιξ δάφνα θ' ἱεροὺς ἀνέ-
> σχε πτόρθους Λατοῖ φίλᾳ ὠ-
> δῖνος ἄγαλμα Δίας;
> σὺν Δηλιάσιν τε κού-
> ραισιν Ἀρτέμιδος θεᾶς
> χρυσέαν ἄμπυκα τόξα τ' εὐλογήσω;
>
> There (*scil.* Delos)[17] where the date palm,
> first of all its line, and the laurel tree
> sent up their holy shoots as an adornment dear to Leto

[15] For *Hecuba*, I use the text of MURRAY (1902) and the translation of KOVACS (1994-2002).
[16] See ROSIVACH (1975, 352).
[17] This addition to the text is mine.

> to grace the birth of their children by Zeus?
> Shall I with the maidens of Delos sing in praise of the golden headband and bow of the golden Artemis?[18]

or that they may take part in the weaving of the *peplos* which was presented to Athena as a part of the Panathenaic festival an Athenian ritual that involved female choral dance (lines 466-74)[19]:

> ἢ Παλλάδος ἐν πόλει
> τὰς καλλιδίφρους Ἀθα-
> ναίας ἐν κροκέῳ πέπλῳ
> ζεύξομαι ἆρα πώλους ἐν
> δαιδαλέαισι ποικίλλουσ'
> ἀνθοκρόκοισι πήναις, ἢ
> Τιτάνων γενεὰν
> τὰν Ζεὺς ἀμφιπύρῳ κοιμί-
> ζει φλογμῷ Κρονίδας;
>
> Or shall I after all in the city of Pallas
> embroider in Athena's saffron-colored gown
> of threads of flowered hue
> the yoking of her lovely chariot-mares
> or the race of Titans, which Zeus, Cronus' son,
> laid low with his thunderbolts of double flame?

As Rosivach and Visvardi have noticed, these women want to take part in rituals with strong virginal associations[20]. Ships perform an action, change their status and force them to become members of choruses of maidens, albeit they used to be wives and mothers (ὤ μοι τεκέων ἐμῶν, «Alas for our children!»: line 475). According to Rosivach, the alternative would have been to stay in Asia, which the women describe as the marriage chambers of Hades (λιποῦσ' Ἀσίαν, Εὐρώπας θεραπνᾶν ἀλλάξασ' Ἅιδα θαλάμους, «I shall leave Asia behind […] leaving Europe's dwelling places for the chambers of the grave»: lines 481-83). The only way to remain in Asia is to die, – «to marry Hades» – according to the Chorus[21]. This imagery in Greek tragedy is frequently used in female laments that have affinities with the lyric genre of *hymenaios*[22]. Instead

[18] According to Murnaghan, this is a form of choral projection in which one of the Chorus' possible fates is to join the chorus of the Delian maidens. See MURNAGHAN (2013, 176, n. 44). For the term choral projection and its meaning see HENRICHS (1994-1995); (1996). For the Delian maidens as archetypes for female choral performers see PEPONI (2009, 60-68); VISVARDI (2011, 278f.).
[19] See CALAME (1997, 130f.); BUDELMANN – POWER (2015, 255f.).
[20] See ROSIVACH (1975, 354-57). Visvardi argues that the Chorus describes the chosen locations as blessed with beauty and holiness and observes that these women imagine themselves as participants in parthenaic religious festivals in Athens and Delos. See VISVARDI (2011, 276-79).
[21] See ROSIVACH (1975, 358).
[22] For the associations between *hymenaios* and lament in Greek tragedy see SEAFORD (1987) and REHM

of singing such a song, this Chorus allows itself to be carried by ships and chooses to appropriate the forms of female *choreia* preferred by their conquerors[23].

In the third *stasimon* (lines 905-52), the same female Chorus describes the sack of Troy in detail. These women were driven to the Greek ships, from where they took a last glance at the burning Ilium (lines 937-42):

> ἄγομαι δὲ θανόντ᾽ ἰδοῦσ᾽ ἀκοίταν
> τὸν ἐμὸν ἅλιον ἐπὶ πέλαγος,
> πόλιν τ᾽ ἀποσκοποῦσ᾽, ἐπεὶ νόστιμον
> ναῦς ἐκίνησεν πόδα καί μ᾽ ἀπὸ γᾶς
> ὥρισεν Ἰλιάδος· τάλαιν᾽, ἀπεῖπον ἄλγει.
>
> I was carried away to the sea after seeing
> my husband slain. Looking back at the city
> once the ship had set sails for home
> and sundered me from Ilium,
> I miserably succumbed to my grief.

The ships that carried them performed actions. They moved their feet (ἐκίνησεν πόδα) and separated these women from Troy (ἀπὸ γᾶς ὥρισεν). The members of the Chorus showed passivity. All they could do was witnessing the ships taking them away and cry. These women had a choral identity in their native city since they state that before being taken to the ships, they had taken part in songs and dances (lines 914-17)[24]:

> μεσονύκτιος ὤλλύμαν,
> ἧμος ἐκ δείπνων ὕπνος ἡδὺς ἐπ᾽ ὄσσοις
> σκίδναται, μολπᾶν δ᾽ ἄπο καὶ χοροποιῶν
> θυσιᾶν.
>
> At the hour of midnight I met my doom,
> when after dinner sweet sleep spread over my eyes.
> After the songs, having finished
> the sacrifices that bring dancing.

As Weiss argues, in *Trojan Women* there is an abundance of references to ships and sailing. Some of them reflexively refer to the chorus's own *mousikē*, especially their dancing and the music of the *aulos*[25]. Hecuba, in her monody in *Trojan Women* (lines 98-152)[26], feels frustrated as she and the rest of the Trojan women are about to enter the

(1994).

[23] Visvardi argues that the women might want to appropriate the power of the performance on Delos and envision themselves as performers of Greek rituals. See VISVARDI (2011, 279).

[24] For the affinities of this ode with transition-rituals of young girls and *partheneia* see SWIFT (2010, 192).

[25] See WEISS (2018, 109f.).

[26] As Weiss notes, Hecuba's monody seems to appropriate the performative language and imagery that

Greek ships. Hecuba seems to perceive her change of status as the lack of the ability to perform choral songs. She states that all she can do is to utter continually her song of woe (ἐπὶ τοὺς αἰεὶ δακρύων ἐλέγους, «as I utter continually my tearful song of woe»: line 119)[27]. She continues by saying that even a lament is a form of music for those in misfortune (μοῦσα δὲ χαΰτη τοῖς δυστήνοις / ἄτας κελαδεῖν ἀχορεύτους, «this is too music for those in misfortune, to utter aloud their joyless troubles»: lines 120f.). Hecuba calls her troubles 'danceless' (ἄτας ἀχόρευτους: line 121).[28] The source of her misfortune is the Greek ships that came to Troy to claim back Helen (lines 122-37). The former queen addresses these objects. According to Hecuba, the Greek ships brought to Troy their music (lines 122-27):

> πρῷραι ναῶν, ὠκείαις
> Ἴλιον ἱερὰν αἳ κώπαις
> δι' ἅλα πορφυροειδέα καὶ
> λιμένας θ' Ἑλλάδος εὐόρμους
> αὐλῶν παιᾶνι στυγνῷ
> συρίγγων τ' εὐφθόγγων φωνᾷ
> βαίνουσαι πλεκτὰν
>
> Prows of ships, with the soft oar
> you came to holly Ilium
> over the dark blue <Aegean> sea
> and the fair harbors of Greece
> with the hateful paean[29] of pipes
> blent with the voice of tuneful flutes.

It is almost like the music of the Greek ships tried to occupy the choral space of Troy[30] as the Greek men tried to occupy the city. This Trojan choral space involved female choral performances. We know that Hecuba's life before the sack of Troy included female choral performances in which she was the chorus leader (lines 148-52):

> οὐ τὰν αὐτὰν
> οἵαν ποτὲ δὴ

usually appears in choral odes. See WEISS (2018, 110).

[27] For *Trojan Women*, I use the text of MURRAY (1902) and the translation of KOVACS (1994-2002).

[28] As Murnaghan observes, behind this characterization lies the notion that in Greek tragedy, ritual lament is in sharp contrast with choral song because it lacks the notion that the performers represent the community at its best which is a fundamental element of choral dance. See MURNAGHAN (2011, 250f.). Battezzato translates ἀχόρευτους as the ones who «do not know the joy of the dance». See BATTEZZATO (2005, 81).

[29] This part of the translation is altered.

[30] According to Battezzato, the Greek fleet has its own «Muse». The old songs of Troy are disrupted by the «ugly paeans» of the invaders. See BATTEZZATO (2005, 81f.). Weiss also argues that Hecuba marks the moment of the invasion of the Greeks in terms of their ominous music. See WEISS (2018, 110).

> σκήπτρῳ Πριάμου διερειδομένα
> ποδὸς ἀρχεχόρου πληγαῖς Φρυγίους
> εὐκόμποις ἐξῆρχον θεούς.
>
> Not at all the same song
> that I lead off, as Priam
> leaned upon his scepter,
> with the confident beat of chorus leader's foot
> in praise of Troy's gods.

All she can do as she waits to be taken to the ships is to become the chorus leader of an impromptu choral song performed by her and the rest of the women (lines 145-48)[31].

Hecuba has a lyric exchange with the female Chorus (lines 153-229). The women deplore their fate as they are about to enter the Greek ships. What is more, the women make favorable or unfavorable references to several Greek locations. According to them, they may be taken to Argos or Phthia (lines 187-89). The Chorus expresses its repulsion for Sparta and assumes that a harsh form of servitude awaits them there (lines 207-13). The women also do not wish to lead a life of sexual servitude (lines 202f.). They think that their servitude in Corinth would include drawing water as a servant from the holy fountain of Peirene (lines 204-206). The female Chorus has a preference for Athens (τὰν κλεινὰν εἴθ' ἔλθοιμεν / Θησέως εὐδαίμονα χώραν, «O that I might come to the famous and blessed land of Theseus»: lines 207f.; τὰν ἱερὰν / Θησέως ζαθέαν ἐλθεῖν χώραν, «the holy and sacred country of Theseus»: lines 218f.) which describes as Theseus' fortunate land or Theseus' sacred, holy land, and Thessaly which describes as the holy land of the Peneus and the very beautiful foundation of Olympus, which is rich in prosperity and abundant fruitfulness (lines 214-19):

> τὰν Πηνειοῦ σεμνὰν χώραν,
> κρηπῖδ' Οὐλύμπου καλλίσταν,
> ὄλβῳ βρίθειν φάμαν ἤκουσ'
> εὐθαλεῖ τ' εὐκαρπείᾳ.
>
> The holy territory of the Peneus river,
> the lovely plinth of which Olympus is built,
> is laden with wealth, I have heard tell,
> and plentiful fruitfulness.

Their third choice is to be taken to Sicily (lines 220-28) where the river Crathis with its holy streams cherishes and blesses a land of brave men (Κρᾶθις ζαθέαις πηγαῖσι τρέφων / εὔανδρόν τ' ὀλβίζων γᾶν, «Crathis […] who cherishes the land with his holy streams

[31] For Hecuba as a displaced chorus leader see MURNAGHAN (2013, 161, 175-77).

and makes it blessed in its brave men»: lines 227-29). Although within the play these locations are not directly linked to female choral song, the locations that they favor can even be linked to *choreia*. As Visvardi observes, these women call some of these places sacred and holy. The beauty and fame of the desired locations reflect valor and blessedness[32]. According to Easterling, this is a form of choral projection alluding to future performances of the play in various locations[33]. Murnaghan argues that the Chorus refers to versions of fictional chorality[34].

In the first lines of the first *stasimon* of *Trojan Women*, the captive women of Troy directly address the Muse and ask for a new song of mourning (ἀμφί μοι Ἴλιον, ὦ / Μοῦσα, καινῶν ὕμνων / ἄεισον ἐν δακρύοις ᾠδὰν ἐπικήδειον, «sing for me concerning Ilium, O Muse, a new-made ode of mourning accompanied by tears»: lines 511-13). This will be a song for the sack of Ilium (νῦν γὰρ μέλος ἐς Τροίαν ἰαχήσω, «for now I shall sing a song of Troy»: line 515). They narrate the story of the destruction of their city which they blame for an object that they describe as a ship. This is the Trojan horse. The Trojan horse, according to them, was carried like a ship (ὡσεὶ / σκάφος κελαινόν, «like the dark hull of a ship»: lines 538f.)[35] to the temple of Pallas and the Trojans celebrated its coming with dancing and singing (lines 527-50). The Trojan horse, eventually, reveals its noise —this is the clatter of the weapons of the Greeks (ὅτ' ἔλιπον ἵππον οὐράνια / βρέμοντα χρυσεοφάλαρον ἔνο- / πλον ἐν πύλαις Ἀχαιοί, «when the horse, reaching high heaven with its clatter, decked with gold cheekpieces arms within»: lines 519-21). The members of the Chorus explicitly mention their part in the *choreia* celebrating the coming of the Trojan horse into their city (lines 551-57):

> ἐγὼ δὲ τὰν ὀρεστέραν
> τότ' ἀμφὶ μέλαθρα παρθένον
> Διὸς κόραν ἐμελπόμαν
> χοροῖσι. φοινία δ' ἀνὰ
> πτόλιν βοὰ κατεῖχε Περ-
> γάμων ἕδρας
>
> In that hour in honor of her in the wilds,
> Zeus' maiden daughter,
> I was dancing around the temple,
> when a murderous cry throughout the city
> possessed the dwelling places of Pergamum.

They also explain what type of songs they used to sing, that is, Phrygian songs (Φρύγιά

[32] See VISVARDI (2011, 275f.).
[33] See EASTERLING (1994, 73-77).
[34] See MURNAGHAN (2013, 176).
[35] See FANFANI (2018, 254).

τε μέλεα, «Phrygian tunes»: line 545). The women refer to the Phrygian choral tradition of their hometown that is well-known for its individuality[36]. Their female *choreia* was interrupted by the sounds of war[37]. This time an object resembling a ship forces them to change their previous status (τετραβάμονος ὡς ὑπ᾽ ἀπήνας / Ἀργείων ὀλόμαν τάλαινα δοριάλωτος, «how that Argive conveyance with four feet wrought my destruction and wretched enslavement»: lines 516f.)[38] by forcibly carrying them to Greece (καράτομος ἐρημία / νεανίδων στέφανον ἔφερεν / Ἑλλάδι κουροτρόφον, «desolation wrought by the headsman's blade brought a victory garland of young women to Greece to bear them children»: lines 563-65). Now that Troy has fallen, they have to adopt a new mode of singing[39].

The same Chorus narrates the sack of Troy once again in the third *stasimon* (lines 1060-122). Among other things, the women dedicate several lines to mourn the loss of their previous choral activities (lines 1071-80):

> φροῦδαί σοι θυσίαι χορῶν τ᾽
> εὔφημοι κέλαδοι κατ᾽ ὄρ-
> φναν τε παννυχίδες θεῶν,
> χρυσέων τε ξοάνων τύποι
> Φρυγῶν τε ζάθεοι σελᾶ-
> ναι συνδώδεκα πλήθει.
> μέλει μέλει μοι τάδ᾽ εἰ φρονεῖς, ἄναξ,
> οὐράνιον ἕδρανον ἐπιβεβὼς
> αἰθέρα τε πτόλεως ὀλομένας,
> ἂν πυρὸς αἰθομένα κατέλυσεν ὁρμά.
>
> Gone are your sacrifices!
> gone the dancer's cheerful shout!
> gone the vigils of the gods as night closed in!
> your images of carven gold are now no more;
> and Phrygia's holy festivals, twelve times a year,
> at each full moon, are ended now.
> It is this, it is this that fills me
> with anxious thought whether you, lord,
> seated on the sky, your heavenly throne,
> care at all that my city is destroyed,
> a prey to the furious fiery blast.

While their city stands destroyed, they will be carried by the Achaean ships to Greece

[36] On the meaning of the phrase «Phrygian songs» see BATTEZZATO with examples (2005, 82f.).
[37] According to Battezzato, Trojan music is interrupted by the shouting of the Achaeans. See BATTEZZATO (2005, 87f.). For the parthenaic overtones of this song see SWIFT (2010, 191).
[38] For the meaning of the word ἀπήνη see LSJ[9] s.v. ἀπήνη. The phrase ναῖα ἀπήνη is used to describe a ship.
[39] See BATTEZZATO (2005, 89f.).

(ἐμὲ δὲ πόντιον σκάφος / ἀίσσον πτεροῖσι πορεύσει / ἱππόβοτον Ἄργος, «while over the sea the ship sped by wings will carry me to Argos»: lines 1085-87). The Achaean swift ships will lead them to Argos. These women are also being separated from their lamenting children (lines 1092-98):

> Μᾶτερ, ὤμοι, μόναν δή μ᾽ Ἀχαιοὶ κομί-
> ζουσι σέθεν ἀπ᾽ ὀμμάτων
> κυανέαν ἐπὶ ναῦν
> εἰναλίαισι πλάταις
> ἢ Σαλαμῖν᾽ ἱερὰν
> ἢ δίπορον κορυφὰν
> Ἴσθμιον.
>
> Mother, alas! torn from your sight, the Achaeans
> bear me away from you
> to their dark ship
> to row me over the deep
> to sacred Salamis
> or to the hill on the Isthmus.

They imagine their future in Greece as one of servitude (Ἰλιόθεν ὅτε με πολύδακρυν / Ἑλλάδι λάτρευμα γᾶθεν ἐξορίζει, «since he is carrying me away in bitter sorrow from the shores of Ilium to be a slave in Hellas»: lines 1105f.). Nonetheless, the word they use to describe their servitude, λάτρευμα, often denotes a service paid to the gods – worship, (e.g., Eur. *IT* 1275). One of the most common ways that women paid their services to the gods, was through dancing and singing.

The Chorus of Greek slave women of *Iphigenia among the Taurians* (lines 1089-152) contrasts their miserable life in the land of the Taurians with their previous lives. The women used to live in Greece and express their longing for the Greek gathering places (ποθοῦσ᾽ Ἑλλάνων ἀγόρους, line 1096)[40], that is, for several sacred places in which ritual activities for Artemis and Apollo took place (lines 1097-105). Although we can suggest that *choreia* was one of the activities that they missed, they leave little to the imagination by their explicit reference to singing in lines 1104f. The women state that they miss the lake (lines 1103f.) where the melodious swan renders his service to the Muses (ἔνθα κύκνος μελῳ- / δὸς Μούσας θεραπεύει). As Bignardi argues, this is a rare reference to a swan having a positive coloring in Euripidean tragedy. This swan μελῳδὸς is connected to the Muses and Apollo. The reference of the Chorus has positive connotations that are connected to their choral past[41]. Their previous attendance of ritual

[40] For *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, I use the text of Murray (1902) and the translation of Kovacs (1994-2002).
[41] See Bignardi (2013, 80-82).

activities, which involved taking part in or watching choral performances, has been replaced by their attendance of Iphigenia's sacrifices (lines 1113-19):

> ἔνθα τᾶς ἐλαφοκτόνου
> θεᾶς ἀμφίπολον κόραν
> παῖδ᾽ Ἀγαμεμνονίαν λατρεύ-
> ω βωμούς τ᾽ οὐ μηλοθύτας,
> ζηλοῦσ᾽ ἄταν διὰ παν-
> τὸς δυσδαίμον᾽.
>
> Where I attend the maiden daughter
> of Agamemnon, who serves
> the hind-slaying goddess,
> and attend the altars where no sheep are sacrificed.

Their new role allows them only to lament (ἐγώ σοι παραβάλλομαι / θρήνους, ἄπτερος ὄρνις, «I, a bird of no wings, vie with you in lamentation»: lines 1094f.). What brought these women to the land of Taurians was a ship (ἐν ναυσὶν ἔβαν / πολεμίων ἐρετμοῖσι καὶ λόγχαις, «I was brought by a ship by the oars and the spears of enemy»: lines 1109f.).

The fall of Troy, the enslavement of women, and their travel to Greece are imagined by the female Chorus of *Iphigenia at Aulis*, consisting of local women of Chalcis (lines 751-800). The women imagine the whole Greek army approaching Troy and reaching Ilium by their ships. They refer to a form of *choreia*, Cassandra's almost manic prophetic *choreia*, that takes place in Troy (lines 757-61)[42]:

> τὰν Κασσάνδραν ἵν᾽ ἀκούω
> ῥίπτειν ξανθοὺς πλοκάμους
> χλωροκόμῳ στεφάνῳ δάφνας
> κοσμηθεῖσαν, ὅταν θεοῦ
> μαντόσυνοι πνεύσωσ᾽ ἀνάγκαι.
>
> There, I am told, Cassandra
> tosses her yellow hair,
> adorned with the green crown
> of myrtle when she is controlled
> by the god's prophetic inspiration.

They also picture the Phrygian women in their looms, that is in a domestic environment which inspired work songs, interrupt their activities and lament their ill fate as they imagine that they will be forced to enter the Greek ships (lines 783-92):

[42] For *Iphigenia at Aulis*, I use the text of MURRAY (1902) and the translation of KOVACS (1994-2002).

μήτ᾽ ἐμοὶ
μήτ᾽ ἐμοῖσι τέκνων τέκνοις
ἐλπὶς ἄδε ποτ᾽ ἔλθοι,
οἵαν αἱ πολύχρυσοι
Λυδαὶ καὶ Φρυγῶν ἄλοχοι
στήσουσι παρ᾽ ἱστοῖς
μυθεῦσαι τάδ᾽ ἐς ἀλλήλας·
Τίς ἄρα μ᾽ εὐπλοκάμου κόμας
ῥῦμα δακρυόεν τανύσας
πατρίδος ὀλλυμένας ἀπολωτιεῖ.

May no foreboding
ever come to me
or to my children's children
like that to be felt by the gilded
Lydian women and the wives of the Phrygians
as by their looms they say to one another,
"What man, then, tightening his grasp
on my luxuriant hair to make me weep,
shall pluck me from my perished fatherland".

It is not only war but also male expeditions that disrupt or transform female *choreia*. Ships often mark this disruption or transformation. In *Medea*, the Nurse, who is not singing, curses Argo (lines 1-48), which has become the cause of her mistresses' angst and lamentation. According to the Nurse, it would have been ideal if Argo had never even been built (μηδ᾽ ἐν νάπαισι Πηλίου πεσεῖν ποτε / τμηθεῖσα πεύκη, «would that pine trees had never been fallen in the glens of Mountain Pelion»: lines 3f.)[43]. If Argo had not even built, or if the ship had not reached Colchis (lines 1-3), her mistress would not have fallen in love with Jason and acted the way she did (lines 1-11). The Nurse focuses on Medea's dislocation (lines 10f.; 30-35). According to her, Medea's happy life in Corinth changed because of Jason's betrayal (lines 12-19). Medea, in her present situation, resembles a mourner, since she constantly weeps, laments (συντήκουσα δακρύοις, «weeping all the hours»: line 25; ἀποιμώξῃ, «weep to herself»: line 31), and moans (βοᾷ, «calls loudly on»: line 21).

In the second *stasimon* of *Hecuba* (lines 629-57), the women dedicate many verses to look back to the origin of the Trojan War. They claim that the source of their misfortunes was the beginning of the construction of the ship that Paris used to go to Greece (lines 629-35):

ἐμοὶ χρῆν συμφοράν,

[43] For *Medea*, I use the text and the translation of Kovacs (1994-2002).

ἐμοὶ χρῆν πημονὰν γενέσθαι
Ἰδαίαν ὅτε πρῶτον ὕλαν
Ἀλέξανδρος εἰλατίναν
ἐτάμεθ', ἅλιον ἐπ' οἶδμα ναυστολήσων
Ἑλένας ἐπὶ λέκτρα.

For me was fated disaster,
for me was fated pain,
on the day when Alexander first cut down
the pine tree upon Mount Ida
for his sea journey
to make Helen his bride.

According to them, Paris was in quest of Helen's bed. A man built an object to attain his goal and used his ship to find Helen. Paris' sea journey brought disaster and tears to Troy and Hellas. Paris' ship forced them to start singing a ritual lament (lines 650-56):

στένει δὲ καί τις ἀμφὶ τὸν εὔροον Εὐρώταν
Λάκαινα πολυδάκρυτος ἐν δόμοις κόρα,
πολιάν τ' ἐπὶ κρᾶτα μάτηρ
τέκνων θανόντων
†τίθεται χέρα δρύπτεται παρειάν,†
δίαιμον ὄνυχα τιθεμένα σπαραγμοῖς.

But many a Spartan girl also sheds plentiful tears
in her house besides the fair Eurotas,
and the mother of young men
slain in battles lays hand upon her hoary head
and gouges <both> her cheeks,
make her nails bloody with the tearing.

The Chorus of Greek women, who sing the third *stasimon* in *Helen* (lines 1107-64), also blames Paris' sea journey for the misfortune of the protagonist and the sufferings of the Trojan women (lines 1112-16). It is Paris' foreign oar, a metonymy used to describe his ship, that brought Helen from Lacedaemon to Troy (lines 1117-21)[44]:

ὅτ' ἔδραμε ῥόθια πεδία βαρβάρῳ πλάτᾳ
ὅτ' ἔμολεν ἔμολε, μέλεα Πριαμίδαις ἄγων
Λακεδαίμονος ἄπο λέχεα
σέθεν, ὦ Ἑλένα, Πάρις αἰνόγαμος
πομπαῖσιν Ἀφροδίτας.

Sing how he ran swiftly over the grey sea
with barbarian oar, the man who came,
who came bringing to the sons of Priam,

[44] For the *Helen*, I use the text of MURRAY (1902) and the translation of KOVACS (1994-2002).

you, Helen, as his bride from Lacedaemon,
Paris the grimly wedded, by the sending of Aphrodite.

According to the Chorus, the ship that brought Helen to Troy is to be blamed for the deaths of many Greeks, which turned their wives into mourners (lines 1120-25):

σέθεν, ὦ Ἑλένα, Πάρις αἰνόγαμος
πομπαῖσιν Ἀφροδίτας
πολλοὶ δ' Ἀχαιῶν δορὶ καὶ πετρίναις
ῥιπαῖσιν ἐκπνεύσαντες Ἄι-
δαν μέλεον ἔχουσιν,
ταλαινᾶν ἀλόχων κείραντες ἔθειραν·
ἄνυμφα δὲ μέλαθρα κεῖται.

You, Helen, as his bride from Lacedaemon,
Paris the grimly wedded,
by the sending of Aphrodite.
Many Greeks died by the sword
and from great boulders hurled at them:
they have grim death as their companion.
In sorrow for them their luckless wives
cut off their long hair,
and from their houses bridal love is gone.

In *Hypsipyle*, the heroine remembers Argo, the ship that still defines the content of her songs. The expatriated daughter of the king of Lemnos is a slave to Lycurgus of Nemea and serves as his son's Nurse. The heroine tells her personal story in a prolog speech and sings to the baby Opheltes. A Chorus of friendly local women approaches to inform her that the Seven and their army have reached Nemea (fr. 752f K.). The *parodos* is a lyric exchange between the heroine and the female Chorus (fr. 752g; fr. 752h, 1-9 K.). According to the Chorus, Hypsipyle constantly sings (διὰ σοῦ / στόματος αἰεὶ κλῃζομένα, «that your voice is always celebrating»: fr. 752f, 19f. K.)[45]. The theme of her songs is the Argo and the Golden Fleece (fr. 752f, 19-25 K.). Hypsipyle sings her response to the Chorus, of which the first part is lost (fr. 752g K.). She states that what her heart longs to see is the Argo and the song she desires is Orpheus' mournful Asian plaint (Ἀσιάδ' ἔλεγον ἰήϊον / Θρῇσσ' ἐβόα κίθαρις, «The Thracian lyre cried out a mournful Asian plaint»: fr. 752g, 9f. K.)[46]. Orpheus' song has a double function. Orpheus' song is not only a chant for the rowers but also an Asian lament[47]. Hypsiplyle's songs on this subject matter do not have an epic character and are rather

[45] For *Hypsipyle*, I use the text and the translation of KOVACS (1994-2002).
[46] The Thracian lyre cried out a mournful Asian plaint.
[47] See CHONG-GOSSARD (2003, 220); CHONG-GOSSARD (2008, 75-79). Simone remarks that this song is elegiac but also operates as a work song for the rowers. See SIMONE (2020, 172f.).

songs of complaint connected to her happier past[48].

3. *Ships Restoring Female Choral Identity*

Sometimes ships in Euripides allow women to travel back home. In these cases, ships enable women not only to return to their homeland but also to restore their choral identity. These ships are sometimes given a role in a choral activity. This is the case for *Iphigenia among the Taurians* and *Helen*.

The Chorus members of *Iphigenia among the Taurians* remain at the land of the Taurians to watch Iphigenia's ship sailing to Greece (lines 1132-37). Like many Euripidean Choruses, these captive women wish to escape[49]. In the third *stasimon*, the members of the Chorus wish that they could enter a ship (λαμπροὺς ἱπποδρόμους βαίην, / ἔνθ' εὐάλιον ἔρχεται πῦρ, «Would that I could tread the gleaming track where the sun goes with his lovely light!»: lines 1138f.) and be taken to the places where they used to dance when they were maidens (lines 1143-52):

> χοροῖς δ' ἑσταίην, ὅθι καὶ
> παρθένος, εὐδοκίμων γάμων,
> παρὰ πόδ' εἰλίσσουσα φίλας
> ματρὸς ἡλίκων θιάσους,
> χαρίτων εἰς ἀμίλλας,
> χαίτας ἁβρόπλουτον ἔριν,
> ὀρνυμένα, πολυποίκιλα φάρεα
> καὶ πλοκάμους περιβαλλομένα
> γένυσιν ἐσκίαζον.
>
> May I take my place in the choruses
> where once as maiden of an illustrious family
> near my dear mother I whirled in dance,
> and competing in grace with the throngs
> of my agemates and vying in the luxury born
> of soft-living wealth I put on a veil of many hues
> and let down my tresses to shade my check.

These women view their possible return home, which could become a reality only if they entered a ship, as a return to their choral activities[50].

In the third *stasimon* of Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians* (lines 1123-52), the Chorus of Greek captive women describe Iphigenia's return home. A ship will be the

[48] See SCODEL (1997, 93).
[49] For escape odes in Euripides' plays see PADEL (1974); SWIFT (2009). *Helen*, *Andromeda*, and *Iphigenia among the Taurians* have been called ''escape tragedies''. For their distinguishing features see WRIGHT 2005.
[50] For the associations of this *stasimon* with *partheneia* see SWIFT (2010, 212f.).

agent of her homecoming. These women combine different types of musical performances with Iphigenia's sea journey. They imagine that the heroine will return on an Argive ship with fifty rowers. As Weiss notes, this reference to the fifty rowers of Iphigenia's ship has strong choral associations[51]. The wax-bound reed pipe will give a beat to the oars, and Apollo, holding the loud-sounding seven-string lyre, will sing and lead the heroine in safety to her destination (lines 1123-31):

> καὶ σὲ μέν, πότνι᾽, Ἀργεία
> πεντηκόντορος οἶκον ἄξει·
> συρίζων θ᾽ ὁ κηροδέτας
> κάλαμος οὐρείου Πανὸς
> κώπαις ἐπιθωΰξει,
> ὁ Φοῖβός θ᾽ ὁ μάντις ἔχων
> κέλαδον ἑπτατόνου λύρας
> ἀείδων ἄξει λιπαρὰν
> εὖ σ᾽ Ἀθηναίων ἐπὶ γᾶν.
>
> You, lady, shall be borne homeward
> on an Argive ship with fifty rowers,
> and the wax-bound reed pipe of Pan,
> the mountain god, will give the beat to the oars,
> while Phoebus the prophet, holding
> the loud-sounding seven-stringed lyre,
> sings and leads you in safety
> to the gleaming land of Athens.

During her sea journey, the heroine will have musical accompaniment. According to these women, it is like *choreia* has already been restored by Iphigenia's entrance to the ship.

In the third *stasimon* (lines 1451-511), the Chorus of *Helen* states that the ship will allow Helen to return to Sparta. These women view Helen's return to her homeland as a chance for the restoration of her choral identity[52]. They envisage her as a participant in a series of festivals (lines 1465-74)[53]:

> ἦ που κόρας ἂν ποταμοῦ
> παρ᾽ οἶδμα Λευκιππίδας ἢ πρὸ ναοῦ
> Παλλάδος ἂν λάβοι,
> χρόνῳ ξυνελθοῦσα χοροῖς
> ἢ κώμοις Ὑακίνθου
> νύχιον ἐς εὐφροσύναν,

[51] The number of the rowers and the number of the dances of a dithyrmbic song was the same. Moreover, there is also a reference to musical accompaniment of the aulos. See WEISS (2018, 42).
[52] For Helen as a displaced chorus leader in Euripides' tragedy see MURNAGHAN (2013, 160-70).
[53] See STEINER (2011, 305).

ὃν ἐξαμιλλασάμενος
τροχῷ τέρμονα δίσκου
ἔκανε Φοῖβος, εἶτα Λακαί-
να γᾶ βούθυτον ἀμέραν.

I think she will find the daughters
of Leucippus by the river
or before the temple of Pallas,
as she arrives home at the time
of the dances or revels of Hyacinth
and their nightlong feasting, Hyacinth,
whom Phoebus, trying to hurl far the round discus,
killed, and thereafter to the land of Lacedaemon
the son of Zeus gave order to keep a day of sacrifice.

Helen will find the daughters of Leucippus performing by the river or before the temple of Pallas, as she arrives home at the time of the festival of the *Hyacintheia*. It is not by chance that Helen's role was crucial to this festival. Helen was Sparta's archetypical chorus leader par excellence[54], and these women imagine her return to her homeland as a return to her choral duties[55].

In the third *stasimon* of Euripides' *Helen* (lines 1451-511)[56], the members of the Chorus of captive Greek women perform their last song while Helen and Menelaus make their way toward the Egyptian shore and the boat that will take them back to Greece. The theme of their song is the return of the heroine by ship escorted over the sea by the Dioscuri. The women address the ship that carries Helen and Menelaus and they describe it as a swift Phoenician ship, an oared vessel dear to Nereus' waves, which leads in the lovely dances of graceful dolphins (χοραγὲ τῶν καλλιχόρων / δελφίνων, «you lead in their lovely dances the graceful dolphins»: lines 1454f.). They state that the purpose of this ship is to carry Helen and Menelaus back to their native Sparta (lines 1459-64). Synecdoche is used two times. As the Chorus evokes the «oar» and oarage that is dear to the waves of Nereus for the larger vessel, the ship is surrounded by a group of dancing dolphins. As Steiner observes, the ship becomes a participant in a chorus since the female singers explicitly style it as a chorus leader as it appears surrounded by a group of dancing figures[57]. Weiss also suggests that the audience of this tragedy can see the dolphins as dancers dancing around Helen's ship as she leaves Egypt for Sparta through the imaginative suggestion of *choreia* and argues that scenes

[54] See CALAME (1997, 191-202).
[55] See PADEL (1974, 237); STEINER (2011, 307f.); MURNAGHAN (2013, 167-70).
[56] For a reading of Euripides' *Helen* as a tragedy rich in metapoetic discourse on song and music, see FORD (2010).
[57] See STEINER (2011, 301). For the similarities of this *stasimon* with *partheneia* see SWIFT (2010, 227-29). Weiss also argues that this ship is pictured as the chorus leader. See WEISS (2018, 78).

of rowing encountered in the later tragedies of Euripides are often linked to the dithyramb[58]. Female *choreia* is restored and the ship is the new chorus leader of this choral group.

4. *Conclusions*

In Euripides' plays, ships as objects seem to have two functions related to female *choreia*. Ships disrupt female *choreia* or become the means to the restoration of female choral identity. Ships force women to abandon their homeland, lead them to a new life and can alter their status. Ships can also save women and bring them back home. Euripides, in these dramas which are related to war or martial expeditions, further explores the connection between war and the performance of music and uses ships, objects built and used by men that have war-like or epic connotations, to mark the disruption or the restoration of female *choreia*. Ships render women unable to perform songs or enable their choral performances. Women in Greek tragedy often use objects to attain a degree of agency[59]. But can we suggest that in Euripides' plays, ships as objects allow women to attain a degree of agency?

Women in Greek tragedy usually gain agency through objects they can create or that are at least tangible and ready for them to use[60]. These women do not create and sometimes they even cannot see these ships in the *hic et nunc* of these tragedies. Ships as objects in Euripides' plays cannot be used by women. Often ships belong to their past and, usually, are a part of their recollections. Some of these women are just witnessing ships taking them away and changing their status. Sometimes these women observe ships taking other people but not them. Ships as objects have epic connotations and women in epic compositions are often the victims of the glorified martial activities of men. When women are related to ships in Euripides' plays, they seem to become objects themselves. Women, throughout Euripides corpus, are being carried away, dragged, forced, or seduced to enter ships. Women, especially in war contexts, become a type of cargo and ships become the means of their loss of previous identity and status. As women, especially Choruses of women, in ancient Greek tragedy seem to have what other scholars call ritual citizenship[61], their change of status implies the loss of their ritual civil rights. Among them is their right to perform choral songs. Their loss of status, usually marked by their entering a ship, entails the loss of their choral identity. Contrary to women, ships as objects in Euripides seem to have agency. Their portrayed

[58] See WEISS (2018, 17, 42).
[59] See, for example, MUELLER (2001); (2011) and the Introduction in MUELLER (2016).
[60] See, for example, MUELLER (2011) on Phaedra's *deltos* or MUELLER (2001) on Medea's objects.
[61] See HALL (1999, 113); WILES (2000, 143); FOLEY (2003, 21).

as active agents. Their ability to perform actions is even highlighted by the syntax used by Euripides. Ships are almost always the subjects of a verb encountered in the active voice. They take women away, they separate them from their homeland or they allow them to return home. Ships are also addressed by some of these women as if they were living things. Ships even bring or create their own music and can become chorus leaders. Moreover, ships define the content of the songs of women. Ships change the status of women and dramatically alter their social standing. In Euripides, ships disrupt female *choreia* and have the power to ruin or restore the choral identity of women.

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