

Cruelty, tenderness and anger: ensuring the Women of Trachis speak to our times

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Cruelty, Tenderness and Anger: Ensuring the *Women of Trachis* Speak to Our Times

KEYWORDS

Crimp; Wertebaker; Sophocles; Tenderness; Anger; Voice

ABSTRACT

At a time when the vocality of women's anger seems particularly pertinent, this article examines two contemporary adaptations of Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*, both of which draw our attention to the abused and traditionally mute character of Iole. Timberlake Wertebaker's 1999 radio adaptation, *Dianeira*, illustrates dramatically the perils of keeping Iole silent; whilst Martin Crimp's 2004 stage adaptation, *Cruel and Tender*, imagines the result of giving her a voice. This article considers how both plays resonate with the gendered and international conflicts of the contemporary world.

ARTICLE

A lot of women will be very angry. Some might even take to the streets. But this won't be the tipping point. There won't be a tipping point, there never is. There will just be the subterranean lava flow of women's anger – slow, blistering, savage and inexorable. We'll go to bed angry, we'll get up angry, we'll drink our coffee and fix the kids' breakfasts angrily, [...] we'll eat silent lunches with rage and we'll pick up groceries on the way home with vengeance on our hearts. We'll kiss our partners and our kids goodnight wrathfully. [...] The anger will shift, seismic but unseen. Before the lava used to burn us to ash on the inside. It's bubbling over now. Enough of us have ripped open our bodies to let the boiling soil of our lives out that the heat itself causes fires. Sure, you can put one or two out at a time. A single flame is easy to catch. But the lava is elemental and everywhere. Kavanaugh will be confirmed. And in less than a generation he'll be a petrified ash fossil, frozen in a rictus of agony in the new Pompeii. Nothing will seem to have changed, until it's too late. The lava of our anger is going to cover the earth and bury you. (Alexander 2018)

It reads like the climactic speech from the final act of a tragedy - a contemporary imagining of *Medea*, perhaps - but the text above is taken from a blog post, responding to the inevitable confirmation of alleged rapist Brett Kavanaugh to the United States Supreme Court. It is just one in a spate of recent articles concerning women's anger (Alexander 2018; Bate 2018; Pine 2018). Central to the thrust of many of these pieces is the need to direct that anger productively into protest, on both a political and a personal level. The passage quoted above suggests that the way to stop the angry lava 'burn[ing] us to ash on the inside' is through small, vocal acts of resistance, for example, amongst one's family and colleagues. In her recent publication, *Rage Becomes Her: The Power of Women's Anger*, Soraya Chemaly argues a similar case at greater length, using the examples of her stifled mother and mute great grandmother as warnings against the dangers of seething in a silent anger. Another vivid illustration of this peril can be found in Timberlake Wertebaker's *Dianeira*, a 1999 radio adaptation of Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*. Wertebaker signposts the anger integral to

her version of this ancient story quickly and directly, by encasing her adaptation in a double frame that introduces two narrators. At one level, the story is told to us by Irene, an elderly Greek storyteller, of the kind who – we are told – can still be found in some cafes in small villages in Northern Greece. But this act of storytelling is itself contextualized by the voice of ‘Timberlake’, a device which, Ann Wilson suggests, ‘invites the audience to receive the character as Wertenbaker’s self-representation while, at the same time, allowing that the playwright’s creation of her own persona involves deliberate self-fashioning’ (2008: 209).ⁱ Timberlake explains that Irene ‘asked us what kind of story we wanted. I wanted one about love, but my friends said they’d heard lots of those, they wanted adventure. We settled on anger. This is what we heard’ (Wertenbaker 2002: 327).

Those familiar with Sophocles’ original textⁱⁱ might question Wertenbaker’s categorization of this play as a story primarily about anger, and this might also suggest to us that Wertenbaker’s focus lies some way removed from a straightforward reading of the play. As it stands, there is already some critical and artistic uncertainty around the text - ‘the least known and least often performed of all of Sophocles’ (McDonald and Walton 2002: xx) – perhaps due to a lack of clarity concerning which character should be seen as its central tragic protagonist. The play features the famed hero Heracles, best known for his completion of twelve ‘labours’, such as the slaying of mythical beasts, but only seen here as a dying man in the play’s final act. More prominently positioned is his long-suffering wife Deianira, whose life has been spent perpetually waiting for his return. We begin the play expecting to follow her journey, but she kills herself offstage during its middle section, leaving the dramatic dénouement to her husband and son. There is evidently some anger here. Heracles rages against Deianira as he is carried onto the stage, writhing in an agony he believes she has deliberately induced through her gift of a poisoned robe; but he is quick to accept his son’s explanation that Deianira acted in error, believing she anointed the robe with a love charm, not a poison. And for us to believe this, we watch Deianira respond more in fear and sorrow than in anger when she is faced with the evidence of her husband’s latest infidelity. So why then does Wertenbaker foreground the theme of anger so explicitly?

Victoria Pedrick has suggested that, for Timberlake Wertenbaker, ‘the translation of ancient tragedies is a matter of when and how one breaks their silences’ (2008: 41). For Wertenbaker, we can read this as a moral imperative, as she believes that ‘silence leads to violence’ (Wertenbaker cited in Mackenzie 1991) and ‘without language, brutality will triumph’ (Wertenbaker 1996: viii-ix).ⁱⁱⁱ In Sophocles’ *Women of Trachis*, the greatest silence lies around the non-speaking part of Iole, a king’s daughter, torn from her razed and plundered city of Eurytus by Heracles, and sent to live as his concubine within Deianira’s home. This action sets the play’s tragedy in motion by provoking Deianira - terrified that she will be supplanted – to send Heracles the robe anointed with the deadly potion she mistakenly believes will rekindle his affection for her. Iole appears in one scene, alongside other ‘women captives’, and is distinctive enough for Deianira to pick her out and enquire about her parentage, but she has no speech and Lichas the Herald underlines this by telling us:

If you get a peep out of her it will be a miracle.
Up to now, I assure you, she hasn’t uttered a word,
Not a single word, good or bad, to anyone.

She does a lot of weeping. (Sophocles, trans. Walton 2002: 86)

Iole does not appear again, but in the play's final scene, the dying Heracles makes a reluctant Hyllos agree to marry her in his stead.

In *Dianeira* (1999), Wertebaker chooses not to break, but to magnify Iole's silence, by retaining a voiceless character in a radio play. Wertebaker's Lychas tells Dianeira that Iole 'sobs sometimes but she never speaks, not a word. Perhaps we ought to respect the pride of grief and not press for answers' (Wertebaker 2002: 339). Yet, though we cannot see or hear her, we are constantly reminded of Iole's presence by Irene's narration. Through this device, Wertebaker's adaptation is able to include an afterword or adjunct to the original play, ending not with Heracles' death, but with a snapshot of the relationship Iole and Hyllos have inherited and the perpetuation of conflict it has ensured:

Hyllos	Iole, for years now we've lived in bitter hatred, anger ...
Irene	She turned then to look at him, bland, confirming those words.
[...]	
Hyllos	What if I let you go? Would you then forgive my father and my family?
[...]	
Irene	But Iole's smile is the smile of refusal. She has suckled her children with her anger, she is her anger, how can she relinquish the anger that she is? (372-3)

This image of the ancient Iole, suckling her children with her anger layers with the images from Alexander's blog: the contemporary women who kiss their kids goodnight wrathfully, and must learn to direct that wrath outwards to avoid Iole's fate: burnt to ash on the inside; entirely impotent. 'Iole's city was never rebuilt. The ruins are over there', we are told (373-4). For her, there was no 'new Pompei' (Alexander 2018).

In Wertebaker's *Dianeria*, Iole's arresting yet impotent silence is – figuratively - given the last word. In Martin Crimp's *Cruel and Tender* (a 2004 stage version of the same Sophocles play), Iole (renamed Laela) has the last word, literally. Crimp's play is a hyper-modern reworking of Sophocles. As Cole (2016) has highlighted, the play's form is distinctly conscious of its classical roots, and includes sections of verse. However, as Crimp 'couldn't imagine writing a play that wasn't cut, linguistically, culturally, from the material of contemporary life' (cited in Sierz 2006: 64), both his verse and prose are littered with modern and postmodern references. Within the first two scenes we hear talk of short skirts, high heeled shoes, suburbs, airports, 'a black car with black glass in the windows', fridges, visas, exercise machines, nail varnish, multiplexes, supermarket car parks, sex tips, magazines and solicitors (Crimp 2004: 1-8). In place of a traditional Nurse character, Crimp positions a Housekeeper called Rachel, who - alongside Cathy the Physiotherapist and Nicola the Beautician – takes on some of the role of the original play's Chorus of Trachinian women. Laela is a young African woman, who - we are initially told - has been rescued from her decimated city. Like Iole, she is introduced to us as a mute. Jonathon (a political spin-doctor who takes the function of the Herald Lychas) explains that Laela and her "brother"^{iv} 'do not

speak at all. They are unable to speak. They have been living in a drain' (15). However, unlike Iole, Laela soon returns to the stage, and is already vocal in her second scene. There are problems inherent in this; Laela learns to speak in the voice of the colonizer, by reading sex tips in glossy magazines. Laela's pedagogical use of these magazines creates a *verfremdungseffekt*, which highlights the distorted view of womanhood presented in them. The supposedly empowering sex tips - 'Don't feel ashamed. If your man doesn't touch you the way you like, give your man a lesson' - are sharply juxtaposed with traditional models of consumerism: 'Oh, look at this dress! I want this dress! [...] You think he'll buy me this dress?' (25-6). Thus, the limitations of supposed sexual liberation are revealed by a model of women's continued economic dependence. Nonetheless, speech gives Laela a presence and a power within Crimp's play, which is not granted to Iole in Wertenbaker's or Sophocles'. Her rise to the top of the play's social strata is underlined when, in the play's final moments, the Housekeeper asks Laela for assistance, only to be told, in no uncertain terms, 'Clear up this mess? (*Smiles.*) That is *your* job' (70).

There is no question that Laela has a voice, but from her closing remarks and other statements, Elizabeth Sakellaridou reads Laela as a 'visible but also equivocally unpleasant character' and has questioned the value of giving her voice in a play that, she argues, is full of 'verbal cruelty' (2014: 366), 'injurious speech and hate language' (365). Crimp has stated a belief in the 'inherent[...] cruelty' (Crimp 2006: 354) of language, making it unsurprising to find such dialogue in this play. In one particularly notable example, Amelia (Crimp's Deianira) rebukes Jonathon:

If you call me distressed
 Jonathon
 one more time
 [...]

what I will in fact do
 is stuff your mouth with barbed wire.
 Because forgive me
 but I'm starting to find the way you speak
 an atrocity which makes cutting a man's heart out
 seem almost humane. (Crimp 2004: 21)

What is noticeable here is the cruelty present, not only in Amelia's violent silencing rhetoric, but in Jonathon's cynical spin-doctor phrasing. Earlier in the play, Jonathon tells us that Laela and her brother have been rescued from the ruins of their devastated city and brought to the General's (Crimp's Heracles) and Amelia's house 'to remind each one of us - of our common - I hope - humanity' (14). The word 'humanity', here, drips with irony, and is infested with the empty propagandist practices of political spin (of which Jonathon is representative). Although, in Wertenbaker's play (as in the Greek original) the Herald Lychas tries to deceive Dianeira with regards to Iole's status amongst her fellow captives, he is blunt and honest about the fact that the women are slaves. In contrast, Jonathon tries to prettify the whole situation, by pretending that the children have been rescued as an act of charity, rather than taken as an act of barbarous plunder.

Wertenbaker is much less cynical about language in general, and the word ‘humanity’ in particular. In an unpublished draft article, she comments that ‘[r]edemption is an extraordinary concept, particularly at the end of the 20th century, when the word could just disappear, along with the word humane’ (c.1990). This demonstrates her desire to keep the word ‘humane’ in common and genuine parlance, and shows that she bears none of Crimp's irony towards it. In fact, her comment seems to carry an awareness that we might lose the word ‘humane’ partly because it is a concept or practice that is in danger in itself, but also because it is a word that we find increasingly difficult to use genuinely. In her play *The Break of Day*, set in the mid-1990s, April voices a similar concern that ‘words like compassion and humanity have cracked in the last fifteen years and we’ve let it happen’ (Wertenbaker 2002: 26-8). From these comments, we infer a slightly old-fashioned but uplifting humanism in Wertenbaker, who feels passionately that ‘we have to continue examining human beings and not despair’ (cited in Bush 2013: 270). And so, it is not cruelty, but tenderness, we find imbuing the language of Wertenbaker’s oeuvre. In fact, the concept of tenderness is one she returns to in several works. In *After Darwin* (1998), it is speculated that ‘tenderness gave mammals an evolutionary advantage’ (Wertenbaker 2002: 113); in *The Line* (2009), Degas expounds that artistic works must depict human beings with ‘pity and tenderness’ (Wertenbaker 2009: 54); and in *The Love of the Nightingale* (1988), Wertenbaker links tenderness with language and the ability to express oneself, whilst a reverse association is made between silence and brutality (Bush 2013: 102-9). Thus, tenderness, for Wertenbaker, is equated with the very roots of human-ness; with linguistic and artistic expression.

In *Dianeira*, we come across tenderness again in a choric ode, ‘borrow[ed] from our poet Sophocles’:

First Chorus	Here comes the night, draping herself in her sequined cloak of stars.
Second Chorus	Shimmering.
Third Chorus	See the night as a womb, heaving, pulled apart, rent asunder, she pushes forth in terrible pain, the sun.
First Chorus	Later, enfolds him again, caressing him, she has already forgotten the pains to come, the loving mother, the tender night. (Wertenbaker 2002: 334)

But in *Cruel and Tender*, Amelia watches a much less tender night. ‘We went outside to look at the stars, but there weren’t any’, she informs us (Crimp 2004: 16). Instead, her equivalent scene is lit by a ‘powerful torch’ that hurts Richard’s (the Messenger character) eyes, and which he later uses (after he obtains it in a ‘silent but intense struggle’) to act out the search lights of military helicopters and rockets, as he explains to Amelia what really happened in Gisenyi (Crimp’s Eurytus). The cruelty of Crimp's searchlight makes a stark contrast with the tenderness of Wertenbaker's starlight.^v And it is not only the night that seems to lack tenderness here. As well as emphasizing the violence of Crimp's language and the unpleasantness of Laela's character, Sakellaridou argues that, whilst in Sophocles' original play *Dianeira* embodies the ethical space of the household or *domus* (a space of ‘honour, responsibility, generosity, and caring’ only violated by ‘the outer, brutal world of men’), in

Crimp's play, Amelia is 'stamped by a sterility of emotion and an impulse for cruelty that make her as repulsive as her husband' (2014: 369).^{vi}

If as Sakellaridou suggests, Amelia is the epitome of 'emptiness, cruelty, and anaesthetisation' and Laela is 'insensitive, treacherous, and bellicose' (2014: 369), where then is the tenderness Crimp's title seems to promise? By turning Crimp's title into a question of either/or, the title of Sakellaridou's article ('Cruel or Tender? Protocols of Atrocity – New and Old') seems to dismiss this inquiry, positing the terms 'cruel' and 'tender' as mutually exclusive. However, the word *tender* is an interesting and multi-faceted one. As an adjective, it means gentle, affectionate, compassionate or loving, but also, paradoxically, sore, painful or bruised: perhaps not so far from cruelty after all. But the word's semantic mutability does not stop there. When used as a verb, *to tender* is to offer, present, propose or bid. As a noun, *a tender* is a person who looks after another person, place or thing. Finally, the English language also has two versions of the verb *to tend*: one meaning to incline or lean towards something, either physically or mentally; the other meaning to care for, look after, or serve.

Etymologically, the verbs *tend* (to incline) and *tender* (to offer, propose or bid) share the same root: the Middle English *tenden* from the Old French *tendre* - to stretch or extend. The verb *tend* (to care for) and the noun *tender* (one who takes care of) share a different root: the Middle English *attenden* from the Old French *attendre* - to wait, expect or heed. Yet both the Old French *tendre* and the Old French *attendre* share the same Latin root: the verb *tendere* - to stretch, extend, proceed or hold forth. It is not difficult to see how this Latin root meaning of stretching or extending has grown into both contemporary understandings: a literal, physical *tending* that signifies an incline, lean or tilt; and a more abstract *tending* that means to offer oneself or one's services. Returning to our original adjective *tender*, from which the noun *tenderness* and the adverb *tenderly* are both drawn, we find another etymological strain. These words also are derived from the Old French *tendre*, which like the English *tender* carried the alternative adjectival definition: young, delicate, soft. But the Latin root of this word is not the verb *tendere*, but the adjective *tener/tenara/tenarum*. Thus, in its first Latin instance the gentle adjective *tener* was not linked to the reaching verb *tendere*; but by the time we reach the Old French, we find the dual verb/adjective *tendre* refers to both concepts, as with the English *tender*. And so, if we understand that 'to *tender*' is to stretch, extend or incline; essentially, to reach out to the other, we might also contend that to *be tender* is to reach out – physically or vocally - to that other.

This expanded conceptualization of tenderness might help us understand the complex usage of the word both by Wertenbaker (discussed above) and Crimp. Though, as Sakellaridou argues, there is little that is obviously tender about Crimp's play, as well as in its title, we hear the word in its opening scene, when Amelia reprimands her youthful chorus for failing to understand the anxieties of an adult relationship with

men - hurt men -
men whose minds are blank
who fuck you the way they fuck the enemy -
I mean with the same tenderness - (Crimp 2004: 7)

This line could, of course, be delivered with sarcasm, to imply that the General is tender neither with Amelia, nor with his foe. However, we could arrive at a more complex reading by seeing both acts as possessing a certain type of tenderness; a rawness, a passion, perhaps even an intimacy of sorts; an inadequate way of reaching out to the other, but a way none the less. But does such a definition of tenderness retain any of the ethical value inherent in the simple definition of the word?

In her article 'Inclining the subject: ethics, alterity and natality', Adriana Cavarero proposes a relational ontology based on 'radical inclination', in which every self 'not necessarily in turn and on a mutual basis' is 'neither vertical nor horizontal, yet given over, exposed, offered, *inclined* to the other' (2011: 195). She offers the example of 'maternal inclination', as a clear illustration of a relational ontology where equal interdependency is impossible. Unpicking the vernacular usage of the term, often problematically applied to suggest women's predisposition toward motherhood, Cavarero presents motherhood as a state of 'inclination', in which the mother is predisposed to respond to her offspring, but crucially, has the choice to respond either with care or with wounding. Cavarero's use of the term inclination resonates strongly with the semantically similar concept of tending, and the choice between care and wound that Cavarero highlights, can also be brought to bear on our understanding of tenderness, as follows.

Let us return for a moment to Wertenbaker's definition of tenderness from *The Love of the Nightingale*;^{vii} that is, a definition that is intricately connected with language and the ability to express oneself. Wertenbaker herself states that 'if a culture loses its language, it loses its tenderness' (cited in Mackenzie 1991), and in *The Love of the Nightingale*, Philomele makes the same equation with her line 'When you love you want to imprison the one you love in your words, in your tenderness' (Wertenbaker 1996: 305). Correspondingly, Tereus' extreme lack of tenderness may come, in part, from his linguistic weakness, apparent in his curt sentences, stultifying effect on conversation, and the way he is ignored, talked over and ridiculed by Philomele; ensuring that, in the face of her articulacy, his only alternative is brutality. One of the most striking moments in Crimp's *Cruel and Tender* is when Amelia, having learnt that Laela and her 'brother' 'are unable to speak', asks Laela: 'Show me your tongue, sweetheart. Tongue. I want to see your tongue'. The stage directions then specify that

Amelia sticks her tongue right out over her lower lip and makes noises to encourage the Girl to show her tongue, if she has one. The Girl finally, silently extends her tongue. (Crimp 2004: 15)

The presence of Laela's tongue and her subsequent potential for voice contrast sharply with a dramatically similar moment in *The Love of the Nightingale*. Unlike Laela, Philomele does lose her tongue, when it is cut off by Tereus to prevent her from revealing him as her rapist. When she finally reunites herself with her sister (Tereus' wife) Procne, she reveals her story by, in Wertenbaker's version, re-enacting it with puppets. A horrified Procne then questions Philomele's authenticity:

Why should I believe you? And perhaps you're not Philomele. A resemblance. A mockery in this horrible drunken feast. How can I know?

Silence

But if it true. My sister.
Open your mouth.

Philomele opens her mouth, slowly.

To do this. He would do this. (Wertebaker 1996: 343)

In *The Love of the Nightingale*, the absence of Philomele's tongue stands for the choice of wounding Tereus made in ripping it out. The need for Laela to show Amelia that her tongue exists reminds us of this choice and the possibility of such brutality, but her tongue's presence can nonetheless be read as a promise of, or at least as the potential for, the choice of care; for tenderness; and crucially, for language, dialogue and the ability to reach out to the other. There is no doubt that there is much cruelty throughout the language of *Cruel and Tender*, but as Angelaki identifies, whilst this language 'makes no excuses for its characters, [...] it ensures that they always argue their cases well' (2012: 124). It also enables a brief moment in Crimp's play where we glimpse the possibility of Amelia and Laela bonding. This is led by Amelia, who rebukes her son James (Crimp's Hyllus), 'Laela doesn't need you to explain to me how Laela feels', and later suggests:

Amelia If we could drive a car, we could drive to the airport. We could go shopping at the airport. What d'you think?
Laela Buy shoes.
Amelia We could buy shoes. We could buy luggage on wheels.
Pause
 What have I done, Laela?
Laela What have you...?
Amelia DONE. WHAT HAVE I DONE?
Pause.
Laela Can we really go to the airport?
Amelia Of course we can, sweetheart. But first you're going to pour me a glass of wine. Let's have a glass of wine together, shall we? Then what we'll do is we'll take the General's car and we'll drive to the airport and meet the General - yes? The two wives will drive to the airport in their husband's car to collect their husband from the airport - what d'you think? Good idea? Everybody drives - it can't be / difficult. (Crimp 2004: 44-45)

Obviously, there is much irony here, particularly connected to the implications that women can only bond by shopping together and would have no need to have learnt to drive their husbands' cars. But in Wertebaker's play and the Greek original there is not even the possibility of such a moment, ironic or otherwise, most fundamentally because of Iole's

silence/absence. Whilst Wertenbaker's approach emphasizes the vulnerability of women – ‘One day, daughters of kings, wives of heroes, and the next sex or kitchen slaves. Ripped open, beaten’ (Wertenbaker 2002: 339) – Crimp’s allows them, or at least allows Laela, to escape this victimization. As Aragay proposes:

As she [Laela] rejects this, our inhospitable civilization – which has led to Amelia’s suicide – and refuses to help clear out its mess, the evidence of its cruel violence lying all around them – [...] – the play closes on a minimal affirmation, the barest suggestion that the bridge towards a different world may lie with the younger generation: the tableau made up of Laela herself, James and the young boy he holds in his arms. (2011: 84-5)

Like Arigaray, I contend that we must read value into Laela’s access to language and voice.^{viii} Whilst we can acknowledge that voice is not always used to good purpose, we must recognise that it gives us a choice between cruelty and tenderness, or as Cavarero describes, between care and wound; and where there is choice, there is hope. Voicelessness removes this choice and, in offering only brutality (turned outwards or inwards), cannot progress a cause. And so, returning to our theme of anger, we can see that these two adaptations illustrate with startling pertinence the current incentive to match anger with voice; to turn anger outwards in protest; and not allow it to, voiceless, consume us from the inside.

Of course, both these adaptations resonate beyond the ever-pertinent battle of the sexes played out between their central characters. *Cruel and Tender*’s contemporary setting enables it to address directly and evocatively the unstable and indefinite post-9/11 ‘climate of fear’ (Sierz 2007: 386). Whilst theatre critic Michael Billington went so far as to describe the play as ‘a direct response to the Iraq war’ (2004b: 28), Angelaki highlights that Crimp was ‘conscious of the fact that the play ought to achieve more than be solely tied to that context’ (2012:125). Other academics have also been cautious about drawing such explicit parallels, with Cole suggesting that ‘the introduction of another geographical layer’ (the African setting for the General's military labours), helps ‘foster a nuanced, multi-layered interpretation of *Trachiniae* that could not only be read as reflecting upon a range of contemporary situations, but also remained elastic enough to be applied to other, yet-to-be-realized political contexts’ (2016: 46). These pervading, yet unspecific, resonances are well suited to Crimp’s engagement with our modern - or perhaps postmodern – sense of undefined panic, as explored by Sierz in his article “‘Form Follows Function’: Meaning and Politics in Martin Crimp's *Fewer Emergencies*’ (2007). Here Sierz draws on the work of Frank Furedi (2006) and Zygmunt Bauman (2006), who suggest that in contemporary Western societies ‘people fear not only actual threats but the thought of threats’ (Sierz 2007: 386). This is certainly true of *Cruel and Tender*'s General, who has been

sent out
on one operation after another
with the aim - the apparent aim -
of eradicating terror: not understanding
that the more he fights terror

the more he creates terror -
and even invites terror - who has no eyelids -
into his own bed. (Crimp 2004: 2)

Although the two adaptations are separated by only five years - Wertenbaker's first broadcast in 1999, Crimp's originally performed in 2004 - the gulf created by the events of, and responses to, 11 September 2001 seems to push them further apart, ideologically speaking. This is not least because Wertenbaker's play is still influenced by an earlier conflict that has, perhaps, been eclipsed in the minds of British and American theatre-goers by twenty-first century wars, but which has nonetheless had a significant impact on Wertenbaker's writing (notably, *The Break of Day*, 1995 and *Credible Witness*, 2001); that is, the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s and early 2000s. Thus, through Timberlake's narration, we are reminded of 'the guns of the country north of the border where there is always a war' (Wertenbaker 2002: 374). This, Pedrick argues:

insinuates war as a setting for and thematic of anger [...]. Modern Trachis is a place where men are always at war, but it is also a place where love and adventure can both be subsumed in anger. Dianeira's ancient personal grievance is put within a modern iteration of the eternal male violence of war' (2008: 48).

The fact that, in contrast to the ongoing and ill-defined 'War on Terror', the Balkan conflict is now (particularly outside its immediate region) viewed as historical and finite, should not allow us to forget its importance and immediacy at the time of Wertenbaker's adaptation.

Thus, both adaptations establish a parallel between military and gendered conflict. Billington's review of the original production of *Cruel and Tender* alludes to this parallel in his description of the General's 'military and sexual assault on an African city' (2004a: 31), and Angelaki identifies the play's 'central metaphor' as 'marriage as war', which, she suggests, enables 'Crimp to examine domestic conflict through the prism of the military one and vice versa' (2012: 125). This is a metaphorical association common to several of Wertenbaker's plays - notably *The Love of the Nightingale* and the unpublished 'Case to Answer' (1980) - in which male-female relations are paralleled by those of oppressive, colonial nations and those they subjugate. In particular, Wertenbaker has been influenced by the oppression of the Basque people and black South Africans. As has been discussed by postcolonial theorists, such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2004), oppressive forces - both masculine and colonial - use a combination of physical and linguistic violence (silencing), to keep subjugated nations (and women) unable to reclaim their own identities and fight back. Women, these plays suggest, when denied a legitimate voice may be driven to the same violent means of self-expression as nations struggling to overthrow colonial exploitation (Bush 2013: 102-117). This phenomenon is referenced explicitly in *Cruel and Tender*, where Crimp establishes a metaphor that connects women in general, and Amelia in particular, to concealed weapons of terror:

some sharp object
some spike

something inside of us
a prohibited object we didn't know about
but that will show up on the screen [...]
one of those women with a rubber-glove
will push her hand
like a midwife Laela
will push her hand deeper and deeper into us
until the tip of her finger rests
just so
on the spike.

And she'll say
'I suspect you of terror.
You have a concealed weapon.
I can feel it next to your heart.' (Crimp 2004: 45-46)

This then is the logical conclusion within a society where men fuck women 'the way they fuck the enemy' (7), and the voices - and the anger - of women are silenced or ignored: women are driven to acts of terror.^{ix} Billington's review of *Cruel and Tender* concludes that 'Crimp shows that global terrorism is a reality: his point is that it is a hydra-headed monster that cannot be defeated by conventional means' (2004a: 31). However, returning to Sierz's discussion of Bauman and Furedi, it becomes evident that the modern West has, in part, created its own terror of the East, of the Muslim faith and culture, and of the culturally Other in general; its actions pushing those it ostracizes towards the violence, first symbolically, then literally, created by its own imagination. This understanding seems reflected in Aragay's suggestion that '*Cruel and Tender* is not so much a play about terrorism per se, as a play about ourselves, our own civilization and its violent underside' (2011: 86); and in Crimp's assertion that our terrors of the Other are 'reflections of our own anxiety. The darker it gets outside, the blacker a window becomes, and the more it turns into a mirror' (cited in Sierz 2006: 66). And so, perhaps we should contend that Crimp's point is not just that global terrorism cannot be defeated by conventional means, but that we all share the responsibility for the presence of that terror, and therefore the moral imperative to find the 'unconventional' means of defeating it. Furthermore, by the parallel that has been established between the culturally Othered and the gendered Other, we can extend our previous conclusions concerning the vital importance of hearing the voices of those Others, even - especially - when they are raised in anger, before the lava of that anger covers the earth and buries us.

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NOTES

ⁱ As well as providing an element of metatheatre, the multiple layers and presences of tellers in Wertebaker's version of this ancient story highlight its changing nature; its many translations and adaptations, and the mutability of the myth. They place the ancient tale within the frame of modern Greece, in close proximity to a 'country north of the border, where there is always a war' (374) and problematize the act of storytelling itself, by setting it in the context of a financial transaction, in which an old blind woman is paid for her services in banknotes and brandy by urban tourists.

ⁱⁱ Thought to have been written at some point between 450 and 420 BCE (Hoey 1979; Whitman 1966; Webster 1936; Vickers 1995).

ⁱⁱⁱ Wertebaker links these ideas to her experience growing up in the Basque Country of France, where the Basque language was deliberately suppressed and devalued by the French authorities, and to 'the violence in certain countries where people are denied freedom of speech', such as 'the horrendous upheavals' that took place as South Africans struggled to end Apartheid (Wertebaker cited in Clifford 1989).

^{iv} Who we later learn is actually Laela's and the General's son.

^v In fact, the only 'Spangled Night' Crimp allows us is the colour of a nail varnish (which the Beautician uses to paint the housekeepers fingernails, as she explains to her and the Physiotherapist how she discovered the blood stained house after Amelia's suicide); and that which is referenced in the General's account:

I have burnt terror out of the world for people like you.
I have followed it through the shopping malls
and the school playgrounds
tracked it by starlight across the desert (57)

^{vi} It is true that Crimp's Amelia is a less sympathetic character than Wertebaker's (and Sophocles') Dianeira. However, this is as much because of Crimp's modern setting, as it is a result of his characterization. As Amelia seems to be living in a post-feminist society, we are inclined to judge her more harshly, because we see her as having made the choices that have led to her unfortunate position. Why, we are tempted to ask, has she not chosen to be more independent? Why, as a teenager, did she beg 'to be allowed to wear' 'the very short skirt and the very high-heeled agonising shoes'? (Crimp 2002a: 1) Why did she 'abandon [her] course at university to become the mother of a child'? (2) Her lack of movement, emphasized by her refusal to leave the house or even use an exercise machine, is therefore read as laziness; inertia; apathy, as in these lines of the Chorus:

Physiotherapist What about exercise?
Beautician She doesn't go out.
Physiotherapist I meant the machine: aren't you using your machine?
Beautician She hates the machine.
Physiotherapist It's a good machine: it's one of the best there is. If you don't
 use your machine, Amelia, how d'you expect to sleep?
Beautician You mean she's not fit?
Physiotherapist I mean she's not tired: she's fit, but she's / not tired. (5-6)

Wertebaker's Dianeira is more sympathetic, because her classical setting emphasizes the limitations of the choices that have been available to her. She regrets her lack of movement, which is not presented as laziness, but dictated by the socio-political and economic circumstances of women of her time: 'Dianeira does not have the relief of movement and search. She has to stay still and wait, all movement in the imagination' (Wertebaker 2002: 334).

^{vii} This play is Wertebaker's retelling of the myth of Philomel and Tereus from Book VI of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In this myth, the Thracian king Tereus marries the Athenian princess Procne, but becomes infatuated with her sister Philomel. Unable to woo Philomel, Tereus abducts and rapes her, cutting out her tongue to prevent her from revealing his crime. However, Philomel sews her story into a tapestry, enabling Procne to learn the truth and leading the two sisters to murder Tereus and Procne's son Itys in a Bacchic frenzy. As Tereus is about to enact his revenge upon the sisters, all three characters are turned into birds.

^{viii} Another clue that Crimp may not intend the speech and language within his play to be read as cruelty alone, comes when Laela reveals that, although in the country she has come from 'only boys go to school', she learnt English at 'Tuseme club'. Crimp has her describe this as an 'HIV Aids learning club', but the aims of the real-world Tuseme youth empowerment project, initiated at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, are wider-

reaching. *Tuseme*, in Swahili, means ‘let us speak out’, and according to *FAWE*, the Forum for African Women Educationalists, the project:

uses theatre-for-development techniques to address concerns that hinder the social and academic development of girls. *Tuseme* trains girls to identify and understand the problems that affect them, articulate these problems and take action to solve them. Through drama, song and creative arts, girls learn negotiation skills, how to speak out, self-confidence, decision-making and leadership skills. (n.d.)

Whilst there is little evidence in Crimp's play that Laela has had much benefit from its training, just invoking this project seems to acknowledge a certain faith in language.

^{ix}Alternatively, Aragay argues that Amelia's “spike” speech reveals ‘not her body's danger, but its ‘potential for love or tenderness’. Aragay contends that this concealed love represents ‘for Crimp as for Lévinas and Bauman, the self's natural inclination to care for other human bodies; an ethical core buried under the self-disciplining, violence-inducing strictures instilled by civilization, which suppress the mechanisms of empathy’ (2011: 83).