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**By and For a Feminist Rhetorical Theory:  
Constituting Cultural Identity in Isocrates' "Helen"**

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in  
The Department  
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## ABSTRACT

### By and For a Feminist Rhetorical Theory: Constituting Cultural Identity in Isocrates' "Helen"

Nanako Nishihira

In this thesis I address the reevaluation of the ancient Greek pedagogue and logographer Isocrates' "Helen" as an example of feminist rhetoric in contemporary rhetorical studies. Through a focus on a specific object/subject, Helen of Troy, I explore the relationship between pedagogy and feminist rhetoric. I argue that the use of a feminine subject is a rhetorical strategy whereby Isocrates constitutes and displays a new Athenian identity, teaching what Athenian culture stands for. As well, I examine the process of materializing Helen's subjectivity in the Panhellenic discourse. My theoretical analysis is conducted within the development of feminist rhetoric in contemporary rhetorical studies, Jacques Derrida's idea of law and Judith Butler's performativity theory. A discussion of the feminine subject, authority, and performative force is key to my analysis.

For my parents, Isao and Fumiko Nishihira,  
who have always given me the best education.

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## INTRODUCTION: The Voice of Isocrates

The purpose of this thesis is to reevaluate and conceptualize the idea of Isocratean rhetoric in contemporary rhetorical studies. By focusing on his choice of Helen of Troy in the encomium of “Helen,” I will articulate Isocrates’ rhetorical critique with a feminist reading of culture, known as feminist rhetoric. My goal is thus to define Isocrates as a feminist rhetorician who displays Athenian nationalism by and for the feminine subject, in order to educate Athenian people. In my case study, I will examine three things: (1) how Isocrates articulates his ideal image of Athens with Helen in order to reconstitute Athenian identity, (2) how he displays Helen as the most appropriate representation of Athens, and (3) how his retelling of Helen’s mythical story becomes the most persuasive interpretation displaying Athenian nationalism. This introduction begins with an assessment of previous literature on Isocrates, as well as an acknowledgment of significant differences in understanding Isocrates’ “Helen.”

### 1. Who is Isocrates?

In recent years, rhetorical critics have called for reframing Isocrates, including who he was and what he has done. For modern readers, there are four famous rhetoricians of ancient Greece including Aristotle, Plato, Gorgias and Isocrates. As David M. Timmerman (1998) points out, unlike the other

three rhetoricians, Isocrates' is mostly labeled as a teacher of rhetoric even though he begins his career as a speechwriter for wealthy Athenians (146). This is because Isocrates founded a school of speech, the first institution of higher learning in Athens, five years before Plato established his Academy. According to Niall Livingstone (1998), Isocrates provides a political education; an education which fits pupils for leadership within their city or state (264). The Isocratean idea of education mainly consists of studying how to be an outstanding speaker in a democratic state like Athens. By equating leadership with the necessity of public speaking, Isocrates offers his speeches as textbooks and good examples to be studied and copied (266). Note that becoming a good speaker is the entrance for young men into their adult careers. Hence, Isocrates' name has been cited more often than that of any other rhetorician in the context of education.

While I am encouraged at the prospect of Isocrates' school, I am also concerned about Isocrates' contribution as a pedagogue to Athenian culture in a broader sense. My interest is expressed well by Norman Clark (1996):

Isocrates lived at a time when particular exigencies led him to see the polis as a contingent phenomenon in danger of collapse. He practiced rhetoric in a time when solutions had to be proposed, when he had to offer visions of how his community should be. Isocrates as practitioner of critical rhetoric enriches critical rhetoric with his understanding of service. Service needs to be combined with critique; critics offer to the communities they serve a provisional course of action.....This view of rhetoric is found in the praxis and writings of Isocrates, where he articulated a perspective for rhetors that I call the critical servant,..... a servant who is a duty-bound to strive for the

best of the community (112-118)

In quoting Clark, I am not equating Isocrates with critical rhetoric. Nor am I attempting to define Isocrates as a rhetorician. Rather, I emphasize Isocrates' service to Athenian community. As I already mentioned, Isocrates established a school of rhetoric for young men. By using his speeches, Isocrates lectures on writing, speaking, and Greek culture to the chosen young elites who work for the public. In other words, instead of directly teaching all Athenians, Isocrates produces great potential leaders by teaching them how to educate Athenian citizens. Thus, Isocrates is not only a teacher for young men, but also a critical servant who teaches the great image of Athens to prospective leaders.

Given that Isocrates is a pedagogue for the entire Athenian community, let me then focus on the role of speech/discourse in education for Isocrates. For him, speeches are a display, a display for teaching Athenian people what they should do and should be. According to J. Richard Chase (1961), the role of an oratory of display or an epideictic discourse is to praise or blame a particular topic to reconstitute identity and thus promote nationalism (294-295). For Isocrates, epideictic oratory is a form of his pedagogy to teach an Athenian course of action in a specific context. To put it differently, Isocrates writes speeches in order to educate, train and discipline Athenian people. In a society oriented toward the practice of oratory, Isocrates is a man of ambition and prospects, who promises to discipline Athenians through his writings.

## 2. Isocrates' "Helen"

In one of his famous works "Helen," Isocrates displays and teaches Athenian identity in the form of praise of Helen of Troy. Isocrates' ultimate goal is to critique and reshape Athenian cultural identity. Instead of directly talking about Athenian policy, Isocrates decides to tell a story, which is easy for everyone to understand and at the same time very persuasive. He chooses Helen of Troy from the Greek myth as his central subject of discourse. In his framework, Helen is considered as the best possible topic to describe Athenian society.

The uniqueness of "Helen" is that Isocrates creates two different but inseparable rhetorical moves when he reconstitutes Athenian identity. The first move deals with justification. To present "Helen" as the most persuasive opinion on Athens, Isocrates offers "Helen" as an example of the new Athenian cultural order by creating its authority through the figure of Helen. Greek common grounds including the popularity of Helen's story, her relationship with the Athenian Goddess Athene, and Zeus as divine power of the discourse enable Isocrates to claim "Helen" as a demanding and appropriate discourse in Athens.

Secondly, Isocrates uses Helen as a pretext for praising Athenian nationalism. As I briefly mentioned, Isocrates illuminates the necessity of his discourse. Given this assumption, he next attempts to reconstitute Athenian identity. Instead of critiquing Athenian people, Isocrates changes

the meaning of Helen by describing not her character, but Greek male figures such as Theseus and Heracles. Praising and blaming two Greek men redefines Helen's reputation from the cause of the Trojan War to an honorable Athenian woman. In other words, Helen as Athenian representation is materialized as an effect of Greek males. This argument makes it possible for Isocrates to promote Athenian nationalism through Helen, claiming that Athens brings great prosperity to the Greek world such as democracy and wisdom. I thus argue that Isocrates reconstitutes and promotes Athenian nationalism by and for feminine subject. I call this rhetorical strategy and critique Isocratean feminist rhetoric.

## 2.1 The Structure of "Helen"

I should begin my reading of "Helen" by calling attention to its internal organization. "Helen" is largely divided into four sections: Isocrates' critique to Gorgias and other rhetoricians, Helen's family, her lover and her contribution to Athenian society. First, by describing Gorgias' "The Encomium of Helen," Isocrates attacks Gorgias' use of rhetoric for private concerns. Secondly, Isocrates describes Helen's family as a proof of her honorable origin. Thirdly, he narrates Helen's lover Theseus. When he talks about Theseus, both Helen and Theseus become important characters in this discourse. In Isocrates' reading, Theseus is a founder of democracy while Helen's wisdom and beauty are the reasons of his political success. Isocrates uses the couple as a symbol of Athenian-ness among many other

things. Isocrates also talks about Heracles, who is a brother of Helen. By comparing Theseus, a man of wisdom, with Heracles, a fierce fighter by nature, Isocrates demonstrates who is the best leader for a community. Placing Theseus over Heracles under the condition that wisdom is desired in Athens, Isocrates metaphorically illustrates his ideal image of Greek hegemony Athens over Sparta. Fourthly, Isocrates praises Helen for her contribution to Theseus and Athenian society for being his sexual and political power in the community.

These four sections are not independently separated, but are inherently circular in order to metaphorically reconstitute Athenian identity. This is because Helen displays the very core of Athens by reinterpreting its essential character as authority of the discourse and Helen's subjectivity as the representation. In short, Athenian identity which is always already temporal are performative, materialized only at the moment when authority and subjectivity retroactively create each other. The retroactive moves in discourse show how the feminine subject and Athenian identity appear as effects of each other.

The text opens with a line of opposition between Gorgias and Isocrates, which, without revealing the content of praise of Helen of Troy, situates Isocrates' pedagogical story in the tradition of rhetoric. To quote Isocrates:

For what sensible man [eligible young student] would undertake to praise misfortunes? No, it is obvious that they take refuge in such topics because of weakness. The strongest proof [of rhetoricians'

weakness in ancient Greece] is this: no one who has chosen to praise bumble-bees and salt and kindred topics has ever been at a loss for words. .... This is the reason why, I praise especially him [Gorgias] who chose to write of Helen, because he has recalled to memory so remarkable a woman, one who in birth, and in beauty, and in renown far surpassed all others. Nevertheless, even he committed a slight inadvertence---for although he asserts that he has written an encomium of Helen, it turns out that he has actually spoken a defense of her conduct! But the composition in defense does not draw upon the same topics as the encomium, nor indeed does it deal with actions of the same kind, but quite the contrary; for a plea in defense is appropriate only when the defendant is charged with a crime, whereas we praise those who excel in some good quality. But I may not seem to be taking the easiest course, criticizing others without exhibiting any specimen of my own, I will try to speak of this same woman, disregarding all that any others have said about her. ("Helen," 11-15)

This passage illuminates Isocrates' justification as for his critique of Helen of Troy. In Isocrates' framework, the role of rhetoric is to convey political messages for the Athenian community by using an appropriate topic in an appropriate way. Isocrates praises Gorgias for using Helen in the form of an epideictic discourse because it is one of the best means to educate people, as discussed. However, for Isocrates, Gorgias fails to educate Athenians for two reasons. First, Isocrates points out that Gorgias' version of Helen is embedded in a logic of defense because instead of praising Helen's character and deeds. Gorgias justifies why Helen should not be accused. Secondly, Gorgias mobilizes Helen's social status to defend his own art of rhetoric, a rhetoric which was less acknowledged at the time compared to that of

Aristotle and Plato; *i.e.* Gorgias demonstrates his justification of rhetoric instead of displaying what Athenian people should learn through political writings.<sup>1</sup> In order to prove his philosophy of education through rhetorical discourse, Isocrates decides to praise of Helen to the best interest of all Athenians.

After explaining the reason why he wants and needs to write “Helen,” Isocrates starts his interpretation of Helen of Troy. He describes the origin of Helen as follows:

I will take as the beginning of my discourse the beginning of her [Helen’s] family. For although Zeus begat very many of the demigods, of this woman alone he condescended to be called father. While he was devoted most of all to the to the son of Alcmena and to the sons of Leda, yet his preference for Helen, as compared with Heracles, was so great that, although he conferred upon his son strength of body, which is able to overpower all others by force, yet to her he gave the gift of beauty, which by its nature brings even strength itself into subjection to it. (“Helen,” 16-17)

The lines quickly introduce Helen, Heracles, and the Greek ultimate God Zeus, who are of the same kinship. It informs us that Helen is from the good Greek family of Zeus. This introduction metaphorically reveals that Athens is rooted in these good and powerful beings. The brief narrative also describes the myth of how Zeus distributes gifts to his children. It

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<sup>1</sup> To quote Gorgias: “Man and woman and speech and deed and city and object should be honored with praise if praiseworthy and incur blame if unworthy, for it is an equal error and mistake to blame the praisable and to praise the blamable” (“The Encomium of Helen,” 2).



emphasizes a difference between Helen and Heracles. In Isocrates' reading, Helen is given beauty and wisdom while Heracles receives physical power to rule the polis. This comparison is necessary for Isocrates to justify the encomium to Helen. It also reveals the hegemonic relationship of Sparta to Athens. Isocrates attempts to change the current political situation, which Sparta is a dominant power of Great Greece, while Athens is inevitably placed in an inferior subject position. In Isocrates' reading, Helen embodies the Athenian symbol "wisdom," while Heracles holds physical power that suggests Spartan-ness from an Athenian point of view. The narrative on Helen's family metaphorically raises a political issue Athenian people face in Isocrates' present.

The rest of the speech continues to describe the goodness of Helen and thus change the hegemonic relationship between Theseus and Heracles, reconstituting Athenian identity through Helen. Isocrates refers to her lover, Theseus, as justification of his praise of Helen and as a superior subject position for Athenians. Isocrates states:

I think this will be the strongest assurance for those who wish to praise Helen, if we can show that those who loved and admired her were themselves more deserving of admiration than other men. For contemporary events we should with good reason judge in accordance with our own opinions, but concerning events in times so remote it is fitting that we show our opinion to be in accord with the opinion of those men of wisdom who were at that time living. The fairest praise that I can award to Theseus is this--that he, a contemporary of Heracles, won a fame which rivaled his. ... It came to pass that Heracles undertook perilous labors more celebrated and more severe,

Theseus those more useful, and to the Greeks of more vital importance. ("Helen," 22-24)

Praising Athenian nationalism through Helen, Isocrates first focuses on Theseus, who devotes himself to the Athenian community by using his great wisdom. Isocrates further compares Theseus with Heracles, who attempts to rule the polis by physical power. Isocrates places Theseus, who receives love from Helen, over Heracles, who only has physical force. By praising Theseus, Isocrates also praises Helen, who giving great sexual and political power to a Greek leader. By narrating Theseus as the man of Greece and Helen as the woman of a Greek hero, the hegemonic relationship between Theseus and Heracles becomes clear. In Isocrates' discourse, Helen's beauty and wisdom let Theseus become a good leader. Moreover, he is truly the founder of Athenian democracy in both mythical and historical contexts. Indeed, by renarrating the myth of Helen rather than critiquing Athenian politics, Isocrates metaphorically changes the power dynamics between Theseus and Heracles.

Although Isocrates never claims that "Helen" is an example of a new Athenian citizenship, the new configuration between Theseus and Heracles allows Isocrates to promote Athenian patriotism through Helen. Isocrates concludes that Athenian glory is derived from Helen in every respect. Isocrates writes:

Far more has been passed over than has been said. Apart from the arts and philosophic studies and all the other benefits which one

might attribute to her and to the Trojan War, we should be justified in considering that it is owing to Helen that we are not the slaves of the barbarians. ... If therefore, any orators wish to dilate upon these matters and dwell upon them, they will not be at a loss for material apart from what I have said, wherewith to praise Helen; on the contrary, they will discover many new arguments that relate to her. ("Helen," 67-69)

As I already touched upon, Isocrates does not directly discuss Athenian identity. Instead, he offers Helen as justification of why Athens is worth praising in Greek society. By describing Helen as a woman who gives Theseus sexual and political power to rule Athens, Isocrates praises Helen for her contribution to Athenian greatness. For Isocrates, Helen functions a metaphorical and ideological means to reconstitute Athenian identity. At the same time, Isocrates' discourse provides an evidence of Helen's honor, refuting her bad reputation. The process of reconstituting Athenian identity through Helen is possible because of the mythical narrative including Zeus and Theseus in the entire speech. A mythical version of Greek citizenship and Helen's subjectivity written by Isocrates becomes established as a standard truth, because a citizen is defined as a person determined by the ultimate Greek God and Athenian founding father. In other words, Isocrates changes the meaning of Athens through Helen, and retroactively reconstitutes the representation of Helen as Athenian feminine power. Insofar as these lines recount a familiar situation, and well-known mythical and heroic figures typical in Greek myths, we see that Isocrates situates Helen as the main metaphor/narrative of his critique of Athenian society.

## 2.2 Genealogy of “Helen”

There are several articles on Isocrates’ “Helen” which analyze what is taught in his discourse. In contemporary rhetorical studies, the analysis of “Helen” is first framed by George A. Kennedy (1958). In his article “Isocrates’ *Encomium of Helen*: a Panhellenic Document,” Kennedy’s key insight is to identify “Helen” as an example of the display of Panhellenic activity. According to Kennedy, Isocrates focuses on Theseus, who founds Athenian democracy in both historical and mythical contexts. In order to demonstrate Athenian nationalism, Kennedy argues that Isocrates compares Theseus with a Spartan hero Heracles. In Kennedy’s reading, Isocrates first tells his audience that Theseus’ greatest advantage is that he undertook labors which were useful to mankind, by referring to the myth of “Theseus and the Minotaur.” Then, he describes Heracles as someone who brought no benefit, but only danger to himself by performing his enormous labors. In Kennedy’s view, these two different stories of Greek heroes determine who is the best leader for Greece. Kennedy’s analysis of “Helen” concludes as follows:

In the *Helen*, Theseus is worthy of Helen, whom he took from Lacedaemon [Sparta], just as in the *Panegyricus* Athens is worthy of the hegemony which it should take from Sparta..... Helen was always an ideal of some sort to the Greeks. That she stands here for excellence and the right to the leadership of Greece... That is, Panhellenism was achieved for the first time under the leadership of

the one who possessed Helen. (81)

For Kennedy, what is taught in “Helen” is that Athens is the great polis in Great Greece. Under this condition, Helen is required as an analogy to extend Isocrates’ image of Athens. In Kennedy’s perspective, “Helen” is obliged to introduce an Athenian hero in order to display the great polis, and therefore Helen of Troy is just a trigger to do so.

Referring to Kennedy, Gunther Heilbrunn (1977) examines two different dimensions of “Helen.” In “The Composition of Isocrates’ *Helen*,” Heilbrunn focuses on the structure of the speech. In particular, he examines the consistency of “Helen.” Like Kennedy, Heilbrunn agrees with the fact that only celebratory matters such as Isocrates’ celebration of Theseus qualifies for admission (154). However, unlike Kennedy, Heilbrunn emphasizes Isocrates’ critique of Gorgias, that is he asks, what makes Isocrates touch upon Gorgias’ speech? Heilbrunn’s answer to this question is that Isocrates wants to advertise in “Helen” his school of rhetoric.

According to Heilbrunn, before he narrates the myth of Theseus Isocrates first attacks Gorgias, who has already published “The Encomium of Helen.” In Heilbrunn’s view, Isocrates criticizes Gorgias’ defense of Helen even though Gorgias’ his text is said to be the form of praise. Heilbrunn believes that Isocrates attempts to differentiate himself from other rhetoricians in terms of how to write and use an epideictic discourse. Heilbrunn’s discussion is well described as follows: “this [Isocrates’ discussion of Gorgias] looks to the encomium. Rather, according to Heilbrunn,

Isocrates is presenting his instruction as an exception to the crowd of fraudulent practitioners, in the hope of attracting pupils" (157). In short, Isocrates teaches Athenians that his school of rhetoric is better than any other place in ancient Greece. Therefore, for Heilbrunn, "Helen" is the display of the Isocratean education itself.

Heilbrunn further points out Isocrates' critique of Gorgias in terms of justification:

The substance of this criticism, that Gorgias wrote a defense speech instead of the encomium he claimed to have written has already been mentioned. ... In it Isocrates explains the choice of Helen as his theme and the novelty of his approach. He does not find it necessary to justify the writing of an encomium in terms of utility or for any other reason; the encomium is simply a given. (158)

In Heilbrunn's view, it is not necessary for Isocrates to attack Gorgias in order to praise Athenian nationalism. To be specific, Heilbrunn does not find any exigencies that Isocrates explains why Gorgias performs an epideictic oratory. For Heilbrunn, it seems that "Helen" is simply given (158-159). Therefore, Heilbrunn concludes that Isocrates' critique of Gorgias has no relation to the talk about Athenian greatness.

Nine years after Heilbrunn's attempt to outline the composition of "Helen," John Poulakos (1986) offers a comparative reading of Gorgias and Isocrates in terms of why and how the two rhetoricians mobilize Helen of Troy in epideictic discourse. Unlike Heilbrunn, J. Poulakos does not illuminate the overall structure of "Helen." Instead, he investigates the

necessity of epideictic discourse for Gorgias and Isocrates. In his article "Gorgias' and Isocrates' Use of the Encomium," Poulakos examines that the crucial difference between Gorgias and Isocrates is why and how to describe Helen.

According to J. Poulakos to Gorgias, Helen is a perfect analogy to explain the demand of encomiastic rhetoric and thus calls for change in the bad reputation of Gorgias' rhetoric (304). As J. Poulakos points out, in order to change the current situation of rhetoric, Gorgias describes Helen's unfortunate reputation as the cause of the Trojan War (302), in spite of her lineage and beauty. By elaborating Helen's essential character and deeds, Gorgias attempts to change the meaning of Helen. For J. Poulakos, what Gorgias has done is to explain the reason why Helen shouldn't be accused rather than praising her (303-304). In other words, "The Encomium of Helen" is an indirect apology or defense of Gorgias' rhetoric which changes its subordinated situation by using Helen's well-known status as a victim of inevitable fate.<sup>2</sup>

In J. Poulakos' reading, Isocrates chooses the praise of Helen as his rhetorical discourse, like Gorgias. Unlike Gorgias, Isocrates attempts to

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<sup>2</sup> For further analysis of Gorgias' "Helen," see John Poulakos (1983) and Susan Biesecker (1990). Both J. Poulakos and S. Biesecker argue Gorgias' version of Helen is embedded in the logic of defense. By "defense," they argue that Gorgias plays a role of the counsel for accused in a criminal court. In "The Encomium of Helen," In order to prove that rhetoric is not guilty, Gorgias first calls Helen as his defendant. Next, he pleads for Helen by saying that she is not responsible for her fate determined by God. He neither praises Helen nor blames others in order to perform his oral proceedings. All Gorgias does is to speak Helen's fate and apply it for his rhetoric, that is, Gorgias performs his critique of Helen for his political motive for a defense of rhetoric.

display the great polis of Athens through Helen of Troy. For this purpose, Isocrates focuses on the positive consequences of Helen's actions in relation to praiseworthy Greek figures, rather than simply telling her character and deeds. To quote J. Poulakos:

This way Isocrates bestows praise on her not by opposing her detractors but by comparing her to other praiseworthy figures, i.e., Heracles, Theseus, Hera, Athena. For Isocrates, Helen is praiseworthy not only because she embodies the most desirable traits but also because she embodies them to the highest degree and because on the most important matters she had benefited the Greeks more than any one else. That is why Isocrates' composition exhibits a preference for comparative terms over Gorgias' antithetical vocabulary; accordingly, he combines praise with deliberation whereas his predecessor had combined it with justification. (305)

In J. Poulakos' view, "Helen" is presented to praise Athenian culture as Kennedy analyzes. Unlike Kennedy, J. Poulakos' focus is more on the role of epideictic discourse than what is taught in "Helen." The important point J. Poulakos makes is that "Helen" is an epideictic discourse that provides Athenian people with the idea of Panhellenism by praising Helen's surroundings.

Following J. Poulakos' understanding of epideictic discourse, his brother Takis Poulakos (1989) further analyzes Isocrates' "Helen." In his article "Epideictic Rhetoric as Social Hegemony: Isocrates' Helen," T. Poulakos argues that Isocrates demonstrates two different hegemonic relationships as its example. The first instance of hegemony T. Poulakos



interprets is Gorgias vs. Isocrates in terms of philosophy of education. In T. Poulakos' framework, Isocrates' critique of Gorgias illuminates the line of opposition between democrats and oligarchs (157). Their purpose of using Helen are key to understanding this difference. As I briefly mentioned, Gorgias uses Helen to bolster his art of rhetoric by articulating it with Helen's unfortunate reputation. T. Poulakos describes this type of rhetoric as "propertied oligarchs" (157). This is because "unable to produce discourses that will actually be of 'practical service' to the auditors, they [Gorgias and other rhetoricians] fail to educate themselves and to instruct their pupils in the practical affairs of Athenian Government" (158).

On the other hand, Isocrates produces rhetorical discourse for educating future leaders of Athens, teaching what they should do for their community. According to T. Poulakos, to prove the greatness of Athenian democracy, Isocrates next displays the hegemonic relationship between Theseus of Athens and Heracles of Sparta. As I already discussed, by renarrating the myth of Theseus and Heracles together, Isocrates describes Theseus as the man of wisdom who brings prosperity to the Athenian community while Heracles' physical power causes danger. This comparison enables Isocrates to explain the importance of democracy in the Athenian community by performing his rhetorical critique.

Gerald Mast (1990) further analyzes what Isocrates displays in "Helen" in terms of identity production. In his article "Epideictic Oratory as Identity Production: The Problem of Domination and Submission in Isocrates' *Helen*," Mast argues that "Helen" exhibits the masculine identity of Greek

heroes (93). Before explaining the process of identity production, Mast once again clarifies a role of epideictic discourse. As Mast writes:

Rather than only appealing to values assumed to be already complete in its audience, epideictic oratory was also a social practice which reinscribed and challenged the political orders it participated in and, in so doing, was formative of political and social identities... .. If we see epideictic speech as value-transmitting, the values we find are explicitly praised in the text; if we understand epideictic as identity producing, the identities we discover are implicitly enacted by the text. Values are notions which are prescribed for social behavior while identity are positions taken up in the social realm. (85)

For Mast, epideictic oratory is an ideological reading of culture which displays the political condition of the state in a particular time and place. He suggests that epideictic oratory defines the text as an object that exhibits a culture whose identity is constituted within a specific context. In Mast's view, Isocrates' ideological interpretation of Athenian culture is the context for Greek masculine identity in "Helen." Mast thus focuses on how male figures are reconstituted in discourse.

The discussion of the male gaze is very important for Mast in order to understand the process of masculine identity production. To quote Mast:

On the one hand, Helen, by being described primarily in terms of a possessed beauty determined by men's gaze, becomes reappropriated as an object against which men in a patriarchal system are defined as agents in the significant areas of international politics and colonization. On the other hand, one can also see the agency conferred on the power of Helen's beauty as positioning men in a very

different way than earlier texts about Helen. (89)

What Mast points out is that Helen is necessary for Isocrates to materialize Greek heroes in praise of Athenian nationalism. Helen's figure determined the configuration between Theseus and Heracles based upon their interactions with her. In Mast's view, Helen's beauty and lineage are pretexts for celebrating Athenian culture. Therefore, the articulation of Greek heroes with Helen enables Isocrates to display his ideal image of Athens.

Steve Schwarze (1999) integrates all the discussion of Isocrates' display into that of *phronesis*, in Greek terms, practical wisdom. In his article "Performing *Phronesis*: The Case of Isocrates' *Helen*," Schwarze claims that "Helen" demonstrates *phronesis* on two different levels. The first level is that Isocrates exhibits his own *phronesis* by writing the speech "Helen." As I discussed earlier, Isocrates writes speeches in order to educate, train and discipline Athenian people under a particular condition in discourse. Based upon Clark's discussion of the critical servant, Schwarze argues that "Helen" is a means of transmitting Isocrates' duty or deliberation on the Athenian community to an audience (79). In short, Isocrates writes the speech not for private concerns like Gorgias but for Athenian society, to pursue the civic education as a part of great leadership. For Schwarze, "Helen" is considered as a representation of Isocrates' rhetorical practice to educate Athenian people.

The second level is the content of "Helen." As all the critics point out,

“Helen” displays Athenian nationalism mainly by praising Theseus, through Helen, as an embodiment of practical wisdom and democracy. In Isocrates’ discourse, Theseus becomes a great leader or *phronomos* whose wisdom leads a community in a better direction. Schwarze concludes that this dual way of figuring *phronesis* enables Isocrates to celebrate Athenian culture.

Let me summarize what the critics say about “Helen.” Isocrates, as a pedagogue and a critical servant for Athenian community, writes “Helen” to display Athenian nationalism in the form of praise. Isocrates first articulates Theseus with Helen by saying that Helen is needed by Theseus if he is to conduct his political mission to rule Athens. Next, Helen’s beauty and lineage enable Isocrates to place Theseus over Heracles by demonstrating that Theseus’ wisdom founds democracy in Athens. By praising Theseus’ masculine identity, Isocrates thus celebrates Athenian greatness.

While I agree with all the interpretations of “Helen,” they do not, however, see the process of how Helen is materialized, and thus becomes a persuasive feminine subject in order to celebrate Theseus and Athenian identity in discourse. Their analysis fails to explain how Isocrates reconstitutes Helen’s subjectivity for the sake of displaying Athenian identity. They do not investigate how Isocrates reads Helen herself in displaying Athenian-ness as he names the text “Helen.” In Isocrates’ discourse, the discussion of Helen does not arise as a private concern. Rather, it is a key topic to debate what Athenian culture stands for, and is deemed vital for defining how citizens should act. For Isocrates, the feminine subject is considered as

a way to retroactively reshape a culture and its people. In short, I would like to reconsider Isocrates' work from a feminist perspective. I thus examine the role of Helen and the process of constituting Helen for Isocrates' discourse.

Reflecting my research interests in Isocrates and feminist rhetorical theory, I have chosen Isocrates' "Helen" as the central text of this entire project because this speech interprets the notorious Helen of Troy to serve Isocrates' political and pedagogical purpose. By articulating Helen with his interpretations of Greek mythology, Isocrates rewrites the image of Athens as well as Great Greece. My argument draws on Isocrates' reading of Helen's femininity --- specifically her subjectivity and its rhetorically performative force--- because the text demonstrates not only Helen as a blessing to a Greek hero, but also that a shift in the way Athens is represented in discourse has indeed taken place. Therefore, I will attempt to explore Isocrates' rhetorical constitution of Helen's subjectivity as the possibility and the process of educating/disciplining Athenians.

In order to reconsider Isocrates' "Helen" from a feminist perspective, the following three chapters mainly analyze Isocrates' rhetorical strategy to display his interpretation of Helen for Athenian identity. In Chapter 1, I explain "Helen" as a textual example to understand the idea of feminist rhetoric in contemporary rhetorical studies. I first describe the development of its theory and then articulate with Isocrates. Chapter 2 investigates the authority of "Helen" by referring to Jacques Derrida's idea of law. I illuminate how "Helen" persuades its audience to accept Isocrates' rhetorical

reading of Athenian culture. By examining the choice of Helen, I explain the way Isocrates justifies his argument. In Chapter 3, I analyze how the meaning of Helen is reshaped according to Greek male figures by referring to Judith Butler' performativity theory. I argue that Helen is a performative feminine subject, which always already appears as an effect of her surroundings.

## Chapter 1: The Isocratean Critique of the “Nation”

This chapter attempts to read the role of the feminine subject in Isocrates’ “Helen” as an example of feminist rhetoric by referring to the works of Barbara Biesecker (1992a, 1992b). The idea of feminist rhetoric shows not only the significance of Isocrates’ rhetoric in contemporary rhetorical studies but also reveals that feminist rhetoric is a form of social critique to reconstitute identity in discourse.

Before articulating Isocrates’ “Helen” with Biesecker, a general orientation to feminist rhetoric will prove useful to facilitate the discussion. I explain why we can/should analyze “Helen” based upon Biesecker’s contribution, not other essentialist critics, in order to understand the importance of Isocrates’ rhetoric. I argue that Isocrates displays Athenian identity by reshaping the feminine subject to educate his audience. In the same manner, Biesecker’s idea of feminist rhetoric is used to read the feminine subject for purposes of a social critique, and not for women’s emancipation and social status like the early feminist rhetoricians.

In contemporary feminist rhetorical theory, Biesecker points to the use of the feminine subject to change the discursive structure of a discourse. Biesecker provides a framework for conceptualizing the rhetorical foundations that underpin the relationship between rhetoric and a feminist perspective. Her understanding of feminist rhetoric is that rhetorical power

in discourse creates social conditions, identity, and cultural orders. Unlike the essentialist's effort to justify a "woman's" rhetoric, Biesecker emphasizes the inside of discourse itself, in short, how a rhetorical critique materializes social conditions and accordingly constitutes cultural order by and for the feminine subject. Her analysis thus shows that interpreting the feminine subject is one of the possible forms of critique for reshaping identity in discourse. Therefore, I attempt to illuminate Isocrates' "Helen" as a textual example of feminist rhetoric to help us understand the possibility and limits of his rhetorical practice in contemporary rhetorical studies.

## 1. Introduction to Feminist Rhetorical Theory

Feminist rhetoric has been one of the critical issues in rhetorical studies since the early 1970's. Besides the speech tradition, whose primary objective is to persuade an orator's audience, the political goal feminist rhetorical critics have set is to make "social change" through a feminine subject. By saying "social change," there are two different approaches referred to, or constituted by the essentialist<sup>3</sup> and post-modern views.<sup>4</sup> The crucial difference between the two approaches is the role of the feminine subject for scholars: there is the feminine subject as scholars' academic desire

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<sup>3</sup> For the essentialist view, I mainly examine Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's Man Cannot Speak For Her (1989) and "Biesecker Cannot Speak For Her Either" (1993), Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin's "Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for an Invitational Rhetoric" (1995).

<sup>4</sup>As for the post-modern approach, see Barbara Biesecker's three articles ("Coming to Terms," "Foucault and Rhetoric," and "Towards a Transactional View") all published in 1992.



to become a part of male rhetorical theory, or the feminine subject in discourse as a means to display identity to educate an audience.

The first approach to feminist rhetoric is an essentialist view of women.<sup>5</sup> This theoretical idea is originally derived from the feminist social movement, which fights the existing male-centered society. In the context of feminist rhetoric, “society” for the essentialist means the field of rhetorical studies. For the essentialist critics, academia is historically regarded as the epitome of patriarchal society, which focuses only on male communicators as the agents of social change. As a response to this male-dominated view, essentialist feminist rhetoric has two objectives including a discovery of women’s rhetorical practices,<sup>6</sup> and an invention of a new form of rhetoric through feminine influences. Therefore, throughout their works, feminist rhetoricians propose that rhetoricians should be aware of the feminine subject as a part of its theories.

One of the first rhetorical critics of woman’s rhetoric is Karlyn Kohrs Campbell. When she examines woman’s rhetorical discourses, Campbell particularly focuses on great women speakers. In her book Man Cannot Speak For Her (1989), Campbell reviews the traditional male-centered history of rhetoric as the problematic of its historical subject. For Campbell, the current history of rhetoric only reflects communication by men, so that

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<sup>5</sup> For overviews of essentialist feminist perspectives on research in rhetoric, see: Altman (1987), Dervin (1987), Foss, Foss, and Griffin (1999), Foss, Foss, and Trapp (1991), Lunsford (1995), Spitzack and Carter (1987), and Steeves (1987).

<sup>6</sup> Traditionally, rhetoric has two mainstreams including speech communication and English composition. The discovery of women’s rhetoric has been placed in the speech genre or female writings. See Campbell’s analysis (1989) on women’s great

“women have no parallel rhetoric history” (1).

With this assumption, her studies focus on great women speakers of the early woman’s rights movement that occurred in the U. S. in the 1830’s. For example, in the case of Elizabeth Stanton who was a leader of the movement, Campbell demonstrates Stanton’s rhetorical strategy of using lyrics with women’s subordinated conditions at the time (304). By extending her argument as a representative of women’s voices, Campbell concludes as follows: “Man cannot take responsibility for women. Men can take responsibility only for themselves, and of course, women are the only ones who can be responsible for themselves” (312). Campbell’s analysis of women’s rhetoric demands that female rhetorical practices should be a part of society and rhetorical theory. In so doing, rhetorical studies could open their door to everyone who participates in communication activities.

For Campbell, equality is very important in discussions of feminist rhetoric. As the early feminist movement called for equal opportunity in society, Campbell looks for a right to reflect women’s voices in the rhetorical tradition. By introducing women into the tradition of rhetoric, Campbell believes in the possibility/reality of change in terms of the social/academic status of women. Therefore, Campbell’s analysis of women’s speech asks traditional rhetoric to include a female perspective.

Following Campbell, Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin (1995) have attempted to develop a theoretical framework of feminist rhetoric as a tool to produce different concepts of rhetoric in its own tradition. Unlike Campbell,

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speech, and Ratcliffe (1996) for the history of women’s writings.

they do not necessarily examine women's speech. Rather, Foss and Griffin try to theorize a new form of rhetoric by offering a feminist perspective in order to dislocate their academic space within the male-centered-persuasion area.

What is significant about Foss and Griffin is that they are more aggressive in their attempts to make a bigger change in the rhetorical tradition. This is because Campbell's works are still biased by male-centered rhetoric: *i.e.* what she follows as the general rule is analyzing orators' rhetoric as textual examples using the traditional theory. Therefore, Foss and Griffin open a new gateway to rhetoric through a feminist perspective: rhetoric is "to understand how people construct the worlds in which they live and how those worlds make sense to them" (Foss, Foss and Griffin, 1999:7).

As the realization of this orientation, Foss and Griffin introduce an "invitational rhetoric" as their example of feminist rhetoric. Invitational rhetoric, is "an invitation to understanding as a means to create relationship rooted in equality, immanent value, and self-determination" (Foss and Griffin, 1995:5). Unlike rhetoric as an argumentation practice that focuses on persuasion, Foss and Griffin consider rhetoric as a process to promote mutual interaction. This is because they believe that persuasion is exclusively based upon a male majority and thus eliminates the oppressed such as women, aboriginal people and visible minorities (3). For Foss and Griffin, the feminine subject is a way to create and accordingly demonstrate women's mode of rhetoric. Instead of directly attacking male rhetoric, they have

decided to be outside of the tradition and start making their own safe place. To put it differently, their discourse is a manifestation of their femaleness as scholars of rhetoric.

Foss and Griffin intend to present invitational rhetoric as a counterpart to male-oriented persuasion and then as suggestion to change the current situation of female rhetorical practices. This effort enables them to connect women and rhetoric, and thus makes it useful to understand “the world” in their book Feminist Rhetorical Theories (1999). By saying “the world,” Foss and Griffin focus not only on rhetorical studies, but also on our society in general. Their new mode of rhetoric tends to be consciously/unconsciously outside of rhetorical tradition and makes the complicated world visible to a (female) audience. Therefore, their theoretical contribution once again returns to that of a feminist social movement, of making a difference in a society.

In their article “Disciplining the Feminine,” Carole Blair, Julie Brown and Leslie Baxter (1994), whose theoretical orientation is based upon Michel Foucault’s genealogy,<sup>7</sup> critically read the process of theorizing feminist rhetoric. Their critique of feminine discipline problematizes the assumptions of women’s rhetoric.

As I have already discussed, the essentialist approach to feminist rhetoric has assumed that there are various existing theories of rhetoric,

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<sup>7</sup> Foucault’s idea of genealogy examines the development of discourse, which focuses not on continuity or linear progression but on the localized, relational and discontinuous point of discourse. In short, Foucault analyzes a condition of possibility for creating knowledge in discourse. See Language, Counter-Memory.

understood through their multiple categories. For this reason, Campbell as well as Foss and Griffin try to include woman's category as an equal and new area. However, Blair, Brown and Baxter argue that feminist rhetoric emerges as an ideological transformation of female "original" communication against masculinity (cf. Blair, Brown and Baxter, 1994:384-397). From their view, a canon of feminist rhetoric indeed embodies a unique set of institutional values, yet at the same time, it must be derived from the particularities of a social/historical/theoretical period and circumstances. Today's feminist rhetoric, Blair, Brown and Baxter might state, is based upon the conditions set by essentialist feminist rhetoricians.

In the case of feminist rhetoric, Campbell, Foss and Griffin look for reasons within the traditional forms of inquiry to justify why women or feminist rhetoricians are not a part of the rhetorical tradition. The invention of a women's own rhetoric does make a change. However, they ideologically select the necessary arguments that are relevant to their development of feminist rhetoric. That causes them to reproduce/maintain the antagonistic relationship between men and women. Their essentialists' view neglects their own rhetoric of feminist reading, which is also an object of critique. Therefore, analyzing the condition of women outside of discourse makes it difficult to understand how Isocrates' rhetoric creates the feminine subject, while at the same time the feminine subject creates a new idea of rhetoric.

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Practice (1977) for further discussion.

## 2. Biesecker and “Helen”

The second approach to the theory of feminist rhetoric, I should rather call it a “transition” from the essentialist view to the postmodern trend, is extended by Barbara Biesecker. My interest focuses exclusively on Biesecker because she is the only rhetorician so far who has analyzed feminist rhetoric by combining rhetorical theory with post-structuralism, feminist theory, and other rhetorical disciplines.<sup>8</sup>

In theorizing feminist rhetoric as a form of social critique, Biesecker first examines its discursive structure. In her article “Coming to Terms with Recent Attempts to Write Women into the History of Rhetoric” (1992a), Biesecker’s focus is on the structure the feminine subject in discourse. To put it in her original question, she asks: “what play of forces made it possible for a particular speaking subject to emerge?” (149). When Biesecker says “structure,” she is not searching for the essential and ultimate formation of discourse. Rather, she looks at the structure that deconstructs the conditions of audience through the feminine subject in discourse. From her standpoint, the feminine subject translates political motive into another type of story. To put it differently, the feminine subject is a mediation that illuminates the current condition and thus produces new plot for better future.

To change the social condition of Athens in “Helen,” Isocrates calls on

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<sup>8</sup> As I have already discussed, Blair, Brown and Baxter analyze the discourse of feminist rhetoric from historical/genealogical perspective. However, they do not extend their study as a part of feminist rhetoric.

Helen as Athenian representation. He then interprets Helen's life by mainly focusing on her interactions with Greek Gods and heroes. This articulation of Helen enables Isocrates to change the meaning of Athens according to a renown Helen receives due to effects of Greek masculine power. What Isocrates has accomplished in "Helen" is to provide a discursive limit whereby an Athenian course of action is always already determined by Helen and her surroundings. In other words, "Helen" becomes an example of cultural order for the Athenian people. In redescribing the definition of the Athenian polis, Isocrates is capable of reversing the situation that Athens who has lost her old prosperity and greatness in the Greek world, and thus has been dominated by Sparta.

Following the analyses of discursive structure, Biesecker next explains the invisible power of the feminine subject. When she says "invisible power," it does not mean stable enforcement. Instead, Biesecker suggests the way in which discourse determines a course of action through the feminine subject. In other words, the feminine subject is "a force or structure of breaching in practice that establishes a cleft or fissure out of which an unforeseen and undersigned transgression may ensue" (155). Within Biesecker's framework, it is arbitrary to choose the feminine subject as a rhetorical tool for social critique. However, in order to provide the feminine subject as an authority of discourse, the discourse should be interpreted and thus change its structure and social condition according to the feminine subject. In short, the feminine subject is a moment in which discourse reconstitutes a culture by creating the most persuasive

interpretation. For Biesecker, the feminine subject is not the way to introduce women's existence, as traditional feminist rhetoricians have done. Rather, it is a rhetorical tool/practice to constitute the condition of society.

In "Helen," Isocrates picks up Helen from the Greek myth as the context of his critique of Athens. Isocrates metaphorically reconstitutes Athenian identity according to the story of Helen. The portrait and story of citizen-myth now permeate Athenian culture, displaying Helen as its embodiment. Articulating Athens with Helen produces a new idea of the Athenian people, so that Athens holds a superior position over Sparta. This type of citizenship is so startling and so moving because of its revelations about national power based upon common cultural background, such as the myth of Helen, that no one can deny. By using Helen, discourse retroactively creates its own enforcement. Isocrates' feminist rhetoric thus creates the condition of an Athenian audience through Helen. Reorganizing discourse through invisible feminine power leads to a particular discourse empowers and thus becomes persuasive to an audience.

By extending the invisible power of the feminine subject Biesecker further critiques the illocutionary force of discourse, separating herself from the essentialists' effort to justify women's own rhetoric as counterpart to the male tradition. She discusses the relationship between subject and discourse by referring to Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. Biesecker writes:

Thus, subjectivity in the general sense is to be deciphered as an



historical articulation, and particular real-lived identities are to be deciphered as constituted and reconstituted in and by an infinitely pluralized weave of interanimating discourses and events. ... Where Derrida would speak of the ever-shifting limits that persistently thwart our desire to make the subject cohere in any final sense, Foucault would chart the localized rules and mechanisms of disciplinary power that insure the production and reproduction of differentially situated subjects in a nonstatic but hierarchically organized space. (1992a: 148-150)

The implication Biesecker explains above is that the feminine subject appears in the process of interpreting a power formation in discourse. As I already discussed, the feminine subject is key to critiquing and redefining a culture. However, it does not necessarily mean that feminine subjects essentially exist. Instead, Biesecker claims that a feminine subject is a performative subject, a subject whose meaning is determined according to the context.

In the case of "Helen," Isocrates does not present Helen as an essential being. Rather, he creates her subjectivity for the sake of his discourse by reinterpreting Greek myth. To be specific, Isocrates reconstitutes Helen as a projection of new Athenian society, *i.e.* Athenian identity as superior over Spartan. In order to materialize and thus map the trajectory of a new Athenian nation, Isocrates calls up three Greek male figures including Zeus, Heracles and Theseus. In order to make his reading persuasive, Isocrates first describes Zeus's gift distribution, or rather oracle, that those who love Helen receive the highest praise in Athenian society. Isocrates next renarrates the story of Theseus for a justification of Helen's

existence, and then moves on to Heracles, who is always already inferior to Theseus in Isocrates' version of Greek myth.

This interpretation is coherent with Isocrates' discourse because Theseus is surely the father of Athenian democracy and Zeus is ultimate Greek God. In short, Isocrates redefines the cultural meaning of Helen by articulating her with his version of Greek myth. For Isocrates, Helen is not only a well-known mythical character for Athenians but also a feminine subject, a necessary political subject to deconstruct the understanding of Athenian culture. Within this retroactive process, discourse provides the significance of "Helen" not only for discourse as cultural law but also for Helen's subjectivity as Athenian representation.

### 3. "Helen" and Feminist Rhetoric

Given the cultural law and Helen's subjectivity as a discursive formation, I can now suggest a reason why Isocrates would retell a famous myth. As I have already indicated, a discursive formation in "Helen" creates not only the new definition of Athens but also recreates Helen. This means that a feminist critique from the outside of a given discursive formation is impossible. Unlike other rhetorical critics of "Helen," I have tried to stress the feminine subject, its role of metaphorically supporting the critique of Athens, and its process of subjectivization for Athenian representation.

These observations have led me to read that the text subverts the moral codes of the myth even as it works from within that tradition. To put

it another way; “Helen” challenges what is an appropriate code of action by introducing Helen and her surroundings from the myth. However, Isocrates does not necessarily force Athenian people to look back to their past. Rather, his critique shows them, through the myth of Helen, the future image of their nation based upon what they have done. In other words, Helen is mobilized to describe a script or cultural order where Athenian people play a main part just as Helen performs as a heroine in Isocrates’ discourse. Read in this way, “Helen” must be understood as a challenge and critique to the orthodoxy of the past rather than as a reaffirmation of traditional mythical values. Instead, Isocrates creates a moment of repetition by circularly connecting the feminine subject with the authority of discourse, in order to reshape Athenian identity. In this sense, Isocratean feminist rhetoric is oriented toward the future.

## Chapter 2: “Helen” as Athenian Cultural Law

By situating Isocrates’ “Helen” in contemporary feminist rhetorical theories, I have briefly explained that the speech plays an important role in reshaping the meanings of Athenian identity and Helen of Troy. This chapter examines why and how Isocrates chooses “Helen” in order to display “Helen” for pedagogical purpose. I will analyze this by referring to Jacques Derrida (1992). He is one of Biesecker’s theoretical assumptions that the feminine subject appears in the process of creating a power in discourse. I would like to extend my analysis of the structure of Isocratean feminist rhetoric within the Derridian idea of law.

In this chapter, I focus on how Isocrates’ “Helen” could only make sense within his conceptualization of a “just right” topic by virtue of Athenian identity constitution. As I already mentioned in Chapter 1, Isocrates constitutes Athenian identity through the well-known story of Helen. Isocrates creates Athenian ontological being based upon his version of Helen’s myth, thus making “Helen” the plot describing his understanding of a new Athenian people. In other words, for Isocrates, the plot grounds itself through an always already ideological selection of common cultural elements such as Greek myth. In particular, Isocrates focuses on the following three things in order to display Athenian identity through Helen: the popularity of Helen’s mythical story in the field of literature and rhetoric, her relationship with Athenian goddess Athena, and Zeus as divine power of the discourse.

Common-ness is a key for Isocrates' choice of Helen as his central subject and provides enforcement for his discourse. Thus, that Isocrates uses this common ground as justification and authority for his rhetorical discourse on Helen or new Athenian cultural order, retroactive constitution of the Athenian people and Helen.

This discussion is very important in my understanding of Isocrates' "Helen" because the enforceability or applicability of the speech is constituted in discourse. In "Helen," Isocrates focuses on the ontological question of "Helen" in order to change the discursive formation of Athens: if Helen is unknowable beforehand, how is what is not *there* for us signified as cultural order, authority and representation? To put it in Derrida's phrase from "Force of Law," "What does it mean to establish the truth of justice?" (12). Justice for Isocrates is to present Helen as the most appropriate or a "just right" topic to reconstitute Athenian identity. From this standpoint, Isocratean feminist rhetoric challenges the very notion of possibility that reconstitutes Athenian identity through the feminine subject and accordingly, "Helen" empowers as cultural law. In order to achieve this goal, the possibility of justice opens up in Isocrates' rhetoric to offer Helen as Athenian topic/representation.

As I have explained in Introduction, "Helen" is divided into four sections in its reconstitution of Athenian identity. Instead of directly describing Athenian culture, Isocrates first narrates his critique of Gorgias in order to explain why Isocrates needs to write "Helen." Secondly, he tells the story of birth of Helen, which helps clarify what Zeus and Heracles had to do

with her. Thirdly, Isocrates illuminates her lover and the founder of Athenian democracy, Theseus, and thus presents Helen as an honorable woman. Fourthly, Isocrates claims that Helen is an important example of Athenian greatness since she gives her sexual and political power to Theseus. This interpretation of Athens through Helen becomes justification and law for an Athenian future, where the naturally good polis of Athens holds a superior position over Sparta.

By articulating Athens with his version of the story of Helen, Isocrates creates this new form of the polis as an effect. This retroactive transformation is possible because the myth is already considered as one of the ultimate forces for the Greeks (Beck, 272). In short, Isocrates chooses the myth of Helen not only because Helen is the best possible analogy for Athenian identity but also because the myth already plays an important role of conveying a powerful message. This agreement in the ancient Greek world gives Isocrates' "Helen" the authority to determine what people should talk about and perform in a community, if the community is not essentially the thing based upon her subjectivity. In this framework, Athenian identity and Helen are always already circular and culturally coherent due to the common grounds Isocrates selects. The Derridian idea of law calls this type of justification "the mystical foundation of authority" (Derrida, 11).

When he attempts to create "mystical authority" in order to situate "Helen" as cultural law, Isocrates does not look for ultimate power from the beginning of his speech. Instead, he posits Helen as the most appropriate Athenian topic/representation in a discourse that determines norms of

conduct and then hails its audience at a specific moment and place. For Isocrates, law does not naturally exist as it is. Rather, it “becomes law” when an audience finds the appropriate topic/representation that symbolizes their culture. In the case of “Helen,” to metaphorically reshape Athenian citizenship, Isocrates mobilizes Helen of Troy as the topic and representation of Athens. Under this circumstance, Isocrates changes the significance of Helen by articulating Greek Gods and heroes. Using the Greek myth and its authority enables “Helen” to become the ultimate cultural script which Athenians use to determine their course of action. In this respect, Isocrates suggests that law requires cultural representation to become law, while at the same time, representation calls for law as the context of its own justification.

An analysis of authority in “Helen” allows us to understand that Isocrates’ use of Helen sets up the discursive condition of Athenians for the purpose of creating Athenian cultural law and citizenship. The condition, in this case the myth of Helen, which metaphorically narrates Athenian politics, determines stories and characters that are suitable in a community. From a different angle, Isocrates makes “Helen” the most appropriate Athenian story by referring to Greek myth. When an audience accepts “Helen” as a part of the mystical story and acts according to the constituted rules, “Helen” becomes cultural order for people in that community. In short, Isocrates believes that Athenian people are constituted as the effects of discourse. Therefore, to reshape Athenian identity, Isocrates deconstructs Helen and her surroundings as the metaphor for Athenian culture by reinterpreting

Greek myth.

To understand the enforceability of “Helen,” I will examine the conditions of materializing Athenian identity and Helen, by focusing on Isocrates’ conceptualization of “Helen” as Athenian cultural law. Most notably I rethink the relationship between Helen and Athenian identity based upon Isocrates’ version of myth; what Derrida refers to as mystical foundation of authority. I argue that interpreting Helen within the context of Greek myth enables Isocrates to provide “Helen” as the Athenian dramatic arena, which always already determines how to act in a community.

### 1. Common Grounds in “Helen”

For understanding how the authority of “Helen” is produced, I will read Isocrates and Derrida together, suggesting that the discourse empowers as an effect of the feminine subject. My attention goes to why “Helen” is accepted as Athenian political myth among Isocrates’ audience. I argue that this is because Isocrates contextualizes his story within Athenian common backgrounds, including the popularity of Helen’s mythical story in the field of literature and rhetoric, her relationship with Athenian Goddess Athena, and Zeus as divine power of the discourse. Contextualization becomes important for Isocrates to enable him to reconstitute Athenian identity through Helen, who is known as merely a mythical character. I attempt to illuminate the tension between Helen and the context that retroactively constitute each other.



As I briefly discussed in Chapter 1, Isocrates chooses Helen of Troy as a rhetorical tool and a source of power that determines a course of action in discourse. Based upon shared cultural narrations of the Greek myth, Isocrates first describes Helen as the most appropriate character for his political story and thus justifies the enforcement of “Helen” for the purpose of representing Athenian identity. What Isocrates has done in “Helen” is, to use the Derridian term, to create the enforceability or applicability of a discourse as a “mystical foundation of authority” (11) to reconstitute Athenian identity through the character of Helen. When Isocrates produces a “mystical foundation of authority,” he does not look for repressive power to determine the social status of women. Instead, he focuses on how the feminine subject determines norms of conduct and then hails its audience in his rhetorical discourse. I will explain the Isocratean process of creating mystical authority through Helen by referring to Derrida. First, I will briefly summarize the Derridan idea of law as an interpretative framework for “Helen.”

In the Derridian framework, law is considered not as naturally-existing order, but as a rhetorically-constituted topological boundary which creates the representation of an audience. This boundary determines an audience’s actions based upon the script a discourse offers. By “law as boundary” (19), Derrida does not mean the permanent space of power. Rather, he refers to a margin of applicability that is always changeable or deconstructible according to the contexts. To quote Derrida:

The structure I am describing here is a structure in which law (*droit*) is essentially deconstructible, whether it is founded, constructed or interpretable and transformable textual strata... It is this deconstructible structure of law (*droit*), or if you prefer of justice as *droit*, that also insures the possibility of deconstruction. Justice in itself, if such a thing exists, outside or beyond law, is not deconstructible. No more than deconstruction itself, if such a thing exists. Deconstruction is justice. (14-15)

For Derrida, law is not a stable act of commitment strictly decided by established authority. Rather, it consists of various interpretations of its content, that is, law could be read in many ways according to the interpretations we choose. However, Derrida does not mean that any interpretation is acceptable for maintaining the force of law. Rather, as a part of performative force, which is “always the power of interpretation,” (13) law is represented as representation.

In the case of “Helen,” Helen is represented as Athenian people. To metaphorically reconstitute Athenian identity, Isocrates first calls upon Helen as his main rhetorical character who plays a role of embodying Athenian beauty and wisdom. He next describes her relationship with a Greek hero, Theseus. By praising Theseus as the founder of Athenian democracy, Isocrates claims that Helen gives Theseus her sexual and political power. Isocrates thus concludes that Helen is an honorable woman in Athens. This articulation reshapes the meaning of Helen and then accordingly the meaning of Athens. The speech provides with Athenian people a new vision of their nation based upon the story of Helen.

The Derridian idea of law further argues that representation is mystical in so far as it does not *a priori* exist, but is always already “just right” for a specific discourse (4). When Derrida examines “just right,” this concept tries to capture *topoi*, in Greek term topic, or “the idea adopted by necessity of repetition” (38-39), which determines how the discourse is to be read in a particular culture. Derrida writes:

*First remark:* On the one hand, for fundamental reasons, it seems just to us to “*rendre la justice*,” as one says in French, in a given idiom, in a language in which all the “subjects” concerned are supposedly competent, that is, capable of understanding and interpreting—all the “subjects,” that is, those who establish the laws, those who judge and those who are judged, witnesses in both the broad and narrow sense, all those who are guarantors of the exercise of justice, or rather of *droit*. (17-18)

In Derrida’s view, *topoi* is considered as what should/should not be talked about based upon the existing trend in a community.<sup>9</sup> The consequence of deciding *topoi* is that it provides representations that can illuminate the condition of existence for culture. This condition becomes the dominant interpretation of social actions when people admit and thus identify with it. Identification with representation is inseparable from the projection of culture, in Derrida’s sense *topoi*. To literally give it a name as law in that

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<sup>9</sup> In his article “The Die is Cast: Topical and Ontological Dimensions of The *Locus* of the Irreparable”(1982), Robert J. Cox describes *topoi* as *loci communes*, which functions as “the constitutive principles of our discourse” (228). For him, as well as for Derrida, *topoi* is the foundation for our interpretation of values in situated moments of action. Therefore, deciding *topoi* is necessary for constituting a dominant interpretation of culture.

sense, retroactively guarantees that representation is appropriate for one's culture. As long as this process of making an appropriate story by and for discourse and political motive is concerned, Derrida sees identity constitution as an effect of discourse. Simply put, reshaping an audience begins with the making dominant, but appropriate representation of, culture based upon its discursive limit, *topoi*.<sup>10</sup>

In "Helen," Isocrates redescibes three common grounds for creating "just right" law for Athenian society: the popularity of Helen's mythical story in the field of literature and rhetoric, her relationship with Athenian Goddess Athena, and Zeus as divine power of the discourse. These three conditions

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<sup>10</sup> In order to explicate the necessity of common ground, Derrida creates an actual example of his theory by choosing an appropriate topic for his discussion. At the beginning of "Force of Law," which originally a special lecture on "Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice" in the U. S., Derrida describes common ground as follows: "*C'est ici un devoir, je dois m'adresser à vous en anglais.* This is an obligation, I must *address* myself to you in English" (3). By "obligation," Derrida does not necessarily mean that he is asked to deliver his lecture in English. Rather, he indicates that he *chooses* to speak English as a common ground and topic for explaining the relationship between representation and identity constitution. As I mentioned, the Derridian idea of law requires representation, which shapes the conditions of action in a specific context based upon common ground. For this goal to be met, it is necessary to constitute a representation that people easily recognize. In the case of the lecture, for Derrida, as well as for his audience, their relationship is merely an academic connection, which shares the theoretical ideas of law. However, once Derrida plays the role of French theorist who must use English for the sake of his own theory, his presence becomes the representation of audience. In other words, the fact that Derrida speaks English is retroactively encoded in the context as a rule. In so doing, the underlying agreement between Derrida and his audience is determined. It is possible only at the moment he creates himself as the representation of audience at the lecture. The representation enforces our course of action for it precisely as it enforces its essence. For Derrida, using representation as an obligation is like the act of making the context where he plays a central character and at the same time his audience performs the ideal audience by following Derrida's representation. The representation thus expresses for Derrida the condition in which his audience becomes "audience" according to one's political motive.

underscore the fact that Isocrates creates “Helen” as its own cultural order, and thus reshapes Athenian identity by and for the feminine subject. Applying his political motive to common grounds gives Isocrates proof for his critique of Athenian society. Hence, my initial interest is about the key reason why and how Isocrates uses the story of Helen as a mediation and authority for reconstituting Athenian identity.

Before focusing on three common grounds, let me explain a role of Greek myth for Isocrates in ancient Greek culture. Isocrates uses this famous Greek myth as a pedagogical medium, to recreate Athenian society based upon its *topoi*. For Isocrates, it is the myth that allows us to reconfirm the social status of Athens in the Greek world through Helen’s story, since the myth is rooted in a community and is thus widely acknowledged. Isocrates considers the Greek myth as the way of founding the authority to justify a representation of Helen as determinative of all Athenian conditions of existence.

In her article “Rhetoric between Orality and Literacy: Cultural Memory and Performance in Isocrates and Aristotle,” Ekaterina V. Haskins (2001) interprets Isocrates’ use of myth as a tool that transforms one’s values for better persuasion. Haskins writes:

As the story [of Greek myth] goes, the world of Greek gods--personified arbitrary forces of nature--gives way to abstract habits of thinking, thus allowing an individual to make judgments about causes and effect without the crutches of myth. ...Archaic Greek culture did not distinguish between the mythical and the real in a religious ritual, prophetic utterance, or poetic performance.

Indeed, the value of these types of speech stemmed from their claim to truthfulness. (14)

Her focus draws the role of Greek myth as the ultimate order for the Greek people. Haskins' reading of Isocrates shows us that the myth exists not simply to display human nature and deeds, but more importantly, to teach people what they should/should not do in their real lives. She also makes the point that in an oratorical culture like that of ancient Greece, myth, epic and religious poetry are considered as chief vehicles for teaching cultural beliefs and norms of conduct because those texts are easy to understand and remember, even though they are not written (15). In other words, mythical story reshapes their cultural beliefs. Thus, there is the power of deconstruction in the very idea of Isocrates using Greek myth to change a political message into a culturally well-known story.

To reconstitute Athenian nationalism, Isocrates chooses the story of Helen his rhetorical authority, based upon three common grounds. First common ground is the popularity of Helen's mythical story in his age. According to Mihoko Suzuki's Metamorphoses of Helen: Authority, Difference, and the Epic (1989), Helen is one of the famous Greek mythical characters repeatedly narrated in the field of literature and rhetoric (1-17). Here are some examples: Gorgias' "Encomium of Helen," Homer's The Iliad and The Odyssey, and Euripides' Trojan Women. By using a famous story, Isocrates believes that his audience understands the story of new Athenian politics easily.

The second common ground Isocrates chooses is Helen's family tree. Isocrates selects Helen because the feminine subject deserves the highest respect from their Goddess of wisdom, Athena, who is Helen's half sister of the same father, Zeus. By reinterpreting Helen, Isocrates is able to use Athena and Zeus as the justification of Isocrates' choice in the Athenian context. However, one crucial question remains unaddressed: Why does Isocrates not directly interpret Athena, then? A simple answer to this question would be, I believe, that Athens is a virgin goddess. In order to make Helen the most appropriate and persuasive representation of Athenian identity, Isocrates creates the moment of repetition and circulation of the story by redescribing Greek male figures. In short, Isocrates attempts to reconstitute Athenian identity through Helen by rearranging the entire context of Helen's life. Isocrates' performative identification of Athenian cultural identity inscribes its authority through the retroactive effects of discourse. Isocrates reconstitutes Helen's feminine subjectivity by renarrating the Greek heroes surrounding her. In other words, Athena cannot be transformed within the Isocratean feminist rhetoric of male-female interactions. Therefore, Helen is a perfect subject to represent an Athenian identity based upon all the cultural elements in Athens.

But what makes this the only position by which Helen can gain respect? The answer is: her love to Theseus, who is a hero in Athenian society. By returning everything to the field of the Greek myth, Isocrates reinterprets Helen's social status from a notorious woman of Troy to a woman who gives sexual and political powers to a Greek hero. The deconstruction

of Athens in Isocrates' sense cannot be separated from this cultural representation of Helen. This representation is always already underway, as soon as it is situated in its cultural background. Thus, there cannot be an adequate pictorial representation of a "before" of this representation of what Athens is, because what "is" is already, always represented. The idea of representation retroactively creates the authority for Isocrates' discourse through Helen. In so doing, Isocrates is able to illuminate in his speech the most powerful and persuasive reading of Helen.

For Isocrates, the question of representation is associated with the question of how to address authority to Athenians, an authority which is always already appropriate for the culture. Not only is the story of Helen and Theseus widely known among Athenians, but it also uses an order, an order that its value and truthfulness are determined by a Greek God. The constituted order guarantees Isocratean feminist rhetoric as a repetition and circularity of Athenian culture for the deconstruction of Athens.

The third common ground Isocrates calls upon is Zeus. His presence allows Isocrates to redefine Athenian society by articulating it with Helen. Derrida refers to this type of rhetoric as "divine violence" (Derrida, 30). In "Helen," Isocrates specifically picks Helen of Troy as his topic from many other myths. Isocrates makes her story the most appropriate context for the deconstruction of Athens because the very choice presupposes the condition of existence for Athenians and Helen as aesthetic beings, who are always already determined by Zeus. The difference between Helen and other mythical heroines lies in kinship--that is, Helen's birth. What makes Helen



the best possible representation of Athens is her blood relationship with an Athenian symbol and the ultimate Father of Greece. By creating the aesthetic dimension of their constituted essence in the name of ultimate divinity, Athenians cannot help identifying with its representation. The representation is never given as beauty before specific contexts. Isocrates thus locates the possibility of deconstruction in the conception of absolute power.

Articulation of Helen with Zeus also justifies that “Helen” symbolically represents the-name-of-the-father. Isocrates argues that Helen is highly endowed with beauty and love from the ultimate Greek God. As a proof for his deconstruction of Athenian identity, he traces back to Zeus’s distribution of gifts to his children, Helen and Heracles. In his reading, Isocrates stresses that Zeus prefers Helen to Heracles. The story first refers to the legendary fact that both Helen and Heracles are members of the great family of Zeus (“Helen”: 16-23).<sup>11</sup>

Next, Isocrates narrates Zeus’s idea that “glory accrues not from a life of ease, but from perilous combats” (“Helen”: 17). By “perilous combats,” Isocrates does not only mean fighting for supremacy. But he suggests that Zeus implies nasty things through his jealous wife, Hera.<sup>12</sup> Isocrates further interprets Zeus’s kinship by elaborating that Zeus gives Helen and Heracles special gifts of power to make up for the disaster caused by his wife.

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<sup>11</sup> Helen’s mother is Leda, wife of King Sparta Tyndareus and Heracles’ mother is Alcmena of Theban princess (“Helen”: 17).

<sup>12</sup> Hera spends much of her time punishing the recipients of Zeus’s love. Many of them, however, overcome difficulties given by Hera and then become demi-gods or

However, they eventually received different ones. Isocrates writes:

Although he [Zeus] conferred upon his son strength of body, which is able to overpower all others by force, yet to her [Helen] he gave the gift of beauty, which by its nature brings even strength itself into subjection to it. ("Helen": 17)

In Isocrates' narrative, Zeus gave Heracles an immoral body, which destines Heracles to fight harshly. Since Heracles receives this gift, he naturally uses it for fighting and it makes him solve all his conflicts by force. Based upon this story, Isocrates suggests that Heracles had to live "a life of labors and love of perils" ("Helen": 17, 23-28).<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, Isocrates illuminates that Helen received the gift of beauty, beauty that brings men to protect Helen from all misfortunes. By "men," Zeus in Isocrates' discourse does not certify that all men are eligible to protect Helen. Instead, Zeus wants to name one guardian chosen from a selected few in order to maintain his glory. As a reward for those who guard Helen, Zeus grants "the gift of [Helen's] nature which drew the admiration of all beholders and which in all men inspired contention" ("Helen": 17). By reinterpreting Zeus's distribution of the gifts, Isocrates can successfully describe Helen as a symbol of wisdom and in turn, those who guard Helen will deserve honor accordingly. As a matter of fact, the guardian is Theseus,

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heroes (cf. Eddy and Hamilton, 2001: 6).

<sup>13</sup> In the myth of "labor of Heracles," Heracles had to face labors given by his master Eurystheus. In reality, these labors were given by Hera, because she was angry at Zeus' affair with other woman. Hera manipulated Eurystheus to order the most dangerous labors to his slave, Heracles.

who is a great hero of Athens. Isocrates use of the story of Zeus is his most persuasive justification for reconstituting Helen for Athenian identity. In so doing, Isocrates believes that his audience should accept his Athenian political document as a story already determined by the Greek father of God.

## 2. The Role of "Helen"

The relation between Helen and Athenian identity, as we have already seen, is the possibility of deconstruction of Athenian cultural law, which determines the dominant but "just right" story for a political motive based upon common ground. The very idea of deconstruction gives way to the representation of justice for the founding authority in a specific cultural context. Representation thus enforces our course of action. For Isocrates, using Helen as a representation of Athens and of his discourse is like the act of making the context where Helen plays a central character and at the same time Athenians accept a new vision of their citizenship by following Isocrates' "Helen." This representation thus expresses for Isocrates the condition in which his audience becomes "Athenian" according to the discourse.

From the beginning, Isocratean feminist rhetoric attempts to reconstitute cultural order and representation by and for the feminine subject. By presenting "Helen" as the most appropriate and persuasive discourse for Athenian people, Isocrates calls for authority, authority that emerges from common grounds between "Helen" and its audience. This approach is very useful because Isocrates is able to persuade Athenians

insofar as he can get into their culture by renarrating Helen, Theseus and Zeus who are important mythical figures in Greek myth. In other words, Isocrates' rhetoric in "Helen" is around the choice and the use of cultural background for a political goal, *i.e.* constituting Athenian identity by and for a feminine subject. For Isocrates, contextualizing one's argument within the cultural framework of one's audience guarantees an important mediation between representation and people, a mediation that will create authority and thus determines the action of the moment.

### Chapter 3: Performativity and Identity Constitution

As I said earlier in this thesis, I attempt to interpret Isocrates' "Helen" by focusing on two questions for my case study of feminist rhetoric. First, I analyzed why and how he selects Helen's myth by referring to Jacques Derrida's "Force of Law." Chapter 2 demonstrated how Isocrates creates the authority of his discourse. I focused on the process of creating Athenian cultural law through Helen by virtue of reshaping Athenian identity.

This chapter turns to my second question: how Isocrates articulates his ideal image of Athens with Helen in order to reconstitute Athenian identity. To the extent that considerations of feminist rhetoric as a form of social critique become crucial for Isocrates, I argue, he employs Helen as a performative feminine subject rather than as an essential being in order to reconstitute Athenian identity. I also argue that Isocrates redefines Helen's cultural/social status by interpreting two Greek male figures such as Theseus and Heracles. To be specific, Isocrates reconstitutes Helen's subjectivity as an effect of Theseus based upon the hegemonic relationship between Theseus and Heracles. By praising Helen's lover Theseus, Isocrates then changes the meaning associated with Helen from the cause of the Trojan War, to an honorable woman who gives a political/sexual power to Theseus.

This chapter thus examines the articulation of Helen with two Greek males in Athenian identity constitution by referring to Judith Butler's idea of

performativity (1990, 1993, 1997). Butler's performativity theory, which has been influenced by Derrida and Foucault, examines how the feminine subject is manifested in order to determine characters and plots in discourse.<sup>14</sup> I will analyze how Helen is described in relation to Greek male figures by virtue of reconstituting Athenian identity.

Reading Isocratean feminist rhetoric within Butler's framework becomes very important for understanding the way in which Helen is materialized according to her surroundings. Butler's most pointed discussion of performativity comes to us by way of her reading of a subject as a given possible social existence.<sup>15</sup> Butler argues that the feminine subject

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<sup>14</sup> Unlike Derrida, Butler does not focus on how a particular action empowers as law. Instead, she examines how a feminine subject is manifested in order to constitute cultural law for the purpose of social critique. The crucial difference between Derrida and Butler in the feminist rhetorical tradition is that Butler focuses more on the role of the feminine subject itself as an effect of discourse. She examines the process of subjectivization: how the feminine subject is circulated based upon cultural background as a result of social critique at the specific moment and place. As an alternative to feminist rhetoric with deconstruction, Butler theorizes a performativity that retroactively overdetermines the moment by and for the feminine subject. In the case of "Helen," Butler would be interested in how Helen is represented for promoting Athenian nationalism while Derrida would analyze how the speech of "Helen" itself becomes cultural law for Athenians. Hence, this chapter illuminates the constitution of Helen's subjectivity, and at the same time her role in the creation of an appropriate scenario and performance for Greek politics.

<sup>15</sup> To quote Butler: The category of "sex" is, from the start, normative; . . . "sex" not only functions as a norm, but is part of regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs, the power to produce-demarcate, circulate, differentiate- the bodies it controls. Thus, "sex" is a regulatory ideal whose materialization is compelled, and this materialization takes place (or fails to take place) through certain highly regulated practices. In other words, "sex" is an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time. (Butler, 1993:1) Like Derrida, Butler's understanding of law does not mean that it is a prominent rule or regulation for the subject. But she means that a law retroactively produces the social condition of characters in discourse. Therefore, Butler analyzes how a subject comes into being in a particular context.

does not exist before discourse, unlike traditional feminist theorists' understanding of the feminine subject as self-evident in a society. Rather, it is used the condition of her existence and at the same time the feminine subject calls for the appropriate condition. As I briefly pointed out in Chapters 1 and 2, Isocratean feminist rhetoric emphasizes the use of the feminine subject at two different but inseparable levels *i.e.* the feminist subject produces the persuasive discourse as its authority but at the same time authority determines the meaning of the feminine subject in a particular context. This repetitive relationship between the feminine subject and authority are constituted by specific cultural contexts and causes. In Butler's framework, the repetition allows discourse to determine the most powerful and persuasive interpretation of a particular belief and idea, since discourse and interpretation are always already circulated as plot and performance by and for the feminine subject. Butler names this retroactive process of creating the feminine subject in discourse "performativity" (Butler, 1990:1).

In "Helen," in order to reconstitute Athenian identity, Isocrates describes two Greek male figures --- Theseus and Heracles --- as the condition of Helen's existence in discourse. By placing Theseus over Heracles in terms of Helen's political/sexual power, Isocrates then changes the significance of Helen from the cause of the Trojan War to an honorable woman as an effect of Theseus' fame. This new interpretation of Helen thus allows Isocrates to praise Athenian nationalism. In this chapter, I will demonstrate the process of materializing Helen as an effect of her

surroundings for critiquing Athenian identity. My analysis attempts not only to articulate “Helen” with Butler’s theory; it also enables us to comprehend, in retrospect, that Isocratean feminist rhetoric retroactively reconstitutes Helen and Athens as a performative but appropriate feminine subject in the context of Athenian nationalism.

### 1. The Process of Helen’s Subjectivization

Isocrates’ social critique resonates with his choice of Helen, as I discussed in Chapter 2. Helen’s figure functions on at least two levels: First, it is used as ultimate law for Athenians for their course of action. In order to justify the necessity and enforcement of his discourse, Isocrates describes three common grounds, including the popularity of Helen’s mythical story in the field of literature and rhetoric, her relationship with Athenian Goddess Athene, and Zeus as divine power of the discourse for creating “just right” law for Athenian society. In particular, calling up Zeus is an important key to presenting “Helen” as Athenian cultural law because no one can replace Zeus with any other Gods. Zeus is the ultimate divine, whose daughter Helen has peerless beauty thanks to him. By saying that “Helen” is derived from Zeus, Isocrates is able to provide his discourse as the ultimate reading of Athenian culture. Just as Zeus from the mystic past gives Helen beauty, so too should Isocrates’ selection of Helen be taken as a worthwhile, appropriate topic of social critique.

The second function is, as I will analyze in this chapter, that Helen



helps Isocrates advance his argument for Pan-Hellenism. Isocrates attempts to change the meaning of Helen as the best representation of Athens in order to prove that “Helen” is always already an effective and appropriate discourse in the Athenian community. To reach this goal, Isocrates redescribes two Greek men related to Helen, Theseus and Heracles, and thus materializes Helen’s subjectivity according to their conducts.

However, Isocrates’ interest does not seem to lie in describing these two males. What marks heroes—the necessity of heroes—for Isocrates is the process of materializing Helen as Athenian cultural representation: a representation of the current Athenian political condition. The uniqueness of “Helen” is that Isocrates casts Helen as the effect of Greek male figures to promote Athenian nationalism. Instead of characterizing her essential nature, Isocrates articulates Helen with Theseus and Heracles. The former is in love with Helen, and the latter is her half brother. By emphasizing the heroic deeds of Theseus and his intimate relationship with Helen, Isocrates changes Helen’s reputation from the cause of the Trojan War to an honorable woman (“Helen”: 67).

This rhetoric is necessary for Isocrates because he sets Greek male figures as the discursive limits of Athenian Helen. That is, she is only manifested at the moment Isocrates articulates her with Greek men. Within this condition, Isocrates can transform the significance of Helen from the cause of the Trojan War to an honorable Greek heroine whose lover contributes to the founding of the great city-state of Athens. What Isocrates attempts to do is to create the condition under which Helen is always already

the embodied goodness of Athenian society.

In Isocrates' account, Helen's subjectivity is a performative production, not the essence of action. Helen appears as an honorable woman, according to Isocrates' interpretation of Greek males. In other words, Helen is given her name only at the moment where she is articulated with Greek heroes. This is because Helen is an empty signifier, a signifier that mirrors the Athenian desire to become the most powerful polis in the Great Greece. In order to materialize a signifier that is always already appropriate in the Athenian cultural context, Isocrates reconstitutes Helen in relation to Greek men. After naming Helen as an honorable woman, Isocrates praises Helen instead of Athenian nationalism.

As I have pointed out, for Isocrates, Helen is an analogy of Athenian identity. Isocrates chooses Helen in order to promote Athenian nationalism in a particular context. In order to do so, Isocrates materializes Helen as if she is the embodiment of great Athenian culture itself. For this reason, he articulates Helen with Greek male figures and changes her significance from the cause of the Trojan War to an honorable woman. This interpretation enables Isocrates to praise Athens through Helen and to reconstitute Athenian identity from that of an inferior polis to that of a superior one. I thus attempt to explain the Isocratean constitution of Helen's subjectivity as a reproductive process of creating Athenian identity.

Butler discusses the rhetorical process of Helen's empowerment by using the word "status." For Butler, "performative subject acquires an act-like status in the present and conceals or dissimulates the conventions of

which it is a repetition” (Butler, 1998:12). According to Butler, performative theory suggests how we might measure and evaluate a rhetorical subject in discourse. In other words, Butler attempts to establish a new social space or status as a consequence of discourse that is contingent upon social contexts.

Isocrates’ central insight in “Helen” is to reshape Athenian identity through the feminine subject within its cultural context. As a rhetorical tool, he attempts to change the status of Helen in order to reconstitute Athens. For Isocrates, social critique depends as much on the subject as on the agency in discourse that reshapes identity not by presenting its essential elements but by changing all the subsequent conditions. Isocratean feminist rhetoric does not permanently illuminate Helen as an essential being, but constitutes her as the best possible representation of Athenian identity in his discourse. In other words, Helen is not only a well-known mythical figure used to prove the appropriateness of his discourse in an Athenian context, but also a performative feminine subject, a subject who symbolizes Athenian people as an effect of Isocrates’ rhetoric.

According to Butler, the performative subject empowers itself by reshaping its social meaning. By “reshaping,” she suggests that discourse can change or reinterpret the meaning of a subject in accordance with characters in its context. What Butler shows us is how to determine a subject’s course of action and how to enhance the possibility of its realization. In her framework, a performative subject is not “being” a subject. Rather, it is “becoming” a subject as an effect of discourse. Hence, the performative subject always appears in the present, and not in the past or the future. By

situating the subject in the present, Butler thus considers the continuous dialectic between the subject and power, and its reproduction.

In “Helen,” to reconstitute Athenian identity through Helen, Isocrates attempts to change her social status. This is because, in order to persuade the Athenian audience, Helen must be the most appropriate representation of their culture. For this goal, Isocrates argues that the significance of Helen is determined by other characters in discourse. Isocrates thus sets the condition of her subjectivity, which is always already appropriate in the Athenian community. Instead of looking for the essence of Helen, Isocrates focuses on Helen’s multiplicity of relationships with Theseus and Heracles. In particular, Isocrates attempts to praise Theseus’ conduct in order to praise Helen and Athenian identity. In so doing, the meaning of Helen is always already overdetermined in discourse.

As I briefly mentioned, Butler’s focus is on the process of constituting the feminine subject: how the subject is overdetermined and how it accordingly produces the power of the subject as truth in a particular context. From Butler’s perspective, there are two steps required in the constitution of feminine subjectivity: “reiteration” and “contingent separation.”

“Reiteration” provides an appropriate context that no one can refute. For Butler, the feminist subject produces persuasive discourse as its authority, but at the same time, authority determines the meaning of the feminine subject in a particular context. This repetitive relationship between the feminine subject and authority is constituted from specific cultural contexts and causes. In Butler’s framework, the repetition allows

discourse to determine the most powerful and persuasive interpretation of a particular belief and idea, since discourse and interpretation are always already circulated as plot and performance by and for the feminine subject.

“Contingent separation,” on the other hand, plays an important role in clarifying the identification of the subject. In order to define the meaning of subject, Butler does not directly offer its as a concrete being. Instead, Butler suggests that one should make “the self-difference, a constitutive rupture that makes rhetorical moves possible on non-identitarian grounds, that installs certain mobilizing conflict as the basis of politicization” (Butler, 1998:37). For Butler, difference as a symbolic internalized mirror of the non-self constitutes the value of a subject. As a result, Butler claims that configuration thus creates hierarchy at this temporal moment of separation.

In “Helen,” Isocrates describes two Greek men Theseus and Heracles. First, he praises Theseus by recounting his virtuous deed to the Athenian community. Isocrates narrates that Theseus becomes a leader of Athens because of Helen’s sexual/political power. This justifies why Helen should be praised instead of being blamed. When Isocrates introduces Theseus, he compares Theseus with Heracles, in terms of ways of ruling the nation. Isocrates posits Theseus over Heracles because Theseus performs his wisdom for the benefit of community while Heracles solves his problem by using force. After dissociating Theseus from Heracles, Isocrates articulates Theseus’ commendable deed with Helen, and then praises her as an honorable woman for the Athenian community.

Helen’s subject position is not essentially determined outside of this

discourse. Rather, it is always situated in a community to which a subject has to belong. What Isocrates has accomplished is to provide the context in which both Helen and Theseus hold the highest praise in Athenian society. In other words, Isocrates sets up a dramatic arena wherein Helen and Theseus take main acting roles. The following two sections explain how Isocrates creates the appropriate context for a reconstitution of Helen as well as of Athenian identity, by using Theseus as repetition, and Heracles as separation.

### 1.1 Praising Theseus for the Repetitive Story

The deconstruction of Greek hegemony through Helen first provides the story of Theseus,<sup>16</sup> one of the bravest kings of Athens. Isocrates recognizes the famous myth of Theseus' various ordeals as a process of materializing Helen for an Athenian cultural representation. This is because Isocrates wants to use Theseus' fame to change the significance of Helen. In this framework, Helen is required to act as a beautiful woman who gives special power to a man. By praising Theseus, who receives love from Helen, Isocrates is able to create a new social role for Helen. In

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<sup>16</sup> Mythically speaking, Theseus was a son of King Aegeus of Athens. On his way back from the oracle at Delphi, at which Aegeus asked about his childlessness, Aegeus had intimacy with Aethra, daughter of King Pittheus of Corinth. After a couple days in Corinth, Aegeus left Aethra saying that their future son, Theseus, might get killed by his cousin who would succeed to the throne unless they pretended his father was the sea-god Poseidon. However it is said that Aethra had a second visitor the same night she met Aegeus and that this god was the true father of Theseus. Whether his father was Aegeus or not, Theseus' paternity was vague, and accordingly Theseus had to prove his own oracle to become a king of

Isocrates' narrative, Helen's role is to contribute to the rule of the scatter polis of Athens. Under this condition constituted by Isocrates, the encomium of Helen for Athenian identity is successful. In short, Isocrates attempts to promote Pan-Hellenism through Helen's feminine subjectivity in his discourse.

In order to promote Athenian nationalism through Helen, Isocrates reinterprets the myth of Theseus and articulates him with Helen. As a departure from Isocrates' version of the myth, Isocrates illustrates Theseus' interest in Helen as follows:

Theseus, . . . seeing Helen not as yet in the full bloom of her beauty, but already surpassing other maidens, was so captivated by her loveliness that he . . . thought life was not worth living amid the blessings he already had unless he could enjoy intimacy with her. ("Helen": 18)

In Isocrates' reading, Helen catches the keenest attention of Theseus, thanks to her beauty. Helen's beauty, given to her by Zeus, makes Theseus realize that he is sexually interested in Helen.<sup>17</sup> As a matter of fact, Isocrates describes Helen's sexual power as something politically worthy to possess: "[Helen] gave to men [who love Helen] honors so that they have power to save when they are seen by sailors in peril on the sea, if they but piously invoke them" ("Helen": 61). The passage implies that Theseus, who will

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Athens.

<sup>17</sup> In fact, in the traditional story, Theseus' lover, Ariadne, was abducted by the god Dionysus on his way back from a fight against Minotaur and thus Isocrates describes Theseus' sexual desire as an interest in intimate relation with a beautiful woman

eventually become a leader of Greece, would receive a magical and powerful gift from Helen. According to this reasoning, Helen's beauty leads Theseus to abduct her from her guardians ("Helen": 19).

Although Theseus could be accused of abducting Helen, Isocrates instead sounds forth the praises of Theseus. To quote Isocrates:

[In fact, Theseus unites the chaotic villages in Attica and then makes Athens into a city-state by] exercising the supreme power and at the same time to enjoy as good as relations as those who live as citizens on terms of perfect equality. ("Helen": 34)

In Isocrates' interpretation of this Greek myth, Helen's sexual power enables Theseus to rule Athens. The important point here is that Isocrates describes sexual power as practical wisdom, or in Greek term *phronesis*. Mythically and historically speaking, Theseus is reputed to be a founder of the Athenian democracy whose rule is based on the equal merits of his fellow-citizens (Vernant, 327-328). In this sense, sexual power is directly related with good politics. Helen gives Theseus political power through her feminine sexuality.

Consequently, Isocrates demonstrates how his speech necessarily uses Theseus in order to praise Helen:

And it seems to me appropriate to speak of Theseus at still greater length; for I think this will be the strongest assurance for those who wish to praise Helen, if we can show that those who loved and admired

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(Graves, 62-69).



her were themselves more deserving of admiration than other men.  
("Helen": 22)

As I already discussed in Chapter 1 and 2, based upon Zeus's distribution of gifts to his children, Isocrates describes those who love Helen as deserving of the highest praise in Greek society. By introducing Theseus in Isocrates' political story, Isocrates can justify the significance of Helen. Steve Schwarze (1999) points out Isocrates' use of Theseus as it narrates a new anecdote about Helen and Theseus by reinterpreting the Greek myth for the sake of Helen. The new story tells us that because Theseus runs away with Helen, he receives special abilities from Helen, which makes him into a king of Athens (80-81). Isocrates rhetorically interprets cause and end in the myth of Theseus and thus Theseus can become a king thanks to Helen. Within Isocrates' dramatic script based on the Greek myth, Theseus is required to us, Helen's sexual power as *phronesis* in order to become a leader of Athens. In short, Isocrates redescribes Theseus as the embodiment of Athenian wisdom. Using these mystical proofs, Isocrates is able to link Helen to the conduct of Theseus, who consequently wins the honor, and situates Helen as one who always deserves unrestrained praise in the discourse.

What Isocrates has suggested by reinterpreting Theseus' conduct is that one should use Helen's sexual power *phronesis* as a possible new form of Pan-Hellenism. In so doing, Isocrates believes that he is able to change the mythical meaning of Helen. For Isocrates, praising Helen is a mediation that recreates Athenian identity in order to promote Pan-Hellenism. By

reconstituting Helen, not as an essential being but as an effect of Theseus, Isocrates can make a social space for Helen in the Greek community. In other words, the meaning of Helen empowers her to live in a community by means of reconsidering and creating her relationship with Theseus.

## 1.2 Heracles as Separation for Helen

In “Helen,” Helen’s subjectivity cannot be separated from other characters in the discourse. He next shows the myth of the “labor of Heracles” as the reason why Theseus is needed in order to praise Helen. Isocrates uses Heracles in order to create a hegemonic relationship between Theseus and Heracles, and to decide who receives the highest praise in Athenian society.

Isocrates sets *phronesis* as the prerequisite of Greek leadership in order to materialize Helen in accordance with Theseus’ conduct. Setting *phronesis* as a qualification of a leader is not incidental to “Helen.” Rather, it is overdetermined because *phronesis* itself is a representation of the Athenian Goddess Athena and thus is acknowledged as common sense or in the Greek term *doxa*.<sup>18</sup> Thus no one questions the importance of *phronesis*. By setting *phronesis* as the *doxatic* prerequisite of a Greek leader, Isocrates proves that Heracles’ physical force does not belong to Athens. In short, it is his Spartan-ness. Isocrates successfully places Theseus over Heracles in

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<sup>18</sup> See Poulakos (2001) for further reference of Isocrates’ use of *doxa* in his rhetorical *praxis*.

terms of *phronesis*. Isocrates then justifies his praise of Theseus to emphasize Helen's identity as the Athenian *doxatic* subject of its ideological forms for Pan-Hellenism. Consequently, Isocrates reconstitutes the meaning of Helen by elaborating her relationship with Greek male figures, and in turn, Helen's subjectivity recreates Athenian identity.

By placing Theseus over Heracles to praise the Athenian Helen, Isocrates argues that Heracles does not engage in Greek society by participating in the Hellenic public, such as by making political judgments:

It came to pass that Heracles undertook perilous labors more celebrated and more severe, . . . . For example, Heracles was ordered by Enrystheus to bring the cattle from Erytheia and to obtain the apple of the Hesperides and to fetch Cerberus up from Hades and to perform other labors of that kind, labors which would bring no benefit to mankind. . . . ("Helen": 23-24)

Isocrates blames Heracles' action of pursuing labor because his labors are all related to bloody fighting. For Isocrates, Heracles symbolizes the wilderness, in which everything is chaotic, a world where the weak fall prey to the strong.

Isocrates further blames Heracles by supposing that Heracles is a leader of Greece: "those who seek to rule their fellow-citizens by force are themselves the slaves of others" ("Helen": 32). In Isocrates' framework, the ruling of the nation by Heracles produces a culture that is far from civilized. Isocrates believes that Heracles would turn Athens into a chaotic society, which in Isocrates' sense would be a culture of severe force, and then would

make the people in a society endure the same labors Heracles that goes through.

In Greek myth, Heracles gets over every obstacle he faces by showing obedience to his master.<sup>19</sup> Likewise, in Isocrates' narrative on the Athenian future course of action, Athenians would obey other poleis, such as Sparta. By blaming Heracles, Isocrates persuades his audience not to choose a false option for their future. If they are not, persuaded, Athenians automatically lose their own supremacy and civilized oratorical culture.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, Isocrates gives his audience a good reason to place Theseus over Heracles, by reinterpreting the Greek myth.

By effectively placing Theseus over Heracles in addition to referring to the Greek myth, Isocrates posits wisdom or *phronesis* as the condition for becoming the most praiseworthy leader in Greece.<sup>21</sup> *Phronesis* represents a sign of an Athenian Goddess. Isocrates does not simply impose this condition alone but declares that this ability is essential to Theseus. In "Helen," *phronesis* determines the subject position of Theseus and Heracles in Isocrates' image of Athenian community. First of all, Isocrates proves that *phronesis* belongs to Theseus by transforming the meaning of *phronesis* itself. *Phronesis* is deemed as the quality differentiating a true leader from

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<sup>19</sup> Heracles is Zeus' son by Alcmena of Theban princess. In the myth of "labor of Heracles," Heracles had to perform the ten most dangerous labors while he was a slave for Eurystheus, the High King of Greece for ninety-nine months (cf. Graves, 75-91).

<sup>20</sup> Ong (1982) argues that there are strong bonds between the Athenian flowering of the oral tradition and the birthplace of democracy (cf. Ong, 6).

<sup>21</sup> Poulakos (1989) discusses that Isocrates describes virtue as a condition of Greek leadership not only because it is *doxa*, but also because virtue is a beautiful deed.

other men. As Isocrates puts it:

It came to pass that Heracles undertook perilous labors more celebrated and more severe, Theseus those more useful, and to the Greek of more vital importance. . . . Theseus, however, being his own master, gave preference to those struggles which would make him a benefactor of either the Greeks at large or of his native land. (“Helen”: 23-25)

From Isocrates’ perspective, *phronesis* is an indispensable part of a nation’s foundation. Isocrates proclaims that such wisdom in “Helen” is “the knowledge of war” (“Helen”: 31), and this ability is needed in times of chaotic situations. “The knowledge of war,” for Isocrates, is not equivalent to knowing how to fight. Rather, the knowledge suggests how to look for the best possible action for the Greek community.

In order to prove that Theseus naturally gets involved with nation founding and accordingly that *phronesis* is an innate ability belonging to him, Isocrates recalls Theseus’ battle with Minotaur:

When Theseus saw them [tribute of twice seven children of Athens] led away, and the entire populace escorting them, to a death savage and foreseen, and being mourned as dead while yet living, he was so incensed that he thought it better to die than to live as a ruler of a city that was compelled to pay to the enemy a tribute so lamentable. (“Helen”: 27)

In Isocrates’ interpretation, what Theseus saw in reality was a desperate and

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In short, virtue itself is a part of Helen’s beauty, *kallos* (Poulakos, 163).

anarchic Athenian society. In order to restore Athenian glory, Theseus gets rid of the Athenian common threat and then frees the city from a monster.<sup>22</sup> Theseus fights against the enemy not for his own satisfaction, but for the Greek community.

Because of his virtuous deeds, Isocrates gives the highest praise to Theseus:

In the consequence, Theseus passed his life beloved of his people and not the object of their plots, not preserving his sovereignty by means of alien military force, but protected, as by a bodyguard, by the goodwill of the citizens, by virtue of his authority ruling as a king, but by his benefactions a popular leader; for so equitably and so well did he administer the city that even to this day traces of his clemency may be seen remaining in our institutions. ("Helen": 37)

By reinterpreting Greek myth, Isocrates metaphorically places Theseus, a founding father of Athenian democracy, in the highest ranks among all the Greek heroes. In short, by constructing a hegemonic relationship between Theseus and Heracles, Isocrates reconstitutes Theseus as a praiseworthy mythical and historical model of Greece who rules Athens with wisdom for the sake of reconstituting Helen and Athenian identity.

This chapter focuses on new the horizon of feminist rhetoric that constitutes the future condition of society and accordingly reshapes its identity through the feminine subject. In the case of "Helen," Isocrates

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<sup>22</sup> In the myth of "Theseus and the Minotaur," Theseus killed a monster, the Minotaur to which the King of Crete Minos, another son of Zeus, forced Athenians to send seven boys and seven girls every nine years to be fed to (cf. Eddy and Hamilton, 52-53).

materializes Helen as an Athenian cultural representation by means of reinterpreting Greek male figures, including Theseus and Heracles. By so doing, Isocrates successfully changes not only her notorious character but also the hegemonic relationship between Athens and Sparta. This is possible only because Helen is a performative subject whose meaning is determined as an effect of discourse. Isocratean feminist rhetoric thus constitutes the material condition of Helen in the name of Pan-Hellenism.

**CONCLUSION:**  
**Reflections of Isocratean Feminist Rhetoric**

When I look at the importance of my case study in a contemporary context, I immediately recall the U. S. political campaign in response to 9.11 terrorist attack in 2001. On November 16, 2001, American First Lady Laura Bush addresses on radio the current situation of women in Afghanistan. She explains the brutality against women and children perpetuated by the al-Qaeda terrorist network and the regime it supports in Afghanistan, the Taliban. To quote Bush's speech:

That [the Taliban] regime is now in retreat across much of the country, and the people of Afghanistan—especially women—are rejoicing. Afghan women know, through hard experience, what the rest of the world is discovering: The brutal oppression of women is a central goal of the terrorists... Civilized people throughout the world are speaking out in horror—not only because our hearts break for the women and children in Afghanistan, but also because in Afghanistan, we see the world the terrorists would like to impose on the rest of us...The fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women. In America, next week brings Thanksgiving. After the events of the last few months, we'll be holding our families even closer. And we will be especially thankful for all the blessings of American life. I hope Americans will join our family in working to insure that dignity and opportunity will be secured for all the women and children of Afghanistan. ("Radio Address by Laura Bush to the Nation")

I was surprised when I found this speech on the Internet, not because Laura Bush made her political/public appearance, but because the story of these



women justified U. S. military action against the terrorist attack. That is, by describing the severe condition of women and children in Afghanistan, Laura Bush blames the al-Qaeda and the Taliban, claiming that they are responsible for people having suffered for years. It is not necessary for the George(s) W. Bush administration to touch upon a woman in Afghanistan as their topic of radio speech. However, by telling the story that women and children have been subordinated for ages in Afghanistan, Laura Bush metaphorically displays the image of the world including the U. S. if the terrorists were not defeated. The figure of a woman in Afghanistan becomes a political issue for the U. S. because both US citizens and Afghan people are the victims of the terrorist. Afghan women functions as an agency to illuminate the current situation American people face and look for their peace and safety in their country.

This statement of blame turns out to the revealing of American goodness, which topic-wise is far from the terrorist's treatment of women and children in Afghanistan. By describing how people undergone due to the brutal treatments by the terrorist, the speech differentiates U.S. from its counterpart. Laura Bush's articulation of Afghan women displays American-ness, which exhibits at least the following five patriotic slogans: "America is the land of freedom," "America always brings freedom for everyone in the world," "America guarantees equal opportunity for everyone," "America is the greatest nation" and "The mission of America is to create the world free from fear, hunger, anxiety." This interpretation makes American people realize that they have to fight against the al-Qaeda and the Taliban in

order to protect their land of freedom, justice and human equality. For the Bush regime, using a feminine subject is one of the political/rhetorical strategies to exhibit and teach American-ness to the public. In the context of Bush's speech, a feminine topic is a way to discipline and then unity American people to strive for their peace and justice. An analysis of a culture by focusing on the articulation of a woman help us understand how a particular discourse creates an image of nation through a feminine subject.

This study has explored a particular theory of feminist rhetoric: the very particular form of pedagogy extended by Barbara Biesecker's feminist rhetoric as a social critique. Throughout this thesis, a feminine subject has been a key concept in the inquiry into Isocratean feminist rhetoric. By situating his work in contemporary rhetorical studies, I have attempted to re-envision ancient Greek speech, Isocrates' "Helen" as an example of feminist rhetoric. The greatest importance of Isocrates' work for rhetorical studies is that it establishes his education and his rhetorical practice on the grounds of a feminine subject, which I name Isocratean feminist rhetoric. I am using the concept "feminine subject," with which feminist rhetoric is largely concerned, to describe the position and figure of a woman in a discourse. I am also using it in the sense of "rhetorical tool," a tool which determines what culture stands for in a particular context.

What distinguishes Isocratean feminist rhetoric from other rhetorical practices is that it has a commitment to constituting an identity from the point of view of their interaction with, and within, a feminine subject. In the case of U. S. political campaign, for example, the radio speech reshapes

American-ness by articulating America's big political concerns about al-Qaeda with its brutal actions against women in Afghanistan. At the same time, an Afghan woman who is rescued by Americans becomes as the most appropriate representation of U. S. in Bush's discourse. This interpretation (re)produces American value of justice and freedom by interacting American people with Afghan women, who has already suffered from the terrorist long before U. S. faces 911 attack. This is where politics comes in: Isocratean feminist rhetoric is not a "politically neutral" discipline. It is a performative tool to define the meaning of a culture to discipline its people by and for a feminine subject.

My case study of Isocrates' "Helen" thus not is not about the transcendence and universality of a woman in a culture. It is about the relationship between identity and a feminine subject; it is also about the process of changing the significance of "woman" as an effect of discourse. Isocratean feminist rhetorical approach seeks to understand how a culture is displayed in relation to a feminine subject that represents a structure and an order in a discourse. Another way of referring to this positioning is situatedness or appropriateness, as empowered, disempowered, permitted, proscribed, visible, invisible, privileged, and discriminated.

When Isocratean feminist rhetoric displays identity in discourse, it is not to reveal the essence of a culture. Instead, Isocrates focuses on how his discourse creates the notion of a culture by articulating it with one interpretation of a woman and its surroundings wherein a culture is now situated. In other words, Isocratean feminist rhetoric creates two rhetorical

and retroactive moves for educating an audience and thus celebrating its patriotism: to change the significance of “woman” and its surroundings by interpreting a culturally-acknowledged story, and to display national identity in relation to the interpretation. The goal of Isocratean feminist rhetoric is achieved only at the moment two rhetorical moves including constitution of an authority and representation through the mythical story of Helen occur. What Isocratean feminist rhetoric has done is to provide a discourse as an example to display the meaning of a culture by changing a particular feminine subjectivity and its contexts.

This thesis has also extended the project of feminist rhetoric by retroactively constituting Athenian identity and Helen’s subjectivity. I have analyzed how ancient Athenian society led a speechwriter Isocrates to reinterpret Helen of Troy in the form of epideictic discourse when Sparta was the dominant power in the mid-380’s. By defining him as a critical servant or a pedagogue for Athenian community, this study has presented the rhetorical constitution of Athenian identity in Isocrates’ “Helen.” A noteworthy tactic that Isocrates employs in response to the Spartan hegemony is to use Greek heroes including Theseus and Heracles as the projection of Isocrates’ rhetorical challenge to the current Athenian condition. Isocrates articulates Greek heroes with Helen, and changes Theseus as an Athenian leader who receives political and sexual power from Helen. Helen, in turn, changes her rhetorical position from the cause of the Trojan War to being an honorable Athenian woman. Thus, Helen is Isocrates’ strategic choice for rhetorical interpretation to occur, ideally at the most appropriate

moment, among the members of Athenian community for pedagogical purpose. Isocrates' text strategically configures symbolic acts that educate Athenian people.

From this approach to Isocrates' rhetoric, it should be clear that a feminine subject is not here regarded strictly as direct, explicit challenge to all the political issues in a particular context. Rather, a feminine subject has formed as a necessary component of feminist rhetoric that can reconstitute the present political condition. In this sense, Isocrates' interpretation of Helen provides the qualification of leadership; Isocrates posits Helen as a potential site of struggle between Theseus and Heracles, and depicts the power of Athens as a promising polis which embodies wisdom, thereby implicitly recreating Athenian identity. Once again, the rhetorical significance of Isocrates' practice lies in his critique of Athenian culture, and his use of Helen as a rhetorical agent to reconstitute and display the greatness of Athens.

Instead of providing closure, the process of writing this thesis has opened up new areas for future research. I particularly want to add four discussions if I ever have an opportunity to write a 300-page book on Isocrates' "Helen." First, I would like to reconsider Helen of Troy from a psychoanalytical point of view. In this study, I chose to focus on relationship between Isocratean idea of pedagogy and a role of feminine subject. By introducing a question of how Helen is desired to become an Athenian feminine representation in its culture, I would be able to explain that Isocrates' rhetoric captures not only Athenian common grounds but also

takes its political fantasy into consideration. In short, I would illuminate Helen as a psychoanalyzed feminine political/sexual body. In so doing, I could extend my argument that Isocrates' critical/public service for Athenian community creates Helen as a representation/emancipation in three levels: that of a society, Isocrates' discourse and Athenian desire.

A second discussion I would like to add is an analysis of gender description in ancient Greece. In my thesis, I mainly examine how Helen of Troy is described to provide a future image of Athenian community in Isocrates' discourse even though women were not allowed to participate in any political events at that time. By exploring a representation of Helen as an "other" or "outsider of Athenian politics whose categories for thinking about gender, undermine and disrupt psychoanalysis' claims to describe the past and future of gender difference. This analysis would reveal how Isocrates' rhetoric rationalizes the sex/gender system in a historically distant epoch as a part of his critical/public service for a community.

Thirdly, I would like to investigate the influence of Helen's status as an outlaw to understand Isocrates' rhetoric. Historically and mythically speaking, Helen of Troy commits two major crimes in Greece world: eloping with a man and participating in a political issue such as the Trojan War. In other words, Helen escapes from a home where all women are supposed to be, and gets involved with politics where only men have an access. Helen of Troy is a figure who breaks the barrier between men and women. I would like to focus on Helen's transformation to retrace where she belongs to and then further clarify the significance of her story for Isocrates' pedagogical

discourse.

Finally, I would like to discuss differences between Isocrates and other rhetoricians including Aristotle, Plato and Gorgias. For example, I could touch upon the philosophy and 'program' of each rhetorician and describe different ideas of rhetorical education in ancient Greece. This comparison and contrast would help us understand the significance of Isocrates not only from contemporary feminist rhetorical perspective, but also from classical rhetoric where Isocrates is generally focused. Thus, I would like to make a clear link between feminist rhetorical theory and other rhetorical disciplines.

In this study I hope to have shown that Isocrates performs feminist rhetoric, a form of a social critique to display an identity. In demonstrating that he engages with and diverges from a more conventional role for the intellectual-the rhetorician, the speechwriter, and the pedagogue- I propose that Isocrates can no longer be regarded as a convenient point of reference, against who to confirm or assert the centrality of more popular rhetoricians. Instead, Isocrates' "Helen" helps us understand the importance of feminist rhetoric in contemporary rhetorical studies.

Feminist rhetoric is not about focussing on a woman to change the subordinated subject position she faces. It is an agency/object of critique to reconstitute and display a future image of a society in discourse. By performing a feminist rhetoric, Isocrates does not simply provide a standard of conduct and morality. Rather, he creates it by situating his political motive in Athenian community. In so doing, he is able to exhibit his vision

of polis for Athenian people. In other words, his duty – and ‘burden’ – as a critical servant is to create and display a representation of a culture without stating what is right and wrong.



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