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Pregnant Words:
A Study of the Trial Scene
of Aischylos's *Eumenides*

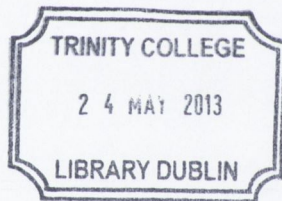
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Thesis 9929

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Mairéad McGrath

Summary

This dissertation examines Apollo's λόγος against maternity in the *Eumenides* of Aischylos (657-666). The central scene of the *Eumenides*, the final play of the trilogy *Oresteia* (staged in 458 BC and also comprising the *Agamemnon* and the *Libation Bearers*), presents a trial set in the Athenian Areopagus court, for which the play presents an aetiology. The god Apollo seeks acquittal for his protégé, Orestes, who is prosecuted by the Erinyes, goddesses of vengeance, for committing the most heinous of crimes, that of murdering his kin: Orestes has killed his mother Klytaimestra in retaliation for her murder of his father, Agamemnon. In a defiant speech, Apollo argues that Orestes did not in fact commit a crime against kin because only the father, he claims, holds a genetic relationship with his child. In support of his theory Apollo mobilizes the myth of the birth of Athena, the goddess who presides over Orestes's trial, who has no mother. Apollo relegates the role of mothers to the point of introducing a fantasy of male autonomous procreation. Crucially, Athena concurs with Apollo's theory and offers her support to the defendant. With her vote cast, Orestes is acquitted and the cycle of revenge transcended.

I argue that Apollo's theory that mothers are not biologically related to their children introduces a problematic discourse which complicates the trilogy's resolution. Our reading of this passage has implications for the interpretation of the *Oresteia* as a whole. I begin in Chapter 1 by reviewing the main interpretations of the *Oresteia* with the aim of situating my own reading. I follow this with a detailed discussion in Chapter 2 of the significance of the issue of sexual reproduction in the conclusion of the *Eumenides*. I argue that, since Athena's motherless birth motivates her decision to acquit Orestes and placate the Erinyes, the resolution of conflict essentially rests on defining the relationship between mother and child. The Olympian ideology of paternal supremacy is ultimately more powerful than the human jury. Yet, despite the influence exercised by Apollo's speech in the drama, the passage, I repeatedly argue is rife with ambiguities which inevitably obscure interpretation. The power of Aischylos's *Oresteia* lies in these ambiguities and tensions, which disturb the drama's closure by allowing resistance to the outcome linger.

In Chapter 3, I interrogate the discourses surrounding sexual reproduction in Aischylos's Athens. My purpose in doing so is to reveal the uncertainty in contemporary discussions of the matter. Aischylos was gesturing towards a topical

debate that was open to reinterpretation and negotiation, rendering Apollo's λόγος inherently contentious. Aischylos's Apollo, then, is not presenting a standard view, but a controversial hypothesis motivated by the aim of absolving Orestes's matricide.

From this, I proceed to analyse the language of Apollo's λόγος more closely in Chapter 4, pressing on the ambiguity of birthing vocabulary by analysing the application of key words in Apollo's speech throughout the *Oresteia*. I demonstrate how Apollo's rhetoric relies on terms which already have an established usage in the trilogy. He reinscribes these terms with new meaning, contradicting the earlier understanding of the relationship between mother and child. I argue that this process of redefining terminology inevitably brings the audience back to the earlier definitions of maternity in the trilogy, exposing Apollo's oratory as manipulative. His view of parenting is partial and open to challenge from within the drama itself.

In Chapter 5, I explore the imagery and metaphors the playwright employs to elucidate the relationship between child and parent. A predominant focus is the bird imagery in the *Agamemnon* and *Libation Bearers* which reveals malevolence on the part of Agamemnon towards his children. I suggest that this problematises Apollo's notion that fathers should be considered sole parents. Further, I explore the role of Artemis in the *Agamemnon*. The playwright establishes Artemis as the protector of mothers and their children, introducing an ideology which directly contradicts Apollo and Athena's later bias towards fathers. Apollo's λόγος does not appear as an isolated reference to parenting and reproductivity in the trilogy. Rather it appears at the climax of a rich exploration of the relationship between child and parent. The complexity of this exploration stresses the simplicity and naivety of Apollo's theory, even if Athena finds it compelling.

In Chapters 6 to 8, I move on to focus on Apollo's τεκμήριον, the birth of Athena. Repeated allusions to Hesiod's *Theogony* throughout the *Oresteia* suggest that the audience is led to interpret Apollo's τεκμήριον through the lens of Hesiod for whom Athena has a mother, the goddess Metis. An audience rehearsed in Hesiodic myth will be aware that Apollo's τεκμήριον is deceptive; his dubious λόγος cannot be proven. However, in lying about Athena's genealogy, Apollo acts with μῆτις. This dissertation concludes by positing that the reverence for μῆτις in Aischylos's trilogy problematises Apollo's rejection of Metis. The drama inevitably acknowledges the necessity not of democracy or patriarchy, but Metis's powers, her reproductivity and craft of deception.

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During the four years preparing this dissertation, I often considered the writing of my acknowledgments. It comforted me that some day after years of solitary research, I would have the opportunity to thank the people who matter most in my life, to recognize that I could not have completed this work without their support. The promise of that opportunity made lone research feel that bit less lonely.

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Note on Translations and Abbreviations

Translations and editions are indicated within the text, with full details included in the Bibliography (under translator's name). In the case of frequently cited texts, I relied on Sommerstein's 2008 translation of the *Oresteia* and Most's 2006 translation of the *Theogony* (with the exception of lines 929α-τ which are translated by Evelyn-White, 1998). I remind the reader of these translations by citing them alongside initial quotes from these texts in each chapter. Greek text is taken from Loeb editions. Abbreviations are indicated in the text with the full name of a text given prior to abbreviation.

ἐμὸν δ' ἐγέλασσε φίλον κῆρ,
ὡς ὄνομ' ἐξαπάτησεν ἐμὸν καὶ μῆτις ἀμύμων.

And my heart laughed within me that my name
and flawless scheme had so beguiled.

Homer's *Odyssey* 9.413-414, trans. A. T. Murray, 1995.

prevented by god. I shall give you powerful proof of this statement. A father can procreate without a mother: a witness to this is here close by us, the daughter of Olympian Zeus, who was not even nurtured in the darkness of a womb, but is such an offspring as no female divinity could ever bring forth.

(*Eum.* 657-66, trans. Sommerstein, 2008b)¹

Apollo's λόγος dictates that the job of women is to nurse the progeny of men. His patrilineal doctrine diminishes the role of all mothers, presumably including his own, which is surprising since more than any other god in Greek literature, Apollo is predominantly associated with his mother, Leto. Famously, in the *Iliad*, Achilles narrates how Apollo killed Niobe's sons to punish her for insulting his mother (*Il.* 24.602-9), thereby eradicating an entire male line. Even in the *Oresteia*, the Erinyes name Apollo as Leto's child (*Eum.* 323). The audience might note that Apollo's λόγος undermines his relationship with his mother, instantly arousing their suspicion of his theory.

Apollo's language may make the audience distrustful too. His rhetoric is very slippery. He begins with an implicit recognition of the contestability of his λόγος, declaring that what he says is spoken ὀρθῶς, "correctly," insinuating that what follows is open to doubt (*Eum.* 657). Apollo follows this with a negation: the mother is *not* a parent of the child (οὐκ ἔστι μήτηρ ἢ κεκλημένη τέκνου / τοκεύς, *Eum.* 658-659). With the use of the verb καλέω (*Eum.* 658), the text self-consciously acknowledges that Apollo's undermining of the mother-child bond is contrary to expectation. τέκνον is the usual name for the offspring of a mother, but Apollo breaks with convention by claiming that the τέκνον is not her child. In effect, Aeschylus subtly informs his audience that Apollo's λόγος is radically redefining terminology.

In Plato's *Phaedo*, Sokrates critiques the inscribing of common linguistic terms with new meaning, also using the verb καλέω: "you are incredulous, are you not, how that which is called learning can be recollection?" (ἀπιστεῖς γὰρ δὴ πῶς ἡ καλουμένη μάθησις ἀνάμνησις ἐστιν; *Phd.* 73b, trans. Fowler, 1982). Like Apollo in the

¹ For the text of these lines, see Murray, 1955, p. 351; Sommerstein, 2008b, p. 438; West, 1990, p. 378. Line 658 κεκλημένη is κεκλημένου in the Codex Mediceus, but taking this with τέκνου makes little sense. Line 663 γείναιτ' is Wieseler's conjecture, printed by Murray and Sommerstein, for MSS γένοιτ', retained by West; the conjecture is strongly suggested by schol. γεννήσειεν. Line 666 θεά is a conjecture by Weil, printed by Murray and Sommerstein, for MSS θεός. Sommerstein convincingly defends this intervention as follows: "θεός ... would hopelessly obscure the crucial point for Apollo's argument. The corruption was due to the influence of θεός 661 and Διός 664" (Sommerstein, 1989, p. 210). West assumes a lacuna before line 665 (where Murray prints οὐκ for MSS οὐδ') and rewrites 666 as follows: ἀλλ' οἶον ἔρνος <αὐτὸς ἀντέλλει> θεός / <ἄνευ δὲ πατρὸς> οὔτις ἂν τέκοι <γυνή>.

Eumenides, Plato's unconvincing philosopher is challenging common sense.² Euripides later reproduces Apollo's phrasing. His *Andromache* refers to "the man who is called your father" (ὁ δὲ κεκλημένος / πατήρ, *Andr.* 75-76, trans. Kovacs, 1995), using again the verb καλέω in the context of naming a parent. The semantic resonance of the verb καλέω and its use in Apollo's argument points to the fact that his questioning of the regular definition of a parent is pedantic. He is employing a discourse that is dubious from the outset.

What follows Apollo's misogynistic account of conception is proof drawn not from biology, but from the precedent of myth, a highly contestable shared resource. Apollo provides a τεκμήριον, Athena, the goddess who presides over Orestes's trial, and who was born without a mother. Her existence is proof that fathers, not mothers, are progenitors. Mothers are essentially superfluous; fathers can even reproduce without them (*Eum.* 663). Apollo omits women from the process of sexual reproduction, compensating for their absence with a fantasy of male autonomous procreation.

The relevance of stories about the gods is obvious in the physical structure of Apollo's speech: three of the ten lines end with the word "god" (*Eum.* 661, 664, 666). There are, however, problems with Apollo's divine τεκμήριον. He employs it to support overarching universal claims: no mother is a τοκεύς and men can procreate without women (*Eum.* 657-662). Yet, the τεκμήριον is troublingly vague and relates to a singular divine situation. It is unclear how the particular circumstance of Athena's divine and miraculous genesis functions as proof for a universal claim about human reproduction.³ Orestes is, after all, a mortal born from his mother. Athena's origins do not negate that. Further, at no point does Apollo explain how Athena was created by Zeus alone. He brushes over his evidence. The audience is expected to know the nativity story already. In effect, Aeschylus assumes a cultural competence on behalf of his audience.⁴

The aftermath of Apollo's speech reveals that his λόγος and τεκμήριον are not expected to be convincing on their own. Apollo flatters Athena and promises her that Orestes will become an ally of Athens if he is acquitted (*Eum.* 667-673). Essentially, Apollo bribes Athena, indicating that she has the power to decide the outcome of the

² Sommerstein, 1989, p. 209.

³ Winnington-Ingram, 1983, p. 125.

⁴ Burian, 2008, p. 195.

trial.⁵ He offers Orestes as σύμμαχος (*Eum.* 671); the Argives will fight alongside the Athenians. The implication is that the Argives could become enemies of the Athenians if Orestes is not freed. Apollo has followed up his λόγος with a veiled threat. His strategy proves highly successful as it wins favour with Athena, leading to her acquittal of Orestes, and his pardon for killing his mother. Athena adds her own λόγος, explaining that since she has no mother, she believes Orestes's desire to avenge his father was just (*Eum.* 736-740). The child's relationship with his father is paramount in her view. Both Athena and Apollo promote a hierarchy that favours fathers over mothers.

The cycle of vengeance depicted in the *Oresteia* comes to an end when Athena vindicates Orestes and appeases the Erinyes. Athena resolves the tragedy's conflicts, uniting with Apollo by virtue of their shared λόγοι, and their preference for fathers and men. Apollo's theory of male biological superiority is crucial to the plot of the *Oresteia*. For this reason, the passage in which he defends his theory has received much attention in scholarship. Mitchell-Boyask deems the passage, "one of the most notoriously controversial in all of Greek literature."⁶ Some assume Aischylos's original audience agreed with it, given what little they knew about biology.⁷ According to Conacher, Apollo's definition of a parent is in no way problematic.⁸ In a similar vein, Winnington-Ingram describes the λόγος as "a conclusive and completely valid argument."⁹ Apollo presents "perfectly serious and valid thoughts" according to Solmsen.¹⁰ In these readings, Apollo's speech confirms the assumed prejudices of Aischylos's audience, offering an agreeable solution worthy of celebration.

Others, however, question whether Aischylos and his audience would have agreed with Apollo's theory. Hogan expresses uncertainty:

It is difficult to say whether his [Aischylos's] audience would have found it novel, and it is not at all certain that Greek males, even given the claims of patrilineal descent, would so easily have dismissed the mother's part in procreation. [...] There are some ambiguities we must live with.¹¹

⁵ Verrall, 1908, p. 121.

⁶ Mitchell-Boyask, 2009, p. 76.

⁷ McDonald, 2010, p. 476.

⁸ Conacher, 1987, p. 209.

⁹ Winnington-Ingram, 1983, p. 123.

¹⁰ Solmsen, 1995, p. 193.

¹¹ Hogan, 1984, pp. 171-172.

Sommerstein's response to the passage is similar, deeming that the ancient audience found the λόγος fallacious, but nonetheless, an impressive form of argumentation.¹² Apollo, in these readings, is engaged in clever sophistry, using persuasive language to convince his audience of a false theory.¹³ It is an example of verbal trickery.¹⁴ The Olympians and Orestes are victors since they succeed at persuading the court. Their victory is what matters.

I offer the view that Apollo's λόγος is more than simply a lawyer's trick, a means to end the trial in Orestes's favour. The tension evoked by Apollo's λόγος, I suggest, subverts the possibility of a definitive resolution to the trilogy. Apollo's theory is a site of instability within the tragedy, providing an opportunity for the spectators to scrutinise the ideology that underlies order in Aischylos's Athens. In this dissertation, I shall analyse the discourse surrounding sexual reproduction in the *Oresteia*, arguing that Aischylos's nuanced treatment of the issue destabilises the hierarchies promoted by Apollo and Athena at the trilogy's close. Through textual analysis of the play, I argue that Aischylos problematises Apollo and Athena's defense of Orestes, and hence the entire conclusion of the *Oresteia*, allowing the interpretation that Athenian democratic institutions are perhaps not perfect and the subordination of female to male is problematic.

Aischylos's tragedies are mostly presented as conservative, especially in contrast to later Euripidean tragedy. Zeitlin argues that Euripides "refused to honour" Aischylos's conformist resolutions in the *Oresteia*.¹⁵ I suggest that Aischylos's text is in fact part of, rather than the target of, a subversive and critical tradition. If this is the case, as I suspect it is, we should perhaps also conclude that problematising dominant ideologies and social hierarchies is not a Euripidean innovation but that this feature was embedded in the genre as early as Aischylos.

I shall begin in Chapter 1 by reviewing the main interpretations of the *Oresteia* with the aim of situating my own reading. Following this is a detailed discussion in Chapter 2 of the significance of the issue of sexual reproduction in the conclusion of the *Eumenides*. I argue that since Athena's motherless birth motivates her decision to acquit Orestes and placate the Erinyes, the resolution of conflict essentially rests on defining the relationship between mother and child. In Chapter 3, I shall interrogate the

¹² Sommerstein, 1989, p. 208.

¹³ Vellacott, 1991, p. 86.

¹⁴ Kennedy, 1994, p. 14.

¹⁵ Zeitlin, 2005, p. 201.

discourses surrounding sexual reproduction in Aischylos's Athens. My purpose in doing so is to reveal the uncertainty in contemporary discussions of the matter. Aischylos was gesturing towards a topical debate that was open to interpretation and negotiation, rendering Apollo's λόγος inherently contentious.

From this, I shall proceed to analyse the language of Apollo's λόγος more closely in Chapter 4. The terminology Apollo employs has complex significance in the context of the trilogy as a whole. I aim to show how Apollo's reformulation of terms used earlier in the drama is troubling. In Chapter 5, I continue to focus on the text of the *Oresteia*, exploring the imagery and metaphors the playwright employs to elucidate the relationship between child and parent. I argue that Apollo's λόγος clashes violently with the poet's earlier treatment of maternity.

In Chapters 6 to 8, I move on to focus on Apollo's τεκμήριον. I argue that Aischylos assumes his audience have knowledge of Hesiod's account of Athena's birth. Systematic allusions to Hesiod's *Theogony* throughout the *Oresteia* suggest that the audience is led to interpret Apollo's τεκμήριον through the lens of Hesiod for whom Athena has a mother, the goddess Metis. I conclude by identifying some of the implications of Aischylos's apparent manipulation of Hesiodic myth and the omission of Metis from Apollo's theory of parentage.

Chapter 1

Responses to the *Oresteia*

In this chapter, I shall provide a survey of modern perspectives on Aischylos's *Oresteia* with a view to framing my own approach. It is routinely argued that the *Oresteia* affirms the Athenian status quo.¹ The trilogy envisions a development from violent conflict to societal restoration, achieved by the intervention of Athens's deity and her law court. At the Areiopagos court, the family feud presented in the *Agamemnon* and the *Libation Bearers* is finally resolved. After the Erinyes cease their opposition, a triumphant march leads them to their new home beneath the Areiopagos. As Aischylos's audience witnessed the parade, they were perhaps reminded of the Panathenaic procession, their principal festival honouring Athena, and stirred into patriotic fervor. The final words of the play, delivered by Athena, call upon the audience to celebrate: "now raise a cry of triumph to crown our song!" (ὄλολύξατέ νυν ἐπὶ μολπαῖς, *Eum.* 1047, trans. Sommerstein, 2008b). The optimism generated by the play's ending is reflected in modern analyses. Podlecki describes the drama as "a *tour de force* of reconciliation."² According to Finley, the movement of the plot reflects "the struggle of history towards a new order."³ In this interpretation, Aischylos's *Oresteia* offers comfort and validation by producing an image of Athens which is progressive, peaceful and hopeful, or as Mitchell-Boyask puts it, "a better world."⁴

Aischylos's Areiopagos

The *Eumenides* dramatises civic and legal processes while providing a charter myth for the Areiopagos court. Furthermore, it commemorates an alliance between the city-states of Argos and Athens. Aischylos directly alludes to a real Athenian institution alongside recent developments in Athenian external affairs. The play depicts the internal workings of the renowned Areiopagos court, a longstanding Athenian institution which had been significantly altered during the emergence of democracy. The powers once exercised by the Areopagites are described concisely in the *Constitution of the Athenians* falsely ascribed to Aristotle:

¹ For example, Collard, 2002; Gagarin, 1976; Macleod, 1982; Meier, 1990; Mitchell-Boyask, 2009; Podlecki, 1966; Solmsen, 1995.

² Podlecki, 1966, p. 77.

³ Finley, 1955, p. 286.

⁴ Mitchell-Boyask, 2009, p. 106.

ἡ δὲ βουλὴ ἢ ἐξ Ἀρείου πάγου φύλαξ ἦν τῶν νόμων καὶ διετήρει τὰς ἀρχάς, ὅπως κατὰ τοὺς νόμους ἄρχωσιν. ἐξῆν δὲ τῷ ἀδικουμένῳ πρὸς τὴν τῶν Ἀρεοπαγιτῶν βουλήν εἰσαγγέλλειν, ἀποφαίνοντι παρ' ὃν ἀδικεῖται νόμον.

The Council of Areiopagos was guardian of the laws, and kept a watch on the magistrates to make them govern in accordance with the laws. A person unjustly treated might lay a complaint before the Council of the Areopagites, stating the law in contravention of which he was treated unjustly.

(*Const. Ath.* 4.4, trans. Rackman, 1971)

The Council of Areopagites oversaw some of the most important affairs and issues in Athens. They had the power to try and punish offenders as they wished (*Const. Ath.* 8). Before Solon's reforms in the sixth century BC, the Areopagites even selected magistrates for office (*Const. Ath.* 8). Isokrates adds in the *Areopagiticus* that the Areopagites, being exclusively men of high birth, supervised decorum and behaviour in Athens (*Areo.* 7.37). Throughout the Persian Wars and for the couple of decades after, the Areopagites continued to be an authoritative body in Athens and guardians of the city-state's laws (*Const. Ath.* 25.1).

However, the influence of the Areopagites was reduced following radical reforms instigated by Ephialtes in 462 BC, only four years prior to the first staging of the *Oresteia*. The reformed Areiopagos Council saw trials for deliberate murder, wounding, death by poison and arson, and oversaw investigations into corruption, but all other cases were handled by other courts (*Const. Ath.* 57.3, Dinarchus's *Against Demosthenes* 1.4). In the *Politics*, Aristotle suggests that the impetus behind this curbing of elite influence was the growing prestige of Athens's fleet. Lower class citizens were actively involved in the naval victories which defeated the Persians, and in return, were demanding more power in their *polis* (*Pol.* 1274a). The reorganization of the Areiopagos received opposition, resulting in Ephialtes's assassination (*Const. Ath.* 25.4), but the new court was highly venerated in other quarters. In *Against Leokrates*, for example, Lykourgos flatters the Areopagites, referring to the reformed Areiopagos as "the greatest bulwark of the city" and commending the councilors' meticulousness (μεγίστην τότε γενέσθαι τῇ πόλει σωτηρίαν, *Ag. Leo.* 52, trans. Burt, 1973). Aeschines, writing later in the fourth century BC, recommends a pious Areopagite in *Against Timarchus*, deeming him worthy of the Council (*Ag. Tim.* 1.81).

Commentators on Aischylos's *Oresteia* have interpreted the playwright's stance on the reform of the Areiopagos in different ways. Some imagine Aischylos as a

conservative supporter of the old Areiopagos. Conacher, for example, interprets the *Eumenides* as a critique of Ephialtes's reform of the Areiopagos court. The great honour attributed to the court in the drama, he claims, challenges Ephialtes's attempts to downgrade its authority.⁵ It is more commonly claimed, however, that Athena's celebration of the Areiopagos court in the *Eumenides* construes a mythical charter for the post-Ephialtean Areiopagos and acts as a warning to citizens to not allow the court powers beyond judging homicide cases.⁶ The *Eumenides* is thus read as an endorsement of the introduction of radical democracy and the curbing of elite power. Some have gone as far as arguing that the final play disrupts the dramatic unity of the trilogy, concluding that the playwright made artistic sacrifices in order to honour the new democratic institution.⁷ Livingstone refers to the closing lines of the trilogy as "stitched on," deeming them inconsistent with the preceding text.⁸ Aischylos, in this reading, was primarily concerned with propagating his partisan message.

Defining Democracy

These readings of the drama are not without modern implications. The *Oresteia* tends to feature prominently in modern discourses which claim Classical Athens as the birthplace of Western political values. During the nineteenth century, the disciplines of classics, anthropology and archaeology emerged and became powerful instruments in the service of defining European selves and nations in opposition to their colonised 'primitive' other. European intellectuals turned to other cultures of earlier historical periods, primarily Greece, in an effort to construct their European heritage. Detienne suggests that ancient Greek culture continues to define Western identity:

Greece remains the birthplace of the West and of all the values that conservatives the world over defend with equal vigour. The Greeks, who were once scattered tribes throughout a thousand and one motley cities, have become *our* Greeks: it is in them that our Western autochthony must be founded and rooted. [...] The West's declared claim [is that] it has always been exceptional, on account of its purely Greek values.⁹

Following the publication of Grote's *A History of Greece* (1846), political thinkers

⁵ Conacher, 1987, pp. 202-204.

⁶ Collard, 2002, p. xix; Macleod, 1982, p. 144; Podlecki, 1966, pp. 94-100.

⁷ Macleod, 1982, p. 124.

⁸ Livingstone, 1925, pp. 123-124.

⁹ Detienne, 2007, p. 7.

claimed the model of Athenian direct democracy as a precursor to the modern model of representative democracy.¹⁰ Athenian democracy provides a historical perspective in studies of modern democracy.¹¹ Grote conducted an extensive study of Athenian history, crediting Kleisthenes with imparting “political franchise to the excluded mass” in Athens.¹² His depiction of Athenian democracy offered a paradigm for a revolutionary and egalitarian concept of politics. Modern democracy, it was then held, had its origins in Athens.

Nineteenth century political theorists looked to ancient Athens for a model of politics which opposed the values of earlier European aristocratic societies. Referencing the writings of Thucydides and Demosthenes, political movements reclaimed the term ‘democracy,’ lending the term purely positive connotations. The values of liberty, equality and freedom of speech, central to direct democracy in Classical Athens, became principal values of the modern nation state. For promoters of European grand narratives claiming the supremacy of democracy, the *Oresteia* offers a celebration and record of the early formation of democracy through its explicit depiction of a charter myth for the democratic court system. The trilogy, when read as a tale of suppressing chaotic tyrannical forces, supports Enlightenment ideals regarding the transcendence of reason and justice over disorder and despotism. Aischylos’s *Oresteia*, it is claimed, marks the development from particularist forces to citizenship. Meier credits the Athenians as the creators of political freedom.¹³ Aischylos’s contribution, in his reading, was to perceive and celebrate the historical moment when European democracy was born.¹⁴ Endeavouring to locate an origin for Western democracy and promote its status as the supreme order of government, such interpretations of Aischylos’s *Oresteia* emphasise the significance of the political reconciliation at the close of the trilogy, focusing on the achievements of the democratic court and hopeful vision of Athens’s future, and pay less attention to other themes in the drama and dissonances which may complicate interpretation.

¹⁰ Hansen, 2004, p. 224.

¹¹ Hansen, 1991, p. 1.

¹² Grote, 2001, p. 76.

¹³ Meier, 1990, p. 7.

¹⁴ Meier, 1990, p. 137.

ἐς μέσον

Commentators who subscribe to the optimistic ending of Aischylos's trilogy nevertheless have noted various tensions in the final play. Much scholarship has been devoted to the split vote in the trial scene where Orestes's acquittal is wholly reliant upon Athena's additional vote.¹⁵ The decision reached by the majority of Areopagites is not honoured, though it is their institution which the drama claims to celebrate. This is a very odd way to inaugurate this pillar of democracy. Porter explains:

The Court of the Areiopagos, this crowning Athenian achievement, comes into being without a word from an Athenian citizen, and the collective impact of the votes cast by its human jurors pales before that of the single vote cast by Athena.¹⁶

I shall examine this issue fully in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. Analyses of other tensions within the text also suggest that while the plot moves towards the resolution of conflict, the playwright's celebratory ending is not without problems. The optimistic ending of the trilogy seems suspicious and unexpected given the complexity which precedes it. The ongoing debates amongst scholars over Aischylos's 'party-line' are in themselves suggestive of how easily the text evades the extraction of a straightforward perspective. As Hall rightly notes, "Aischylos has clothed his primeval Areiopagos in mythical and poetic dress which is so consciously *ambiguous* that it can sustain any interpretation."¹⁷ Aischylos's skill, I shall maintain in this dissertation, is in his ambiguity; he is not a propagandist.

Due to the difficulty in deciphering the political message in Aischylos's drama, a difficulty which is inherent to tragedy's agonistic and self-questioning form, Macleod argues that tragedy should be read as an analysis of the human condition, rather than in its political context:

The function of tragedy in its social and historical context is not to comment directly on the times, but to raise to universality and touch with emotion the experience of the dramatist and his fellow citizens, to interpret in myth and drama their deepest concerns as human beings.¹⁸

¹⁵ Gagarin, 1976, pp. 77-78.

¹⁶ Porter, 2005, p. 305.

¹⁷ Hall, 2010, p. 226.

¹⁸ Macleod, 1982, p. 131.

Nevertheless, Macleod, like other critics, evaluates Aischylos's political position: "[Aischylos] clearly accepts the Areiopagos as Ephialtes reconstituted it and the Argive alliance."¹⁹ This implies that the historical context cannot be ignored. As poignant as tragedy's emotion may be for a modern audience, overlooking the political dimension of drama risks missing the function tragedians intended their plays to have in the specific context of fifth century BC Athens. The final play of the *Oresteia* is set in Athens precisely because it has something to say to its Athenian audience. The trial and the pacification of the Erinyes have consequence for the Athenian *polis*.

In his illuminating essay, 'Civic Ideology and the Problem of Difference: The Politics of Aeschylean Tragedy, Once Again,' Goldhill cautions the reader against ignoring the "politicization of [tragedy's] emotions."²⁰ The emotion in drama, he claims, adds to the text by undermining, emphasizing and destabilising its resolutions. In this way, the *Oresteia* elicits various responses from its spectators and encourages discussion. Aischylos's *Oresteia* is a radically political work, performed at the Greater Dionysia, a festival which in Athens was organised, financed and structured according to democratic ideals. Its audience represented the voting citizens of Athens, many of whom served as jurors and held political office. The playwright is an observer of Athens while at the same time exercising his duty as democratic citizen by creating a frame within which his audience can explore the workings of their *polis*.

Approaching Aischylos's text as a product of partisan patriotism greatly simplifies the purpose of his art. Dover warns that looking for the political views of poets in their plays is "seldom profitable and may be disastrous."²¹ This is because drama was defined by the democratic ideal of ἐς μέσον ("putting into the public domain to be contested").²² The theatre provided a formal setting to question civic ideology.²³ Drama, for the Greeks, was "democracy in action," a forum for openly analysing Athens's changing social, cultural and political landscape.²⁴ Tragedy's aim was to problematize, not to simply teach or affirm the audience.²⁵ It is in this way that the *Oresteia* is political. By focusing on tensions in the *polis*, Goldhill adds that tragedy offers "Dionysiac

¹⁹ Macleod, 1982, p. 144.

²⁰ Goldhill, 2000, p. 42.

²¹ Dover, 1957, p. 230.

²² Goldhill, 2004, p. 16. See *Il.* 23.574 and *Hdt.* 1.206 where ἐς μέσον refers to public discussion.

²³ Pelling, 1997, p. 235.

²⁴ Goldhill, 2000, p. 35.

²⁵ Goldhill, 1987, p. 74.

transgression,” thus paying homage to the god which the theatre festival was named after.²⁶

In his groundbreaking essay, ‘The Historical Moment of Tragedy in Greece’ (1972), Vernant asserts that the function of tragedy in its Athenian context was to explore and articulate the anxieties which were arising in a rapidly changing social system. According to Vernant, tragedy “confronts heroic values and ancient religious representations with the new modes of thought that characterise the advent of law within the city-state.”²⁷ The innovative theatrical form was created at a specific ‘moment’ in history, during the sixth century BC, and the conditions in which this phenomenon was born must be appreciated. The authority of the gods and codes of behaviour outlined by the poets Homer and Hesiod became topics of deliberation as civic law, democracy and new ideologies of human responsibility developed. Athenians held their myths in high regard, but the evolving political system introduced opposing discourses and values. Tragedy explores oppositions between religious, political and legal vocabularies, and questions the tensions and ambiguities inherent in changing Athenian concepts.²⁸

It was owing to this shift that tragedy was born in Athens. As Vernant explains, “Greek tragedy appears as a historical turning point precisely limited and dated. It is born, flourishes and degenerates in Athens, and all almost within the space of a hundred years.”²⁹ It was a site for cultural experimentation at a time of intense social transformation. The desire among modern critics to tease out a monolithic message from the Oresteian trilogy involves a misunderstanding of the function of Attic theatre as a democratic institution.³⁰ Such approaches fail to do justice to the richness of the text by isolating and prioritising the optimistic discourse of political resolution above the discourses of doubt, hesitation and injustice which also permeate the drama.

Victory for Men

The reconciliation at the close of the *Eumenides* has also led critics to conclusions about Aeschylus’s view on gender relations. The *Oresteia*, it is often argued, ultimately

²⁶ Goldhill, 1987, p. 76; Goldhill, 1992, p. 129.

²⁷ Vernant, 1981a, p. 4.

²⁸ Vernant, 1981b, p. 68.

²⁹ Vernant, 1981a, p. 2.

³⁰ Goldhill, 2000, p. 48.

reinforces and legitimates a male monopoly of power. The achievement of civic order occurs alongside the suppression of women.³¹ Case argues: “Western civilisation has followed the deciding gender judgments of Athenian culture in condemning women to a subservient role.”³² In this reading, the male values espoused by the gods in Aischylos’s drama are believed to have shaped modern society. Patriarchy was, as it were, born in Athens alongside democracy.

The conflict between male and female is a central theme throughout the plot of the *Oresteia*.³³ The trilogy’s explicit interest in sexual conflict has received scholarly attention since the nineteenth century. Early social historians read the clash between the male and the female (Agamemnon and Klytaimestra, Orestes and Klytaimestra, Apollo and the Erinyes) as a microcosm of a broader historical conflict between matriarchy and patriarchy. Bachofen’s *Mother Right* (1861) hypothesized that a historical development occurred in the ancient world whereby patriarchy replaced an earlier, more primitive matriarchal order.³⁴ Bachofen reads Aischylos’s *Oresteia* as a historical source to prove and illustrate this transition.³⁵ He argues: “in the adventures of Orestes, we find a reflection of the upheavals and struggles leading to the triumph of paternity over the chthonian-maternal principle.”³⁶ This poetic tradition, he claims, records “a memory of real experiences of the human race.”³⁷ The subordination of women in the *Eumenides*, it is argued, represents a precondition of civilized society.

Bachofen ignored any aspects of Aischylos’s trilogy which would have negated the historical paradigm he set out to prove. His reading was highly selective. For instance, Bowlby points out how two of the three crimes in the trilogy are committed by men, a pattern which does not fit with the notion that there is a clear progression from maternal rule to patriarchal rule.³⁸ Yet, Bachofen’s thesis had a profound impact on later theory. In the preface to the fourth edition of *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1891), Engels relies on Bachofen’s analysis of the *Oresteia* to exemplify his materialist explanation of women’s oppression. He agrees with Bachofen’s

³¹ Mitchell-Boyask, 2009, p. 108.

³² Case, 2008, p. 14.

³³ Rocco, 1997, p. 142.

³⁴ Zeitlin, 1996, p. 89.

³⁵ Cantarella, 1993, p. 5; Mitchell-Boyask, 2009, pp. 114-115.

³⁶ Bachofen, 1992, p. 110.

³⁷ Bachofen, 1992, p. 110.

³⁸ Bowlby, 2007, p. 5.

“absolutely correct interpretation of the *Oresteia*.”³⁹ In *Moses and Monotheism* (1937), Freud restates Bachofen’s view of history:

It came about that the matriarchal social order was succeeded by the patriarchal one—which, of course, involved a revolution in the juridical conditions that had so far prevailed. An echo of this revolution seems still to be audible in the *Oresteia* of Aischylos. But this turning from the mother to the father points in addition to a victory of intellectuality over sensuality—that is, an advance in civilization.⁴⁰

For Freud, like Bachofen, the development from matriarchy to patriarchy marked a momentous achievement for humanity. These thinkers looked to the *Oresteia* to understand their current social organization and explain the inferior social position of women. They posited an earlier era when women were ‘free,’ but it was a primitive time which was, in Mitchell’s words, “pre-historic, pre-civilization.”⁴¹

For second-wave feminists in the twentieth century, Bachofen became a target of critique. In her celebrated work, *The Second Sex* (1949), de Beauvoir rebukes Bachofen for celebrating the shift from matriarchal to patriarchal rule, uncritically accepting Bachofen’s reading of the *Oresteia*: “only the father engenders [...] as Aischylos says. [...] In making posterity wholly his, man achieved domination of the world and subjugation of woman.”⁴² Likewise, in the classic feminist text, *Sexual Politics* (1970), Millett condemns the oppression of women in the historical paradigm drawn by Bachofen from Aischylos’s trilogy, among other sources, while accepting the paradigm as a given. The *Oresteia*, according to Millett, depicts “matriarchy’s last stand in the ancient world.”⁴³ Such analyses are flawed as they confuse Aischylos’s drama with Bachofen’s historical paradigm. The *Oresteia* is a fictional play which comments upon its particular social context, but it is not a rationalization of a real historical shift in sexual power relations.

Continuing to interpret the drama as prescriptive, even recent feminist critics have condemned the play for pursuing a misogynistic agenda, and Aischylos’s intentions have been flatly described as “the denigration of women.”⁴⁴ DuBois

³⁹ Engels, 2004, p. 30.

⁴⁰ Freud, 1964, pp. 113-114.

⁴¹ Mitchell, 1979, p. 366.

⁴² deBeauvoir, 1997, p. 111.

⁴³ Millett, 1971, p. 113.

⁴⁴ Thomas, 1998, p. 214.

denounces Aischylos as the “most misogynist” of the tragedians.⁴⁵ For Zeitlin, “the *Oresteia* stands squarely within the misogynistic tradition that pervades Greek thought.”⁴⁶ She argues that the trilogy endorses a “hierarchization of values” where the subordination of the feminine is presented as the just resolution to the play’s conflict.⁴⁷ In her study of women’s speech in Athenian drama, McClure proposes that Aischylos’s *Oresteia* converts the deceptive speech used by Klytaimestra into the divinely sanctioned speech of the law court.⁴⁸ Athena, as opposed to Klytaimestra, uses language as a means of reconciliation. Order is restored through the regulation of female speech.

Certainly, the outcome of the trial in the *Eumenides* is a victory for the male, achieved by the androgynous Athena. Millett condemns the goddess’s rhetoric and actions as “betray[ing] her kind.”⁴⁹ Some feminist readers rebuke Athena for using her power in the service of men, rather than women.⁵⁰ However, such criticisms assume an agreement between Athena and the playwright, and fail to give weight to the countercurrents in the play which undercut Athena’s preference for men.⁵¹ Critics ignore substantial ambiguities and tensions within the text which destabilize the hierarchy of male over female ordained by the Olympian gods. The *Oresteia* is targeted in feminist discourses without real engagement with the way in which the play itself comments upon the gender hierarchy it depicts.

Winnington-Ingram has already pointed out some of the tensions which problematise feminist criticisms of Aischylos’s trilogy. For instance, the female characters are depicted more favourably and in far greater complexity than the males: “interest and sympathy are concentrated upon the women in the *Agamemnon*, where, to set against Iphigeneia, Klytaimestra, and Cassandra, we have the humiliated Agamemnon and the ignominious Aigisthos.”⁵² Moreover, as already noted above, the majority of the human jurors support the condemnation of Orestes, casting doubt on the force of Apollo’s pro-male rhetoric.⁵³ And last but not least, Apollo’s theory of female biological inferiority leaves Klytaimestra’s claims to having carried, nourished, given

⁴⁵ duBois, 1988, p. 162.

⁴⁶ Zeitlin, 1996, p. 88.

⁴⁷ Zeitlin, 1996, p. 87.

⁴⁸ McClure, 1999, p. 72.

⁴⁹ Millett, 1971, p. 114.

⁵⁰ Deacy, 2008, p. 36.

⁵¹ Mitchell-Boyask, 2009, p. 117.

⁵² Winnington-Ingram, 1983, p. 128.

⁵³ Winnington-Ingram, 1983, p. 120.

birth to and nursed Orestes unaddressed.⁵⁴ It is precisely these maternal duties that Aischylos's trilogy focuses upon.

Goldhill has suggested further tensions within the text, arguing, for example, that since Athena is a character highly reminiscent of Klytaimestra, there remains the lingering threat of female disobedience at the trilogy's close.⁵⁵ It is still a potentially transgressive and powerful female who rules in the end. In *Language, Sexuality, Narrative: the Oresteia*, Goldhill points out that "the sexual and verbal ambiguity of Athena stands against the society of the polis which attempts to designate itself through such polarities as male/female, inside/outside."⁵⁶ Athena symbolizes transgression. The analyses of Winnington-Ingram and Goldhill show that Aischylos's exploration of sexual conflict is far more nuanced than most critics admit. Though Apollo and Athena support male interests, we cannot simply assume that the text as a whole promotes sexual prejudice. I shall show in this dissertation that there are in fact many more ambiguities which complicate Aischylos's treatment of gender relations in the *Oresteia*.

Psychoanalysing a Text

Psychoanalytic theory has also appropriated the *Oresteia* for its own purpose, using it to illustrate modern psychoanalytic concepts. Various psychoanalytic thinkers have found in the fabric of Aischylos's trilogy reflections of unconscious processes which still shape our modern lives and relationships. The final words of Klein's unfinished essay, 'Some Reflections on the *Oresteia*' (1963), offer the following observation:

I shall conclude with the tentative suggestion that the greatness of Aischylos's tragedies [...] derives from his intuitive understanding of the inexhaustible depth of the unconscious and the ways in which this understanding influences the characters and situations he creates.⁵⁷

For psychoanalytic theorists, the continuing relevance of Athenian tragedy is its expression of commonly shared impulses and desires. Following on from Freud's formative reading of Sophokles's *Oidipous the King* in the *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Klein turns her attention to Aischylos's *Oresteia*, suggesting that the trilogy articulates universal matricidal fantasies. Patriarchal culture sanctions a violent

⁵⁴ Winnington-Ingram, 1983, p. 124; Goldhill, 1986, p. 51.

⁵⁵ Goldhill, 2004, p. 41.

⁵⁶ Goldhill, 1984, p. 280.

⁵⁷ Klein, 1997, p. 299.

separation between mother and child.⁵⁸ It is for this reason that Oedipus's patricide results in the destruction of social order while Orestes's matricide leads to social restoration. Matricide, on a symbolic level, describes the subject's necessary departure from his/her mother.

The *Oresteia* has been cast by psychoanalytic thinkers as a model for understanding the social position of mothers and the role of symbolic matricide in forming subjectivities and social relations.⁵⁹ In Orestes's murder of Klytaimnestra, the resulting persecution by the Erinyes and the hero's eventual acquittal, theorists have seen illustrated the pattern by which all subjects construct their identities as separate from their mothers. Klein contends: "because Orestes has injured and killed his mother, she has become one of those injured objects whose revenge the child fears."⁶⁰ Along the same line, Kristeva has employed the *Oresteia* to elucidate her concept of abjection. The abject is that which every subject excludes or denies in constructing their identities.⁶¹ Since the mother reminds her child of his/her dependency on and origins in another body, she is excluded on a symbolic level. Klytaimnestra, for Kristeva, horrifies the audience by signifying abjection.

Green has claimed that Orestes's idealisation of his dead father is exemplary of the process by which sons inherit their patriarchal role from their fathers.⁶² On the other hand, both Kristeva and Cixous have focused on the relationship between Klytaimnestra and Elektra for what it reveals about the dynamics between modern mothers and their daughters.⁶³ Such approaches to Aeschylus's *Oresteia* are guided by an assumption that a universal, cross-cultural, transhistorical structure governs psychosexual development. Irigaray states explicitly, "what the *Oresteia* describes for us still takes place."⁶⁴ The *Oresteia* operates in these readings to confirm observations on modern psychosocial development. In fifth century BC tragedies, psychoanalytic thinkers claim we already find the repressed, unconscious desires of the modern subject, acted out for all to see.

In his essay, 'Oedipus without the Complex' (1967), Vernant challenges psychoanalysis's engagement with tragedy:

⁵⁸ Wieland, 2000, p. 27.

⁵⁹ Wieland, 2000, p. 13.

⁶⁰ Klein, 1997, p. 291.

⁶¹ Kristeva, 1982, p. 64.

⁶² Green, 1979, p. 50.

⁶³ Cixous, 1996, p. 110; Kristeva, 1986, p. 150.

⁶⁴ Irigaray, 1991, p. 37.

A theory elaborated on the basis of clinical cases and contemporary dreams is 'confirmed' by a dramatic text from another age. But the text can only provide this confirmation provided that it is itself interpreted by reference to the framework of the modern spectator's dream.⁶⁵

The method of analysis is circular as the text is cited only insofar as it 'proves' modern observations. The psychoanalytic reader's interpretative method presupposes that the material of the drama is structured in accordance with the oedipal framework, failing to acknowledge contradictions to that schema within the text.

For the psychoanalytic interpretative model not to be circular, unconscious structures would have to be theorized following close analysis of the text.⁶⁶ This is the strategy of Jacobs who in her recent study of the trilogy, *On Matricide: Myth, Psychoanalysis and the Law of the Mother* (2007), analyses the text to uncover unconscious structures not reducible to the oedipal pattern. Jacobs explains, "I use the *Oresteia* here as a way to reread Oidipous so that, rather than competing with Oidipous, it functions to expand the horizons of oedipal logic, to add something new to the frame."⁶⁷ The word "use" makes it clear that Jacobs's interest lies in how the text can be interpreted in a way that develops modern theory. Jacobs primarily analyses myths related to the Oresteian story which are omitted in Aischylos's play, such as the story of Metis, Athena's mother in Hesiod's *Theogony* (886-929). Jacobs argues that it is significant that Aischylos's Apollo omits Metis when discussing Athena's genealogy (*Eum.* 663-666) and that successive generations of modern critics continue to overlook this omission. Jacobs argues: "the Oresteian myth conceals within it the story of the incorporation of Metis."⁶⁸ Metis, for Jacobs, symbolizes a maternal law which submits all subjects to a limit by prohibiting them from believing they can reproduce autonomously.⁶⁹ The absence of Metis in the *Oresteia* gives birth to Apollo's notion that men can procreate without women. Metis is a reminder of the subject's reliance on the maternal body. It is this law which is hidden in Aischylos's text. By exploring this latent mythical structure, she argues, the dominance of the oedipal paradigm in cultural analysis, which posits that paternal law structures society, is naturally called into question, leading to a reorganisation of our current framework of analysis and the potential for societal transformation.

⁶⁵ Vernant, 1981b, p. 64.

⁶⁶ Vernant, 1981b, p. 64.

⁶⁷ Jacobs, 2007, p. 56.

⁶⁸ Jacobs, 2004, p. 25.

⁶⁹ Jacobs, 2007, p. 176.

Jacobs's study, however, fails to consider the possibility that the removal of Metis in the *Eumenides* may have been conscious and apparent to an ancient audience with different terms of reference. Her approach separates Aischylos's drama from the Classical Athenian social, political and cultural context in which it found expression, where the audience's conceptual frameworks and knowledge differed from our own. What is 'latent' from a modern viewpoint may not have been so in a different era. Her approach, in this sense, underestimates the audience's complicity in the making of meaning. Aischylos's ambiguities and silences lose their power in Jacobs's reading. While her study highlights the exclusions operating in our current dominant symbolic organisation and she offers some interesting analysis of Aischylos's trilogy, she does so, like other psychoanalytic readings, at the expense of simplifying the *Oresteia*.

In *Sowing the Body: Psychoanalysis and Ancient Representations of Women* (1988), duBois, like Vernant, reproaches psychoanalytic readings of Attic drama: "the desire to assimilate ancient and future cultures into our own, to assume a universal ahistorical version of socialisation [...] seems to me naive and ideologically suspect."⁷⁰ The practice, instituted by Freud, of relying on ancient Greek texts to illustrate or justify psychoanalytic concepts, reveals a "colonizing attitude" where the dissimilarity of other cultures from our own is denied in favour of producing a discourse of sameness and universality to lend justification and 'objectivity' to our contingent views and models.⁷¹ Khanna concurs with the sentiments expressed by duBois, deeming psychoanalysis a colonial discourse.⁷²

DuBois stresses how studying drama can teach us the very otherness of Athenian culture and emphasize the radical changes which have occurred throughout history.⁷³ By challenging psychoanalysis's assumption of a static past, present and future, where the same structures determine subjectivities and hierarchies, we can be more optimistic about transformations occurring in our future sociosymbolic economy. As duBois articulates, "a different reading of Greek culture may decenter and defamiliarize our own ahistorical mythologies of gender hierarchy."⁷⁴ However, though psychoanalytic theory is limiting in its universalizing and homogenizing of cultures, it remains an invaluable tool for conducting analysis. Further, it considers how tragedy

⁷⁰ duBois, 1988, p. 16.

⁷¹ duBois, 1988, pp. 18-19.

⁷² Khanna, 2003, pp. 5-6.

⁷³ duBois, 1988, p. 17.

⁷⁴ duBois, 1988, p. 29.

reproduces cultural norms and offers a methodology for locating tragedy in the modern world. Athenian tragedy, as a result, has become a means for thinking about issues in the present.

A Tense Conclusion

My survey of modern reactions to Aischylos's trilogy has been largely critical of approaches which posit or imply that the conflicts in the drama are soundly resolved, and further, that the certainty of the resolution promotes a partisan political agenda of one sort or another. Further, I have argued that using the *Oresteia* to support modern concepts and theories limits how we read the drama. I am more interested in the tensions and peculiarities in Aischylos's trilogy. Like Goldhill, I read the *Oresteia* as a drama which revolves around ambiguities.⁷⁵ However, I acknowledge that my interest in the play's ambiguity, openness and unresolved elements also aligns with a particular modern trend in classical scholarship.

Originally, I came to Aischylos's *Oresteia* from an interest in feminist studies and a desire to explore how the female body and female subjectivities were culturally represented in fifth century BC Athens. The trilogy, just as it has inspired other feminists and scholars, provided me with a medium to analyse gender norms in a world different from my own, as a means to investigating the arbitrary and unfixed nature of modern practices and categories. This aspiration and interest is a consequence of my personal position in a society that has been radically altered in recent decades by the impact of feminist activism and LGBTQ movements. One effect of these societal developments on scholarship has been a greater focus on gender and sexuality with a view to revising what are regarded as exclusions in earlier studies. Postmodernism informs my approach too and explains my scepticism of critical approaches which posit true, stable and certain readings of the text or its author's intentions. My interest is not in the 'true' meaning intended by Aischylos, but in how we currently speak about that past, what is at stake for us as modern readers and the meanings that emerge when we become critical of our hegemonic frameworks of enquiry.

I look to the past and the socio-political, cultural and literary context of the *Oresteia* as a way to offer another perspective from which to appreciate the trilogy and

⁷⁵ Goldhill, 1986, p. 47

bring into relief the contingency of our own interpretative position. My approach is somewhat akin to that of duBois: “my interest *is* in the classical world *as an other* [...] about which we construct an allegory, an interested narrative that speaks to our own situation.”⁷⁶ My reading differs from others who find tensions in the *Oresteia* as I posit Apollo’s λόγος as the locus for this instability. The issue of which parent, male or female, has more influence in childbearing is contentious in the drama. Aischylos’s intricate engagement with the issue of gender, procreation and parenting complicates the trilogy’s conclusion, opening up the play to be interpreted in conflicting ways. I shall show how the gods’ celebration of the court system and their bias against women is not the only line of thought in the trilogy’s conclusion. The controversy over creation and origins at the heart of the trilogy frustrates the Olympian solution and any wishes we may have as an audience to draw from the trilogy a straightforward message. Having reviewed other readings of the *Oresteia* in this chapter, I shall make clear how integral the theme of parenting is in the trilogy in the next chapter. In Chapter 2, I analyse how Athena relationship with her parent, Zeus, and the circumstances of her birth, motivates her decision to acquit Orestes and defeat the Erinyes. While the jury are not worn over by Apollo’s λόγος against maternity, Athena’s bond with her father inspires her to favour Orestes, thus legitimating matricide and determining the conclusion of the play.

⁷⁶ duBois, 1988, p. 26.

Chapter 2

A Decisive Bias

In this chapter, I shall establish the significance of the issue of parentage in Aeschylus's trilogy. Apollo's theory that only men procreate shapes the action thereafter. I shall predominantly analyse Athena's reaction to Apollo's theory, since it is Athena that brings about the resolution. Athena returns to Apollo's λόγος, supporting his male bias and broadly affirming his narrative of her motherless birth (*Eum.* 736-740). This bias motivates her decision to exonerate Orestes and refuse the Erinyes their revenge. Hence, Apollo's rhetoric becomes a commanding ideology, uniting the Olympians and molding a gender hierarchy which determines that Orestes goes unpunished and the Erinyes are subjugated. The issue of the male's dominance in sexual reproduction emerges as decisive.

I shall discuss the function of Athena's vote for Orestes and her decree that equal votes will secure his acquittal. Athena's vote and decree are crucial in my analysis of the *Eumenides*. If Athena acquits Orestes because of her preference for men, continuing the logic introduced by Apollo's λόγος, then Orestes's release is a result not of human deliberation but of the Olympian commitment to a fantasy of male autonomous procreation. I argue that her vote is critical, which is a view supported by other commentators.¹ However, other critics posit her vote as a 'casting' vote which has a purely symbolic function, thus minimizing Athena's influence.² In these readings, the human jury decides the case. Athena gives her vote as a gesture to break a tie reached by the jury. Her vote is a "tie breaking vote."³ Hester argues that this is the standard modern understanding of the voting.⁴ I shall closely analyse and draw out the conflicting modern interpretations of Athena's vote, pointing out the limitations of certain readings, thus establishing that the text soundly supports my view that Athena overturns the decision of the human jury and decides the trial's resolution in accordance with an Olympian ideology of paternal supremacy.

¹ Commentators who concur with my interpretation of the voting scene include: Gagarin, 1975, pp. 122-123; Hall, 2010, p. 222; Loraux, 1995, p. 189; Mitchell-Boyask, 2009, p. 84; Porter, 2005, p. 305; Rocco, 1997, p. 158; Rosenbloom, 1995, p. 116; Sommerstein, 1989, p. 225; Vellacott, 1991, p. 88.

² Some of these commentators include: Conacher, 1987, pp. 164-167; Fagles, 1977, p. 327; Hester, 1981, pp. 265-274; Podlecki, 1989, pp. 211-213; Seaford, 1995, pp. 208-217; Thomson, 1938, p. 298; Verrall, 1908, pp. xxvii-xxix.

³ Kitto, 1966, p. 19.

⁴ Hester, 1981, p. 265.

Judge and President

As the trial scene comes to an end, the jury cast their votes, but before the ballots are counted, Athena announces that she will be “the last to judge this case” (λοισθίαν κρῖναι δίκην, *Eum.* 734, trans. Sommerstein, 2008b). She will be an agent of κρίσις. Earlier, Athena assigned the Areopagites the duty of κρίσις (*Eum.* 682), to “choose,” to “decide,” to “judge.” Now, she decides to join them. The language she uses communicates explicitly that her vote is in no way different from the rest of the jurors. She says that the duty of the jurors is “judging [...the] trial” (δίκας κρίνοντες, *Eum.* 682), while her own task is to “judge this case” (κρῖναι δίκην, *Eum.* 734). Furthermore, Athena adds that she is the “last” (λοισθίαν, *Eum.* 734) to judge. She is the final voter from a group. She is not performing a separate action, but completing an action already carried out by the other jurors. Athena casts the final vote in favour of Orestes: “I shall cast this ballot for Orestes” (ψηφον δ’ Ὀρέστη τήνδ’ ἐγὼ προσθήσομαι, *Eum.* 735). She throws her ψηφος into the count. This action alerts the audience that Athena is partial. She supports the defence over the prosecution.

This display of prejudice is in some ways surprising. The last words Athena delivered to the jurors suggested that she would not be judging the case: “now you must rise, deliver your votes, and decide the case, respecting your oath. I have said my say” (ὀρθοῦσθαι δὲ χρῆ / καὶ ψηφον αἴρειν καὶ διαγῶναι δίκην / αἰδουμένους τὸν ὄρκον. εἴρηται λόγος, *Eum.* 708-710). Her λόγος was supposedly complete. Athena earlier made clear that she would not have a say in the decision of the court as she feared her intervention would inspire further hostility: “the matter is too great for any mortal who may think he can decide it; but neither is it proper for me to judge a case of murder which can give rise to fierce wrath” (τὸ πρᾶγμα μεῖζον, εἴ τις οἶεται τόδε / βροτὸς διαιρεῖν. οὐδὲ μὴν ἐμοὶ θέμις / φόνου δικάζειν ὄξυμηνίτους δίκας, *Eum.* 470-472). This statement is loaded; Athena acknowledges a higher force of justice, θέμις, which she would be violating. Only a little earlier, Athena spoke out against injuring others since such behaviour was also not θέμις (*Eum.* 413-414).

θέμις refers to divine law, a primal law which differs from νόμος, the law and custom recognized as human creations. In the *Eumenides*, the goddess Themis is the daughter of Gaia and Apollo’s predecessor at Delphi (*Eum.* 2-5), advising humans on divine law through her oracle. Her intelligence surpasses others. Hence, Themis is αἰπυμήτης in the *Prometheus Bound* (18); she has high thoughts or high μῆτις. Hesiod

narrates how in union with Zeus, Themis gave birth to, amongst others, Eunomia (Lawfulness), Eirene (Peace), the Moirai (Destinies) and Dike, Justice herself (*Th.* 901-906). She is the source of all human institutions of justice, preceding them and engendering them as it were. According to Homer, Themis directs men's assemblies (*Od.* 2.68) and summons the assemblies of gods (*Il.* 20.4). In the *Olympian Odes*, Pindar proclaims that Themis and Zeus together aid humans in judging difficult cases (*Pind. O.* 8.21-29).

There are frequent mentions of θέμις in the *Oresteia*. The chorus of elders in the *Agamemnon* request θέμις from Klytaimestra (*Ag.* 98). They wish to be given proper and correct information. But when she responds and tells them of the destruction of Troy, they do not understand her words (*Ag.* 268-269), gesturing towards Klytaimestra's dishonesty which is revealed later (*Ag.* 1372-1373). The queen presents lies rather than θέμις. Agamemnon argues that his sacrifice of Iphigeneia was ordained by θέμις (*Ag.* 216-217), while Klytaimestra in turn swears an oath that her murder of Agamemnon was conducted with θέμις (*Ag.* 1431-1432). Both characters are eager to claim that θέμις justifies their actions in order to evade punishment. They understand that to violate θέμις is to provoke divine wrath; punishment is hence meted out to both. Athena's claim that it would not be θέμις for her to judge murder (*Eum.* 471-472) sets up the scene so that her later decision to vote is controversial. Her judgement violates divine law.

On the other hand, the prosecution and the defence wish for Athena to decide the verdict, so the audience are prepared for this prospect. Both Apollo and the Erinyes ask Athena to judge the case (*Eum.* 434-435, 580-581). Apollo addresses the court as "Pallas, and you who are sitting with her to decide this case by your votes" (Παλλάς, οἳ τ' ἐφήμενοι / ψήφῳ διαρεῖν τοῦδε πράγματος πέρι, *Eum.* 629-630). His address is vague concerning Athena's exact role but it could be interpreted that Athena will have the same task as the jurors, to judge the case.⁵ Similarly, the Erinyes, when answering a question from Athena, instruct that the ξένοι respect their oath when they cast their votes, implying that they believe Athena is part of the jury (*Eum.* 679-680).⁶ Hence, it is not entirely unexpected that Athena will vote.

This confusion in the text over whether Athena will judge the case or not is a result of the ambiguous role she performs in the court. She serves different functions in

⁵ Sommerstein, 1989, p. 201.

⁶ Sommerstein, 1989, p. 212.

the scene. While Aischylos depicts Athena as a member of the voting jury, he also makes it clear that she rules over the court. Athena, as president, delivers an ordination speech (*Eum.* 681-708), marking the foundation of the court. She is courteous from the beginning with her use of the optative κλύοιτε, inviting those present to listen (*Eum.* 681). However, she refers to her audience as Ἀττικὸς λεώς (*Eum.* 681), a choice of phrasing which communicates that she is the leader. The Pythia earlier referred to the Delphians who welcomed Apollo as λεώς (*Eum.* 15). Orestes's subjects are the Ἀργεῖος λεώς (*Eum.* 290). The term λεώς refers not simply to “people,” but to people as distinguished from their superior.⁷ Haubold defines the term as “a social world in need of support.”⁸ It denotes a group of people under their guardian. Athena confirms her authority when she calls her audience “my townsmen” (ἐμοῖς... / ἀστοῖσιν, *Eum.* 707-708), reiterating words she employed earlier (ἀστῶν τῶν ἐμῶν, *Eum.* 487). She also addresses the Athenians as “Aigeus’s army” (Αἰγέως στρατῶ, *Eum.* 683), as though she is speaking as a military commander. With the mention of Aigeus, father of Theseus, Athena introduces Athens’s legendary king. Her words link Athens’s glorious past with its promising future under the protection of the new court (*Eum.* 683-684).

Athena’s reference to the Amazonomachy further commends the Athenians in the context of inaugurating the new justice system. The goddess proclaims:

ἔσται δὲ καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν Αἰγέως στρατῶ
αἰεὶ δικαστῶν τοῦτο βουλευτήριον
πάγον δ’ Ἄρειον τόνδ’, Ἀμαζόνων ἔδραν 685
σκηνάς θ’, ὅτ’ ἦλθον Θησέως κατὰ φθόνον
στρατηλατοῦσαι, καὶ πόλιν νεόπολιν
τήνδ’ ὑψίπυργον ἀντεπύργωσαν τότε,
Ἄρει δ’ ἔθυον, ἔνθεν ἔστ’ ἐπώνυμος
πέτρα πάγος τ’ Ἄρειος. 690

In time to come also, the people of Aigeus will always have this council of judges. (They will sit on) this hill of Ares, the abode and camping place of the Amazons when they came as invaders, out of jealousy of Theseus, fortified this new citadel with high walls opposite the existing citadel, and sacrificed to Ares, whence this crag and hill was given the name Areiopagos [‘Hill of Ares’]. (*Eum.* 683-690)

⁷ Homer, for instance, uses *leōs* to refer to the subjects of a leader or captain (*Il.* 2.365, 13.108, *Od.* 3.214).

⁸ Haubold, 2000, p. x.

Athena here offers a somewhat surprising aetiology, forming a unique explanation for the name Areiopagos, ‘Hill of Ares.’ The more common story of the foundation of the Areiopagos court depicts how the war god Ares was first to be put on trial for murdering Poseidon’s son, Halirrothius, but was acquitted by a jury of Olympian gods.⁹ Aischylos is more or less forced to formulate a different aetiology since the first figure judged in his Areiopagos court is not Ares, but Orestes. According to Athena, the name commemorates the Amazonian invasion. Images of the Amazonomachy fill the west metopes of the Parthenon, constructed in the decades following the original performance of Aischylos’s *Oresteia*, demonstrating how important this battle was to the Athenians. It was likewise a common subject in vase paintings.¹⁰ Herodotos recounts the Amazonomachy as a great Athenian victory (Hdt. 9.27.4). The legend paralleled their historic defeat over their Persian invaders.¹¹ The Amazonomachy marked the Athenians as the antithesis to all barbarian and effeminate cultures to the east.¹²

However, Athena’s focus in the *Eumenides* is not on Theseus’s victory. In fact, she does not even mention it. I suggest that part of the reason why Athena gives the Amazons prime attention is because they are warrior maidens like her. Athena enters the play as a warrior, having just claimed the property she won at Troy (*Eum.* 397-402). She describes the Amazons too as skilled warriors; they came to Athens as an army and fortified their camp (*Eum.* 687-688). Athena and the Amazons behave like men, inherently destabilising societal gender norms. The Amazons’ motivation for invading Athens was ill-will towards Theseus (Θησεώς κατὰ φθόνον, *Eum.* 686). With this vague description, Athena does not explain their wrath against Athens’s legendary hero. The audience, however, are aware of the story of how Theseus carried away Antiope, an Amazon princess, and took her to Athens.¹³ Pseudo-Apollodoros records how the Amazons in revenge took up camp on the Areiopagos to storm the Akropolis (Apollod. *Epit.* 1.16). Just as Athena fought in Troy to bring back Helen for Menelaos, the Amazons marched to Athens to recover Antiope.

The Amazons are not only the epitome of female warriors, they are also παρθένοι; they do not get married (Hdt. 4.114). Athena, also a παρθένος, makes it clear

⁹ Apollod. 3.14.2, Dem. 23.66, *El.* 1258-1261, *IT* 945-946, Paus.1.21.4. See Gantz, 1996, p. 81.

¹⁰ *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae (LIMC)*, 1988, pp. 469-471 Vol. I 2, Amazonas 232-242.

¹¹ Stewart, 1995, p. 582.

¹² Castriota, 1992, p. 143.

¹³ See Gantz, 1996, pp. 282-283 for textual and visual sources.

later in the *Eumenides* that she never intends to marry (*Eum.* 737). The Amazons and Athena share the qualities of ἀνδρεία and παρθένεια, which sets them apart from other women.¹⁴ In the *Eumenides*, the Amazons give the court its name and Athena establishes its authority. The court which will protect all Athenians is indebted to Athena and warrior women like her, transgressive women who reject Athenian gender roles. Their role is not reducible to the *oikos* or childbearing. In effect, these are women not affected by Apollo's λόγος. While Apollo's theory insults Athenian mothers, it does not undermine Athena herself.

Athena's allusion to the Amazonomachy also resonates with earlier words in the *Eumenides*. Apollo compared Klytaimestra to an Amazon (*Eum.* 627-628). Hence, Athena's foundation speech for the Areiopagos reminds the audience of Klytaimestra's murder of Agamemnon. Athena finds a place for honouring the Amazons in her court, but also embedded in her speech is a reminder of Klytaimestra's violence. The Amazons, while like Athena, are also like Klytaimestra. Just as the Amazons were defeated, so will be those representing Klytaimestra. Aischylos is implicitly foreshadowing his own conclusion. The case of matricide is judged in the same place that Theseus defeated the Amazons. Just as Theseus was victorious, so will be Orestes against the Erinyes.¹⁵ As the opponents of the hero of Athens, the Amazons are opponents of the state. The male hero protects the *polis* while women threaten its security.¹⁶ In essence, the ferocious Erinyes are Orestes's Amazons. Castriota adds that the function of the Amazon myth is to promote "the repression or containment of women by autochthonous males."¹⁷ Also, like the Amazons, the Erinyes are παρθένοι. They are "childless" (ἄπαιδες, *Eum.* 1034). Wild and unbridled παρθένοι threatened the Athenian status quo; subduing this threat was necessary.¹⁸ Athena achieves this in the *Eumenides* by including the Amazons in Athens's mythical heritage and incorporating the Erinyes into Athenian society through a cult in their honour (*Eum.* 1021-1031).¹⁹ She secures order by giving these women an important place in the *polis*. The message is clear: the Athenians are both superior in battle since they defeated the Amazons and pioneers in justice, and in both areas, Athena leads the way.

¹⁴ Deacy, 1997, p. 153.

¹⁵ Sommerstein, 1989, p. 214.

¹⁶ Merck, 1978, p. 96.

¹⁷ Castriota, 1992, p. 146.

¹⁸ Stewart, 1995, p. 594.

¹⁹ Burian, 2003, p. 24.

Athena also dictates the duty of the Areopagites. She announces that they will judge the first trial for murder (*Eum.* 682). Their area of concern is “shed blood” (αἵματος χυτοῦ, *Eum.* 682), which aligns them with the Erinyes (*Eum.* 653). Further, the court will incite fear amongst citizens (*Eum.* 690-699), directly mirroring the Erinyes’ claim that fear generates social obedience (*Eum.* 517-530). The new court will perform the social function previously exercised by the Erinyes. Through the foundation of the court, Athena passes justice from the ancient divinities into the hands of men, but men who are under her jurisdiction, unlike the Erinyes.

More than a symbolic figure of worship, Athena is expressly the political authority in Athens. She directs and oversees the action of the trial, bringing the case to trial by choosing the jurors, establishing the jurors’ oath and instructing the prosecution and the defence to compile their testimonies (*Eum.* 482-486). Thereafter, she initiates court procedures and announces the beginning of the trial (*Eum.* 570), calling for the attention of the audience and jurors (*Eum.* 571). Apollo addresses Athena as the president, asking her to bring the case before a jury (*Eum.* 580-581). Athena responds to Apollo with authority: “I do hereby bring the case before the court. The prosecutor, if he speaks first and tells the tale from the beginning, can give us proper information about the case” (εἰσάγω δὲ τὴν δίκην. / ὁ γὰρ διώκων πρότερος ἐξ ἀρχῆς λέγων / γένοιτ’ ἂν ὀρθὸς πράγματος διδάσκαλος, *Eum.* 582-584). Athena later announces the close of proceedings (*Eum.* 674-675) and instructs the jurors to cast their votes (*Eum.* 708-710). The depiction of Athena in Aeschylus’s *Eumenides* defines her role as guardian of Athens and its democratic law court.²⁰ Athena is “sovereign of this land” (χώρας ἄνασσαν, *Eum.* 288).

There is a blurring of roles in the court scene with Athena acting as judge and presiding magistrate. Gagarin argues that it is unexpected that the president would act as a member of the voting jury.²¹ Yet, this is exactly what happens. Aeschylus’s trial represents the first of its kind so proceedings and roles are only being formed.²² It is this ambiguity which is crucial in the scene. Seaford argues that it is precisely because Athena is the president that she should not be interpreted as a member of the voting jury.²³ However, the presumption that Athena cannot vote with the jurors on the basis that she is the president is not borne out by the text. The play is not a demonstration of

²⁰ Papadopoulou, 2001, p. 304.

²¹ Gagarin, 1975, p. 122.

²² Podlecki, 1989, p. 204.

²³ Seaford, 1995, p. 210.

the technical workings of a court and the dramatist only needs to generally reflect the audience's expectations of what happens in a trial. As Podlecki rightly points out: "it seems to me mistaken literalism to expect Aischylos to have followed actual contemporary courtroom procedure *to the last iota*."²⁴ Athena votes for Orestes, providing judgement from the highest authority in the *polis*.

Athena's λόγος

Athena provides an explanation for her vote, hence risking provoking the Erinyes by revealing her own bias. It would be unnecessary for her to do so unless her vote matters. Her λόγος is crucial as it directly points back to Apollo's λόγος, indicating for the audience the continuing impact of his theory. Athena motivates her vote for Orestes as follows:

μήτηρ γὰρ οὔτις ἐστὶν ἢ μ' ἐγείνατο,
τὸ δ' ἄρσεν αἰνῶ πάντα, πλὴν γάμου τυχεῖν,
ἅπαντι θυμῷ, κάρτα δ' εἰμὶ τοῦ πατρός.
οὔτω γυναικὸς οὐ προτιμήσω μόρον
ἄνδρα κτανούσης δωμάτων ἐπίσκοπον.

There is no mother who gave birth to me, and I commend the male in all respects (except for joining in marriage) with all my heart; in the fullest sense, I am my father's child. Therefore I shall not set a higher value on the death of a woman, when she had killed her husband, the guardian of her house. (*Eum.* 736-40)

Athena does not suggest how her decision will benefit society as a whole. Neither does she reason how she can justly allow the killing of a one person while condemning the killing of another.²⁵ Athena's reason for voting for Orestes's acquittal is her preference for the sex of Klytimestra's victim. She does not favour the γυνή (*Eum.* 739). She presents the circumstances of her birth as an explanation for her loyalty to her father and personal partiality towards the male, hence deciding the case on personal grounds.²⁶ She is fully her father's child (*Eum.* 738). Orestes describes Athena as "like a bold man" (ὡς ἀνὴρ ἐπίσκοπεῖ, *Eum.* 296). The goddess embodies male attributes and values and her

²⁴ Podlecki, 1989, p. 209.

²⁵ Vellacott, 1977, p. 120.

²⁶ Dodds, 1985, p. 59.

masculinity aligns her with Orestes's cause.²⁷ In the court which she claimed was "untouched by thought of gain" (κερδῶν ἄθικτον, *Eum.* 704), Athena shows no hesitation in appealing to personal preference. Further, Athena classifies the case as a homicide trial (*Eum.* 682) even though she asked the prosecution to identify what the trial was about (*Eum.* 583-584) and the Erinyes clearly indicated that in their view the trial is about matricide (*Eum.* 585-589).²⁸ Athena ignores their statement of the point at issue as she has no interest in the relationship between mother and child. She also fails to uphold her principle that it is necessary for citizens to fear punishment for their crimes to maintain a law abiding society (*Eum.* 698-699).²⁹ Orestes has admitted to committing the crime of matricide (*Eum.* 588), yet Athena allows him to go unpunished. She ignores the charge of matricide and mentions only Klytaimestra's murderous actions, while not acknowledging the queen's reason for killing Agamemnon, the sacrifice of Iphigeneia. The goddess's response conveys little serious engagement with the issues at hand and she rather reverts to personal anecdote to form her judgement. Dover deems Athena's reasoning personal and "illogical."³⁰

It is Athena's unique relationship with her father that grounds her partiality. Athena favours men because she only has a father. Her motherless birth is the key issue. It is implied that since Athena only has a father, she favours men and supports Orestes. The father and child relationship is most important; all other relationships are eclipsed in Athena's resolution.³¹ In this way, Athena's λόγος follows on from Apollo's (*Eum.* 657-666). Later in the text, Athena emphasises how Apollo delivered "plain evidence before the court originating from Zeus" (ἐκ Διὸς γὰρ λαμπρὰ μαρτύρια παρῆν, *Eum.* 797), which confirms that Athena is allied with Apollo in abiding the ruling of Zeus.³² Athena implements the judgement of her father.³³ Athena adds that Apollo encouraged Orestes to kill Klytaimestra, promising him that he would not be harmed for doing so (*Eum.* 798-799). This reminds the audience that Apollo too was acting out of personal interest in the trial; the reputation of his oracle is at stake.

Apollo prepared the audience for Athena's alignment with the defense by offering that the goddess's unusual birth proves his claim that mothers are not related to

²⁷ Papadopoulou, 2001, p. 304.

²⁸ Vellacott, 1977, p. 119.

²⁹ Vellacott, 1991, p. 87.

³⁰ Dover, 1957, p. 236.

³¹ Winnington-Ingram, 1983, p. 126.

³² Neils, 2001, p. 219.

³³ Neils, 2001, p. 219.

their children (*Eum.* 664). However, unlike Apollo, Athena does not explicitly deny that a genetic tie exists between human mothers and their children. She only endorses Apollo's claim that her birth was motherless: "there is no mother who gave birth to me" (μήτηρ γὰρ οὔτις ἐστὶν ἢ μ' ἐγένεατο, *Eum.* 736) and affirms that her father is her sole parent (*Eum.* 738). Notably, Athena does not respond to Apollo's claim that she "was not even nurtured in the darkness of a womb" (οὐδ' ἐν σκοτοῖσι νηδύος τεθραμμένη, *Eum.* 665). Athena leaves open the possibility that a female was involved in her conception. For this reason Collard identifies Athena's speech as "deliberately wide in meaning."³⁴ Yet despite this ambiguity, Athena's λόγος implicitly affirms Apollo's theory that the father is the parent who matters. Mothers are rendered obsolete.

Equal Votes

On casting her vote, Athena announces: "the defendant wins, even if the votes are equally divided" (νικᾷ δ' ὁ φεύγων, κἂν ἰσόψηφος κριθῆ, *Eum.* 741). She returns to her role as president, establishing a decree. In effect, Athena has intervened by voting, and then intervened again, by ordaining a decree which will benefit Orestes. She has performed two actions to ensure Orestes is freed. Athena's announcement that a split vote will acquit Orestes builds anticipation, making it obvious that equal votes is what the audience should expect.³⁵ It was normal practice in the historical Areiopagos court for an equally divided vote to result in the defendant's acquittal. Pseudo-Aristotle records, "if the votes are equal, the defendant wins" (νικᾷ, ἂν δὲ ἴσαι, ὁ φεύγων, *Const. Ath.* 69.1, trans. Rackman, 1971). During Aischylos's time, the number of jurors in the Areiopagos court varied from case to case, permitting that the jury's votes could be equally divided when there was an even number of jurors.³⁶ However, though this was normal practice in the real court, it is crucial that Aischylos's trial is a depiction of the court's first session, so it appears as though Athena is making up the ruling on the spot. She has invented the decree to assist Orestes. Hence, according to Aischylos's play, this judicial practice has its origins in suspicious circumstances. The decree is at once familiar, and yet, highly controversial since it could be interpreted that Athena is introducing it in order to secure her preferred outcome.

³⁴ Collard, 2002, p. 221.

³⁵ Gagarin, 1975, p. 127.

³⁶ Hester, 1981, p. 268; Seaford, 1995, p. 209.

According to Seaford, the purpose of Athena's vote is to give divine backing to the judicial practice of acquitting in the case of a split vote.³⁷ Verrall adds that Athena does not place a voting pebble in the urn but rather signals that she will vote in favour of Orestes only if the jurors' votes are evenly divided.³⁸ Her vote is conditional. Athena indicates this by either holding a voting pebble before the court or extending her arm above Orestes, but she does not add her vote to the count.³⁹ Thomson suggests that Athena adds her voting pebble to the urn at the *Eumenides* 756, after the votes of the jurors have been counted as equal.⁴⁰ These commentators argue that the purpose of Athena's vote is to establish a precedent; the president will always vote for the acquittal of the accused when a tie arises.⁴¹

Countering these arguments, Gagarin argues that it is nowhere explicitly suggested in the *Eumenides* that Orestes's acquittal on the grounds of equal votes sets a precedent.⁴² I argue that it is implicit that Athena is establishing a decree for future trials, but at no point is this ruling associated with Athena's ψῆφος. Athena submits her vote unconditionally, not only if it is required to sanction a draw.⁴³ There is no hint that her vote is conditional.⁴⁴ The language and action of the scene suggest that she has a voting pebble in her hand and adds it to the urn at the *Eumenides* 734-741. If her vote is not included with the votes of the jurors, then one would expect the text to make this clear to the audience.⁴⁵

Seaford argues that Athena's ruling regarding the split vote occurs at the time of the voting to make the decree acceptable to the defeated party.⁴⁶ I am not convinced by this interpretation. If the goddess wished to avoid a dispute with the defeated party, surely the time to announce that a tied vote would mean acquittal would have been at the beginning of the trial (*Eum.* 582-584) or when she was instructing the jurors to vote (*Eum.* 708-710). She announces the ruling at the same time that she decides to judge the case as she intends the decree to save Orestes. Mitchell-Boyask observes that Athena and the audience are watching as the jurors drop their voting pebbles into their chosen

³⁷ Seaford, 1995, p. 210.

³⁸ Verrall, 1908, p. 133.

³⁹ Verrall, 1908, p. 133.

⁴⁰ Thomson, 1938, p. 299.

⁴¹ Conacher, 1987, p. 165; Verrall, 1908, p. xxix.

⁴² Gagarin, 1975, pp. 126-127.

⁴³ Gagarin, 1975, p. 122; Mitchell-Boyask, 2009, p. 85.

⁴⁴ Mitchell-Boyask, 2009, p. 85.

⁴⁵ Gagarin, 1975, pp. 123-124.

⁴⁶ Seaford, 1995, p. 211.

voting urn, one urn for acquittal, the other for conviction. Aischylos's text makes it clear that there is more than one urn on stage as Athena at the count gives the instruction to empty the ballots from the "urns" (τευχέων, *Eum.* 742). The destination of each voting pebble is visible to all.⁴⁷ Athena decides to intervene and add her own vote in favour of Orestes since she knows Orestes is going to lose.⁴⁸ More votes have been added to the urn for his conviction. This explains why Athena announces to the audience that a tied vote will acquit Orestes as the spectators know her vote will secure a tie.

This also implies that the number of human jurors is odd. Other commentators maintain that there is an even number of human jurors.⁴⁹ However, an odd number is suggested by the structure of the text. While the jurors cast their votes, Apollo and the Erinyes engage in a heated exchange of threats (*Eum.* 711-733). The quarrel takes the form of ten couplets and one triplet, which we can assume provides the appropriate time for one juror to cast his vote during each of the ten couplets, followed by an eleventh juror who casts his vote during the first two lines of the triplet while Athena steps forward during the final line to announce her intention to vote. There are eleven separate statements in the *agōn* between Apollo and the Erinyes, suggesting a matching number of eleven jurors. It has been convincingly argued that any other movement arrangement would have clashed with the pace created by the structure of the verbal exchanges.⁵⁰ Assuming that the number of jurors is eleven and that Athena adds the twelfth vote, I conclude that the majority of human jurors favour Orestes's conviction, but Athena's vote and decree override their decision.

The ballots are tallied and Athena informs the court of the verdict: "this man stands acquitted of the charge of bloodshed. The votes have been counted, and they are equal" (ἀνήρ ὄδ' ἐκπέφευγεν αἵματος δίκην. / ἴσον γάρ ἐστι τὰρίθμημα τῶν πάλων, *Eum.* 752-753). Later in the text, Athena reaffirms that the votes were equal (*Eum.* 795). Orestes's acquittal rests on Athena's vote and her ruling that equal votes will acquit him. Without her interference, he was set to be condemned. Sommerstein suggests that

⁴⁷ Mitchell-Boyask, 2009, p. 82.

⁴⁸ Mitchell-Boyask, 2009, p. 84.

⁴⁹ Some of these commentators include: Conacher, 1987, pp. 164-167; Fagles, 1977, p. 327; Hester, 1981, pp. 265-274; Podlecki, 1989, pp. 211-213; Seaford, 1995, pp. 208-217; Thomson, 1938, p. 298; Verrall, 1908, pp. xxvii-xxix.

⁵⁰ Gagarin, 1975, p. 122; Kitto, 1966, p. 20; Mitchell-Boyask, 2009, pp. 82-84; Sommerstein, 1989, pp. 223-224.

Athena's vote creates "deliberate ambiguity."⁵¹ It appears the case is not decided by the human Areopagites, but by Athena, who has reversed a majority decision. The audience is left to wonder if human litigation had any impact or whether this is simply an instance of divine intervention.

After the Trial

The modern debate surrounding Athena's vote and the split jury includes conflicting analyses of scenes following the trial. Here, I shall argue that the closing action supports my view that Athena's vote is decisive. Hester claims that if the majority of human jurors voted against Orestes, we should expect the acquitted hero to only express gratitude towards Athena and be conversely enraged with the Athenian jurors.⁵² Yet, Orestes promises allegiance to the Athenians. This assumption is less than convincing. One might dispute that Orestes should be enraged with the jurors considering that nearly half the human jurors voted in his favour. On hearing of his acquittal, Orestes emphatically thanks Athena, Apollo and Zeus (*Eum.* 754-761). Porter notes that Orestes bestows "full credit for his acquittal on the gods."⁵³ Orestes nowhere thanks the jurors or the court. He never even mentions them. This fits with the interpretation that Athena reversed the human vote.

Orestes then promises an alliance between Athens and Argos which can be understood in relation to Apollo's earlier bribe to Athena (*Eum.* 667-673). Orestes is now fulfilling Apollo's promise. This reveals nothing about Orestes's opinion of the citizen jurors. If Orestes did not fulfil Apollo's promise on the grounds that he was angry with the jurors, he would be breaking the agreement with Athena who has delivered his acquittal. The language of Orestes's final speech (*Eum.* 762-777) conveys that Athena is responsible for his acquittal. He speaks as someone who is relieved and fortunate to have received a favourable verdict, expressing excessive gratitude and promises of allegiance. Orestes does not speak as a confident, self-assured victor. As Orestes departs he again preferences Athena, saying goodbye to her first and then to the citizens (*Eum.* 775).

⁵¹ Sommerstein, 1989, p. 223.

⁵² Hester, 1981, p. 270.

⁵³ Porter, 2005, p. 306.

Additionally, Hester argues that the Erinyes express great anger toward the Athenians, which suggests that the human jury brought about their defeat.⁵⁴ Seaford agrees, adding that the Erinyes' aggression should be targeted against Athena if she reversed the jury's majority decision.⁵⁵ The Erinyes do express rage: "I am a laughing-stock. I have suffered unbearable treatment at the hands of the citizens!" (γελῶμαι. δύσοιστ' ἐν / πολίταις ἔπαθον, *Eum.* 789-790, 819-820). Earlier in the drama, the Erinyes refer to the jurors as "judges" (τοὺς δικάζοντας, *Eum.* 601) and "foreign friends" (ξένοι, *Eum.* 680). It is the "citizens" (πολίταις) whom they rebuke in the final scene. Their anger is not targeted specifically against the jurors; they blame all Athenians for their defeat. This anger against the Athenians collectively is expected and has been foreshadowed. Athena, speaking of the Erinyes earlier in the drama, acknowledged that "if they do not get a victorious outcome, the poison that will afterwards fall from their outraged pride into the soil will be an unbearable, unending plague for this land" (κἄν μὴ τύχωσι πράγματος νικηφόρου, / χώρα μεταῦθις ἰδὸς ἐκ φρονημάτων / πέδῳ πεσῶν ἄφερτος αἰανῆς νόσος, *Eum.* 477-479). As the voting began, the Erinyes warned the jurors, "to avoid dishonouring us, for we can be dangerous company to this land" (καὶ μὴν βαρεῖαν τήνδ' ὁμιλίαν χθονὸς / ξύμβουλός εἰμι μηδαμῶς ἀτιμάσαι, *Eum.* 711-712). The Erinyes are enraged because they are defeated and convey their anger towards the Athenians as they warned they would. This reaction was expected, irrelevant of how their defeat came about.

Later the Erinyes complain: "the evil scheming and trickery of the gods has sundered me from my age-old privileges, and made me into nothing" (ἀπό με γὰρ τιμᾶν δαναιᾶν θεῶν / δυσπάλαιοι παρ' οὐδὲν ἦραν δόλοι, *Eum.* 845-846, 879-880). I suggest that the reference to δόλοι by the gods implies that the Erinyes believe Orestes was acquitted unfairly and owing to the intervention of the gods. Verrall claims these lines refer to Athena's offer of a cult in Athens to honour the Erinyes (*Eum.* 832-836).⁵⁶ But the Erinyes later accept Athena's offer (*Eum.* 916) so it seems unlikely that they would refer to it as a trick here. Since the Erinyes are referring to something that occurred in the past, it is more probable that they are referring to the gods' actions in the trial. The gods' tricks were δυσπάλαιμος (*Eum.* 846, 880), hard to conquer or put one's hands on. The Erinyes describe how multiple gods (most likely Athena, Apollo and Zeus) plotted

⁵⁴ Hester, 1981, p. 271.

⁵⁵ Seaford, 1995, p. 211.

⁵⁶ Verrall, 1908, p. 149.

against them. The allusion to the cunning of the gods refers to the reversal of the human verdict by Athena's vote.

Still focusing on the closing scenes, Seaford argues that it is because the human votes were evenly divided that Athena is able to eventually conciliate the Erinyes.⁵⁷ Conacher likewise feels that Athena's integrity as a pacifier would be destroyed if she reversed the vote of the human jury.⁵⁸ In their opinion, the equal votes of the jurors allow Athena's mediation with the Erinyes after the trial to succeed. However, it is Athena's persuasion that calms the Erinyes in the end, not anything to do with the voting. Athena appeals to the chorus: "you have not been defeated; the result of the trial was a genuinely equal vote, and did you no dishonour" (οὐ γὰρ νενίκησθ', ἀλλ' ἰσόψηφος δίκη / ἐξῆλθ' ἀληθῶς, οὐκ ἄτιμία σέθεν, *Eum.* 795-796). The use of the term "genuinely" (ἀληθῶς) paradoxically calls attention to the validity of the split vote. Athena would not need to emphasise that it was genuinely equal unless there was reason to believe this was not the case. Further, Athena here contradicts her earlier claim that the equally divided votes mean victory for the defendant (*Eum.* 741). If an equal vote spells victory for Orestes then it means defeat for the Erinyes. Athena's claim that the Erinyes have not been defeated is designed to win them over, rather than reflecting the reality of what happened during the trial. Athena begins her appeal by saying "let me persuade you" (ἐμοὶ πίθεσθε, *Eum.* 794), which communicates clearly the rhetorical purpose of her speech.

Thomson argues that Athena's confirmation to the Erinyes that the votes were equal proves her own vote was not included in the judgement of the court: "if the votes have only been made equal by the addition of her own, she is adding insult to injury."⁵⁹ Although Thomson assumes it is impossible that the poet intends this, the text indeed depicts the Erinyes as highly insulted by Athena's claim regarding the votes. In reaction, they state: "ιό, you younger gods, you have ridden roughshod over the ancient laws, and taken them out of my hands into your own! And I, wretched that I am, am dishonoured, grievously angry" (ιὼ θεοὶ νεώτεροι, παλαιὸς νόμους / καθιπάσασθε κακὰ χερῶν εἴλεσθέ μου. / ἐγὼ δ' ἄτιμος ἅ τάλαινα, βαρύκοτος / ἐν γὰρ ταῖδε, φεῦ, *Eum.* 808-811). It is implied that the Erinyes are not swayed by Athena's account of the voting. Rather, it is her later threats of violence (*Eum.* 826-828) and her reiterated bribe

⁵⁷ Seaford, 1995, p. 215.

⁵⁸ Conacher, 1987, p. 165.

⁵⁹ Thomson, 1938, p. 299.

of a cult in honour of the Erinyes in Athens (*Eum.* 832-836, 853-857, 890-891) which convinces them to surrender. The final scene of the *Eumenides* depicts exchanges between only divinities. The decision of the human jurors has been overshadowed and they have no active role in resolving the conflict at the close of the drama. Just as Athena decided the trial, she brokers the resolution of the dispute which arises from the verdict.

Ancient Commentators

Modern critics also look to ancient sources to support the view that Athena's vote in the *Eumenides* is a tie breaking vote. However, I argue that ancient sources do not clarify the voting. In the *Panegyric in Honour of the Empress Eusebia*, for instance, Julian records:

Ἀθήνησι μὲν οὖν φασιν, ὅτε τοῖς πατρίοις ἔθεσιν ἐχρῶντο καὶ ἔζων τοῖς οἰκείοις πειθόμενοι νόμοις μεγάλην καὶ πολυάνθρωπον οἰκοῦντες πόλιν, εἴ ποτε τῶν δικαζόντων αἱ ψῆφοι κατ' ἴσον γένοιτο τοῖς φεύγουσι πρὸς τοὺς διώκοντας, τὴν τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς ἐπιτιθεμένην τῷ τὴν δίκην ὀφλήσειν μέλλοντι.

Now we are told that at Athens, in the days when they employed their ancestral customs and lived in obedience to their own laws, as the inhabitants of a great and humane city, whenever the votes of the jurymen were cast evenly for defendant and plaintiff, the vote of Athena was awarded to him who would have incurred the penalty.

(Jul. 3.114D, trans. Wright, 1913)

Julian surmises that Athena favoured the accused in the case of a split jury. Her judgement was indicated through an action (τὴν τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς ἐπιτιθεμένην δίκην); she cast a vote in addition to the already tied votes. Aelius Aristides agrees with Julian, but is more explicit, writing that Athena only adds her vote in the case of a split jury.⁶⁰ He says:

ἴσων τῶν ψήφων γενομένων, προσθεμένη τὴν παρ' αὐτῆς σώζει. καὶ τοῖνυν ἔτι νῦν σώζει πάντας, ἐὰν ἴσαι γένωνται: ἔδοξε γὰρ ἐξ ἐκείνου ταῖς ἴσαις προστιθέναι τὴν παρὰ τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς ἀφιῖσαν.

If the votes are equal, she saves by adding her own vote. And therefore, still now she saves all [defendants] if the votes are equal. For it was

⁶⁰ Gagarin, 1975, p. 125.

decided from that moment to add to the equal votes the one cast by Athena. (Ael. Arist. 2.13, my own translation)

However, Lucian presents an opposing understanding of the function of Athena's vote in the *Harmonides*:

ὥστε ἦν πού καὶ νῦν ἐμοὶ ἐς τὸ χεῖρον ῥέπωσιν αἱ ψῆφοι ἐν τῷ λόγῳ καὶ ἐλάττους ὧσιν αἱ ἀμείνους, σὺ δὲ τὴν τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς προστιθείς ἀναπλήρου τὸ ἐνδέον παρὰ σεαυτοῦ καὶ τὸ ἐπανόρθωμα οἰκεῖόν σοι δοκεῖτω.

So if at the present time the voting is going against me in the count and the favourable votes are in a minority, like Athena give your casting vote and make up the deficiency in your own person, and let the credit be yours for setting the matter right. (*Harm.* 3, trans. Kilburn, 1959)

Hester argues that Lucian is not referring to Aischylos's *Eumenides*, but to Euripides's later treatment of the trial.⁶¹ However, this is an arbitrary claim. Lucian is more likely referring to Aischylos's *Eumenides* where the jurors' votes went against the defendant, but Athena's vote reversed the verdict. According to Lucian, Athena's vote produces a tie rather than breaking one.⁶² As a result, the credit for deciding the case goes to the person who gives the casting vote, not the jury. It is likely that Lucian simply understood the *Eumenides* differently from Aelius Aristides and Julian, in the same way modern interpreters have produced opposing readings. These ancient writers were interpreting this judicial practice many centuries after it began, and hence, are not reliable evidence for how Aischylos's original audience interpreted the voting.⁶³ All the ancient debate demonstrates is that the voting is confusing and has provoked contention since ancient times.

Critics also frequently cite passages from Euripides's plays to support the interpretation that Athena's vote breaks a tie created by the human jurors.⁶⁴ Here, I shall show the limitations of this line of argument. Euripides recalls the action of the *Oresteia*, focusing on Orestes's exoneration by the tied vote. In Euripides's *Iphigeneia in Tauris*, Orestes tells his sister, "Phoebus saved me by giving evidence, and with her hand Pallas counted out for me equal numbers of votes" (Φοῖβός μ' ἔσωσε μαρτυρῶν, ἴσας δέ μοι / ψήφους διηρίθμησε Παλλὰς ὠλένη. *IT* 965-966, trans. Kovacs, 1999).

⁶¹ Hester, 1981, p. 268.

⁶² Hester, 1981, pp. 268-269.

⁶³ Conacher, 1987, p. 165.

⁶⁴ Hester, 1981, p. 268; Seaford, 1995, p. 209; Thomson, 1938, p. 298; Verrall, 1908, p. 133.

Apollo's μάρτυς and the equal votes vindicated Orestes. At the end of the play, Athena appears as the *deus ex machina* and describes her role in the *Eumenides*: "having saved your life before now, Orestes, on the Areiopagos when I decided the tie vote. This will be the custom, that when the votes are tied, the defendant wins his case" (ἐκσώσασά γε / καὶ πρὶν σ' Ἀρείοις ἐν πάγοις ψήφους ἴσας / κρίνας', Ὀρέστα. καὶ νόμισμ' ἔσται τόδε, / νικᾶν ἰσῆρεις ὅστις ἂν ψήφους λάβῃ (*IT* 1469-1472). Athena, not the human jury, takes credit for Orestes' acquittal. However, the language is vague regarding the voting: Athena ψήφους ἴσας κρίνας' (*IT* 1470-1471), she judged equal pebbles. Here, κρίνω describes Athena's decree that the equal votes spell Orestes's acquittal, but it is not clear how the equal votes came about. The makeup of the voting body is not mentioned and there is no reference to the significance of Athena's voting pebble in the *Eumenides* 735.

In Euripides's *Elektra*, the playwright again claims that the split vote which acquitted Orestes set a model for Athenian judicial procedure. Castor informs Orestes: "votes justly cast in equal numbers shall prevent your being killed. [...] And for all generations to come this law will be established: when the votes are equal the defendant always gains the verdict" (ἴσαι δέ σ' ἐκσώσουσι μὴ θανεῖν δίκη / ψῆφοι τεθεῖσθαι [...] καὶ τοῖσι λοιποῖς ὅδε νόμος τεθήσεται / νικᾶν ἴσαις ψῆφοισι τὸν φεύγοντ' ἀεὶ, *El.* 1265-1269, trans. Kovacs, 1998). Athena's vote is not mentioned. In fact, Athena is not linked at all with the establishment of this legal practice. There is no implication that her vote enacts the ruling. Yet, it is clear from Euripides's reading that Aeschylus's *Eumenides* provided a foundation myth for the practice of acquittal by a split vote.

Seaford argues that Euripides's reflections upon the split vote confirm that Athena's vote in the *Eumenides* ordains the breaking of the tie in favour of the defendant.⁶⁵ I agree with Gagarin that the Euripidean passages are far from unambiguous.⁶⁶ Crucially, they do not mention Athena's voting pebble (*Eum.* 735) and the passages do not clarify if votes were only cast by mortals. They claim that Orestes's acquittal established a historical practice whereby equal votes secure the defendant's victory, without excluding the possibility that Athena's vote produced the tie. Euripides only refers to the counting of the votes and not the identity of the voters. If Athena decreed that the defendant wins in the case of equal votes, this does not negate the

⁶⁵ Seaford, 1995, p. 210.

⁶⁶ Gagarin, 1975, p. 125.

evidence from the *Eumenides* that her own vote produced the tie. Euripides's plays do not provide proof that Athena's vote was not counted amongst those of the jurors.

Euripides may have wished to exonerate Athena for her apparent interference in the court's decision in Aischylos's *Eumenides* by stressing her achievement in establishing court procedure. In Euripides's *Elektra*, Castor tells the traditional story of the founding of the Areiopagos whereby the first murder trial was established to judge Ares (*El.* 1258-1261), which directly contradicts Athena's claim in the *Eumenides* that Orestes was the first to receive civic justice for murder (*Eum.* 682). Castor's account of the trial of Ares also challenges Athena's account of how the Areiopagos received its name (*Eum.* 685-690). In Euripides's *Iphigeneia in Tauris*, Orestes likewise tells how the Areiopagos was established to put Ares on trial for murder (*IT* 945-946). Clearly, Euripides is not simply reproducing his predecessor's play. He includes alternative accounts and offers his own innovations.

Rereading Euripides

While the *Elektra* and the *Iphigeneia in Tauris* do not contradict my reading of the voting in the *Eumenides*, I suggest that Euripides's *Orestes* implicitly supports it. Here, Euripides presents a wholly different account of Orestes's trial, showing again how Euripides does not simply mirror Aischylos. At the end of the *Orestes*, Apollo tells the hero: "on the Areiopagos the gods as judges in the case will cast their votes most piously for either side, and there you are fated to be victorious" (θεοὶ δέ σοι δίκης βραβῆς / πάγοισιν ἐν Ἀρείοισιν εὐσεβεστάτην / ψῆφον διοίσουσ', ἔνθα νικῆσαι σε χρή, *Orest.* 1650-1652, trans. Kovacs, 2002). West interprets that an even number of Olympian gods cast their votes to acquit Orestes.⁶⁷ This version of Orestes's trial is also recorded by Aelius Aristides (*Panathenaic Oration* 66) and Demosthenes (*Dem.* 23.66). Demosthenes claims that twelve gods adjudicated between the Erinyes and Orestes (*Dem.* 23.66). Euripides's *Orestes* depicts how the hero is acquitted by the gods following a verdict of conviction at the Argive assembly. The Argives voted to condemn Orestes to death for committing matricide (*Orest.* 857-858). The gods overturn the verdict of the mortals. It is important that one of the divine votes must

⁶⁷ West, 1987, p. 292.

belong to Athena.⁶⁸ Hence, in this telling, her vote creates the tie which frees Orestes as it did for Aischylos.

It is relevant, I suggest, that the alternative version of the trial in Euripides's *Orestes* has Orestes acquitted by a jury of Olympians, including Athena. Aischylos's audience, just fifty years earlier, were perhaps also familiar with this myth of Orestes's acquittal by the votes of Athena and the other Olympians, and hence Athena's vote in the *Eumenides* is understood to have the same function as her vote in what was presumably the traditional myth which Aischylos adapted: to vote for Orestes's acquittal and reverse the human judgement. It seems intuitive that Aischylos is recasting the traditional myth which is later presented in Euripides's *Orestes*. Commentators have pointed out that the split vote receives little attention in the *Orestes*; the focus is on the divine verdict.⁶⁹ The votes of the gods remove the uncertainty for Orestes created by the human verdict. Aischylos's audience, if accustomed to the myth that Orestes is rescued by divine vote, would have assumed that Athena's vote is included in the count in the *Eumenides* and reverses the human jury's verdict.

Divine Intervention

Mirroring the myth of Ares's acquittal by the gods, Apollo foretells that the gods will favour Orestes at his trial on the Areiopagos (*Orest.* 1650-1651). In both stories of Ares's and Orestes's acquittals, Athena's vote frees the male. Deacy identifies how throughout extant Greek literature Athena supports male heroes, often at the expense of causing suffering to women.⁷⁰ The vote of Athena in the *Eumenides* recreates the divine voting which is central to myths of the foundation of the Areiopagos. Ultimately, Orestes is judged by the Olympians. In this way, the jury in the *Eumenides* represents a union of human and divine. It could be interpreted that this makes the court's decision all the more powerful. Solmsen argues that the Olympian victory "has a symbolic significance which transcends the case."⁷¹ But if that were simply the case, one would expect the drama to end here. Rather, the action continues as the Erinyes aggressively dispute the verdict and need to be reconciled by Athena. The decision of the court

⁶⁸ Hester, 1981, p. 268.

⁶⁹ Willink, 1986, p. 355; Rutherford, 2005, p. 293.

⁷⁰ Deacy, 2008, p. 60.

⁷¹ Solmsen, 1995, p. 195.

inspires further hostility, not harmonious resolution. In the end, Athena alone without any human help brings about the resolution of the drama's conflicts.

Orestes is victorious owing to Athena's vote and her ruling. It is not the legal process which decides the matter.⁷² The outcome of the votes emphasizes the intensity of the clash between the prosecution and the defence, and as Finley argues, "attests the strength of the Erinyes's position."⁷³ The introduction of the Erinyes as figures of cult worship at the close of the play is foreshadowed by the support they receive from the Areopagites; they cannot be brushed aside.⁷⁴ Apollo's theory of male reproductive superiority convinces less than half the jury; the majority do not condone matricide and vote in favour of the prosecution. The plot pivots upon Athena's extra vote, which secures Orestes's acquittal, sanctions matricide and legitimates the supremacy of the father in both the political and biological spheres. The logic which guides Athena's vote continues to determine her actions as she acts on behalf of her father to subdue the Erinyes. Athena's birth is introduced as an issue in Apollo's λόγος. Her motherless birth continues to have immeasurable significance thereafter. Athena decides the trial and resolves the conflict of the play owing to her relationship with her father, or more specifically, owing to her commitment to a theory of male autonomy in sexual reproduction. Athena's motherless birth is no trivial matter. Having established the centrality of Apollo's λόγος and the story of Athena's birth to the resolution of Aischylos's plot in this chapter, I shall move on to a broader discussion of how parenting and procreation were understood in fifth century BC Athens. In Chapter 3, I analyse various ideas surrounding procreation in medical writings, art and poetry. The aim of this discussion is to situate Aischylos's exploration of this theme within its own context. I argue that the issue of which parent, male or female, was more dominant in procreation was a contentious issue at this time. Hence, Aischylos was responding to ideas recognisable to his audience, allowing him to add to this contentious debate and play his audience's expectations.

⁷² Rocco, 1997, p. 158.

⁷³ Finley, 1955, p. 275.

⁷⁴ Solmsen, 1995, pp. 195-196.

Chapter 3

Theorising Procreation

It has become a truism in modern scholarship that Apollo's theory in the *Eumenides* reflects common thinking among fifth century BC Athenians.⁷⁵ Padel's observation is typical: "many Greeks denied that the womb had power to engender. In the *Oresteia*, [...] the male god Apollo [...] claims that the male is the one who engenders, [...] the female is all passive reception."⁷⁶ Apollo's λόγος is representative of a trend, and thus, deemed uncontroversial. Greeks routinely viewed the female sex as passive, superfluous even, in the processes of reproduction, while they promoted the male as the essential creator. The male sexed body is productive; the female receives and nurtures his creation. With women reduced to merely receptacles, their influence over their children and *oikos* was limited. The biological superiority of the male explained his 'natural' right to authority.

However, while this view held credence, it did not stand alone. The 'standard' discourse surrounding human creation received substantial opposition and questioning. The aim of this chapter is to explore the discussion surrounding the roles of the sexes in procreation in Athens to bring into focus not only the contentiousness of Apollo's λόγος, but also to highlight the ambiguity underlying his theory and all theories of procreation. The dispute amongst Anthropologists in the 1960s over the attitude to paternity in the Trobriand Islands demonstrates how varied ideas surrounding procreation can be even in our time.⁷⁷ Apollo's voice can be viewed as one among many who were striving to argue their own perspective while making spurious claims to certainty. He is a protagonist in a familiar and heated debate. Apollo's λόγος is distinctly argumentative in this context. The playwright is not simply regurgitating and affirming collective ideology, but exploring a wider contemporary conversation.⁷⁸

The Appeal to φυσιόλογοι

The female body was isolated as an object of inquiry in Greece, exemplified by the creation of a new area of medicine which claimed that it required special attention,

⁷⁵ Boylan, 1984, p. 85; Lloyd, 1983, p. 86.

⁷⁶ Padel, 1992, p. 107.

⁷⁷ See Leach, 1966 and Spiro, 1968.

⁷⁸ Allen, 2008, p. 81.

gynaecology.⁷⁹ Apollo's λόγος in the *Eumenides* shows how biological investigation could be guided by misogynistic presuppositions. Fagles adds: "it was also sociological and economic propaganda which might be used to ensure the male inheritance of property in the democratic state."⁸⁰ Apollo's words demonstrate both how ideology formed biological concepts and also how biology was employed with the explicit purpose of justifying social inequality. However, Gagarin cautions that Aischylos's play presents the only extant example of this propagandistic use of biology.⁸¹ Aischylos's Apollo employs biological theory mixed with theogonic material as an argument to denigrate women. His theory has a purpose. This, however, need not entail that such explicit aims were also shared by the thinkers who engaged in the fifth century BC debates surrounding the roles of the sexes in sexual reproduction.

The question of origins concerned many Greek thinkers. Hesiod composed the *Theogony* as a means to explain the origins of the cosmos and all life within it.⁸² By the third century AD, the Latin writer Censorinus still found it relevant to discuss in the *Birthday Book* the variety of opinions which intellectuals held about origins (*Birth. Bk.* 4.1). The range of hypotheses intellectuals put forward on the matter demonstrates the contestability of the topic.⁸³ The intellectual backdrop to Apollo's λόγος was a plurality of views vying for attention in a competitive climate. Lloyd argues: "male-orientated values were not the only ones that found articulate expression."⁸⁴ Sommerstein goes even further, claiming that theories resembling Apollo's in the *Eumenides* represented "a minority view even among natural philosophers, most of whom held that both male and female contributed 'seed' essential to the process of generation."⁸⁵ The ancient debate over sexual reproduction problematises the notion in modern scholarship that there was consensus on the matter.

Apollo's λόγος in the *Eumenides* is frequently aligned in modern scholarship with fifth and fourth century BC theories of conception, particularly that of Aristotle, who was writing a century after Aischylos.⁸⁶ In his notes on Aristotle's *Generation of Animals*, Peck conflates Apollo's λόγος specifically with Aristotelian theory:

⁷⁹ King, 1998, p. 11.

⁸⁰ Fagles, 1977, p. 325.

⁸¹ Gagarin, 1976, p. 102.

⁸² Clay, 2003, p. 3; Rowe, 1983, p. 124.

⁸³ Padel, 1992, p. 109.

⁸⁴ Lloyd, 1983, p. 59.

⁸⁵ Sommerstein, 1989, p. 208.

⁸⁶ For example, Demand, 1994, p. 135; Hogan, 1984, p. 171; Peck, 1943, p. 372.

“[Aristotle’s theory] is a view put forward also in the *Eumenides* of Aischylos by Apollo.”⁸⁷ Aristotle’s agreement is offered as proof that Apollo’s theory was recognisable and easily digestible for Aischylos’s audience. Sommerstein hints at the error in this conflation: “we do not know whether Aischylos himself believed it, or whether his audience would have found it convincing.”⁸⁸ While Apollo’s λόγος finds resonances in Aristotle’s later writings, this does not necessarily imply that it represents the pervasive fifth century BC perspective.

Aristotle and the Debate

In the *Generation of Animals* Aristotle examines the contemporary debate concerning the contributions of male and female to procreation. He asserts that only the male produces generative seed, echoing Apollo’s idea in the *Eumenides* that only fathers are progenitors. But it is clear in Aristotle’s discussion that his view by no means represents the standard. He cautiously asks:

πότερον προίεται σπέρμα ὡσπερ τὸ ἄρρεν καὶ ἔστιν ἐν μίγμα τὸ γινόμενον ἐκ δυοῖν σπερμάτων, ἢ οὐθὲν σπέρμα ἀποκρίνεται ἀπὸ τοῦ θήλεος. καὶ εἰ μηθέν, πότερον οὐδὲ ἄλλο οὐθὲν συμβάλλεται εἰς τὴν γένεσιν ἀλλὰ μόνον παρέχει τόπον, ἢ συμβάλλεται τι, καὶ τοῦτο πῶς καὶ τίνα τρόπον.

Does [the female] discharge semen as the male does, which would mean that the object formed is a single mixture produced from two semens; or is there no discharge of semen from the female? And if there is none, then does the female contribute nothing whatever to generation, merely providing a place where generation may happen; or does it contribute something else, and if so, how and in what manner does it do so?

(*GA* 726a32-726b2, trans. Peck, 1943)

The exploratory register employed by Aristotle suggests he expects these questions to arouse diverse reactions from his audience. Aristotle unsurprisingly presupposes that the female provides the place (τόπος) where creation occurs, i.e. the womb. However, the question he believes requires answering is whether she supplies anything other than the τόπος, and if she does, whether this is generative σπέρμα, which would be equivalent to male σπέρμα, or is it some unknown ingredient? What is certain for Aristotle is that the male’s σπέρμα is generative. The male and the female are inherently different for

⁸⁷ Peck, 1943, p. 372.

⁸⁸ Sommerstein, 2008b, p. 438.

Aristotle but must unite in order to sexually reproduce (*GA* 767a14-18). Men and women differ in their functions, but not so radically that one can procreate without the other.⁸⁹ His uncertainty rests on whether or not there is a combining (συμβάλλω) of male and female generative elements to create a child. By questioning if there are “two seeds” (δυσὶν σπερμάτοις, *GA* 726a33), male and female, Aristotle reveals that a theory of dual seeds existed. When later asserting his own view that only the male supplies σπέρμα with all the essential constituents for procreation, he confirms that there were intellectuals who supported the notion that the female too provides essential σπέρμα: “the offspring is not formed from a mixture of two seeds, as some allege” (οὐδὲ μίγνυμένων ἀμφοῖν γίνεται, ὥσπερ τινές φασιν, *GA* 727b8-9).

Aristotle’s denial that females produce σπέρμα rests on his beliefs about menstrual blood:

ἐπεὶ δὲ τοῦτ’ ἐστὶν ὃ γίγνεται τοῖς θήλεσιν ὡς ἡ γονὴ τοῖς ἄρρεσιν, δύο δ’ οὐκ ἐνδέχεται σπερματικὰς ἅμα γίνεσθαι ἀποκρίσεις, φανερόν ὅτι τὸ θῆλυ οὐ συμβάλλεται σπέρμα εἰς τὴν γένεσιν. εἰ μὲν γὰρ σπέρμα ἦν, καταμήνια οὐκ ἂν ἦν. νῦν δὲ διὰ τὰ ταῦτα γίνεσθαι ἐκεῖνο οὐκ ἔστιν.

Now it is impossible that any creature should produce two seminal secretions at once, and as the secretion in females which answers to semen in males is the menstrual fluid, it obviously follows that the female does not contribute any semen to generation; for if there were semen, there would be no menstrual fluid; but as menstrual fluid is in fact formed, therefore there is no semen. (*GA* 727a26-30)

Aristotle arbitrarily correlates menstrual blood with male σπέρμα. He assumes that if females produce generative fluid, it should have the same consistency as male σπέρμα, and since females produce menstrual blood, which has a different consistency to semen, he concludes that female σπέρμα does not exist. Menstrual blood does not contribute to creation while male σπέρμα does. In Aristotle’s account, menstrual blood is evidence of the inferiority of the female body; women fail to produce semen:

ἔοικε δὲ καὶ τὴν μορφήν γυναικὶ παῖς, καὶ ἔστιν ἡ γυνὴ ὥσπερ ἄρρεν ἄγονον. ἀδυναμία γάρ τινι τὸ θῆλυ ἐστὶ, τῷ μὴ δύνασθαι πέττειν ἐκ τῆς τροφῆς σπέρμα τῆς ὑστάτης [...] διὰ ψυχρότητα τῆς φύσεως.

A boy actually resembles a woman in physique, and a woman is as it were an infertile male; the female, in fact, is female on account of inability of a

⁸⁹ Boylan, 1984, p. 92.

sort, it lacks the power to concoct semen out of the final state of the nourishment [...] because of the coldness of its nature. (*GA* 728a 18-21)

Aristotle argues that the difference between the sexes is connected to the difference between hot and cold. Heat is a prerequisite of fertility. It is in the nature (φύσις) of the female body to be cold (ψυχρός). This coldness makes the female body barren (ἄγονος). In opposition, the male body is “hot” (θερμόν, *GA* 767a18).

Aristotle earlier acknowledged the contestability of his claim that only males produce σπέρμα (*GA* 727b8-9). In the *Parts of Animals*, he reveals that there is likewise a debate amongst intellectuals concerning hot and cold:

ἔνιοι...θερμότερά φασι εἶναι...τὰ ἄναιμα τῶν ἐναίμων καὶ τὰ θήλεα τῶν ἀρρένων, οἷον Παρμενίδης τὰς γυναῖκας τῶν ἀνδρῶν θερμότερας εἶναι φησι καὶ ἕτεροί τινες ὡς διὰ τὴν θερμότητα καὶ πολυαιμούσας γινομένων τῶν γυναικείων, Ἐμπεδοκλῆς δὲ τοῦναντίον. ἔτι δ' αἷμα καὶ χολῆν οἱ μὲν θερμόν ὀποτεροῦν εἶναι φασι αὐτῶν, οἱ δὲ ψυχρόν.

It is asserted that bloodless animals are hotter than those that have blood; and that females are hotter than males. Parmenides and others, for instance, assert that women are hotter than men on the ground of the menstrual flow, which they say is due to their heat and the abundance of their blood. Empedokles, however, maintains the opposite opinion. Again, some say that blood is hot and bile cold, others that bile is hot and blood cold.

(*Parts* 648a26-33, trans. Peck, 1937)

Aristotle's analysis of the debate suggests a general assumption amongst thinkers that the dichotomy between hot and cold somehow explained sexual difference.⁹⁰ However, the terms within this debate were highly negotiable. Aristotle has revealed that the terms hot and cold are uncertain in their relevance, but nevertheless, he expects his audience to accept as nonnegotiable his theory that female coldness explains female reproductive inadequacy. Both his explanation and conclusion are arbitrary.

Aristotle's opinion is not based on empirical observations, but reflects his preset assumption that women are inferior. His condescending view of women is clear in the *Politics*: “as between the sexes, the male is by nature superior and the female inferior, the male ruler and the female subject” (τὸ ἄρρεν πρὸς τὸ θῆλυ φύσει τὸ μὲν κρεῖττον τὸ δὲ χεῖρον, καὶ τὸ μὲν ἄρχον τὸ δ' ἀρχόμενον, *Pol.* 1.1254b13-14, trans. Rackman, 1990). Aristotle describes the female body according to its deviation from the norm as

⁹⁰ Lloyd, 1964, p. 105.

represented by the male body. Since the female body does not imitate the male body, Aristotle deems females defective and the birth of a female a “monstrosity” (τέραξ), adding that the female body is evidence that “nature has in a way strayed from the generic type” (παρεκβέβηκε γὰρ ἡ φύσις ἐν τούτοις ἐκ τοῦ γένουξ τρόπον τινα, *GA* 767b6-8). Aristotle’s interpretation of his data is described within a framework which presupposes gender inequality.

Precedents to Aristotle

Aristotle’s responses to his predecessors’ sexual theories reveal the rivalry that characterised the debate. He ascribes his own single σπέρμα theory to the natural philosopher Anaxagoras:

φασὶ γὰρ οἱ μὲν ἐν τοῖξ σπέρμασιν εἶναι ταύτην τὴν ἐναντίωσιν εὐθύξ, οἷον Ἀναξαγόραξ καὶ ἕτεροι τῶν φυσιολόγων. γίνεσθαὶ τε γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ ἄρρενοξ τὸ σπέρμα, τὸ δὲ θῆλυ παρέχειν τὸν τόπον.

Thus, some people, such as Anaxagoras and certain other physiologists, say that this opposition [between male and female] exists right back in the semens, alleging that the semen comes into being from the male, while the female provides the space for it. (*GA* 763b30-34, A107 DK)

Anaxagoras, writing from around 467 BC, was also a contemporary of Aischylos. Hence, his sexual theories are often presumed to have inspired Apollo’s λόγος in the *Eumenides*.⁹¹ Aristotle does not mention Aischylos’s *Eumenides* as a relevant reflection on earlier theories. Nonetheless, solely as a result of conflating Aristotle’s later theory of procreation with Apollo’s λόγος, modern commentators look to the works of Anaxagoras as Aischylos’s inspiration.⁹²

However, aligning Aischylos with Anaxagoras is highly problematic. Since Aristotle is the only source who attributes this view to Anaxagoras, it is uncertain if his ascription can be trusted.⁹³ According to another later source, Censorinus’s *Birthday Book*, Anaxagoras contended that both the father and mother emit seed which engenders the foetus (*Birth. Bk.* 5.4). Anaxagoras also thought that children inherited the physical

⁹¹ Allen, 2008, pp. 75-76; Mitchell-Boyask, 2009, p. 119; Sommerstein, 1989, p. 206.

⁹² A key proponent of the view that Anaxagoras inspired Apollo’s theory in the *Eumenides* is Wolfgang Rosler, whose work *Reflexe vorsokratischen Denkens bei Aischylos* I was unfortunately unable to source.

⁹³ Kember, 1973, p. 9.

appearance of whichever parent, mother or father, provides the most seed (*Birth. Bk.* 6.8). Censorinus's survey contradicts Aristotle's. It is difficult to determine which source is incorrect. Aristotle certainly had a motive for distorting his sources since he was putting forward a precedent to support his own theory. Kemper rejects Aristotle's report on Anaxagoras's single seed theory on the grounds that no other source supports it.⁹⁴ Reading Aischylos as an expression of Anaxagoras assumes an agreement with Aristotle's later and potentially incorrect interpretation of his predecessor.⁹⁵

Kemper further problematises the association between Aischylos and natural philosophy, arguing that the *Eumenides* cannot be read as a record of the theories of natural philosophers since there is no discussion in the play of any of their central concepts.⁹⁶ Apollo's λόγος bears little semblance in form, for instance, to the technical inquiry exemplified later by Aristotle. Apollo's theory is far less rigorous. However, Aristotle's later theory of sexual reproduction undoubtedly shows a similar line of thinking to that found in Apollo's λόγος. Both Aristotle and Aischylos's Apollo speculate that only males are progenitors. Censorinus attests to other thinkers who held this view: Diogenes, Hippon and the Stoics all maintained that only the father produces seed (*Birth. Bk.* 5.4). Hippon promoted this idea during Aischylos's lifetime.

While Aischylos's Apollo is not a mouthpiece for any one particular philosopher, he is presented in the guise of a philosophical orator. Apollo was certainly considered an authority on biology. His epithet Paean marked him as an expert in healing and medicine. Apollo's λόγος belongs to a more populist discourse than that reflected in philosophical writings, but that does not take away from the fact that there was agreement between Apollo's λόγος and some contemporary theories. As Allen asserts, "Aischylos was an innovative and intellectually curious poet, who was ready to incorporate contemporary debates into his work."⁹⁷ However, it is nonetheless problematic, I argue, to privilege Apollo's viewpoint on the grounds that it is supported in certain physiological discourses. Aischylos is reworking broadly recognisable terms

⁹⁴ Kemper, 1973, p. 12.

⁹⁵ It is also unlikely that Apollo's λόγος credits Anaxagoras since the philosopher had a negative reputation in Athens. In the *Perikles*, Plutarch records how an Athenian decree was issued against Anaxagoras (*Per.* 32.1). He was impeached for not believing in the gods. In the *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, Diogenes Laertius also suggests that Anaxagoras was put on trial and condemned for impiety (*D.L.* 2.3). This suggests that there was popular prejudice against his perceived secular form of inquiry.

⁹⁶ Kemper, 1973, pp. 8-9.

⁹⁷ Allen, 2008, p. 74.

and concepts for his own purposes, which cannot be reducible to the same purposes as Aristotle or his predecessors.

Theories of Two Seeds

The rivalry which characterised dialogues between thinkers debating the topic of parentage is apparent in Aristotle's discussion. In the same way, Apollo's λόγος evokes not only theories which resonate with it, but importantly, the theories of those who disagreed with him, which I will turn to now. Pseudo-Plutarch records in *On the Opinions of Philosophers* that Pythagoras, Epikouros and Demokritos believed that women produce seminal seed (*Op. Phil.* 5.5). Parmenides too hypothesized a dual σπέρμα theory (B18 DK). After Aristotle also, counterviews to his own continued to enjoy support. Galen, though heavily influenced by Aristotle, proposed a theory of dual male and female seeds (IV 604, 612, 626, 642 K). Aristotle acknowledges this counterview when he rejects the theories of both Empedokles and Demokritos. Empedokles, Aischylos's contemporary, contended that the male and female contribute generative seed (B63 DK). Aristotle rebukes Empedokles's theory, countering that if both male and female produce seed then the female should not require the male to procreate. The female in this case could provide both the seed and the place for its development on her own (*GA* 722b13-17). Aristotle misses the point here, failing to accept that both σπέρμα combine in the reproductive process.

Demokritos (460-370 BC) likewise believed that both males and females produce σπέρμα, showing how this theory continued to find credence after Empedokles. Aristotle presents Demokritos's view:

Δημόκριτος δὲ ὁ Ἀβδηρίτης ἐν μὲν τῇ μητρὶ γίνεσθαι φησι τὴν διαφορὰν τοῦ θήλεος καὶ τοῦ ἄρρενος, οὐ μέντοι διὰ θερμότητά γε καὶ ψυχρότητα τὸ μὲν γίνεσθαι θῆλυ τὸ δ' ἄρρεν, ἀλλ' ὁποτέρου ἂν κρατήσῃ τὸ σπέρμα τὸ ἀπὸ τοῦ μορίου ἐλθὼν ᾧ διαφέρουσιν ἀλλήλων τὸ θῆλυ καὶ τὸ ἄρρεν.

Demokritos of Abdera holds that the difference of male and female is produced in the womb, certainly, but denies that it is on account of heat and cold that one becomes male and another female; this is determined, he asserts, according to which of the two parents' semen prevails, the semen that is to say, which has come from the part wherein male and female differ from one another. (*GA* 764a6-11, A143 DK)

The pangenesis doctrine which Aristotle attributes to Demokritos holds that the male and female emit σπέρμα drawn from all parts of the body. Aristotle challenges this view stating that if both parents produce seed then, “the offspring, if female, should also take after its mother, and if male after its father” (θῆλύ τ’ ἂν ἦν καὶ τῆ μητρὶ ἐοικός, ἢ ἄρρεν καὶ τῷ πατρὶ, *GA* 764b26-27). Resemblances between parents and their children of the opposite sex imply, according to Aristotle, that both male and female do not provide σπέρμα. Demokritos was as prolific and esteemed a thinker as Plato and Aristotle. Lee warns against underestimating the influence and importance of views presented by philosophers, such as Demokritos, whose many works have not survived.⁹⁸ As the Platonic tradition provided the foundations for later philosophy, ancient thinkers who fell outside of that tradition are often forgotten.⁹⁹ However, none of these philosophers had the last word.¹⁰⁰

The Hippocratic Corpus, a collection of medical ἀπόδειξις from the fifth and fourth centuries BC, composed by different doctors with diverse views in a climate of fierce competition, offers further examples of the view that both the male and female produce generative σπέρμα. *On Regimen* records that there are female and male contributions to the embryo, but the female element is weaker (*O.R.* 28-29). The writer of *On the Generating Seed and the Nature of the Child* argues that both partners produce seed. A male child results from a combination of strong seeds; a female child is the product of weak seeds (*G.S.N.C.* 6). Generally, writers in the corpus insist that the male seed and the creation of a male child are superior.¹⁰¹ Within the texts, complex formulations of female difference are expressed, turning the general belief that women were inferior into natural facts. The female remains in these theories, as in the theories of the philosophers, unequal to the male.¹⁰²

Nonetheless, theories ascribing a generative role to mothers in sexual reproduction represent opposition to the notion that the female body was essentially futile and passive. That many Greek writers were able to imagine the female as more than just the τόπος and the τροφός demonstrates how they could challenge gender inequality.¹⁰³ The notion that the female emits seed placed her as equal to the male in creation. The female body is reproductive and exists in relation to the male, rather than

⁹⁸ Lee, 2008, p. 184.

⁹⁹ Songe-Moller, 2002, p. 4.

¹⁰⁰ Lee, 2008, p. 254.

¹⁰¹ Lloyd, 1983, p. 91.

¹⁰² Boylan, 1984, p. 90.

¹⁰³ Lloyd, 1983, p. 107.

in opposition. These discourses to some extent challenge binary models of activity/passivity which govern other Greek views of procreation. Hence, Apollo's λόγος does not represent the only persuasive and influential view on sexual reproduction that existed in the ancient world. Appreciating the diversity of opinions on the matter means eroding the authority of Aristotle, since privileging his perspective leads to the marginalising of the counterview. The diversity of views undermines the notion that there was a standard perspective, rendering Apollo's λόγος negotiable, rather than strictly normative.

Female as Field

The interest in sexual reproduction was not isolated to philosophers and doctors. Literary treatments of the theme also reflect diverse perspectives and ambiguities. Euripides's Jason and Hippolytos wish that men could produce children without women (*Med.* 573-574, *Hipp.* 616-624), demonstrating how Apollo's fantasy of male autonomous procreation reverberated in later drama. Songe-Moller posits that a "misogynist tradition of metaphors" survives in Greek literature for describing sexual reproduction.¹⁰⁴ Agricultural metaphors in drama are prime examples. Tragic poets relied upon the language of farming to describe sexual acts and reproduction. For the Greeks, ploughing the earth was closely analogous to implanting semen in a woman's body, connecting ideas which are unrelated in modern thought.¹⁰⁵ Apollo's λόγος provides an example of this with his use of the term νεόσπορος (*Eum.* 659), meaning "newly sown." The mother is planted with the father's sown seed.

This correlation between sexual reproduction and vegetative growth is most apparent in the stories of the sexual union of Ouranos and Gaia. In a surviving fragment from Aischylos's *Danaids*, Aphrodite describes the union of the male and female primordial deities as follows:

ἔρᾱ μὲν ἀγνὸς οὐρανὸς τρῶσαι χθόνα,
 ἔρωσ δὲ γαῖαν λαμβάνει γάμου τυχεῖν.
 ὄμβρος δ' ἅπ' εὐνάεντος οὐρανοῦ πεσὼν
 ἔκυσε γαῖαν, ἣ δὲ τίκτεται βροτοῖς
 μήλων τε βοσκὰς καὶ βίον Δημήτριον

¹⁰⁴ Songe-Moller, 2002, p. 80.

¹⁰⁵ Clarke, 2001, pp. 369-370.

δένδρων τ' ὀπώραν. ἐκ νοτίζοντος γάμου
τέλειός ἔστι. τῶν δ' ἐγὼ παραίτιος

The holy Heaven passionately desires to penetrate the Earth, and *erōs* takes hold of Earth for union with Heaven. Rain falls from the brimming fountains of Heaven and makes Earth conceive, and she brings forth for mortals grazing their flocks, Demeter to sustain their life, and the fruit of trees: by the wedlock of the rain she comes to her fulfilment. Of this, I [Aphrodite] am in part the cause.

(Aischylos fr. 44 Radt, trans. Sommerstein, 2008a, adapted)

Aphrodite arouses Ouranos's desire and he impregnates Gaia with his inseminating rain. Thereafter, the land provides produce for humans. Sexual coitus produces vegetation. In *On the Opinion of Philosophers*, Pseudo-Plutarch records how Greeks thought of the sky as a father since rain has a quality akin to semen, while the earth is a mother since she receives his rain/semen (*Op. Phil.* 1.6). Older sources also attest to this association. In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Gaia produces flowers at the will of Zeus (*HH* 2.9). Creation from the earth is a result of Gaia's fertility and Zeus's command. Gaia is the personification of the earth, directly aligning the female body with soil.

Gaia's fecundity is emphasized in Hesiod's *Theogony* (126-146). Without a male partner, she generates many divinities. She is not the recipient of male semen, but procreates alone. This presents a different model of creation, parthenogenesis from the soil. Aischylos's audience were very familiar with female divinities who procreated asexually.¹⁰⁶ In fact, stories of goddesses producing offspring without men are far more common than men procreating alone. These traditions contradict the notion of male autonomous procreation which Apollo propounds in the *Eumenides*. The *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* depicts how Hera produced Typhaon alone: "Hera once bore him in anger at father Zeus, when he gave birth to glorious Athena out of his head" ("Ἡρῆ ἔτικτε χολωσαμένη Διὶ πατρί, / ἠνίκ' ἄρα Κρονίδης ἐπικυδέα γείνατ' Ἀθήνην ἐκ κορυφῆς, *HH* 3.307-309, trans. M. L. West, 2003). Hera conceived Typhaon to retaliate against Zeus. She competes with her husband by producing a child without him. An audience educated in these stories will not be easily persuaded that Apollo's account of Athena's origins offers indisputable evidence that mothers en masse are not physiologically related to their children, even if Apollo's λόγος appeals to cultural prejudice. There are more birth stories in their shared resource of myths to disprove Apollo's λόγος than there are to support it.

¹⁰⁶ Female parthenogenesis will be discussed more later in Chapter 7.

In Aischylos's *Libation Bearers*, Elektra prays "to Gaia herself, who gives birth to all things, nurtures them, and then receives that fruit of her womb back into herself" (καὶ Γαῖαν αὐτήν, ἣ τὰ πάντα τίκτεται / θρέψασά τ' αὖθις τῶνδε κῦμα λαμβάνει, *Lib.* 127-128, trans. Sommerstein, 2008b). Elektra gives a libation to Gaia as she is the source of everything.¹⁰⁷ In the *Prometheus Bound*, Gaia is again the "mother of all" (παμμήτωρ, *PB* 90, trans. Sommerstein, 2008c). Aischylos's Elektra directly alludes to Hesiod's depiction of Gaia, including an image of autonomous female reproductivity, which essentially contradicts Apollo's suggestion that only men are progenitors (*Eum.* 657-666). Opposing conceptions of female reproductivity are voiced by different characters in the trilogy, revealing the diversity of views available.

Aischylos employs agricultural imagery with different effect in the *Seven Against Thebes*. The chorus of Theban maidens credit Oidipous as the progenitor of his children: "Oidipous the father-slayer, who sowed the sacrosanct soil of his mother, where he had been nurtured" (πατροκτόνον Οἰδιπόδαν / ὅστε ματρὸς ἄγναν / σπείρας ἄρουραν, ἴν' ἐτράφη, *Seven* 752-754, trans. Sommerstein, 2008c). Jokasta is imagined as a field (ἄρουρα) that nurses (τρέφω) offspring. Oidipous, on the other hand, is the sower (σπείρω). The key event is the sowing. This is the moment of creation as the male plants seed in the female soil. The analogy implies that male ejaculation is the act which gives birth to progeny. The father is the progenitor and creator; the mother is the nurse. Further, the father is human, the mother is not. This represents a common metaphorical structure in Greek thought; the father is the active worker of the earth while the mother is passive, awaiting cultivation.¹⁰⁸ The male's exertion ensures the continuation of his lineage.

Sophokles employs the field metaphor with similar effect. In *Oidipous the King*, Jokasta is "[the mother,] the field that had yielded two harvests, himself [Oidipous] and his children" (μητρώαν δ' ὅπου / κίχοι διπλῆν ἄρουραν οὗ τε καὶ τέκνων, *OT* 1256-1257, trans. Lloyd-Jones, 1994a). Jokasta is again the ἄρουρα. The role of the father is not specified, but διπλός (*OT* 1257) recalls Jokasta's two male partners, father and son, Laios and Oidipous. Their children emerged from Jokasta's body like a plant sprouts from the earth. How the children were created is uncertain. Yet, the comparison between Jokasta and a doubly ploughed field suggests that she was the inert recipient of her male partners' seed.

¹⁰⁷ Garvie, 1986, p. 76.

¹⁰⁸ duBois, 1988, p. 68.

In the *Women of Trachis*, Deianeira describes Herakles's absence from their home also using the language of agricultural work:

κάφύσαμεν δὴ παῖδας, οὓς κείνός ποτε
γῆτης ὅπως ἄρουραν ἔκτοπον λαβῶν
σπείρων μόνον προσεῖδε κάξαμῶν ἅπαξ.

We had, indeed, children, whom he, like a farmer who has taken over a remote piece of ploughland, regards only when he sows and when he reaps. (*Trach.* 31-33, trans. Lloyd-Jones, 1994b)

Deianeira uses the first person plural form of φύω, to “produce,” indicating that wife and husband together produced their children. Herakles is the farmer who looks from afar at the ἄρουρα which he sows (σπείρω) and reaps (ἐξαμάω). Sexual reproduction occurs just once, as expressed by μόνον...ἅπαξ (*Trach.* 33), conveying an aloofness between the spouses. The image also conveys Herakles's ownership of his wife: she is his land. The children are likewise their father's property. Mother and father bring forth their children together, but the male is in control and human, while the female is passive nature.

In the *Orestes*, Euripides plays with agricultural metaphors at a key moment when Orestes directly alludes to Apollo's λόγος in Aischylos's *Eumenides*. Orestes tells his maternal grandfather his reason for supporting Agamemnon: “my father engendered me, and my mother, ploughland receiving the seed from another, gave me birth” (πατὴρ μὲν ἐφύτευσέν με, σὴ δ' ἔτικτε παῖς / τὸ σπέρμ' ἄρουρα παραλαβοῦσ' ἄλλου πάρα, *Orest.* 552-553, trans. Kovacs, 2002). Euripides's Orestes explicitly differentiates between male and female; his father was the planter-producer (φυτεύω), his mother the producer (τίκτω). The difference between these actions is made clearer with an analogy. Klytaimestra was the ἄρουρα that received Agamemnon's σπέρμα. His planting of his σπέρμα marked the moment of creation. She merely held his seed and delivered his offspring. Euripides is transparently referencing his predecessor's work. Orestes's justification for committing matricide is that his mother is not his real parent genetically speaking. There is a clear purpose motivating his viewpoint, just as there is also for Aischylos's Apollo. But Euripides develops the agriculture metaphor further than Aischylos, demonstrating how Apollo's λόγος relies on this familiar imagery.

However, in Aischylos's *Agamemnon*, the playwright does something different with this metaphor, manipulating familiar terms for the purposes of characterisation and

demonstrating how diversely the female as field image can be construed. Following her murder of Agamemnon, Klytaimestra boasts:

βάλλει μ' ἔρεμνῃ ψακάδι φοινίας δρόσου,
χαίρουσαν οὐδὲν ἦσσον ἢ διοσδότῳ
γάνει σπορητὸς κάλυκος ἐν λοχεύμασιν.

[He] hit me with a black shower of gory dew—at which I rejoiced no less than the growing corn rejoices in the liquid blessing granted by Zeus when the sheathed ears swell to birth. (*Ag.* 1390-1392, trans. Sommerstein, 2008b)

Klytaimestra describes the murder using violent language, miming her actions so as to bring the full horror of her act on the stage.¹⁰⁹ Her words echo Homer's *Iliad*.¹¹⁰ Homer describes Menelaos's reaction when Antilochos offers him a mare the latter unfairly won at the funeral games commemorating Patroklos: “and his heart was warmed like the grain when it grows ripe with the dew on the ears, when the fields are bristling (τοῖο δὲ θυμὸς / ἰάνθη ὡς εἶ τε περὶ σταχύεσσιν ἔέρση / ληΐου ἀλδήσκοντος, ὅτε φρίσσουσιν ἄρουραι, *Il.* 23.597-599, trans. A. T. Murray, 1999). Here, the ripening corn describes Menelaos's satisfaction at reconciling with Antilochus after he had rebuked him for cheating. In Aischylos's text, the growth of corn likewise describes Klytaimestra's satisfaction at rebutting Agamemnon, not through reconciliation but rather through revenge. The intertextuality at play here likens Agamemnon to the cheating Antilochos, placing the Argive king in an ignoble light.

In Aischylos's metaphor for procreation, the mother exercises agency. Having violently struck Agamemnon dead, she is sprayed by his blood. She describes his blood as rain (ψακάς). The liquid nutrient prompts birth (λόχευμα), the birth of corn (σπορητός). By taking his blood-rain, she transgressively generates alone. Agamemnon's blood is like Zeus's rain, thus associating the king of gods with the human king. The comparison activates the divine world as a frame of reference for the audience.¹¹¹ In some sense, Klytaimestra takes the guise of Gaia, the female who receives Zeus's rain, but she describes herself as the earth's produce, the corn, rather than the earth itself.

Klytaimestra could be “sown corn” or already “growing corn;” σπορητός introduces an interesting ambiguity. If Klytaimestra is a sown crop, she is a farmer's

¹⁰⁹ Diggle, 2005, p. 216.

¹¹⁰ Richardson, 2000, p. 234.

¹¹¹ Later, I shall further discuss the significance of the allusion to the union of Ouranos and Gaia in this passage (p. 153).

produce. In this understanding of *σπορητός*, the avenging Klytaimestra could be Agamemnon's crop, his creation. Klytaimestra is born from the seeds Agamemnon previously sowed. Agamemnon, it could be interpreted, is responsible for his own demise. If one imagines Agamemnon as the farmer, this has implications for his culpability in the revenge plot. The father's control over creation is intimately linked with his own downfall. This could implicitly recall his murder of Iphigeneia. The use of the word *δρόσος* (*Ag.* 1390) is interesting in this regard. It refers to "dew," but also to anything that is young and tender. The blood that Klytaimestra takes from Agamemnon has vulnerable and youthful qualities. In effect, the murder of Agamemnon returns to Klytaimestra youthful blood, the blood of her young daughter perhaps, and with it, the queen flourishes. In offering Agamemnon and Cassandra as sacrifices to Zeus (*Ag.* 1387), Klytaimestra links her act to the sacrifice of Iphigeneia.¹¹² Iphigeneia haunts the scene. The playwright, I suggest, spins the image of the active father-farmer on its head; it is precisely Agamemnon's agency in killing Iphigeneia which has destroyed him. The spilling of her young blood has led to his loss of life.

However, *σπορητός* also means "growing corn." Klytaimestra, in this understanding, is not an untilled field awaiting cultivation as in the standard metaphor, but an already growing crop which thrives when it receives the male's nutrient. In some sense, she appears to produce freely. Perhaps this autonomy is a hint at Klytaimestra's adultery. She is not under the control of her husband. But, primarily, the description leaves the source of the produce unspecified. Klytaimestra, it seems, is generating alone like Hesiod's Gaia. Aischylos demonstrates the potential for reinterpreting the metaphor of the female as field. In this instance, he generates a figure of horror. Klytaimestra's dominance is perverse and earns her criticism from the chorus (*Ag.* 1399-1400). Through the ambiguity of *σπορητός*, the poet introduces uncertainty about not only whether it is the father or mother who is more accountable in the production of children, but also whether it is Agamemnon or Klytaimestra who is responsible for the king's death. The familiar scene of the union of earth and sky offers a poetic analogue for issues of responsibility in the play. Aischylos deploys the ambiguity in the contribution of the sexes to reproduction as a means to bring into question the responsibility of his characters for their murderous actions.

¹¹² Lebeck, 1971, p. 76.

DuBois argues that the popular image of the farmer cultivating his field replaced the earlier image of the goddess Gaia, the earth, a female divinity capable of procreating autonomously.¹¹³ The female body could be represented as both the fallow field awaiting cultivation and the all producing earth in the form of Gaia. Countering DuBois's analysis, I suggest that alternative representations of the female body are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The later tradition need not replace the earlier. One tradition may even evoke the other, destabilising the authority of each perspective. The renegotiation of ambiguous agricultural language and metaphors in dramatic poetry demonstrates the inherent contestability of ideas surrounding sexual reproduction for poets and their audience. The poets were able to rework these images and terms in different ways as there was not a fixed understanding of what the roles of the sexes were in sexual reproduction. Each poet could explore these ambiguities for his own rhetorical purposes.

The Pregnant Philosopher

After Aischylos, Plato shows clearly how the language of sexual reproduction carried diverse applications owing to its inherent ambiguity. In Plato's *Timaios*, men plough the mother "as upon ploughed soil" (ὡς εἰς ἄρουραν, *Tim.* 91d, trans. Bury, 1929). Here, again, is the metaphor of the ἄρουρα familiar from tragic poetry. Plato is drawing upon cultural resources for describing sexual reproduction. When describing the beginnings of the natural world, Plato's *Timaios* claims, "it is proper to liken the Recipient to the Mother, the Source to the Father, and what is engendered between these two to the Offspring" (καὶ δὴ καὶ προσεικάσαι πρέπει τὸ μὲν δεχόμενον μητρὶ, τὸ δ' ὄθεν πατρὶ, τὴν δὲ μεταξὺ τούτων φύσιν ἐκγόνῳ, *Tim.* 50d). In the same dialogue, the male is compared to a tree laden with fruit (*Tim.* 86c), emphasizing the fertility of the male. However, it is not clear if Plato believed that only the male produces σπέρμα.¹¹⁴ In the *Republic*, Sokrates expresses that the only difference between the sexes is that females "produce" (τίκτω) while males "mount" (ὀχεύω), a distinction which leaves it uncertain which parent provides seed (*Rep.* 454d-e). The female may provide σπέρμα.

Plato reveals how truly flexible ideas about sexual reproduction were in the *Symposium* when Sokrates quotes Diotima's discourse on love:

¹¹³ duBois, 1988, p. 68.

¹¹⁴ Hobbs, 2006, p. 263.

κυοῦσιν γάρ, ἔφη, ὃ Σώκρατες, πάντες ἄνθρωποι καὶ κατὰ τὸ σῶμα καὶ κατὰ τὴν ψυχὴν, καὶ ἐπειδὴν ἐν τινὶ ἡλικίᾳ γένωνται, τίκτειν ἐπιθυμεῖ ἡμῶν ἡ φύσις. τίκτειν δὲ ἐν μὲν αἰσχυρῷ οὐ δύναται, ἐν δὲ τῷ καλῷ. ἡ γὰρ ἀνδρὸς καὶ γυναικὸς συνουσία τόκος ἐστίν. ἔστι δὲ τοῦτο θεῖον τὸ πρᾶγμα, καὶ τοῦτο ἐν θνητῷ ὄντι τῷ ζῳῷ ἀθάνατον ἔνεστιν, ἡ κύησις καὶ ἡ γέννησις. τὰ δὲ ἐν τῷ ἀναρμόστῳ ἀδύνατον γενέσθαι.

All men are pregnant, Sokrates, both in body and in soul: on reaching a certain age our nature yearns to beget. This it cannot do upon an ugly person, but only on the beautiful: the conjunction of man and woman is a begetting for both. It is a divine affair, this engendering and bringing to birth, an immortal element in the creature that is mortal; and it cannot occur in the discordant. (*Sym.* 206c, trans. Lamb, 2001)

The passage relies heavily on the language of sexual reproduction: κυέω, κύησις, γίγνομαι, γέννησις, τίκτω, τόκος, συνουσία. The terms cover actions from coitus to conception to pregnancy to parturition. Notably, all humans (πάντες ἄνθρωποι) perform these actions; all are pregnant (κυέω) in body and soul, and all produce (γίγνομαι). This description places parturition in a positive light; it is a highly creative act. The products of the soul are, however, superior creations to children (*Sym.* 209c-d), suggesting that philosophical pursuits are the highest form of creation.¹¹⁵ Yet, Plato's Diotima employs a distinctly female experience, pregnancy, as a metaphor for both cerebral and physiological creations.¹¹⁶ The focus on pregnancy comes from a woman, Diotima, adding to the sense that female activities are being described.¹¹⁷ Female imagery provides the model for all creation.

In the *Phaidros*, Plato returns to the metaphor of the field with a different purpose than in the *Timaios*, drawing a correlation between sexual reproduction and philosophy:

ὅταν τις τῇ διαλεκτικῇ τέχνῃ χρώμενος, λαβὼν ψυχὴν προσήκουσαν, φυτεύῃ τε καὶ σπείρῃ μετ' ἐπιστήμης λόγους, οἱ ἑαυτοῖς τῷ τε φυτεύσαντι βοηθεῖν ἱκανοὶ καὶ οὐχὶ ἄκαρποι ἀλλὰ ἔχοντες σπέρμα, ὅθεν ἄλλοι ἐν ἄλλοις ἡθεσι φυτόμενοι τοῦτ' αἰεὶ ἀθάνατον παρέχειν ἱκανοί.

When one employs the dialectic method and plants and sows in a fitting soul intelligent words which are able to help themselves and him who planted them, which are not fruitless, but yield seed from which there spring up in other minds other words capable of continuing the process for ever.

(*Phdr.* 276e-277a, trans. Fowler, 1982)

¹¹⁵ Songe-Moller, 2002, p. 112.

¹¹⁶ Hobbs, 2006, pp. 264-265.

¹¹⁷ Songe-Moller, 2002, p. 105.

Sokrates reworks the metaphor of the female as field by employing agricultural language to describe intellectual pursuits. Sowing and planting λόγοι yields σπέρμα which generates more λόγοι. The cultivated female body is here the cultivated mind of a philosopher. The reinscribing of the field metaphor reveals the semantic stretch of these terms. The agricultural language customarily used to describe sexual reproduction can be easily introduced into alternative spheres of human creation. The planter of λόγος is superior in the intellectual interaction, just as the farmer is dominant over the female field. The philosopher's words, in this instance, replace the female body as the site of reproduction.¹¹⁸

DuBois critiques Plato's appropriation of maternity for the male philosopher which she claims facilitates the creation of an intellectual tradition where the male is wholly self-sufficient.¹¹⁹ The male philosopher incorporates what is traditionally female, rendering her redundant. Songe-Moller points out that women are excluded from the masculine and spiritual creation which Plato promotes.¹²⁰ However, while Plato idealises the male philosopher, he does not negate the female. In a sense, she is always there since the image of the pregnant philosopher relies on the traditional representation of the pregnant female for its meaning. What is interesting about Plato's images is rather his rejection of a clear system assigning what is intrinsic to the male and to the female.¹²¹ He does not distinguish between male and female, liberating both from their cultural restraints.¹²² Any traditional opposition between the sexes collapses in Diotima's image of the pregnant philosopher. In exploiting the ambiguity of these terms, Plato shows how malleable and negotiable the terms used to describe the roles of the sexes in sexual reproduction are. In the period after Aischylos, Plato shows the contestability of ideas surrounding gender and reproduction, and their openness to exploitation for the purposes of a specific agenda.

Erichthonios and the Athenian γθών

The different motivations guiding poetic explorations of sexual reproduction can be seen clearly in treatments of a key Attic myth: the genesis story of Athens's founder

¹¹⁸ duBois, 1988, p. 178.

¹¹⁹ duBois, 1988, p. 173.

¹²⁰ Songe-Moller, 2002, p. 96.

¹²¹ Sandford, 2010, p. 122.

¹²² Hobbs, 2006, p. 271.

Erichthonios. He was literally born from the soil. Further, Athena features as a primary character in his genesis story, linking it with Aischylos's *Eumenides* where Athena also plays a pivotal role. Like Aischylos's play, the story of Erichthonios's birth spoke directly to Athenians. The genesis of their founder provided a means to understand their own relationship with their *polis*, and hence, affirm their place as citizens. Further, I argue that the story of Erichthonios's birth demonstrates the plurality of ways maternity was imagined.

The myth of Erichthonios's birth was popular in the fifth century BC, the same period as the first performance of Aischylos's play.¹²³ The birth story is frequently depicted in fifth century BC Attic vase painting.¹²⁴ An Attic red figure hydria attributed to the Oinante painter depicts Gaia rising into the scene holding the infant Erichthonios.¹²⁵ She is handing the boy to Athena, who receives him. The child reaches out for Athena. Another fifth century BC Attic vase, a red figure stamnos, shows Gaia with her arms outstretched towards Athena.¹²⁶ From Gaia's hands, Athena takes Erichthonios. The implication is that Gaia produced Erichthonios, but Athena assumes the duty of rearing him. The focus in the vase paintings is on the roles played by the two goddesses, Gaia and Athena. Loraux interprets that the images show Erichthonios's passage from his infancy under the care of Gaia to his social role under Athena's guardianship.¹²⁷ In essence, the scenes represents not Erichthonios's biological birth, but his birth as Athens's founder, which relies upon his relationship with Athena.

Homer's *Iliad* provides more details about the relationship between Athena and Erichthonios:

οἱ δ' ἄρ' Ἀθήνας εἶχον εὐκτίμενον πτολίεθρον
δῆμον Ἐρεχθῆος μεγαλήτορος, ὃν ποτ' Ἀθήνη
θρέψε Διὸς θυγάτηρ, τέκε δὲ ζείδωρος ἄρουρα,
κάδ δ' ἐν Ἀθήνης εἶσεν ἐῶ ἐν πίονι νηῶ.

And they who held Athens, the well-built citadel, the people of great-hearted Erechtheus, whom Athena, daughter of Zeus, once nurtured, but the earth,

¹²³ Loraux, 1993, p. 41.

¹²⁴ *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae (LIMC)*, 1988, pp. 632-634 Vol. IV 2, Erechtheus 11, 32-34.

¹²⁵ British Museum, London, Inv. E182.

¹²⁶ Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Munich, Inv. 2413.

¹²⁷ Loraux, 1993, p. 62.

the giver of grain, bore him; and she settled him in Athens, in her own rich shrine.¹²⁸ (*Il.* 2.546-549, trans. A. T. Murray, 1999)

This section is most likely a later Athenian insertion into the epic. In the Homeric account, Athena is Erichthonios's τροφός (from τρέφω). The τροφός is the essential tie between Athens's founder and the *polis*. However, Erichthonios is a product of the fruitful ἄρουρα (*Il.* 2.548). The ἄρουρα is naturally conflated with the earth goddess Gaia as personified in vase paintings of the story. There is no mention of Erichthonios's father.

Erichthonios's birth from Gaia features elsewhere. In Herodotos's *Histories*, Erichthonios is "earthborn" (γηγενέος, *Hdt.* 8.55, trans. Godley, 1981). This epithet clearly identifies Erichthonios as born from Ge, an alternative name for the goddess Gaia. The same epithet appears in the prologue of Euripides's *Ion* (20). Following this, Hermes calls the people of Athens αὐτόχθων (*Ion* 29), a term related to Erichthonios's name mentioned only a few lines earlier. Athenians can claim they are autochthonous owing to Erichthonios's birth from Ge. Behind the Athenians' cherished claim to be autochthonous lies the memory of their origins in one mother.

The notion that the land of Attica is female goes far back. In Plutarch's *Solon*, the famous lawmaker promotes the idea that the Athenian land was female, boasting how he had freed her from bondage (*Sol.* 15.5). Plato develops this idea much later:

ἐπειδὴ δὲ παντελῶς ἐξειργασμένοι ἦσαν, καὶ ἡ γῆ αὐτοὺς μήτηρ οὔσα ἀνῆκεν, καὶ νῦν δεῖ ὡς περὶ μητρὸς καὶ τροφοῦ τῆς χώρας ἐν ἧ εἰσι βουλευέσθαι τε καὶ ἀμύνειν αὐτούς, ἐάν τις ἐπ' αὐτὴν ἦ, καὶ ὑπὲρ τῶν ἄλλων πολιτῶν ὡς ἀδελφῶν ὄντων καὶ γηγενῶν διανοεῖσθαι.

And when they were quite finished the earth as being their mother delivered them, and now as if their land were their mother and their nurse they ought to take thought for her and defend her against any attack and regard the other citizens as their brothers and children of the self-same earth.

(*Rep.* 414e, trans. Shorey, 1930)

The land that the Athenians live off and fight to protect is the same soil which they originate from. Here again is the notion of γηγενής. Athenians are united in their origins from a shared mother. Similarly, in the *Menexenus*, Athenian men enjoy a

¹²⁸ The names Erechtheus and Erichthonios are variants indicating the same mythical figure. Burkert explains that Erichthonios was a later name given to the founder of Athens. The later name reflects his unusual birth from the earth, χθών. In order to avoid confusion, I shall refer only to Erichthonios. See Burkert, 1983, p. 156.

“brotherhood” due to their shared maternal origins (μᾶς μητρὸς πάντες ἀδελφοὶ φύντες, *Menex.* 239a). In Plato’s texts, the Athenian citizen identifies with the *polis* and his fellow citizens as a consequence of their perceived shared origins from the earth. The myth of autochthony defines Athenian brotherhood.

In *Against Leokrates*, Lykourgos quotes a section from Euripides’s lost play *Erechtheus* where the Athenians are celebrated as a superior people owing to their autochthonous origins (*Ag. Leo.* 100). Lysias similarly idealises Athenian autochthony in his *Funeral Oration* (17). He explains how most nations are created when colonisers aggressively take over a foreign land, but Athenians rightly possess their land since they were born from its soil, and therefore, “possessed in one and the same country their mother and their fatherland” (ἀλλ’ αὐτόχθονες ὄντες τὴν αὐτὴν ἐκέκτηντο μητέρα καὶ πατρίδα, *Lys.* 2.17, trans. Lamb, 1930). Autochthony deems Athenians unique as it naturalises their citizenship status.¹²⁹ Further, it generates solidarity amongst citizens through a myth of common parentage. For Lysias, the land of Athens provides both a mother and father to all Athenians.

In the years shortly after the first staging of the *Oresteia*, Athenians came to rely on their mother and father to secure their citizen status. The Periklean citizenship law of 451/450 B.C., designed to reduce citizen numbers, declared that only an Athenian born from an Athenian father and mother could claim citizenship (*Const. Ath.* 26.3). Neither parent had more influence. This enhanced the status of Athenian citizen mothers since they and their children were deemed superior to foreign women and their children. Women, as well as men, became the guarantors of citizenship for the male lineage. The existence of this law makes clear that there was a debate in Athens surrounding the significance of parentage in the 450s BC. Hence, poetic explorations of the contributions of the sexes to creation were part of a much broader current conversation about how to define an Athenian citizen. Ancestry was not just of interest to the poets, but was a key issue in determining the rights of Athens’s citizen and non-citizen inhabitants.

Claim to land acts as a marker of citizenship in Aischylos’s *Oresteia*. Athena offers the Erinyes social esteem in Athens by gifting them land (*Eum.* 890). Their choice is between remaining hated outsiders or becoming honoured owners of γῆών. To be an alien is to have no claim to Athenian land. On arriving home from war, the herald

¹²⁹ Loraux, 2000, p. 23.

in the *Agamemnon* honours his fatherland (ἰὸ πατρῶν οὔδας Ἀργείας χθονός, *Ag.* 503). His origins are the χθών of Argos. The land, for him, belongs to his paternal ancestry. However, when Eteocles expresses the debt the Thebans owe to their homeland in Aischylos's *Seven Against Thebes*, he gives the land a distinctly maternal character:

ὕμᾱς δὲ χρῆ νῦν [...]	10
Γῆ τε μητρί, φιλάτη τροφῶ	
ἢ γὰρ νέους ἔρποντας εὐμενεῖ πέδῳ,	
ἅπαντα πανδοκοῦσα παιδείας ὄτλον,	
ἐθρέψατ' οἰκητῆρας ἀσπιδηφόρους	
πιστοὺς ὅπως γένοισθε πρὸς χρέος τόδε.	20

This is the time when every one of you [...] must come [...] to the aid of your Motherland, your most loving nurse; for when you were children crawling on her kindly soil, she generously accepted all the toil of your upbringing, and nurtured you to become her shield-bearing inhabitants and be faithful to her in this hour of need. (*Seven* 10-20, trans. Sommerstein, 2008c)

Here, the function of the land is the same as the regular duties of nursing and nurturing performed by human mothers. Maternal nurturance is highly valued in this passage. The Thebans must protect the land because it, like a mother, gave them life.

Aischylos displays conscious awareness of how the land could be imagined as a father or mother. Depending upon the response he desired from his audience, he could give primacy to one parent over the other. There was no fixed gender hierarchy to comply with as neither male nor female had definitively greater influence. In the prologue of Aischylos's *Eumenides*, the Pythia's interest is in paternal origins. She refers to the Athenians as "children of Hephaistos, who turned an untamed land into a tame one" (παῖδες Ἡφαίστου, χθόνα / ἀνήμερον τιθέντες ἡμερωμένην, *Eum.* 13-14, trans. Sommerstein, 2008b). The Athenians succeeded in civilising the χθών. The Pythia is alluding to the story of Erichthonios, but remarkably chooses to associate the Athenians with Erichthonios's divine father, Hephaistos, rather than their mother, Gaia, and nurse, Athena. She posits a male source for the Athenians, foreshadowing how Apollo later will stress the prominence of the male in procreation. However, the reference to the χθών reminds the audience that the Athenians are elsewhere considered descendants of Gaia. The audience will naturally remember the roles played by Gaia and Athena in the birth and rearing of Erichthonios. The wild land which the Athenians cultivated in the Pythia's speech was the female earth they originated from. The Pythia implicitly points to Erichthonios's mother, but chooses to give primacy to his father.

The Pythia's assumption that the Athenians are descendants of Hephaistos is paralleled in other sources. This is a well known story. In the *Description of Greece*, Pausanias records: "men say that Erichthonios had no human father, but that his parents were Hephaistos and Earth" (πατέρα δὲ Ἐριχθονίῳ λέγουσιν ἀνθρώπων μὲν οὐδένα εἶναι, γονέας δὲ Ἥφαιστον καὶ Γῆν, *Paus.* 1.2.6, trans. Jones, 1978). Hellanikos, a fifth century BC chronicler, also believed Hephaistos was Erichthonios's father (fr. 4F39). Pseudo-Apollodoros's the *Library* describes Hephaistos's role in Erichthonios's genesis most fully:

τοῦτον οἱ μὲν Ἥφαιστου καὶ τῆς Κραναοῦ θυγατρὸς Ἀτθίδος εἶναι λέγουσιν, οἱ δὲ Ἥφαιστου καὶ Ἀθηνᾶς, οὕτως. Ἀθηνᾶ παρεγένετο πρὸς Ἥφαιστον, ὄπλα κατασκευάσαι θέλουσα. ὁ δὲ ἐγκαταλελειμμένος ὑπὸ Ἀφροδίτης εἰς ἐπιθυμίαν ὄλισθε τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς, καὶ διώκειν αὐτὴν ἤρξατο· ἡ δὲ ἔφευγεν. ὡς δὲ ἐγγὺς αὐτῆς ἐγένετο πολλῇ ἀνάγκῃ (ἦν γὰρ χωλός), ἐπειρᾶτο συνελθεῖν. ἡ δὲ ὡς σώφρων καὶ παρθένος οὔσα οὐκ ἠνέσχετο· ὁ δὲ ἀπεσπέρμηθεν εἰς τὸ σκέλος τῆς θεᾶς. ἐκείνη δὲ μυσσασθεῖσα ἐρίῳ ἀπομάζασα τὸν γόνον εἰς γῆν ἔρριψε. φευγούσης δὲ αὐτῆς καὶ τῆς γονῆς εἰς γῆν πεσοῦσης Ἐριχθόνιος γίνεται. [...] ἐν δὲ τῷ τεμένει τραφεῖς Ἐριχθόνιος ὑπ' αὐτῆς Ἀθηνᾶς, ἐκβαλὼν Ἀμφικτύονα ἐβασίλευσεν Ἀθηνῶν, καὶ τὸ ἐν ἀκροπόλει ξόανον τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς ἰδρύσατο, καὶ τῶν Παναθηναίων τὴν ἑορτὴν συνεστήσατο, καὶ Πραξιθέαν νηίδα νύμφην ἔγημεν, ἐξ ἧς αὐτῷ παῖς Πανδίων ἐγεννήθη.

Some say that this Erichthonius was a son of Hephaistos and Atthis, daughter of Kranaos, and some that he was a son of Hephaistos and Athena, as follows: Athena came to Hephaistos, desirous of fashioning arms. But he, being forsaken by Aphrodite, fell in love with Athena, and began to pursue her, but she fled. When he got near her with much ado (for he was lame), he attempted to embrace her; but she, being a chaste virgin (and wise), would not submit to him, and he dropped his seed on the leg of the goddess. In disgust, she wiped off the seed with wool and threw it on the ground; and as she fled and the seed fell on the ground, Erichthonius was produced. [...] Having been brought up by Athena herself in the precinct, Erichthonius expelled Amphictyon and became king of Athens; and he set up the wooden image of Athena in the Akropolis, and instituted the festival of the Panathenaea, and married Praxithea, a Naiad nymph, by whom he had a son Pandion. (*Apollod.* 3.14.6, trans. Frazer, 1956)

A similar account of Erichthonios's birth featured in a now lost play by Euripides.¹³⁰ This suggests that Hephaistos's failed union with Athena was part of the Erichthonios story in the Classical period. Pseudo-Apollodoros gives much less attention to Ge than earlier writers. While other authors posit Ge as Erichthonios's mother, Pseudo-

¹³⁰ Frazer, 1956, p. 90.

Apollodoros believes that either Atthis or Athena is his mother. However, his story which follows complicates this by crediting Ge as the producer. The author reports that he knows of two different accounts of Erichthonios's parentage. His uncertainty is communicated through λέγω. Pseudo-Apollodoros is retelling versions of the story, indicating that the tradition is inconsistent. He makes it clear from the beginning that the identity of Erichthonios's mother is highly contestable. Contrastly, the father is certainly Hephaistos. Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, of the first century AD, paradoxically narrates how Erichthonios was produced without a mother (*Met.* 2.553). Uncertainty surrounding Erichthonios's mother may have been common in later versions of the story.

In the *Library*, three events bring about Erichthonios's birth: Hephaistos's ejaculation, Athena's throwing of the inseminated wool to the earth and Ge's parturition. Hephaistos's ejaculation seems to represent the moment of creation. But it is Athena who facilitates the impregnation and it is implied that Erichthonios is her child. There is an interesting change in the language. The masculine form of "seed," γόνος, becomes γονή, the feminine form, owing to Athena's actions with her wool. There is no difference in meaning between these forms—both mean "seed"—so the change in gender is significant. Erichthonios is born from γονή, female seed. Athena, it is suggested, is not only Erichthonios's τροφός (Apollod. 3.14.6), but produces the future king through the use of her wool. Though Athena does not receive Hephaistos's semen, she behaves as though she is the biological mother.¹³¹

The story is reminiscent of how Hephaistos and Athena joined forces, on Zeus's instruction, to produce the first woman in Hesiod's *Theogony* (570-580). In the *Library*, they produce the first Athenian man. The pairing of Hephaistos and Athena locates the story of Athens's founder within the atmosphere of Hesiod's famous cosmogonies. However, Pandora is created from a combination of Hephaistos and Athena's craftwork, while Erichthonios is created as a result of sexual desire. Hephaistos essentially attempts to rape Athena, but she escapes. As Loraux elaborates: "the first Athenian was not born from the union of the sexes, but from their disjunction."¹³² Athena, as the female protagonist in the story, occupies the role of Erichthonios's mother, but without tarnishing her virginity. She aids the genesis through the use of her wool, but she does not have sex. Working with wool was a prototypical female activity in Greece.¹³³

¹³¹ Songe-Moller, 2002, p. 5.

¹³² Loraux, 2000, p. 24.

¹³³ Schein, 1995, pp. 19-20.

Hence, the wool signifies a distinctly female contribution to creation. Ge receives what Athena cannot receive, the product of Hephaistos's arousal, allowing a sexual union of sorts. His semen combines with Athena's wool to impregnate Ge. The myth affirms that Ge's body is required for Erichthonios to be born. The role of the female earth is understated, but is nonetheless essential. Her reception of the inseminated wool enables Athena to become a mother to Erichthonios.

Owing to the emphasis on Athena's virginity, Loraux argues that autochthonous birth "does way with the significance of women's maternity."¹³⁴ Goldhill argues that this Athenian tradition offers support from myth for theories which denied the female a role in sexual reproduction.¹³⁵ Female sexuality and its contribution to sexual reproduction are replaced by the virgin motherhood of Athena. Loraux adds that Athena's virgin maternity represents a form of motherhood which is impossible in the human world; the image provides Athens's citizens with a fantasy of a world without mothers.¹³⁶ Loraux presents Apollo's *λόγος* in the *Eumenides* as another instance of this Athenian fantasy.¹³⁷ Songe-Moller comments in a similar vein:

The myth associates fertility with virginity, thus implying a model of reproduction devoid of sexuality: reproduction without female participation. The Athenian boy has a father but no mother. What this suggests is some ideal of one-sex humanity, where all children are boys, and each child originates from the father alone. [...] It could be said that the myth implies a vision of the human to eternity without needing to mix himself with anything that differs in nature from himself.¹³⁸

I suggest there are problems with these interpretations. The autochthony myth is for the benefit of Athenian men and it directly affirms their origins and shared citizen identity. Yet, the myth does not deny the importance of mothers. While Athena's virginity is idealised in the story, alongside her link with Erichthonios, the essential problem is not that there is no mother, but rather than there are three potential mothers: Atthis, Athena, Ge. It is the task of isolating who the mother is which leads Pseudo-Apollodoros's inquiry. Arousal, coitus, gestation, parturition and nursing are all features of the story, so it is an error to suggest that female sexuality and maternity are denied. Further,

¹³⁴ Loraux, 1993, p. 8.

¹³⁵ Goldhill, 2004, p. 39.

¹³⁶ Loraux, 1993, p. 11.

¹³⁷ Loraux, 1993, p. 11.

¹³⁸ Songe-Moller, 2002, p. 5.

Hephaistos appears secondary to the female figures and he is not depicted in an honourable light. He fails to win Athena, ejaculates and then disappears, leaving Athena to rear the child and introduce him to society. This is hardly a romantic view of fatherhood. It is as though Erichthonios is an orphan child; his biological parents move aside to allow Athena rear him, making him a child of Athens as it were. Erichthonios becomes king because of Athena, not owing to his father. What is paramount in these stories is stressing the link between Erichthonios and Athena, an alliance which Pseudo-Apollodoros attempts to naturalise by suggesting Athena is the biological mother. In effect, this author's account has nothing definitive to say about the relationship between child and mother or child and father. Its aim is to establish the validity of Erichthonios's kingship.

Within Pseudo-Apollodoros's attempt to ally Erichthonios with the virgin goddess of Athens, the role of Ge is downplayed, but the confusion this creates concerning the hero's parentage is always apparent. Pseudo-Apollodoros's story represents not a negation of the maternal role, but an exploration of what constitutes maternity. The discourse of virgin motherhood sits uneasily with Erichthonios's birth from Ge. Ge's delivery of Erichthonios recalls the goddess's asexual reproductivity in the *Theogony* (126-132). The Erichthonios myth relies on the Hesiodic image of the fecund Ge. The Athenians are products of Hephaistos's seed as it impregnated Ge, the mother of all.¹³⁹ The role of Ge in the story gives Erichthonios's birth more importance. He is born, like the primeval divinities, directly from Ge. It is as though his birth signals the beginning of the world. He is γηγενής as in other tellings of the story. It is important to recall that in earlier versions, the role of Ge in producing Erichthonios is central. Autochthony implies birth from the female earth. Condemning autochthony as a rejection of maternity stems from an over reliance on and simplification of Pseudo-Apollodoros's account.

The Erichthonios story clearly shows how different storytellers exploited the uncertainty surrounding his parentage. What is important is that the ambiguity of terms and roles in procreation meant that parentage could be reimagined in different ways. Athena assumes the roles of mother and nurse in the Erichthonios story though she did not give birth to her son. This is highly significant considering Athena's preference for the father and child relationship in the *Eumenides* (734-740), a preference which has

¹³⁹ duBois, 1988, p. 63.

momentous consequences. The belittling of women in Aischylos's play effectively undercuts the relationship between Athena and Erichthonios, the relationship which secures the Athenians' tie to their patron goddess. Apollo's λόγος challenges a story which is central to Athenian identity, making it highly controversial. It is with this context in mind—a context of ambiguous vocabulary for describing procreation, and debate over the contributions by men and women as parents, and the significance of these contributions—that Apollo's λόγος must be interpreted. In Chapters 1 to 3 of this dissertation, I have identified Apollo's λόγος as a point of uncertainty in the *Oresteia*, offering this as my unique entryway into analysing tensions in the trilogy's conclusion. I have established the importance of this theme in the play: Athena's motherless birth essentially brings about Orestes's victory and the Erinyes' surrender. That the theme of procreation and heritage is contentious is not only borne out by the play, but also in discussions of this theme in other texts. Aischylos is not simply affirming dogma, but engaging with a debate. In the following chapter, I shall establish the contentiousness of Apollo's λόγος further by examining the language he uses.

Chapter 4

The Language of Parenting

The opening word of Aischylos's *Eumenides* is "first" (πρῶτον), which Goldhill points out is revealing since the action of the play will "turn on relations of origin, or parenthood."¹⁴⁰ The trial is deeply concerned with creation. Apollo's claim that Orestes is the product of his father alone generates a vision of creation devoid of women (*Eum.* 657-666). However, Padel points out how the concepts employed to describe creation in Greek literature "have complicated resonances."¹⁴¹ This is very much so the case in the *Eumenides*. Aischylos employs language that is so ambiguous that it is contentious and open to reinterpretation. The language of sexual reproduction, then, gives rise to controversy. Aischylos draws on the troublesome language of parenting and creation, purposefully employing concepts which provoke uncertainty and debate. In this chapter, I will analyse the poetics of Apollo's λόγος, revealing the complex resonances his terminology has in the trilogy.

τοκεύς and τροφός

After breaking with convention by declaring that a mother is *not* a τοκεύς (*Eum.* 658-659), Apollo goes on to explain what he believes a mother *is*. She is the "nurse" (τροφός) of the "newly-sown wave" (κύματος νεοσπόρου, *Eum.* 659, trans. Sommerstein, 2008b), the liquid product of a male, who is described as "he who mounts" or "leaps" (ὁ θρώσκων, *Eum.* 660). This unusual use of θρώσκων to describe a man appears elsewhere in Aischylos (fr. 15). The playwright seems to be evoking the term θορός, meaning "semen." Essentially, θρώσκων connotes the provider of semen, confirming the male as the producer of seed. The language relies on nature imagery, removing any sense of human connection between father and mother. Herodotos uses the word θορός when describing how fish procreate (Hdt. 2.93). Their mating ritual involves the female swallowing the male seed to become pregnant. θορός is also ejaculated by Indians, who copulate openly like cattle (Hdt. 3.101). By relying on the term θρώσκων, Apollo insinuates that the father and mother are strangers who copulate like animals to facilitate reproduction. The man provides the seed; the woman is the

¹⁴⁰ Goldhill, 1984, p. 208.

¹⁴¹ Padel, 1992, p. 109.

field to his animal produce. This is inconsistent with Apollo's earlier ode to the institution of marriage, which he claimed is protected by Hera and Zeus, and represents the closest bond mortals can experience (*Eum.* 213-218).¹⁴² Now, the mother is the carer of the male's sperm. She is soil to his seed. Her involvement is not with the τέκνον but with the ἔρνος, the young shoot which she nurtures and keeps safe (*Eum.* 661). Apollo has established a distinction: the female nurses, the male mounts.

Apollo separates parenting (τοκεύς) and nurturing (τροφός). The mother is the nurse, but she is not the parent. These nouns already have an established usage in the *Oresteia*. In the *Libation Bearers*, Orestes employs the plural form of τοκεύς to refer to his mother and father together: "for my parents, both alike" (τοκεῦσι δ' ὅμως, *Lib.* 385, trans. Sommerstein, 2008b). τοκεῦσι could refer to either parent, Agamemnon or Klytaimestra, alone, but it most likely applies to both parents.¹⁴³ The Erinyes also use the noun to indicate father and mother as a pair on several occasions (*Eum.* 152, 497, 545). The chorus add that both parents are φίλοι (*Eum.* 271). The singular τοκεύς can be either male or female. Apollo, then, is altering the previous understanding of τοκεύς in the drama by associating it solely with the male parent. Sommerstein notes: "Apollo does violence to the normal usage of the noun τοκεύς."¹⁴⁴ This essentially places Apollo in a weak argumentative position. In order to make his argument, the god must manipulate the language of reproduction which the audience are accustomed to. Common understanding does not support his viewpoint. However, τοκεύς is grammatically masculine so there is a certain natural association between the noun and the male parent which to an extent supports Apollo's restricted use of the term. Nonetheless, the audience are pressed to interpret that Apollo is using terms in an unusual way.

The noun τροφός is likewise burdened with a history of associations in the *Oresteia*. In the *Libation Bearers*, the earth is depicted as a nurse (χθονὸς τροφοῦ, *Lib.* 66). The chorus tells how the earth receives blood and from her, vengeance is born. This image of nursing corresponds with Apollo's λόγος. The nurse takes a liquid substance into herself, and thereafter, it becomes something else. She facilitates the transformation of liquid to living form. Apollo adds that a god may destroy the male's seed during this

¹⁴² Sommerstein, 1989, p. 209.

¹⁴³ Garvie, 1986, p. 145.

¹⁴⁴ Sommerstein, 1989, p. 207.

process (*Eum.* 661). Thus, it is divinity that is responsible if the seed does not survive, not the mother. The mother acts as nurse as long as the gods allow her to.

For the audience, the primary figure associated with nursing in the *Oresteia* is Kilissa, Orestes's nurse. The chorus introduce Kilissa as "Orestes's nurse" (τροφὸν δ' Ὀρέστου, *Lib.* 731). When Apollo claims that the *mētēr* is the τροφός of the embryo, the audience are surely reminded of Kilissa and her description of nursing:

φίλον δ' Ὀρέστην, τῆς ἐμῆς ψυχῆς τριβὴν, ὄν ἐξέθρεψα μητρόθεν δεδεγμένη,	750
κἄκ' νυκτιπλάγκτων ὀρθίων κελευμάτων καὶ πολλὰ καὶ μοχθήρ' ἀνωφέλητ' ἐμοὶ τλάση—τὸ μὴ φρονοῦν γὰρ ὡσπερὶ βοτὸν τρέφειν ἀνάγκη, πῶς γὰρ οὔ; τρόπῳ φρενός οὐ γὰρ τι φωνεῖ παῖς ἔτ' ὢν ἐν σπαργάνοις,	755
εἰ λιμός, ἢ δίψη τις, ἢ λιπουρία ἔχει. νέα δὲ νηδὺς αὐτάρκης τέκνων. τούτων πρόμαντις οὔσα, πολλὰ δ', οἴομαι, ψευσθεῖσα παιδὸς σπαργάνων φαιδρύντρια, γναφεὺς τροφεύς τε ταῦτ' εἰχέτην τέλος.	760
ἐγὼ διπλᾶς δὲ τάσδε χειρωναξίας ἔχουσ' Ὀρέστην ἐξεδεξάμην πατρί- τεθνηκότος δὲ νῦν τάλαινα πεύθομαι.	

But dear Orestes, who wore away my life with toil, whom I reared after receiving him straight from his mother's womb! (Over and over again I heard) his shrill, imperative cries, which forced me to wander around at night (and perform) many disagreeable tasks which I had to endure and which did me no good. A child without intelligence must needs be reared like an animal—how could it be otherwise?—by the intelligence of his nurse; when he's still an infant in swaddling clothes he can't speak at all if he's in the grip of hunger or thirst, say, or of an urge to make water—and the immature bowel of small children is its own master. I had to divine these things in advance, and often, I fancy, I was mistaken, and as cleaner of the baby's wrappings—well, a launderer and a caterer were holding the same post. Practising both these two crafts, I reared up Orestes for his father; and now, to my misery, I learn that he is dead! (*Lib.* 749-763)

Addressing Orestes as φίλος, Kilissa implies an intimacy between them (*Lib.* 749). She tells of how she brought Orestes up from childhood, employing the verb ἐκτρέφω (*Lib.* 750). Orestes was given by his mother to Kilissa to rear (*Lib.* 750). In this scene, Kilissa eclipses Klytimestra as caregiver to Orestes. The child's weaning and rearing occurs outside of her influence.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Goldhill, 1984, p. 170.

Kilissa describes the unpredictability of Orestes's νηδύς when he was an infant (*Lib.* 757), foreshadowing Apollo's use of the same term (*Eum.* 666). Kilissa speaks of the νηδύς of a male child, while Apollo describes the dark νηδύς where Athena was never nurtured (*Eum.* 665). The context of Apollo's λόγος implies that the νηδύς is a distinctly female body part, an anatomical cavity where the embryo develops, which is tempting to translate simply as 'womb.' In the Hippocratic Corpus, the womb is denoted by the term ὕστέρα (*On Ancient Medicine* 22, *Aphorismi* 5.22). Likewise, Herodotos employs ὕστέρα to describe the womb (*Hdt.* 4.109). Aischylos chooses the more ambiguous term νηδύς. Athena has no mother since she was never nurtured in a νηδύς. But, Kilissa's speech shows that the νηδύς also signifies a cavity in the male, the bowel or stomach. The obscurity of meaning inherent in the noun defies any attempt to associate it with the male or female exclusively. I shall explore associations with the term νηδύς more in Chapter 7. Apollo is trying to construct a theory which dichotomises the sexes, but the terminology he employs will not allow that. The terms which form the theory only amplify confusion surrounding reproduction. The playwright is pressing on the uncertainty of these terms.

Kilissa's speech prepares the audience for Apollo's λόγος in another way. The nurse performed her tasks for Orestes's father (*Lib.* 762), foreshadowing Apollo's theory of paternal superiority in the *Eumenides*. For Kilissa, the father is the parent, while she was the caregiver of the child which she received from the mother. The mother's role is transitory, existing somewhere between father and nurse. The nurturer of the child is not the mother, but the nurse, a non-family member. Following Kilissa's and Apollo's complementary speeches, the audience have been offered a distinctive account of parenting where the father is the parent, the mother briefly nurses the foetus and the nurse rears the child. The mother's role is minimal; her relationship is essentially only with the unborn seed of the father which she keeps safe only to the extent that the gods allow her to.

Crucially, Kilissa's straightforward account of child-rearing is complicated within the text of the *Libation Bearers*. In the *agōn* between mother and son prior to the play's climactic murder scene, Klytaimestra calls Orestes her "child," using the noun τέκνον (*Lib.* 896), the same noun which appears in Apollo's λόγος (*Eum.* 658). Klytaimestra goes on to describe how she nursed the infant Orestes with her breast (*Lib.* 897-898). He was well nourished, εὐτραφής (*Lib.* 898). Here, Klytaimestra performed nursing duties which Kilissa claimed was her domain (*Lib.* 750). Klytaimestra adds: "I

reared you” (ἐγὼ σ’ ἔθρεψα, *Lib.* 908). Again, twenty lines later, she repeats her claim to have nursed her child (*Lib.* 928). The emphasis on “I” (ἐγὼ) sounds like a challenge to Kilissa. This competition to claim the nursing role reveals how important this duty was; nursing does not lack social significance.

Klytaimestra identifies her maternal role through breastfeeding, which is an activity neither Kilissa nor Apollo mention. In immediate response to Klytaimestra’s appeal to breastfeeding her child, Orestes hesitates and questions whether he should kill his mother (*Lib.* 899). Orestes recognises that he is her child, and hence, calls her μήτηρ (*Lib.* 899). He implicitly agrees that she breastfed him and that this is significant. Klytaimestra’s dream and Orestes’s interpretation of it (*Lib.* 527-550) reveals that Klytaimestra certainly breastfed her son.¹⁴⁶ Orestes’s tragic predicament is clear; he is about to kill the parent who nurtured him with her breast, the parent who his life depended upon as an infant. The filial bond between Klytaimestra and Orestes at this juncture seems impossible to challenge. This moment of Orestes’s recognition of his mother’s influence is evoked by Apollo’s λόγος since he relies on the same terms. The λόγος against maternity paradoxically reminds the audience of the inextricable tie between Klytaimestra and Orestes.

I suggest that the emphasis on breastfeeding in the *agōn* between Klytaimestra and Orestes held greater significance for an ancient audience than for a modern one. Aischylos clearly modelled the character of Kilissa upon Homer’s Eurykleia, who in the *Odyssey* plays a prominent role as Odysseus’s τροφός (*Od.* 2.361, 4.742, 17.31, 19.15, 21.380, 22.391, 22.480, 23.25). Just as Kilissa describes her nursing duties on Orestes’s return to his *oikos*, so too, Eurykleia is present at Odysseus’s νόστος to claim her role in Odysseus’s rearing.¹⁴⁷ Both Eurykleia and Kilissa aid the overthrow of their nurslings’ enemies. One exchange between Odysseus and Eurykleia is particularly relevant. Odysseus addresses Eurykleia affectionately as μάϊα and tells of how she nursed him (τρέφω) and fed him with her breast (*Od.* 19.482-483). Eurykleia acted as Odysseus’s wet-nurse while Klytaimestra explicitly claims this responsibility in the *Libation Bearers* (897). Aischylos could easily have allowed Kilissa this duty too, which would have eclipsed Klytaimestra’s role in Orestes’s infancy, but he does not. Rather he emphasizes it, having Klytaimestra reveal her breast on stage.

¹⁴⁶ Garvie, 1986, p. 292.

¹⁴⁷ Goldhill, 1984, p. 169.

In the original production of the *Oresteia*, the male actor most likely appeared on the stage in luscious robes pointing at an exposed artificial breast.¹⁴⁸ Homer's *Iliad* inspires the scene. In a desperate attempt to convince Hektor not to fight Achilles, Hekabe shows her breast to her son and pleads with him to take pity on her (*Il.* 22.82-83). Aischylos is reproducing an idea from epic; the mother's breast is a powerful symbol of the child's maternal dependence. The theatrical tension of the moment of hesitation relies upon the audience recognising that the bond between mother and child is special. Aischylos gives Klytaimestra prominence in Orestes's rearing through giving significance to breastfeeding. Orestes was reliant on the μαστός, the breast. In his interpretation of Klytaimestra's dream, Orestes imagines himself as a snake violently drinking blood and milk from his mother's breast (*Lib.* 540-550). He envisions nursing as a form of sadistic oral attack on his mother.¹⁴⁹ Thus, when Apollo later says that the mother is the nurse (*Eum.* 659), the audience may be reminded of Orestes's conflicting emotions around his mother's breast, the object which causes him to hesitate.

The Lion Cub

Another passage of text is instructive for the audience's interpretation of Apollo's definitions of τοκεύς and τροφός. It occurred in the *Agamemnon*. There, the chorus of elders show an interest in the language of parenting, referring to the concepts of τοκεύς and τροφός together. When describing Helen's part in the Trojan War, the chorus construct an allegorical story about a man rearing a lion cub in his home (*Ag.* 717-736). The cub is cherished by the household but matures to become its destroyer. Nappa explains how modern scholarship tends to treat the lion as a representation of Helen who is responsible for Troy's annihilation.¹⁵⁰ Knox's account of the parable is standard: "the antistrophe describes the destruction brought to Troy by Helen, the lion cub."¹⁵¹ Yet, Nappa rightly points out that imagery in the *Oresteia* frequently has more than one referent, and thus, the lion can equally be read as a metaphor for the disaster Paris brings upon his house.¹⁵² I concur with Nappa that the correspondence between the lion and Paris is in fact more fitting since he was reared within the Trojan palace, while

¹⁴⁸ DeForest, 1993, p. 129.

¹⁴⁹ Simon, 1988, p. 41.

¹⁵⁰ Nappa, 1994, p. 82.

¹⁵¹ Knox, 1952, p. 17.

¹⁵² Nappa, 1994, p. 82.

Helen came from outside.¹⁵³ The lion parable evokes the Trojan situation where a son brings destruction to his *oikos* owing to an ill-devised marriage.

This is also highly reminiscent of what is happening in Argos. The chorus's anecdote captures the anxiety which runs throughout the *Oresteia* surrounding the dangers posed to the *oikos* from within. Iphigenia, Agamemnon, Klytimestra and Aigisthos are all killed by their kin. Hence, all the murderers in the trilogy are connected in the image of a lion cub maturing to the detriment of the house. The chorus open the passage: "a man once reared in his home an infant lion" (ἔθρεψεν δὲ λέοντος ἱ- / νιν δόμοις...οὐ- / τως ἀνήρ, *Ag.* 717-719, trans. Sommerstein, 2008b). Distinctively, the male is the nurse, as is indicated by the verb τρέφω, which is directly related to τροφός. The cub is described as "fond of the nipple but deprived of its milk" (ἀγάλακτον...φιλόμαστον, *Ag.* 718-719). The cub is missing its mother. He is φιλόμαστος, a description which aligns the cub with the infant Orestes (*Lib.* 897). Orestes, then, could be viewed as the cub that becomes his house's destroyer, though this interpretation can only be arrived at retrospectively. The chorus follow with an image of the man feeding the cub (*Ag.* 723-726). The image created by the chorus's description is of a lone father caring for a cub without maternal help. It is an image of union between father and child. However, this image is quickly shattered:

χρονισθεῖς δ' ἀπέδειξεν ἦ-
θος τὸ πρὸς τοκέων· χάριν
γὰρ τροφεῦσιν ἀμείβων
μηλοφόνοισιν ἐν ἄταις
δαῖτ' ἀκέλευστος ἔτευξεν.
αἶματι δ' οἶκος ἐφύρθη,
ἄμαχον ἄλγος οἰκέταις
μέγα σίνος πολυκτόνον.
ἐκ θεοῦ δ' ἱερεὺς τις ἄ-
τας δόμοις προσεθρέφθη.

But in time it displayed the character inherited from its parents; it returned thanks to its nurturers by making, with destructive slaughter of sheep, a feast, unbidden. The house was steeped in blood, an uncontrollable grief to the household, a great calamity with much killing. What a god had caused to be reared as an inmate of the house was a priest of Ruin. (*Ag.* 727-736)

There is a distinctive move from the singular to the plural. The natural parents of the lion are denoted by the plural τοκέων (*Ag.* 728), while its human carers are referred to

¹⁵³ Nappa, 1994, p. 85.

by the plural τροφεῦσιν (*Ag.* 729). The parental influence spells trouble for the nurses. There is a separation of τοκεύς and τροφός, pre-empting how these roles will be divided again later in Apollo's λόγος, but the division here is not according to gender. The parents instil destruction; the nurses are the victim of this. The alliance between the male nurse and the lion is lost as the animal succumbs to its inherited nature, a nature determined by its τοκεών, parents plural. In the lion cub allegory, τοκεύς carries negative connotations while τροφός is positive. The child takes over the malicious character of its parents. Further, the parable shows that male and female can nurse the infant. Male and female are also parents. The binary sexual roles which Apollo later develops are fluid and interchanging in this earlier passage. Creating a neat loop, the passage ends with a return to the verb τρέφω as the chorus bemoans the destruction of a home by that which it reared (*Ag.* 736).

This image of evil being passed from one generation to the next undoubtedly has great significance for the central theme of the trilogy, which considers how the curse on Atreus impacts his descendants.¹⁵⁴ Knox explains:

The lion cub is a symbol of reversal to type, of *hubris* that resembles its parent: and this connects the parable with the house of Pelops, where in each generation the evil strain in the race comes out. The specific references to the individual members of that house emphasize a new series of identifications, and for each of them the parable has a wealth of meaning.¹⁵⁵

The lion cub signifies the violence latent within the family. Hence, Cassandra likens Agamemnon, Aigisthos and Klytaimestra to lions (*Ag.* 1259, 1224, 1258).¹⁵⁶ Each has become the adult lion, the destroyer of the *oikos*. The lion cub image, then, certainly has implications for Orestes. He, after all, is the lion cub in the family, the young male on the verge of adulthood. Orestes will repeat the actions of his parents; he will kill a family member as they did before him. Further, his victim will be his mother, the τροφός according to Apollo. The chorus's separation of the roles of τοκεύς and τροφός in the *Agamemnon* takes on new meaning in Apollo's λόγος. These roles were performed by male and female in the lion cub anecdote but Apollo gives them exclusive sexual connotations. The effect of this is interesting. For the chorus of the *Agamemnon*, the destructive force of the τοκεύς harmed the τροφός. The sway of the parent overrides

¹⁵⁴ Knox, 1952, p. 18.

¹⁵⁵ Knox, 1952, p. 22.

¹⁵⁶ Knox, 1952, p. 19.

the nurse's influence with detrimental consequences. But for Apollo, the τροφός is distinctly the mother. The story of the lion cub has importance for the entire trilogy as it equates societal destruction with violence against the nurse. Orestes indeed becomes the lion. According to Apollo's gendered definitions of τοκεύς and τροφός, Orestes has inherited the destruction of his father and brought harm upon his mother. Such an action spells the destruction of the *oikos* and war in the *Agamemnon*. Aischylos has already established the danger which results when τοκεύς dominates τροφός, deeply unsettling Apollo's distinctions.

ἔρνος

According to Apollo, the task of the mother is to keep the ἔρνος safe (*Eum.* 661). The object of her nursing is a "shoot." The newly-sown κῦμα engendered by the male (*Eum.* 659) becomes an ἔρνος under the mother's care. The concept κῦμα appears on only three occasions in Aischylos's trilogy: in Elektra's prayer to Gaia (*Lib.* 128), in Apollo's λόγος (*Eum.* 659), and later again, in Athena's persuasion speech (*Eum.* 832). Athena tries to convince the Erinyes to surrender their opposition: "lull to rest the bitter force of the black surge" (κοῖμα κελαινοῦ κύματος πικρὸν μένος, *Eum.* 832). In this instance, κῦμα may recall the black sea as depicted in Homer's *Iliad* (7.63-64) and *Odyssey* (4.402).¹⁵⁷ I agree with Verrall, however, that κῦμα here primarily means "seed" or "foetus" and relates to the earlier mention of this concept by Elektra.¹⁵⁸ It is the wave of sperm which causes the female to swell.¹⁵⁹ The image the playwright constructs in the final reference suggests that the female Erinyes are capable of producing a malicious κῦμα from within them that will harm Athens. The Erinyes are virgins, but are also progenitors here. They are not the nurses of the κῦμα, but the source of it. They produce κῦμα autonomously. Likewise, Gaia appears to produce κῦμα autonomously and then receives it back into herself (*Lib.* 128). This is a clear reference to Gaia's dominant role in the formation of the cosmos in Hesiod's *Theogony* (126-138), an allusion which will take on more significance later in this chapter and in my discussion of intertextuality in the *Oresteia* (Chapter 7). It is crucial that Apollo's use of the term κῦμα recalls Elektra's prayer to Gaia and the active, generative role performed

¹⁵⁷ Sommerstein, 1989, p. 247.

¹⁵⁸ Verrall, 1908, p. 147.

¹⁵⁹ Padel, 1992, p. 108.

by the goddess in reproduction. Goddesses are depicted as active generators of κῦμα both prior to and following Apollo's λόγος, directly problematising Apollo's theory of male biological superiority. Apollo assigns κῦμα as a male product, but it can also be a female's. Male and female produce generative κῦμα according to the *Oresteia*.

The language of sowing in Apollo's λόγος prompts the audience to imagine the father as a farmer and creator, while the mother is soil holding his shoot. According to Apollo, Athena is an ἔρνος that no goddess could have produced (*Eum.* 666). However, Aischylos presents these same terms slightly differently earlier. Klytaimestra laments Iphigeneia, "the offspring that I conceived by him, the much-bewailed Iphigeneia" (ἀλλ' ἐμὸν ἐκ τοῦδ' ἔρνος ἀερθὲν / τὴν πολυκλαύτην Ἴφιγενεΐαν, *Ag.* 1525-1526). Iphigeneia is ἐμὸν...ἔρνος, vehemently Klytaimestra's shoot. The shoot came from Agamemnon (ἐκ τοῦδ') but belongs to Klytaimestra. Hence, the tie between mother and ἔρνος is strong.

Notably, the repetition of the agricultural term ἔρνος automatically links Klytaimestra's claim regarding Iphigeneia in the *Agamemnon* with Apollo's λόγος later. When Apollo speaks of the ἔρνος which the mother protects (*Eum.* 661), the audience are expected to remember that Iphigeneia was identified as Klytaimestra's ἔρνος (*Ag.* 1525-1526). She was the shoot which Klytaimestra sought to keep safe. Hence, for the audience, the ἔρνος refers to more than the father's embryo which the mother gestates. It is the child which the mother rears. Apollo's λόγος, then, implies that the mother protects the child into adulthood; there is a social relationship between mother and child. The father, on the other hand, only impregnates. The language of Apollo's λόγος reveals an extensive relationship between mother and child.

Apollo's following remark may take on a specific meaning in this reading: "for those in whose case this is not prevented by a god" (οἷσι μὴ βλάβη θεός, *Eum.* 661). Apollo interprets that a god may prevent a mother from keeping her ἔρνος safe. The audience know that in the case of Iphigeneia, the ἔρνος, her father was involved in her death. Apollo is in effect asserting that Agamemnon was not responsible; it was all down to the gods. The question of responsibility which was introduced in the *Agamemnon* is still being disputed in the *Eumenides*.

Klytaimestra not only claims Iphigeneia as her own, but also uses the word ἀερθὲν (*Ag.* 1525), which is notoriously difficult to translate.¹⁶⁰ Pearson points out that

¹⁶⁰ Pearson, 1930, p. 55; Sansone, 1984, p. 5.

the verb ἀείρω, meaning “to lift” or “take charge of,” usually refers to the actions of a father in Greek literature; this is the only surviving instance where the mother is the actor of this verb.¹⁶¹ Strikingly, this is not the first time the poet has used this verb in connection with Iphigeneia. On the occasion of her death, Iphigeneia was ἀερόθεν, “lifted up” (*Ag.* 234).¹⁶² On the orders of her father, she was lifted up over the sacrificial altar (*Ag.* 231). When enacted by her father, ἀείρω spelled Iphigeneia’s death. Though fathers normally perform ἀείρω, Klytaimestra assumes the task. When Agamemnon does act ἀείρω, it is perverse and dangerous. The point is that the vocabulary for describing parenting is so broad that it cannot be delineated according to gender. Klytaimestra ‘lifted up’ her ἔρνος, giving her authority over her child. Apollo’s λόγος carries a different understanding and corrects Klytaimestra’s claims, but using vocabulary that is equally subject to reinterpretation.

τίκτω and γίγνομαι

Further ambiguity is generated by Apollo’s λόγος since the father is never explicitly named as the τοκεύς. Apollo tells us that the mother is *not* the τοκεύς, but never asserts that the father *is*. Rather than clarifying what the father is, Aischylos relies on ambiguous verbs to describe what the father does. The leaper, ὁ θρόσκων, produces, τίκτω (*Eum.* 660); the father can produce without a mother (ἄν γένοιτ’ ἄνευ μητρός, *Eum.* 663). The two verbs here are τίκτω and γίγνομαι. The latter clause is formed using a potential optative. A father *could* procreate, employing the verb γίγνομαι. The claim automatically sounds uncertain. Apollo is dealing with verbs that are notoriously flexible, and further, gender neutral. γίγνομαι can be used in a wide range of contexts and applied to people, things and events, meaning “to be born,” “to come into being,” “to be produced,” “to become.” Six lines after Apollo employs γίγνομαι to describe how fathers beget, he uses it again to promise that Orestes will “become” Athena’s ally (γίγνομαι, *Eum.* 670). This is a verb with broad application. Hence, it is not at all obviously the action of a father specifically.

The audience know that females perform both reproduction verbs which Apollo assigns to the male. Males and females traditionally are subjects of the verb τίκτω. Padel explains:

¹⁶¹ Pearson, 1930, p. 55.

¹⁶² Sansone, 1984, p. 5.

Tiktein's range of usage implies a jostling of inconsistent assumptions about procreation, which evade the question of the female's creative contribution, and are summed up in the English lexicon's explanation: "of the father, beget; of the mother, bring forth."¹⁶³

Orestes acknowledges that Klytaimestra produced him, referring to her as τεκοῦσα (*Lib.* 913). He explicitly confirms that he was born from Klytaimestra's body.¹⁶⁴ Klytaimestra agrees that she is his parent (τεκοῦσα τόνδ' ὄφιν, *Lib.* 928). Orestes rebukes Klytaimestra: "you gave birth to me—and then threw me out into misery" (τεκοῦσα γάρ μ' ἔρριψας ἐς τὸ δυστυχέες, *Lib.* 913). Orestes suggests that since she enacted τίκτω, she is expected to care for him. He assumes that his suffering is due to Klytaimestra's failings as a parent. At this point in the trilogy, mothers are clearly believed to be required for the successful producing and rearing of children. The mother is the source of her child. Agamemnon's body never features in the drama as a reproducing body. Yet, Klytaimestra is repeatedly depicted as fecund and able to procreate. Both Klytaimestra and Orestes understand τίκτω as a female activity, yet it an action assigned to the male in Apollo's λόγος (*Eum.* 660).

One particular section of Aischylos's *Libation Bearers*, which I have briefly discussed already, is critical in this discussion of reproduction verbs. Elektra prays to Gaia:

καὶ Γαῖαν αὐτήν, ἣ τὰ πάντα τίκτεται,
θρέψασά τ' αὔθις τῶνδε κῦμα λαμβάνει·
...πεπραμένοι γὰρ νῦν γέ πως ἀλώμεθα
πρὸς τῆς τεκούσης.

And to Earth herself, who gives birth to all things, nurtures them, and then receives that fruit of her womb back into herself. [...] At present we are virtually vagrants, sold by our mother. (*Lib.* 127-133)

In this extract, Gaia and Klytaimestra are both agents of the verb τίκτω (*Lib.* 127, 133). The inference is that there is nothing in existence that does not originate from Gaia's action of τίκτω. Everything in the cosmos is produced from a mother. This stands starkly in contrast to Apollo's theory of parentage where the father is the actor of τίκτω. Gaia is also a nurse as indicated by the verb τρέφω (*Lib.* 128), a crucial term in Apollo's

¹⁶³ Padel, 1992, p. 107.

¹⁶⁴ Green, 1979, p. 48.

λόγος in the *Eumenides*. Apollo separates τίκτω (father's sphere) and τρέφω (mother's sphere), but for Elektra, both verbs are the actions of a mother, Gaia.

The chorus of maids explicitly equate μήτηρ with τίκτω (*Lib.* 419, 422). Fathers are likewise the actors of this verb. Orestes refers to his father as τὸν τεκόντα (*Lib.* 690). The father and mother are both identified by their enacting of τίκτω; the language of reproduction defines their roles. There is no clear difference between mother and father as progenitors. The chorus in the *Libation Bearers* speak of the father begetting (πατέρων τε καὶ τεκόντων, *Lib.* 329). Hence, the female and the male are both agents of the verbs which Apollo implies in the *Eumenides* describe only a male action.

This obscurity exists in other texts too. Both reproduction verbs γίγνομαι and τίκτω are regurgitated again and again throughout Hesiod's *Theogony* to describe female generation; the closing list of births provides a good example of the frequency of their usage (*Th.* 931-984). Notably, Hesiod employs γίγνομαι and τίκτω to depict the goddesses Night and Gaia's bearing of their children (*Th.* 123-132). The goddesses produce their children autonomously, demonstrating how these verbs can be applied to female reproduction exclusively. Also in Hesiod's *Theogony*, γείνομαι, a related verb to γίγνομαι, describes the male god Pontos's begetting of Nereus (*Th.* 233) and Zeus's bearing of Athena from his head (*Th.* 924). Ouranos and Kronos ἐκγίγνομαι their children (*Th.* 154, 668). Hence, these examples demonstrate how these verbs are used in the context of a male and female reproducing together, and also to describe autonomous female or male procreation. The terms have a very broad meaning non-inclusive of any specific connotations of sex. Apollo's λόγος assigns definitive meanings to verbs that inherently are open to interpretation, rendering his theory highly unstable.

Apollo adds that Athena is the type of ἔρνος that no goddess "could bring forth" (ἄν τέκοι, *Eum.* 666). The playwright relies on a potential optative, which makes it clear that this is a hypothesis, not a certainty. The meaning of this could be understood as goddesses can bring forth (τίκτω), but just not offspring like Athena. So, goddesses can enact τίκτω too. By placing τίκτω beside the word θεά, the playwright suggests that this is a female action as well as a male. Apollo identifies Athena as the ἔρνος (*Eum.* 667) which creates confusion. A few lines prior, the ἔρνος is that which the mother guards (*Eum.* 661). To be the ἔρνος in this context is by definition to be nurtured by a mother. Hence, there is slipperiness in Apollo's language which gets the audience paradoxically associating Athena with gestation.

Further, Apollo's λόγος appears to structurally replicate an earlier speech spoken by Orestes. Orestes endeavours to convince Athena that he has been cleansed and purified of blood pollution: "I will give you powerful proof of this" (τεκμήριον δὲ τῶνδ' ἐσοι λέξω μέγα, *Eum.* 447). He offers τεκμήριον like Apollo does later. Orestes informs Athena that he has undergone rituals with animal blood and water in order to be cleansed. He follows this up with an account of his origins, his γένος (*Eum.* 454): he is the Argive son of Agamemnon who was killed by his mother. Orestes presents a μάρτυς to prove Agamemnon was murdered—the net of clothes with which Klytaimestra surrounded Agamemnon (*Eum.* 461). The μάρτυς, the net, testifies to Orestes's murder of Klytaimestra too. Orestes presents a τεκμήριον followed by a μάρτυς, and an account of a genesis, the same ingredients which will make up Apollo's climactic λόγος. Orestes refers to Klytaimestra in this earlier replica speech as "my mother" (ἐμή / μήτηρ, *Eum.* 459-460). He confidently asserts, "I killed my mother" (ἔκτεινα τὴν τεκοῦσαν, *Eum.* 463); he killed the τεκοῦσαν, the one who brought him forth. Orestes explicitly conflates μήτηρ and the verb τίκτω. Apollo's convergence of father and τίκτω directly contradicts Orestes's account of his own genesis, an account which the audience are naturally expected to remember owing to the structural similarities between the speeches. Apollo's attempts to redefine the concept of a parent can only sound empty in this context, given the extensive emphasis given to the bond between mother and child in the earlier narrative.

ξένοι

Apollo's attempt to undermine mothers is further frustrated by his appeal to ξενία. He likens the relationship between father and mother to that of a male ξένος to a female ξένη (ἢ δ' ἄπερ ξένω ξένη, *Eum.* 660). Mitchell-Boyask argues that this description is crucial to interpreting the passage. ξένος can be translated simply as "stranger" or "foreigner." Sommerstein points out how this idea of spouses being strangers to one another further downgrades the institution of marriage.¹⁶⁵ Yet, Apollo's double use of the term cannot fail to evoke the trilogy's earlier discussion of ξενία, guest-host relationships.¹⁶⁶ The abuse of hospitality, such as displayed by Paris's adulterous affair with Helen, carries dire consequences. ξένοι are divinely protected (*Eum.* 270, 546).

¹⁶⁵ Sommerstein, 1989, p. 209.

¹⁶⁶ Mitchell-Boyask, 2009, p. 120.

Gods, ξένοι and parents are on par in terms of the sanctity due to them (*Eum.* 270-271). The chorus of elders tells the spectators how ξένιος Zeus, god of hospitality, contrived the war at Troy to punish Paris (*Ag.* 362-366). Abuse of hospitality offends Zeus.¹⁶⁷ ξενία implies a bond with great cultural significance. This explains why Klytaimestra addresses the disguised Orestes and Pylades as ξένοι, followed by an immediate promise of hospitality (*Lib.* 668). When Apollo formally addresses the Athenian jurors, it is also as ξένοι (*Eum.* 748), which exemplifies the respectful resonances the term carries. To disavow ξενία meant incurring Zeus's wrath. Sexual reproduction too, then, is a process with social importance. Mitchell-Boyask concludes: "while most scholarship has seen the dissolution of the mother's blood tie to child as a denigration of the female, the recasting of maternity in terms of ξενία actually elevates it according to the *Oresteia*'s conceptual structure."¹⁶⁸

Apollo's depiction of procreation as occurring between two strangers ironically, through the social significance of ξενία, affirms that there is a respected social pact between male and female. The mention of ξένος brings Apollo's physiological terminology into the cultural sphere; biological reproduction cannot be separated from its social significance. So as Apollo seeks to show that the female is biologically inferior to the male, he reveals that male and female practice a social interdependence. If mother and father cooperate under the code of ξενία to reproduce, this gives greater importance to childbearing. ξενία reveals a significance Apollo cannot deny. The playwright uses the Erinyes' response to Apollo's λόγος as an opportunity to emphasize the ironic implications of ξένος. The Erinyes address the jurors as ξένοι (*Eum.* 680), mirroring Apollo's assertion that mothers are ξένοι.¹⁶⁹ Thus, the point is clear; if jurors must be honoured as ξένοι, so too must mothers.

Apollo's Omissions

Apollo's λόγος includes terminology laden with ironies and ambiguities. Further, there are obvious exclusions in his speech. Apollo does not mention parturition or breastfeeding so the audience are left wondering about the significance of these activities. Orestes described how Klytaimestra bore the heavy weight of her children

¹⁶⁷ Fraenkel, 1950, p. 39.

¹⁶⁸ Mitchell-Boyask, 2009, p. 120.

¹⁶⁹ Mitchell-Boyask, 2009, p. 77.

from beneath her ζώνη, a clear reference to labour (*Lib.* 992). Hence, maternity has been associated with labour and breastfeeding in the trilogy, along with child-rearing, but Apollo says nothing of these activities.

Apollo also does not mention the significance of shared blood, but the audience have certainly been primed to expect him to. The Erinyes already established that the mother's kinship with her child is a result of how she nurtures the embryo with her blood (*Eum.* 607-608). They use the verb τρέφω. Hence, later when Apollo says the mother is the τροφός, the audience recall how it is with her blood that the mother nurses during gestation. This is significant as Orestes suggested that there is no blood tie between him and Klytaimestra (*Eum.* 606). However, the Erinyes successfully rebuked him on this (*Eum.* 607-608). In effect, when Apollo defines the mother as τροφός of the seed, he implicitly and ironically affirms the Erinyes' theory that the mother nurtures with her blood and discounts Orestes's denial of kinship with his mother.

Orestes is first to problematize the genetic tie between him and his mother in the trial. During the Erinyes' cross-examination of Orestes in stichomythia, the hero asks the chorus suggestively, "and I am blood-kin to my mother?" (ἐγὼ δὲ μητρὸς τῆς ἐμῆς ἐν αἵματι; *Eum.* 606). Orestes defines Klytaimestra as his "mother" (μητρὸς, *Eum.* 606), but proposes that he is not related to her "in blood" (ἐν αἵματι, *Eum.* 606). He tentatively introduces the idea that he is not his mother's blood relation, expressing the proposition as a cautiously asked question. He phrases the question so that its content does not have universal implications for all mothers. The use of τῆς ἐμῆς makes this clear. Orestes suggests only that he is not made of the same blood as his mother. Yet, even his isolated vision of his own parentage surely gets the audience thinking more broadly about the physiological tie between mother and child, especially since this is a topic that the audience have been encouraged to mull over. The chorus of elderly maids in the *Libation Bearers* promote the idea that Orestes's sole parent is his father. As they goad Orestes to kill his mother, the chorus instruct him to yell at Klytaimestra that he is his father's child (θροούσα πρὸς σὲ τέκνον πατρὸς αὐδάν, *Lib.* 829). Again, their instruction refers to the particular situation, not to all mother-child relationships. In the *Eumenides*, Orestes is regurgitating this idea.

Notably, an earlier instance of stichomythia in the play also features a discussion of ancestry (*Eum.* 415-421). Here, the Erinyes disclose an account of their parentage to Athena. The Erinyes declare that they are the "everlasting children of Night" (Νυκτὸς αἰανῆ τέκνα, *Eum.* 416). The Erinyes claim their mother as their kin while Orestes

subjects his filial relationship with his mother to scrutiny. The playwright clearly shows how different characters have opposing preferences; the Erinyes credit only their mother, Orestes only his father.

Orestes's question features at the close of the *agōn* between him and the Erinyes. At the beginning of the cross-examination, he responds to the Erinyes' first question with a self-assured admittance of the murder he committed (*Eum.* 588). Yet, by the end, Orestes's confidence is wavering. He defensively questions his prosecutors rather than submitting to answering all their questions as the judicial procedure demands (*Eum.* 586). He does not answer the Erinyes' three final questions (*Eum.* 603-608) and resorts instead to questioning them (*Eum.* 604-606), thus digressing from the issue of Klytaimestra's murder. Through turning attention from himself to the Erinyes, Orestes manages to express his motivation for the homicide: Klytaimestra killed her husband and his father (*Eum.* 602). This is important as the Erinyes do not give Orestes the opportunity to explain this.¹⁷⁰ The audience are given the impression that Orestes's suggestion that he does not share blood with his mother is reactionary. He introduces the idea that his mother is not his blood relation only in response to the line of argumentation pursued by the Erinyes. The Erinyes maintain that they did not punish Klytaimestra as "she wasn't of the same blood as the man she killed" (οὐκ ἦν ὁμαίμος φωτὸς ὃν κατέκτανεν, *Eum.* 605). Earlier, the Erinyes expressed the same idea to Apollo (*Eum.* 212). There too they employed the term ὁμαίμος, "of the same blood." The Erinyes' privileging of shared blood is what stirs Orestes. Orestes's immediate attempt to deny a blood relationship between him and Klytaimestra reveals that he endorses the Erinyes' hierarchy. Rather than criticizing the Erinyes' partiality towards a kin dispute over a violation of marriage, Orestes urgently endeavours to reduce his relationship with his mother to a similar status as that between Klytaimestra and Agamemnon. In Apollo's λόγος, the god tries to give Orestes's strategy universal meaning. Fundamentally, Orestes agrees with the Erinyes; there is something more sacred about blood relationships.

Orestes produces no evidence to support his hypothesis. In fact, he earlier connected his blood with his mother's. After killing his mother, Orestes tells how he is "fleeing this kindred bloodshed" (φεύγων τόδ' αἷμα κοινόν, *Lib.* 1038). The use of κοινός, "shared," reveals that Orestes believes at this point in the trilogy that he shares

¹⁷⁰ Sommerstein, 1989, p. 192.

blood with his mother. There is no doubting that Klytimestra gestated Orestes and hence nourished him with her blood. The Erinyes's reaction confirms the illogicality of Orestes's question. They exclaim: "how else did she nourish you, you filthy murderer, beneath her girdle? Do you disavow your mother's blood, the nearest and dearest to your own?" (πῶς γάρ σ' ἔθρεψ' ἄν ἐντός, ᾧ μαιφόνε, ζώνης; ἀπεύχῃ μητρὸς αἷμα φίλτατον; *Eum.* 607-608). The mother nurses with blood. Orestes has no response to either question and he is defeated in the *agōn*. Crucially, the question of what is a μήτηρ has been raised. Apollo takes up Orestes's rhetorical question later in his λόγος, but takes it up literally and gives it universal importance. But, crucially, the central concern for Orestes and the Erinyes—blood—is totally evaded in Apollo's theory of procreation. Yet, it was already established that shared blood defines the mother's kinship with her child. Apollo forms his λόγος by rejecting the prior definition of blood kinship between mother and child.

Aischylos sets up his drama so it is clear to his audience that Apollo's theory of parentage wholly contradicts the earlier understanding of the relationship between mother and child, rendering his λόγος unconvincing and manipulative. The kinship between mother and child is what underscored the tragedy of matricide, giving the trilogy its tension and energy. Apollo's λόγος denies this tension which the audience have been primed to empathise with. In this chapter, I argued that the language of Apollo's λόγος, which is heavily burdened with earlier resonances, complicates his message. It is not so easy to discount mothers. In agreement with other commentators who read tensions in Aischylos's trilogy as I discussed in Chapter 1, Apollo's λόγος introduces more tensions than it resolves. Chapter 2 established how Apollo's λόγος determines the trilogy's conclusion, but since the language of his λόγος is troubling, the conclusion of the play is then made uncertain. In Chapter 5, I shall explore this uncertainty further by analysing how Apollo's λόγος relates with earlier imagery surrounding procreation in the trilogy. My aim is to show how the playwright's discussion of parenthood is far more nuanced than Apollo's λόγος suggests. Apollo's λόγος reads as highly problematic in this context of a rich exploration of the relationship between parent and child.

Chapter 5

Images of Fathers and Mothers

In this chapter, I further analyse Aeschylus's treatment of the relationship between parent and child in the *Oresteia*. The broader implications of how the playwright conceptualises parenting will be suggested. This will involve examining the representation of Agamemnon as a father and Clytemnestra as a mother. Further, I will examine the prominence of Artemis in the first play and consider the implications of Artemis's role as a protector of mothers for interpreting the trilogy as a whole. My aim is to unpack the background to Apollo's λόγος in the *Eumenides*. Apollo's claim that only men are progenitors will be analysed against the playwright's nuanced discourse surrounding parenting and childbearing.

The Bird Simile

In the first choral ode of the *Agamemnon*, the chorus draw a striking image of vultures grieving for their lost young. The image acts as a simile comparing the Atreidae to the birds of prey (*Ag.* 43-49). The poet returns to bird imagery as the trilogy unfolds, presenting the sequence of images as analogies for reading related human affairs. It is a poetic strategy which demands that the audience actively interpret the drama's images, gradually teasing out the play's message. The overlay of bird imagery in the trilogy links key events in the family's history. The chorus of elders describe the Atreidae setting out to Troy like birds of prey demented with anguish:

μέγαν ἐκ θυμοῦ κλάζοντες Ἄρη	
τρόπον αἰγυπιῶν, οἷτ' ἐκπατίοις	
ἄλγεσι παιδῶν ὕπατοι λεχέων	50
στροφουδινούνται	
πτερύγων ἐρετμοῖσιν ἐρεσσόμενοι,	
δεμνιοτήρη	
πόνον ὀρταλίχων ὀλέσαντες	
ὑπατος δ' αἰών ἢ τις Απόλλων	55
ἢ Πᾶν ἢ Ζεὺς οἰωνόθροον	
γόνον ὄξυβόαν τῶνδε μετοίκων	
ὑστερόποινον	
πέμπει παραβᾶσιν Ἐρινύν.	

Uttering from their hearts a great cry for war,
like birds of prey who, crazed

by grief for their children, wheel around
high above their eyries,
rowing with wings for oars,
having seen the toil of watching
over their nestlings' beds go for nothing
and some Apollo on high, or Pan,
or Zeus, hearing the loud shrill wailing cries
of the birds, exacts belated revenge
on behalf of these denizens of his realm
by sending a Fury against the transgressors.

(*Ag.* 48-59, trans.Sommerstein, 2008b)

The theft of the chicks from the nest acts as a metaphor for Paris's stealing of Helen from the Spartan palace. The chorus claims that Apollo, Pan or Zeus sent an Erinyes to exact revenge for the theft. In effect, the Erinyes is represented by the war-hungry vultures. Through the simile, the chorus suggest that the gods supported the Achaian campaign to Troy. The gods defend the Atreidae as they do the vultures.

The chorus are clearly presenting their own interpretation of past events through the medium of the bird simile. Remarkable is the inclusion of the indefinite τίς (*Ag.* 55). Aischylos explicitly signals to the audience that the chorus is unsure which god orchestrated events. They are hypothesizing, creatively interpreting historical events. The simile functions to suggest that the Achaian revenge was divinely orchestrated, a perspective on events which is in fact unsubstantiated. With this early example of a simile in the trilogy, the playwright demonstrates how imagery is employed with a purpose. The simile is not superfluous to the plot; it carries a persuasive power. Simile can manipulate the audience's perspective on unfolding events. Like a code, it communicates something.

Aischylos demonstrates how reading a simile, an activity which both his characters and audience will do throughout the trilogy, is an uncertain exercise and one which can be easily exploited. In this sense, Aischylos's first bird simile functions as a 'sign' in the action.¹ It shows how subjective readings of events will be in the trilogy. What the chorus presents as the doings of the gods is rather their own creative interpretation of a simile. The poet already introduced contentiousness surrounding symbols in the opening watchman's speech: "if indeed the city of Ilium has been taken as the fire-signal vividly declares" (εἴπερ Ἰλίου πόλις / ἐάλωκεν, ὡς ὁ φρυκτὸς ἀγγέλλων πρέπει, *Ag.* 29-30). The fire-signal can be seen clearly (πρέπω); it is visible,

¹ Bushnell, 1982, p. 8.

but the watchman is unsure of its meaning. The symbol needs to be read correctly. Aischylos is cleverly highlighting how symbols and images can be easily misread and reread with different outcomes.

The image of the vultures is complex and draws the audience to identify with different characters in the play. The birds have lost their young, but Menelaos was deprived of his wife. There is some discrepancy amongst commentators about how the audience should interpret the simile's interest in the lost children. Verrall asserts that *παίδων* (*Ag.* 50) refers not to the offspring of the birds but to the young men who stole from the nest.² He points out that *τέκνον* is the term commonly applied in Greek poetry to describe animal offspring, while *παῖς* refers to a human child or young adult. In Verrall's interpretation, the birds lament the violation of Menelaos's marriage bed by the Trojan men. Conversely, it is suggested in Sommerstein's translation above that the birds mourn their young. In agreement with Sommerstein, other commentators posit *παίδων* as meaning "children" in the objective genitive, not the subjective.³ Denniston and Page suggest that the birds are depicted as "parent-vultures."⁴ I concur with this interpretation. My analysis of these lines assumes that the birds are depicted as grieving fathers, though neither Menelaos nor Agamemnon has yet lost a child.

West notes that animals were naturally described in human terms in Greek fables.⁵ The poets assimilated the natural and human worlds. By using *παῖς* to describe the chicks, Aischylos brings the audience's attention to the significance of the animal anecdote for the human story. *παῖς* refers to a human child generally in Aischylos's trilogy, as is exemplified only a few lines later when the Atreidae are referred to as *Ἀτρέως παῖδας* (*Ag.* 60). Fraenkel comments that "the feeling of grief is intensified" since *παῖς* gives the bird image human significance.⁶

Conversely, Iphigeneia is a *τέκνον* (*Ag.* 207) and Apollo denotes a child as *τέκνον* (*Eum.* 658) when he presents his controversial *λόγος*; no doubt he is speaking of a human child. These uses of *τέκνον* are interesting. The chorus liken Iphigeneia to a goat when they describe the horrific scene of her sacrifice (*Ag.* 232). Hence, the poet encourages the audience to think of the circumstances of Iphigeneia's death as fitting for an animal, inhumane so to speak. I suggest that the poet's use of *τέκνον* here (*Ag.*

² Verrall, 1904, pp. 195-196.

³ Thomson, 1938, p. 9.

⁴ Denniston and Page, 1957, p. 72.

⁵ West, 1979, p. 2.

⁶ Fraenkel, 1950, p. 32.

207) dehumanises Iphigeneia. Hence, when Apollo uses the same term at the climax of his defence speech in the *Eumenides*, the audience may sense that he is also dehumanising children. Apollo's τέκνον (*Eum.* 658) recalls how Iphigeneia was treated like a sacrificial goat. In effect, τέκνον may hint at a tragic undervaluing of children. The term instils a clinical tone to Apollo's λόγος. The emotional relationship between parent and child is evaded.

Aischylos directs his audience's attention specifically to human children through employing παιδων in the bird simile. The audience know he is communicating something about the children in the house of Atreus. The reference to Apollo (*Ag.* 55) further clarifies that the poet's interest is with the royal children. Fraenkel can offer no explanation for why the poet mentions Apollo in the parados.⁷ Aischylos, I suggest, is identifying Apollo as the protector and avenger of the children-chicks, foreshadowing the role Apollo assumes later in the *Oresteia* when he defends Orestes.⁸ The bird simile sets up the expectation that Apollo will be involved. Further, the bird simile stresses that the Atreidae are fathers. This is important as the audience will never witness any interaction between the kings and their children on stage. The chorus suggest that Zeus may have sent the Erinye to support the fathers (*Ag.* 56). Here, the Erinye is an agent of the bereaved father birds. Zeus also gave the kings their thrones and sceptres (*Ag.* 43). From the very beginning of the dramatic action, the chorus hint that Zeus and Apollo support Agamemnon, an alliance which will prove crucial to the conclusion of the trilogy. The bird simile provides the first description of Agamemnon and Menelaos and it clearly establishes the specific aspects of Agamemnon's character which will come into focus in the trial scene in the *Eumenides*: his role as a king and as a father.

In this discussion of the specifically paternal character of the birds, it is crucial to draw attention to the origins of Aischylos's bird simile in Homer's *Odyssey*.⁹ Following the climactic moment in Homer's epic when Odysseus reveals his true identity to his son Telemachos, the narrator describes their joyous reunion:

κλαῖον δὲ λιγέως, ἀδινώτερον ἢ τ' οἰωνοί,
 φῆναι ἢ αἰγυπιοὶ γαμψώνυχες, οἷσί τε τέκνα
 ἀγρόται ἐξείλοντο πάρος πετεηνὰ γενέσθαι·
 ὧς ἄρα τοί γ' ἐλεεινὸν ὑπ' ὀφρύσι δάκρυον εἶβον.

⁷ Fraenkel, 1950, p. 36.

⁸ Rabel, 1982, p. 325.

⁹ Verrall, 1904, p. 196.

And they wailed aloud more vehemently than birds, sea-eagles, or vultures with crooked talons, whose young the country-folk have taken from their nest before they were fledged; even so piteously did they let tears fall from beneath their brows. (*Od.* 16.216-16.219, trans. A. T. Murray, 1995)

Aischylos's bird simile evokes Telemachos's emotional reunion with his father in Homer's *Odyssey*. In epic, the image of the birds' empty nest captures the intense mourning of a father and son who have been long separated and their home plundered by the suitors. The episode marks a turning point where Odysseus and Telemachos's individual efforts to restore their *oikos* becomes their joint mission. The alignment of father and son is the antidote to collective suffering.

It is striking that Homer uses τέκνον to denote the young bird-Telemachos (*Od.* 16.217). Aischylos consciously deviates from the Homeric model by preferencing παῖς (*Ag.* 50). Aischylos make the father-child relation more explicit in his bird simile; the audience are expected to read the human situation into the image. A similar interest in the bond between father and child is expressed in Homer's *Iliad*. Achilles's *menis* ends when the hero returns Hektor's body to King Priam. The warrior finds internal reconciliation through honouring a father's love for his son. Priam appeals to Achilles: "remember your father, godlike Achilles" (μνησai πατρός σοῖο θεοῖς ἐπιείκελ' Ἀχιλλεῦ, *Il.* 24.486, trans. A. T. Murray, 1999). Achilles's grief for his own father is stirred (*Il.* 24.507) and together Priam and the hero cry over their mutual losses (*Il.* 24.509-511). Homer pays tribute to the relationship between father and son. However, Homer does not exclude mothers. Achilles compares Priam's grief to Niobe's suffering. In an extended digression, Achilles tells of Niobe's terrible mourning after her twelve children were killed by Apollo and Artemis (*Il.* 24.602-617). Homer treats Niobe's grief as equivalent to Priam's. The bond with one's child is invaluable for both parents.

For Homer, the sanctity of the relationship between father and son is illustrated most powerfully by the house of Atreus saga. In the *Odyssey*, the tale of Orestes's murder of Aigisthos provides a paradigm of heroic vengeance (*Od.* 1.29-30). Orestes is a hero because he avenges his father. Aigisthos, Agamemnon's murderer, is the source of Orestes's dilemma, akin to the threat the suitors pose to Telemachos. On the death of Klytaimestra, the *Odyssey* remains vague. While Orestes orders that her corpse be buried, nowhere is her death explicitly described (*Od.* 3.309-310). Homer avoids assigning Orestes as the agent of matricide; it may even be possible that Klytaimestra

committed suicide.¹⁰ The story of Orestes's vengeance inspires Telemachos to defend his father's estate. In epic, Agamemnon and Orestes are comparable to Odysseus and Telemachos. Through the bird simile, Aischylos is subtly evoking this Homeric parallel. I suggest that Aischylos references the scene of Odysseus and Telemachos's reunion as it resonates with the story that he going to tell on stage. The relationship between father and son will receive much attention in his drama. The Homeric paradigm may function to remind Aischylos's audience that his famous poetic predecessor revered this relationship. However, in contrast to Homer's silence, Aischylos makes the issue of Klytimestra's murder a vital concern. Orestes is pushed to murder his mother in order to prove his loyalty to his father. Further, Aischylos highlights the danger Agamemnon poses to his child, Iphigeneia. Aischylos explores the darker aspects of the familial violence in the house of Atreus saga, inevitably complicating Homer's adoration of the father-son union. Aischylos's bird simile alerts his audience that he will be reassessing a theme already explored in epic.

The bird simile itself and the episode in the *Odyssey* which it references bring the audience's attention to the role of fathers. Menelaos and Agamemnon are depicted as father birds who once watched over their chicks in their nests (*Ag.* 53-54). Through the metaphor of the grieving birds, Aischylos presents both Menelaos and Agamemnon as devoted fathers. The audience know well that Menelaos and Agamemnon attacked the Trojans in order to recover Helen and punish Paris for his abuse of Spartan hospitality. Hence, the image of the birds implies that Helen's infidelity entails a suffering similar to that experienced by fathers who lose their children. In this regard, the image appears unfitting. The terrible loss suffered by the Achaians owing to the war fought for Helen is lamented later in the play when the chorus watch the ashes returning from Troy (*Ag.* 438-451). It is clear that the great suffering of the Achaians outweighs the losses which motivated the Atreidae to go to war in the first place. Peradotto notes, "Menelaus's dreamy, erotic grief over the loss of Helen is set sharply against the brooding anguish of the community for the Argive dead."¹¹ For the audience, the image of the distraught birds is a more apt illustration of the grief experienced by all the Achaians who lost their children in the war.

The audience may notice a paradox too in the bird simile. Agamemnon and Menelaos are referred to as the Atreidae (Ἀτρεϊδᾶν, *Ag.* 44) and the sons of Atreus

¹⁰ West, 1988, p. 181.

¹¹ Peradotto, 1969, p. 255.

(Ἀτρέως παῖδας, *Ag.* 60), emphasizing their filial connection to their own father. Atreus was famous in mythology for having cruelly killed Thyestes's children and served them as a meal to their father, a story which becomes prominent later in the play as it is told by Cassandra (*Ag.* 1219-1222), the chorus (*Ag.* 1242-1244), Klytimestra (*Ag.* 1501-1503) and Aigisthos (*Ag.* 1583-1604). I shall discuss this background story later in this chapter and again in Chapter 7. Other Greek writers tell how Tantalus, the grandfather of Atreus and Thyestes, served his son Pelops as a meal to the gods (*Od.* 11.582-92, Paus. 10.31.12, *Orest.* 4-10, *IT* 386-88). Infanticide, familial violence and cannibalism are reoccurring motifs in the house of Atreus saga. Hence, paternal bereavement as represented by the grieving vultures ironically mirrors the suffering of Thyestes, Atreus's brother, who cursed Agamemnon and Menelaos for their father's infanticide. It is a subtle evocation, but if the audience note it, their sympathy for Agamemnon and Menelaos may waver. They were not fathers who lost children; rather they are the descendants of known infanticides. The audience already know that Agamemnon sacrificed Iphigeneia, acting out his inherited brutality. It becomes clear by the end of the choral ode, following the climactic description of the sacrifice of Iphigeneia, that like Atreus, Agamemnon and Menelaos are not dutiful fathers as the bird simile initially suggests. Again, the audience are being challenged to read symbols carefully. The bird simile does not reflect the nature of the Atreidae accurately. It expresses the chorus's idealization of their kings. The conflicted history of the house of Atreus reveals a more sinister aspect of the relationship between father and child.

The image of the birds, in this regard, is multifaceted. The chorus may read the simile differently to the audience. The simile presents the Trojan War as divinely sanctioned and reminds the audience of the archetypal bond between father and son presented in Homer's *Odyssey*, while in contrast, it may alert them to the myth of Thyestes, a tale which presents a violent disharmony between father and child. Importantly, the image also works on another level. It prepares the spectators to emotionally sympathise with a parent's experience of losing a child. The death of Iphigeneia becomes a prominent issue soon after, so this garnering of sympathy has a function which I will suggest later in this chapter.

The Bird Omen

After reporting on the destruction brought upon Trojans and Achaians by the war (*Ag.* 63-71), the chorus tell of the omen which foretold of Troy's defeat prior to the departure of the Achaian fleet a decade earlier. The chorus term it a bird omen (θούριος ὄρνις, *Ag.* 112), relating the omen with the bird simile (*Ag.* 48-59). The chorus describes the content of the portent as follows:

οἰωνῶν βασιλεὺς βασιλεῦσι νε-
ῶν ὁ κελαινός, ὃ τ' ἐξόπιν ἀργᾶς,
φανέντες ἴκταρ μελάθρων χερὸς ἐκ δοριπάλτου
παμπρέπτοις ἐν ἔδραισιν,
βοσκόμενοι λαγίνας, ἐρικύμονα φέρματι γένναν,
βλαβέντα λοισθίων δρόμων
αἴλινον αἴλινον εἶπέ, τό δ' εὖ νικάτω.

The king of birds appearing to the king of ships,
one black, one white in the hind parts,
near the house, on the side of the spear-wielding hand,
settling where they were conspicuous to all,
eating a scion of the hare tribe, pregnant with many offspring,
her final run cut short.
Cry sorrow, sorrow, but may good prevail! (*Ag.* 114-121)

In this passage of the text, kingship is emphasised as it was in the earlier bird simile. The kings are “twin-throned” (διθρόνου, *Ag.* 43 and δίθρονον, *Ag.* 109) and described as the “king of birds appearing to the king of ships” (οἰωνῶν βασιλεὺς βασιλεῦσι νεῶν, *Ag.* 114). The kings are also “warlike” (μαχίμους, *Ag.* 124). The language of the augury reading evokes the Atreidae. The prophet Kalchas instructs the army that the birds are the kings (*Ag.* 122-125). He enforces the idea that the Atreidae and the eagles share certain traits. Kalchas interprets that the omen signals that Menelaos and Agamemnon are destined to capture Troy and plunder the city's possessions (*Ag.* 125-130).

Aischylos is describing the process of augury interpretation. The audience are explicitly alerted that the chorus's interpretation of the omen comes from Kalchas; it presents one man's reading of a sign. Implicit is the possibility that Kalchas may be incorrect. The other characters and the audience may choose to believe his reading or not. The prophet's claim that Troy will fall rests on his skills of ornithomancy. In Kalchas's interpretation, the pregnant hare symbolises Troy, and her foetus the city's inhabitants. The consumption of the pregnant hare spells the Atreidae's victory.

The audience are most likely surprised by the components of Aischylos's omen. The textual backdrop to the opening of the *Agamemnon* is undeniably Homer's *Iliad*, the most famous description of the Trojan War. Aischylos's drama depicts Agamemnon's νόστος, similar to how Homer's *Odyssey* presents Odysseus's. The *Nostoi* was another poem in the Epic Cycle which narrated Agamemnon and Menelaos's homecoming from the war. The repetition of these homecoming myths in Greek storytelling shows how familiar and popular they were. The *Agamemnon* assumes that the audience know the narrative of the *Iliad* and the Epic Cycle. The omen which inaugurates the Trojan War features in Homer's *Iliad*. Odysseus describes the omen and Kalchas's interpretation of it:

ἔνθ' ἐφάνη μέγα σῆμα· δράκων ἐπὶ νῶτα δαφεινὸς
 σμερδαλέος, τὸν ῥ' αὐτὸς Ὀλύμπιος ἦκε φόως δέ,
 βωμοῦ ὑπαίξας πρὸς ῥα πλατάνιστον ὄρουσεν. 310
 ἔνθα δ' ἔσαν στρουθοῖο νεοσσοί, νήπια τέκνα,
 ὄζω ἐπ' ἀκροτάτῳ πετάλοις ὑποπεπηθῶτες
 ὀκτώ, ἀτὰρ μήτηρ ἐνάτη ἦν ἡ τέκε τέκνα·
 ἔνθ' ὃ γε τοὺς ἐλεεινὰ κατήσθιε τετριγῶτας·
 μήτηρ δ' ἀμφεποτᾶτο ὀδυρομένη φίλα τέκνα· 315
 τὴν δ' ἐλελιζάμενος πτέρυγος λάβεν ἀμφιαχυῖαν.
 αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ κατὰ τέκνα φάγε στρουθοῖο καὶ αὐτήν,
 τὸν μὲν ἀρίζηλον θῆκεν θεὸς ὅς περ ἔφηνε·
 λαῶν γάρ μιν ἔθηκε Κρόνου πάϊς ἀγκυλομήτεω·
 ἡμεῖς δ' ἐσταότες θαυμάζομεν οἶον ἐτύχθη. 320
 ὡς οὖν δεινὰ πέλωρα θεῶν εἰσηλθ' ἑκατόμβας,
 Κάλχας δ' αὐτίκ' ἔπειτα θεοπροπέων ἀγόρευε·
 τίπτ' ἄνεω ἐγένεσθε κάρη κομόωντες Ἀχαιοί;
 ἡμῖν μὲν τόδ' ἔφηνε τέρας μέγα μητίετα Ζεὺς
 ὄψιμον ὀψιτέλεστον, ὅου κλέος οὐ ποτ' ὀλεῖται. 325
 ὡς οὗτος κατὰ τέκνα φάγε στρουθοῖο καὶ αὐτήν
 ὀκτώ, ἀτὰρ μήτηρ ἐνάτη ἦν ἡ τέκε τέκνα,
 ὡς ἡμεῖς τοσσαῦτ' ἔτεα πτολεμίζομεν αὐθι,
 τῷ δεκάτῳ δὲ πόλιν αἰρήσομεν εὐρυάγυιαν.
 κεῖνος τὼς ἀγόρευε· τὰ δὲ νῦν πάντα τελεῖται. 330
 ἀλλ' ἄγε μίμνετε πάντες ἐϋκνήμιδες Ἀχαιοὶ
 αὐτοῦ εἰς ὃ κεν ἄστυ μέγα Πριάμοιο ἔλωμεν.

There appeared a great portent: a serpent, blood-red on its back, terrible, which the Olympian himself sent into the light, glided from beneath the altar and darted to the plane tree. Now on this tree were the nestlings of a sparrow, tender little ones, on the topmost bough, cowering beneath the leaves, eight in all, and the mother that bore them was the ninth. Then the serpent devoured them as they twittered piteously, and the mother flitted around them, wailing for her dear little ones; but he coiled himself and

caught her by the wing as she screamed at him. But when he had devoured the sparrow's little ones and the mother with them the god who had brought him to light made him disappear; for the son of the crooked-counseling Kronos turned him to stone; and we stood there and marvelled at what had happened. So, when the dread portent interrupted the hecatombs of the gods, then immediately Kalchas prophesied, and addressed our assembly, saying: "why are you silent, long-haired Achaians? To us has Zeus the counsellor showed this great sign, late in coming, late in fulfilment, the fame of which shall never perish. Just as this serpent devoured the sparrow's little ones and the mother with them—all eight, and the mother that bore them was the ninth—so shall we war there for as many years, but in the tenth we shall take the broad-wayed city." Thus spoke Kalchas, and now all this is being brought to pass. But come, remain all you well-greaved Achaians, just where you are, until we take the great city of Priam.

(*Il.* 2.308-2.332, trans. A. T. Murray, 1999)

The basic structure of Aischylos's omen mimics Homer's. Kalchas is the human augury-reader, a predator kills a mother animal and her young. The chorus in the *Agamemnon* add that Zeus sent the birds of prey (*Ag.* 135), agreeing with Homer's vision of the snake as Zeus's creation. The Atreidae are aligned with Zeus in Kalchas's augury readings. The omens are gruesome and induce horror as Zeus's animals eat a mother and her young. Fraenkel interprets that every expression Aischylos employs in this passage brings out the tragedy of the hare's death.¹² Heath adds that for Aischylos's audience who are hearing about the events leading up to the Achaian fleet's departure for Troy, any reference to a bird omen would naturally have conjured up the sparrow and snake omen in Homer's *Iliad*.¹³ He adds, "that the omen turns out to involve different species would of course strike the audience as significant and demand interpretation."¹⁴

Aesop's fable *The Sparrow and the Hare* suggests that both sparrows and hares were popularly thought of as the prey of eagles; perhaps hares and sparrows were easily interchangeable for the purposes of storytelling. Besides the difference in species which Heath points out, a more notable innovation is that while the sparrow is with her young in the *Iliad*, Aischylos's hare has not yet given birth; she is big with her young (ἐρικύμονα, *Ag.* 119). The mother animal in Aischylos's omen is specifically in the latter stage of pregnancy. A hare could be depicted pregnant, a sparrow could not.

¹² Fraenkel, 1950, p. 82.

¹³ Heath, 2001, p. 18.

¹⁴ Heath, 2001, p. 18.

Aischylos's omen focuses on a female animal prevented from giving birth. Hence, Kalchas's interpretation of the bird omen leads the audience to imagine the Atreidae as father birds eating a pregnant mother. The fathers disrupt a mother's pregnancy. Aischylos paints an image of fathers denying a mother her role in reproduction. The term ἐρικύμων (*Ag.* 119), which Aischylos employs to describe the hare's pregnancy reappears later in Apollo's λόγος (κύματος, *Eum.* 659). When Apollo rejects maternity near the close of the *Eumenides*, the audience is pressed to recall the pregnant hare in the *Agamemnon* and the consequences of her death.

The image of the hare represents the playwright's first depiction of pregnancy. The text clearly emphasizes that the hare is pregnant with the term ἐρικύμων (*Ag.* 119).¹⁵ This is significant since the female role in reproduction will become a central issue in the trilogy. The hare's pregnancy is violently disrupted by the eagles, producing horror for the audience and perhaps compelling them to sympathise with the position of the pregnant mother, complicating how the audience will later react to Apollo's theory of male autonomous procreation. I shall return to the story of the scavenged hare in Chapter 7 of this dissertation (p. 191) when I posit a similar narrative, the myth of Zeus's swallowing of the pregnant goddess Metis, as an implicit backdrop to Aischylos's trilogy as a whole.

Aischylos does not allow the image of the eagles ingesting the pregnant hare to easily leave the minds of his spectators. The omen carries significance for the trilogy as a whole. The Pythia compares the killing of Pentheus by Dionysos's Bacchants to the hunting of a hare (*Eum.* 26). Also in the final play, the Erinyes describe Orestes as a cowering hare (*Eum.* 326). Orestes is πῶκα (*Eum.* 326), matching the description of the omen (*Ag.* 136).¹⁶ The Erinyes maintain that the hare Orestes must be sacrificed to atone for his mother's death (*Eum.* 326-327), recalling the mother hare who died previously. A hare (Orestes) must die in exchange for the murdered mother. In this metaphor, Klytimestra could be equated with the mother hare in the omen. The consumption of the hare and the murder of Klytimestra are linked. Importantly, the hare simile lends sympathy to Orestes.¹⁷ He is the hunted hare, not the hunter bird like his father.

¹⁵ Fraenkel, 1950, p. 71.

¹⁶ Podlecki, 1989, p. 159.

¹⁷ Peradotto, 1969, p. 261.

Kalchas's Artemis

Kalchas predicts that the goddess Artemis will be angry as a result of the slaughter of the hare and her unborn litter:

“οἴκτω γὰρ ἐπί-
φθονος Ἄρτεμις ἀγνὰ
πτανοῖσιν κυσὶ πατρὸς
αὐτότοκον πρὸ λόχου μογερὰν πτάκα θυομένοισιν
στυγεῖ δὲ δεῖπνον αἰετῶν.”
αἴλινον αἴλινον εἶπέ, τό δ’ εὖ νικάτω.

“For holy Artemis, out of pity, bears a grudge against the winged hounds of her father who slaughtered the wretched hare, litter and all, before it could give birth; she loathes the eagles’ feast.” Cry sorrow, sorrow, but may good prevail! (*Ag.* 134-138)

Artemis is angry at her father and his eagles. Kalchas does not indicate how he knows that the goddess has been provoked by the contents of the portent. The prophet calls on Apollo to appease his sister (*Ag.* 146). Apollo is his παῖων, healer. Earlier, the chorus approached Klytimestra as their παῖων (*Ag.* 98), a title she proves not to deserve. This may cast doubt on whether Apollo is a trustworthy healer. Kalchas calls on Apollo with a specific request: “let her not cause any persistent adverse winds that hold back the Danaan ships from sailing” (μή τινας ἀντιπνόους Δαναοῖς χρονίας ἐχενῆδας / ἀπλοίας / τεύξῃ, *Ag.* 147-150). Before there is any indication of unfavourable weather, Kalchas suggests that Artemis may seek retribution for the hare’s death by manipulating the winds. Later, when weather conditions do cease the ships, stranding the army at Aulis (*Ag.* 188-191), Kalchas announces Artemis as their source (*Ag.* 202). He does not announce this immediately, however, despite his earlier suspicion that Artemis would impede their sailing. He declares Artemis as the cause of the winds only after other weather remedies failed (*Ag.* 199-200). Kalchas, it seems, is far from confident. His call to Apollo, his patron god, fell on deaf ears; the weather became unfavourable despite Kalchas’s plea (*Ag.* 147-150). Now, he struggles to come up with a solution to the winds.

Argive Feasts

In Kalchas's interpretation of the omen, Agamemnon and Menelaos are the hounds of Zeus. The prophet refers to the Atreidae as λαγοδαίτης (*Ag.* 124), hare-devourers, explicitly associating the actions of Zeus's birds with the human kings. Since Kalchas conflates the eagles with the Atreidae, he deduces that Artemis is opposed to the Greek leaders. Hence, Kalchas progresses from reading a message of victory in the omen to suggesting that the omen spells danger for the Atreidae. The description of the hare and her litter as a "meal" (δειπνον) reminds the audience of Thyestes's feast of his children, the act which bore an ancestral curse on the house.¹⁸ Aischylos creates a constellation of imagery relating to fathers and consumption. The association of imagery subtly connects different events. Cassandra describes a father eating (πατρὸς βεβρωμένας) the roasted flesh of his children (*Ag.* 1096-1097). She uses a different phrase later to describe the same act: Thyestes eating his sons (πατὴρ ἐγεύσατο, *Ag.* 1222). Aigisthos describes Thyestes's feast in gruesome detail:

ξένια δὲ τοῦδε δύσθεος πατὴρ	1590
Ἄτρεϋς, προθύμως μᾶλλον ἢ φίλως, πατρὶ	
τῶμῳ, κρεουργὸν ἤμαρ εὐθύμως ἄγειν	
δοκῶν, παρέσχε δαῖτα παιδείων κρεῶν.	
τὰ μὲν ποδῆρη καὶ χερῶν ἄκρους κτένας	
ἔθρυπτ', ἄνωθεν (...)	1595
ἄνδρακᾶς καθήμενος.	
ἄσημα δ' αὐτῶν αὐτίκ' ἀγνοίᾳ λαβῶν	
ἔσθει βορὰν ἄσωτον, ὡς ὄρᾳς, γένει.	

But Atreus, [...Agamemnon's] impious father, in an act of hospitality to my father that was more eager than it was friendly, pretending to be holding a cheerful day of butchery, served him with a meal of his children's flesh. The foot parts and the combs at the ends of the arms, (and the heads, he set aside; the rest of their flesh) he chopped up, well away from the diners who were sitting each by himself, so that it was unrecognizable; and Thyestes at once, in ignorance, took some of it and ate it, a meal that, as you now see, was ruinous for the family. (*Ag.* 1590-1597)

Herodotos reproduces Aigisthos's description of Thyestes's feast to illustrate the story of Harpagus's punishment of Astyages in the *Histories* (1.119.4).¹⁹ His use of Aischylos's text suggests that the passage was memorable for the ancient audience; it

¹⁸ Peradotto, 1969, p. 246.

¹⁹ Sommerstein, 2008b, pp. 194-195, n.331.

stood out. Thyestes's feast parallels the eagles' consumption of the pregnant hare. In the *Eumenides*, the Erinyes terrify the audience as they yearn to hunt and eat Orestes (*Eum.* 244-268). The chorus proclaim "terror grips me" when they are reminded of Thyestes's feast (φόβος μ' ἔχει, *Ag.* 1243), offering a hint for how the audience was expected to react to all the horrific images of ingestion in the trilogy.

I suggest that it is significant that Aischylos situates the repeated chorus refrain, "cry sorrow, sorrow, but may good prevail!" (αἴλινον αἴλινον εἰπέ, τὸ δ' εὖ νικάτω, *Ag.* 121, 138) immediately following references to the savaged hare. Clearly, the playwright intends the image of the pregnant hare to have an emotive force. Images of eating and cruel feasts saturate the trilogy; the playwright sees something intrinsically perverse about cannibalism in the Argive house, which also links the Atreidae with Zeus and Kronos. In Hesiod's *Theogony*, Kronos swallows his children while Zeus swallows his pregnant wife Metis. I shall discuss the significance of these parallels further in Chapter 7 (p. 186). The boundaries between fathers and their family members are in urgent need of repair in these myths. While Agamemnon is not responsible for the death of the pregnant hare, Kalchas's relating of the eagles and the Atreidae contributes to the broader pattern of ingestion imagery in the trilogy, essentially suggesting that the Atreidae, like their ancestors, are treacherous eaters of young.

Artemis κουροτρόφος

In contrast to Zeus who sends the eagles to kill the hare, Artemis is enraged by the hare's death. Kalchas has established that there is an opposition between Zeus and Artemis. Artemis did not appear to the Achaians to bemoan the event, but Kalchas believes that she is angry (*Ag.* 146-150). This is crucial. Artemis becomes a character in the *Agamemnon* because Kalchas assumes she is annoyed by the death of the pregnant hare. He also assumes the Zeus sent the birds. This reveals the role Artemis occupied in the consciousness of Aischylos's audience. It could be taken for granted that Artemis would be angry because she is the protector of young animals. The hare was sacred to Artemis. In Callimachus's *Hymn to Artemis*, the goddess is described as the hare-shooter (*H.A.* 3). Thumiger notes: "hare-hunting is not one of the heroic hunts celebrated in Greek culture as offering men a chance to prove their courage. [...] hare-

hunting has strong connotations of pre-adulthood.”²⁰ There was an association between hares and childhood, the period in life protected by Artemis. The goddess features in the play primarily in her role as κούροτρόφος. The pregnant hare provides a means for the dramatist to introduce Artemis’s interests: maturation and pregnancy. Artemis is not simply a character in the trilogy; she represents an entire sphere of concern.

According to Kalchas, Artemis is angry that the mother hare was prevented from giving birth; the hare was killed “before giving birth” (πρὸ λόχου, *Ag.* 136). Notably, the birthing term, λοχάω, meaning specifically “lying in wait for,” implies passivity on the part of the female. Kalchas here reflects that Artemis is concerned with successful parturition. In Aeschylus’s *Suppliants*, the daughters of Danaus pray to Artemis Hecate who supports women in labour (*Supp.* 677-678). Artemis appears in later tragedy too as the protector of pregnant mothers. The chorus in Euripides’s *Hippolytus* tell how they call upon Artemis when they are in labour (*Hipp.* 162-169). Artemis eases their birth-pangs. The *Greek Anthology* records how women made dedications to Artemis after they had given birth (*G.An.* 6.201). Hence, a woman’s parturition occurred under Artemis’s divine protection. In Callimachus’s *Hymn to Artemis*, the goddess tells Zeus that she will live in the mountains and only travel to the cities in order to aid women in labour. She adds that her mother Leto experienced no pain as she gave birth to her since the Moirai determined that Artemis would bring easy labours (*H.A.* 21-26). In contrast, Leto suffered nine days and nine nights of painful labour to bring forth Apollo, Artemis’s brother (*HH* 3.92-94). In addition, Leto did not nurse Apollo. Instead, the goddess Themis fed him nectar and ambrosia as soon as he was born (*HH* 3.123-124). It is Artemis’s destiny to aid mothers in pregnancy while the story of Apollo’s birth hints at his malevolence towards the processes of reproduction and nursing.

Kalchas describes Artemis as “holy” (ἄγνὰ, *Ag.* 135), and a few lines later, as “kindly disposed” (εὐφρων, *Ag.* 140), and “the Fair One” (ἁ καλὰ, *Ag.* 140). Artemis is a gentle and compassionate divinity. Aeschylus constructs a miniature hymn to her:

τόσον περ εὐφρων, καλά,
 δρόσοισι λεπτοῖς μαλερῶν λεόντων
 πάντων τ’ ἄγρονόμων φιλομάστοις
 θηρῶν ὀβρικάλοισι τερπνά.

²⁰ Thumiger, 2006, p. 199.

So very kindly disposed is the Fair One
To the unfledged seed of fiery lions,
And so delightful to the suckling whelps
Of all beasts that roam the wild. (*Ag.* 140-143)

Artemis shows kindness towards animals who love their mothers' breasts (φιλομάστοις). The audience know Artemis's protection extends to human infants too. Later when Klytimestra reminds Orestes how he suckled milk from her breast as a baby (*Lib.* 896-898), the audience know that this activity between mother and child is protected by Artemis. The murder of the pregnant hare, Kalchas assumes, evokes Artemis's wrath given her role as κουροτρόφος. She refuses to accept the killing of a pregnant animal.²¹ Aischylos introduces Artemis into the plot as the protector of mothers and their young, reminding the audience that these familial relationships are revered by the goddess.

Reading a σύμβολον

Kalchas believes that Artemis is the source of the destructive winds (*Ag.* 202), and the chorus in response, deem Kalchas's words to be destined (*Ag.* 157). The prophet claims that the goddess demands a σύμβολον, a sign or token (*Ag.* 144). She wants a sign to compensate for the harm committed against the pregnant hare. It is an ambiguous request to say the least. Kalchas's words require interpreting. συμβαλεῖν means "to throw things together," "to bring information to bear on a situation."²² Inherently, σύμβολον implies that something needs to be resolved, that important information for understanding a situation is missing.²³ The verb implies the act of gathering information to reach a conclusion. This is something both characters and the audience engage in, reaching conclusions based on bringing the events and imagery in the play together.²⁴

The poet has already provided a paradigm for this interpretative process. The watchman was waiting for a σύμβολον (*Ag.* 8). Klytimestra instructed him to watch for the sign indicating Troy's defeat (*Ag.* 9-11), but he knew to be cautious when interpreting the signal (*Ag.* 29-30). The poet develops this sign-reading model as the play continues, indicating that interpreting correctly and critically is a central concern in

²¹ Fraenkel, 1950, p. 84.

²² Irwin and Greenwood, 2007, p. 7.

²³ Struck, 2004, p. 79.

²⁴ Irwin, 2007, p. 48.

the trilogy. Signs present the audience with interpretative riddles to figure out. Klytaimestra, later, refers to the fire beacons as a σύμβολον sent to her from Agamemnon in Troy (*Ag.* 315-316). She knows of the Achaian victory because of the σύμβολον. Notably, the chorus are not so trusting of the sign. Much later in the play, they are still questioning the meaning of the fire beacons (*Ag.* 475-487). They interrogate whether the fire beacons tell of victory or are some divine deception, suggesting that “the coming of this joyful light has beguiled our minds like a dream” (τερπνὸν τόδ’ ἔλθὸν φῶς ἐφήλωσεν φρένας, *Ag.* 492). The chorus only accept that Troy has been taken when the herald appears and reports on the victory (*Ag.* 503-538). They trust his testimony as he does not “signal voicelessly with fire-smoke” (ὡς οὔτ’ ἄναυδος οὔτε σοι δαίω φλόγα, *Ag.* 496). From the perspective of the chorus, spoken testimony is trustworthy while reading symbols is not.

Artemis’s supposed demand for a σύμβολον generates ambiguity and suggests caution, yet Kalchas interprets definitively that the Atreidae must placate the goddess (*Ag.* 201-202). From the obscurity of the bird omen, the prophet instructs that the Atreidae must act. As mentioned earlier, the chorus refer to Kalchas’s instruction as “another remedy” (ἄλλο μῆχαρ, *Ag.* 199). The implication is that Kalchas has voiced previous suggestions which failed. He has not been successful at συμβαλεῖν. Aischylos is purposely bringing into question Kalchas’s reliability as a reader of signs. Worrying, then, is the chorus’s brief mention a few lines earlier that “the senior leader of the Achaian fleet [is] not criticizing any prophet” (καὶ τόθ’ ἡγεμῶν ὁ πρέ- / σβυς νεῶν Ἀχαικῶν, / μάντιν οὔτινα ψέγων, *Ag.* 184-186). Agamemnon is choosing to agree with Kalchas’s readings, relying on the prophet, and thus, he does not interpret the σύμβολον himself. He does not exhibit caution in reading signs as the watchman does in the opening lines of the play or as the chorus do later. In the tapestry scene, Agamemnon’s fails to note the danger symbolised in the material leading his way to the palace, leading to his death (*Ag.* 944-957). His concern for his own prestige overrides his interpretative skills. He is not equipped to read signs. Agamemnon’s commitment to Kalchas’s reading is made clear: “it is a grievous doom not to comply” (βαρεῖα μὲν κῆρ τὸ μὴ πιθέσθαι, *Ag.* 206). He is not complying with Artemis, he is complying with Kalchas. This distinction is clear for the audience. The king has been persuaded (πεῖθω) by Kalchas’s omen reading. He has not tried to understand σύμβολον, but has been persuaded by Kalchas’s ambiguous oracle.

Artemis's part in the *Agamemnon* has received ample attention in modern scholarship. Lloyd-Jones deems Artemis's motivation for punishing the Atreidae to be one of the most debated problems in the *Oresteia*.²⁵ Denniston and Page describe the passage as "in some respects obscure and in others plainly unsatisfactory."²⁶ Critics claim that Aischylos fails to assign any wrongdoing to Agamemnon; there is no real cause of Artemis's anger.²⁷ Some have pondered if her antagonism towards the Atreidae in this scene is meant to be understood as an expression of her opposition to the fated Achaian defeat of the Trojans; Artemis and Apollo famously supported the Trojans in the war.²⁸ Lawrence rightly contradicts this view on the grounds that there is no indication in the text that Artemis is opposed to war.²⁹

The killing of the pregnant hare, Artemis's sacred animal, warrants her wrath in Kalchas's reading. The cause of Artemis's anger is as simple as that: Artemis is angry at Zeus over the killing of the pregnant hare. The failure of critics to accept this cause reflects an assumption in modern scholarship that Aischylos is not concerned about Artemis's providence as guardian of mothers and the young, rather than any weakness in the text itself. I suggest that for an ancient audience, Artemis's anger over the killing of an animal would have been unsurprising. They were accustomed to other myths where Artemis avenges injured animals. Another ancient source describes Artemis as angry with Agamemnon for killing an animal. The story of the unfavourable winds at Aulis is told in the *Cypria*. The *Cypria* is part of the Epic Cycle and is tentatively attributed to Stasinus of Cyprus (Athenaeus's *Deipnosophistae* 15.682d-f, Tzetzes's *Chiliades* 13.638). It functioned as a prequel to Homer's *Iliad* and narrated the events leading up to the Trojan War and the first nine years of the battle. Proclus's later prose summary of the epic in the *Chrestomathy* (cited in Photius's *Bibliotheca*, ninth century A.D.) is the only surviving source detailing the content of the epic, but it is clear that the *Cypria* was well known in fifth century BC Athens, as exemplified for instance by Herodotos's mention of it in the *Histories* (2.117.1). The story of Artemis's anger towards Agamemnon is told in Proclus's summary of the *Cypria*:

²⁵ Lloyd-Jones, 1983, p. 87.

²⁶ Denniston and Page, 1957, p. 77.

²⁷ Denniston and Page, 1957, p. xxiii.

²⁸ Lloyd-Jones, 1983, p. 87.

²⁹ Lawrence, 1976, p. 104.

Καί τὸ δεύτερον ἠθροισμένου τοῦ στόλου ἐν Αὐλίδι, Ἀγαμέμνων ἐπὶ θήρας βαλὼν ἔλαφον, ὑπερβάλλειν ἔφησε καὶ τὴν Ἄρτεμιν. Μηνίσασα δὲ ἡ θεὸς ἐπεσχεν αὐτοὺς τοῦ πλοῦ χειμῶνας ἐπιπέμπουσα. Κάλχαντος δὲ εἰπόντος τὴν τῆς θεοῦ μῆνιν καὶ Ἰφιγένειαν κελεύσαντος θύειν τῇ Ἄρτεμιδι, ὡς ἐπὶ γάμον αὐτὴν Ἀχιλλεῖ μεταπεμφάμενοι, θύειν ἐπιχειροῦσιν. Ἄρτεμις δὲ αὐτὴν ἐξαρπάσασα, εἰς Ταύρους μετακομίζει καὶ ἀθάνατον ποιεῖ. ἔλαφον δὲ ἀντὶ τῆς κόρης παρίστησι τῷ βωμῷ.

While the expedition had mustered a second time at Aulis, Agamemnon, while at the chase, shot a stag and boasted that he surpassed even Artemis. At this the goddess was so angry that she sent stormy winds and prevented them from sailing. Kalchas then told them of the anger of the goddess and bade them sacrifice Iphigeneia to Artemis. This they attempt to do, sending to fetch Iphigeneia as though for marriage with Achilles. Artemis, however, snatched her away and transported her to the Tauri, making her immortal, and putting a stag in place of the girl upon the altar.

(*Cyp.* 1, trans. Evelyn-White, 1998)

Here, Artemis is explicitly angry at Agamemnon. This is not the case in the *Agamemnon*. Critics have wondered why Aeschylus does not reproduce the story of Agamemnon's boast.³⁰ Sophokles later recreates this account from the *Cypria* in his *Elektra* (563-576). In Sophokles's retelling, the offence against Artemis is even worse since Agamemnon was hunting in her sacred grove. Yet, Aeschylus deliberately rejects this tradition.

I offer that the playwright expects that the tradition from the *Cypria* will be naturally evoked for his audience. Kalchas declares that "a Wrath [...] will avenge a child" (Μῆνις τεκνόποινος, *Ag.* 155). The reference may be designed to mirror the μῆνις of Artemis in the *Cypria*, assuming that this term was used to describe the goddess's wrath in the original epic. The root τεκνό may conjure up animal young for the audience, recalling how Artemis is provoked by the slaughter of animals. In contrast to Fraenkel's reading of this passage, which he deems has no "double meaning," I argue that Kalchas's words are purposely highly obscure.³¹ Kalchas refers to the child's avenger as the "guileful keeper of the house" (οἰκονόμος δολία, *Ag.* 155), implying that the μῆνις that will avenge a child is Klytaimestra. A few lines earlier, after fearing that Artemis may hamper the campaign, Kalchas used the words "bent on another sacrificial slaughter" (σπευδομένῃ θυσίαν ἑτέραν, *Ag.* 150). This appears to refer to a sacrifice

³⁰ Lloyd-Jones, 1983, p. 101.

³¹ Fraenkel, 1950, pp. 92-93.

which Artemis demands, but it could be the sacrifice of Agamemnon which Klytaimestra will commit. In this case, the sacrifice of Iphigeneia goes hand in hand with that of Agamemnon. Kalchas's warning of another sacrifice hints at Agamemnon's doom. The oracle predicts the king's death. Agamemnon, however, fails to interpret this. The agent of the sacrifice is "a fashioner of strife" (νεικέων τέκτονα, *Ag.* 152). Again, this could be Artemis or Klytaimestra. It is not clear which character Kalchas is speaking about. He seems to be speaking about both at once, demonstrating the inherent obscurity of oracular speech. Kalchas's words identify Artemis's wrath at the death of the hare with the future wrath of Klytaimestra in response to the death of Iphigeneia. The audience will perceive this double meaning immediately, bringing into relief Agamemnon's failing to do the same.

Aischylos's trilogy dramatises the consequences of μῆνις, just as Homer's *Iliad* is concerned with the μῆνις of Achilleus. Notably, for Klytaimestra and Achilleus, their μῆνις is born in reaction to actions committed by Agamemnon. The centrality of μῆνις as a theme in epic is suggested by the positioning of this term as the first word in Homer's *Iliad*. Aischylos's audience will have noted it as significant that this noun identifies Klytaimestra. Muellner defines μῆνις as follows:

μῆνις is not a word for a hostile emotion arising in one individual against some other individual, as we may spontaneously understand it. It is the name of a feeling not separate from the actions it entails, of a *cosmic sanction*, of a social force whose activation brings drastic consequences on the whole community.³²

While Kalchas and the chorus align the Atreidae and Zeus in the *Agamemnon*, Artemis and Klytaimestra are subtly connected through the nature of their shared μῆνις. Their μῆνις is in reaction to male violence. Artemis's wrath is towards the eagles while Klytaimestra detests Agamemnon for killing her daughter. This further polarizes fathers and mothers. Artemis acts on behalf of the mother hare while Klytaimestra retaliates for Iphigeneia. The goddess and the queen are concerned about mothers and their children, but both are also capable of immense violence. I suggest that Klytaimestra's weapon for trapping Agamemnon—the net (*Ag.* 1380-1381, *Lib.* 980-984, 997-1004, *Eum.* 634-635), a device specifically used for hunting—further associates the queen with the famed huntress Artemis.

³² Muellner, 2005, p. 8.

What is important here is that the playwright's audience know from the *Cypria* that Artemis punished Agamemnon for killing her sacred animal. Whether a stag or a pregnant hare, Artemis's anger is provoked by insolence towards animals. So Aischylos's pregnant hare replaces not only the sparrows in Homer's omen but also the stag in the explanation of Artemis's anger in the *Cypria*. Aischylos cleverly reshapes the omen which signalled Agamemnon's victory in the *Iliad* as a dual functioning sign of his success at war and his personal downfall. The pregnant hare is a powerful symbol in this regard.

Artemis's anger over the killing of the pregnant hare brings into focus her particular concern for pregnant mothers and their children, her providence which is not symbolised in the image of the stag in the *Cypria*. Aischylos is stressing that pregnant mothers have divine protection in the form of Artemis. The maltreatment of mothers generates $\mu\eta\nu\iota\varsigma$, which inevitably transforms society. Fontenrose argues that Artemis "has nothing to do with the conflict of the *Oresteia*."³³ On the contrary, I suggest that since the trilogy's conflicts find resolution through the establishing of a hierarchy which demotes mothers, the inclusion of Artemis in her role as protector of mothers certainly carries significance. Artemis's presence in the *Oresteia* deserves analysis.

The playwright consciously innovates Artemis's role in the story of the Achaian fleet at Aulis. Aischylos does not directly connect Agamemnon's actions with Artemis's $\mu\eta\nu\iota\varsigma$, as Sophokles does later or the *Cypria* did earlier. Kalchas interprets that the eagles represent the Atreidae, just as the chorus earlier posited the vultures to be the kings. The characters on stage are engaged in a creative process of bird sign reading. The eagles represent what Agamemnon is going to do himself in the future: kill a mother and her young. He will kill his own daughter, he will disregard the relationship between Klytimestra and Iphigeneia, and he will lead a war that will result in the deaths of many mothers and their children. However, this is all only realised later. Kalchas's reading of the omen posits that the brothers Menelaos and Agamemnon are the same as their father. The fathers in the house of Atreus injure children and mothers, thus disregarding that which Artemis seeks to protect. Peradotto observes, "Artemis hates the eagles because they typify the Atreidae [...] she hates both eagles and Atreidae for the same reason."³⁴ However, it is not Artemis who conflates the eagles and the Atreidae, but Kalchas.

³³ Fontenrose, 1971, p. 90.

³⁴ Peradotto, 1969, p. 240.

Aischylos makes it clear that Agamemnon has not done anything to provoke Artemis. There is no obvious reason for her to punish him.

Kalchas's reading of the omen creates the scenario where the Atreidae will commit the act which makes them analogous to the eagles. Kalchas advises Agamemnon to placate Artemis, but the prophet never says explicitly that Agamemnon must sacrifice Iphigeneia. His instruction to the Atreidae almost brings them to tears (*Ag.* 204), but this instruction is never revealed. Agamemnon fears killing his child (*Ag.* 206) and comments that the army want her to be sacrificed to ease the winds (*Ag.* 214-216). Hence, Agamemnon interprets that the sacrifice of Iphigeneia will pacify Artemis, but it is not certain that this is the exact remedy that Kalchas suggested. The king kills his daughter, becoming the eagle in the omen, hence invoking μήνις, which will take form in Klytimestra's future revenge. The augury reading and Agamemnon's agreement with it sets the king up to offend Artemis. Agamemnon kills his daughter as a result of how he has interpreted a σύμβολον. Events could have gone differently if he read the omen differently. Inevitably, Agamemnon's death is a direct consequence of his agreement with Kalchas.

Kalchas never explains why it is that Artemis punishes the Achaians for the death of the hare.³⁵ He says that Artemis bears a grudge against Zeus and his eagles (*Ag.* 135), and as a result, the portent is ominous (*Ag.* 145). Her anger is in reaction to the contents of the portent, not what Kalchas claims it represents.³⁶ The causal link between Artemis's anger at Zeus and her decision to hinder the Achaian ships is obscure. Sommerstein suggests that Artemis, being offended by Zeus, seeks revenge by harming Zeus's human protégé, Agamemnon.³⁷ Agamemnon was given his kingly power from Zeus (*Ag.* 42-43). Zeus and Agamemnon are not only allied as kings, the text stresses that they are both fathers. Kalchas tells how Artemis is angry at her πατήρ (*Ag.* 135) and the Atreidae were introduced to the audience as fathers through the bird simile (*Ag.* 49-59). Artemis, on the other hand, is concerned about the welfare of mothers, as the omen suggests. Artemis opposes Agamemnon, in this reading, because he represents Zeus on earth.

³⁵ Fraenkel, 1950, p. 97.

³⁶ Lawrence, 1976, p. 97.

³⁷ Sommerstein, 1980, p. 167.

Agamemnon's Choice

The chorus shift their interest from the Atreidae as a pair to Agamemnon alone as they describe the circumstances surrounding Iphigeneia's death. They narrate how Agamemnon decided to sacrifice his daughter rather than abandon the military mission (*Ag.* 205-213). Faced with Kalchas's prophecy, Agamemnon bemoaned, "it is a grievous doom not to comply, and a grievous one if I am to slay my child, the delight of my house" (βαρεῖα μὲν κῆρ τὸ μὴ πιθέσθαι, / βαρεῖα δ' εἰ τέκνον δαίξω, δόμων ἄγαλμα, *Ag.* 206-207). In Agamemnon's own words, he has a choice but both options are heavy with suffering (βαρεῖα). The bird simile at the beginning of the play underpins Agamemnon's decision; the grief the father birds expressed over their empty nest is now manifesting as his reality.

Denniston and Page interpret that Agamemnon has no choice but to abide by Artemis's instruction.³⁸ It is Agamemnon's duty to do as Artemis commands; he cannot save Iphigeneia from the goddess's will.³⁹ Sophokles's *Elektra* later exaggerates the constraint Agamemnon is under when she explains that the fleet could neither travel homeward nor to Troy owing to the winds; Agamemnon had to surrender Iphigeneia in order to move at all (*El.* 572-574). Euripides also presents Agamemnon as acting under duress (*IT* 19). However, Aischylos's Agamemnon has more freewill in the matter than these interpretations imply. Fraenkel describes his decision as "voluntary."⁴⁰ He chooses to abide by Kalchas's decidedly obscure interpretation of the omen. Further, Agamemnon explains that he cannot desert his fleet (*Ag.* 212). The king chooses the blood pollution that will incur from Iphigeneia's death (*Ag.* 210) above the disintegration of the military campaign (*Ag.* 213). ἀμαρτῶν (*Ag.* 213) stresses the moral failure Agamemnon faces if he retreats.⁴¹ Sommerstein, however, points out that nothing in the play suggests that Agamemnon is obliged to his allies.⁴² Menelaos is just as horrified by the prospect of killing Iphigeneia as Agamemnon is (*Ag.* 203-204). In Euripides's *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, Menelaos criticizes Agamemnon for choosing of his own accord to sacrifice Iphigeneia, motivated by his wish to preserve his command and fame (*IA* 356-364). In his account of events, it is not clear which of the gods caused the

³⁸ Denniston and Page, 1957, p. xxiii.

³⁹ Denniston and Page, 1957, p. 87.

⁴⁰ Fraenkel, 1950, p. 99.

⁴¹ Fraenkel, 1950, p. 123.

⁴² Sommerstein, 2008b, pp. 25, n. 47.

adverse winds (*IA* 351); Artemis is not identified as the cause. Kalchas, however, advises Agamemnon to sacrifice Iphigeneia to Artemis (*IA* 358-359). Euripides's Agamemnon does so gladly.

When confronted with the choice of losing prestige or losing his child, Agamemnon decides to safeguard his own hegemony. It is this same self-interest and concern for prestige which results in Agamemnon's defeat in the tapestry scene (*Ag.* 908-972). Importantly, it is proleptically that Kalchas's augury reading is validated. Agamemnon became a child-killer like his ancestors in response to Kalchas's interpretation and evocation of Artemis. Kalchas introduces a course of action which Agamemnon fully enacts. His choice to agree with Kalchas reveals his true character. The king's priority is his prominence in the *polis*, not his *oikos*. The sacrifice of Iphigeneia is not determined by divine will but the deliberated choice of Agamemnon. Aischylos's innovative reinterpretation of the story positions Agamemnon as responsible for his own downfall. Agamemnon went to war for reasons of personal pride; the sacrifice of Iphigeneia reveals this.⁴³ This is his crime. While Zeus ordained the war and the Achaian victory, Agamemnon's motivations are flawed.

Agamemnon concludes his contemplation on the matter by asserting:

παυσανέμου γὰρ θυσία
παρθενίου θ' αἵματος ὀρ-
γᾶ περιόργως ἐπιθυ-
μεῖν θέμις. εὖ γὰρ εἶη.

That they should long with intense passion for a sacrifice to end the winds and for the blood of a maiden is quite natural. May all be well! (*Ag.* 214-217)

The term *περιόργως* (*Ag.* 216) describes the anger of the soldiers who are eager to depart for Troy. This is the real factor which influences Agamemnon, his partiality towards the restless and exhausted army. He wishes to appease them. The reference to the anger of the soldiers may imply that Iphigeneia will be killed even if Agamemnon refuses to commit the sacrifice.⁴⁴ She will die at the hands of the soldiers anyway as they are desperate to depart from Aulis. This proves the persuasive power Kalchas's augury reading has had on the army.

⁴³ Lawrence, 1976, p. 105.

⁴⁴ Denniston and Page, 1957, p. 87.

But, if Aischylos intended the audience to interpret that Iphigeneia's fate is out of Agamemnon's control, I suggest that he would make this clear in order to exonerate the king and further, the focus given to Agamemnon's moral meditation would be unnecessary. The point is the Aischylos purposely makes the scene unclear. Agamemnon's contemplation on the matter is paramount in this scene precisely because it is his decision whether Iphigeneia lives or dies. I argue that these lines, as quoted by the chorus, elucidate where Agamemnon's priorities lie. His concern is the anger of the soldiers, not the emotions of his child or family. Nowhere does Agamemnon consider the opinions of his family on the matter, only that of the soldiers. As the military allies believe that it is θέμις to spill the blood of a παρθένος, Agamemnon deems that his actions are justified.

The chorus's reaction to Agamemnon's words immediately undermines his claim that the sacrifice of Iphigeneia is θέμις. They describe Agamemnon's mind as "impious, impure, unholy" (δυσσεβῆ [...] / ἄναγνον, ἀνίερον, *Ag.* 219-220). While Artemis is ἄγνός (*Ag.* 134), Agamemnon is the opposite, ἄναγνον. Artemis's holiness is expressed in her concern for children; Agamemnon's unholiness manifests in his killing of his child. He is αἰσχρόμητις, acting out shameful schemes (*Ag.* 222). The language here could not get much harsher or more accusatory.

The chorus deem that Agamemnon's wretched and frenzied determination to commit the sacrifice was the πρωτοπήμων, the first cause of ill (*Ag.* 223). In the minds of the chorus, the sacrifice of Iphigeneia is a primal crime. This is the act which sets in motion the violence which follows. Interestingly, in the closing lines in the *Libation Bearers*, the chorus ignore the death of Iphigeneia as a crime in the house's history. They include Thyestes's suffering, Agamemnon's murder and the death of Klytaimestra as the three acts of destruction in the house (*Lib.* 1065-1076). The chorus evade the crime which the dramatist placed as first in the *Agamemnon*.⁴⁵ Characters in Aischylos's trilogy reveal their different loyalties through what they define as criminal and just. When defending her killing of Agamemnon, Klytaimestra reminds the chorus that the sacrifice of Iphigeneia was a polluting act (*Ag.* 1420). Her disgust is in tune with the earlier revulsion expressed by the chorus. The playwright has structured the play so that the audience is primed to sympathise with Klytaimestra's motivation for revenge.

⁴⁵ Vellacott, 1991, p. 74.

The chorus posit the motivation behind Agamemnon's decision to sacrifice his daughter as his desire to advance the war for the retrieval of Helen (*Ag.* 225-226). The chorus condemn the king's ridding of a daughter in order to avenge the loss of a wife (θυγατρός, γυναικοποιών, *Ag.* 225). The verbal antithesis in the Greek between daughter and wife is significant here.⁴⁶ The chorus are disgusted by Agamemnon's defence of a social relation (wife) above kin (daughter). The sentiment expressed by the chorus foreshadows the Erinyes' loathing of Orestes owing to his disregard for his blood-tie to Klytimestra (*Eum.* 608). Father like son, both Agamemnon and Orestes discount obligations to kin. From the perspective of the chorus in the *Agamemnon*, Agamemnon's disregard for his blood relation is dishonourable. This is crucial since Apollo and Athena will propagate Agamemnon's bias; they maintain that the injury of a spouse is a greater grievance than the maltreatment of a blood relative. Yet this moral stance is condemned by the chorus in the *Agamemnon*. In the first play, the playwright is bringing into question morals that will later become fully associated with Olympian ideology. But, while the chorus express aversion towards Agamemnon for his actions, the murder of their king inspires them to turn their anger towards Klytimestra. Agamemnon's αἰσχρόμητις (*Ag.* 222) is overshadowed by Klytimestra's μεγαλόμητις (*Ag.* 1426). By the end of the first play, the father's failings fall short of the mother's.

The Great Sacrificer

The chorus paint an emotive picture as they describe Iphigeneia's sacrifice. The event provides the only example in the trilogy of a scenario in which Agamemnon is described in the company of one of his children. The chorus make it clear that Agamemnon was present at his daughter's death; father and daughter were together (*Ag.* 231). Hence, the sacrifice of Iphigeneia is the prime episode the dramatist offers to the audience for assessing Agamemnon's role as a father. It is notable that Klytimestra is not present at Aulis. The story of the sacrifice demonstrates what occurs when Agamemnon exercises sole authority over his daughter. The sacrifice scene presents an instance of a father acting as sole parent; the mother has no say. The scene of Iphigeneia's sacrifice presents the only reference point for analysing a father acting without maternal input. Crucially, in the absence of her mother, Iphigeneia meets her death at her father's orders. Similarly,

⁴⁶ Verrall, 1904, p. 29.

the father vultures in the opening bird simile in the *Agamemnon* lose their chicks. Fathers, it would appear, do not make good protectors of children. Aischylos's vision of fathers as lone parents is deeply disturbing. Yet, Apollo will argue that fathers are the only parent that matters (*Eum.* 657-666).

The playwright does not offer much to balance the negative impression of male parenting created by the scene of Iphigeneia's sacrifice. In the *Libation Bearers*, Orestes and Elektra continually attempt to rouse Agamemnon's infernal support (*Lib.* 315, 332, 456-522). The chorus add to their cries and call to the underworld for aid to be sent to Elektra and Orestes (*Lib.* 476-478). While Klytaimestra's grief was predominant in the *Agamemnon*, the children's mourning for their father takes centre stage in the *Libation Bearers*. Simon describes their lamenting as "stirring up the dead to create a powerful, phallic father."⁴⁷ Orestes and Elektra have been left bereft owing to Klytaimestra's actions. Orestes wishes to be master of the palace (*Lib.* 480) and Elektra is eager to marry (*Lib.* 487). Elektra describes herself as a slave (*Lib.* 135). Elektra, a daughter of marriageable age, has been unable to transition to the status of γυνή since she lacks a κύριος.⁴⁸ The text stresses that their loss of paternal support is detrimental for them. Agamemnon is required to support his children's transition to adulthood. This is the parenting role of a father according to the logic of the *Libation Bearers*, to ensure his child's successful social integration. His role in procreation is never mentioned.

The children desperately call upon their father, but he never appears. Yet the love they express for their father dilutes the negative impression of the king generated in the first play.⁴⁹ His children's affection for him places Agamemnon in a positive light. Yet, the shade of Agamemnon fails to respond to his children's calls.⁵⁰ The audience might expect that Agamemnon will arise from the underworld to offer guidance to his children. After all, the ghost of Klytaimestra takes to the stage in order to instruct the Erinyes in the *Eumenides* (94-139) and Darius's shade appears to advise his wife and the Persian elders in the *Persae* (681-842). Significantly, Darius's shade appears at his tomb, a similar setting to the opening scene of the *Libation Bearers* where Elektra and Orestes are reunited at the tomb of Agamemnon. The visual resemblance between the tomb scenes in the two plays may have led the audience to expect that Agamemnon's shade is

⁴⁷ Simon, 1988, p. 54.

⁴⁸ Goldhill, 2004, p. 37.

⁴⁹ Solmsen, 1995, p. 192.

⁵⁰ Simon, 1988, p. 54.

going to appear, just as Darius's had in Aischylos's earlier play. But, Aischylos chooses to preserve Agamemnon's absence from the stage after his death.

Orestes later claims Agamemnon supports him from his grave (*Eum.* 598), but there is no evidence for this. In Homer's *Odyssey*, Agamemnon has never even seen Orestes (*Od.* 11.452-453). There is a stark lack of relationship between Agamemnon and his children. As Armens notes, "[Orestes is] the deprived and rejected child. Who can feel for a father he has rarely seen or a mother who prefers her paramour to her child? Orestes, the patriarchal son, is, seemingly, a man without knowledge of love."⁵¹ In a prayer to Zeus, Orestes compares himself and Elektra to the young of a dead eagle, evoking the bird simile and the bird omen in the *Agamemnon*. Orestes says:

Ζεῦ Ζεῦ, θεωρὸς τῶνδε πραγμάτων γενοῦ·
ἰδοῦ δὲ γένναν εὖνιν αἰετοῦ πατρός,
θανόντος ἐν πλεκταῖσι καὶ σπειράμασιν
δεινῆς ἐχίδνης. τοὺς δ' ἀπωφανισμένους
νῆστις πιέζει λιμός· οὐ γὰρ ἐντελεῖς
θήραν πατρώαν προσφέρειν σκηνήμασιν.
οὔτω δὲ κάμῃ τήνδε τ', Ἥλέκτραν λέγω,
ἰδεῖν πάρεστί σοι, πατροστερῆ γόνον,
ἄμφω φυγὴν ἔχοντε τὴν αὐτὴν δόμων.
καὶ τοῦ θυτῆρος καὶ σε τιμῶντος μέγα
πατρός νεοσσούς τούσδ' ἀποφθείρας πόθεν
ἔξεις ὁμοίας χειρὸς εὐθιοῖνον γέρας;
οὔτ' αἰετοῦ γένεθλ' ἀποφθείρας, πάλιν
πέμπειν ἔχοις ἂν σήματ' εὐπιθῆ βροτοῖς·
οὔτ' ἀρχικός σοι πᾶς ὄδ' ἀνανθείς τυθμῆν
βωμοῖς ἀρήξει βουθύτοις ἐν ἡμασιν.
κόμιζ', ἀπὸ μικροῦ δ' ἂν ἄρειας μέγαν
δόμον, δοκοῦντα κάρτα νῦν πεπτωκέναί.

Zeus, Zeus, look down on these things! Behold the orphan brood of the eagle father, of him who died in the twisting coils of the fearsome viper! The bereaved children are hard pressed by ravenous hunger, for they are not yet full-grown so as to be able to bring home to the nest the prey their father hunted. So too you can see this woman, Elektra, and me, children robbed of their father, both alike in banishment from their home. And if you allow us nestlings to perish, whose father was the great sacrificer who greatly glorified you, from whence will you get the honour of a fine feast given with comparable generosity? If you let the brood of the eagle perish, you would never again be able to send mortals signs that they would readily believe; and if this ruling stock is allowed to shrivel away entirely, it cannot minister to your alters on days when oxen are sacrificed. Take care of us, and you can

⁵¹ Armens, 1967, p. 73.

raise this house from littleness to greatness, a house that to all appearance is now utterly fallen. (*Lib.* 246-263, trans. Sommerstein, 2008b)

Agamemnon is an “eagle father” (αἰετοῦ πατρός, *Lib.* 247). In the bird simile, the Atreidae are depicted as “vultures” (αἰγυπιῶν, *Ag.* 49) and “birds” (οἰωνόθροον, *Ag.* 56), while in Kalchas’s reading of the bird omen, they are “birds” (οἰωνῶν, *Ag.* 114) and “eagles” (αἰετῶν, *Ag.* 137). Aischylos is constructing a compressed metaphor as the drama unfolds. The descriptions of Agamemnon function to develop the audience’s impression of him as a father. The chorus initially saw Agamemnon as a father bird grieving over his empty nest, but then Kalchas aligned him with a father bird eating a pregnant mother. The metaphor now finds completion in the image of the young nesting birds mourning their father bird. Like the earlier bird simile, the image initially appears to present Agamemnon as an ideal father, a nurturer who once brought food to his children (*Lib.* 249-251). This is the aspect of their father which the children valorise. The passage stresses the vulnerability of children; without their father, they are hungry (*Lib.* 250). The helplessness of young children is further captured in the nurse’s speech (*Lib.* 734-765). The nurse describes Orestes as a baby unable to control his bowel (νηδῦς, *Lib.* 757) or communicate his hunger (*Lib.* 756). Children require parental care.

While Orestes idealises his father as once a great provider, he also describes his father as “the great sacrificer” (τοῦ θνητοῦ [...] μέγα, *Lib.* 255), reminding the audience of Iphigeneia’s death at Agamemnon’s hands. The audience are encouraged to notice a tension here: Orestes bemoans the death of his father, but the cause of Agamemnon’s death was his decision to sacrifice Iphigeneia. Further, Orestes’s reference to the father bird’s “hunt” (θήραν, *Lib.* 251) may conjure up the image of the eagles eating the pregnant hare. Orestes’s words seem designed to recall Agamemnon’s actions which led to his downfall, hence reminding the audience of Agamemnon’s failings as a parent while simultaneously highlighting the longing the children feel for their father.

Klytimestra’s Grief

The suffering of the father birds in the bird simile extends to Klytimestra’s grief for her lost daughter. The bird image conjures up Klytimestra’s loss of Iphigeneia.⁵² While the bird simile was famously associated with the reunion of a father and son in the *Odyssey*,

⁵² Knox, 1952, p. 18.

it is a more appropriate illustration of a mother's loss of her daughter in the *Oresteia*. Grief for Iphigeneia is most strongly articulated by Klytaimestra. The pain of losing a child becomes fully associated with the queen. Her sorrow will be the cause of the entire action in the *Agamemnon*. In a sense, the play dramatises the consequences for Agamemnon and the Argives of Klytaimestra's bereavement. Through the bird simile, the dramatist introduces the notion that the loss of children motivates violence. It stirs the father birds to go to war. The murder of the pregnant hare likewise results in further violence. The death of Iphigeneia will rouse Klytaimestra's dissent. The previous imagery has led the audience to expect Iphigeneia's death will bring destruction. The loss of a child has detrimental consequences for the entire community.

Klytaimestra's loss is evoked in her language. In the *Agamemnon*, her first words announce: "in accordance with the proverb, may a morning of good news be born from the womb of this night of good news!" (εὐάγγελος μὲν, ὥσπερ ἡ παροιμία / ἕως γένοιτο μητρὸς εὐφρόνης πάρα, *Ag.* 264-265). Klytaimestra personifies the morning (ἕως) as a mother (μητρὸς) who delivers good news. The queen herself is the source of the news that Troy has fallen (*Ag.* 267). Hence, Klytaimestra is equivalent to the morning in the proverb. The metaphor instantly brings attention to Klytaimestra's maternal role. She is a mother. Through the use of different metaphors, both Agamemnon and Klytaimestra are introduced to the audience in their parental roles. The position in the text of Klytaimestra's opening greeting is certainly loaded as the chorus have just finished describing the bleak circumstances of Iphigeneia's death (*Ag.* 200-50). The maternal guise in which Klytaimestra first speaks to the audience is significant; the audience will naturally see her as the mother of the deceased Iphigeneia.⁵³

After killing Agamemnon and Cassandra, Klytaimestra announces that her purpose was to avenge Iphigeneia (*Ag.* 1417). She reaffirms that this was her motive on several occasions (*Ag.* 1432, 1504, 1525-1527, 1555). The queen adds that Iphigeneia is "much-bewailed" (πολύκλαθτόν, *Ag.* 1526). Aischylos presents Klytaimestra as a character in mourning for her child. The bird simile, designed to illustrate the despair of the Atreidae, leads the audience to sympathise with Klytaimestra's position in the drama. The central bond between parent and child depicted in the *Agamemnon* is between Klytaimestra and Iphigeneia; the focus is the mother and daughter rather than the father and son of epic.

⁵³ Winnington-Ingram, 1983, p. 103.

The anguish expressed by Klytaimestra over the loss of her daughter was familiar to the Athenian audience. Humphreys stresses that in all cultures the “intensity of emotional relationships is surely affected by the value placed on them by the actor’s culture [...] and reactions to child death therefore have to be related to the status of children in the culture.”⁵⁴ In fifth century BC Athens, the continuity of a man’s estate through the generations depended upon the survival of his children. For an Athenian woman, the bearing of children was her primary duty. It was not until the birth of her first child that she would be fully accepted in the *oikos* of her husband.⁵⁵ Owing to disease, a large proportion of newborn infants did not survive their childhood.⁵⁶ The communal rituals performed by women at festivals such as the Thesmophoria, which involved mourning the goddess Demeter’s loss of Persephone (a myth I shall discuss more fully in Chapter 7), may have served to psychologically prepare them for the probability of losing a child of their own.

Klytaimestra’s affection for Iphigeneia becomes overshadowed by her surviving children’s hatred for their mother. Elektra refers to Klytaimestra as “my mother, who has an impious spirit towards her children that belies the name of mother” (ἐμή γε μήτηρ, οὐδαμῶς ἐπόνυμον / φρόνημα παισὶ δύσθεον πεπαμένη, *Lib.* 190-191). Klytaimestra’s μῆνις erodes her relationship with her surviving children. They hate her because she killed their father (*Lib.* 429-433). Further, Klytaimestra mutilated Agamemnon’s corpse (*Lib.* 439-440) and denied him a proper burial (*Lib.* 433). The death of Agamemnon has left Elektra and Orestes desolate, their future uncertain (*Lib.* 132-134, 336). In effect, Agamemnon’s death has led to social disintegration and pollution. As Goldhill explains, “for a woman to plot like a man – and thus aim at the position of authority – is inevitably to plot against a man: against the established order of patriarchy.”⁵⁷ Klytaimestra’s rule is detrimental for her children and society as a whole.

The queen, following her violent retribution against Agamemnon, fails to provide maternal protection to her surviving children. On discovering that Orestes has killed Aigisthos, Klytaimestra orders, “someone give me, right away, an axe that can kill a man!” (δοίη τις ἀνδροκμήτα πέλεκυν ὡς τάχος, *Lib.* 899). Klytaimestra is prepared to kill her son when faced with her own death. Her willingness to use force recalls her

⁵⁴ Humphreys and King, 1981, p. 3.

⁵⁵ Cantarella, 1993, p. 47.

⁵⁶ Demand, 1994, p. 22.

⁵⁷ Goldhill, 2004, p. 34.

threat to fight the chorus of elders in the *Agamemnon* (*Ag.* 1419-1425). Her desire for power and self-preservation overtake her past concerns for her daughter.

Yet, Klytaimestra's sensitive maternal affection for Iphigeneia also continues to echo throughout the plays, alongside the negative depiction of her. Elektra refers to Iphigeneia as "the sister who was pitilessly sacrificed" (τῆς τυθείσης νηλεῶς ὁμοσπόρου, *Lib.* 242), reminding the audience of the chorus's poignant description of the sacrifice and Klytaimestra's calls for justice for her child in the *Agamemnon*. Orestes recalls how he was once dear to his mother (*Lib.* 1007), evoking for the audience an image of Klytaimestra's tenderness towards her children before the death of Iphigeneia. On hearing the false news of Orestes's death, Klytaimestra expresses sorrow. She exclaims, "ah me, we are completely, utterly ruined!" (οἶ 'γὼ, κατ' ἄκρας εἶπας ὡς πορθούμεθα, *Lib.* 691). She mourns being stripped of her "loved ones" (φίλων, *Lib.* 695), adding, "and now Orestes" (καὶ νῦν Ὀρέστης, *Lib.* 696). The death of Orestes, for Klytaimestra, presents a specific instance of a general phenomenon. He is the latest in a line of φίλοι she has lost. The broad meaning of the term φίλοι conceals who exactly it is Klytaimestra has mourned. In Orestes's response to his mother (*Lib.* 700-706), he also speaks of φίλοι, but distinctly when referring to non-familial friends, essentially emphasising the broad meaning of the term. In this sense, Klytaimestra's words may communicate that the loss of her son is equivalent to the loss of non-kin. The poet inserts a broad term which brings into question the sincerity of Klytaimestra's pain. However, her allusion to past grief must remind the audience of Iphigeneia. The death of Orestes stirs the same pain in Klytaimestra as the loss of her daughter. Klytaimestra adds that Orestes was kept away from Argos to guard him from the curse on the house (*Lib.* 697). She adds later that he was sent to live with friends, not exiled (*Lib.* 914). Orestes would certainly have been a target in the case of a revolt in the king's absence so this explanation is legitimate.⁵⁸ Recognizing Klytaimestra's sorrow as genuine allows the complexities of her character to emerge. She is both affectionate and violent.

In the *Eumenides*, implicit reminders of Klytaimestra's bond with her children continue to feature. The Pythia's description of the passing of the oracle at Delphi from mother to daughter in the prologue (*Eum.* 1-6) may remind the audience of the ruptured relationship between Klytaimestra and Iphigeneia. Shortly before Apollo presents his

⁵⁸ Margon, 1983, p. 296.

λόγος, he mentions that Agamemnon’s military campaign was “for the most part a successful venture” (ἡμποληκότα / τὰ πλεῖστ’ ἄμεινον, *Eum.* 631-632). The audience may interpret that Agamemnon’s sacrifice of Iphigeneia was the element that was not successful. The uncertainty in Apollo’s statement gets the audience thinking critically. They are not allowed to forget Iphigeneia. The cause of Klytaimestra’s opposition to Agamemnon is kept alive for the audience to contemplate.

The Sacrifice of Iphigeneia

The scene of Iphigeneia’s sacrifice haunts Aischylos’s trilogy. The chorus describe what happened:

λιτὰς δὲ καὶ κληδόνας πατρώους παρ’ οὐδὲν αἰῶ τε παρθένειον ἔθεντο φιλόμαχοι βραβῆς.	230
φράσεν δ’ ἀόζοις πατήρ μετ’ εὐχὰν δίκαν χιμαίρας ὑπερθε βωμοῦ πέπλοισι περιπετῆ παντὶ θυμῷ προνωπῆ λαβεῖν ἀέρδην, στόματός	235
τε καλλιπρώρου φυλακᾶ κατασχεῖν φθόγγον ἀραῖον οἴκοις, βία χαλινῶν τ’ ἀναύδω μένει. κρόκου βαφὰς δ’ ἐς πέδον χέουσα ἔβαλλ’ ἕκαστον θυτήρ-	240
ων ἀπ’ ὄμματος βέλει φιλοίκτω, πρέπουσά θ’ ὡς ἐν γραφαῖς, προσεννέπειν θέλουσ’, ἐπεὶ πολλάκις πατὴρ κατ’ ἀνδρῶνας εὐτραπέζους ἔμελψεν, ἀγνᾶ δ’ ἀταύρωτος ἀυδᾶ πατὴρ	245
φίλου τρίτοσπονδον εὐ- ποτμον παιῶνα φίλως ἐτίμα— τὰ δ’ ἐνθεν οὔτ’ εἶδον οὔτ’ ἐννέπω· τέχνη δὲ Κάλχαντος οὐκ ἄκραντοι.	

Her [Iphigeneia’s] pleas, her cries of “father!”
and her maiden years, were set at naught
by the war-loving chieftains.
After a prayer, her father told his attendants
to lift her right up over the altar
with all their strength, like a yearling goat,
face down, so that her robes fell around her,
and by putting a guard
on her fair face and lips to restrain
speech that might lay a curse on his house

by force, by the silencing power of a bridle.
As she poured saffron dye towards the ground
she cast on each of her sacrificers a glance darted from her eye,
a glance to stir pity, standing out as if
in a picture, wanting to address them
by name—because often
at the rich banquets in her father’s dining-chambers
she had sung, a pure virgin with pure voice,
duly and lovingly performing her father’s
paean for good fortune to accompany the third libation.
What followed I did not see and do not say
but the skilled prophecies of Kalchas do not fail of fulfilment. (*Ag.* 228-249)

Various features of this passage are striking. Agamemnon instructs that Iphigeneia is to be gagged and held above the sacrificial alter (*Ag.* 231-237). The playwright emphasises that Agamemnon is giving the orders; he directs this act. The men employ force and might (βία) to enact the sacrifice (*Ag.* 237). The dramatist makes it clear that Iphigeneia is being sacrificed against her will. She does not, as Euripides later depicts her, accept death to earn κλέος and aid the Achaians: “I do not say no to death” (θανοῦσα δ’ οὐκ ἀναίνομαι, *IA* 1501). Aischylos’s Iphigeneia cries and begs to her father, but he ignores her (*Ag.* 228-229). Agamemnon does not heed the distress of his child.

The playwright shifts the focus from the simile of the stolen vulture-children in the opening of the *Agamemnon* to the very real loss of Iphigeneia (*Ag.* 205-247). The chorus’s narration of Iphigeneia’s sacrifice reveals that the Atreidae are not fathers whose children were taken from them, but rather, they are the killers of Iphigeneia. In this way, the bird simile begins a network of imagery carrying great significance for how the audience will judge Agamemnon. Agamemnon’s actions introduce a profound moral problem. The sympathetic image of the father birds retrospectively takes on new meaning for the audience as Agamemnon’s treatment of Iphigeneia is disclosed.

The chorus describe Iphigeneia as like a “she-goat” (χμαίρας, *Ag.* 232). The simile seems designed to draw parallels between Iphigeneia’s sacrifice and the sacrifices which commonly occurred during festivities in honour of Artemis. Goats were sacrificed to Artemis during wartime. In the *Hellenica*, Xenophon records that it was customary in Sparta to sacrifice a goat to Artemis Agrotera before going to battle (*Hell.* 4.2.20). Elsewhere, in the *Anabasis*, Xenophon explains how the Athenians vowed prior to the Battle at Marathon that they would sacrifice a goat to Artemis in exchange for every Persian soldier they killed. Following the battle, they were unable to source enough goats so instead they inaugurated an annual practice of sacrificing five

hundred goats to Artemis (*Anab.* 3.2.12). According to Xenophon, this practice was still taking place during his lifetime. It must have been an annual ritual that was very familiar to Aischylos. Munn identifies that the special devotion Athenians gave to Artemis during the Persian Wars reveals their anxiety concerning the divine wrath that war could inspire.⁵⁹ The destruction brought about by war was believed to anger Artemis. Hence, the goddess had to be placated. Aischylos's audience understood that war necessitated a sacrifice to Artemis. However, in the *Agamemnon*, sacrifice takes a human form rather than that of a goat.

Mejer asserts that the symbolic significance of human sacrifice requires deciphering.⁶⁰ However, I suggest that human sacrifice was a familiar element in myths concerning Artemis. The notion of human sacrifice in the worship of Artemis features elsewhere. In Euripides's *Iphigeneia in Tauris*, Athena instructs Orestes to establish a law whereby a man is sacrificed in honour of Artemis Tauropolos (*IT* 1459-1461). Furthermore, ancient lexicographers connected an Athenian dictum, Ἐμβαρός εἰμι, with a story about an Athenian father named Embaros. Apollo's oracle dictated that Embaros must surrender his daughter to be sacrificed to Artemis to compensate for the killing of a bear. In order to prevent his daughter's death, the father hid his daughter in the temple of Artemis and sacrificed a goat dressed in his daughter's clothing (Leutsch/Schneidewin *Paroem.* Gr. I 402, Eust. Il. 2.732).⁶¹ This local Athenian story replicates the scenario described in Aischylos's drama. Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter to atone for the killing of an animal sacred to Artemis. However, unlike Agamemnon, Embaros chooses not to sacrifice his daughter. The Embaros myth shows that it was possible to refuse Artemis's request for a human sacrifice. Perhaps Aischylos's mention of a goat hints to his audience to recall the myth of Embaros; Agamemnon's chooses to do that which Embaros refuses. Agamemnon's actions as a father can be judged in comparison to Embaros's who shows determination to protect his daughter. Further, the story of Embaros demonstrates that human sacrifice was a familiar notion in the myths associated with the cult of Artemis.⁶²

In the *Agamemnon*, the playwright emphasises two well known aspects of Artemis's cult: firstly, the goddess's role in protecting mothers and their young, and secondly, the worship of the goddess through human sacrifice, which manifests in

⁵⁹ Munn, 2006, p. 265.

⁶⁰ Mejer, 2009, p. 68.

⁶¹ Perlman, 1989, p. 125.

⁶² Lloyd-Jones, 1983, p. 98.

Athenian cult practice as the offering of goats. The omen and the sacrifice of Iphigeneia demonstrate Artemis's power to protect and to punish. The play offers a thorough explication of Artemis's providence. Artemis is the goddess who will protect mothers and children when they are slaughtered in the pursuit of power.⁶³ She will punish the aggressors. To insult mothers is a grave offense against Artemis, a lesson that must have repercussions for how the audience will judge Apollo's denial of maternity in the *Eumenides*. Aischylos is presenting a crucial problem. By siding with the Olympian ideology of favouring fathers above mothers, the Athenian *polis* may run the risk of suffering the wrath of Artemis.

Artemis at Brauron

The chorus in the *Agamemnon* stress Iphigeneia's status as a παρθένος (*Ag.* 215, 229), usually translated as "maiden" or "virgin." She is also described as ἀταύρωτος (*Ag.* 245), literally meaning "unbullied," which Sommerstein posits as a cultic term for a virgin.⁶⁴ She is depicted as pure and dutiful, performing for the men who ironically become her killers (*Ag.* 232-247). The playwright gives special attention to Iphigeneia's dress: she is wearing "robes" (πέπλοισι, *Ag.* 233) that are "saffron" in colour (κρόκου, *Ag.* 239). In Aristophanes's *Lysistrata*, these same ritual elements feature. As the women prepare en-masse to refuse sex to their husbands, Lysistrata says that she is ἀταύρωτη (*Lys.* 217), unbullied, and κροκωτοφορέω (*Lys.* 219), dressed in the *krokotos*, the same ritual saffron garments as Iphigeneia wears in the *Agamemnon*. Aristophanes includes the female form ἀταύρωτη, just as Aischylos did (*Ag.* 245).⁶⁵ However, the women in *Lysistrata* are married so the meaning of ἀταύρωτος differs to the modern understanding of virgin. Greek terms in this context are notoriously difficult to translate into English. Rigoglioso points out the failing of English definitions of παρθένος:

Attempts to equate it with "virgin" and "maiden" inevitably become problematic, as textual evidence reveals that a *parthenos* was sometimes one but not the other and sometimes neither.⁶⁶

⁶³ Peradotto, 1969, p. 246.

⁶⁴ Sommerstein, 2008b, pp. 29, n. 54.

⁶⁵ Henderson, 1987, p. 95.

⁶⁶ Rigoglioso, 2009, p. 40.

Rigoglioso proposes that the term *παρθένος* describes a state of ritual purity which can be applied to virgins and mothers alike.⁶⁷ It was not a technical description for a woman who had never had sex, but for a woman practicing ritual celibacy.⁶⁸ The *Lysistrata* passage suggests that women who adopted a status of ritual purity (*ἄταύρωτος*) were not required to be virgins, but avoiding sex was a condition of their rites. Perhaps both *παρθένος* and *ἄταύρωτος* are terms originating from ritual settings. In this sense, Aischylos is reproducing the language of cult practice. Aischylos compels his audience to see Iphigeneia as young, pure and innocent, a *παρθένος* on the brink of conducting cult rites.

Peradotto identifies that the cultic references in the *Agamemnon* passage culminate to create the impression that Iphigeneia is a participant at the festivals in honour of Artemis in Brauron.⁶⁹ Located in Attica, Brauron was a site of cult worship exterior to the Athenian *polis*. It was a centre for the cult worship of Artemis. The importance of this site for Athenians is attested to by the building of a temple to Artemis Brauronian on the Akropolis during the fourth century BC.⁷⁰ The Athenian tyrant Peisistratos originated from Brauron and officially installed the worship of Artemis in Athens during the sixth century BC. Excavations at the ancient site of Brauron began in 1948 under the direction of Papadimitriou. Included in recoveries from the site were fragments of hundreds of black figure craters, decorated with scenes of girls running foot-races or dancing.⁷¹ These date to the late sixth and early fifth centuries BC, demonstrating that activities were taking place at the site during Aischylos's lifetime. Archaeologists also discovered votive statues, one of which depicts a young girl holding a hare.⁷² This provides further evidence that the hare was sacred to Artemis and sheds light on why Aischylos chose to feature a hare in his omen. The playwright is encouraging his audience to reflect upon their worship of Artemis. The archaeological finds from Brauron suggest young girls went to the site to perform rituals and games.

Aristophanes's *Lysistrata* provides further evidence about the activities that took place in Brauron. The all female chorus in the *Lysistrata* recollect the rituals they performed as young Athenian girls:

⁶⁷ Rigoglioso, 2009, p. 42.

⁶⁸ Stewart, 1995, p. 578.

⁶⁹ Peradotto, 1969, p. 245.

⁷⁰ Peradotto, 1969, p. 244.

⁷¹ Perlman, 1989, p. 119.

⁷² Peradotto, 1969, p. 244.

ἐπὶ μὲν ἔτη γεγῶσ' εὐθὺς ἠρρηφόρου·
εἶτ' ἀλετρις ἢ δεκέτις οὔσα τάρχηγέτι·
καὶ χέουσα τὸν κροκωτὸν ἄρκτος ἢ Βραυρωνίοις·
κάκανηφόρου ποτ' οὔσα παῖς καλὴ 'χουστ'
ισχάδων ὀρμαθόν.

As soon as I turned seven I was an Arrephoros;
then when I was ten I was a Grinder for the Foundress;
and shedding my saffron robe I was a Bear at the Brauronia;
and once, when I was a fair girl, I carried the Basket,
wearing a necklace of dried figs. (*Lys.* 641-647, trans. Henderson, 2000)⁷³

At the onset of puberty, Athenian girls ‘act the she-bear’ for Brauronian Artemis. The women mention the wearing of the κροκωτός as a significant feature of the rites (*Lys.* 645). Artemis played a role at various stages of female maturation.⁷⁴ King explains: “menarche and first lochia [...] seem to complement each other, forming the opening and the completion of the transformation of παρθένος to γυνή. At each of them Artemis is involved.”⁷⁵ The girls who went to Brauron to conduct rites were enacting an important aspect of their progression to womanhood.⁷⁶ The scholia on the passage in the *Lysistrata* comments that young girls go to Brauron to act the she-bear (ἀρκτεύειν) or imitate the she-bear (μιμήσασθαι τὴν ἄρκτον) which involved a mystery rite and a goat sacrifice (Scholia Ar. *Lys.* 645).⁷⁷ Perlman interprets: “the maiden ἄρκτοι [bears] at Brauron ‘acted the she-bear’ by imitating the bear’s transformation from maiden to mother.”⁷⁸ In the *Agamemnon*, Iphigeneia is around the same age and wears the same dress as the ἄρκτοι. As mentioned earlier, she is likened to a goat. The rituals at Brauron clearly provide the material the playwright draws upon in this scene.

The chorus describe Iphigeneia’s sacrifice as a προτέλεια (*Ag.* 227), literally a “pre-nuptial rite.”⁷⁹ This further suggests that the audience were naturally expected to think of the festivities at Brauron as they watched. The chorus also describe the Trojan War as a pre-marriage rite (*Ag.* 65). In Aischylos’s *Argos*, war and infanticide take the place of customary rituals. Iphigeneia is approaching the age to marry, but she faces her own death. Her κύριος, Agamemnon, enacts her sacrifice rather than securing her

⁷³ See discussion of the textual problem at *Lys.* 644-645 with associated literature in Henderson, 1987, pp. 156-157.

⁷⁴ King, 2002, p. 83.

⁷⁵ King, 2002, p. 90.

⁷⁶ Perlman, 1989, p. 118.

⁷⁷ Perlman, 1989, p. 118.

⁷⁸ Perlman, 1989, p. 123.

⁷⁹ Sommerstein, 2008b, pp. 27, n.49.

marriage. By explicitly identifying Iphigeneia's sacrifice as a pre-marriage rite, the playwright stresses the perversity of her fate: Iphigeneia will be killed rather than go to Brauron and perform the rituals in order to become a woman. Cole comments, "girls had to serve Artemis before proceeding to the service of Aphrodite."⁸⁰ It is this transition which Agamemnon denies Iphigeneia. His parenting is perverse and destructive.

Aischylos's allusion to female maturation rites was surely apparent to the ancient audience, though this feature of the drama is easily missed in modern reception. Aischylos's plays are spotted with material which betrays the influence of cult practices upon his thought. Cassandra's dramatic prophetic speeches and frenzy (*Ag.* 1072-1330) seem designed to mimic the routines of female oracles, such as the Pythia at Delphi. In the recognition scene in the *Libation Bearers*, Elektra discovers Orestes's lock of hair at Agamemnon's tomb, a token of honour for his dead father (*Lib.* 168-179). The *Greek Anthology* records how girls dedicated a lock of hair to Artemis at puberty (*G.An.* 6.277). Aischylos is relying upon common ritual practices which his audience will easily recognise and understand the significance of.

Specific aspects of female ritual appear throughout the trilogy, not only in the scene of Iphigeneia's sacrifice. Orestes describes how his mother "had borne the weight of [Agamemnon's] children beneath her girdle" (ἐξ οὗ τέκνων ἦνευχ' ὑπὸ ζώνην βάρος, *Lib.* 992). The allusion to Klytaimestra's girdle, ζώνη, is significant. The Erinyes later refer to her ζώνη again. They challenge Orestes: "how else did she nourish you, you filthy murderer, beneath her girdle?" (πῶς γὰρ σ' ἔθρεψ' ἂν ἐντός, ὃ μαιφόνε,/ ζώνης; *Eum.* 607-608, trans. Sommerstein, 2008b). King explains that there were various rituals surrounding the ζώνη in Greece, all of which were performed in honour of Artemis.⁸¹ A married woman untied her ζώνη when she was in labour. King adds: "I believe that the association between Artemis and the ζώνη, worn throughout the παρθένος to γυνή transition, deserves to be seen not as one of many examples of the release of all knots at times of transition but as a far more specific reference to the powers of Artemis."⁸²

Aischylos's veiled reference to this ritual in his trilogy demonstrates the influence of Artemis's cult. The importance of rites such as those that were performed

⁸⁰ Cole, 2004, p. 210.

⁸¹ King, 2002, p. 89.

⁸² King, 2002, p. 89.

at Brauron is reaffirmed at the end of Aischylos's trilogy. As Athena endeavours to placate the Erinyes, she announces: "from this land, mighty as it shall be, you will forever receive the first-fruits, sacrifices before childbirth and before the completion of marriage" (πολλῆς δὲ χώρας τῆσδ' ἔτ' ἀκροθίνια / θύῃ πρὸ παίδων καὶ γαμηλίου τέλους, *Eum.* 834-835). Athena affirms the necessity of childbirth and marriage by extending Artemis's providence to the Erinyes. Interestingly, Artemis is not mentioned despite her prominence in the *Agamemnon*. But, the mention of pre-marriage rites and sacrifices before childbirth reminds the audience of Artemis's role in the scene of Iphigeneia's sacrifice and in the bird omen. All that which Artemis is assumed to represent in the *Agamemnon*, pregnant mothers and their bond with their young, is undermined in the trial scene of the *Eumenides*. Apollo denies the maternal role in reproduction. Athena consents to this and gives Artemis's providence to the Erinyes. The audience may be wondering if this resolution is going to once again stir Artemis's μῆνις. The power of Artemis, while only poetic for a modern audience, was real for the ancient audience. Hence, the ancient spectators will understand the ramifications of Apollo's rejection of maternity and Athena's consent with this.

Artemis Iphigeneia

In Aischylos's description of Iphigeneia's sacrifice, the young girl is aligned with Artemis. Artemis's sacrificial victims seem to be associated with the goddess. For instance, Embaros's daughter hides in Artemis's temple. In Aischylos's drama, Iphigeneia is ἀγνός (*Ag.* 245), just like Artemis (*Ag.* 134). Iphigeneia was famously identified with Artemis in cult. Critics propose that Iphigeneia was worshipped as a goddess at Brauron and later replaced by Artemis.⁸³ Pausanias even refers to cults of Artemis Iphigeneia (*Paus.* 2.35.1). This conflation of Artemis and Iphigeneia in Greek cult explains the frequency of myths which depict Artemis taking Iphigeneia from Aulis before she is sacrificed. In Proclus's summary of the *Cypria*, Artemis steals Iphigeneia before she is sacrificed by the Achaians and takes her to Tauris where Iphigeneia is deified (*Cyp.* 1). This account correlates with the notion that Iphigeneia and Artemis were worshipped together as divinities. The myth may act as a foundation story for how the two females came to occupy the same cult site. Hesiod also records that Iphigeneia's

⁸³ Perlman, 1989, p. 124; Lloyd-Jones, 1983, p. 95.

sacrifice was averted by the intervention of Artemis (Hesiod fr. 23a17, Merkelbach and West).

The relationship between Iphigeneia and Artemis is dramatized in Euripides's *Iphigeneia in Tauris*. Iphigeneia tells how Artemis stole her from the sacrificial alter in Aulis and left a deer to be sacrificed in her place; the goddess then took Iphigeneia to the land of the Taurians (*IT* 26-30). Euripides is following the tradition established in the *Cypria*, proving again that this tradition was alive in the fifth century BC. Artemis installed Iphigeneia as the priestess in the temple in Tauris where Iphigeneia conducts secret sacrifices (*IT* 34-39). Iphigeneia explains that she fears Artemis (*IT* 37). Similar to Aischylos's vision, Artemis, akin to Klytimestra, is a protector but violent and fear inducing as well.

In Aischylos's account, Iphigeneia is not rescued by Artemis. As I have mentioned before, Artemis never actually appears in the play. Kalchas claims that she directs the action. Aischylos chooses to ignore the popular tradition. Nowhere in the *Oresteia* is there an explicit mention of the prominence of Iphigeneia in the worship of Artemis. However, Aischylos must presume his audience will automatically unite Iphigeneia and Artemis in their minds. The chorus complete their narration of the story of Iphigeneia's sacrifice with a vague statement: "what followed I did not see and do not say; but the skilled prophecies of Kalchas do not fail of fulfillment" (τὰ δ' ἔνθεν οὔτ' εἶδον οὔτ' ἐννέπω / τέχνη δὲ Κάλχαντος οὐκ ἄκραντοι., *Ag.* 248-249). Iphigeneia's death and burial are not described. Thus, Aischylos leaves it open for the audience to wonder what happened to her next. By refusing to refer to the story of Iphigeneia's rescue, the dramatist makes Klytimestra's loss all the more affecting. Klytimestra believes Iphigeneia is dead and this strengthens her motive for vengeance. More importantly, it keeps the focus on Agamemnon's culpability. The king is not exonerated by the reassuring news that Iphigeneia is still alive and that Artemis did orchestrate the events. The reference to Kalchas (*Ag.* 249) reminds the audience of the prophet's interpretation of the bird omen. His τέχνη is fulfilled.

The term τέχνη denotes Kalchas's art or skill, but also carries connotations of cunning. Kalchas's omen reading is a creative and persuasive activity. The chorus's claim that his prophecy has been fulfilled is purposely ambiguous. It could simply refer to the easing of the winds, which proved Kalchas's remedy (*Ag.* 200) was successful. However, Kalchas also predicted: "for their awaits, to arise hereafter, a fearsome, guileful keeper of the house, a wrath that remembers and will avenge a child" (μίμνει

γὰρ φοβερὰ παλίνορτος / οἰκονόμος δολία μνάμων μῆνις τεκνόποιος, *Ag.* 154-155). If Kalchas has remedied the winds, so too will it bring about a vengeful wrath. His ‘remedy’ is the source of the suffering to come. The chorus immediately follow this with an observation on the human condition: “over the one side Justice looms, that they may suffer and learn. The future one will hear about when it happens; till then, leave it be” (Δίκη δὲ τοῖς μὲν παθοῦσ- / ιν μαθεῖν ἐπιρρέπει / τὸ μέλλον δ’, ἐπεὶ γένοιτ’, ἄν κλύοις· πρὸ χαϊρέτω, *Ag.* 250-252). This is an interesting sentiment to express immediately following the mention of Kalchas. The chorus bring into question the whole art of prophecy.

Competing Parental Loyalties

Besides the links between Artemis and Iphigeneia, there are implicit parallels between Artemis and Athena. The chorus in Euripides’s *Ion* capture the similarities between the two goddesses: “you [Athena] and the daughter of Leto, two goddesses, two virgins, the holy sisters of Apollo” (σὺ καὶ παῖς ἅ Λατογενῆς / δύο θεαὶ δύο παρθένοι / κασίγνηται σεμναὶ Φοίβου, *Ion* 465-467, trans. Kovacs, 1999). Artemis is described emphatically as παρθένος in Greek literature. She has the same status as Iphigeneia and Athena (*Eum.* 737). In the *Homeric Hymns*, Artemis is a *parthenos* (*HH* 27.2). Callimachus’s *Hymn to Artemis* depicts the goddess as a young girl approaching her father Zeus to ask him if she can remain a παρθένος eternally (παρθενίην αἰώνιον, *H.A.* 7). Zeus consents to her request. Artemis and Athena are similar in this regard. Both remain chaste. In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Persephone tells her mother Demeter how she was gathering flowers with a group of maidens, which includes Athena and Artemis, when Hades abducted her (*HH* 2.424-432). Elektra too is unwed in the *Libation Bearers* and she calls upon Persephone for aid (*Lib.* 490). In Greek consciousness, maidens are often associated, perhaps reflecting the real group ritual activities that women conducted separately from men.

Athena and Artemis are also both favourites of Zeus. In epic, Hera attacks Artemis and bemoans how Zeus made Artemis a lion among women and allows her to kill at her pleasure (*Il.* 21.483-484). Following the dispute with Hera, Artemis runs to her father seeking his comfort (*Il.* 21.505-507). Athena’s closeness to Zeus is captured in Aeschylus’s play (*Eum.* 738). Hera reacts with anger and jealousy to the births of Athena (*Th.* 927-928) and Artemis (*HH* 3.100). However, Athena is the goddess of war

and the city while Artemis is the goddess of the hunt and wilderness. They represent different activities and environments. Aischylos creates a greater polarity between the two goddesses as his Athena favours fathers while his Artemis is the protector of mothers. For Aischylos's audience, the obvious counterpart to Athena's preference for fathers in the *Eumenides* is Artemis's concern for mothers in the *Agamemnon*. Here, the similarities between the two powerful παρθένος goddesses becomes significant. The prominence of Athena at the close of the trilogy reminds the audience of Artemis in the opening. Athena and Artemis both feature in the trilogy, Artemis at the beginning and Athena at the end. The trilogy is sandwiched by these two goddesses and their competing parental loyalties. The trilogy opens with the ode to Artemis and ends with the worship of Athena. One does not exist without the other.

Interestingly, Athena is aligned with Apollo in the *Eumenides*, Artemis's brother. In Greek myth, Apollo and Artemis are regularly depicted together. Jointly, Apollo and Artemis kill Tityos when he attempts to rape Leto (*Pind. P.* 4.4, Apollod. 1.22). The myth of Niobe (*Il.* 24.602-617), which I discussed earlier, is a particularly famous example of Apollo and Artemis working in unison. Again, their aim is to defend Leto, their mother. Aischylos dramatized this story in his *Niobe*, demonstrating his interest in the myth. Apollo and Artemis appear in a similar guise in Aischylos's drama. Akin to the myth of Niobe, the sibling divinities determine the tragic fate of another mother, Klytaimestra: Artemis is implicated in the death of Iphigeneia (*Ag.* 200-247, 1418) and Apollo orders Orestes to kill Klytaimestra (*Lib.* 269-275). The duo of Athena and Apollo in the *Eumenides* may naturally conjure up for the audience the sibling partnership of Apollo and Artemis. Hence, Artemis's absence at the end of the trilogy is apparent. Athena has replaced Artemis. In the absence of Artemis, Apollo and Athena undercut the position of mothers.

Crucially, Athena appears as the *deus ex machina* at the end of Euripides's *Iphigeneia in Tauris*, mirroring her decisive role at the close of the *Oresteia*. She instructs Orestes to establish a cult to Artemis in Halae and Iphigeneia to found a cult to Artemis in Brauron (*IT* 1446-1464). Here, Iphigeneia and Orestes work together, perhaps mimicking the bond between Artemis and Apollo. Euripides creates a foundation myth for the cult of Artemis in Brauron. Both male (Orestes) and female (Iphigeneia) honour Artemis. The cooperation of brother and sister in honouring Artemis in Euripides's play contrasts with the prominence given to Apollo in the *Eumenides*. The dominance Athena and Apollo attribute to Zeus and fathers at the close

of the *Eumenides* is balanced by the worship of Artemis at the close of *Iphigeneia in Tauris*. It is interesting that these cults are instituted by Athena. I suggest Euripides is responding to the tensions at the close of Aischylos's famous trilogy. Euripides's Athena compensates for the apparent failings of Aischylos's Athena.

Euripides's reinterpretation of the story suggests that Aischylos's audience found something about Apollo and Athena's dismissal of mothers problematic. The omen and the sacrifice of Iphigeneia begin the action of the *Oresteia*; both events establish the cult of Artemis at the centre of the playwright's interest. The bird imagery which dominates the choral ode connects these pivotal events with the death of Agamemnon and his children's mourning, hence relating Artemis with the question of whether Orestes should be punished or acquitted for committing matricide. The entire trilogy is structured in a way so that all the ensuing action following the omen cannot be judged without reference to Artemis and her providence. Hence, Euripides makes explicit what is implicit in the *Eumenides*: the Olympian strategy of relegating mothers requires remedying. Aischylos shows the problem and Euripides provides the solution by establishing cult worship of Artemis. Apollo's λόγος against maternity, then, while resolving the action of the trilogy, provokes the audience's concern and asks them to question Athena and Apollo's response to conflict. In this chapter, I have shown how rather than straightforward and normative, Apollo's λόγος is deeply troubling in the context of the previous action and imagery. I revealed in Chapter 3 how disputed the topic of procreation was in fifth century BC Athens and my discussion here in Chapters 4 and 5 exposes that are similarly conflicting ideas within Aischylos's trilogy. In the following chapters 6 to 8, I will further unravel Apollo's λόγος by analysing his telling of the story of the birth of Athena in the context of knowledge available to Aischylos's audience. My aim in doing so is to further illustrate that Apollo's λόγος unsettles the trilogy's conclusion, rather than simply engendering a satisfactory resolution.

Chapter 6

Stories of Athena's Birth

Having discussed in detail Apollo's λόγος, I shall now turn to Apollo's proof for his theory, which proves equally troubling. Apollo's mention of his τεκμήριον (*Eum.* 662), his "proof" or "sign," to support his λόγος may automatically recall the scepticism the chorus expressed concerning signs in the *Agamemnon* (489-492). The chorus of elders referred to Klytaimestra's words as "trustworthy evidence" (πιστά...τεκμήρια, *Ag.* 352, trans. Sommerstein, 2008b), but discover later that Klytaimstra is far from trustworthy (*Ag.* 1372-1373). The audience have been taught a lesson: τεκμήρια can deceive. Elektra's failure to interpret the τεκμήρια at Agamemnon's tomb—the lock of hair and footprints—as evidence of Orestes's return (*Lib.* 205-236) further demonstrates how signs do not necessarily reveal the truth of a situation. The interpreter of τεκμήρια can read incorrectly. The trilogy began with a critical sign, the bird omen, which led to the death of Iphigeneia, and thereafter, Agamemnon's downfall. In a sense, the whole plot has turned on how the characters interpret signs. The *Agamemnon* and *Libation Bearers* prepare the audience to cast a critical eye on Apollo's τεκμήριον in the final play.

Apollo not only presents a τεκμήριον, but also a μάρτυς (*Eum.* 664). His τεκμήριον proves his λόγος (*Eum.* 662), his theory that mothers are not parents; his μάρτυς proves that a father can procreate without a mother (*Eum.* 663-664). His μάρτυς, "witness," is Athena, the daughter of Olympian Zeus. Athena, it turns out, is both the τεκμήριον and μάρτυς. She is the proof that only fathers are progenitors and they can procreate autonomously. Before the trial began, the goddess instructed the defence and prosecution to "collect testimonies and proofs" (μαρτύριά τε καὶ τεκμήρια / καλεῖσθ', *Eum.* 485-486, trans. Sommerstein, 2008b). Apollo summons Athena as both. She is the proof, and also, the witness called upon to confirm the proof. The evidence is only valid if Athena confirms it. In effect, it is her word and support that really matters. This prepares the audience to expect that Athena will confirm Apollo's sign. She is no longer an onlooker, but is a witness for the defence.

Athena fulfills her role as Apollo's μάρτυς by avowing that her father is her only parent (*Eum.* 738), but she does not reach the same conclusions as Apollo about human reproduction. She does not suggest that mothers are not parents or that men generally can reproduce without women. Athena's genesis does not have the same significance for her as it does for Apollo. This demonstrates for the audience that the implications of

Athena's birth are complicated. Just because Apollo presents her birth as proof of his λόγος does not mean that other characters or the audience are expected to agree with him. Being persuaded by Apollo's evidence is particularly difficult since his account of Athena's birth is peculiar. In this chapter, I shall be discussing other versions of the story of Athena's birth from Greek literature, with the aim of stressing the uniqueness of the account in the *Eumenides*. Apollo's τεκμήριον relies upon its audience's pre-existing knowledge of the story of Athena's birth. The audience have other stories to compare Apollo's to. I argue that Apollo's τεκμήριον gestures to a tradition of nativity stories that rather than affirming Apollo's λόγος, explicitly challenge it.

Metis

The greatest hindrance to Apollo's τεκμήριον is that he leaves out key elements of the familiar story of Athena's genesis. In Hesiod's *Theogony*, Athena has a mother, the goddess Metis. Metis, the divine incarnation of wisdom, is impregnated by Zeus, but before the goddess goes into labour, Zeus swallows her, and thereafter, delivers Athena from his own head (*Th.* 886-929). I shall examine Hesiod's account fully in Chapter 7. For now, I point out that Apollo's λόγος in the *Eumenides* distinctly evades Metis's role in Athena's creation. Apollo's λόγος, which he claims to speak ὀρθῶς noticeably omits Metis. The full story of Athena's birth told by Hesiod could not function as a τεκμήριον. Hesiod's account of Athena's birth directly contradicts Apollo's claim that "a father can procreate without a mother" (πατὴρ μὲν ἄν γείναιτ' ἄνευ μητρός, *Eum.* 663) and that Athena "was not even nurtured in the darkness of a womb" (οὐδ' ἐν σκοτοῖσι νηδύος τεθραμμένη, *Eum.* 665). In the *Theogony*, Zeus delivered Athena, but in consequence of swallowing Metis, Athena's pregnant mother.

Apollo's sparse telling of the genesis story is designed to support his λόγος. I argue that the playwright expects his audience to recognize that Apollo has manipulated the genesis story. He has no truthful proof for his λόγος since it is a theory that contradicts common sense. Apollo creates his own story for the purpose of subjugating mothers. The story is designed to undermine the relationship between mother and child so that Orestes's crime appears less heinous. It is a rhetorical strategy aimed at acquitting Orestes. Apollo's storytelling is guided by his λόγος, rather than proving it. Gantz points out: "Aeschylus's *Eumenides* depends heavily on the notion that Athena is

the daughter of Zeus alone.”¹ If the audience are suspicious of Apollo’s evidence, as I suspect that they are expected to be, his whole polemic comes into question. Athena’s motive for acquitting Orestes then also comes into question, and the Olympian victory at the close of the trilogy becomes highly problematic.

The Authority of Hesiod

While a modern audience may have no knowledge of Metis, Aischylos’s audience, who were rehearsed in Hesiod’s poems, were most likely alert to the absence of Metis in Apollo’s account of Athena’s origins. I argue that Apollo’s contradiction of Hesiod is expected to evoke the audience’s suspicion. Hesiod’s *Theogony*, being the most influential tradition of theogonic poetry, formed cultural knowledge with which Aischylos’s audience was certainly equipped. This material was the obvious reference point for Aischylos when he set out to narrate the story of Athena’s birth in the *Eumenides*. For this reason, I will be focusing heavily on Hesiod’s *Theogony* in Chapters 7 and 8 of this dissertation.

Heraklitos, an older contemporary of Aischylos, expressed scepticism of Hesiod’s teachings. Nonetheless, he conceded that most Greeks trusted the poet. He claims, “the teacher of most people is Hesiod; they think that he knows the most” (διδάσκαλος δὲ πλείστων Ἡσίοδος. τοῦτον ἐπίστανται πλεῖστα εἰδέναι, Hes.Test. 113b, trans. Most, 2006). For the Greeks, Hesiod was their most respected poet, alongside Homer. Other celebrated poets are referred to in ancient Greek sources: Orpheus, Mousaios, Archilochus, Mimnermus and Phocylides (Hes.Test. 17, 18, 83, 85), but Hesiod and Homer stood apart. The influence of Hesiodic poetry on drama is apparent in Aristophanes’s *Knights*. Bowie lays out the many similarities between the *Theogony* and the *Knights*, which he argues “are striking.”² The plot of the *Knights* presents a parody of Hesiod’s succession myth. Likewise, the *Prometheus Bound* relies partially on Hesiod’s poetry.³ Hesiod tells the story of how Prometheus tricks Zeus and is punished in return (*Th.* 561-616). The *Prometheus Bound* blends Hesiod’s story of Prometheus with the story of Io, along with its own innovations. Hesiodic influences on drama confirm the familiarity of Hesiod in fifth century Athens.

¹ Gantz, 1996, p. 84.

² Bowie, 1993, p. 59.

³ Anderson, 2005, p. 133.

It is uncertain whether Hesiod or Homer were historical figures, but what is certain is that for the ancient Greeks, these legendary poets were celebrated above all others. They were considered the closest to authoritative.⁴ Hesiod even inspired philosophers with the Stoic Zeno of Citium using the *Theogony* to support his own cosmogony in the fourth century BC.⁵ Plato (*Sym.* 178b) and Aristotle (*Metaph.* 984b27) relied on Hesiod in a similar fashion.⁶ Nagy credits the poetic traditions of Hesiod and Homer as “the primary artistic means of encoding a value system common to all Greeks.”⁷ While entertaining its audience, oral poetry also supplied a shared model for ethical and moral behaviour.⁸ Inhabitants in the city-states of ancient Greece worshipped numerous gods and goddesses. Each city-state fostered its own traditions, cult practices and mythological systems. A divinity that was given prominence by one community was often ignored by another and immortals did not necessarily embody the same guises from one *polis* to the next.⁹ However, the disparate character of religious practices evolved from the eighth century BC onwards as a movement towards panhellenism emerged. Increased networking between city-states led to the development of panhellenic institutions and phenomena, such as the organisation of the Olympic Games, the founding of the oracle at Delphi and the spreading of the Greek alphabet.¹⁰ The birth of panhellenic poetry was a principal component in this movement. Rutherford terms this building of connections between different mythical traditions from different parts of Greece as “panhellenic poetics.”¹¹

Inhabitants of the city-states worshipped both gods at a local level and the panhellenic Olympian gods. Herodotos credits Hesiod and Homer as the authors of a theology common to all Greeks:

ἐνθεν δὲ ἐγένοντο ἕκαστος τῶν θεῶν, εἴτε αἰεὶ ἦσαν πάντες, ὀκοῖοί τε
τινὲς τὰ εἶδεα, οὐκ ἠπιστέατο μέχρι οὗ πρῶην τε καὶ χθὲς ὡς εἰπεῖν
λόγῳ. Ἡσίοδον γὰρ καὶ Ὅμηρον ἠλικίην τετρακοσίοισι ἔτεσι δοκέω
μευπρεσβυτέρους γενέσθαι καὶ οὐ πλέοσι· οὗτοι δὲ εἰσὶ οἱ ποιήσαντες

⁴ Montanari, 2009, p. 313.

⁵ Montanari, 2009, pp. 325-326.

⁶ Montanari, 2009, pp. 328-330.

⁷ Nagy, 1992, p. 36.

⁸ Scodel, 2004, p. 45.

⁹ For instance, Athena was the central deity in Athens but this was not the case in other city-states. For Athenians she was simply called “the goddess” while in the schema of the Olympian pantheon she was just one of many of Zeus’s inferiors. Her guises were varied; she was most often goddess of the city and citadel but she also represented handicrafts and carpentry, and was a protector of heroes. See Burkert, 1985, pp. 139-142 and Deacy, 2008, p. 76.

¹⁰ Nagy, 1992, p. 37.

¹¹ Rutherford, 2005, p. 101.

θεογονίην Ἑλλήσι καὶ τοῖσι θεοῖσι τὰς ἐπωνυμίας δόντες καὶ τιμὰς τε καὶ τέχνας διελόντες καὶ εἶδεα αὐτῶν σημῖναντες.

But whence each of the gods came into being, or whether they had all for ever existed, and what outward forms they had, the Greeks knew not till (so to say) a very little while ago; for I suppose that the time of Hesiod and Homer was not more than four hundred years before my own; and these are they who taught the Greeks of the descent of the gods, and gave to all their several names, and honours, and arts, and declared their outward forms. (Hdt. 2.53.1-2, trans. Godley, 1981)

Parry argues that the poems attributed to Hesiod and Homer were like the Bible for fifth century BC Athenians.¹² In essence, the creation of panhellenic poetry marked the beginnings of Greek theology.¹³

Poetry at this time was comprised of countless contributions from numerous oral poets over many years. Lamberton, for this reason, aptly labels Greek poetry “a collective art.”¹⁴ It was through oral performance that cultural knowledge was shared and sustained in Greece. Some modern critics attribute Hesiod and Homer’s fame to the invention of writing.¹⁵ This technological advance allowed the poets to combine in one work more material than earlier oral poets could present continuously and enabled them to record and accumulate myths from all over the Greek world. However, the poems were known to the majority of Greeks through oral performance since illiteracy was the norm and access to manuscripts was limited.¹⁶ Hence, writing does not explain how Hesiod rose to such prominence. In Plato’s *Laws*, the role of performance in keeping oral poetry alive is attested to by an Athenian who tells of the delight old men experience when “listening to a rhapsode giving a fine recitation of the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* or of a piece from Hesiod” (ῥαψῳδὸν δέ, καλῶς Ἰλιάδα καὶ Ὀδύσειαν ἢ τι τῶν Ἡσιοδείων διατιθέντα, τάχ’ ἂν ἡμεῖς οἱ γέροντες ἥδιστα ἀκούσαντες, *Laws* 2.658d, trans. Bury, 1967). This citation from Plato demonstrates how Hesiod was being performed in Athens not long after Aeschylus’s time. Greek oral poetry was composed collectively over generations, subject to adaptation and delivered repeatedly to mass audiences. It was produced and received in a group environment. Hence, Hesiod’s *Theogony* was a shared resource.

¹² Parry, 1971, p. xi.

¹³ Lamberton, 1988, p. 14.

¹⁴ Lamberton, 1988, p. 18.

¹⁵ Most, 2006, p. xx; West, 1966, p. 47.

¹⁶ Nagy, 1992, p. 38.

The poems and epics attributed to Hesiod and Homer held a special status yet there were nonetheless always competing mythologies in circulation. As Sommerstein explains, “there was never any single, authoritative, canonical version of the traditional stories.”¹⁷ Storytelling was highly contentious for this reason. Various poetic traditions shared the same polytheistic vision of a divine world inhabited by generations of gods under the rule of Zeus, but each tradition presented differing accounts of various elements in this divine world. Even disparities arise between the poems attributed to Hesiod and Homer, though these works are closely related. Lamberton emphasizes that the Greek myths were never definitively set in stone.¹⁸ Various traditions flourished. The competitive context in which oral traditions evolved in Greece dictated that no one poet and no one theogony stood out as truly unchallenged. This is hinted at in the *Histories* when Herodotos, in order to support his assertion that Hesiod and Homer produced the earliest theogonies, relegates the primacy of other poets: “but these poets who are said to be older than Hesiod and Homer were, to my thinking, of later birth” (οἱ δὲ πρότερον ποιηταὶ λεγόμενοι τούτων τῶν ἀνδρῶν γενέσθαι ὕστερον, ἔμοιγε δοκέειν, ἐγένοντο, Hdt. 2.53.3, trans. Godley, 1981). Although the poems attributed to Hesiod and Homer were the closest to authoritative in the Greek world, other works were influential.

The Derveni papyrus, discovered by archaeologists in Macedonia in 1961 and dated to the later fourth century BC, records eighteen hexameters of commentary on theogonic poetry attributed to Orpheus. Scholars believe that the Orphic tradition, which survives in the Derveni papyrus, was influential in Greece since the sixth century BC.¹⁹ Much of what survives of the Orphic theogony resembles Hesiod’s *Theogony*, but it restores motifs from near Eastern myths which were altered in the poem attributed to Hesiod.²⁰ The Derveni papyrus is the oldest surviving manuscript in Europe; no records of the poems by Hesiod and Homer have survived from such an early date. It clearly demonstrates that although the Hesiodic and Homeric corpora represent the most influential and impressive of Greek theogonies, other traditions were circulating.

Even within the poems attributed to Hesiod, there is an allusion to the rivalry between oral poets. The Muses in Hesiod’s *Theogony* attest to the supremacy of Hesiod’s theogony above all others in the opening lines of the poem: “we know how to

¹⁷ Sommerstein, 2005, p. 164.

¹⁸ Lamberton, 1988, p. 39.

¹⁹ Kirk, Raven and Schofield, 1991, p. 21.

²⁰ Kirk, Raven and Schofield, 1991, pp. 32-33.

say may false things similar to genuine ones, but we know, when we wish, how to proclaim true things” (ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα / ἴδμεν δ’ εὔτ’ ἐθέλωμεν ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι, *Th.* 27-28, trans. Most, 2006). The Muses divinely inspire Hesiod to tell the true story of the gods to his audience (*Th.* 29-34). The poem here unveils the competitive context in which oral poetry was delivered. Hesiod’s *Theogony* is the true version contra the false tales of other bards.²¹ Incorrect theogonies have been rejected to make way for his definitive story.

Besides being subject to revision and challenge from other traditions, stories about the gods also evoked criticism in some quarters. Xenophanes, writing in the generation prior to Aischylos, claims Hesiod and Homer brought shame upon the gods by depicting them committing crimes such as adultery and thievery (*Hes. Test.* 97). Plato later expresses similar criticisms (*Rep.* 2.377d-378c). There existed diverse perspectives on divinity, all of which were perhaps represented in Aischylos’s audience. As Revermann explains, “playwrights appeal to various kinds and layers of audience competence.”²² But whether the spectators found current theogonies dubious or not, these poems were known to them, and for them, Hesiod’s *Theogony* was the most famous form of theogonic poetry. Stories about the gods would naturally be compared to Hesiod’s account.

Aischylos was partaking in a competition. He put his poetry forth to be scrutinized and compared to others. Apollo’s τεκμήριον must be read in this context. Like a rhapsode, he is telling a story to his spectators. The backdrop to Aischylos’s *Oresteia* is a mythical heritage rich and varied by the contributions of competing poets. Hence, Apollo’s τεκμήριον is naturally subject to comparison with other tellings of Athena’s birth story. Aischylos’s audience, then, were accustomed to variants of the same basic stories. They already knew the tragic plot but yet expected the plays to contain novel features. Innovations would still come as a surprise, however, since they would not know beforehand what part of the story the playwright was going to innovate.²³ Tragedy was born out of the exploitation and innovation of already existing stories, at once affirming and contradicting its audience’s expectations.

Athenian dramatic performance took place in a ritual setting. At the festival of the Greater Dionysia, a programme of events offered Greeks the opportunity for sacred

²¹ Nagy, 1992, p. 45.

²² Revermann, 2006, p. 105.

²³ Sommerstein, 2005, p. 169.

worship and exploration of the relationship between themselves and divinity. But their knowledge of the divine world was not grounded in an official canon or the authoritative word of a religious hierarchy; they looked to their poets. Oral poets illustrated the divine world while the dramatist brought this world alive on the stage. Drama, poetry and the divine were intrinsically linked in fifth century BC Athens. As the source for the material explored on the Attic stage, oral poetry and its teachings, was everpresent in the minds of an ancient Athenian audience. This knowledge was immediate and fluent for them. Hence, when tragedy employs material from poetry, it is always constructing a representation of a representation. Tragedy is inherently intertextual in this sense as it reproduces and innovates poetic material. Nearly all tragedy was based on myths from poetry.²⁴ Aischylos and his audience are always referring back to antecedents. The audience of ancient drama can only recognise the playwright's allusions to earlier texts when it has knowledge of this material.

The Survival of Metis

Sommerstein alludes to the possibility that Aischylos's audience would likely have noticed the omission of Hesiod's Metis from Apollo's τεκμήριον.²⁵ Yet, he cautions that, "other accounts, to be sure, ignore Metis."²⁶ Modern critics point out that ancient accounts of Athena's origins customarily remain silent about Metis.²⁷ Brown argues: "in the interval after Hesiod, Metis was eliminated."²⁸ Hence, it is presumed that Hesiod's account of Athena's heritage is unimportant for the audience's interpretation of Apollo's λόγος. Blundell adds: "a denial of motherhood may always have been a part of the characterization of [Athena]."²⁹ West argues that Athena's birth from Zeus's head was originally an independent motif and Hesiod only added Metis to the story so that Athena could be provided with a mother.³⁰ Metis, in this reading, is secondary and easily detachable from the story. The implication is that the absence of Metis in the *Eumenides* is not alarming since this absence represents a general trend in Greek literature.

²⁴ Sommerstein, 2005, p. 163.

²⁵ Sommerstein, 1989, p. 207.

²⁶ Sommerstein, 1989, p. 207.

²⁷ Gantz, 1996, p. 51; Sommerstein, 1989, p. 207.

²⁸ Brown, 1952, p. 137.

²⁹ Blundell, 1995, p. 28.

³⁰ West, 1966, p. 401.

However, I argue that Metis had not been forgotten. Other ancient sources demonstrate that the story of Metis survived long after Hesiod. A Hesiodic fragment cited by Chrysippus in the third century BC retells the narrative, depicting Metis as Zeus's paramour who was swallowed by him. Metis is explicitly described as "Athena's mother" (Ἀθηναίης μήτηρ, *Th.* 929ξ, trans. Evelyn-White, 1998). I shall examine this account further in Chapter 7. A reference to Metis also appears in the genealogy of Eros presented in Plato's *Symposium* (203b). The author of *Of the Origin of Homer and Hesiod, and Their Contest* mentions Metis as a possible mother of Homer: "as for his [Homer's] mother, she is variously called Metis, Cretheis, Θέμις τα, and Eugnetho" (μητέρα δὲ οἱ μὲν Μῆτιν, οἱ δὲ Κρηθίδα, οἱ δὲ Θεμιστήν, οἱ δὲ Εὐγνηθῶ, *Orig.H.H.* 314, trans. Evelyn-White, 1998).

Long after Aischylos, Pseudo-Apollodoros recorded the story of Metis in *The Library*:

μίννται δὲ Ζεὺς Μῆτιδι, μεταβαλλούση εἰς πολλὰς ἰδέας ὑπὲρ τοῦ μῆσυνελθεῖν, καὶ αὐτὴν γενομένην ἔγκυον καταπίνει φθάσας, ἐπεὶπερ ἔλεγε Γῆ γεννήσειν παῖδα μετὰ τὴν μέλλουσαν ἐξ αὐτῆς γεννᾶσθαι κόρην, ὅςουρανοῦ δυνάστης γενήσεται. τοῦτο φοβηθεὶς κατέπιεν αὐτήν· ὡς δ' ὁ τῆςγεννήσεως ἐνέστη χρόνος, πλήξαντος αὐτοῦ τὴν κεφαλὴν πελέκει Προμηθέως ἢ καθάπερ ἄλλοι λέγουσιν Ἡφαίστου, ἐκ κορυφῆς, ἐπιτοταμοῦ Τρίτωνος, Ἀθηνᾶ σὺν ὄπλοις ἀνέθορεν.

Zeus had intercourse with Metis, who turned into many shapes in order to avoid his embraces. When she was with child, Zeus, taking time by the forelock swallowed her, because Earth said that, after giving birth to the maiden who was then in her womb, Metis would bear a son who should be the lord of heaven. From fear of that Zeus swallowed her. And when the time came for the birth to take place, Prometheus or, as others say, Hephaistos, smote the head of Zeus with an axe, and Athena fully armed leaped up from the top of his head at the river Triton. (Apollod. 1.3.6, trans. Frazer, 1956)

This is the only version of Athena's birth which Pseudo-Apollodoros records, suggesting he believed it to be the most familiar full account. He gives no attention to Apollo's account in Aischylos's *Eumenides* or the notion that Athena has no mother. Against the view of modern critics, these sources confirm that Metis was a familiar character to Athenians. Hesiod's poetic successors kept the story alive, demonstrating how influential Hesiod's account was. It restricts our reading of the *Eumenides* if we undermine the influence of Hesiod or assume a constant trend existed whereby Metis was eclipsed. There is an important difference between Apollo's outright denial of

Athena's mother in the *Eumenides* and the omission of Metis in other sources. Only in the former case is Athena's mother explicitly rejected.

From the Head of Zeus

Homer's *Iliad* (5.880) and *Odyssey* (6.229) refer to Athena as the daughter of Zeus without mention of Metis. Similar to Aischylos's *Eumenides*, these sources do not explain how Athena was created. The *Homeric Hymn to Athena* (28.1-16) and Pindar's 7th *Olympian Ode* (35-44) tell how Athena was born from Zeus's head. There is no mention, however, of preceding events to the birth. The chorus of Euripides's *Ion* exclaim: "I entreat you, Athena, my goddess, you who never had part in the pangs of childbed, brought to birth from the forehead of Zeus by Prometheus the Titan" (σὲ τὰν ὠδίνων λοχῖαν / ἀνειλείθουσαν, ἐμὰν / Ἀθάναν, ἱκετεύω, / Προμηθεῖ Τιτᾶνι λοχευ- / θεῖσαν κατ' ἀκροτάτας, / κορυφᾶς Διός, *Ion* 452-457, trans. Kovacs, 1999). Aischylos never mentions Zeus's head in the *Eumenides*. Apollo does not explain *how* Athena was born without a mother or *how* she came into being. Following Apollo, Athena does not offer an explanation either. She vaguely says she is of her father (δ' εἰμι τοῦ πατρός, *Eum.* 738). The spectators are left with no other option but to rely on their shared heritage of mythical knowledge to fill in Aischylos's blanks, surely a textual strategy by the playwright. The strategy implicitly directs the audience to other versions of Athena's nativity story. In this sense, an awareness of Greek texts is an essential precondition for interpreting the *Eumenides*.³¹

Further, by not mentioning Zeus's head, Apollo avoids explicitly suggesting that mortal men could give birth from their heads. Apollo not only omits Metis but also the motif of Zeus's delivery from his head, demonstrating the selective nature of Apollo's rhetoric. Further, if Apollo made it explicit that Zeus is Athena's parent in virtue of having delivered her, the logical conclusion would be that the parent is the figure who gives birth to a child, i.e. the mother in the normal instances of human childbearing. The story of Zeus's parturition is hence excluded. Aischylos's audience, however, are expected to remember that Athena emerged from her father's head, and I suggest, in the process of recalling the fuller stories of Athena's origins, they will remember too that Athena has a mother.

³¹ Buxton, 1982, p. 2.

From as early as the seventh century BC, depictions of Athena's birth from the head of Zeus are found in Attic vase painting and reproductions of the scene on vases became increasingly popular in the sixth century BC.³² The scene usually depicted on vase paintings includes a small, fully-armed Athena emerging from Zeus's head.³³ Zeus is seated and surrounded by a crowd of gods. Sometimes Hephaistos is present and acts as a midwife, holding the axe which he used to break open Zeus's head to assist the delivery. Alongside the gigantomachy, Athena's birth represents the most common subject matter in vase paintings on Akropolis pottery.³⁴

Neils suggests that the popularity of images of Athena on vase paintings in the sixth century BC was a consequence of the reorganization of the Panathenaia, the major festival in honour of Athena at this time.³⁵ The central day of the Panathenaia festival was 28 Hekatombaion when Athena's birth was celebrated.³⁶ Meanwhile, the prominence of images of Athena's birth in vase painting decreased greatly after 460 BC.³⁷ However, the birth scene continued to be found in Athenian iconography and is depicted on the east pediment of the Parthenon (438-432 BC). The story of the birth of Athena from Zeus's head appears in Greek literature and art again and again, proving it to be a very popular story.³⁸ Hence, Aischylos includes a topical story at the climax of the *Eumenides*, one that will be immediately familiar to his original audience.

Blundell argues that the predominant approach of poets was to write Metis out of the story in order to explain the unique bond between Athena and Zeus.³⁹ Neils adds: "the city's tutelary goddess is deliberately associated with Zeus, and her potency on behalf of its citizens derives from her intimate association with the King of the gods."⁴⁰ The union of Athena and Zeus guarantees that Athens is divinely favoured. Throughout Aischylos's *Eumenides*, the uniqueness of the bond between Athena and Zeus is emphasised.⁴¹ Athena has access to Zeus's thunderbolt (*Eum.* 826); she received her knowledge from her father (*Eum.* 850) and the Athenians are revered by Zeus owing to their association with Athena (*Eum.* 1002). However, contra previous commentators, I

³² Neils, 2001, p. 228.

³³ *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae (LIMC)*, 1988, pp. 743-746 Vol. II 2, Athena 343-369.

³⁴ Wagner, 2001, pp. 99-100.

³⁵ Neils, 2001, p. 227.

³⁶ Deacy, 2008, p. 77.

³⁷ Neils, 2001, pp. 226-227.

³⁸ Deacy, 2008, p. 77.

³⁹ Blundell, 1995, p. 28.

⁴⁰ Neils, 2001, p. 219.

⁴¹ Papadopoulou, 2001, p. 305.

suggest that the tendency to omit Metis in order to stress the powerful bond between Zeus and Athena does not imply that Aischylos's audience were uncritical of her absence in Apollo's account of Athena's genealogy.

Even texts which elide the story of Athena's conception do not necessarily deny Metis. The *Homeric Hymn to Athena* exemplifies this:

...τὴν αὐτὸς ἐγείνατο μητίετα Ζεὺς	
σεμνῆς ἐκ κεφαλῆς, πολεμῆια τεύχε' ἔχουσαν,	5
χρύσεια, παμφανόωντα· σέβας δ' ἔχε πάντας ὀρώωντας	
ἀθανάτους· ἦ δὲ πρόσθεν Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο	
ἔσσυμένως ὄρουσεν ἀπ' ἀθανάτοιο καρῆνου,	
σεΐσασ' ὄξυν ἄκοντα· μέγας δ' ἐλελίζετ' Ὀλυμπος	
δεινὸν ὑπὸ βρίμης γλαυκώπιδος· ἀμφὶ δὲ γαῖα	10
σμερδαλέον ἰάχησεν· ἐκινήθη δ' ἄρα πόντος,	
κύμασι πορφυρέοισι κυκώμενος· ἔκχυτο δ' ἄλμη	
ἔξαπίνης· στήσεν δ' Ὑπερίονος ἀγλαὸς υἱὸς	
ἵππους ὠκύποδας δηρὸν χρόνον, εἰσότε κούρη	
εἴλετ' ἀπ' ἀθανάτων ὄμων θεοεΐκελα τεύχη	15
Παλλὰς Ἀθηναίη· γήθησε δὲ μητίετα Ζεὺς.	

...From his awful head wise Zeus himself bare her arrayed in warlike arms of flashing gold, and awe seized all the gods as they gazed. But Athena sprang quickly from the immortal head and stood before Zeus who holds the aegis, shaking a sharp spear: great Olympus began to reel horribly at the might of the bright-eyed goddess, and earth round about cried fearfully, and the sea was moved and tossed with dark waves, while foam burst forth suddenly: the bright Son of Hyperion stopped his swift-footed horses a long while, until the maiden Pallas Athena had stripped the heavenly armour from her immortal shoulders. And wise Zeus was glad. (*HH* 28.4-16, trans. Evelyn-White, 1998)

While the focus in the *Homeric Hymn to Athena* is on the earth-shattering birth of Athena from her father's head, Metis is also alluded to within the text, though only implicitly. Zeus is twice referred to with the epithet μητίετα, meaning "all-wise" (*HH* 28.4, 16). The title μητίετα derives from the goddess Metis. Zeus is μητίετα because he contains Metis inside his body; he assimilated her qualities when he swallowed the pregnant Titaness.⁴² Hence, the *Homeric Hymn to Athena* is not entirely silent about Athena's mother. This text does not support the modern notion that Metis was removed from the tradition. The hymn also does not promote the idea that Athena has no mother as Aischylos's *Eumenides* does. In the *Homeric Hymn to Athena*, Athena's mother is contained in Zeus, her father.

⁴² Detienne and Vernant, 1991, p. 107.

By the second century AD, Lucian is able to mock the circumstances of Athena's delivery in the *Dialogues of the Gods*. The dialogue depicts a conversation between Zeus and Hephaistos. Zeus begs Hephaistos to split open his skull in order to bring his labour pains to an end (*DG* 13.8). When Hephaistos strikes Zeus's head with his axe, Athena emerges and Hephaistos offers a comical reaction:

τί τοῦτο; κόρη ἔνοπλος; μέγα, ὦ Ζεῦ, κακὸν
εἶχες ἐν τῇ κεφαλῇ. εἰκότως γοῦν ὀξύθυμος ἦσθα
τηλικαύτην ὑπὸ τὴν μήνιγγα παρθένον ζωογονῶν
καὶ ταῦτα ἔνοπλον. ἦ που στρατόπεδον, οὐ
κεφαλὴν ἐλελήθεις ἔχων. ἡ δὲ πηδᾶ καὶ πυρ-
ριχίζει καὶ τὴν ἀσπίδα τινάσσει καὶ τὸ δόρυ
πάλλει καὶ ἐνθουσιᾶ καὶ τὸ μέγιστον, καλὴ πάνυ
καὶ ἀκμαία γεγένηται δὴ ἐν βραχεῖ.

Hullo, what's this? A girl in armour? That was no small trouble you had in your head. No wonder you were short-tempered, breeding a big girl like that in your brain—and her with armour into the bargain. It wasn't a head you had but a barracks, though we didn't know it. She's leaping up and down in a war-dance, shaking her shield and poising her spear, full of the spirit of battle; and, most wonderful of all, see how good looking and grown up she's become in this short time. (*DG* 13.8.226, trans. M. D. Macleod, 1961)

The notion of birth from Zeus's head is comical for Lucian and his audience. Apollo's τεκμήριον, then, is laughable at a later moment in Greek history. Lucian's joke about the genesis story captures the dubious impression it may have left on Aischylos's audience. The means by which Athena was created is wholly different to human reproduction. A story of miraculous birth offers little for understanding human creation.

The surviving accounts of Athena's birth share similar elements. The arrival of the warrior Athena inspires fear and shock. Athena is born γλαυκῶπις and raring for battle in Hesiod's *Theogony* (924-929) and the *Homeric Hymn to Athena* (28.4-16). In the 7th *Olympian Ode*, Pindar describes the consequences of Athena's birth: "Heaven shuddered at her, and mother Earth" (Οὐρανὸς δ' ἔφριξέ νιν καὶ Γαῖα μήτηρ, Pind. *O.* 7.38, trans. Race, 1997). He adds that Hephaistos was present at the birth and used an axe to strike Zeus's head to enable the delivery (ἀνίχ' Ἀφαιίστου τέχναισιν, Pind. *O.* 7.35). Brown argues that the omission of Metis from the myth occurred alongside the introduction of the figure of the midwife, alternately played by Hephaistos, Prometheus

or Hermes.⁴³ The similarities between stories of Athena's birth reveal how each author was retelling a hackneyed tale while inserting their own alterations. Each account carries the memory of its precedents, showing how older accounts, primarily Hesiod's, had retained influence. Aischylos's Apollo evokes this corpus of stories when he refers to Athena's nativity, revealing the discrepancy in Apollo's claim that Athena was never gestated in a womb. Apollo is lying; he is not speaking ὀρθῶς as he claimed (*Eum.* 657). In this chapter, I have argued that knowledge of Hesiod's *Theogony* alters interpretation of Apollo's account of Athena's birth in the *Eumenides*. Apollo's account is unique and hence surprising for the audience. The audience know that another version of the story, like Hesiod's, does not support Apollo's theory. His theory in effect cannot be proven. In the following chapter, I will look closely at similarities between the *Oresteia* and the *Theogony*. The aim in making this comparison is to show how Aischylos heavily relies on Hesiodic poetry, thus pressing his audience to question Apollo's reinterpretation of the story of Athena's birth. The trilogy is set up to accentuate that Apollo has omitted Metis, Athena's mother.

⁴³ Brown, 1952, p. 137.

Chapter 7

Signs of Hesiod

Apollo's τεκμήριον is not an isolated gesture to Hesiodic myth. Rather, Hesiod's *Theogony* reverberates throughout the *Oresteia*, demonstrating how popular Hesiod's poem was in fifth century BC Athens. Aischylos references it again and again. He relies on various traditions but the structure of his plot and many of his divine genealogies originate from Hesiod. Solmsen argues that "we cannot ignore or dismiss as accidental certain structural similarities" between Hesiod's *Theogony* and Aischylos's *Oresteia*.¹ Repeating the strategy Zeus employs in the *Theogony*, the Olympians gain supremacy in Aischylos's *Eumenides* through defeating their opponents and elders, the Erinyes, and by claiming exclusive rights for fathers as parents by removing Metis from the narrative of Athena's birth, a metaphoric 'swallowing' of sorts. For Hesiod and Aischylos, Zeus's order is built on the overpowering of older divinities and the controlling of female fecundity.

In this chapter, I analyse the similarities between the *Theogony* and the *Oresteia*. The question of parentage, which I have argued determines the conclusion of the *Oresteia*, is a central theme in Hesiod's *Theogony*. Here, I shall outline how Hesiod explores this issue. I argue that this intertextuality presses Aischylos's audience to interpret the trilogy through the lens of Hesiod, thus emphasizing Apollo's departure from the *Theogony* in his telling of Athena's ancestry and complicating the trilogy's conclusion.

The Female Source

Hesiod's *Theogony* describes the formation of the cosmos. The poem presents a succession plot: sons surmount their fathers, generating familial and social upheaval, but in the end Zeus founds permanent government. Zeus rises above the pattern of succession conflict by subjugating his predecessors and swallowing his pregnant wife Metis, preventing the birth of a usurping son. The god, hence, emerges as the unchallenged ruler through bringing an end to succession. Zeus's order is born out of conflict. Chaos is the first principle born in the cosmos (*Th.* 116). It is a force which has no gender or

¹ Solmsen, 1995, p. 127.

characteristics and is described as a void.² This follows from the word's etymology since it is a neuter noun. In the beginning, then, there seems to be neither male nor female. The first clearly gendered creation is Gaia, the female Earth (*Th.* 117). Chaos and Gaia are two mutually independent principles that are the source of all life in the cosmos. Both initially produce asexually. Songe-Moller argues that both are essentially feminine, pointing out that Chaos “was the original cleft or chasm [...], which thus serves as an image of female sexuality.”³ Without engaging in sexual intercourse, Chaos brings forth Erebus and Night (*Th.* 123), while Gaia produces her male partner Ouranos, the Sky (*Th.* 126). Gaia creates Ouranos for a specific purpose: he will cover her on every side, becoming “the ever immovable seat for the blessed gods” (ὄφρ’ εἴη μακάρεσσι θεοῖς ἔδος ἀσφαλὲς αἰεὶ, *Th.* 128, trans. Most, 2006). Subsequently, Gaia autonomously creates more divinities: the Mountains and Pontos (*Th.* 126-132). Zeus’s divine ancestral line begins with Gaia. In effect, her potency alone makes the Olympian pantheon possible. After her primal act of parthenogenesis, Gaia and other divinities continue to produce alone throughout the poem. For example, Pontos goes on to produce Nereus on his own (*Th.* 233). Both male and female manifest their respective fecundity by procreating without the opposite sex. From the outset then, Hesiod’s *Theogony* shows an interest in childbearing, a central concern in Aischylos’s later *Oresteia*.

Kronos and Zeus

Ouranos and Gaia also generate offspring together, but by refusing to separate from Gaia, Ouranos stops her from delivering their children (*Th.* 156-159). Ouranos imprisons his children inside Gaia, denying the next generation an existence. Gaia takes action: she “devised a tricky, evil stratagem” (δολίην δὲ κακὴν ἐπεφράσσατο τέχνην, *Th.* 160). Gaia is the first divinity amongst many in the poem to plot a *δόλος*. She does so in reaction to Ouranos’s “evil deed” (κακῶ...ἔργῳ, *Th.* 158). The male is the first to inflict injury and the female in turn tricks him. She conspires against Ouranos, persuading her son Kronos to castrate his father/brother (*Th.* 163-182). Kronos agrees, condemning Ouranos as “the first to devise unseemly deeds” (πρότεπος γὰρ ἀεικέα μήσατο ἔργα, *Th.* 172). In effect, Gaia instigates Kronos’s overthrow of Ouranos, setting in motion a string of disputes between men. Conflict in Hesiod’s poem is between males, encouraged by females. The

² Clay, 2003, p. 15.

³ Songe-Moller, 2002, p. 24.

name Kronos means “time,” indicating how he will intervene in Ouranos’s static and timeless universe. Kronos’s castration of Ouranos marks the genesis of time and is the first act in the succession myth.⁴

Gaia directs every part of the vendetta and Kronos enacts it. Her scheme to castrate Ouranos, “the whole trick” (δόλον...πάντα, *Th.* 175) which she instructs Kronos to execute, targets the symbol of Ouranos’s transgression, forcing him to abandon his incessant union with Gaia. Kronos uses a weapon created by Gaia, the jagged-toothed sickle (*Th.* 175), the tool of her δόλος. While Ouranos resists generational succession, Gaia promotes the transition of power from one generation to the next. She empowers the younger generation, supporting the disintegration of the patriarch’s hegemony, only to allow a new patriarch to succeed. Throughout much of the action of the poem, Gaia supports the younger generation to the detriment of the older.⁵ Through the severance of Ouranos’s genitals, the separation of sky and earth is achieved and the cosmos becomes populated by the freed divinities. A struggle for sovereignty between these gods then begins.

Kronos is named the first king of the gods (*Th.* 486), but soon receives a prophecy from Gaia and Ouranos telling that his son will overpower him. To prevent his fate, Kronos swallows his newborn children (*Th.* 459-462). His actions earn him the epithet “crooked-counseled” (ἀγκυλομήτης, *Th.* 473). He has crooked μητις. Swallowing is an act of μητις aimed at maintaining Kronos’s power. Rhea, Kronos’s sexual partner and sister, seeks vengeance for the loss of her children, just as Gaia did previously. Hesiod tells how “unremitting grief gripped Rhea” (Ρέην δ’ ἔχε πένθος ἄλαστον, *Th.* 467) over the loss of her children. Rhea approaches her parents, Gaia and Ouranos, seeking advice so she can give birth to her youngest son in secret (*Th.* 463-473). The goddess asks her parents for a cunning plot, a μητις (*Th.* 471). The μητις is inspired by the ἐρινύς of her father and children (*Th.* 472). Here, μητις is the tool of the Erinyes, deity of vengeance. Following her parents’ advice, Rhea gives birth to Zeus on Crete, unbeknownst to Kronos (*Th.* 477). She then hides Zeus inside Gaia. The language Hesiod uses to describe the place where Zeus is concealed (ὑπὸ κεύθεσι γαίης, *Th.* 483) mirrors how Ouranos previously hid his children in their mother (Γαίης ἐν κευθμῶνι, *Th.* 158). Both Kronos and Zeus are hidden inside Gaia. The goddess gestates the infant Zeus, preparing him to confront his father when he matures (*Th.* 479-480).

⁴ Clay, 2003, p. 17.

⁵ Clay, 2003, p. 17.

Rhea returns to Kronos and tricks him again by handing him a stone wrapped in swaddling clothes to swallow in place of the baby Zeus (*Th.* 485-486). Later, Gaia tricks Kronos into vomiting up his other children (*Th.* 494). Kronos releases his offspring from his stomach, delivering them into the cosmos. The image is a striking one. In Rhea's absence, Kronos is depicted as pregnant with their children, whom he delivers.⁶ The father assumes the ability to gestate and give birth. In effect, Rhea and Kronos have both carried and delivered their children. Replicating Ouranos's strategy, Kronos attempts to control procreation, but he fails as Rhea outwits him with the help of her parents. Her parentally sanctioned μήτις, driven by an ἐρινύς, defeats Kronos's egotistic μήτις.

In the *Theogony*, men and women are tricksters; they devise δόλος and μήτις, and are subject to being tricked. Trickery and cunning wisdom are closely associated. The plot structure of Kronos's downfall by trickery mimics the fate met by Ouranos. The fathers (Ouranos and Kronos) violently obstruct birth and generational change in order to maintain their monopoly on power. They conceal their children and prevent relationships developing between mother and child. In reaction, the mothers (Gaia and Rhea) employ tricks to ensure the new generation succeeds the old. In each generation of the divine family, son and mother ally to defeat the father. The collaboration of mother and child is disastrous for the father who wishes to maintain his authority.

Klytaimestra's Trickery

Mothers are transgressive for Hesiod and Aischylos. The father and king, for both poets, eliminates his child against the wishes of the mother in an effort to protect his social standing. Agamemnon sacrifices Iphigeneia to pursue a war against the Trojans. Similarly, Ouranos traps his children and Kronos swallows his in order to safeguard their sovereignty. Like the fathers in Hesiod's *Theogony*, Agamemnon obstructs the life of his child to protect his own position.

As a result, Klytaimestra loses her daughter. Klytaimestra mentions how Agamemnon took Iphigeneia away from Argos using a δόλος (*Ag.* 1523). In Euripides's later play *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, Agamemnon deceives Klytaimestra, telling her Iphigeneia is to be married to Achilles (*IA* 361-362). Klytaimestra then willingly brings their daughter to Aulis where Iphigeneia is sacrificed. It is uncertain whether this tradition was

⁶ Arthur, 1982, p. 71.

followed in Aischylos's lost play *Iphigeneia*, but Aischylos's audience was familiar with the notion that Agamemnon used deceit. The trickery of Agamemnon, who is eager to defeat the Trojans in battle, results in the destruction of the relationship between Klytaimestra and her child. In revenge, Klytaimestra tricks and murders her husband. Mirroring the sexual conflicts in the *Theogony*, the father in Aischylos's story seeks to remove his child and the mother responds with vengeance.

The damage inflicted by fathers upon the children of the royal house resonates in the closing lines of Aischylos's trilogy. The pacified Erinyes demand a brighter future: "I forbid the misfortunes that make men die before their time, and ask you to grant that lovely young women live and get husbands" (ἀνδροκμηῆτας δ' ἄωρους / ἀπεννέπω τύχας / νεανίδων τ' ἐπηράτων / ἀνδροτυχεῖς βίότους δότε, *Eum.* 956-960, trans. Sommerstein, 2008b). The audience may be reminded by these words of how Thyestes's sons did not live to adulthood and Iphigeneia died before she could be wed. This prompt to the audience to recollect the failings of fathers in the play may raise concerns regarding Apollo's λόγος. In light of the play's action, it is difficult to imagine that children will survive in a world in which fathers are considered sole parents.

In the *Agamemnon*, Klytaimestra is an avenger of the younger generation. Her maternal protection recalls the similar role played by Gaia in Hesiod's poem. Mothers have been required in both the *Theogony* and the *Oresteia* to punish fathers for mistreating their children. Klytaimestra, akin to Gaia and Rhea in the *Theogony*, challenges her male partner. However, Klytaimestra punishes her king herself while Gaia and Rhea persuade their sons to act. The conflict in the *Oresteia* is more directly between male and female. Klytaimestra works on behalf of the younger generation to the detriment of the king. Her revenge explicitly imitates the action committed by Agamemnon; she sacrifices her husband just as he sacrificed Iphigeneia (*Ag.* 1387, 1417-1421, 1527-1529). The chorus note the smell of sacrifices emanating from the palace before they realise that it is their king who has been killed (*Ag.* 1310). Homer too describes Agamemnon's death as a sacrifice. The ghost of Agamemnon describes how Aigisthos murdered him "just as one slays an ox at the crib" (ὥς τις τε κατέκτανε βοῶν ἐπὶ φάτνῃ, *Od.* 11.410, trans. A. T. Murray, 1995). In Hesiod's *Theogony*, women likewise recreate the violent actions of their male partners when they lose their children. Gaia directs Kronos's attack on Ouranos's genitalia since he blocked her from releasing her children from her womb and Rhea feeds Kronos a stone just as he fed on her children. The mothers reverse the fathers' actions against them.

Klytaimestra's situation in the *Oresteia* also resonates with another narrative from Hesiod's *Theogony*, Demeter's loss of her daughter Persephone. Hesiod narrates:

αὐτὰρ ὁ Δῆμητρος πολυφόρβης ἐς λέχος ἦλθεν
ἦ τέκε Περσεφόνην λευκώλενον, ἦν Αἰδωνεὺς
ἤρπασε ἧς παρὰ μητρός, ἔδωκε δὲ μητίετα Ζεύς.

Then bounteous Demeter came to his [Zeus's] bed; she bore white-armed Persephone, whom Aidoneus snatched away from her mother—but the counsellor Zeus gave her to him. (*Th.* 912-914)

Again, the father causes the separation of mother and child. At the Eleusinian Mysteries, the myth of Demeter's loss of her daughter and their subsequent reunion provided a paradigm for emotive ceremonies rejoicing the seasonal return of vegetation to the pastures of Greece. A fuller version of the myth is presented in *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. Though Zeus is aware of his brother's plans to abduct Persephone, he fails to intervene to protect her. In protest against this outrage to her motherhood, Demeter, goddess of the cornfields, causes the earth to fall barren (*HH.* 2.302-313). Demeter restores the fertility of the land when she is reunited with her daughter. Nevertheless, since Persephone's marriage to Hades was secured, she is obliged to return to her husband's home in the Underworld for a third of every year. Annually, the earth becomes fruitless during this time owing to Demeter's grief. Athenians travelled to Eleusis to conduct communal cult worship of Demeter and Persephone, an important event in the Athenian calendar. This was a central myth for Athenians. Aischylos, hailing himself from Eleusis, was very familiar with these cults and recognised their significance. This is implied in Aristophanes's *Frogs* when the character Aischylos calls to Demeter, wishing to be worthy of her mysteries (*Frogs* 887).

Demeter is an emblem of transgression within Zeus's Olympian order. She resists Zeus's authority and challenges the father's right to decide where her daughter will live.⁷ Klytaimestra too has been robbed of her daughter. Iphigeneia is sacrificed for the cause of another pair of brothers, Agamemnon and Menelaos. Like Demeter, Klytaimestra seeks revenge by destructive means.⁸ While Demeter threatened the world with famine, Klytaimestra kills her husband and king. By murdering Agamemnon, Klytaimestra dissolves the patrilineal succession. She sides with her daughter at the price of social

⁷ Seaford, 1994, p. 384.

⁸ DeForest, 1993, p. 130.

upheaval. Klytaimestra's predicament may have been intended to remind the Athenian audience of the famous myth of Demeter and Persephone. In the *Libation Bearers*, Elektra calls upon Persephone (*Lib.* 490), a reference perhaps designed to recall the similarities between the fates of Iphigeneia and Persephone.

However, Klytaimestra's vengeance goes further than that of Gaia, Rhea and Demeter since the mortal queen not only punishes her husband, but annihilates him with her own hand. Aischylos draws on stock goddess characters from poetry to depict Klytaimestra, but his female protagonist is also distinctive. Her violence is a fitting retribution in the context since Agamemnon's crime also goes further than that of Ouranos, Kronos and Zeus since he killed his child. Klytaimestra has matched the crime Agamemnon committed himself. Spousal violence has irreversible consequences in a mortal setting.

I suggest that Aischylos's depiction of Klytaimestra owes a debt to Hesiod's vision of mother goddesses. The *Agamemnon* encourages the audience to make an association between Klytaimestra and female divinity. At the end of the *parodos*, the chorus leader asserts, "I have come, Klytaimestra, in reverence towards your power" (ἦκω σεβίζων σόν, Κλυταιμήστρα, κράτος, *Ag.* 258, trans. Sommerstein, 2008b). The verb used here, σεβίζω, can connote the worship of a god, or the feeling of fear and religious awe which the gods inspire in mortals. The chorus, I suggest, honour Klytaimestra as they might a goddess. Further, Klytaimestra controls ritual activities. The Argives obey when she instructs them to conduct sacrifices (*Ag.* 88-96) and they ask her to "be a healer of this concern of ours" (αἴνει παιῶν τε γενοῦ / τῆσδε μερίμνης, *Ag.* 98-99). The Argives look to Klytaimestra as their source of knowledge and salvation as though her royal status affords her oracular power. Klytaimestra interprets the fire beacons, a signalling system which she orchestrated, as though the fire is an omen from the divine world (*Ag.* 281-314), clarifying only at the end of her speech that Agamemnon was the source of the message of the Achaean victory (*Ag.* 316).

Klytaimestra's dream in the *Libation Bearers* associates her with the *Theogony's* goddesses too. She dreams she gave birth to a snake which drew blood and milk from her breast (*Lib.* 527-39). In the *Theogony*, Gaia gave birth to Typhoeus, the god with a hundred heads of a serpent (*Th.* 821-825). The characterisation of Klytaimestra relies on images of goddesses from Hesiod. The speech Klytaimestra delivers after killing Agamemnon and Cassandra (*Ag.* 1388-1392) seems to play on the audience's expectations of divine mothers. I discussed the agricultural imagery in this passage

already in Chapter 3 (p. 60). While standing over her victims' corpses, Klytaimestra claims full responsibility for the murder. No other speech in Greek tragedy offers so many claims of responsibility by a speaker.⁹ In Hesiod's *Theogony*, Gaia and Rhea similarly express no doubts concerning their right to vengeance. They are both wronged by the fathers of their children, just like Demeter is insulted in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, and it is only the question of how they will achieve their revenge which concerns them.¹⁰ Klytaimestra's speech is evocative of Hesiod's description of Kronos's emasculation of Ouranos (*Th.* 178-185). Drops of blood from Ouranos's dismembered genitals fall on Gaia and from her the Erinyes are born (*Th.* 185). The blood from an injured father triggers the mother's fertility. Ouranos, in reaction to his punishment, which has brought about the separation of earth and sky and allowed the Titans to come forth, warns his children of future vengeance (*Th.* 210). In the *Theogony*, the first act of interfamilial violence in the cosmos is directed by Gaia and results in the birth of the Erinyes and the creation of a cycle of blood-for-blood retribution. In the *Oresteia*, having punished her husband, Klytaimestra takes his blood, an act which necessitates Klytaimestra's own downfall and will lead to the arrival of the Erinyes. Agamemnon is dead, and akin to Ouranos in the *Theogony*, he contributes his blood unintentionally. In both the *Theogony* and the *Oresteia*, the blood from a father, injured by the schemes of a mother, leads to regeneration and revenge by the Erinyes.

μητις in the *Oresteia*

Revenge in the *Oresteia*, as in the *Theogony*, is reliant on μητις and δόλος. Characters in the *Oresteia* display the skills of μητις, but Metis herself is denied her role as Athena's mother. Klytaimestra practices the skills which are personified by the goddess Metis. The chorus in the *Agamemnon* remark how Klytaimestra is μεγαλόμητις (*Ag.* 1426); she is great μητις. Buxton points out that there was no clear dichotomy between the personification of concepts and their abstract usage.¹¹ Hence, the term μητις would evoke the goddess for Athenians. The chorus's description isolates Klytaimestra as an expert in cunning, the skill of the goddess Metis. Later, in the *Libation Bearers*, the chorus of servant women reproach Klytaimestra for her μητις (*Lib.* 626). In the *Odyssey*,

⁹ Conacher, 1987, p. 49.

¹⁰ Arthur, 1982, p. 72.

¹¹ Buxton, 1982, p. 30.

Agamemnon describes Klytāimēstra as *dolómētiς* (*Od.* 11.422). This description clearly demonstrates the close association between *dólos* and *mētis*.

The etymology of Klytāimēstra's name further associates her with Metis's domain. *Κλυταιμήστρα* translates as the "famed (*κλυται*) plotter (*μήστρα*)." Homer presses on the meaning of her name in the *Odyssey* when the ghost of Agamemnon compares Penelope and Klytāimēstra:

...τῷ οἱ κλέος οὐ ποτ' ὀλεῖται
ἧς ἀρετῆς, τεύξουσι δ' ἐπιχθονίοισιν ἀοιδῆν
ἀθάνατοι χαρίεσσαν ἐχέφρονι Πηνελοπείῃ,
οὐχ ὡς Τυνδαρέου κόυρη κακὰ μῆσατο ἔργα,
κουρίδιον κτείνασα πόσιν, στυγερὴ δέ τ' ἀοιδῆ
ἔσσειετ' ἐπ' ἀνθρώπους, χαλεπὴν δέ τε φῆμιν ὀπάσσει
θηλυτέρησι γυναιξί.

...Therefore the fame of her virtue shall never perish, but the immortals shall make among men on earth a pleasant song in honour of constant Penelope. Not on this wise did the daughter of Tyndareus devise evil deeds and slay her wedded husband, and hateful shall the song regarding her be among men, and evil repute doth she bring upon all womankind.

(*Od.* 24.196-202, trans. A. T. Murray, 1995)

The women inspire two songs, two paradigms of female behaviour. While Penelope earns *κλέος* for her loyalty to her husband, the daughter of Tyndareus is in contrast famous for devising (*μῆσατο*) against her partner. Without naming Klytāimēstra, the use of the verb *μῆδομαι* makes it clear who the poet is referring to. Klytāimēstra is the famous deviser.

The shade of Agamemnon rebukes his wife for her "contriving" (*ἐμήσατο*, *Od.* 11.429). Klytāimēstra likewise performs *μῆδομαι* in the *Oresteia* (*Lib.* 991). When the chorus in the *Libation Bearers* parallel Klytāimēstra with various women who have brought destruction upon mortal men (*Lib.* 585-652), they complain about the *μῆδομαι* committed by the daughter of Thestius. It is this characteristic which she shares with Klytāimēstra. Cassandra too links the queen's name with the verb *μῆδομαι*:

ὦ πόποι, τί ποτε μῆδεται;
τί τόδε νέον ἄχος μέγα
μέγ' ἐν δόμοισι τοῖσδε μῆδεται κακὸν
ἄφερτον φίλοισιν [...]
ὦ τάλαινα, τόδε γὰρ τελεῖς,
τὸν ὀμοδέμνιον πόσιν
λουτροῖσι φαιδρύνασα.

Ιό, popoi! What, what is being *schemed*?
What is this fresh agony? A great evil,
a great evil is being *schemed* in this house,
unendurable for the family [...]
Ιό, wretched woman! Will you really carry out this deed?
You wash your husband, who shares your bed,
in the bath. (*Ag.* 1100-1109)

In this strophe, the playwright twice leaves the subject of μήδομαι unexpressed. The verb is repeated in quick succession. At lines 1107 to 1108 Cassandra makes it apparent that she is referring to a woman, hence Klytāimēstra. But the double use of μήδομαι without a subject suggests the audience would already have understood that it is Klytāimēstra who is being referred to here. The poet is playing on the meaning of her name; the one who schemes is Klytāimēstra.

Aischylos earlier demonstrates the significance of names. The chorus comment on how Helen's name is appropriate considering her behavior (*Ag.* 681-690). Her name Ἑλένη has its origins in the verb ἐλεῖν meaning "capture," "kill" or "destroy."¹² In fulfillment of her name's meaning, Helen brought destruction upon the Achaean army and enabled the capture of Troy (*Ag.* 688-690). The *Prometheus Bound* also presses on the significance of a name when Power accuses Prometheus, meaning "Forethought," of being unable to exercise forward thinking (*PB* 85-87).¹³ In the *Libation Bearers*, Aischylos explicitly acknowledges the meaning of Klytāimēstra's name when he depicts her as "the far-famed, deep-thinking fury" (κλυτὰ / βυσσόφρων Ἐρινύς, *Lib.* 651-652, trans. Sommerstein, 2008b). The poet's play with words here shows that he is aware her name connotes that she is a famous thinker. The queen embodies the very meaning of Κλυταιμήστρα.

Chantraine has established the linguistic correlation between Klytāimēstra's name and the verb μήδομαι. Importantly, the verb also shares its etymological origins with the goddess's name Metis.¹⁴ In ancient Greek thought, Metis, the goddess of cunning intelligence, is related to all activities of cunning, scheming, resolving and plotting which are denoted by the verb μήδομαι. Long defines μῆτις as, "a transformative political intelligence [...] which carries the sense of cunning, deception and craftiness as much as

¹² Sommerstein, 2008b, pp. 81, n. 144.

¹³ Levin, 2001, p. 19.

¹⁴ Chantraine, 1999, pp. 693, 699.

that of wise counsel and political acumen.”¹⁵ It is a wisdom required for politics. Detienne and Vernant add:

There is no doubt that *mētis* is a type of intelligence and of thought, a way of knowing; it implies a complex but very coherent body of mental attitudes and intellectual behaviour which combine flair, wisdom, forethought, subtlety of mind, deception, resourcefulness, vigilance, opportunism, various skills, and experience acquired over the years.¹⁶

Hence, the term μήστωρ meaning “adviser” or “counsellor” also originates from μήδομαι.¹⁷ Klytaimestra’s ability at devising or scheming, and also her wisdom, foresight and ease with which she outwits others are attested to by her name. It is these skills that enable her to usurp Agamemnon’s leadership and establish a new regime in Argos.

The implications of Klytaimestra’s name are further emphasized if we compare her with other female mythical characters whose names also originate from the verb μήδομαι. Most notable is the figure of Mestra whose name is closely related to that of Klytaimestra. While Klytaimestra denotes the “famous plotter,” Mestra means simply the “plotter.” Irwin points out how Mestra has a speaking name; her cunning is indicated by her name.¹⁸ Mestra was a familiar figure to Aischylos’s audience as she appears in Hesiod’s *Catalogue of Women*. Considering the likeness of their names, ancient spectators of the *Oresteia* may have been reminded of the stories surrounding Mestra as they watched Klytaimestra on the stage.

Mestra’s story in the *Catalogue of Women* is recorded in fragment 43a by Merkelbach and West or as fragment 69 by Most. Here, I will refer to Most’s presentation of the extant fragments. The later Latin poet Ovid reinterprets Hesiod’s telling of the Mestra myth in the *Metamorphoses* (8.738-878), which suggests that the Hesiodic story had sustained interest throughout and after the Classical period. Hesiod tells how Mestra is the daughter of Erysichthon, who was known as Aethon (“blazing”) as he was cursed with an unrelenting hunger. Eventually Erysichthon had no resources left and decided to sell his daughter in order to attain more food (*Met.* 8.843-847). Erysichthon sold Mestra to Sisyphus in exchange for livestock (fr. 69.18-25), but shortly after the marriage to Sisyphus’s son, Mestra escaped by changing her outer appearance (fr. 69.30-33). A quarrel erupts between Sisyphus and Erysichthon as a result of Mestra’s deception and as

¹⁵ Long, 2007, p. 67.

¹⁶ Detienne and Vernant, 1991, p. 3.

¹⁷ Chantraine, 1999, p. 693.

¹⁸ Irwin, 2005, p. 71.

the mortals are unable to reach a resolution, a god intervenes as legal arbitrator (fr. 69.38-40). The name of the god is missing from the text but West argues that it can only be Athena.¹⁹ In response to the case, Athena establishes a general ruling: once an exchange has been made, the buyer cannot demand the return of the purchase price (*CW*. fr. 69.41-43). Thus Sisyphus must accept his losses. Athena's decision places the onus on the husband in the trial; it is the man's responsibility to control his wife.²⁰ Ερυσιχθών goes on to sell Mestra to many men from whom she escapes by transforming into various animals (*Met.* 8.870-874). Mestra eventually gives birth to a child after she is raped by Poseidon (*CW* fr. 69.55-58). Hesiod stresses how it was only a god who could succeed in impregnating her.

Klytaimestra and Mestra share a similar type of crafty intelligence. They apply their intelligence to rebel against their husbands. Osborne argues that the Mestra myth represents a disorder of the regular marriage plot; the bride refuses to remain under the control of her husband and he fails to subdue her owing to her ability to change shape.²¹ Likewise, Klytaimestra refuses to be dominated in marriage; she engages in an extra-marital affair with Aigisthos and kills her husband. Mestra and Klytaimestra disregard the marriage bond to the detriment of their male partners. Their μῆτις not only frees them from their husbands, it represents a totally different vision of societal order, one where women are not subordinates to their κύριος. Medea is another example of a female character whose name means "cunning" and whose trickery is turned against her husband in Euripides's *Medea*. It is μῆτις which empowers these women to act as dissenters and disobey social norms.

As a power which brings about change, it is fitting that μῆτις also manifests as the ability to shapeshift. Both Mestra and Metis are shapeshifters. Apollodoros tells how Metis morphed into many shapes in order to avoid coitus with Zeus (Apollod. 1.3.6). Hesiod also implies that Metis has shapeshifting powers when he describes how Zeus had to trick Metis in order to catch her and lodge her in his stomach (*Th.* 890); he had to hold her tight in order to swallow her (*Th.* 929η). Though Klytaimestra does not have any magical shapeshifting powers, Aischylos nevertheless associates her trickery with the ability to morph. Throughout the *Agamemnon* Klytaimestra is repeatedly referred to as both female and male. The first mention of her is by the watchman who explains that she

¹⁹ West, 1985, p. 169.

²⁰ Osborne, 2005, p. 20.

²¹ Osborne, 2005, p. 19.

is a woman who “plans like a man” (ἀνδρόβουλον, *Ag.* 11). The chorus of elders address Klytaimestra: “lady, you have spoken wisely, like a sensible man” (γύναι, κατ’ ἄνδρα σόφρον’ εὐφρόνως λέγεις, *Ag.* 351). Agamemnon considers Klytaimestra’s antagonism “unwomanly” (οὔτοι γυναικός, *Ag.* 940), while she asserts her wisdom as a woman’s (*Ag.* 1661). As Klytaimestra speaks in public and commits a murder with her own hand, she is deemed to behave like a man according to Greek conventions. Aigisthos, as Klytaimestra’s romantic partner, is ridiculed for being a woman (*Ag.* 1625). Since she behaves like a man, he is a woman.

Klytaimestra is also imagined as an animal. Orestes tells how his father “died in the twisting coils of the fearsome viper” (θανόντος ἐν πλεκταῖσι καὶ σπειράμασιν / δεινῆς ἐχίδνης, *Lib.* 248-249). Cassandra depicts Klytaimestra as a dog (*Ag.* 1228-1229) and compares her to the serpent Amphisbaena (*Ag.* 1233). Likewise, the chorus in the *Libation Bearers* deem her a serpent (*Lib.* 1047). The chorus of servant women depict Orestes as the hero Perseus killing the Gorgon (*Lib.* 831-837), hence conflating Klytaimestra with Medusa, the chthonic monster whom the very sight of turned onlookers to stone (*Met.* 4.770). On first sighting the Erinyes, Orestes instantly identifies them as Gorgons with serpents entangling their bodies (*Lib.* 1048-1050). He also describes them as the avenging hounds of his mother (*Lib.* 1054). The Pythia recognises them initially as Gorgons too (*Eum.* 48). Like Klytaimestra, the Erinyes are depicted as dog-like and snake-like. This repetition of animal imagery creates the impression that Klytaimestra has transformed into the Erinyes. The sense that Klytaimestra has the power to transcend human form is intensified in the *Eumenides* when she reappears as a ghost following her death (*Eum.* 94-139). The spectators are led to believe that her murder means her role in the drama is over and yet she appears again on the stage, making her the only character to appear in all three plays of the trilogy. She cannot be entirely rid of.

Like Mestra, Klytaimestra defies Greek expectations of what is considered appropriate behaviour and activity for a woman. Both women act as they wish which manifests as either a literal or imagined power to change shape. This capacity to change shape and pervert normal boundaries is shared by the goddess Metis. Interestingly, Athena resolves the social upheaval brought about by the μήτις of both Mestra and Klytaimestra. Perhaps there are echoes of the litigation process in the Mestra myth in Aischylos’s depiction of the trial in the *Eumenides*. In both situations the daughter of Metis appears to bring the destabilising power of μήτις under control.

The Cycle of δόλοι

Vernant and Detienne point out: “in Aischylos the theme of the *dolos* is explicit.”²² Trickery brings the Olympians their victory at the close of the *Eumenides*. The Erinyes rebuke the younger gods for defeating them with δόλοι (*Eum.* 846, 880). But, trickery is initially Klytaimestra’s tool. Klytaimestra employs δόλος just like the characters who display μῆτις in Hesiod’s *Theogony*: Ouranos, Gaia, Rhea, Kronos, Zeus and Prometheus. Orestes details how Klytaimestra netted his father in a “bond” (δεσμὸν, *Lib.* 981). It was also with a δεσμός that Zeus trapped Kronos (*Th.* 652) and punished Prometheus (*Th.* 616). Klytaimestra uses the typical tools associated with μῆτις: trickery (δόλος) and binding (δεσμός). She describes how she used the tapestries as a net to trap Agamemnon (*Ag.* 1375-1383). Agamemnon’s corpse lies netted and entangled in robes at her feet. The net, δίκτυον, was an implement of justice for Zeus in the destruction of Troy (*Ag.* 359), but becomes a tool of Klytaimestra’s justice. Elektra dismays at how her father was shamed by being trapped in a shroud (*Lib.* 494). The garments which Klytaimestra uses as a net are later Orestes’s μάρτυς, proving Agamemnon was murdered (*Lib.* 1010). Orestes refers to the net as Klytaimestra’s “trick” (δολώματι, *Lib.* 1003). Aigisthos affirms that the “trickery” was a job for a woman (δολῶσαι, *Ag.* 1636). Cloth is intimately associated with trickery. Hence, Elektra accuses Orestes of πλέκω, “weaving,” δόλος (*Lib.* 220).

Garments feature as tools of trickery elsewhere in Greek literature. In Homer’s *Odyssey*, Penelope demonstrates guile when she delays the suitors’ proposals by weaving Laertes’s funeral shroud by day only to unravel it in secret at night. (*Od.* 2.93-110, 19.137-56, 24.129-48). Both Penelope and Klytaimestra enact their plots through weaving cloth.²³ Preparing materials is in itself a form of cunning. Penelope refers to this action as her μῆτις (*Od.* 19.158). μῆτις manifests as a weaving and unweaving of material.²⁴ For Athena and Odysseus, their scheming is a metaphorical act of weaving (μῆτιν ὑφίηνω, *Od.* 13.303). It is not surprising then that Zeus and Athena, the gods most renowned for their μῆτις, each use a garment—the αἰγίς—as their shield. Given the role of cloth in symbolising Penelope’s loyalty to Odysseus, Aischylos’s use of cloth represents a subversion of the traditional framework, symbolising instead Klytaimestra’s challenge to her spouse.²⁵

²² Detienne and Vernant, 1991, p. 61.

²³ Detienne and Vernant, 1991, p. 295.

²⁴ Slatkin, 1996, p. 235.

²⁵ Morrell, 1996, p. 164.

The net is Klytaimestra's weapon; it is her "contrivance" (τὸ μηχανήμα, *Lib.* 981). Cassandra also calls the net a μηχανή (*Ag.* 1127), used to commit a δόλος (*Ag.* 1129). Zeus too employs "contrivances" (μηχαναῖς, *Ag.* 677). Aigisthos claims the murder of Agamemnon was his μηχανή (*Ag.* 1609) in revenge for Atreus's μηχανή (*Ag.* 1582). The μηχανή is an instrument or machine, but also connotes wiles and devices for scheming. It is an object or plot associated with δόλος and μῆτις. It was also a stage device used in fifth century BC theatre. The μηχανή was a wooden crane-like structure that was pulled out onto the stage. When an actor stood on top, he appeared at a higher level than the other actors. Gods often arrived on stage on this device, hence the creation of the term *deus ex machine* (θεὸς ἀπὸ μηχανῆς). It is clear from Aristophanes's comedies that this crane existed in the fifth century (for example, *Acharn.* 427 and *Clouds* 218-238).²⁶ Taplin tentatively suggests that Athena could have entered the stage in the *Eumenides* on the μηχανή (*Eu.* 397).²⁷ The μηχανή is the dramatists's tool for deceiving and impressing his audience. Klytaimestra's device of trickery is aligned with a tool at the disposal of the dramatist. This association hints at how trickery and persuasion are not only required for winning authority in political conflict, but also for the poet to win over his audience.

In a pattern familiar to audiences of Hesiod's *Theogony*, μῆτις is employed in the *Oresteia* to defeat μῆτις. Trickery and cunning are returned to those who commit them. Agamemnon being αἰσχρομήτις (*Ag.* 222) is no match to Klytaimestra's μῆτις. The queen herself is then defeated by μῆτις. Orestes sets out his plan:

ἀπλοῦς ὁ μῦθος· τήνδε μὲν στείχειν ἔσω,
αἰνῶ δὲ κρύπτειν τάσδε συνθήκας ἐμάς,
ὡς ἂν δόλω κτείναντες ἄνδρα τίμιον
δόλοισι καὶ ληφθῶσιν ἐν ταῦτῳ βρόχῳ
θανόντες, καὶ Λοξίας ἐφήμισεν,
ἄναξ Ἀπόλλων, μάντις ἀψευδῆς τὸ πρῖν.

What I have to say is simple. My sister here is to go inside; and I bid you keep secret this agreement with me, so that, having killed a man of renown by trickery, so too they may be trapped by trickery and perish in the same snare, the way that has been foretold by Loxias, Lord Apollo, a prophet who has never lied in the past. (*Lib.* 554-559)

Trickery, which is so closely associated with μῆτις, is Orestes's strategy. The *Oresteia* traces a development from μῆτις as Klytaimestra's skill to Orestes's. On facing her own

²⁶ Mastronarde, 1990, p. 286; Taplin, 1977, p. 444.

²⁷ Taplin, 1977, p. 446.

death, Klytaimestra acknowledges that she will be killed by a δόλος because she used trickery (*Lib.* 888). Orestes mimics his mother. Both kill a couple and both achieve their revenge through lying. In a sense, the two characters are actors. Klytaimestra acts as a loyal wife (*Ag.* 855-913) while Orestes acts as a stranger (*Lib.* 674). They employ the same net to trap their victims (*Lib.* 997-1000). When Orestes appears on the stage with his dead victims beneath him (*Lib.* 973), the audience are pressed to remember Klytaimestra's appearance on stage after killing her husband and his concubine (*Ag.* 1372). The scenes are visually identical. Orestes's actions refer back to his mother's.

This metatheatricality links mother and son together for the audience. However, the repetition of certain motifs also exaggerates the differences between them. Orestes does not indulge in celebrating his offence as Klytaimestra did over the dead corpse of Agamemnon. Orestes describes himself as suffering and polluted as a result of committing murder (*Lib.* 1016-1017) and surrenders himself to exile (*Lib.* 1042). Klytaimestra, conversely, refused exile (*Ag.* 1412-1413). However, the broad model of revenge through trickery comes from the *Theogony*. Family members share the trait of μήτις in the *Theogony* and the *Oresteia*. One character outwits the other.

βία and Gifts

While trickery is a central theme in the *Theogony* and the *Oresteia*, brute force also features. With the support of the Hundred-Handers and his siblings, Zeus is victorious in the Titanomachy and he binds the Titans for eternity beneath the earth (*Th.* 664-720). Zeus frees the Hundred-Handers from Ouranos's "bind" (δεσμῶ, *Th.* 618) only to enforce "binds" upon the Titans (δεσμοῖσιν, *Th.* 718). Zeus is just as brutal as his predecessors. Just as Kronos defeated his father, Zeus too defeats Kronos.

Zeus's victory over Typhoeus signals another step in the cementing of his authority. Gaia gave birth to Typhoeus, a product of her union with Tartaros (*Th.* 821). Typhoeus threatens to overthrow Zeus. Again in the Typhoeus episode, Gaia is the source of cosmic revolution and instability. She produced Kronos, nurtured Zeus and bore Typhoeus, all dissident males. Typhoeus, however, fails to usurp Zeus's throne. Zeus responds swiftly to the threat (*Th.* 839-843). He inspires terror, causing Gaia to groan (*Th.* 843) as she did when Ouranos blocked her from giving birth (*Th.* 159). There is an ominous similarity

between Zeus and his grandfather.²⁸ Zeus attacks Typhoeus with his thunderbolts and banishes him to Tartarus (*Th.* 836-868). His attack on Typhoeus has an effect which mirrors his defeat of the Titans, causing the earth and sea to shake (*Th.* 687-710). The god defeats the Titans and Typhoeus owing to his superior strength. His βία, “might,” establishes his rule.

Zeus’s βία is present in the *Eumenides* too. The assimilation of the Erinyes into Zeus’s order occurs only after Athena threatens the Erinyes with violence:

κάγὼ πέποιθα Ζηνί, καὶ—τί δεῖ λέγειν;
καὶ κληῖδας οἶδα δώματος μόνη θεῶν
ἐν ᾧ κεραυνός ἐστιν ἐσφραγισμένος
ἄλλ’ οὐδὲν αὐτοῦ δεῖ. σὺ δ’ εὐπειθῆς ἐμοί.

I for my part have trust in Zeus, and—what need have I to say more?—and, alone among the gods, I know the keys to the chamber in which his thunderbolt is sealed up. But there is no need for that. Be readily persuaded by me. (*Eum.* 826-829)

The danger of Zeus’s thunderbolt is very real here; it was with this weapon that Zeus defeated the Titans in the *Theogony* (689-694). Athena’s threat of violence recalls the βία which Zeus employed in order to assume his position as king of the gods.

Alongside trickery and βία, Zeus employs another strategy in the *Theogony*. Gaia prophesizes that Zeus will be king of the gods and in accordance, all the divinities urge him to be their leader (*Th.* 881-884). The battles have come to an end. In effect, Zeus’s sovereignty is ordained by Gaia, his grandmother. Zeus orders the cosmos by dividing honours amongst the immortals, securing their allegiance:

ὅς ἂν μετὰ εἶο θεῶν Τιτῆσι μάχοιτο,
μὴ τιν’ ἀπορραΐσειν γεράων, τιμὴν δὲ ἕκαστον
ἐξέμεν, ἦν τὸ πάρος γε μετ’ ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσιν.
τὸν δ’ ἔφαθ’, ὅστις ἄτιμος ὑπὸ Κρόνου ἢ δ’ ἀγέραςτος,
τιμῆς καὶ γεράων ἐπιβησέμεν, ἧ θέμις ἐστίν.

Whoever of the gods would fight together with him against the Titans, him he would not strip of his privileges, but that everyone would have the honour he had before among the immortal gods; and that whoever had been without honour and without privilege because of Kronos, him he would raise to honour and privileges, as is established right. (*Th.* 392-396)

²⁸ Blickman, 1987, p. 345.

Zeus's strategy of giving honours to the descendants of the Titans ensures that his political rivals are brought into allegiance.

The first divinity to receive honours in the *Theogony* is Styx, the eldest daughter of Ocean. Zeus honours Styx by enlisting her to embody the oath of the gods and by bringing her sons under his protection (*Th.* 400-401). Hesiod later tells how the immortals loath Styx; she lives apart from the rest of the gods (*Th.* 775-779). But Styx performs an important role in the cosmos. Whenever an immortal swears a false oath after pouring a libation of the water from her river, the divinity undergoes a terrible punishment (*Th.* 782-806). Styx prevents lies being told by the gods, preserving honesty. Oaths are designed to alleviate deception, protecting Zeus from conspiracies to overthrow him.

Hesiod also gives special attention to Hecate who Zeus "honoured above all others: he gave her splendid gifts" (τὴν περὶ πάντων... / τίμησε. πόρεν δέ οἱ ἀγλαὰ δῶρα, *Th.* 412-413). Hecate is the daughter of Phoebe who produces her daughter without union with a man; Hecate is "an only child from her mother" (μουνογενῆς ἐκ μητρὸς ἐοῦσα, *Th.* 448). Zeus gives Hecate power in many realms—earth, sea and sky—and she can bestow happiness on mortals (*Th.* 413-420). Hecate holds on to her honours previously bestowed by the Titans, but she secures far more privileges since Zeus favours her (*Th.* 421-428). Zeus gives her authority to help people in the assembly, men in war, kings, athletes, horsemen, fishermen and farmers (*Th.* 429-447). The poet twice refers to how Zeus made Hecate "the nurse of all the children" (κουροτρόφος, *Th.* 450, 452). Hecate, a product of parthenogenesis and hence a symbol of female fecundity, is a nurse who does not produce her own children. Like Artemis, she is a virgin κουροτρόφος. This is Hecate's most important role. On receiving her honours, she no longer represents a threat to Zeus. Female potency as embodied by Gaia and Rhea, which has threatened every generation of the male line, is repressed by subordinating all rival females through the giving of honours and gifts.²⁹ Along with Gaia, the other primal female powers are united with Zeus. The conflict between the younger and older generations in the cosmos is ended as the children of the Titans join with the ordained king of the gods.

Aischylos's Erinyes

Athena employs a similar strategy in the *Eumenides* by giving honours to the Erinyes. Aischylos posits a divine world encompassing older and younger generations of gods who

²⁹ Arthur, 1982, p. 71.

are in conflict over their mutual rights and honours. The playwright takes from Hesiod his genealogical constructions defining the old gods and the young. His audience recognises that Zeus's sovereignty relies upon his domination of the older gods who held power before him and their source for this is Hesiod. In the drama, the Erinyes are the older deities and the Olympians (Zeus, Apollo and Athena) are the younger. The Erinyes deem Apollo's defense abuse inflicted by "the young over the aged" (πρεσβῦτιν νέος, *Eum.* 731). They assert that punishment is their allotted function (*Eum.* 419, 715) and rebuke the Olympian gods for appropriating their ancient privileges (*Eum.* 758-759, 808-809). For the chorus in the *Agamemnon*, the Erinyes embody the doctrine of revenge:

τῶν πολυκτόνων γὰρ οὐκ
 ἄσκοποι θεοί. κελαι-
 ναὶ δ' Ἐρινύες χρόνω
 τυχηρὸν ὄντ' ἄνευ δίκας
 παλιντυχεῖ τριβᾶ βίου
 τιθεῖσ' ἀμαυρόν, ἐν δ' αἰ-
 στοῖς τελέθοντος οὔτις ἀλκά.

For the gods do not fail to take aim
 against those who have killed many, and in time
 the black Furies enfeeble him
 who has been fortunate against justice,
 reversing his fortune and corroding
 his life, and when he comes
 to the land of the unseen, he has no protection. (*Ag.* 461-468)

Murderers are destined to suffer divine vengeance from the Erinyes. When mortals wish for justice, they cry out to the Erinyes (*Eum.* 511-512). The Erinyes are referred to throughout the drama as instigators of punishment (*Ag.* 461-469, 645, 749, 991, 1433, *Lib.* 283-284). The frequent mention of the Erinyes in the *Agamemnon* indicates their importance.³⁰

The Erinyes have a broad punitive role, but their more specific task is to punish murderers (*Lib.* 400-404). The Erinyes claim they are concerned with all homicides: "we drive from their homes those who kill human beings" (βροτοκτονοῦντας ἐκ δόμων ἐλαύνομεν, *Eum.* 421). They are divinities with a specific job but they also represent an ability or function which others enact when they commit murder. Hence, characters in the drama can both evoke the Erinyes and become the Erinyes. It is only after Orestes kills Klytimestra that the Erinyes appear on stage, actively demonstrating their duty. Prior to

³⁰ Fraenkel, 1950, p. 39.

this there was always a family member eager to achieve vengeance, but no kin survive to reprimand Orestes for his crime. The shade of Klytaimestra laments how no divinities have succeeded in punishing Orestes (*Eum.* 100-101). The Erinyes take on the task. They appear as the chorus in the *Eumenides* and explain that Klytaimestra's death is appropriate punishment for the crime she committed (*Eum.* 603), confirming Orestes's claim that Klytaimestra enacted her own death by her crime (*Lib.* 923). Orestes's logic entails that he too will have to die and it is this outcome which the Erinyes are determined to achieve. It is this logic that Zeus too follows in the *Agamemnon*, but in the case of Orestes's crime, Zeus establishes a new logic of justice by trial which displaces the Erinyes.

The Oresteian trilogy depicts a movement from vengeance as the prime tool of justice, as signified by the Erinyes, to the new justice of Athena and Zeus's court. Zeus and Athena become the deciders of what is and is not just. Mirroring the action in the *Theogony*, the ideology of revenge fuels a potentially endless pattern of intergenerational brutality, which is finally ended by the king of gods. An alliance is eventually achieved at the end of the trilogy. Zeus's authority in the *Theogony* is strengthened by including rival divinities in his order and honouring them with privileges. To bring an end to the Erinyes' wrath in the *Eumenides*, Athena offers them tributes (*Eum.* 890-899). She also promises the Erinyes a home and sacrifices (*Eum.* 832-835), and gives them the power to make any house prosper (*Eum.* 895), honours which recall those which Zeus gave to Hecate in the *Theogony* (412-450). The goddess promotes the Erinyes as persecutors of all criminal offenders in Athens (*Eum.* 932-937, 955). The Erinyes will ensure that fear of punishment is induced in all mortals to discourage them from committing crimes. Athena describes them as a force of justice in the city of Athens (*Eum.* 992-995). The Erinyes, in this sense, retain their old function but it is now Zeus's judgement they will protect and promote. They are Zeus's police rather than an autonomous force. The Olympians amalgamate the Erinyes, along with their aggressive vengefulness, within their order once it is agreed that the Erinyes accept their subordination to Zeus's rule.³¹ This incorporation of female divinities reveals how the new orders in the *Theogony* and the *Oresteia* are dependent on feminine power. The strategy employed by Zeus in Hesiod's poem is repeated in Aeschylus's play. The threat to Zeus's authority posed by his female elders is removed by earning their loyalty through the gifting of honours.

³¹ Solmsen, 1995, p. 199.

After accepting their new benefits and their home in Athens, the chorus of Erinyes remark how their sisters, the Moirai, are the most highly honoured of the gods (*Eum.* 961-967). This directly echoes Hesiod's *Theogony* where Zeus gives the Moirai the greatest honours after establishing his sovereignty (*Th.* 904-906). Their privilege is to "give to mortal human beings both good and evil to have" (αἶ τε δίδουσι / θνητοῖς ἀνθρώποισιν ἔχειν ἀγαθόν τε κακόν τε, *Th.* 905-906), which parallels the role gifted to the Erinyes at the end of Aischylos's trilogy. This cross-referencing implies that the Zeus who resolves the tensions in the *Oresteia* is Hesiod's Zeus, Zeus who aligns with older authorities to secure his rule. For this reason, Solmsen argues that Aischylos shares Hesiod's "historical" attitude; both poets believe that the values and systems of the older generation must contribute to Zeus's government.³²

In both the *Theogony* and the *Oresteia*, order is achieved by the integration of older rival forces. Though fifth century BC Athenians have long relied upon the Areiopagos court as their vehicle of justice and Zeus has long been the king of their gods, the audience of the *Eumenides* are presented with the creation of a new world. Zeus's new judicial court in Athens is inaugurated and all divine power comes into allegiance with his justice.³³ The Athenian Areiopagos court is an emblem of Zeus's justice. In this way, the creation of the Athenian justice system is linked with the emergence of Zeus's rule in the cosmos. The *Oresteia* is recreating the formation of the cosmos, retelling Hesiod's *Theogony*, with the added element that Athena is situated as an authority alongside her father.

The Story of Metis

With his kingship and power won, Zeus's first union in the *Theogony* is with Metis, the goddess of wisdom (*Th.* 886). Metis is the daughter of Ocean and Tethys (*Th.* 358), and Hesiod describes her and her sisters as "the oldest maidens" (πρεσβύταται κοῦραι, *Th.* 363). She is an older divinity and powerful, hence posing a similar threat to Zeus as Hecate and Styx in the *Theogony* or the Erinyes in the *Eumenides*. When Metis falls pregnant, Zeus finds himself faced with the same predicament as his father. Ouranos and Gaia inform him that Metis is destined to bear a son who will be stronger than Zeus.

³² Solmsen, 1995, p. 196.

³³ Solmsen, 1995, p. 187.

Zeus's own logic of violence which he inflicted upon Kronos is now directed against him. He responds both violently and craftily:

Ζεὺς δὲ θεῶν βασιλεὺς πρώτην ἄλοχον θέτο Μῆτιν,
πλεῖστα θεῶν εἰδυῖαν ἰδὲ θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων.
ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ ἄρ' ἔμελλε θεὰν γλαυκῶπιν Ἀθήνην
τέξεσθαι, τότε ἔπειτα δόλφ φρένας ἐξαπατήσας
αἰμυλίοισι λόγοισιν ἐὴν ἐσκάτθετο νηδύν, 890

Γαίης φραδομοσύνησι καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος.
τῶς γὰρ οἱ φρασάτην, ἵνα μὴ βασιληίδα τιμὴν
ἄλλος ἔχοι Διὸς ἀντι θεῶν αἰειγενετῶν.
ἐκ γὰρ τῆς εἵμαρτο περίφρονα τέκνα γενέσθαι.
πρώτην μὲν κούρην γλαυκῶπιδα Τριτογένειαν, 895

ἴσον ἔχουσαν πατρὶ μένος καὶ ἐπίφρονα βουλήν,
αὐτὰρ ἔπειτ' ἄρα παῖδα θεῶν βασιλῆα καὶ ἀνδρῶν
ἤμελλεν τέξεσθαι, ὑπέρβιον ἦτορ ἔχοντα.
ἀλλ' ἄρα μιν Ζεὺς πρόσθεν ἐὴν ἐσκάτθετο νηδύν,
ὥς οἱ συμφράσσαιτο θεὰ ἀγαθὸν τε κακὸν τε. 900

αὐτὸς δ' ἐκ κεφαλῆς γλαυκῶπιδα γείνατ' Ἀθήνην,
δεινὴν ἐγρεκύδοιμον ἀγέστρατον ἀτρυτῶνην, 925
πότνιαν, ἣ κέλαδοί τε ἄδον πόλεμοί τε μάχαι τε.
Ἥρη δ' Ἥφαιστον κλυτὸν οὐ φιλόττηι μιγεῖσα
γείνατο, καὶ ζαμένησε καὶ ἦρισεν ὅ πατακοίτη,
ἐκ πάντων τέκνησι κεκασμένον Οὐρανιῶνων.

Zeus, king of the gods, took as his first wife Metis, she who of the gods and mortal human beings knows the most. But when she was about to give birth to the goddess, bright-eyed Athena, he deceived her mind by craft and with guileful words he put her into his belly, by the prophecies of Earth and of starry Sky: for this was how they had prophesied to him, lest some other one of the eternally living gods hold the kingly honor instead of Zeus. For it was destined that exceedingly wise children would come to be from her: first she would give birth to a maiden, bright-eyed Tritogeneia, possessing strength equal to her father's and wise counsel, and then to a son, a king of gods and of men, possessing a very violent heart. But before that could happen Zeus put her into his belly, so that the goddess would advise him about good and evil.

(*Th.* 886-900)

He himself gave birth from his head to bright-eyed Athena, terrible, battle-rouser, army-leader, indefatigable, queenly, who delights in din and wars and battles; but Hera was furious and contended with her husband, and without mingling in love gave birth to famous Hephaistos, expert with his skilled hands beyond all of Sky's descendants. (*Th.* 924-929)

I have presented the two parts of this story separately as there is a significant digression in between. There is some dispute amongst critics over whether both these passages even belong in the *Theogony*. Solmsen and Wilamowitz argue that the *Theogony* 886-900 is an

interpolation, deeming this section to be inconsistent with the poem as a whole.³⁴ West, on the other hand, maintains that the original version of the *Theogony* ended at line 900 so that the incorporation of Metis was presented as the culmination of the story of how Zeus gained supremacy over the gods.³⁵ Whether both sections were originally in this text or were presented in other poems by Hesiod, what matters for my purposes is that there existed a full story of Athena's genesis which Greeks attributed to Hesiod.

It is clear that the Metis story is climactic in the plot of the *Theogony*. Brown claims that the myth of Metis is "indispensable" in the poem.³⁶ The scene is the most important in the plot as it marks the final achievement of order.³⁷ Further, there are clear similarities between the language of the Metis story and the preceding narrative. Angier points out how there are formulaic correspondences between the account of Kronos's swallowing of his children and Zeus's swallowing of Metis, suggesting that they are variants of one type-scene.³⁸ Repetition of language and imagery has the effect of emphasizing key ideas in the poem. The two ingestion stories are linked and express primary concerns of the poet. Hesiod twice employs the phrase ἔμελλε τέξεσθαι to indicate that Rhea was "about to give birth" to Zeus (*Th.* 468-469, 478), and again later, the phrase features twice, referring in this instance to how Metis was "about to give birth" to her child (*Th.* 888-889, 898). The repetition of ἔμελλε τέξεσθαι highlights the suffering of the goddesses. Both Rhea and Metis are close to giving birth, close to completing their task, but their situation is complicated by the intervention of their male partners.

Hesiod's use of enjambement is revealing too. τέξεσθαι occurs at the beginning of a sentence, separated from ἔμελλε in the preceding line (*Th.* 888-889). The run-over word is required to complete the sense of the previous sentence.³⁹ The effect of this enjambement is that the image of Metis's obstructed labour is drawn out over two lines of the poem. This is followed on a few lines later by the repetition of the phrase, again at the beginning of a sentence (*Th.* 898). ἔμελλε τέξεσθαι is purposely given an emphatic position in the passage, indicating that the phrase communicates a central issue. Hesiod pronounces this idea; his lead female characters were "about to give birth." The poet employs repetition and careful word positioning to deploy his theme, revealing that the

³⁴ Brown, 1952, p. 131.

³⁵ West, 1966, pp. 398-399.

³⁶ Brown, 1952, p. 131.

³⁷ Detienne and Vernant, 1991, p. 57; Faraone and Teeter, 2004, p. 178.

³⁸ Angier, 1964, p. 340.

³⁹ Friedrich, 2000, p. 2.

element which links the stories of Kronos and Zeus is their interference with female pregnancy. What is at stake in the mens' pursuits for power is controlling childbearing.

ἄλοχος

Zeus and Metis are also the first acknowledged spouses in the family line. Metis is Zeus's ἄλοχος (*Th.* 886). Hesiod describes the prior unions in the family differently: Rhea was overpowered by Kronos (*Th.* 453) while Gaia produced Ouranos (*Th.* 126). Neither of these are affectionate couples. The term ἄλοχος is, however, ambiguous and broad in meaning. It designates a bed-mate or spouse. This is the only occasion it is used in Hesiod's poem, suggesting that there is something peculiar about Zeus and Metis's union. Their relationship marks a transition. In Homer's *Iliad*, Agamemnon designates Klytaimestra as his ἄλοχος, explaining that he favours Chryseis above his wife (*Il.* 1.111-114). The term alludes to the formal marriage of Agamemnon and Klytaimestra, but he cares less for his formal wife than his concubine. Klytaimestra asserts that she is Agamemnon's ἄλοχος in the *Agamemnon* (1499). Zeus and Metis's relationship has the same status as Agamemnon and Klytaimestra's. However, in the *Iliad*, the term does not appear alone, but is joined with κουρίδιος, meaning "wedded." Homer makes this distinction between ἄλοχος and κουρίδιος ἄλοχος elsewhere.⁴⁰ Achilles refers to Briseis as his ἄλοχος (*Il.* 9.336), but when Briseis reveals how Patroklos had promised her that she would be married to Achilles on their return to Phthia, she anticipates being the hero's κουρίδιος ἄλοχος (*Il.* 19.297-299). The term ἄλοχος alludes to a man's partner, his wife in practice, but he may not be formally married to her.

Interestingly, the word ἄλοχος signifies the woman's part in sexual reproduction. Since λόχος means "childbirth," the woman's fertility was intrinsic to her role as ἄλοχος.⁴¹ Hence, ἄλοχος conveys that a woman is not only a partner, but a child-bearer. Metis, as Zeus's ἄλοχος, is his bed-mate and the potential mother of his children. Likewise, Klytaimestra is distinctly the mother of children. The word ἄλοχος brings the female contribution to sexual reproduction into focus. This is fitting since Metis's maternity, her capacity to procreate, will present danger for Zeus.

⁴⁰ Patterson, 1991, p. 57.

⁴¹ Zeitlin, 1995, pp. 148, n. 125.

The emphasis in the Metis passage is on giving birth, employing the gender neutral language of creation, *τίκτω* and *γείνομαι*.⁴² Angier identifies that the most important repetitions in the *Theogony* are words for birth.⁴³ There is no mention of conception, which means that the seminal contributions of male and female to procreation are never made clear. Hera later becomes Zeus's *ἄκοιτις* (*Th.* 921), the regular term for a human wife in the poem (*Th.* 410, 608). I suggest that this confirms that the union between Zeus and Hera is definitive. In another episode of the *Theogony*, Hesiod describes marriage as a necessity, though one which is destructive for mortal men. Zeus creates mortal women as punishment for the crimes committed by Prometheus. The Titan Prometheus, famed for his skills at deception, tricks Zeus by stealing fire and giving it to mortals (*Th.* 561-564). Zeus binds Prometheus (*Th.* 614-616) and as penalty for his crime, Zeus instructs Hephaistos and Athena to create the first woman, "an evil for human beings in exchange for fire" (*δ' ἄντι πυρὸς τεῦξεν κακὸν ἀνθρώποισι, Th.* 570). Zeus's vengeful *δόλος* is the creation of women (*Th.* 589). Women are a curse as they care only for luxury and live off the hard work of men (*Th.* 590-602). But Zeus decrees that men must marry women and punishes those men who avoid it (*Th.* 602-607).

Marriage in Hesiod's *Theogony* is an essential institution ordained by Zeus and a condition of order in human society. In Greek societies, marriage was a means to ensure the legitimacy of children and the continuation of the family's lineage. But the continuation of his family line is exactly what Zeus prevents. In the divine realm, Zeus violates the same institution he ordains for humans by swallowing his wife and stopping her from giving birth to their child. In effect, the same solution closes the *Oresteia* as Apollo and Athena reject maternity and also 'swallow' Metis.

The Model of Divine Rule

With the swallowing of Metis, the transgenerational chain of succession disputes is brought to an end and stable rule is achieved. Zeus, unlike his father and grandfather, will not be overthrown by his son. The king of gods has successfully intervened in his fate. The trickery which fuelled the earlier revolutions is now under Zeus's control. Zeus's kingship is, hence, defined by this episode. He is "king" (*βασιλεύς, Th.* 886) and holds "kingly honour" (*βασιληίδα τιμὴν, Th.* 892). Faraone and Teeter point out that the Metis

⁴² Evans, 2006, pp. 14-15.

⁴³ Angier, 1964, p. 329.

passage is remarkable for its emphasis on the kingship of Zeus.⁴⁴ The consumption of Metis enshrines Zeus's sovereignty. He is sovereign because he contains Metis.

Hesiod's vision of Zeus's monarchy echoes in the *Oresteia*. Zeus's respect for kings is clear in the trilogy. The chorus of elders in the *Agamemnon* tells how the Atreidae received their thrones and scepters from Zeus (*Ag.* 43-44). Apollo later reiterates this claim in respect to Agamemnon (*Eum.* 626). In Homer's *Iliad*, Agamemnon's scepter is of divine origin: it passed from Zeus to Hermes to Pelops to Atreus to Thyestes and finally, to Agamemnon (*Il.* 2.98-108). Agamemnon's rule is ordained by Zeus. The breakdown of the family in the *Oresteia* coincides with the disintegration of royal power. A struggle for authority within the family translates into the corrosion of societal order. When the father's rule is undermined, revolution occurs. The same movement is depicted in Hesiod's *Theogony*. Aischylos's audience had no immediate experience of kingship but the gods they worshipped inhabited an imagined society under the rule of Zeus. For this reason, monarchy was very much within the consciousness of Athenians.⁴⁵ Stories of the divine world, as depicted most fully in Hesiod's *Theogony*, provided a model for thinking about kingship in a society where collective government reigned.

Agamemnon's status as a king is described in various ways in the trilogy. The herald proclaims that Agamemnon deserves to be honoured above all mortals (*Ag.* 531). It is as though he is semi-divine because he is a king. Agamemnon is "lord of the house" (ἄνακτος οἴκων, *Ag.* 35). He and Menelaos are "powers" (κράτος, *Ag.* 109). Agamemnon is "king" (βασιλέα, *Ag.* 521) like Zeus is "king" (βασιλεῦ, *Ag.* 355). βασιλεύς (*Ag.* 783, 1346, 1489, 1513) and ἄναξ (*Ag.* 523, 530, 907) refer to Agamemnon on various occasions. The chorus also honour Klytaimestra as βασίλεια (*Ag.* 84), suggesting that the βασίλειον, the "palace," belongs to her (*Ag.* 96). Agamemnon is also a despot (*Lib.* 53, 942), a term lacking the negative connotations in modern usage. Aigisthos is also a despot (*Lib.* 875). What clearly distinguishes Agamemnon's rule from that of Klytaimestra and Aigisthos is the word "tyrant." The chorus deem the killer of Agamemnon to be a τυραννίς (*Ag.* 1355). On achieving his revenge, Orestes declares that he has killed two tyrants (*Lib.* 973). The chorus of elders believe that it is better to die than to live under tyranny (*Ag.* 1365). Hence, in the semantic pattern of the *Oresteia*, the kingship of Zeus is marked by βασιλεύς and this is the favoured form of government in contrast to tyranny as represented by Klytaimestra and Aigisthos. Tyranny is the negative expression of

⁴⁴ Faraone and Teeter, 2004, p. 180.

⁴⁵ Munn, 2006, p. 13.

monarchy. Zeus's rule, on the other hand, represents an ideal kingship. Zeus's monarchy is a paradigm for human government in the trilogy.

Monarchy was also the model of government employed by Aischylos's ancestors. In Mycenaean Bronze Age Greece, monarchical rule was the norm. The myths of the great families in Greece, such as the saga of the House of Atreus, provided Greeks with a heroic past. Monarchy not only features in the Athenian past and in their notions of the divine world, but it was also the main form of rule practiced by their neighbours to the east. Greeks were opposed to the Persians since they largely rejected monarchical rule in favour of mostly oligarchic rule. Aischylos's *Persae* offers a depiction of the internal workings of the Persian royal family, demonstrating the interest this held for Athenians. In Herodotos's *Histories* 3, a negative impression of Persian tyranny is conveyed. The story of King Cambyses's cultural arrogance and brutality provides a key example of the failures of tyranny. It is a warning to Herodotos's Greek audience.

Government and its diverse forms is a topic which was understandably relevant for the audience of democratic Athens where their new, experimental structure of government was designed to resist the failings of oligarchic, tyrannical and monarchic regimes. Power in Aischylos's Athens was held by the citizens collectively but the threat to this system posed by individual abuses of power still remained. Citizens had good reason to feel concerned about the stability and viability of their democracy where individual pursuits of power still characterized the political scene, as was demonstrated by the assassination of Ephialtes and Perikles's ostracism of Cimon only a couple of years prior to the first production of the *Oresteia*. While the royal hegemonies portrayed by Hesiod are situated in the divine world, these stories nonetheless tap into Athenian concerns about their own past, present and future. Further, this landscape of divine kingship puts Hesiod's *Theogony*, amongst other poems, at the forefront of the minds of Aischylos's spectators. According to Hesiod, Zeus favours mortal kings (*Th.* 81-97). Kingship is the form of government which is divinely ordained.

Wily Words

Hesiod adds that the Muses give kings the gift of wise speech (*Th.* 81-97). Hesiod's emphasis on the speech of kings aligns them with poets; both are skilled with words. Words win power throughout Hesiod's *Theogony*. Zeus uses λόγοι to trick Metis: "he deceived her mind by craft and with guileful words" (τότ' ἔπειτα δόλω φρένας

ἐξαπατήσας / αἰμυλίοισι λόγοισιν, *Th.* 889-890). His wily words enabled him to trick the personification of trickery. He employs a δόλος and λόγοι; his victory is achieved through swallowing and words. Speech and swallowing are thus connected. Strauss Clay comments on Hesiod's exploration of the different functions of speech:

Hesiod may well be the first to acknowledge the ambiguity of rhetoric, its ability to harm and to heal, to persuade and seduce, and its power to further the truth as well as to dress up lies.⁴⁶

The cunning aspect of speech is repeatedly explored in Aischylos's *Oresteia*. Characters rely on μῦθος as well as λόγος. Cilissa bemoans how Aigisthos will be overjoyed on hearing the μῦθος of Orestes's death (*Lib.* 743). The story tricks Aigisthos and Klytimestra into believing Orestes is dead. A μῦθος can deceive its listener. Even the ideology of vendetta which fuels the trilogy's action originates from a μῦθος (*Lib.* 310-314). Apollo predicts that the μύθους offered during the trial will enchant the judges (*Eum.* 81-82). They will be θελκτήριοις, "enchanting," and provide the μηχανή to release Orestes. In Apollo's view, judicial speech endeavours to charm and contrive. The discourse of the democratic lawcourt is aimed at persuasion. Judicial speech, in effect, mesmerises and influences its audience. This function of speech is explicitly demonstrated by the Erinyes' binding song (*Eum.* 306-396). The Erinyes warn Orestes that their song will act like a δέσμος, debilitating him. Words function to impress upon and persuade their listener. Aischylos displays conscious awareness of the way words and stories can manipulate.

The trilogy's interest in cunning speech naturally brings the audience back to the the opening scene of the *Agamemnon*, which I already discussed briefly in Chapter 5 (p. 91). The watchman refuses to speak openly:

τὰ δ' ἄλλα σιγῶ· βοῦς ἐπὶ γλώσση μέγας
βέβηκεν· οἶκος δ' αὐτός, εἰ φθογγὴν λάβοι,
σαφέστατ' ἂν λέξειεν· ὡς ἐκὼν ἐγὼ
μαθοῦσιν αὐδῶ κού μαθοῦσι λήθομαι.

About other matters I say nothing; a great ox has stepped upon my tongue. The house itself, were it to find voice, might speak very plainly; as far as I am concerned, I am deliberately speaking to those who know—and for those who do not, I am deliberately forgetting. (*Ag.* 36-39)

⁴⁶ Clay, 2010, p. 449.

The watchman alerts the spectators that speech is deceptive. He asks the audience to recall what they know, the knowledge they are equipped with, and to be aware that only the building of the house itself could speak clearly. The characters in the play will not. The audience must be alert to verbal trickery.

Klytaimestra's ability to command language is controversial in the *Agamemnon* and marks her out. The elders "marvel at" her words (κάποθαυμάσαι, *Ag.* 318). They consider her to have "spoken wisely" (σώφρον' εὐφρόνως λέγεις, *Ag.* 351). Her wisdom is proven by her speaking abilities. Yet the chorus comment upon the difficulty in deciphering the meaning of Klytaimestra's words (*Ag.* 615-616). Similarly, they later fail to comprehend Cassandra's speech (*Ag.* 1112-1113, 1245) and proclaim that the pronouncements of the Pytho are difficult to understand (*Ag.* 1255). There is an excessive quality to the words of these women; they communicate more than is comprehensible. It is as though Klytaimestra uses the language of a prophet and in a sense this is the case since she knows of the dreadful acts which will unfold in the *Agamemnon*. Through her manipulation of speech, Klytaimestra directs the action in the first play. She depicts herself as a faithful wife, eager to be reunited with her husband (*Ag.* 606-612). She knows nothing of infidelity or brandishing weaponry (*Ag.* 611-612). But the audience is aware that the opposite is the truth. Klytaimestra is having an affair with Aigisthos and intends to murder her husband with an ax. Her words are fallacious. Yet Klytaimestra successfully tricks Agamemnon and the chorus of elders with her lies. She persuades her listeners: "such is my boast, and, being full of truth, it is not a disgraceful one for a noble woman to utter" (τοιόσδ' ὁ κόμπος, τῆς ἀληθείας γέμων / οὐκ αἰσχρὸς ὡς γυναικὶ γενναίᾳ λακεῖν, *Ag.* 613-614). She asserts that she does not speak δόλος or deception (οὐ δόλον φέρει, *Ag.* 886).

The elders are uncertain whether Klytaimestra's interpretation of the fire beacons is true or designed to beguile them (*Ag.* 489-492). Further, they wonder if it is a case of divine deception (*Ag.* 478). They suspect that "a woman's ordinance is too persuasive" (πιθανὸς ἄγαν ὁ θῆλυς ὅρος ἐπινέμεται, *Ag.* 485). The chorus and the herald converse about the difficulty of concealing lies (*Ag.* 620-623). The tapestry scene demonstrates the queen's ability to overpower with words (*Ag.* 944-947). With the murder of Agamemnon and Cassandra accomplished, Klytaimestra appears on the stage and admits to her prior lies before defending her actions. She declares: "I have said many things hitherto to suit the needs of the moment, and I shall not be ashamed to contradict them now" (πολλῶν

πάροιθεν καιρίως εἰρημένων / τάναντί' εἰπεῖν οὐκ ἐπαισχυνθήσομαι, *Ag.* 1372-1373). Klytaimestra's boasts earn her accusations of arrogance from the elders (*Ag.* 1399) and they warn her that she will be punished for her cunning and proud words (*Ag.* 1425-1430). But the last words of the *Agamemnon* are spoken by Klytaimestra and reaffirm that she is in charge. Her cunning has secured her power. Aigisthos is depicted as deceptive also. He tells the audience that he speaks plainly when he recounts Atreus's crime (*Ag.* 1584), yet he noticeably fails to mention his father's adultery which provoked Atreus. Transparent speech is hard to come by in the *Oresteia*.

Aigisthos goes on to demonstrate his clumsy use of language by repeatedly threatening the chorus with violence (*Ag.* 1621-1623, 1631-1632, 1639-1642, 1649-1650). As Aigisthos did not partake in the murder, his claims to be the heroic avenger of his father appear weak, and his final speech, in which he resorts to clichés and promises of money to the citizens (*Ag.* 1638), fails to convince the chorus.⁴⁷ Klytaimestra, on the other hand, speaks respectfully to the elders and convinces them to not bring about further suffering (*Ag.* 1654-1661). She explicitly points out that her counsel is a woman's: "such are the words of a woman, if anyone sees fit to learn from them" (δαίμονος χηλῆ βαρεία δυστυχῶς πεπληγμένοι / ὄδ' ἔχει λόγος γυναικός, εἴ τις ἀξιοῖ μαθεῖν, *Ag.* 1660-1661). If there was any uncertainty about who is directing the action in the *Agamemnon*, it is made clear in the final line as Klytaimestra asserts to Aigisthos how ἐγὼ / καὶ σύ will control the house and establish order (*Ag.* 1672-1673). She is the first commander and he is second. The persuasions and resolve of a woman ends the *Agamemnon*. Later, the persuasion of another woman, Athena, ends the *Eumenides*. Both women are victorious owing to their superior skills in rhetoric.

Apollo also asserts that he does not tell lies (*Eum.* 615) and that he speaks "correctly" (ὀρθῶς, *Eum.* 657). Yet, there are reasons to suspect that, like Klytaimestra, he is untrustworthy. He assures Orestes on several occasions that he will protect him from punishment (*Lib.* 269, 1031; *Eum.* 64). Orestes tells how he has undergone many purification rituals and has been cleansed by Apollo, and yet, he still requires Athena's aid (*Eum.* 276-288). He remains polluted (*Eum.* 40-42). Orestes continues to be pursued by the Erinyes for committing murder despite Apollo's guardianship. Apollo, in effect, does not have the power to protect him. Vellacott argues that Apollo has cheated

⁴⁷ Goldhill, 1984, pp. 96-97.

Orestes.⁴⁸ Apollo coaxed Orestes to murder his mother without warning him of the persecution he would face from his mother's Erinyes. Aischylos's audience have been advised to distrust Apollo. Cassandra credits the god as her destroyer (*Ag.* 1080-1082, 1085-1087). Characters who claim not to lie in the trilogy are proven to be susceptible to telling falsehoods.

During the trial, Apollo advises the judges to disregard their oath. He recommends: "an oath can in no way be stronger than Zeus" (ὄρκος γὰρ οὐτι Ζητὸς ἰσχυεὶ πλέον, *Eum.* 621). Athena begins the trial stressing that the jurors she has chosen will not violate their oath (*Eum.* 487-489). Before the voting, she reminds the jurors to respect their ὄρκος (*Eum.* 710). Likewise, the Erinyes' last words to the jurors before they cast their votes is to "have respect in your hearts for your oath" (ἐν δὲ καρδίᾳ / ...ὄρκον αἰδεῖσθε, *Eum.* 679-680). Earlier, I discussed the importance attached to oaths in Hesiod's *Theogony* (782-806). Zeus honours Styx by making her the great oath of the gods; this oath upholds Zeus's regime by ensuring allegiance to him.⁴⁹ A terrible punishment is inflicted on any god who does not honour this oath. Hence, Apollo's disregard for oaths reveals his cynical attitude towards the trial. His claim that Zeus is stronger than an oath seems to be a threat, a reminder to the jurors of Zeus's βία. In essence, Apollo presses the jurors to be persuaded by his words as this is what Zeus decrees. It is the capacity of words to win power that is at stake, not deciphering right from wrong. The trial does not offer an opportunity for genuine litigation. With Apollo's threat in mind, it could be interpreted that the jurors are intimidated into voting for Orestes's acquittal.

Persuasion is a skill associated with Zeus. Prometheus remarks that Zeus "will not charm me by the honey-tongued spells of persuasion" (καί μ' οὐτι μελιγλώσσοις πειθοῦς / ἐπαιδαῖσιν θέλξει, *PB* 173-174, trans. Sommerstein, 2008c). πείθω, persuasive speech, is employed to manipulate and charm. It has a deceptive purpose. The chorus in the *Libation Bearers* highlights this cunning aspect of speech when they refer to "guileful Persuasion" (Πειθῶ δολίαν, *Lib.* 726). They associate πείθω and δόλος together, rendering persuasion as a form of trickery. The chorus in the *Agamemnon* judge that πείθω causes suffering (*Ag.* 385). It is Klytaimnestra's tool. She speaks persuasive λόγοι to Cassandra to convince her to enter the palace (*Ag.* 1052). Klytaimnestra's πείθω is designed to lead Cassandra to her death. Cassandra then uses πείθω; she tries to persuade the chorus of the truth of her prophecy (*Ag.* 1239). She, however, fails to persuade them. Though Cassandra tells what

⁴⁸ Vellacott, 1991, p. 76.

⁴⁹ Clay, 2003, p. 22.

will happen in the house of Atreus, her audience do not understand the meaning of her words (*Ag.* 1245). The chorus are won over by Klytaimestra's lies but not by Kassandra's truths. Persuasion, then, proves a victorious strategy for the deceiver.

In the *Eumenides*, *πείθω* becomes fully associated with Athena. Having convinced the Erinyes to surrender their opposition, Athena thanks the goddess Peitho for guiding her speech (*Eum.* 970-971). Persuasion has brought about reconciliation.⁵⁰ Athena credits Peitho as the source of her ability to charm (*Eum.* 885-886). However, the Erinyes have already critiqued the Olympians' use of speech. Early in the play, the Erinyes rebuke Apollo for using *logoi* to remove their privileges (*Eum.* 227), and prior to accepting their subjugation, they protest the use of *δόλοι* by the younger gods against them (*Eum.* 846). Buxton argues: "*πείθω* is opposed to *δόλος* as frankness is to cunning deceit."⁵¹ However, I suggest the opposite, that even when exercised by Athena, persuasion is presented as a form of trickery. Speech, even the speech of the democratic court, is corruptible.⁵²

Athena's aptitude for persuasion links her with Klytaimestra. Both women threaten violence (*Ag.* 1421-1425, *Eum.* 827-828), but ultimately establish their authority through persuasion. Athena's skill with speech also recalls her mother. Her intelligence is inherited from Metis.⁵³ Detienne and Vernant point out: "if Zeus swallowed Metis in order to become 'pregnant with metis,' Athena is the daughter whom Metis was expecting at the very moment when she allowed herself to be taken by surprise."⁵⁴ Athena shows the closest affinity with the goddess Metis, rendering her a constant reminder of her mother.

Interestingly, Athena comments on the source of her wisdom in the *Eumenides*: "Zeus has given me, too, no mean understanding" (*φρονεῖν δὲ κάμοι Ζεὺς ἔδωκεν οὐ κακῶς*, *Eum.* 850). Athena credits Zeus as her educator; he is the source of her wisdom. She does not mention Metis or the story of how Zeus appropriated her wisdom through swallowing her. Athena's silence concerning the maternal source of her wisdom is another metaphorical act of swallowing. I suggest this silence was intended to ignite the audience's suspicion. Assertions by women regarding their intelligence are reasonably rare in extant Greek drama. Euripides has Medea speak generally of female intelligence:

⁵⁰ Buxton, 1982, p. 109.

⁵¹ Buxton, 1982, p. 65.

⁵² Vellacott, 1991, p. 89.

⁵³ Detienne and Vernant, 1991, pp. 108-109.

⁵⁴ Detienne and Vernant, 1991, p. 179.

“we too possess a muse, who consorts with us to bring us wisdom” (ἀλλὰ γὰρ ἔστιν μουσα καὶ ἡμῖν / ἡ προσομιλεῖ σοφίας ἔνεκεν, *Medea* 1085-1086, trans. Kovacs, 1994).

Melanippe in Euripides’s *Melanippe the Wise* declares that she is wise. Evoking the fate of Metis, Zeus punished Melanippe’s mother because of her oracular power (Eur. fr. 481.15, Collard and Cropp). Zeus wished to prevent her from prophesying divine secrets.⁵⁵ Melanippe’s mother was transformed into a horse and became known as Hippo. Zeus punishes both Metis and Hippo as he fears their power. Melanippe asserts: “I am a woman, but I have intelligence” (ἐγὼ γυνὴ μὲν εἰμι, νοῦς δ’ ἔνεστί μοι, Eur. fr. 482, trans. Collard & Cropp, 2008). Her claim is followed by a digression where she describes how her mother taught her about the origins of the cosmos (fr. 484 CC). Whereas Athena avoids crediting her mother as the source of her wisdom (*Eum.* 850), Melanippe acknowledges that she inherited her intelligence from her mother. Euripides’s scene appears modeled on Athena’s proclamation in the *Eumenides*. Yet it is reworked to allow the female character to tribute her mother as the source of her wisdom.

Melanippe’s words are quoted later by Lysistrata in Aristophanes’s play.⁵⁶ Echoing Melanippe’s claim to intelligence, Lysistrata asserts at a crucial point:

ἐγὼ γυνὴ μὲν εἰμι, νοῦς δ’ ἔνεστί μοι
ἀντὶ δ’ ἐμαυτῆς οὐ κακῶς γνώμης ἔχω
τοὺς δ’ ἐκ πατρός τε καὶ γεραιτέρων λόγους
πολλοὺς ἀκούσασ’ οὐ μεμούσωμαι κακῶς.

I am a woman, but I don’t lack sense. I’m of myself not badly off for brains, and often listening to my father’s words and old men’s talk, I’ve not been badly schooled. (*Lys.* 1124-27, trans. Rogers, 1996)

Like Aischylos’s Athena, Lysistrata credits her father as her teacher. In the period of the comedy’s production, the priestess of Athena Polias was named Lysimache.⁵⁷ The similarity in sound between Lysistrata’s name and the real priestess’s suggests Aristophanes intended his audience to draw a strong association between the fictional Lysistrata and the real life priestess of Athena.⁵⁸ Lewis argues that a later decree of 255 B.C. suggests at one time there was a priestess of Polias named Lysistrate in Athens.⁵⁹ There is a correlation between Lysistrata and Athena. I suggest that Aristophanes, like

⁵⁵ Collard, 1995, p. 241.

⁵⁶ Collard, 1995, p. 251.

⁵⁷ Lewis, 1955, p. 6.

⁵⁸ Henderson, 1987, p. xxxix.

⁵⁹ Lewis, 1955, p. 4.

Euripides, used Athena's speech in the *Eumenides* as a model for exploring the parental source of female intelligence, engaging with the debate over whether the male or female is more influential in childbearing. While Athena credits Zeus, Euripides saw how a mother could have been the source. Melanippe honours her mother where Athena did not. The parental influence on children is at stake in these pronouncements of wisdom.

An Alternative Story of Metis

Another version of Hesiod's story of Metis has come down to us through Galen's *On the Opinions of Hippocrates and Plato*. Writing in the second century AD, Galen cites the third century BC Greek stoic philosopher Chrysippos. Chrysippos in turn cites Hesiod. The citation, recorded alternatively as the Chrysippos fragment 908, *Fragmenta Hesiodica* 343 or the *Theogony* 929α-τ, tells the story of Metis from Hesiod's *Theogony* (886-929), providing testimony that this passage was familiar as late as the third century BC, but it also records an alternative version of the story. Chrysippos assigns his variant account to Hesiod. He claims the passage belongs to a poem which was appended to the *Theogony* (Hes. Fr. 343, Merkelbach and West). The textual source of the alternative version of the Hesiodic Metis story is uncertain, and hence, it is printed by Merkelbach and West as 'Fragmentu Dubium.'⁶⁰ Elsewhere, West argues that since the two Hesiodic versions of the story of Metis agree so closely, the Chrysippos citation must be accepted as an authentic part of the Hesiodic corpus.⁶¹ Both the *Theogony* (886-929) and the Chrysippos citation (*Theogony* 929α-τ) are survivals from a poetic tradition where Metis is the mother of Athena.⁶² The two versions were alternatives within the same tradition.

In the fragment, Chrysippos explains his reasons for referring to the two Hesiodic accounts. He tells how many say Athena was born from Zeus's head without detailing how this happened. Hesiod, he points out, does explain the precedent events to the birth (Hes. Fr. 343, Merkelbach and West).⁶³ He records Hesiod's two versions of the genesis to compensate for omissions in earlier texts. Hesiod's tells the alternative account as follows:

⁶⁰ Merkelbach and West, 1967, pp. 171-172.

⁶¹ West, 1966, p. 402.

⁶² Athanassakis, 1989, p. 12.

⁶³ West, 1966, p. 402.

Ἦρη δὲ ζαμένησε καὶ ἤρισε ὧ παρακοίτη.	α
ἐκ ταύτης δ' ἔριδος ἦ μὲν τέκε φαίδιμον υἱὸν	β
Ἦφαιστον, φιλότιτος ἄτερ Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο,	γ
ἐκ πάντων παλάμησι κεκασμένον Οὐρανιώνων·	δ
αὐτὰρ ὃ γ' Ὠκεανοῦ καὶ Τηθύος ἠγκόμοιο	ε
κούρη νόσφ' Ἦρης παρελέξατο καλλιπαρήφω,	ς
ἐξαπαφῶν Μῆτιν καίπερ πολυδῆνε' ἐοῦσαν.	ζ
συμμάρψας δ' ὃ γε χερσὶν ἐὴν ἐγκάτθετο νηδὺν	η
δείσας, μὴ τέξῃ κρατερώτερον ἄλλο κεραυνοῦ.	θ
τοῦνεκά μιν Κρονίδης ὑψίζυγος αἰθέρι ναίων	ι
κάμπιεν ἐξαπίνης· ἦ δ' αὐτίκα Παλλάδ' Ἀθήνην	κ
κύσατο· τὴν μὲν ἔτικτε πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε	λ
πὰρ κορυφὴν Τρίτωνος ἐπ' ὄχθησιν ποταμοῖο.	μ
Μῆτις δ' αὖτε Ζηνὸς ὑπὸ σπλάγχνοις λελαθυῖα	ν
ἦστο, Ἀθηναίης μήτηρ, τέκταινα δικαίων	ξ
πλεῖστα θεῶν τε ἰδυῖα καταθητηῶν τ' ἀνθρώπων,	ο
ἔνθα θεὰ παρέδεκτο ὅθεν παλάμαις περὶ πάντων	π
ράθανάτων ἐκέκασθ' οἱ Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσιν,	ρ
αἰγίδα ποιήσασα φοβέστρατον ἔντος Ἀθήνης	σ
σὺν τῇ ἐγείνατό μιν πολεμῖα τεύχε' ἔχουσιν	τ

But Hera was very angry and quarrelled with her mate. And because of this strife she bare without union with Zeus who holds the aegis a glorious son, Hephaistos, who excelled all the sons of Heaven in crafts. But Zeus lay with the fair-cheeked daughter of Ocean and Tethys apart from Hera, deceiving Metis although she was full wise. But he seized her with his hands and put her in his belly, for fear that she might bring forth something stronger than his thunderbolt: therefore did Zeus, who sits on high and dwells in the aether, swallow her down suddenly. But she straightway conceived Pallas Athena: and the father of men and gods gave her birth by way of his head on the banks of the river Triton. And she remained hidden beneath the inward parts of Zeus, even Metis, Athena's mother, worker of righteousness, who was wiser than gods and mortal men. There the goddess received that whereby she excelled in strength all the deathless ones who dwell in Olympus, she who made the host-scaring weapon of Athena. And with it (Zeus) gave her birth, arrayed in arms of war. (*Th.* 929α-τ, trans. Evelyn-White, 1998)

In Hesiod's *Theogony* 929α-τ, Metis is Zeus's paramour, not his ἄλοχος. Zeus joins with Metis at a time when he and Hera are in conflict. Further, in the *Theogony* 929α-τ, Metis is not pregnant when Zeus swallows her. She "conceives" (κύσατο, *Th.* 929λ) immediately after being swallowed and retains her autonomy inside Zeus's stomach as "Athena's mother" (Ἀθηναίης μήτηρ, *Th.* 929ξ). Hence, she appears to conceive in consequence of being swallowed. The sequence of events is otherwise the same in both versions of the story: there is a sexual union between Zeus and Metis; Zeus believes Metis's child will be a threat; Zeus acts by placing Metis into his νηδύς (ἐσκάτθετο

νηδύν, *Th.* 890 / ἐγκάτθετο νηδύν, *Th.* 929η); afterwards, Zeus gives birth to Athena from his head and her genesis is linked with that of the god Hephaistos.

The Neutral νηδύς

In both passages attributed to Hesiod (*Th.* 886-929 and *Th.* 929α-τ), Metis is lodged in Zeus's νηδύς (*Th.* 889, *Th.* 929η), which is usually translated as “stomach” or “belly,” but is more accurately a cavity in Zeus's body. Hesiod's use of this word is important since it appears in Apollo's λόγος. Hesiod employs the word to refer to Rhea's womb which brings forth children (*Th.* 460) and the exact same phrasing as in the Metis passage is used to depict Kronos swallowing the stone into his stomach (ἐσκάτθετο νηδύν, *Th.* 487). Rhea, Kronos and Zeus all hold divinities in their νηδύς. As I established earlier in this dissertation (p. 76), it is a gender neutral term. Hence, translating νηδύς as “womb” removes the ambiguity in the Greek term by giving it distinctly female connotations. Hesiod conflates the womb and the stomach as cavities exercising a similar anatomical function.⁶⁴ It is as though the male stomach is a pseudo-womb, capable of holding a child in place of the mother's womb.

Zeus becomes pregnant despite being male; he performs the role expected of Athena's mother by gestating and giving birth to her.⁶⁵ I suggest that Hesiod's text acknowledges that male gestation is curious. The poet repeats that Zeus placed Metis in ἐῆν...νηδύν (*Th.* 890, 899). The inclusion of ἐός is important. Essentially, the poet distinguishes that Zeus put Metis in “his own” νηδύς. There is something unprecedented going on. Normally, it would not be Zeus's νηδύς performing gestation.

This repeats a motif Hesiod already explored when Kronos carried his children and re-delivered them by vomiting them up. νηδύς links different parts of the poem. Arthur argues that Hesiod conflates all forms of taking into and releasing from the body, including “acts of ingesting, conceiving, and receiving poetic inspiration, and of vomiting, giving birth, and singing or speaking.”⁶⁶ All are forms of creation. Both male and female contain a νηδύς as their creative source. However, the female νηδύς delivers divinities into the cosmos—Gaia's wrath is a consequence of not being permitted to release the divinities inside her—while the male νηδύς prevents their entry into the

⁶⁴ Faraone and Teeter, 2004, pp. 183-184.

⁶⁵ Slater, 1992, p. 130.

⁶⁶ Arthur, 1983, p. 107.

cosmos. Kronos only releases his children as he is tricked into doing so and it is unclear in Hesiod's accounts if Zeus willingly gives birth to Athena from his head. The image the poet creates of Athena fully-armed and raring for battle on her birth suggests that she forced her release from her father's body. This seems to have been how later writers interpreted the scene as Pindar, for instance, describes Hephaistos striking Zeus's head with an axe in order to allow Athena to leap out (Pind. *O.* 7.35-37). Athena is depicted as active in the birth; she victoriously escapes while Zeus is left with a head injury. Pseudo-Apollodoros records how the axe was required to free Athena since Zeus had a terrible headache (Apollod. 3.14.6). The motif of Zeus's headache signals that Athena caused Zeus distress in order to escape. Release from the male body is congruent with loss of power. In general, male pregnancy functions to bind divinities while female pregnancy brings forth life into the cosmos. The point is that the male divinities carry their offspring in order to maintain their power. This involves taking over the female role in procreation. Hence, it is clear that the motive behind Apollo's theory of male autonomous procreation is power, which is reliant on removing women from prominence. The notion of male pregnancy assumes a conflict for authority between male and female.

νηδύς appears in the *Oresteia* on several occasions. As the ghost of Klytaimestra stirs the Erinyes to awaken and pursue Orestes, she instructs them to rely on the "fire in your belly" (νηδύος πυρί, *Eum.* 138). The Erinyes hold fire in their interior. More importantly, Aischylos relies on this same term from Hesiod at the climactic moment of Apollo's λόγος. Apollo asserts that Athena was not nourished in the darkness of a νηδύς (*Eum.* 665). Since this term can be used to describe male and female anatomy, Apollo's claim does not clearly discount Athena having a mother. The term carries ambiguity. Further, Aischylos has chosen a term which evokes the story of Metis from Hesiod's *Theogony*. Zeus placed Metis in his νηδύς (*Th.* 889, *Th.* 929η). Hence, Apollo's words may reveal that the reason Athena was not nurtured in a νηδύς is not because she didn't have a mother, but because her mother is held in the νηδύς of Zeus. As I discussed in Chapter 4, Aischylos could have used another term here to designate "womb," but he purposely relies on an ambiguous term from Hesiod which reminds the audience of the story of Athena's mother. The concept of the νηδύς, which proved important for Hesiod in linking his stories together, provides an equally important means for Aischylos to link his story with Hesiod's. The νηδύς symbolizes for Hesiod the male appropriation of the female's role in reproduction. Hence, Aischylos is implicitly showing that this issue is also at stake in Apollo's λόγος. Further, it is the place that Metis inhabits. The νηδύς

recalls the swallowing of Metis. Apollo's reference to this cavity gestures to an act of swallowing, which is taking place again through his rejection of Athena's mother.

Gestation in the male *νηδύς* signals that the male has consumed his child. The violent histories of the divine family in the *Theogony* and the royal family in the *Oresteia* share a distinctive motif: grotesque acts of ingestion by fathers. Similar to the pattern of conflict between fathers and sons in Hesiod's *Theogony*, the clash between the brothers Atreus and Thyestes manifests as a male dispute for power. Men in both texts are in conflict. Further, the murder of Thyestes's sons destroys the male lineage which had the potential to threaten Atreus's rule. This ancestral conflict, which involves Thyestes eating his children, haunts the text of the *Oresteia*. I already discussed this ingestion imagery in Chapter 5. Atreus committed the infanticide in order to punish Thyestes for pursuing an adulterous affair with Atreus's wife (*Ag.* 1191-1193). Aigisthos and Thyestes are adulterers; Agamemnon and Atreus are child killers. Sons repeat the transgressive actions of their fathers, just as both Kronos and Zeus mimic their fathers' actions in the *Theogony*.

Violence between the generations is rife in the house of Atreus, symbolised most powerfully by the literal eating of children by a parent. Kronos's swallowing of his children in the *Theogony* is undone when he releases them, but in the mortal realm, a father's consumption of his children cannot be reversed. Thyestes's sons are killed. Kronos and Thyestes are fathers who consume their children. Zeus eats the pregnant Metis in the *Theogony*, preventing the birth of his children.

The merging of child and parent through ingestion brings about ceaseless destruction in the *Oresteia*. The chorus of the *Libation Bearers* surmises that the crimes in the house are all linked: Thyestes' suffering led to Agamemnon's suffering (*Lib.* 1068-1071). Aigisthos claims the murder of Agamemnon as vengeance for the crime Atreus committed against Thyestes (*Ag.* 1604). Klytaimestra depicts her murder of Cassandra as an act of cannibalism, referring to the prophet as a "side-dish" (*παροψώνημα*, *Ag.* 1447). Klytaimestra's metaphorical consumption of Cassandra is associated with the memory of Thyestes's children.⁶⁷ The motif of the sacrificial meal in the *Oresteia* evokes the horror of cannibalism with which the cycle of revenge within the family began.

Klytaimestra cites Atreus's cruel banquet as a precursor to her killing of Agamemnon; Agamemnon's corpse is offered as another alongside the young children

⁶⁷ Pulleyn, 1997, p. 565.

already killed (*Ag.* 1502-1504), Thyestes's sons and Iphigeneia. The chorus adds that the avenging spirit may be seeking justice for the young boys who were made into a meal by Atreus (*Ag.* 1507-1512). The pattern of cyclical revenge resonates with the plot of the *Theogony*. Revenge takes the form of eating in both stories, naturally linking these similar plots for Aischylos's audience.

The birds' eating of the pregnant hare (*Ag.* 119-120) is also part of this motif and begins a series of violent acts as Agamemnon kills Iphigeneia and he is killed in turn. The death of the pregnant hare by Zeus's birds sets up a poetics of swallowing/eating in Aischylos's trilogy, which I suggest subtly evokes Zeus's swallowing of Metis in the *Theogony*. Zeus 'swallows' maternity in both texts. The rejection of succession, whether that is by eating children or pregnant females, situates the *Oresteia* in Hesiodic territory. Apollo's λόγος, in this context, is part of a pattern, whereby Zeus secures authority through controlling childbearing and generational succession.

Double Birth

In Hesiod's accounts of the Metis story, Zeus ingests Metis in order to trap her. Zeus (perhaps unwillingly) then delivers Athena into the cosmos, but Metis remains trapped inside him. Athena's release does not invite negative consequences for Zeus, unlike the release of Kronos's children, but Metis's liberation would bring about the birth of a usurping son. Metis is the threat. While Zeus "gives birth" (γείνατ', *Th.* 924 / ἔτικτε, *Th.* 929λ) to Athena, the logic of the Hesiodic narratives implies that Metis earlier delivers Athena inside Zeus. Athena is released from Zeus as an adult, dressed, in armour and ready to fight. She had the opportunity to be educated by her mother and be given the αἰγίς which Metis makes for her (*Th.* 929θ-σ). According to Homer, Hephaistos produced the αἰγίς for Zeus (*Il.* 15.310), but the Hesiodic tradition describes it as a gift from Metis to her daughter. Owing to this relationship between mother and daughter, Athena is renowned for being πολύμητις (*HH* 28.2), having much μῆτις. She inherited the cunning wisdom of her mother.

It is as though Athena is born twice, first from her mother inside Zeus and then from her father's head. Athena, then, is born from a female and from a male. The motif of double birth is found throughout the *Theogony*. Ouranos hides his progeny inside Gaia where they await their liberation. Kronos similarly hides his children inside himself following their birth from Rhea and they too are born again. Zeus escapes the fate of his

siblings but instead is hidden inside Gaia (*Th.* 483), much like the Titans before him. The double birth motif reveals the poet's interest in sexual reproduction as a process which male and female compete to control. The divinities are not born freely into the cosmos, but are concealed by their fathers on their birth. Men endeavour to control their progeny. In the poem, birth is a process that is disputed. This dispute is then brought onto Aischylos's stage.

Metis's predicament is akin to those divinities that were trapped inside Gaia and Kronos. Her fate also resembles that of the Titans and Prometheus who Zeus binds to prevent them from threatening his authority (*Th.* 715-720). But Metis is imprisoned under Zeus's constant surveillance since she has been incorporated into his body. In this sense, the swallowing of Metis in Hesiod's *Theogony* echoes Ouranos's violent sexual intercourse with Gaia (*Th.* 156-159). The Hesiodic cosmogony begins and ends with the corporeal merging of female and male. The father's wish to control the processes of reproduction materializes as a forceful union of him and his female partner, seeking to eliminate the woman's role in delivering their children. The castration of Ouranos (*Th.* 163-182), on the other hand, represents the separation of male and female which allows the cosmos to evolve. Parental separation and the overthrow of the father generate social transformation. When the mother and father are amalgamated, the prospect of transformation is eradicated.

Zeus's treatment of Metis not only replicates his grandfather's actions but also those of his father. Both Kronos and Zeus commit monstrous acts of swallowing. It is on the advice of Ouranos and Gaia that Zeus consumes Metis (*Th.* 888-893). While Gaia and Ouranos warn both Kronos and Zeus of their destiny, only Zeus receives advice from his grandparents on how to prevent his fate. Zeus succeeds because Ouranos and Gaia are on his side.⁶⁸ Ouranos and Gaia support Rhea to the detriment of Kronos while they support Zeus to the ruin of Metis. Cosmic stability under the rule of Zeus can be achieved only once Gaia no longer favours succession. On her keen-sighted advice, Zeus swallows Metis before she conceives their son. Rather than attempting to remove the usurping son as Ouranos and Kronos did, Zeus disposes of Metis, the prospective mother and source of the threat. Implicit here is the assumption that mothers provide a necessary contribution to procreation; if the mother is removed, the dangerous son cannot be born. Controlling her potency saves the day. In effect, Hesiod's story affirms that a child cannot be created

⁶⁸ Detienne and Vernant, 1991, p. 66.

without a mother, the opposite message to Apollo's λόγος. Zeus is victorious through managing female fecundity.⁶⁹ Likewise, the Olympians will win out in the *Eumenides* through denying mothers their reproductivity.

μητίετα Zeus

The merging of Metis and Zeus not only establishes Zeus's sovereignty but also explains how Zeus received his epithet μητίετα (*Th.* 56, 520, 904, 916; *WD* 104; *Il.* 1.175; *Od.* 14.243) and became the embodiment of μῆτις. Metis's name and her skills are consistently associated with Zeus; μητίετα was a standard epithet for the king of gods. It is μητίετα Zeus who denies Demeter a relationship with her child (*Th.* 914), implicitly associating the subjugation of Demeter with that of Metis. Zeus absorbs the goddess Metis, the personification of μῆτις, and harnesses control over this particular type of intelligence. On appropriating Metis, Zeus is transformed. In essence, Zeus's epithet marks Metis's disappearance; he is μητίετα because he trapped Metis. The cycle of like-for-like vendetta is brought to an end since disputes will be judged thoughtfully within the superior mind of μητίετα Zeus. Metis advises Zeus about what is good and what is evil (*Th.* 900) and she is the "worker of righteousness" (τέκταινα δικαίων, *Th.* 929ξ). The hatred and merciless vengeance which characterized the rules of Ouranos, Kronos and the younger Zeus are replaced by a regime in which forethought and deliberation decide matters. Without Metis, Zeus's sovereignty could neither have been achieved nor maintained. She is the special ingredient that cements his rule.

The principles of βία and δόλος/μῆτις previously fueled the unrelenting process of generational change in the cosmos.⁷⁰ It is owing to their μῆτις that Kronos, Gaia, Rhea, Zeus and Prometheus all threaten authority. Gaia and Ouranos are known for the μῆτις they contrive (*Th.* 471). Both Kronos and Prometheus are ἀγκυλομήτις (*Th.* 473, 546), but are outwitted by Zeus. Prometheus tries to deceive Zeus by hiding a sacrifice (*Th.* 537-539). Zeus, however, "knows eternal counsels" (ἄφθιτα μῆδεα εἰδώς, *Th.* 545, 550) and immediately recognises Prometheus's trick (*Th.* 551). The lesson is clear: though Prometheus "knows counsels beyond all others" (πάντων πέρι μῆδεα εἰδώς, *Th.* 559), he cannot defeat Zeus whose cunning is ἄφθιτα. Both Zeus and Prometheus have μῆδεα, a concept though not etymologically linked with μῆτις is semantically equated in meaning.

⁶⁹ Arthur, 1982, p. 71.

⁷⁰ Clay, 2003, p. 28.

Yet, μητίετα Zeus can even outwit Prometheus, the cleverest of the gods. Other gods practice cunning and are then in turn deceived themselves, but Zeus, it seems, cannot be tricked.⁷¹ When the skills of Metis are brought under Zeus's control, no trickery can occur unbeknownst to him. Since he contains Metis, he, in effect, is her. It is as though Zeus and Metis are ruling together. This is what separates Zeus from his predecessors. Through his seizure of the goddess and her attributes, he can anticipate all threats to his power and bring a stop to conspiracies. While Ouranos and Kronos exercise μητις in a limited capacity, Zeus comes to personify μητις itself.⁷²

In the *Prometheus Bound*, Prometheus tells how it was fated that “it was not by brute strength nor through violence, but by guile that those who should gain the upper hand were destined to prevail” (ὡς οὐ κατ’ ἰσχὺν οὐδὲ πρὸς τὸ καρτερόν / χρεΐη, δόλω δὲ τοὺς ὑπερσχόντας κρατεῖν, *PB* 214-215, trans. Sommerstein, 2008c). Zeus's leadership was won by the force he exacted against the Titans and Typhoeus with Gaia's backing, but his uncontested sovereignty, a status held by no god before him, was achieved by his consumption of Metis. Force is necessary to achieve power but it is not enough to sustain it. Zeus is an invincible sovereign as he ordains a regime in which “it is not possible to deceive or elude the mind of Zeus” (οὐκ ἔστι Διὸς κλέψαι νόον οὐδὲ παρελθεῖν, *Th.* 613).

Yet μητις is an inherently ambivalent concept.⁷³ It is a disorderly force, associated with rebellion and revolution. It overturns hegemonies and established hierarchies, functioning to outwit and surprise those in authority. This is how it functions throughout the *Theogony*. West argues that the ancient Greeks admired μητις above all other mental endowments.⁷⁴ In Pseudo-Apollodoros's retelling of the succession myth, it is Metis, rather than Gaia, who tricks Kronos into releasing his children:

ἐπειδὴ δὲ Ζεὺς ἐγενήθη τέλειος, λαμβάνει Μῆτιν τὴν Ὠκεανοῦ συνεργόν, ἣ δίδωσι Κρόνον καταπιεῖν φάρμακον, ὑφ’ οὗ ἐκεῖνος ἀναγκασθεὶς πρῶτον μὲν ἐξεμεῖ τὸν λίθον, ἔπειτα τοὺς παῖδας οὓς κατέπιε.

But when Zeus was full-grown, he took Metis, daughter of Ocean, to help him, and she gave Kronos a drug to swallow, which forced him to disgorge first the stone and then the children whom he had swallowed.

(Apollod. 1.2.1, trans. Frazer, 1956)

⁷¹ Clay, 2003, p. 18.

⁷² Detienne and Vernant, 1991, pp. 67-68.

⁷³ Brown, 1952, p. 133.

⁷⁴ West, 1966, p. 267.

In Hesiod's *Theogony*, Zeus's sovereignty relies on his control over Metis; this is the foundation of his rule. But μήτις is the very force which seeks to dismantle hierarchies and undermine order. It is a transformative and shifting power, not a stable one. Hence Zeus is in an invisible bind himself. The goddess who is the source of this power is also his ultimate threat. It is only as a result of the constant vigilance which is required to keep Metis subdued inside him that his order appears stable. Simultaneously, Metis is both Zeus's greatest ally and latent destroyer. Zeus's power is reliant on eradicating potential competitors. Hence, his unrelenting task is to displace female fertility, the potential source of a usurping son. Zeus does this in the *Theogony* by binding Metis and by integrating other powerful females, including Gaia, Hecate, Styx and Athena under his rule. This is also what the Olympians do in the *Oresteia*. Zeus is situated in a similar bind with the Erinyes in the *Eumenides* to that found between him and various female divinities in the *Theogony*. He requires the power of the Erinyes to secure his authority, but yet they are a potential danger to him. The older female divinities must remain under his control for him to sustain his unchallenged kingship. Zeus's male ancestors failed in their attempts to control sexual reproduction, but Zeus, while mirroring the actions of his male ancestors, succeeds to a degree that they did not.⁷⁵ However, a new contest could feasibly lead to the overthrow of Zeus.⁷⁶ If Metis herself was tricked, then surely Zeus could be too. After all, Prometheus succeeded in tricking Zeus. Zeus is a contradictory character in this sense, having the divine quality of being impossible to deceive and the human quality of vulnerability.⁷⁷ The possibility that Zeus will be usurped underlies his rule.

Metis and Thetis

Other sources illustrate how threats to Zeus's hegemony occasionally recur. The *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* narrates how Aphrodite had the power to lead Zeus astray. Under the influence of the goddess, Zeus succumbs to his desire for mortal women and forgets his wife (*HH* 10.36-39). To punish Aphrodite for uniting mortal women with the gods, Zeus instills in her longing for Anchises, a mortal man (*HH* 10.45-52). Aphrodite, on becoming pregnant with Anchises's child, vows to no longer boast of her power to bring mortals

⁷⁵ Arthur, 1982, p. 76.

⁷⁶ Munn, 2006, p. 21.

⁷⁷ Lloyd-Jones, 1971, pp. 82-83.

and immortals together (*HH* 10.246-255). She has learnt her lesson. Zeus employs a strategy to eliminate the divine-human liaisons created by Aphrodite. The goddess threatens stability since she inspires sexual unions. In this sense, the story depicts Zeus's attempts to manage the female generative principle. He must stop Aphrodite from inspiring desire in the gods in order to secure order. Clay aligns Aphrodite's power with Metis's: "Aphrodite's weapons are not the masculine arms of strength and force [...]. As such, they resemble the strategems of μήτις, which bring about the defeat of the stronger by means of craft and guile."⁷⁸ Seduction is a form of craftiness. Hence, female sexuality and trickery pose the same challenge to Zeus, a challenge embodied in the goddesses Aphrodite and Metis.

Hesiod's Metis plot is part of a larger constellation of divine succession crises. While Zeus is never dethroned, his sovereignty is brought under threat. In the final lines of Aristophanes's *Birds*, Peisthetairos points out that Athena is an heiress since Zeus has no male heirs (*Birds* 1653). By removing Metis, Zeus assures that no alliance between a mother and her son can threaten his sovereignty. Rather Zeus delivers a loyal daughter who will not compromise his rule.⁷⁹ Hesiod's cosmogony begins with Gaia's delivery of a fatherless son (*Th.* 126) and ends with Zeus's delivery of Athena.⁸⁰ By giving birth to Athena himself, Zeus secures his influence over his daughter and ensures Athena's filial loyalties lie with him. The great power of the warrior Athena will only be exercised in the service of Zeus, Athena's only parent. As Thomas explains, "[Athena] represents the neutralising of the negative aspects of son as successor and deposer, while affirming the positive aspects of son as heir and champion."⁸¹ Athena is the ideal heir. She owes full allegiance to her father since her mother is part of him and her virginity ensures she will never produce a son stronger than Zeus. Athena symbolizes the end of succession disputes in the *Theogony*. Yet, by being born Zeus's inferior, rather than his equal as the prophecy dictated (*Th.* 896), Athena is a reminder of the avoidance of fate upon which Zeus's rule is built. Blickman argues that Athena is born without being harmed, unlike the children of Ouranos and Kronos.⁸² However, Athena is harmed. The goddess, by her very existence, recalls what has been sacrificed under Zeus's regime: Athena's mother, her unborn brother, and her own entitlements to power.

⁷⁸ Clay, 1989, p. 159.

⁷⁹ Arthur, 1982, p. 77.

⁸⁰ Deacy, 2008, p. 30.

⁸¹ Thomas, 1998, p. 211.

⁸² Blickman, 1987, p. 345.

Achilleus too is a symbol of the destiny Zeus avoided. In the *Prometheus Bound*, Prometheus predicts that Zeus will be overthrown by his son (*PB* 764-770, 907-914, 957-959). Prometheus is not referring to the story of Metis, but to another similar story familiar to Athenians. Pindar tells his fuller version in the *Isthmian Odes*:

ταῦτα καὶ μακάρων ἐμέμναντ' ἀγοραί,
 Ζεὺς ὄτ' ἀμφὶ Θέτιος ἀγλαός τ' ἔρισαν Ποσειδᾶν γάμῳ,
 ἄλοχον εὐειδέ' ἐθέλων ἐκάτερος
 ἐὰν ἔμμεν· ἔρωσ γὰρ ἔχεν.
 ἀλλ' οὐ σφιν ἄμβροτοι τέλεσαν εὐνὰν θεῶν πραπίδες,
 ἐπεὶ θεσφάτων ἐπάκουσαν· εἶπε δ'
 εὐβουλος ἐν μέσοισι Θέμις,
 οὔνεκεν πεπρωμένον ἦν φέρτερον γόνον ἄνακτα πατρὸς τεκεῖν
 ποντίαν θεόν, ὃς κεραυνοῦ τε κρέσσον ἄλλο βέλος
 διώξει χερὶ τριόδοντός τ' ἀμαιμακέτου, Δί τε μισγομένην ἢ Διὸς παρ'
 ἀδελφείοισιν.—‘ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν παύσατε: βροτέων δὲ λεχέων τυχοῖσα
 υἱὸν εἰσιδέτω θανόντ' ἐν πολέμῳ,
 χεῖρας Ἄρεϊ τ' ἐναλίγκιον στεροπαῖσι τ' ἀκμὰν ποδῶν.
 τὸ μὲν ἐμὸν Πηλεΐ γάμου θεόμορον
 ὀπάσσαι γέρας Αἰακίδα.

Even the assembly of the blessed gods remembered this, when Zeus and splendid Poseidon quarrelled over marriage to Thetis, each wishing her to be his own beautiful wife, because love held them in its grip. But the gods' immortal minds did not accomplish that wedlock for them, when they heard what was ordained. For wise-counseling Themis said in their midst that it was fated for the goddess of the sea to bear a royal son mightier than his father, who would wield another kind of weapon stronger than the thunderbolt or the tireless trident, if she was joined to Zeus or to Zeus's brothers. "Come, stop this. Let her win a mortal's bed and see her son die in war, a match for Ares with his hands, and like lightening in the power of his feet. My advice is to grant the divine gift of this marriage to Aiakos's son Peleus."

(Pind. *I.* 8.26-39, trans. Race, 2006)

Themis fears that Zeus will marry Thetis and be overthrown by their son. To prevent the prophecy from being fulfilled, Thetis is married to a mortal Peleus, resulting in the birth of Achilleus, whose mortality ensures he can never overpower Zeus. Hesiod also tells how Achilleus is the son of Thetis and Peleus, adding that Peleus took the goddess by force (*Th.* 1006-1007).

When Homer introduces Achilleus as Peleus's son in the first line of the *Iliad*, his audience are immediately reminded of how the hero was fated to defeat the king of the gods had Zeus not altered destiny. Thetis laments how she was forced to marry a mortal (*Il.* 18.429-34). She has suffered in the course of Zeus's attempts to protect his hegemony.

The goddess emphasises her role in creating her son. She produced (τίκτω) Achilleus, he grew like a shoot (ἔρνος), and she nourished (τρέφω) him, but she grieves how he will never return home from Troy (*Il.* 18.55-60). The same parenting vocabulary appears in Apollo's λόγος, perhaps evoking the close bond between Thetis and Achilleus in the *Iliad*, thus revealing the severe implications of Apollo's biological theory for mother-child relationships.

Since Zeus rejected Thetis, giving her to Peleus, her maternal labours brought forth a mortal child. Her bond with her son will be severed by his death owing to Zeus's actions. The relationship between mother and son is crucial in the epic. Thetis is the hero's advisor and represents him on Olympus. It is owing to Thetis that Achilleus is a great warrior, but also owing to her marriage, he is plagued by the human condition of mortality. Zeus's refusal to marry Thetis in favour of maintaining his rule has profound consequences for the hero. Achilleus will die; his mortality is a central issue of the epic.⁸³ His mortality leaves him with two fates as predicted by his mother: he will achieve eternal glory through his death at Troy or he will live a long unremarkable life at home (*Il.* 9.410-416). Achilleus's crisis follows on from Zeus's response to the threat of succession.

Thetis is the link between Zeus who will rule eternally, and Achilleus, who in consequence of Zeus's rule, must choose how to end his life. Achilleus believes Zeus owes him honour since he will only have a short life (*Il.* 1.352-356). Achilleus's mortality and Thetis's influence over Zeus continuously point back to the divine succession story. In fact, the Trojan War is intimately connected with the succession myth since the judgement of Paris occurred at the wedding of Thetis and Peleus (*Il.* 24.25-30). Proclus claims in his summary of the *Cypria* that Zeus and Themis planned the war together. Pseudo-Apollodoros narrates how Eris arrived at the wedding and offered the prize of a golden apple to the most beautiful goddess, indicating Paris as the judge. Paris chose Aphrodite as she promised him Helen of Sparta in exchange (*Apollod. Epit.* 3.2). Thus, Paris went to Sparta and took Helen, igniting Menelaos's rage. At the wedding of Thetis and Peleus, which marks Zeus's avoidance of succession, Eris emerges to wreak havoc for mortals. Mortals, like Achilleus and Paris, suffer in the name of Zeus's rule.

Features of the Thetis story closely resemble the Metis plot. Like Metis, Thetis is a powerful force. Thetis holds favour with Zeus because she freed him from the

⁸³ Slatkin, 1991, p. 48.

Olympians' bonds (*Il.* 1.393-412). She rescued Zeus from a rebellion by Poseidon, Athena and Hera. In essence, she has the power to prevent or bring about Zeus's fall from power. Both Thetis and Metis are dangerous since they have the power to produce sons stronger than Zeus. One story evokes the other, and one goddess the other, forming a pattern of succession crises. The myth of the struggle for divine sovereignty is fundamental.⁸⁴ This is the backdrop to Aischylos's *Eumenides* and Apollo's relegating of mothers. Apollo's λόγος, I argue, is naturally related to the divine succession plot and Zeus's refusal to pass on his power.

Before describing Iphigeneia's sacrifice, the chorus in the *Agamemnon* tangentially remind the audience of Hesiod's divine succession plot, referring to how Zeus achieved his sovereignty through the displacement and imprisonment of his father, Kronos. The chorus narrate how Zeus succeeded his grandfather and father, and brought suffering to mankind (*Ag.* 167-178). Under the reign of Zeus, the will of the gods is imposed upon humans by force (*Ag.* 182). In Hesiod's *Works and Days*, the poet tells how humans enjoyed a golden age of abundance under the rule of Kronos (*WD* 109-120), but Zeus's reign marked a new era of punishment for mortals (*WD* 238-247). Aischylos's account of the divine succession is distinctively Hesiodic, indicating that Hesiod's story holds significance for Aischylos's.

The poet's positioning of the succession myth at this point of the choral ode isolates the relationship between child and father as destructive. It may remind the audience that Ouranos, Kronos and Zeus all endeavoured to rid of their children in order to protect and advance their own power. They also overthrow their fathers. It will transpire that Agamemnon sacrificed his child rather than surrender at Aulis. Through referencing Hesiodic material, Aischylos is building an image of fathers as highly malevolent. Agamemnon's behaviour is being implicitly compared to the past actions of divine kings, isolating Hesiod's succession plot as a paradigm for interpreting Aischylos's tale. Importantly, the Hesiodic succession plot points to the story of Metis. Zeus's swallowing of Metis brought succession to an end. Implicit in Aischylos's recollection of the succession plot is a reminder of the story of Athena's mother, the story which will later be omitted by Apollo and Athena.

⁸⁴ Slatkin, 1991, p. 14.

Athena and Hephaistos

The association between Athena and Hephaistos's births in the *Theogony* develops the conflict over succession. In Hesiod's *Theogony* 929α-τ, Athena's birth is directly linked to Hera's lone creation of Hephaistos (*Th.* 929α-φ). These events are implicitly related too in the *Theogony* 886-929. Hesiod tells how Hera "was furious and contended with her husband" (καὶ ζαμένησε καὶ ἤρισεν ᾧ παρακοίτη, *Th.* 928). Hera enacts ἐρίζω; she "quarrels," "contends," "engages in a contest" with Zeus. The verb ἐρίζω is related to ἔρις, "strife" or "rivalry." Hera's ἔρις manifests as asexual reproduction. Autonomous procreation is explicitly a competitive act. The same verb ἐρίζω features in the *Theogony* 929α-τ. Hera enacts ἐρίζω (*Th.* 929α); she contends with her husband. In this account, Hera displays ἔρις before Zeus joins with Metis. Hence, Hera is not reacting to the birth of Athena, but nonetheless, she produces a child in order to compete with her husband. It is unclear why she is angry at him. The mention of the births of Athena and Hephaistos together in the *Theogony* suggests there was a dispute between Zeus and Hera over their respective reproductivity.⁸⁵ Hence, for Greeks, childbearing is associated with conflicts for power. Apollo's appeal to a theory of male procreative autonomy, then, is easily interpreted as a quest for power. Pseudo-Apollodoros likewise links the births of Athena and Hephaistos (Apollod. 1.3.5-6). In the Greek poetic imagination, there is a clear parallel between the geneses of the two divinities. In the Hesiodic corpus, antagonism between their parents, Hera and Zeus, takes the form of an ἔρις, recalling the pattern of contest between male and female throughout the *Theogony*.⁸⁶ What is at stake in this ἔρις is the production of children.

Hera proves her reproductive autonomy by producing Hephaistos. She displays greater fecundity than Zeus as she gives birth to Hephaistos without coitus (οὐ φιλότητι μυγεῖσα, *Th.* 927). Hesiod's account of Hephaistos's birth departs from the *Iliad*. In the *Iliad*, Hephaistos is simply the son of Zeus and Hera (*Il.* 1.575). Pseudo-Apollodoros records both versions as alternatives (Apollod. 1.3.5-6). Hesiod, on the other hand, creates a clear opposition: Athena is father-born while Hephaistos is mother-born. Zeus's creation of Athena, however, is preceded by a sexual union with Metis who conceives, gestates, and I suggest, delivers Athena. Zeus is not an autonomous progenitor. Hence, I suggest that the story of Athena's birth, when situated alongside the story of Hephaistos's

⁸⁵ Athanassakis, 1989, p. 7.

⁸⁶ Clay, 2003, pp. 162-163.

birth, does not convey Zeus as in charge of the production of children. Hera can produce Hephaistos on her own while Zeus is forced to swallow Metis in fear of her unborn son. It is as though Zeus is surrounded by women more potent than him.

Arthur argues that Zeus's consumption of Metis reverses the pattern of female parthenogenesis in the *Theogony*; the birth of the female from the male signifies the complete transformation of the cosmos.⁸⁷ Thomas concurs that Zeus resolves the tension between fathers and mothers which characterizes the plot of the *Theogony*.⁸⁸ However, I suggest that the opposition between male and female is not truly resolved. The genesis of Hephaistos is a counterpart to the birth of Athena, as already stated, and both births demonstrate the necessity of female involvement in the process of sexual reproduction. Metis is still a part of Zeus and he requires her for his power.

It has been suggested that Hera's act of lone creation brings forth a god inferior to Zeus's Athena since Hephaistos is lame.⁸⁹ Hesiod describes Hephaistos as ἀμφιγυῆεις (*Th.* 571, 579), but does not indicate that he was lame from birth. In Homer's *Iliad*, however, it is clear that Hephaistos was born lame. The god honours Thetis for rescuing him after Hera threw him to the sea since she was ashamed of his disability (*Il.* 18.395-405). Thetis, here, is the nurse of Hera's unwanted son, just as she nurses Achilleus, the son Zeus did not want. However, there is no hint that Hephaistos's lameness makes him inferior in the final lines of Hesiod's poem. Hesiod describes Hephaistos as "expert with his skilled hands beyond all of Sky's descendants" (ἐκ πάντων τέκνησι κεκασμένον Οὐρανιῶνων, *Th.* 929). Homer records how a man who is taught the crafts of both Hephaistos and Athena produces the greatest work (*Od.* 6.232-234). Athena and Hephaistos are equals; she is renowned for her pursuits in war (*Th.* 925-926) and he is famous for his skills as a craftsman.

Further, Pontos's delivery of Nereus (*Th.* 233) is a precedent to Zeus's pregnancy and occurs during an earlier and more primitive stage of the ordering of the cosmos.⁹⁰ Hence, male pregnancy does not represent a progression but rather a regression to an earlier stage in the formation of the cosmos. Hera's act of asexual creation also has primitive antecedents. Matrilineal lineage is pronounced throughout the poem. Zeus's delivery of Athena does not end the contest between mothers and fathers over creation. Hence, Zeus will go on in other texts to fear the threat posed by childbearing to his rule.

⁸⁷ Arthur, 1982, p. 77.

⁸⁸ Thomas, 1998, p. 210.

⁸⁹ Thomas, 1998, pp. 218, n. 229.

⁹⁰ Clay, 2003, pp. 28, n. 46.

The female regenerative element embodied by Metis is brought under control in the *Theogony*, but sexual reproduction continues to be a source of dispute for the divinities. The opposition between Athena as father-born and Hephaistos as mother-born at the close of the *Theogony* suggests the contest between male and female is far from over. Hera's ἔρις attests to this.

Clay demonstrates how the catalogue of marriages (*Th.* 930-961) serves to reconcile Zeus and Hera by uniting their children. Further, Athena and Hephaistos work together to create Pandora, the mortal female (*Th.* 513-616).⁹¹ In Homer's *Iliad*, Zeus is depicted as frightened of Hera (*Il.* 1.396-406, 15.18-25); he never gains comfortable control over her.⁹² This fits with the pattern of relationships explored in the *Theogony*; Zeus is eternally fearful of the potential for divine mothers to give birth to a new power which will be set against him.

Cosmic Justice to Athenian Justice

In Hesiod's cosmos, cyclical revolution is superseded by fixed government once Zeus swallows Metis. Zeus's second marriage in the *Theogony* is to Themis, the personification of divine law, with whom he produces Dike, Justice herself (*Th.* 901-903). Thus, the swallowing of Metis inspires a new concept of justice. Since Zeus has acquired Metis's wisdom, he no longer relies on the ideology of vendetta. I suggest that it is Hesiod's vision of Zeus's triumph over disparate forces and implementation of justice which Aischylos situates in the context of the Athenian *polis*.

In the *Eumenides*, the foundation of the Areiopagos court in Athens signals a new era of justice. Aischylos depicts Zeus, the king of the gods, as the guardian of the new justice system, associating the justice of the cosmos with Athenian litigation. Though Zeus never appears as a character, he ultimately provides the evidence in Orestes's trial (*Eum.* 797) and sends Apollo as Orestes's advocate (*Eum.* 713). The arguments presented by the defense in the trial are spoken by Apollo but are repeatedly attributed to Zeus. In the prologue of the *Eumenides*, the Pythia, mouthpiece of Apollo, explains how Apollo is Zeus's "spokesman" (προφήτης, *Eum.* 19). Apollo claims that Orestes is under Zeus's protection; it is Zeus's will that Orestes be acquitted (*Eum.* 92). Apollo later warns the jurors that he speaks the will of Zeus (*Eum.* 618). Athena likewise explains that the

⁹¹ Clay, 2003, pp. 162-163.

⁹² Slater, 1992, p. 134.

evidence presented in the trial originates from her father (*Eum.* 797). In effect, Zeus is the source of Apollo's claim that men dominate sexual reproduction. Zeus is the architect of the trial and its outcome. He is absent yet he is the most powerful figure behind the trial. The decision of the democratic court and the will of Zeus are one and the same. The court is a vehicle of Zeus's rule.

As the Erinyes accept residence in Athens, they mention how Zeus too lives in the *polis* (*Eum.* 916-918). He is in the background throughout the trilogy. The herald in the *Agamemnon* asserts that Zeus will decide if Menelaos and his family line will survive (*Ag.* 677). Orestes tells how Zeus is watching over all the events (*Lib.* 985). As Athena attempts to persuade the Erinyes to accept defeat, she informs them that she trusts in Zeus (*Eum.* 826). Athena is abiding Zeus's order. Hence, when she eventually appeases the Erinyes, the goddess can claim that the victory belongs to Zeus (*Eum.* 973). The pacification of the Erinyes is Zeus's achievement.

Zeus is as powerful in the *Oresteia* as he is in the *Theogony*. Aischylos's audience has long been prepared to accept Zeus as the mastermind behind the trilogy's conclusion. The chorus in the *Agamemnon* claims Zeus directs the entire cycle of revenge which afflicts the House of Atreus:

διαὶ Διὸς
παναιτίου πανεργέτα
τί γὰρ βροτοῖς ἄνευ Διὸς τελεῖται;
τί τῶνδ' οὐ θεόκραντόν ἐστιν;

All by the will of Zeus,
the Cause of all things, the Effector of all effects;
for what comes to pass for mortals, except by Zeus's doing?
what of all this is not divinely ordained? (*Ag.* 1485-1488)

Punishment and fear of punishment are central principles in Zeus's government (*Ag.* 1560-1564). The chorus in the *Agamemnon* warns Klytaimestra that she will "suffer stroke in return for stroke" (τύμμα τύμματι τεῖσαι, *Ag.* 1430). The same understanding of justice which grounds Klytaimestra's dissent spells her doom. At different points in the drama, both Klytaimestra and Agamemnon acknowledge that their actions may lead to their own downfalls (*Ag.* 1567, 206-209). Every act has consequences in the world Aischylos depicts. Zeus is likewise merciless in the *Prometheus Bound*. Hephaistos suggests that Zeus is harsh because he is new to power (*PB* 35). The daughters of Oceanos bemoan that Zeus rules arbitrarily and has forsaken the old powers (*PB* 150-

151). The supreme god in Aischylos's universe is Zeus. Other gods are powerful, but Zeus determines events.⁹³ Lloyd-Jones confirms that this vision of Zeus comes from Hesiod.⁹⁴ All references to Zeus's rule and justice in the *Oresteia* point back to Hesiod since it was there that his law was established. Aischylos's politics is shaped by Hesiod's theology. Having firmly established the influence of Hesiod on Aischylos's drama, the aim of the final chapter of this dissertation will be to suggest how this intertextuality effects interpretation of the *Oresteia*. In Chapters 4 and 5, I showed how Aischylos unsettles Apollo's theory of female biological inferiority by situating it in a context of imagery and language which affirms the importance of the mother and child bond. Chapters 6 to 8 are concerned with unravelling Apollo's proof for his theory, Athena's birth. I argue that Apollo's proof is problematic as the audience have been primed to compare it with Hesiod's very different version of the tale. Chapter 8 focuses on how the playwright challenges the audience by reinterpreting Hesiod.

⁹³ Lloyd-Jones, 1971, p. 87.

⁹⁴ Lloyd-Jones, 1971, p. 86.

Chapter 8

The μήτις of the *Oresteia*

The *Theogony*, as argued in Chapter 7, is Aischylos's model. Aischylos brings the contest over creation and power in Hesiod's *Theogony* onto the Athenian stage. While Aischylos relies heavily on Hesiod to structure his plot and build his characters, his departures from Hesiod are most illuminating. Aischylos sets up Hesiod as the audience's interpretative frame, but at key moments challenges Hesiod with interesting effect. While the drama echoes the *Theogony*, Aischylos is not simply reproducing its message or offering testament to Hesiod. Aischylos mirrors Hesiod with a purpose. The intertextuality at play in the *Oresteia* creates opportunities to explore Olympian ideology and its place in Athenian society. In this chapter, I shall look closely at how Aischylos creates ambiguity and unsettles his audience through gesturing to and contradicting Hesiod.

In the opening of the *Eumenides*, the Pythia acts as a storyteller. She tells the history of the oracle at Delphi (*Eum.* 1-8) which she knows from a λόγος (*Eum.* 4). The Pythia records how Gaia passed the prophetic seat to her daughter Themis, which then passed to Gaia's other daughter Phoebe (*Eum.* 1-7). The seat was given from one goddess to the next. Here, the playwright depicts a peaceful succession whereby each goddess graciously gives the seat to another. Notably, the genealogy originates from Hesiod (*Th.* 135-136). The peaceful female succession stands in stark contrast to Aischylos's description of the violently competitive male divine succession (*Ag.* 167-183). The reference to the succession at Delphi perhaps reminds Aischylos's audience of how Gaia supports succession in Hesiod's *Theogony*, while the male gods seek to avoid it.

The Pythia goes on to explain how Phoebe gave the seat at Delphi to Apollo as a birthday gift, explaining how Apollo received her name as his epithet (*Eu.* 7-8). Critics point out how this description differs greatly from other versions of the story where Apollo aggressively took the Delphic oracular chair (*HH* 10.300-374, Pindar fr. 55, *IT* 1234-1283).¹ Aischylos stresses that the succession at Delphi occurred without force (*Eum.* 5). I suggest Aischylos is preparing the audience to notice the effect of his deviations from traditional stories. The playwright has created a new story of Apollo's accession in Delphi which differs from the story which the audience expect to hear.

¹ Podlecki, 1989, p. 129.

Apollo is presented as the grateful receiver of a gift, rather than a violent usurper. This innovation interestingly functions to emphasise the bond between Apollo and his maternal lineage. His position in Delphi is wholly reliant on his female ancestors. Women can not be so easily rejected as Apollo later attempts to do.

Myth as μάρτυς

In the midst of the trial scene, Aischylos returns to Hesiod's account of the divine competition for rule of the cosmos. Immediately prior to Apollo's λόγος, an explicit reference to the succession disputes in Hesiod's *Theogony* features in the *agōn* between Apollo and the Erinyes. The arrangement of the arguments is crucial. Apollo claims that Zeus supports fathers and is not concerned with the rights of mothers (*Eum.* 625). The bond between child and father, it is implied, must be respected above all other familial loyalties. In response, the Erinyes challenge Apollo:

πατὴρὸς προτιμᾷ Ζεὺς μόρον τῷ σῶ λόγῳ·
αὐτὸς δ' ἔδησε πατέρα πρεσβύτην Κρόνον.
πῶς ταῦτα τούτοις οὐκ ἐναντίως λέγεις;

On your account, Zeus sets a higher value on the death of a father. Yet he himself imprisoned his old father, Kronos. Isn't your statement in contradiction with that?

(*Eum.* 640-642, trans. Sommerstein, 2008b)

Here, Hesiodic myth is offered as testimony in the trial, only twenty lines before Apollo delivers his λόγος. The Erinyes ask the jury and audience to witness it, using the verb μαρτύρομαι, the action of a μάρτυς (*Eum.* 643). This anticipates Athena becoming Apollo's μάρτυς in the next passage. The story of Kronos is the Erinyes' τεκμήριον, the story of Athena's birth is Apollo's. The *Theogony* is activated as the audience's interpretative frame immediately prior to Apollo's λόγος. In this way, the audience is primed to interpret Apollo's telling of the story of Athena's birth as a manipulation of Hesiod's story.

The story of the binding of Kronos is known from Hesiod's *Theogony* (717-720). The anecdote when placed at this point in the *Eumenides* defies Apollo's claim that Zeus favours fathers. The story of Kronos's defeat makes clear the real motivations behind the Olympian preference for fathers in the *Eumenides*: Zeus requires the loyalty

of his children if his hegemony is to remain intact. The Erinyes' allusion to the story of Kronos's downfall at this crucial point in the drama also explicitly recalls how Zeus came to power within the context of a succession dispute. Just as the House of Argos has been plagued by familial violence, Zeus's background is also one of familial conflict. If the audience here recalls the full story of Zeus's accession, they will realise that Zeus's relationship with his father wholly contradicts Apollo's claims regarding the sanctity of the bond between father and child. Not only did Zeus bind his father, but he did so in self-defence. Zeus only prevailed over his father's wrath to become king because his mother and his grandmother protected him. Further, the kings' greatest threat is their sons. As the story of Metis illustrates, Zeus is destined to be overthrown by his son, just as his father and grandfather were before him. Hesiod's succession myth explains Zeus's attempt to undermine mothers and control the female generative principle.

In Aristophanes's *Clouds*, the Erinyes' τεκμήριον in the *Eumenides* is reproduced.² During a debate over whether justice exists, the Weaker Argument asks: "if that's where justice is, then how come Zeus hasn't been destroyed for chaining up his own father?" (πῶς δῆτα δίκης οὔσης ὁ Ζεὺς / οὐκ ἀπόλωλεν τὸν πατέρ' αὐτοῦ / δήσας; *Clouds* 904-906, trans. Henderson, 1998). In reaction, the Stronger Argument rebukes the Weaker Argument for employing this form of testimony (*Clouds* 907-908). Aristophanes shows how rhetoric can be used to justify the weaker argument, rendering persuasion more powerful than justice.³ Hesiod's story of Zeus's binding of Kronos is also presented as evidence by Euthyphro in Plato's dialogue. Euthyphro offers the story as testimony in defence of his prosecution of his father (*Euth.* 6a). Sokrates refutes Euthyphro, arguing that the war between the gods did not happen and is only a tale (*Euth.* 6b). The use of myth as court evidence is a weak strategy, but myth is the primary material of both the defence and the prosecution in Aischylos's trial scene.

Apollo's response to the Erinyes is important too. Apollo defends Zeus:

πέδας μὲν ἄν λύσειεν, ἔστι τοῦδ' ἄκος
καὶ κάρτα πολλὴ μηχανὴ λυτήριος
ἄνδρὸς δ' ἐπειδὴν αἴμ' ἀνασπάσῃ κόνις
ἄπαξ θανόντος, οὔτις ἔστ' ἀνάστασις.

² Podlecki, 1989, p. 177.

³ McDonald, 2010, p. 474.

Fetters he can undo: there is a cure for that affliction, and many a device for getting him released. But when once a man had died, and the dust has sucked up his blood, there is no rising again. (*Eum.* 645-648)

Apollo challenges the Erinyes by pointing out that Zeus's treatment of his father is not a useful analogy for judging homicide. Murder has no counterpart in the divine world since only mortals die. Apollo has in effect pre-empted the fallacy in his λόγος which follows. By the same logic, Athena's miraculous birth is not appropriate testimony in a human trial. Apollo has shown that appealing to stories about the divine world cannot clarify human dilemmas. Divine precedents are always contestable and do not apply to human experience in any straightforward way. The gods are distinctly different since they are immortal.

Even before defending his λόγος as the "correct" one (ὀρθῶς, *Eum.* 657), divine stories have been unravelled as a problematic μάρτυς. The persuasive speeches of Apollo and Athena avoid the reality of death and succession which face humans, and moreover, the intense emotions which only humans experience in this regard. The herald in the *Agamemnon* expresses the emotional separation between gods and mortals: "who, except the gods, is free from pain for the whole of his lifetime?" (τίς δὲ πλὴν θεῶν / ἅπαντ' ἀπήμων τὸν δι' αἰῶνος χρόνον; *Ag.* 553-554). Mortals are vulnerable and have a strong awareness of their powerlessness.⁴ Their gods enjoy freedom from vulnerability. The gods in the *Eumenides* replace the human emotional dilemmas explored in the trilogy, dilemmas centred on the relationship between mother and child, with a fictional hypothesis of a world in which humans have no reliance upon the maternal body.

The murder of Agamemnon symbolises the subordination of fathers, which destabilizes the very conditions of Zeus's hegemony. Zeus's logic in the *Eumenides*, as articulated by Apollo, very much belongs to the territory of the *Theogony*. The belittling of mothers and the necessity to defend the bond between child and father are strategies employed to protect Zeus's power. The audience is alerted that Zeus is repeating the strategy he employed in the *Theogony* to bring an end to political revolutions in the *Oresteia*. I suggest that the Erinyes' added call to the jurors to witness their accusation adds emphasis to this section (*Eum.* 643). The text encourages the audience to see how Hesiod's text is mobilized as a means for the Erinyes to successfully challenge Apollo. Twenty lines later, Apollo announces his theory of male biological superiority and

⁴ Davies, 1997, p. 43.

narrates the story of Athena's birth as proof for his claim, which could likewise be countered by another Hesiodic narrative, the myth of Metis. Notably the Erinyes are interrupted and do not respond. Apollo bribes Athena (*Eum.* 667-673) and she brings the proceedings to an end (*Eum.* 673-5). I suggest that the text has led the audience to expect that the Erinyes will contradict Apollo again by appealing to the story of Metis.

Further, the phrasing adopted by Apollo to announce Athena as the proof of his λόγος (*Eum.* 664-6) could have operated to remind the audience that Metis is Athena's mother. Apollo refers to Zeus as "Olympian Zeus" (Ὀλυμπίου Διός, *Eum.* 664). In hexameter poetry, διός is customarily accompanied by the epithet αἰγίοχος. Throughout Hesiod's *Theogony*, Zeus is addressed by this epithet (*Th.* 11, 13, 24, 50, 735, 918, 966, 1022). Aeschylus appears to deliberately replace "aegis-bearing" with "Olympian." An Athenian audience, rehearsed in the epithets of their gods, may have observed this amendment. The epithet "Olympian" appears in the *Theogony* on only three occasions. It is first used of Zeus in the context of his rise to power which sees him coaxing the gods to support him against the Titans (*Th.* 390). It is then used to refer to Zeus in his involvement with the liberation of Prometheus (*Th.* 529). The final, climatic usage of the epithet occurs when Zeus has defeated the Titans and is installed as king of the gods. The story of Metis immediately follows the reference (*Th.* 881-886). In the *Eumenides*, "aegis-bearing" is replaced with "Olympian" with the effect of evoking the climax of Hesiod's succession story and Metis.

Immediately thereafter, Apollo claims "no goddess" could have bore Athena (οὐτις [...] θεά, *Eum.* 666). If the audience is already thinking about the story of Metis here, Apollo's explicit negation that a goddess could have given birth to Athena can only remind of how Zeus prevented Metis's labour. Likewise, Athena's later negation that "no mother" produced her (μήτηρ...οὐτις, *Eum.* 736) paradoxically recalls the swallowing of Metis. Through the arrangement of his references to Hesiod, Aeschylus has made it clear that Apollo and Athena are deceptive orators, telling lies for their own ends. Hesiod's Zeus swallows Metis; Aeschylus's Apollo and Athena omit her. However, by evoking Hesiod's *Theogony*, but then denying Metis in the *Eumenides*, Aeschylus makes Zeus's strategy apparent for his audience. The layout of the scene is designed to generate unease. The Olympians in the *Eumenides* have removed the story of Metis. Swallowing has become a narrative strategy. They are engaged in their own creative theogony, using storytelling for their purpose of winning power.

Goddess Night

From the beginning of the *Eumenides*, Aischylos encourages his audience to think about Hesiod's genealogies. Orestes calls to Athena: "but whether she is in a region of the land of Africa, close by the stream of her natal river Triton [...] may she come here" (ἀλλ' εἴτε χώρας ἐν τόποις Λιβυστικοῖς / Τρίτωνος ἀμφὶ χεῦμα γενεθλίου πόρου / [...] ἔλθοι, *Eum.* 292-297). By alluding to the river Triton, Orestes evokes the tradition of Athena's birth attributed to Hesiod (*Th.* 929μ). Athena is also referred to as τριτογένεια in the Metis episode in Hesiod's *Theogony* (895), suggesting the river Triton was considered the place of her birth here too. Appearing on stage, Athena alludes to her "aegis" (αἰγίδος, *Eum.* 404). Hesiod claims Metis to be the designer of the aegis which she gave to Athena (*Th.* 929ς). Hence, Athena's reference may echo Hesiod's account of Metis.

Athena's first speech interestingly turns to the subject of origins. Athena does not recognize the Erinyes and asks them to explain what race they belong to (*Eum.* 408-412). The Erinyes address Athena as "daughter of Zeus" (Διὸς κόρη, *Eum.* 415) and explain how they are the children of Night (*Eum.* 416), pushing an opposition between Athena's father and the Erinyes' mother. Aischylos has deviated from Hesiod in his accounts of the geneses of both Athena and the Erinyes. The text introduces here how it will play with genealogies, a topic that will later become crucial to Athena's decision to support Orestes and reject the Erinyes' pleas.

As already outlined, the birth of the Erinyes in the *Theogony* occurs alongside the beginning of the cycle of vengeance in the poem. In the *Oresteia*, the Erinyes also enact revenge but Aischylos departs from Hesiod's account of their origins. According to Aischylos, the Erinyes are the children of Night (*Eum.* 321-322, 415-417). Night is first mentioned in the trilogy as Zeus's ally. The chorus of elders tell how Zeus and Night won the Trojan War for the Greeks: "O Zeus the king, and friendly Night, winner of great glories" (ὦ Ζεῦ βασιλεῦ καὶ Νύξ φιλία / μεγάλων κόσμων κτεάτειπα, *Ag.* 355-356, trans. Sommerstein, 2008b). They are depicted in unison.

Other sources suggest that Night was a central power in Greek cosmogonies. Zeus respects her in Homer's *Iliad* (14.259-261). In the theogonies attributed to Orpheus, she is a powerful primordial deity with a leading role. In Aristophanes's *Birds*, the chorus details a possible Orphic theogony which tells how Night came into existence before

Gaia and Ouranos; she is the source of the cosmos (*Birds* 694-704).⁵ In Hesiod's *Theogony*, Night is the daughter of Chaos (*Th.* 123) and she asexually engenders many dark forces (*Th.* 211-225). She inhabits the furthest edges of the cosmos and is described as an ominous power: "the terrible houses of dark Night stand here, shrouded in black clouds" (Νυκτὸς ἐρεμνῆς οἰκία δεινὰ / ἔστηκεν νεφέλης κεκαλυμμένα κυανέησι, *Th.* 744-745, trans. Most, 2006).

Aischylos's audience know from Hesiod that Night and the line of Chaos are powerful divinities separate from and not included in the Olympian order. Solmsen argues that Aischylos's drama follows on from Hesiod and illustrates the means by which this line comes to be integrated in Zeus's regime, just as other dominant immortals are subsumed under the Olympian order in Hesiod's *Theogony*.⁶ Aischylos's aim, in this reading, is to complete Hesiod's vision of cosmic stability under the rule of Zeus. I suggest that the inclusion of the figure of Night has a different purpose and crucial implications.

As a primordial deity, who is depicted as equal to Zeus in the *Agamemnon*, Night is not a force to be ignored. Zeus is a father while Night is a mother. Their children compete to decide what is just in the *Eumenides*. Aischylos has built an opposition between the Erinyes and the Olympians, manifesting as a split between a powerful mother (Night) and father (Zeus). This dichotomy between maternal and paternal is a replay of the pattern of conflicts between divine mothers and fathers in Hesiod's *Theogony*.

This antagonism in the *Eumenides* is reinforced by the gross visible appearance of the Erinyes (*Eum.* 52-56). They must remain entirely apart from the feasts and festivities of the Olympians (*Eum.* 349-352). Just prior to and during the trial scene in the *Eumenides*, the function of the Erinyes is more restricted than at any other point in the trilogy. They clarify that they are pursuing Orestes because he killed his blood-kin; they did not punish Klytaimestra since she did not murder a biological relation (*Eum.* 605). They are only concerned with murders by kin (*Eum.* 212). Yet they concede that Klytaimestra's death has freed her from persecution (*Eum.* 603); she was damned for committing a non-kin murder. As the Erinyes hypothesize the loss of justice their demise would bring about, they mention how it is both parents, fathers and mothers, who rely on them (*Eum.* 513-514). The Erinyes' particular interest in crimes between

⁵ Dunbar, 1995, p. 440.

⁶ Solmsen, 1995, p. 185.

blood-kin does not replace their broader function as a punitive body but rather stresses the contest over parenting in the play. The restriction of their role begins a dialogue leading to Orestes questioning his biological relationship with his mother (*Eum.* 606). Also, it clearly establishes that there is something unique about the link between Klytimestra and the Erinyes. The chorus are willing to defend her above Agamemnon. This situates them as a force which promotes mothers over fathers. It is a “mother’s blood” which motivates their actions (αἷμα μητρῶον, *Eum.* 230, 261). Structurally, the restriction reinforces an opposition between the Erinyes and the Olympians.

By employing the figure of Night, Aischylos is able to elaborate this polarization even further. The Erinyes refer to themselves as the Curses (Ἀραί, *Eum.* 417). Orestes also recognizes the Erinyes as the Curses (*Lib.* 406). Aischylos associates the Erinyes and Curses in the *Seven Against Thebes* when Eteocles calls: “mighty Curse and Fury of my father” (Ἀρά τ’ Ἐρινύς πατρὸς ἡ μεγασθενής, *Sept.* 70, trans. Sommerstein, 2008c). Also in the *Seven Against Thebes*, the chorus aligns the Erinyes and the Keres: “O you vaunting destroyers of families, Keres, Furies” (ὦ μέγανλοι καὶ φθερσιγενεῖς / Κῆρες Ἐρινύες, *Sept.* 1054-1055). Aischylos groups these divinities (Erinyes, Curses, Keres) and depicts them as a force of retribution. While in Hesiod’s *Theogony* the Erinyes are born from Gaia after she is impregnated by the blood from Ouranos’s dismembered genitals, Night produces the Keres on her own (*Th.* 211- 217). She bore the Keres though “she had slept with none of the gods” (οὐ τινη κομηθεῖσα θεῶν, *Th.* 213). Hesiod assigns the following role to the Keres:

...αἶ τε βροτοῖσι
 Γεινομένοισι διδοῦσιν ἔχειν ἀγαθόν τε κακόν τε,
 αἶ τ’ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε παραιβασίας ἐρέπουσιν,
 οὐδέ ποτε λήγουσι θεαὶ δεινοῖο χόλοιο,
 πρὶν γ’ ἀπὸ τῶ δώωσι κακὴν ὄπιν, ὅστις ἀμάρτη.

They give to mortals when they are born both good and evil to have, and they hold fast to the transgressions of both men and gods; and the goddesses never cease from their terrible wrath until they give evil punishment to whoever commits a crime. (*Th.* 218-222)⁷

⁷ Lines 218-219 present a textual problem since they are omitted in one excerpt by Stobaeus though included in another and in other sources. Whether the lines appear here or not, they reoccur at 905-906, confirming they were part of the poem. For full discussion, see Solmsen, 1995, pp. 36-37 and West, 1966, p. 229.

Aischylos's Erinyes and Hesiod's Keres are the same divine force.⁸ This is confirmed in the *Eumenides* when the Erinyes refer to the Moirai as their sisters. They are "children of the same mother" (ματροκασιγνήται, *Eum.* 962). In Hesiod's *Theogony*, the Keres and the Moirai are named together in the same line as offspring of Night (*Th.* 217). Hesiod later tells an alternative account of the ancestry of the Moirai where they are the daughters of Zeus and Themis (*Th.* 904). The Moirai were either produced by parthenogenesis or from a union between male and female. The effect of this development is that Hesiod replaces asexual with sexual reproduction. Aischylos sticks with Hesiod's earlier account. However, the mention of the Moirai in the *Eumenides* may remind the spectators of the two variant stories of their parentage in the *Theogony*, revealing how even in the same text ancestries can be altered at the poet's discretion. Aischylos does not reproduce Hesiod's narrative of the origins of the Erinyes, but he nevertheless employs a different Hesiodic genealogy to explain their ancestry.⁹

I suggest that Aischylos's assimilation of the Erinyes and Keres has an aim. Athena is the daughter of Zeus (*Eum.* 415, 664); she was born without a mother (*Eum.* 736) and considers herself the child of her father alone (*Eum.* 738). Meanwhile the Erinyes are allocated the same origins as the Keres; they are born from their mother alone and have no father. Their existence implicitly counters Apollo's λόγος. The Erinyes are the divine evidence that fathers do not hold a monopoly on creation. They are the μάρτυς to counter Apollo's μάρτυς (*Eum.* 664). The divine births in the trilogy both affirm and contradict Apollo's theory regarding female reproductivity, proving that the divine world does not provide a model for understanding how humans form their families. Further, Night is not the only emblem of female parthenogenesis in the trilogy. As discussed already (p. 85), Elektra refers to how Gaia gives birth to everything (*Lib.* 127), recalling Gaia's autonomous procreation in the *Theogony* (126-132). In this case, a woman procreates without a man, signalling that there is an integral genetic tie between the mother and child. The incorporation of the Erinyes, products of female parthenogenesis, into Athena's new order at the close of the *Eumenides* signals that female reproductivity cannot be denied. The new order relies on the Erinyes' compliance with Athena, which shows that both their causes are required, the cause which supports fathers and those who support mothers.

It is notable that following the trial, the Erinyes begin to continually remind the

⁸ Solmsen, 1995, p. 179.

⁹ Solmsen, 1995, p. 181.

audience that they are daughters of Night (*Eum.* 745, 791-792, 821-822, 843, 876). The issue of Athena's motherless birth decided the trial, but thereafter, the playwright emphasises the fatherless creation of the Erinyes. The description of the Erinyes and the Moirai as *ματροκασιγνήται* (*Eum.* 962) points to Hesiod's *Theogony* where these divinities have no father; they are products of their mother alone. The description stands in contrast to Apollo's appeal to Hermes in the opening of the *Eumenides*: "and you, my own blood brother, begotten of the same father" (σὺ δ', ἀντάδελφον αἷμα καὶ κοινοῦ πατρός, / Ἑρμῆ, *Eum.* 89-90). The play opens with Zeus as primary parent, but ends with the Erinyes giving special attention to their mother.

Considering their knowledge from Hesiod, the audience may have been expecting to hear that the Erinyes were born from the blood of Ouranos's genitals and that Athena is the child of Metis, but instead they are told unique genealogies. The stories of both Athena's birth and the genesis of the Erinyes deviate from the Hesiodic tradition, though presented in a context rich with references to Hesiod's *Theogony*. I offer that Aischylos expects his audience to notice his manipulation of myth. He has generated a sexual dichotomy through his own creative mythmaking. Aischylos's telling of the origin stories creates a radical separation between fathers and mothers, reproducing the logic of the *Theogony* where the sexes compete to control childbearing. The Olympians claim supremacy in the *Eumenides* through 'swallowing' Metis, but tension lingers since the necessity of female fecundity is reaffirmed in the figure of Night. Just as Hera's *eris* at the close of the *Theogony* limits Zeus's attempts to eradicate female reproductivity, the references to Night in the final lines of the *Eumenides* makes it clear that women are required to reproduce. As the drama closes, the final words spoken by the procession celebrate the "children of Night" (Νυκτὸς παῖδες, *Eum.* 1034). The Erinyes and Athena are the only divinities remaining on the stage; they respectively signify mother-borne and father-borne. The founding of the new social order is achieved in the end by women alone. The Erinyes are no longer depicted as horrific or frightening; they benefit Athens just as Athena does.

The Erinyes and Athena have a notable thing in common too; they are virgins who disregard marriage. Apollo rebukes the Erinyes for not honouring the marriage bond (*Eum.* 213-214), adding that they are virgins (*Eum.* 68), and Athena states clearly that she will never marry a man (*Eum.* 737). The procession at the close of the trilogy reiterates that the Erinyes have no children (*Eum.* 1034). Zeus and Night have produced daughters who do not bear children. Lone creation, as it were, ends succession.

Athena's virginity secures the unity between her and her father.¹⁰ In the divine realm, her virginity equates with order. Zeus's aim in the *Theogony* is to bring an end to succession and this strategy is repeated in the *Oresteia*. At the close of the *Eumenides*, the stage is populated by virgins.¹¹ The image promotes the same static cosmos as created by Hesiod's Zeus, a society where women do not threaten Zeus's power and there can be no cosmic change. His divine cosmos is a still one where the human realities of birth, aging, death and generational succession are avoided. Zeus prevents evolution and the possibility of revolution, processes which are essential for mortals.

However, the references to Night's reproductivity imply that Athena and the Erinyes could produce alone without getting married. In the divine world, Zeus never controls reproduction entirely since goddesses can procreate autonomously. A male monopoly on creation is never achieved. Apollo's fantasy of male reproductive autonomy seeks to deny the conditions for society's existence, but the end of Aeschylus's drama affirms that Athens depends on women. The *polis* relies on female reproductivity as embodied by Night. Further, the playwright has revealed to his audience that Apollo's theory is a fantasy, borne from the denial of Metis. The fantasy of male autonomy is founded on a lie. Society not only depends on female reproductivity, but on a female principle, μητις. The Athenian court in the *Eumenides* is a vehicle for cunning intelligence. Apollo and Athena 'swallow' Metis in the story of Athena's origins in the *Eumenides*, using wily words as Zeus did in the *Theogony* (890). But, in omitting Metis, they perform μητις too. μητις, a force which has its origins in the female generative principle, creates the possibility for a new political scene. No matter how hard the Olympians may try, Metis does not submit in Aeschylus's drama.

¹⁰ Arthur, 1983, p. 99.

¹¹ Goldhill, 1984, p. 281.

Conclusion

This dissertation has traced the μήτις of Aischylos's tragic poetry. The playwright constructs a constellation of fantasies which elide maternity and female reproductivity from Apollo's claim that women are not parents (*Eum.* 658-659) and that men can procreate without women (*Eum.* 663) to Athena's assertion that no mother gave birth to her (*Eum.* 736), and that, she is a product of her father alone (*Eum.* 738), the source of her intelligence (*Eum.* 850). It is their belief in the primacy of fathers which unites Apollo and Athena and grounds their support of Orestes against Klytaimestra and the Erinyes. Orestes is acquitted without punishment because the Olympians care little for his victim, Klytaimestra, a mother. Athena silences the Erinyes' calls for vengeance since it is a mother's rights the divinities seek to protect. The *Oresteia* ultimately rests on this issue. The antidote to the violence and disorder of the *Agamemnon* and the *Libation Bearers* is the rejection of mothers in the *Eumenides*. In a world where mothers are undermined, only the welfare of men is of concern. Hence, Klytaimestra's loss of Iphigeneia, her motivation to murder her husband, and her resulting death at the hands of her son, are rendered unimportant. What matters to Apollo and Athena are the death of Agamemnon and the acquittal of Orestes. Order, then, is restored not by the measured deliberation of the Areopagites, who remain silent throughout, but as a result of Apollo and Athena's paternal bias.

My entryway into exploring Aischylos's treatment of this theme was Apollo's λόγος and τεκμήριον (*Eum.* 657-666), which I argued introduces a discourse which shapes the trilogy's conclusion. I described in Chapter 2 how this discourse inspires Athena to free Orestes, overturning the decision of the human jury, their function inevitably nulled. The impetus for Athena's vote is her motherless birth which becomes a matter of interest in the trial owing to Apollo's τεκμήριον. The Olympian ideology of paternal supremacy is ultimately more powerful than the human jury. Yet, despite the influence exercised by Apollo's speech in the drama, the passage, I repeatedly argued is rife with ambiguities which inevitably complicate interpretation. Apollo and Athena's λόγοι are, in a sense, pregnant. What is unsaid is most powerful and revealing. The intensity of this ambiguity makes the discourse which promotes fathers above mothers unstable and open to question.

I began my analysis of Apollo's speech in Chapter 3 by situating it in the context of contemporary ideas surrounding sexual reproduction. Through comparing the theories of ancient thinkers, some of whom agree with Apollo's notion that women do not provide a generative contribution to procreation, and others who contradict Apollo, positing that both men and women are genetically related to their children, I surmised that there was no standard perspective on exactly how the sexes influenced childbearing. This plurality of views, I offered, forms the backdrop to Apollo's λόγος. In this context of debate and competing ideas, the ideology of male biological superiority in the *Eumenides* can only be contentious.

The diverse ways of describing the male and female roles in procreation are captured in poetry. Agricultural metaphors, I argued, demonstrate how the female body was in some contexts conceived as a fallow field cultivated by a male farmer, while in others, she is the all-producing soil who produces offspring alone. I argued that the broad application and significance of the terms used for describing procreation allowed writers to renegotiate this topic as they wished. By analysing various presentations of the Erichthonios myth, I demonstrated how writers present different understandings of the hero's parentage, depending on the meaning and importance they give to the vocabulary on hand. In this sense, any theory of reproduction is a hypothesis, an interpretation of an ambiguous set of terms. Aischylos's Apollo, then, is not presenting a standard view, but a controversial hypothesis motivated by the aim of absolving Orestes's matricide.

In Chapters 1 to 5, I focused on Apollo's λόγος. His theory is inherently argumentative, since it references an unresolved contemporary debate surrounding reproduction and redefines slippery terminology with the aim of influencing Athena, so that Orestes can be exonerated for homicide even though Klytaimestra was punished. The purpose of Apollo's speech is to promote a gender hierarchy in which men and women are judged differently. In Chapter 4, I pressed more on the ambiguity of birthing vocabulary by analysing the application of key words in Apollo's speech throughout the *Oresteia*. I showed how Apollo's rhetoric relies on terms which already have an established usage in the trilogy. He reinscribes these terms with new meaning, contradicting the earlier understanding of the relationship between mother and child. I argued that this process of redefining terminology inevitably brings the audience back to the earlier definitions of maternity in the trilogy, exposing Apollo's oratory as

manipulative. His view of parenting is partial and open to challenge from within the drama itself.

Aischylos's treatment of parenting and childbearing also occupied my interest in Chapter 5. The aim of this chapter was to continue unpacking the background to Apollo's λόγος. I explored the significance of imagery used in the trilogy to elucidate the relationship between parents and their children. A predominant focus was the bird imagery in the *Agamemnon* and *Libation Bearers* which revealed malevolence on the part of Agamemnon towards his children. I suggested that this problematises Apollo's notion that fathers should be considered sole parents. Most striking is the image of Zeus's birds ingesting a pregnant hare, which Kalchas interprets as signaling the Achaian victory at Troy (*Ag.* 104-138). Kalchas assumes Artemis is angry over the murder of the pregnant hare. I argued that this feature of the plot is important for several reasons. Firstly, it introduces a sign-reading model into the text. Kalchas's belief that Artemis is upset motivates Agamemnon to sacrifice Iphigeneia, which inevitably brings about his own death at the hands of his wife. The king's reading of a sign determines his doom. This has implications for how the audience later read Apollo's story of Athena's birth, a sign which he suggests proves his theory that mothers are not parents. The episode of the bird omen shows how sign-reading can go wrong, advising the audience to interpret the play's signs critically and carefully. This introduces the role deception plays in the trilogy.

Further, Kalchas's assumption that Artemis is involved in the events, though there is no proof for this, reveals a reverence for maternity in the play. Kalchas presumes without question that Artemis will react to the maltreatment of a pregnant mother. With the playwright's gesturing to Artemis, Klytaimestra's loss of Iphigeneia in the *Agamemnon*, her appeals to Orestes before her death to respect their filial bond in the *Libation Bearers*, and the rejection of maternity and Athena's mother in the *Eumenides*, take on greater significance. The playwright has established that Artemis is the protector of mothers and their children. Before Apollo and Athena espouse their ideology of paternal dominance in the *Eumenides*, a contradictory ideology has already been expressed, one which stands for mothers and is represented by another divinity, Artemis. The action of the trilogy is sandwiched between Artemis and Athena. Athena and her rejection of maternity naturally evoke her opposite: Artemis who venerates mothers. Thus, the audience may interpret that Apollo's λόγος could inspire Artemis's wrath, rendering his theory highly problematic and dangerous. Apollo's λόγος does not

appear as an isolated reference to parenting and reproductivity in the trilogy. Rather it appears at the climax of a rich exploration of the relationship between child and parent. The complexity of this exploration stresses the simplicity and naivety of Apollo's theory, even if Athena finds it compelling.

In Chapter 6, I moved my attention from Apollo's λόγος to his τεκμήριον, Athena. Through conducting a survey of narratives of Athena's birth, I concluded that Apollo's account is unique. While some accounts do not mention Athena's mother, Apollo's version of events is distinct since it wholly discounts Athena having a mother, which is controversial considering she does have a mother in Hesiod's canonic telling of the genesis myth. An audience rehearsed in Hesiodic myth will be aware that Apollo's τεκμήριον is deceptive; his dubious λόγος cannot be proven. When Athena agrees with Apollo's account of her birth, then, she condones his deception. In effect, Apollo and Athena are united by this lie. Their order is founded on the omission of Athena's mother, Metis. In Chapters 7 and 8, I stayed with Hesiod to suggest that the playwright makes the omission of Metis evident for his audience. I outlined the parallels between the *Oresteia* and the *Theogony*, suggesting that Aischylos intended Hesiod's *Theogony* to be in the minds of his spectators. The issue of which parent, male or female, greater influences their offspring comes from the *Theogony* where winning power correlates with controlling reproduction. Hence, Apollo's λόγος in the *Eumenides* points back to the *Theogony*. Aischylos is returning to a familiar poetic theme.

Apollo's rejection of maternity and Metis determines how rule and justice are organised in Athens. The contentiousness and slipperiness of his language, the insult his theory potentially poses to Artemis and the challenges available to his theory from contemporary thinkers, the drama itself and Hesiod combine to make Apollo's speech highly unconvincing. In this way, his tactful omission of Metis and creative storytelling reveals the Olympians' μῆτις. The force which determines events and rebuilds social order is cunning and lies. Just as μῆτις fueled Klytaimestra's rebellion, it too secures the Olympians their victory. In essence, their μῆτις is the 'swallowing' of maternity, which manifests as a rejection of Klytaimestra, the Erinyes and Metis. Zeus's gastronomic feat in the *Theogony* is the story behind the *Oresteia*. His μῆτις overcomes Metis in the *Theogony*; Apollo and Athena's μῆτις overcomes another mother and her supporters in the *Eumenides*. In both texts, μῆτις oppresses maternity through wily λόγοι.

Aischylos's poetry, however, also reveals the limitations of the Olympians' μῆτις. There is a paradox in the Olympian strategy. They use cunning intelligence, the

power of Metis, to relegate mothers. A mother's skill provides the condition for their society's existence. μητις is, in this sense, a circle in the *Oresteia*. In omitting Metis by committing μητις, the Olympians expose how truly necessary she is for their society to function. Wisdom and maternity are both embodied in Metis. To act with μητις means also to acknowledge Metis, hence to acknowledge maternity. Even when swallowed, Metis is always there, in Zeus, directing his decisions. Aischylos designs his trilogy so that his audience is thinking about Metis at the precise moment when Apollo denies her. Metis is omitted, but she is not silent. Further, her absence is apparent owing to the presence of her daughter. This strategy is the playwright's μητις as he reveals the incoherency of the Olympian ideology of paternal supremacy. Zeus's existence and order relies on mothers. The prominence of Night at the close of the *Eumenides* further insinuates that maternity is essential in Athens as the Erinyes, her daughters, become the city-states's protectors.

With Metis in mind, I return to the quotation from Homer's *Odyssey* which began this dissertation: "and my heart laughed within me that my name and flawless scheme had so beguiled" (ἐμὸν δ' ἐγέλασσε φίλον κῆρ / ὡς ὄνομ' ἐξαπάτησεν ἐμὸν καὶ μητις ἀμύμων, *Od.* 9.413-414, trans. A. T. Murray, 1995). In Polyphemos's cave, Odysseus takes on a fake identity as Nobody (μη τις, *Od.* 9.405-406). He tricks the Kyklops with a μητις by becoming Me-tis. Odysseus's trickery is celebrated throughout the epic. Even the hero's claims to speak truthfully merely demonstrate the depth of his deception.¹ After telling his first Cretan lie to Athena, the goddess acknowledges Odysseus's skill:

κερδαλέος κ' εἶη καὶ ἐπίκλοπος ὅς σε παρέλθοι
ἐν πάντεσσι δόλοισι, καὶ εἰ θεὸς ἀντιάσειε.
σχέτλιε, ποικιλομητα, δόλων ἄτ', οὐκ ἄρ' ἔμελλες,
οὐδ' ἐν σῆ περ ἐὼν γαίῃ, λήξειν ἀπατάων
μύθων τε κλοπίων, οἳ τοι πεδόθεν φίλοι εἰσίν.
ἀλλ' ἄγε, μηκέτι ταῦτα λεγόμεθα, εἰδότες ἄμφω
κέρδε', ἐπεὶ σὺ μὲν ἔσσι βροτῶν ὄχ' ἄριστος ἀπάντων
βουλῆ καὶ μύθοισιν, ἐγὼ δ' ἐν πᾶσι θεοῖσι
μήτι τε κλέομαι καὶ κέρδεσιν.

Cunning must he be and knavish, who would go beyond thee in all manner of guile, aye, though it were a god that met thee. Bold man, crafty in counsel, insatiate in deceit, not even in thine own land, it seems, wast thou to cease from guile and deceitful tales, which thou lovest from the bottom

¹ Haft, 1984, p. 299.

of thine heart. But come, let us no longer talk of this, being both well versed in craft, since thou art far the best of all men in counsel and in speech, and I among all the gods am famed for wisdom and craft.

(*Od.* 13.291-299, trans. Murray, 1995)

Odysseus's Cretan lies demonstrate his ability to improvise and recreate the story of his own origins. In a similar fashion, when Demeter arrives in Eleusis, having left Olympus owing to her rage against Zeus, she tells the women she meets that she is from Crete (*HH* 2.124). She too lies about her origins. In the *Odyssey*, Athena bonds with Odysseus over their mutual $\mu\eta\tau\iota\varsigma$. Further, Athena revels in detecting Odysseus's lie.² This is her $\mu\eta\tau\iota\varsigma$. As Odysseus's audience, she is not fooled by him.

Odysseus's lies about his origins, I suggest, provide a paradigm for interpreting the *Oresteia*. The spectators at the Theatre of Dionysos overlooked the Areiopagos in the near distance as they watched Aischylos's drama unfold.³ The Areiopagos court on stage provides a vehicle for Apollo and Athena's $\mu\eta\tau\iota\varsigma$ as they refashion the story of Athena's origins in order to restore Orestes's patrimony and save Athens from the Erinyes' anger, similar to how Odysseus lies about his background to reclaim his *oikos*. Odysseus, Athena and Apollo are all unreliable narrators. The gods' reliance on lies suggest that matricide is, after all, inexcusable. Only through lying can Orestes be acquitted. Aischylos, in the process, reveals himself as an unreliable storyteller, filling his play with false tales.

In this sense, the courtroom in the *Eumenides* is no different to the theatre itself. In both spaces, we find performers, weavers of words and lies who endeavour to persuade their audience. Athena, the founder of the court, is not concerned with justice, but rather promoting her own father and his rule. Nonetheless, Aischylos persuades his audience to celebrate at the close of the *Oresteia*, to join in the triumphant procession. They are not, I argue, celebrating Athenian democracy. The ideology of democracy is nowhere to be found in the trilogy's conclusion, as the jurors remain silent and Athens appears under the rule of Athena and Zeus, divine monarchs. The Areiopagos court has proven easily corruptible. Perhaps it was for this reason that Aristophanes presents Aischylos at odds with the Athenians (*Frogs* 808). Aischylos does not show their lawcourt in a particularly good light. Further, the closing procession in the *Eumenides* is

² Pratt, 1993, p. 72.

³ Pickard-Cambridge, 1946, p. 45

not celebrating patriarchy; only women appear on the stage singing of the goddess Night, commemorating female fecundity.

The spectators are, it would seem, like Odysseus freed from the Kyklops's cave, celebrating μῆτις, the craft of cunning. The spectators have been drawn into the playwright's μῆτις, ultimately pressed to recognize and interpret Apollo and Athena's lies. As the audience revel in deciphering the playwright's words, they are much like Homer's Athena, finding pleasure in identifying verbal ploys and seeing through them. In essence, the dramatist calls upon his audience to rely on their own μῆτις, to question and be critical. μῆτις brings about the Olympian victory, and the poet's μῆτις exposes the fallibility of the Olympian ideology of paternal supremacy. It is a victory for poetic artifice. The trilogy inevitably affirms the necessity of μῆτις, the cunning, overturning and revolutionary force of a pregnant goddess.

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