Bentley Wood
High School for Girls

AS Classical Civilisation
GCSE to A level

Bridging Work
Year 11 into 12 for 2022/23

Name: _____

Tutor Group: _____

Teacher: _____

AS Classical Civilisation Induction Pack

Welcome to AS Classical Civilisation!

You have just made the best choice of your life.

Classical Civilisation is the best subject for those who have an interest in everything.

During the course we will cover:

- History
- Literature
- Drama
- Politics
- Art
- Archaeology
- Anthropology
- Reception Theory
- Theology
- Architecture
- Philosophy
- And much, much more.

What is Classical Civilisation?

Classical Civilisation is the study of the cultures of Ancient Greece and Rome. It is a very wide ranging subject involving the study of literature, art and ancient thought and ideas, which are studied in the historical context.

Though all of the literature would have been originally written in Ancient Greek and Latin, everything that we study will be in **translation** (in English).

Why study Classical Civilisation?

The number one reason to study Classical Civilisation is that it is endlessly and enduringly interesting. Why else would scholars have been writing about these civilisations for the last 2,000 years?

Classical Civilisation is the perfect subject for someone who is an all rounder, but also for those who would like to increase their skills in a wide range of areas since it is all-encompassing and through reading a simple extract from a piece of ancient literature, you will have already covered elements of History, Philosophy, Language and many other disciplines. For this reason, Classical Civilisation is widely respected and can be extremely useful for whatever you might want to do in later life.

Transferable Skills:

- Analytical skills (from analysing sources and language)
- Developing argument
- Learning about and from cultures different from your own
- Developing independent, critical and evaluative approaches

Classical Civilisation can take you anywhere. It is the perfect complement to science subjects, as well as to supporting arts subjects. It is listed as an excellent subject to study to support university applications for Arts subjects and it is listed on UCL's list of 'preferred A Level options.'

What does the course look like?

Over the course of 2 years we will complete the course listed below.

We study two texts (The Odyssey and The Aeneid – the foundation texts of Western Literature) and **one** choice from Component Group 2 and **one** from Component Group 3.

We will be studying Greek Theatre and Love and Relationships. Both of these choices provide a wide overview of Greek and Roman life and provide great comparisons with the modern day.

	Content Overview	Assessment Overview	
Y12 Y13	**The World of the Hero** This is a compulsory component consisting of an in-depth study of: • one of Homer's *Iliad* or *Odyssey* • and Virgil's *Aeneid* This component is solely focused on the study of literature in translation.	**The World of the Hero** H408/11 100 marks 2 hours 20 minutes Written paper	**40%** of total A Level
Y12	**Component Group 2: Culture and the Arts** Learners must study one component in this component group, chosen from: • Greek Theatre (H408/21) • Imperial Image (H408/22) • Invention of the Barbarian (H408/23) • Greek Art (H408/24) Components in this group involve the study of visual and material culture. In all except Greek Art this is combined with the study of literature in translation.	**Culture and the Arts** H408/21, H408/22, H408/23, H408/24 75 marks 1 hour 45 minutes Written paper	**30%** of total A Level
Y13	**Component Group 3: Beliefs and Ideas** Learners must study one component in this component group, chosen from: • Greek Religion (H408/31) • Love and Relationships (H408/32) • Politics of the Late Republic (H408/33) • Democracy and the Athenians (H408/34) Components in this group involve of an area of classical thought, in combination with either the study of literature in translation or visual/material culture.	**Beliefs and Ideas** H408/31, H408/32, H408/33, H408/34 75 marks 1 hour 45 minutes Written paper	**30%** of total A Level

Support

Classical Civilisation will hopefully be an incredibly positive and fulfilling learning environment, but there may be times that you encounter problems with work, family, health, friends etc. that may have an impact on your life in school.

If you are experiencing any difficulties, there are always people you can turn to in school.

You can also come to see Miss Hussain and Miss Illingworth, or email them.

Expectations

In order to succeed during Classical Civilisation A Level, there are certain requirements that are expected during your time at school.

You are expected to:

- Have 100% attendance and excellent punctuality. If you are unwell, please contact your teacher prior to the lesson. If you have to miss a lesson for medical or academic appointments, it is **your responsibility** to catch up on the course content.
- Complete **one piece of homework every week** and hand it in on time. This may take the form of some reading, preparation work, critical analysis or essay writing.
- Spent 4 hours a week on personal study for Classical Civilisation. During this time you will be required to make detailed notes, read for essays and complete your homework. In order to do this, you must ensure that you are organised.
- Manage your time both in and outside of school effectively. A Levels demand great commitment, thus you will be responsible for organising your time and your resources and keeping them tidy.
- Work well with your peers. Be a respectful listener and a critical friend. Be supportive of everyone in the class to create a safe and inspiring learning environment.

You should expect me to:

- Mark homework and return it within two weeks of the hand-in date.
- Be willing to discuss any questions that you might have and to be supportive of your learning and progression within the subject.

Useful Websites and Knowledge Growing Ideas

- The course website: www.ocr.org.uk If you go onto the website and type in 'Classical Civilisation A Level' you will be taken to the area of the website that includes: the course information and some sample questions.
- https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qykl: Log on to 'In Our Time' on BBC Radio4. They have some excellent discussions about Ancient Writers such as The Philosophy of Love since Plato and The Odyssey – this will serve as an excellent introduction to the text.
- Follow Mary Beard on Twitter and watch her documentaries on Pompeii and read her books:
    - *Pompeii*
    - *Confronting the Classics*
    - *SPQR*
    - *Women and Power*
- Read modern novels about Ancient Texts like:
    - *The Children of Jocasta* by Natalie Haynes (a story of Oedipus the King from his wife's POV)
    - *The Song of Achilles* by Madeleine Miller
    - *Troy* by Adele Geras
- Read about Tragedy in *Poetics* by Aristotle – this may help you with your holiday question

Watch *Troy* (with Brad Pitt and Orlando Bloom in it!) – this tells the story of the Iliad, which comes before The Odyssey. It will provide good background.

Tasks:

1. Order your copy of the Odyssey: Homer, 'Odyssey' translated by E.V. Rieu, revised translation by D.C.H. Rieu (Penguin)
2. Read at least Books 1-12 (you can keep reading, if you wish).
3. From your reading (or research, if necessary), complete the table on the key characters in the Odyssey and the Homeric terms table.
4. Read the introduction to the Odyssey below (Jenkyns). From it and Books 1-12, complete:
    a. A visual representation of what you think is the most interesting scene in the Odyssey (I leave it to you to choose what media you use)
    b. One question that you would like to learn more about the Odyssey over the year.
    c. 'Odysseus is not a hero, in the modern sense of the word.' Do you agree with this statement? Answers should be two pages, handwritten, ideally with about 4 paragraphs. One of these could be about whether he is an ancient Greek hero, if you would like to research this.

Greek Term	Meaning and Explanation
xenia	
nostos	
kleos	
time	

Name	Who is he/she?	What is their involvement in the Odyssey?
Penelope		
Telemachus		
Anticleia		
Laertes		
Circe		
Calypso		
Nausicaa		
Polyphemus		
Eurymachus		
Antinous		

Academic Enrichment Suggestions:

READ!

- *Circe* by Madeleine Miller
- *The Song of Achilles* by Madeleine Miller
- *The Silence of the Girls* by Pat Barker
- *The Women of Troy* by Pat Barker
- *The Children of Jocasta* by Natalie Haynes
- *A Thousand Ships* by Natalie Haynes
- *Pandora* by Natalie Haynes
- *The Secret History* by Donna Tartt
- *The Penelopiad* by Margaret Atwood
- *The Odyssey* translated by Emily Wilson (first edition to be published in the English language by a woman)
- *Mythos* by Stephen Fry
- *Home Fire* by Kamila Shamsie
- Ancient Texts:
  - *Metamorphoses* by Ovid
  - *The Iliad* by Homer

LISTEN!

BBC 'In Our Time' podcast:

- The Greek Myths
- Tragedy
- The Odyssey

(Always make detailed notes as you listen!)

WATCH!

U	Ben Hur
U	Hercules (Disney)
U	Jason and the Argonauts
PG	Spartacus
PG	The Odyssey (1997)
PG	Clash of the Titans (1981)
12	Pompeii
12	Agora
12	The Eagle
15	300
15	Alexander
15	Gladiator
15	Troy

Jenyns Scholarship

The Plots

The Troy Story

All three poems are related to the story of Troy. Paris, son of Priam, king of Troy, was invited to judge which was the most beautiful of three goddesses, Hera, Athena and Aphrodite (Latin names: Juno, Minerva, Venus). He chose in favour of Aphrodite, goddess of love, in return for which she enabled him to seduce Helen, wife of Menelaus, king of Sparta, and take her to Troy. To avenge this insult, Troy was besieged by a Greek army led by a federation of chieftains under the overall command of Menelaus' brother, Agamemnon, king of Mycenae. (Troy is also called Ilium – hence *Iliad*.)

The Iliad

The *Iliad* has one of the best plots ever devised. Its outlines are simple, but there is a very large cast of subsidiary characters. The essential plot is given here; added in brackets are some details or episodes which may clarify the discussion in this book.

It is the tenth and last year of the war. The Trojan priest of Apollo offers ransom for the return of his daughter, who is Agamemnon's captive. Agamemnon insults him, and the god Apollo sends a plague on the Achaean (i.e. Greek) army. The Achaean chieftains meet: Agamemnon agrees to return the girl, but angered by the speech of Achilles, son of Peleus, the best of the Achaean warriors, seizes Achilles' own captive woman, Briseis. Achilles withdraws from battle and appeals for help to his mother, the sea-goddess Thetis. (We learn that his life is destined to be short.) She prevails on Zeus, king of the gods, to give the Trojans the upper hand in the battle, so that the Achaeans will have to make terms with Achilles.

Under the leadership of Hector, son of King Priam, the Trojans begin to gain the upper hand. (Hector's wife Andromache, with their baby son, is introduced in a scene in which she talks with him before

he re-enters battle.) Agamemnon is forced to back down, and sends an embassy to Achilles (consisting of two chieftains, Ajax and Odysseus, and Achilles' old tutor, Phoenix) offering the return of Briseis and a vast recompense in addition. (Phoenix tells the story of the anger of another hero, Meleager, trying to persuade Achilles that if he delays too long, he may lose the recompense.) Achilles angrily rejects the offer, declaring that he will not do battle again until the Trojans are setting fire to the Achaean ships.

Distressed by the continued Achaean reverses, Patroclus, Achilles' intimate friend, persuades Achilles to let him enter the fight wearing Achilles' armour. (Patroclus inflicts slaughter on the Trojans and kills Sarpedon, a Lycian who is fighting with the Trojans as an ally.) Hector kills Patroclus.

Achilles is stricken with grief and rage. (Thetis persuades the god Hephaestus to make him new armour, including a shield depicting many scenes of human activity.) He now makes up his quarrel with Agamemnon, passionately eager to plunge into battle again. He kills many Trojans, and finally meets and kills Hector. To avenge Patroclus he refuses to return Hector's body for burial and attempts to mutilate it by dragging it behind his chariot (though the gods prevent the mutilation by supernatural means). Patroclus' ghost appears to Achilles, asking for burial. Achilles sacrifices animals and Trojan prisoners by his pyre. He organises funeral games, which show him in a newly humane light.

There is contention among the gods between those who favour the Achaeans and those who favour Troy, but the squabble is soon settled. The gods agree to tell Achilles to hand back Hector's corpse, and arrange for Priam (escorted by the god Hermes, disguised as a young man) to come alone to bring the ransom and collect his son. Achilles shows generosity and pity towards Priam, and a short truce is arranged for the funeral rites.

The Odyssey

Books 1-4. Ten years after the end of the Trojan War, Odysseus, king of the island of Ithaca, has still not returned home, thanks to the enmity of the sea-god Poseidon. His palace is occupied by local nobles, who are wasting his substance; they are suitors for the hand of his faithful wife Penelope, who is finding it hard to resist their demands that she choose one of them. The goddess Athena prevails on Zeus to enable Odysseus to return. She comes to Ithaca, in

disguise, to put heart into Telemachus, Odysseus' son; he holds an assembly, and sets off on a journey to enquire after his father, visiting the court of Nestor at Pylos and (with Nestor's son Peisistratus) the court of Menelaus and Helen at Sparta.

Books 5-8. Meanwhile Zeus sends the messenger god Hermes to the island of Ogygia, where the amorous goddess Calypso has for years kept hold of Odysseus. She is told to let him go; he builds a raft and leaves, and after being shipwrecked in a storm sent by Poseidon is washed ashore at Scheria, land of the Phaeacians. He is rescued by the princess Nausicaa, who tells him to go to her parents, Alcinous, the Phaeacian king, and Arete. He is hospitably received, and at a feast is asked to tell his name and story.

Books 9-12. He tells his adventures, in which all his men perished. Some of them are captured by the one-eyed cannibal giant, Polyphemus the Cyclops, from whom they escape by blinding him. He is Poseidon's son; hence the god's wrath. After the Laestrygonians, another cannibal people, have destroyed eleven of Odysseus' ships and their crews, the surviving ship reaches Aeaea, island of the enchantress Circe. She turns some of Odysseus' men into pigs, but by supernatural assistance he outwits her, and they have an affair. Odysseus leaves her and comes to a place where he calls up the ghosts of the dead: the seer Teiresias foretells his future, and he also meets his mother Anticleia, Achilles, Agamemnon and his old rival Ajax. On another island they find the cattle of the Sun, which they are forbidden to touch, but driven by hunger, they kill and eat some; only Odysseus refrains. In consequence Zeus wrecks the ship, and Odysseus alone survives, cast ashore on Calypso's isle. (Other adventures include the Lotus-Eaters, Aeolus and the bag of winds, the Sirens, and Scylla and Charybdis.)

Books 13-20. The Phaeacians leave Odysseus on Ithaca, asleep. He meets Athena, disguised again, and tries to deceive her with a lying story. She reveals herself, promises help, and disguises him as an aged beggar. He is hospitably received by the loyal swineherd Eumaeus, to whom he tells more false tales about himself. Telemachus returns, accompanied by a seer, Theoclymenus, whom he has met on the journey, and escapes a plot by the suitors to kill him. He comes to Eumaeus' hut, and Odysseus reveals his identity to him. Odysseus,

Eumaeus and Telemachus come to the palace. The aged hound Argus recognises Odysseus, and dies. Odysseus is insulted by the goatherd Melanthius, the beggar Irus, the maidservant Melantho and several suitors. Odysseus and Penelope converse; she tells the housekeeper Eurycleia to wash him, and Eurycleia recognises him by his scar. Theoclymenus foresees the suitors' deaths from a vision of blood dribbling from their mouths as they eat meat.

Books 21-3. Penelope tests the suitors by inviting them to string Odysseus' bow and shoot through a line of axes. They fail to string the bow. Odysseus reveals himself to Eumaeus and the loyal oxherd Philoetius. He strings the bow and shoots through the axes. Odysseus, Telemachus and the two loyal herdsmen kill the suitors. Those slave-girls who were disloyal are hanged, and Melanthius is hideously mutilated. Penelope refuses to believe in Odysseus' identity. As a trick she orders his bed to be moved; Odysseus, who had built the bed around a living tree, flares up in anger, and Penelope acknowledges that this is truly her husband. They retire into the bed.

Book 24. The souls of the suitors pass to the underworld, where they meet Agamemnon and Achilles. Odysseus visits his father Laertes, who is living in decrepit conditions in the country, and after testing him with another false story, reveals himself. The suitors' kin plan vengeance; there is a skirmish, but Athena intervenes and brings peace.

The Aeneid

Book 1. Aeneas is the leader of a band of Trojans who have survived the sack of Troy. Jupiter, king of the gods, has willed that he shall go to Italy and establish the people that will ultimately found Rome; but his wife, Juno, is resolved to continue her persecution of the Trojans. Juno arranges for a storm to batter Aeneas' ships; the remnants of his fleet make landfall on the African coast, near Carthage. Jupiter reassures Aeneas' mother, the goddess Venus, and reveals the future greatness of Rome, culminating in the rule of Augustus. Aeneas meets Venus, disguised as a young huntress. The Trojans are hospitably received by the queen of Carthage, Dido, a young widow. Juno and Venus, from different motives, conspire to make Dido fall in love with Aeneas.

Chapter 8
The Two Worlds of Odysseus

On the face of it there are two kinds of Odysseus in the poem. There is the folktale figure, the trickster, wily, curious, cheeky, acquisitive, the cousin of Jack the Giantkiller and Sinbad the Sailor; and there is the Odysseus of the *Iliad*, a hero of epic song. The one Odysseus is a wanderer among magic and monsters, the other is a king rooted in his own kingdom, a noble whose prowess is displayed in close combat with other nobles. The co-existence of these two conceptions is due to the tradition. Odysseus the trickster seems to be a very ancient figure; we have stories about his wiles which are quite independent of Homer. At some stage, probably much earlier than the *Iliad*, he becomes attached to the Troy story, but even in the *Iliad* as we have it there are trace-indications of his origins elswhere: he is regarded as belonging to a generation older than that of the other Achaeans, and he belongs to a part of Greece remote from the Mycenaean heartland out of which most of the heroes come.

However, we should not regard the two types of Odysseus as a flaw in the *Odyssey*: on the contrary, the diversity of the tradition is material with which the poet plays, and from which he produces some of his most delicate effects. From one point of view the main narrative itself is a blend of folktale and epic tale: obvious folktale elements are the magic disguise, the wondrous bow that only Odysseus is strong enough to bend, the fantastic way in which one man can kill dozens almost single-handed, the riddle of the bed. But the simple story of Odysseus' homecoming has been expanded to a heroic length comparable to that of the *Iliad*, and that expansion of scale is matched by one of the leading ideas of the poem, the heroisation of the domestic; we shall come back to this in due course.

From another point of view, though, it can be said that the two kinds of Odysseus are kept almost separate. When he tells the story of his wanderings he begins in the real world, with Ismarus in Thrace, Cythera and Cape Malea. From Malea he is carried by a storm for nine days, and that storm blows him right off the map. Thereafter he is in a wholly mythical world, inhabited mainly by gods and monsters,

Fig. 3. Odysseus blinding the one-eyed giant, Polyphemus, was a favourite subject with vase-painters (here on a jar of about 520 BC). The folktale is depicted with appropriately crude gusto. In the poem Odysseus describes how he twisted the stake while his men pushed; adapting the story for visual treatment, the artist has Odysseus at the front thrusting, his foot pressed against Polyphemus' chest.

and otherwise by peoples who are dangerous in magical or exotic ways (the Lotus-Eaters, the cannibal Laestrygonians). The lying stories that Odysseus tells after his return to Ithaca are set in real places, like Crete and Egypt, while the geography of the 'true' adventures that he tells in Phaeacia is entirely fantastic – so far are the two fictional worlds of the *Odyssey* kept apart.

The poet's pleasure in the juxtaposition of these two kinds of fiction comes out above all in the place where they meet, Scheria, land of the Phaeacians, the charm of which resides in the delicate way that it is poised between the familiar and the fantastic. This is a magic place: there are fruit and blossom in Alcinous' garden all the year round (7. 117ff.), there are automata in his palace (7. 91ff., 100ff.); the Phaeacians' ships steer themselves (8. 557ff.); this people, as Alcinous himself says, is especially close to the gods, who come and join their feasts in person (7. 201ff.). But this does not prevent the poet from regarding them with an ironic humour, which like much in the poem is understated: as in the *Iliad*, we are often not told what to think; we make our own deductions. Alcinous, the generous host, proposes that each of the Phaeacian nobles should make Odysseus a present, but spoils the effect by adding that they should recoup the cost from the people later (13. 10ff.). Thus spake Alcinous, 'and the speech pleased them'; the formula acquires an edge in the context.

There are other hints that Alcinous is a bit of a bumbler; for example Nausicaa's advice, unexplained, that when Odysseus enters the palace, he should pass by Alcinous (who 'sits drinking wine like an immortal') and supplicate the queen so that he can get what he wants (6. 308ff.). Later Alcinous presses Odysseus to come and watch the Phaeacians at their sports, so that 'the stranger may tell his friends when he comes home how far we excel others in boxing and wrestling and jumping and running' (8. 101ff.). When Odysseus is goaded into taking part he wins the discus competition easily, and threatens to beat his young rivals at boxing, wrestling and even running as well. Alcinous blandly adjusts his earlier boast; it is another example of how repetition and the formulaic manner can be used, neatly and economically, to humorous effect:

> We are not outstanding boxers and wrestlers, but we run swiftly and are the best of seamen, and always dear to us are feasting, the lyre and dances, changes of clothing, hot baths and bed. But come... make merry, so that the stranger may tell his friends when he comes home how far we excel others in seamanship, fleetness of foot, dancing and song. (246ff.)

Well, we may reflect, it takes no great skill to like hot baths and fresh linen. But the passage is not simply comic: there is something touching and lovely in the idyll of Scheria, a land of dance – as we shall see.

Homer's blend of the elevated and the everyday is at its most delicate in the handling of Nausicaa. She belongs with Circe and Calypso in the sequence of women whom Odysseus encounters in his wanderings, but she differs from the others in that they are goddesses, while she is an ordinary mortal, and that they have sexual relations with him, while she may not. She is unlike Circe and Calypso, and yet – here is the delicacy – not wholly unlike. Nausicaa too is physically drawn to Odysseus, and we may start to wonder if her story also will be one of passion and desolation. And though she is not a goddess, at moments she resembles one. As she plays with her maidens she is likened to Artemis, accompanied by her nymphs (6. 102ff.). When Odysseus comes forward to her in supplication, he asks her if she is god or mortal, and makes the comparison with Artemis again (149ff.). This is flattery, to be sure, but flattery with a sort of truth in it. Later, he will promise that when he reaches home, he will always pray to her as to a god, in gratitude for what she has done for him (8. 467f.). The charming naturalism with which Nausicaa's girlhood is portrayed gains a radiance from these hints of divinity that hover about it. One can easily be pompous or sentimental about Nausicaa, which Homer is not; but it is fair to say that Homer shows us that, in a sense, girlishness can be divine.

The preparations for Nausicaa's excursion are a social comedy of hidden motives and tacit understandings. First Athena comes to her, disguised as one of her friends, and urges her to go and wash her clothes in preparation for her marriage, which cannot be far off; the goddess conceals her true purpose, which is to bring Nausicaa face to face with Odysseus (and indeed, since he will be naked, rather more than face to face). Nausicaa, for her part, is embarrassed to talk about marriage to her father, and pretends that she wants to wash his own and her brothers' clothes. In turn, Alcinous recognises her real motive, but goes along with the pretence, as though he had not seen through it. These social levities are also part of a moral vision. Manners makyth man; and a part of good manners, in Homer's idea, is a respect for reticences. A bad host, like the Cyclops, demands Odysseus' name at once (9. 252); the good host Alcinous waits until

Odysseus has been bathed and fed before enquiring about him (8. 550ff.). In the reticences of Athena, Nausicaa and Alcinous there is a mixture of cunning and good feeling; it is part of the ethos of the *Odyssey*, serious but mischief-loving, good-humoured and yet wry, that these two things should come so close together.

After the washing is done, Nausicaa and her maidens play ball. This is not a competition but a dance, accompanied by singing. Nausicaa had told her father that she wanted to do her brothers' laundry because 'they always wish to have newly washed clothes to go to the dance' (6. 64ff.). In the Phaeacians' happy world, order and harmony, which are leading themes of the poem, are lifted out of the solemn business of common life into the playfulness of dancing and music.

The scene of Nausicaa and her maidens is the first picture in European literature of simple happiness. But curiously enough, the washing of clothes had already been associated with the idea of happiness in the *Iliad*. As Achilles chases Hector around the walls of Troy, they pass the washing troughs

> where the Trojans' wives and lovely daughters used to wash their bright clothes, in earlier times, in peace, before the sons of the Achaeans came.
>
> (22. 154ff.)

There, in the midst of horror, is a brief glimpse of the good time that will never return. And surely it is no accident that laundry and pleasure should be twice associated together. Ordinarily, the women's sphere is indoors, the men's outdoors; Nausicaa finds her mother spinning by the hearth, with her handmaids, while her father is outside, on his way to take counsel with the chieftains (6. 51ff.). But when women go to wash clothes, they leave the house, they leave the city ('The washing-troughs are far from the city,' as Athena observes, 6. 40); they are women together, freed from the constraints of the home, without men to see them or command them – the presence of Odysseus is indeed an alarming intrusion.

Having created this feminine idyll, what will Homer do with it? Nausicaa hints to Odysseus that he might become her husband. There is more mild deceit and unspoken meaning. She suggests that as they approach the city, Odysseus should leave her and enter separately for fear of gossip; otherwise, someone may say, 'Who is this tall, handsome stranger with Nausicaa? Where did she find him? He will be her husband' (276ff.). And thus Nausicaa, too modest to announce

her name directly, has managed to reveal it by indirection. We seem to be at the beginning of a folktale: the story of the stranger who comes to a far land, performs deeds of prowess and marries the king's daughter. Yet Nausicaa and Odysseus separate before they reach the city, and apart from one very brief scene, apparently of farewell, he seems not to see her again. It is as though the romance has been lost or forgotten before it ever got started.

Odysseus cannot of course marry Nausicaa. The Phaeacians, who have no existence in myth independent of Homer, have plainly been invented to fit into the *Odyssey*, or into a poem close to the one we know. It is therefore hard to believe that there was ever a love story which got lost as the poem developed. Rather, the poem chooses to toy with the folktale motif, to tease our expectations. The beauty lies in understatement. We have almost forgotten Nausicaa when she comes into the hall where Odysseus is feasting with the Phaeacian nobles. She does not even come close to him, but stands by a pillar, at a distance, as befits a woman. And she speaks two lines only: 'Farewell, stranger,' – for she has not learnt so much as his name – 'so that when you are in your homeland you may still remember me, since you owe thanks to me for first saving you' (8. 461ff.). Odysseus briefly thanks her and promises to remember her with honour. That is all; we do not even have her departure from the hall described.

Notice that the restraint is not only in the telling but in the event itself. Many poets would have milked the story of all the pathos that it could yield. All but a very few, even if they did not dwell upon the girl's heartbreak, would at least have implied it. Homer will not even do this. The pathos is there ('She looked admiringly at Odysseus before her eyes'), but it is kept very light. Nausicaa has been happy and Homer will not let that happiness be destroyed. When Virgil alludes to Nausicaa as he introduces Dido, he prepares to transform the idyll into tragedy; but though Dido's story is a masterpiece, we may feel that with the vanishing of Homer's understatement something has been lost. There is a type of literary critic who cannot be content with the depiction of happiness unless the poet is in some way undercutting it or adding troubling overtones. Homer was wiser.

The Phaeacians themselves fade from the picture in a curious way. Odysseus has no parting from them: he wakes up in Ithaca and finds them gone. We ourselves never learn whether their prayers will dissuade Poseidon from raising a mountain above their city, and they actually disappear from our sight in mid-sentence:

> Thus the chiefs and leaders of the people of the Phaeacians prayed to the lord Poseidon, standing around the altar, while Odysseus awoke...
>
> (13. 185ff.)

We shall know them no more; nor will anyone else, for Alcinous has resolved that whereas hitherto they have given everyone passage in their ships, they will never do so to mortal men again. Homer's technique of narrative, in refusing to complete the story, is a strange one, teasing in its elusiveness; but it is curiously apt that the Phaeacians, who have combined the charms of domesticity with the enchantments of distance, should pass from the poem by a mysterious evanescence.

XIII
Women in Roman Society

Women have been mentioned in many of the selections in the previous chapters, but not as lawyers, magistrates, bankers, politicians, soldiers, teachers, administrators, or business-owners. The activities of women in Roman society were limited mainly to the domestic sphere. While male members of the society regularly spent their days outside the home working, conducting business, attending to legal and political matters, or interacting with associates and clients, women generally remained close to home, first their father's home, then their husband's, and perhaps finally their son's.[1] Their primary role was to bear children and manage a household.[2] Men in Roman society had both a public and private identity; a man was a baker or a banker or a carpenter, as well as a husband and a father. A woman, on the other hand, was dependent on her family connection for her identity; she was somebody's daughter, somebody's wife, or somebody's mother. Women were praised only for their performance in these roles, and conspicuous behavior in any other role brought notoriety rather than praise. In every aspect of their lives, moreover, women were expected to defer to men and to subordinate their own interests to those of the men in the family.[3] They were treated like wards or dependents who needed constant supervision. If a woman's father died, she was entrusted to the care of a guardian.[4] Even in her role as child bearer and child rearer, a woman's life was controlled by men. An infant could be exposed without the consent of the woman who had just given it birth.[5] And a

[1] Quintilian's mother, for example, seems to have lived with him; see selection 17. Consider also the account of the ungrateful son in selection 23.

[2] This was the role of free and freed women. The identity and role of a slave woman was defined by the wishes of her owner (and she might have several owners in her lifetime).

[3] Consider Plutarch's advice for a happy marriage in selection 58 and Cicero's complaints about his sister-in-law in selection 70.

[4] On guardians, see selection 50. The function of the guardian was to protect any money or property the woman might have inherited. Few women in ancient Rome were financially independent; the vast majority were bound to the men in their lives because they had no money of their own, or no control over their money. Compare Cato's comment in selection 335: "Our ancestors were not willing to let women conduct any business, not even private business, without a guardian. They wanted them to remain under the control of their fathers, brothers, and husbands."

[5] On exposure, see selections 36 and 37.

mother would lose her children if she were divorced. Men were the doers and achievers of the Roman world; women were the nourishers and sustainers, providing the men in their lives—their fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons—with encouragement and support.

CHILDHOOD

Little Women

Roman girls grew up very quickly; they received little, if any, formal education and were considered ready to assume the duties of a Roman *matrona* (matron) and to become a wife and even a mother as early as the age of twelve or thirteen. Even before marriage they were expected to act like little adults rather than like children. In this letter to his friend Marcellinus, Pliny expresses his grief at the untimely death of a girl, named Minicia, whom he thought had possessed all the qualities desirable in a thirteen-year-old Roman girl: maturity of judgment, matronly dignity, and modesty; she was serious and industrious, obedient and cheerful; she had little interest in toys or in play; and right to her death she bore her suffering courageously.[6]

325 Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 5.16.1–7

I write this to you with a very heavy heart: the younger daughter of our friend Fundanus is dead. No young girl has ever been more charming than she, or more lovable, or, as I think, more worthy not just of a longer life, but even of immortality. She had not yet completed her thirteenth year, and yet she had the judgment of a mature woman and the dignity of a matron, but the sweetness of a little girl and the modesty of a young maiden. How lovingly she put her arms around her father's neck! How affectionately and respectfully she embraced us who were her father's friends! How she adored her nurses, her paedagogues, and her teachers, each for the special guidance that he or she had offered her! How diligently and how perceptively she used to read! How rarely and how demurely she played! With what composure, with what patience, indeed with what courage did she endure her final illness! She obeyed her doctors, she comforted her sister and father, and, even after the strength of her body failed her, she hung on by the strength of her mind. And this strength remained with her right to the very end; neither the length of her illness nor fear of death could weaken it. She has, therefore, because of her courageous attitude, left us even greater and graver reasons to feel loss and grief. O sad and quite untimely death! Indeed, I find the untimeliness of her death more cruel than the death itself. She had already been engaged to a fine young man, the day had now been set for the wedding, and we had just received our invitations. Now our joy has turned to sadness. I cannot express in words what great anguish I felt when I heard Fundanus himself making arrangements for the money he had intended to spend on his daughter's wedding clothes, pearls, and jewelry to be spent instead on funeral incense, ointments, and perfumes.

Single Women

As we have seen, young girls did not choose their own husbands, and they certainly had no choice about whether to marry or to remain single. An unmarried daughter

[6]Compare the grief expressed by Quintilian over the untimely death of his sons in selection 17. Quintilian laments that his sons' lives were cut short before they could excel as orators and scholars; Pliny laments that Minicia died before marriage.

was considered by her family an undesirable burden; it was her duty to marry the man chosen for her and to raise a family. In this passage from a poem by Catullus, we see that parents might even hate an unmarried daughter.

326 Catullus, *Poems* 62.57–65

If, when she is ripe for marriage, she enters into wedlock, she is ever dearer to her husband and less hateful to her parents. . . . So do not reject such a husband, little girl. It is not right to reject the man to whom your father and mother gave you. You must obey them. Your virginity is not entirely yours. One-third of it belongs to your father, one-third to your mother, and only one-third to you yourself. Don't fight against your parents who have surrendered to your husband a dowry and their rights over you.

LIFE EXPECTANCY

A Brief Life

Some females died of exposure immediately after birth; some lived to be 80. Many women, however, were married at a young age, raised families, and died before reaching "middle age." A woman's life passed rapidly; she might well be a grandmother at 30. The woman mentioned in this epitaph from the Roman province of Pannonia was married at 11, gave birth to six children, lost five of them,[7] and died at 27.

327 *CIL* 3.3572

Here I lie, a matron named Veturia. My father was Veturius.[8] My husband was Fortunatus. I lived for twenty-seven years, and I was married for sixteen years to the same man. After I gave birth to six children, only one of whom is still alive, I died.

Titus Julius Fortunatus, a soldier of Legion II Adiutrix, provided this memorial[9] for his wife, who was incomparable and showed outstanding devotion[10] to him.[11]

Death in Childbirth

The duty of the Roman *matrona* was to bear legitimate heirs for her husband. Girls married in their early teens soon became pregnant; childbirth was frequently difficult and painful, and many women died. In this letter to his friend Velius Cerialis, Pliny comments on two such deaths.

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[7] Cornelia, mother of Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus, bore twelve children, but only three lived to adulthood.

[8] On the naming of girls, see note 4 of genealogy chart 2.

[9] *this memorial:* funerary inscription.

[10] *devotion:* Latin *pietas;* see the introduction to selection 1 and the introduction to the section on ritual in Chapter XV.

[11] For other examples of military families on the frontiers, see selections 313 to 316.

328 Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 4.21.1, 2

What a sad and bitter tragedy befell the two Helvidiae sisters! Both of them died in labor, both of them died while giving birth to daughters. I am overwhelmed with grief. And not unduly, for it seems to me so tragic that two very virtuous young women, in the prime of their youth, were snatched away from us even as they were giving life to a new generation. And I grieve over the unhappy lot of the infants, who immediately, even while being born, were deprived of their mothers.[12] And I weep for the sad fate of the husbands, who are both very fine men.[13]

PRAISEWORTHY BEHAVIOR

The Virtues of Women

The following passage, taken from a late first century B.C. eulogy to a woman named Murdia (a eulogy delivered by her son and preserved in Rome as an inscription on marble), gives expression to the belief that a much narrower range of virtues was expected of women than of men. Men could strive for excellence[14] and compete for honor in many different areas of their lives; women were restricted to striving for excellence in those qualities that best served the interests of the family.

329 *CIL* 6.10230 (*ILS* 8394)

Praise for all good women is simple and similar because their qualities, which are natural, characteristic, and carefully sustained, do not require a variety of words. Let it suffice that they have all done things which are worthy of celebration. And since it is difficult for a woman to win praise in new areas of endeavor, because their lives are stimulated by less diversity of opportunities, we must inevitably cherish the traits which they have in common so that nothing may be lost from these just precepts and ruin the rest. And yet my mother, who was very dear to me, deserved greater praise than all the others because in modesty, moral integrity, chastity, obedience, wool-working,[15] diligence, and loyalty she was equal and similar to other excellent women, nor did she yield to any woman in virtue, hard work, or wisdom.

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[12] Many children did not know their natural mothers; see the introduction to the section on mothers in Chapter II. In selection 325, there is no mention of Minicia's mother, who is perhaps dead or separated from her children by divorce.

[13] For more information about this family, see selections 331 and 332, and genealogy chart 3.

[14] *excellence:* Latin *virtus*, from which we derive our English word "virtue."

[15] *wool-working:* see note 73 of this chapter and compare selection 59: "she spun wool." Wool-working was one of the traditional duties of a Roman matron and even upper-class matrons were praised for their skill and diligence in wool-work. Today women are expected to perform household tasks, but are usually not celebrated in their obituaries or other public tributes for activities such as ironing or cleaning. "Roman society, however, stressed the connection between women and housework even in the case of women unlikely to have performed any tasks of this kind." Judith Hallett, "Perspectives on Roman Women," p. 141, in *From Augustus to Nero: The First Dynasty of Imperial Rome*, edited by Ronald Mellor (East Lansing, Michigan, 1990).

An Outstanding Example of *Pietas*

Women earned praise when they directed all their actions toward the welfare and preservation of their families. A man was expected to devote himself to his own career or political advancement; a woman was expected to devote herself to the advancement of others. Therefore, courage, intelligence, and strength in a woman were commendable qualities, but only when coupled with selflessness and self-sacrifice. The following inscription, which dates to the end of the first century B.C. and was discovered in Rome, honors a Roman woman whose name was perhaps Turia. She exemplified the character and behavior expected of a Roman matron. She was strong, brave, modest, prudent, faithful, and self-sacrificing. In sum, she was an outstanding example of *pietas:* an unswerving sense of duty, devotion, and loyalty to one's family, friends, country, and gods. This eulogy was written by her husband.

330

CIL 6.1527, 31670 (*ILS* 8393)

The day before our wedding you were suddenly left an orphan when both your parents were murdered. Although I had gone to Macedonia and your sister's husband, Gaius Cluvius, had gone to the province of Africa, the murder of your parents did not remain unavenged. You carried out this act of piety[16] with such great diligence—asking questions, making inquiries, demanding punishment—that if we had been there, we could not have done better. You and that very pious woman, your sister, share the credit for success. . . .

Rare indeed are marriages of such long duration, which are ended by death, not divorce. We had the good fortune to spend forty-one years together with no unhappiness.[17] I wish that our long marriage had come finally to an end by *my* death, since it would have been more just for me, who was older, to yield to fate.

Why should I mention your personal virtues—your modesty, obedience, affability, and good nature, your tireless attention to wool-working, your performance of religious duties without superstitious fear, your artless elegance and simplicity of dress? Why speak about your affection toward your relatives, your sense of duty[18] toward your family (for you cared for my mother as well as you cared for your parents)? Why recall the countless other virtues which you have in common with all Roman matrons worthy of that name? The virtues I claim for you are your own special virtues; few people have possessed similar ones or been known to possess them. The history of the human race tells us how rare they are.

Together we diligently saved the whole inheritance which you received from your parents' estate. You handed it all over to me and did not worry yourself about increasing it.[19] We shared the responsibilities so that I acted as the guardian of your fortune and you undertook to serve as protector of mine. . . .

You demonstrated your generosity not only toward your very many relatives but especially in your performance of family duties. . . . For you brought up in our home young female rela-

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[16] *piety:* Latin *pietas*. It was Turia's duty to her parents to avenge their murders. In the absence of their husbands, she and her sister took a very active role in the murder investigations, but their concern was family, not personal, honor, and their behavior was therefore laudable.

[17] Statements such as these help to correct the impression that all Romans of the late republican period had loveless marriages and were frequently divorced. For a marriage of long duration in the imperial period, see selection 60.

[18] *sense of duty:* Latin *pietas*.

[19] It was the husband's duty and right to manage his wife's estate. It is clear, however, in the next paragraph that separate books were kept for the wife's money and the husband's money.

tives.[20] . . . And you provided dowries for them so that they could attain a position in life worthy of your family. These arrangements which were planned by you and your sister were supported by Gaius Cluvius and me with mutual agreement; moreover, since we admired your generosity, in order that you might not reduce the size of your inheritance, we put on the market family property and provided dowries by selling our estates. I have mentioned this not to congratulate myself but in order to make known that we were compelled by a sense of honor to carry out with our own money those arrangements made by you because of your dutifulness and generosity. . . .

When my political enemies were hunting me down,[21] you aided my escape by selling your jewelry; you gave me all the gold and pearls which you were wearing and added a small income from household funds. We deceived the guards of my enemies, and you made my time in hiding an "enriching" experience. . . .

Why should I now disclose memories locked deep in my heart, memories of secret and concealed plans? Yes, memories—how I was warned by swift messages to avoid present and imminent dangers and was therefore saved by your quick thinking; how you did not permit me to be swept away by my foolhardy boldness; how, by calm consideration, you arranged a safe place of refuge for me and enlisted as allies in your plans to save me your sister and her husband, Gaius Cluvius, even though the plans were dangerous to all of you. If I tried to touch on all your actions on my behalf, I could go on forever. For us let it suffice to say that you hid me safely.

Yet the most bitter experience of my life came later. . . . I was granted a pardon by Augustus,[22] but his colleague Lepidus[23] opposed the pardon. When you threw yourself on the ground at his feet, not only did he not raise you up, but in fact he grabbed you and dragged you along as if you were a slave. You were covered with bruises, but with unflinching determination you reminded him of Augustus Caesar's edict of pardon. . . . Although you suffered insults and cruel injuries, you revealed them publicly in order to expose him as the author of my calamities.[24] . . .

When the world was finally at peace again and order had been restored in the government,[25] we enjoyed quiet and happy days. We longed for children, but spiteful fate begrudged them. If Fortune had allowed herself to care for us in this matter as she does others, we two would have enjoyed complete happiness. But advancing old age put an end to our hopes for children. . . . You were depressed about your infertility and grieved because I was without children. . . . You spoke of divorce and offered to give up your household to another woman, to a fertile woman. You said that you yourself would arrange for me a new wife, one worthy of our well-known love, and you assured me that you would treat the children of my new marriage as if they were your own. You would not demand the return of your inheritance;[26] it would remain, if I wished, in my control. You would not

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[20] On orphans, see selection 51. Turia considered it her duty to look after relatives who had been orphaned.

[21] When Octavian and Mark Antony formed an alliance in 43 B.C. (see note 82 of Chapter III), they began to hunt down systematically and to kill their political opponents. Turia's husband, Quintus Lucretius Vespillo, was one such opponent, but he managed to escape execution. Cicero, however, was executed by Antony (see selection 154).

[22] *Augustus:* Octavian.

[23] *Lepidus:* member of the political alliance with Octavian and Antony (the Second Triumvirate); see note 104 of Chapter VII.

[24] Although Turia here appeared conspicuously in public and even dared to contradict a man, Lepidus, she did so on behalf of her husband and is therefore praised, not censured.

[25] That is, when Augustus (Octavian) established the principate; see selection 267.

[26] Roman husbands by law assumed control of their wives' money. Turia's husband managed for her the money she had inherited from her parents. In the case of divorce or death, the husband was required to return the wife's dowry to her father or, if he were dead, to her guardian; see selection 71. However, Roman funerary laws provided that "a husband can retain from his wife's dowry the amount which he spent on her funeral"; see selection 126. The vast majority of Romans were lower-class and not fortunate enough to have inheritances and large dowries to worry about. Consider selection 292; Ligustinus's wife brought to the marriage "nothing except her free birth and chastity."

detach or isolate yourself from me; you would simply carry out henceforth the duties and responsibilities of my sister or my mother-in-law.

I must confess that I was so angered by your suggestion that I lost my mind. I was so horrified that I could scarcely regain control of myself. How could you talk of a dissolution of our marriage before it was demanded by fate![27] How could you even conceive in your mind of any reason why you should, while still alive, cease to be my wife, you who remained very faithfully with me when I was in exile, indeed almost in exile from life! How could the desire or need for having children be so great that I would break faith with you! . . .

I wish that our old age had allowed our marriage to last until I, who was the elder, had passed away; it would have been fairer for you to arrange a funeral for me. . . . But by fate's decree, you finished the race of life before I did, and you left me all alone, without children, grieving and longing for you. . . . But inspired by your example I will stand up to cruel fortune, which has not stolen everything from me since it allows the memory of you to grow brighter and stronger through praise. . . .

I conclude my oration with this: you have deserved all, and I can never repay you completely. I have always considered your wishes my commands. I will continue to do for you whatever I still can.

May the Manes[28] grant to you and protect your eternal peace, I pray.

Emotional Control

In this letter to his friend Nepos, Pliny describes the courage of Arria, the wife of Caecina Paetus. When her husband was ordered by the emperor Claudius in A.D. 42 to end his life,[29] he hesitated to do so. Arria picked up a sword, stabbed herself, handed the bloody sword to her husband, and said, "Paetus, it does not hurt." The incident related in this passage took place, of course, before Paetus's suicide. Arria's strength of mind is viewed as praiseworthy because it was directed toward the welfare of her husband.

331

Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 3.16.3–6

Arria's husband, Caecina Paetus, was ill. So was her son, and neither was expected to recover. The son died, a boy of exceptional beauty, remarkable modesty, and dear to his parents for all sorts of reasons in addition to his being their son. Arria made arrangements for his funeral and attended the funeral without her husband's knowing. In fact, whenever she entered his room, she pretended that their son was alive and even feeling better. And whenever her husband asked how the boy was doing, she replied, "He has rested well and has his appetite back." Then, when the tears which she had held back for a long time overwhelmed her and gushed forth, she left the room and only then gave way to grief. After she had wept, she dried her eyes, regained her composure, and returned, as calm as if she had left her feeling of bereavement outside the room. Her best-known deed was, of course, heroic, when she unsheathed the sword, stabbed herself in the breast, pulled out the sword, and handed it to her husband, saying these immortal, almost divine words: "Paetus, it does not hurt." But still she had before her eyes, as she was acting and speaking thus, the hope of fame and immortality. How much more heroic was it to conceal her tears when she had little chance of gaining

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[27] *fate:* death.

[28] *Manes:* see note 56 of Chapter III.

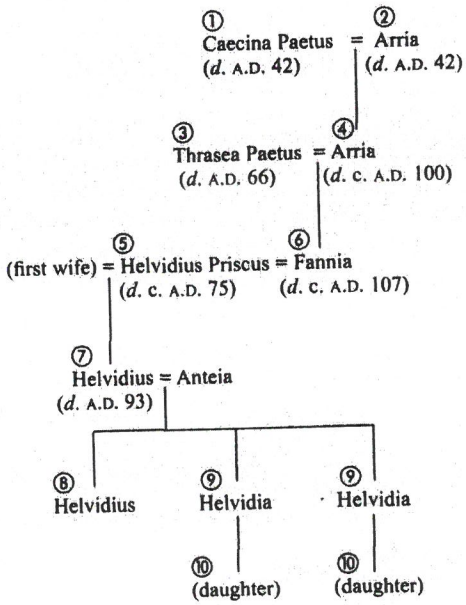
[29] Upper-class Romans who had incurred the wrath of an emperor were frequently invited to end their lives (commit suicide) and thus save their families the embarrassment of a public execution.

immortality, to hide her grief, with little chance of fame, and to continue acting like a mother after she had lost her son.

Loyalty

In this letter, Pliny tells his friend Priscus about the illness of Fannia. Fannia was the granddaughter of Caecina Paetus and Arria, who were mentioned in the previous

Genealogy Chart 3. Helvidii



① *Caecina Paetus:* involved in a plot to overthrow the emperor Claudius; tried, found guilty, and forced to commit suicide.

② *Arria* (*the elder*): committed suicide with her husband ("Paetus, it does not hurt"); see selection 331.

③ *Thrasea Paetus:* involved in opposition to the emperor Nero; charged with treason, and forced to commit suicide.

④ *Arria* (*the younger*): wanted to follow her mother's example and share her husband's fate. He persuaded her to remain alive for the sake of their daughter, Fannia.

⑤ *Helvidius Priscus:* exiled by Nero in A.D. 66; put to death in exile by the emperor Vespasian.

⑥ *Fannia:* accompanied her husband into exile; see selection 332.

⑦ *Helvidius* (*the elder*): accused of treason against the emperor Domitian and executed in A.D. 93.

⑧ *Helvidius* (*the younger*): brother of the two women who died in childbirth; see selection 328.

⑨ *Helvidia:* the two sisters who died in childbirth.

⑩ *daughters:* infant girls born to the two sisters who died.

passage. Her husband was Helvidius Priscus, a Stoic philosopher and writer[30] who was prominent in the opposition to the emperors and who was put to death by the emperor Vespasian around A.D. 75.[31]

332 Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 7.19.1, 3, 4, 6

Fannia's illness worries me. . . . Her fever lingers, the cough grows worse, and she is extremely thin and weak. . . . I grieve that so great a woman is being snatched away from the sight of our citizens; I don't know whether we will see another like her. What purity she had! What integrity! What dignity! What loyalty! Twice she followed her husband into exile; the third time, after his death, she herself was banished when she tried to preserve his writings. . . . For when the Senate, through fear and imperial pressure, decreed that her husband's books be burned, she kept them safe (even though all her own possessions were confiscated) and took them with her into exile.[32]

This same woman was charming and friendly and—a quality possessed by only a few—both loved and respected. Will there in the future be anyone whom we can offer to our wives as a model? Will there be anyone in whom we men can find an example of courage, whom we can all admire, even as we see and speak with her, as much as the heroines we read about in books?

Patience

The Romans maintained a double standard for sexual fidelity in marriage. A wife was considered adulterous if she had sexual relations with any man except her husband, but a man was adulterous only if his sexual partner was the wife of another man.[33] A good wife, moreover, tolerated her husband's infidelities without complaint.[34] The woman described in the following passage, Tertia Aemilia, was married to one of Rome's greatest heroes, Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus, the conqueror of Hannibal.[35]

333 Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Deeds and Words* 6.7.1–3

Tertia Aemilia, wife of Scipio Africanus and mother of Cornelia, who in turn was mother of the Gracchi,[36] was a woman of such generosity and patience that, although she knew that one of her

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[30] On Stoicism and the Stoics of this period, see selections 466 to 473.

[31] Fannia and her husband were related to Arria, who was mentioned in the previous passage, and the two sisters of the Helvidian family who died in childbirth (selection 328); see genealogy chart 3. Many of the men in the family were exiled and even executed for their political beliefs. For other acquaintances of Pliny who were exiled or executed by emperors, see selection 55.

[32] Fannia, like Pliny's wife, Calpurnia (selection 61), was intelligent and educated enough to appreciate the value of her husband's writings. Neither woman sought fame on her own as a writer.

[33] See the selection on adultery in Chapter III.

[34] Consider the behavior of Augustine's mother, described in selection 67.

[35] *Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus:* 236–184 B.C. For more information on his military career, see the introduction to selection 352. For an outline of his family connections, see genealogy chart 2.

[36] *Cornelia:* see note 7 of this chapter.

little slave girls was attracting the sexual attention of her husband, she pretended not to notice.[37] For she considered it inappropriate for a woman to make charges against Africanus, the conqueror of the world, or for wifely impatience to make charges against a great man. In fact, her mind was so far removed from vindictive thoughts that, after the death of Africanus, she manumitted the slave girl and gave her in marriage to one of her freedmen.

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR

Scandalous Conduct

Women who exhibited independence of thought or concerned themselves with matters outside the home and family were subject to criticism. One of the most fascinating women in Roman history is Sempronia, who is described in the passage below from Sallust's account of *The Catilinarian Conspiracy*. Catiline was a young upper-class Roman of good family who in 63 B.C. planned a revolution to overthrow the state. The conspiracy was discovered by Cicero, consul in 63 B.C., and the conspirators were either killed in battle or arrested and executed.[38] Sempronia, an intelligent, well-educated, and talented upper-class Roman matron, had supported Catiline and thereby scandalized the "decent" citizens of Rome. They were scandalized because she had apparently acted independently, had assumed a public role in the political life of Rome, and had done so not in support of her family but for personal reasons. Thus, while women like Turia and Arria were seen to exhibit "strength of mind," Sempronia was viewed as "willful." Sallust's portrait of her reveals his ambivalent reactions to her character: disgust at her flouting of the traditional female role, but honest admiration for her considerable talents.

334 Sallust, *The Catilinarian Conspiracy* 25

Sempronia had often in the past acted with a masculine daring and boldness. Yet Fortune had blessed her quite adequately, first with beauty and good birth, and then with a husband and children. She had studied Greek and Latin literature. She could play the lyre and dance, although with more skill than is necessary for an honest woman.[39] And she had many other talents which lead to moral dissipation. But there was nothing she valued less than honor and decency; it would be difficult to decide which she squandered more—her money or her reputation. She was so filled with burning lust that she more often made advances to men than they did to her. Even before meeting Catiline, she had often broken promises, dishonored credit agreements, been an accessory to murder, and plunged headlong into poverty because of her extravagance.[40] And yet her abilities were far from contemptible; she could

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[37] The slave girl was not necessarily a willing partner; on the sexual exploitation of slaves, see the introduction to selection 213.

[38] One father executed his son for his involvement in this conspiracy; see the introduction to selection 15.

[39] The Romans enjoyed watching dance performances but thought the dancers themselves were low-class and contemptible. Most dancers were slaves or foreigners. However, Sempronia's fault is not so much that she dances, but that she dances well; a woman's talents are not to be conspicuous.

[40] Sallust's description of Sempronia's personal behavior may well have been colored by his distaste for her political involvement.

write poetry, be droll, converse modestly or tenderly or coarsely, as the situation demanded. In fact, she was a woman of great wit and great charm.

Women and Politics

In 215 B.C., after a stunning defeat by Hannibal at Cannae,[41] the Romans passed a law (the Oppian Law), which curtailed women's purchases of luxury items, such as gold jewelry and expensive clothing. The Romans hoped this austerity measure would increase the money available for the war effort. A few years after the end of the war, in 195 B.C., two tribunes brought before the Concilium Plebis a proposal to repeal the Oppian Law. The proposal was discussed at great length and often bitterly. Since the Oppian Law had directly affected women, one would expect that women would have had strong opinions about its repeal. And they did! They poured out into the streets and into the Forum, where the assembly met, and, although they could not themselves vote, they tried to persuade their menfolk to vote for repeal. Ultimately, the proposal for repeal was passed by the assembly, but one of its reactionary opponents, Marcus Porcius Cato,[42] expressed dismay and disgust at the behavior of the Roman women who had dared to express an opinion about a political matter and had lobbied for support. This passage is taken from one of his public speeches.

335 Livy, *A History of Rome* 34.2.1, 2, 8–11, 14

If each of us men, fellow citizens, had undertaken to keep the right and the authority of the husband out of the hands of the women of the family, we would have less trouble with groups of women. But as it is now, at home our freedom is trampled on by feminine rages, and here in the Forum it is crushed and trod underfoot. Because we were unable to control each woman as an individual, we are now frightened by women in groups. . . .

Indeed, it was with some embarrassment that I came a few minutes ago to the Forum right through a crowd of women. If I had not held in respect the dignity and basic decency of each woman as an individual (it would mortify them to be seen receiving a scolding from a consul), I would have said: "What kind of behavior is this, running around in public and blocking streets and talking to other women's husbands? Could you not have asked your own husbands the same thing at home? Are you more persuasive in public than in private, with others' husbands than with your own? And yet it is not right, even in your own homes (if a sense of shame and decency were to keep you within your proper limits), for you to concern yourselves about which laws are passed or repealed here." That's what I would have said.

Our ancestors were not willing to let women conduct any business, not even private business, without a guardian. They wanted them to remain under the control of their fathers, brothers, and husbands. We, for heaven's sake, now allow them to take part in politics and to mingle with us in the Forum and to attend assemblies. . . . To be quite honest, they desire freedom, nay rather license in all matters. And if they win in this matter, what will they not attempt?

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[41] *Hannibal:* Carthaginian general who ravaged much of Italy during the Second Punic War; see note 87 of Chapter VII.

Cannae: town in eastern Italy.

[42] *Marcus Porcius Cato:* see selections 134, 176, and 207.

Women and Education

Roman women were expected to have enough education to appreciate their husbands' work, wit, writing, and opinions; they were not, however, expected to express opinions of their own. In public they were best seen—nodding in agreement or smiling appreciatively at their husbands' wit—but not heard. An intelligent and talented woman had to be careful not to appear more clever than the men around her.[43]

Juvenal's Sixth Satire is a scathing attack on women. Many of his criticisms involve an exaggeration of the situation but nonetheless reveal what sort of behavior irritated Roman men. Apparently Roman men were embarrassed by, and thus disliked, women who were openly more learned than they.

336 Juvenal, *Satires* 6.434–456

Really annoying is the woman who, as soon as she takes her place on the dining couch,[44] praises Vergil,[45] excuses Dido's suicide,[46] compares and ranks in critical order the various poets, and weighs Vergil and Homer[47] on a pair of scales.[48] Grammar teachers[49] surrender, professors of rhetoric[50] are defeated, the entire group of guests is silent; neither a lawyer nor an auctioneer nor even another woman will get a word in. So loud and shrill are her words that you might think pots were being banged together and bells were being rung. . . .

Like a philosopher she defines ethics. If she wants to appear so learned and eloquent, she should shorten her tunic to midcalf![51] . . . Don't marry a woman who speaks like an orator—or knows every history book. There should be some things in books which she doesn't understand. I hate a woman who reads and rereads Palaemon's[52] treatise on grammar, who always obeys all the laws and rules of correct speech, who quotes verses I've never even heard of, moldy old stuff that a man shouldn't worry about anyway. Let her correct the grammar of her stupid girlfriend! A husband should be allowed an occasional "I ain't."

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[43] Sempronia, vehemently criticized by Sallust in selection 334, evidently did not conceal her talents.

[44] *dining couch:* the Romans reclined at dinner parties.

[45] *Vergil:* Rome's greatest epic poet; author of the epic poem *Aeneid* which recounts the journey from Troy to Italy of Aeneas, a Trojan prince who survived the Trojan war.

[46] An episode from the *Aeneid*. Dido, queen of Carthage, a city in North Africa, had fallen in love with Aeneas when he landed there. After a few months, however, Aeneas sailed away to continue his journey to Italy. The unhappy Dido committed suicide. Readers of the *Aeneid* have either blamed Aeneas for deserting a friend and causing her suicide or, like the woman at the dinner party, excused Aeneas for Dido's suicide because *pietas* demanded that he continue on to Italy. On Aeneas's *pietas*, see note 88 of Chapter XV.

[47] *Homer:* Greek epic poet who composed the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

[48] A figurative expression; she tries to determine the "weightiness," or value, of each poet's work.

[49] *grammar teachers:* Latin *grammatici;* see selection 152.

[50] *professors of rhetoric:* Latin *rhetores:* see selection 153.

[51] The tunic (Latin *tunica*), which reached about midcalf, was a man's garment; the woman's garment was a *stola* which extended to the feet. Juvenal is saying, let her wear men's clothing if she wants to act like a man.

[52] *Palaemon:* see note 31 of Chapter VI.

Women and Luxuries

In the same satire from which the previous passage came, Juvenal, who lived around A.D. 100, blames women's immorality on Rome's affluence. In the "good old days," life was hard and women were pure, or so Juvenal thought.

337

Juvenal, *Satires* 6.286–295, 298–300

Do you wonder where these monsters come from? In the good old days, poverty made our Latin women chaste; small huts didn't provide opportunities for immoral behavior. Hard work, lack of sleep, hands rough and callused from working wool,[53] Hannibal[54] near the city, their husbands performing militia duty—these things just don't allow vices to develop. Now, however, we are suffering the ill effects of a long peace. Luxury, more destructive than war, threatens the city and takes revenge for the lands we have conquered.[55] No crime or lustful act is missing, now that traditional Roman poverty is dead. . . . Obscene wealth brought with it foreign customs,[56] and unmanly luxuries and ugly affluence weakened each generation.

Women and Theatrical Performances

In this letter to a man named Geminus, Pliny reports the death of Ummidia Quadratilla, a woman more fond of theatrical performances than he considered proper for an upper-class Roman matron. Both Pliny and Juvenal, the author of the two previous passages, lived at the end of the first century A.D. and expressed a conservative perspective on the appropriate behavior for women. We do not know how widely their opinions were shared by others. Perhaps the 80-year-old Ummidia reflects the values of an earlier, and less restrictive, generation. Pliny praises a woman's artistic interest only if it is directed toward the work of her husband. His own wife sang *his* poems and read *his* books (selection 61), and Fannia kept safe her husband's books (selection 332).

338

Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 7.24.1, 4, 5

Ummidia Quadratilla passed away a little before her eightieth birthday. She was in good health until the end, a woman with a figure more solid and plump than is usual even for a matron. . . . She owned a company of pantomime dancers[57] and enjoyed their performances with more enthusiasm

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[53] On wool-working as a matron's duty, see note 15 of this chapter.

[54] *Hannibal:* see note 41 of this chapter.

[55] Lands conquered by Rome in war sent money to Rome for taxes and tribute. These lands also offered Roman capitalists new territory in which to expand their business ventures. However, as Rome became more affluent and prosperous, it also became, according to Juvenal, weaker and immoral, and thus conquered lands could indirectly cause the downfall of Rome.

[56] On Juvenal's prejudice against foreigners, see selection 235.

[57] *owned a company:* performers were usually slaves; therefore, this woman literally owned the performers.
pantomime: a performance in which dancers depicted the actions of characters, usually mythological, in various situations; see selection 390. The woman in this letter loved pantomime but thought it would corrupt her grandson. Most Romans enjoyed the stage but despised the actors. On Roman ambivalence toward theatrical performance, see the introduction to selection 389.

than was proper for a woman of her social rank. However, her grandson Quadratus, who was brought up in her household, never saw their performances, either in the theater or at home, and she certainly never encouraged him to. She herself told me, when she was asking me to supervise his rhetorical training, that she, during the idle hours which women have,[58] used to relax by playing checkers or watching pantomimes; but when she was about to do either, she always told her grandson to go and study.

HYSTERIA

The word *hysteria* is derived from the Greek word *hystera*, "womb." Greco-Roman medical writers believed, as did the Egyptians before them, that hysteria was an illness caused by violent movements of the womb and that it was therefore peculiar to women. The illness had a clearly recognizable pattern of symptoms: suffocation, inability to speak, and sometimes convulsions. Men exhibiting similar symptoms were not considered hysterical, since they did not have a *hystera*, or "womb," and they were therefore assumed to have a different illness, such as epilepsy. The Greco-Roman theory of hysteria as an illness of physiological origin influenced doctors for the next 2,000 years. During these millennia hysteria continued to be considered a feminine ailment attributable to disturbances of the womb. Not until the time of Freud did doctors begin to recognize that the symptoms of hysteria were caused by emotional tensions arising from unconscious sources; these tensions are converted from emotional manifestations into a physical ailment, into the symptoms of hysteria. It is interesting that the symptoms of hysteria vary from culture to culture and are adapted to the ideas and mores current in each particular culture. "Hysteria has become an apparently infrequent illness. In this century behavior that includes 'kicking about' and 'waving the arms and legs' is met with distaste and lack of sympathy. . . . It has been suggested that, unlike the psychotic patient, the patient suffering from hysteria retains a sense of reality in the course of the seizure and is thus able to control his manifestations and to keep them within the limits permissible in his ambient setting. Unacceptable today would be the fainting ladies of the Victorian period . . . because they would altogether fail to evoke any sympathetic response in their social environment. . . . Hysteria has become subjectively unrewarding."[59]

In the passages below, medical writers of the Roman world describe the origins, symptoms, and cures of hysteria. Their ideas seem curious, particularly since we now recognize that hysteria is caused, in both men and women, by anxiety and emotional tensions, and also since we seldom today see such examples of hysteria. However, we may well wonder why hysteria was so prevalent in the Roman world. What were the pressures, tensions, and anxieties that tormented so many Roman women and found a socially acceptable outlet only in the manifestation of hysterical symptoms?[60]

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[58] Upper-class women, attended by many slaves, might have "idle hours," but lower-class women would have precious few moments of leisure. Pliny's perspective was upper-class. However, even upper-class women were expected not to be idle. See note 15 of this chapter on wool-working and other household tasks.

[59] Ilza Veith, *Hysteria: The History of a Disease* (Chicago and London, 1965), p. 273. See also p. 209: "The symptoms, it seems, were conditioned by social expectancy, tastes, mores and religion, and were further shaped by the state of medicine in general."

[60] Consider, for example, the repressed behavior of Arria in selection 331. Or consider the strain on a woman who was forced to expose her child (selections 36 and 37).

Symptoms

339

Aretaeus, *Medical Writings* 2.11.1–3; 6.10.1–4

In women, in the hollow of the body below the ribcage, lies the womb. It is very much like an independent animal within the body for it moves around of its own accord . . . and is quite erratic. Furthermore, it likes fragrant smells and moves toward them, but it dislikes foul odors and moves away from them. . . . When it suddenly moves upward[61] and remains there for a long time and presses on the intestines, the woman chokes, in the manner of an epileptic, but without any spasms. For the liver, diaphragm, lungs, and heart are suddenly confined in a narrow space. And therefore the woman seems unable to breathe or speak. In addition, the carotid arteries, acting in sympathy with the heart, compress, and therefore heaviness of the head, loss of sense perception, and deep sleep occur. . . . Disorders caused by the uterus are remedied by foul smells,[62] and also by pleasant fragrances applied to the vagina. . . .

The uterus follows after sweet-smelling things as if it experiences pleasure from them, and flees from stinking and foul-smelling things as if it experiences pain from them. If any bad-smelling thing irritates it from above, it flees downward, even beyond the genital organs. But if a fetid odor is applied below, it is forced upward, away from the odor. . . . If the uterus wanders upward, it very quickly causes the woman to suffocate and choke by cutting off her breathing. She cannot even struggle in pain or shout and call for help. In many cases, inability to breathe strikes immediately, in others inability to speak. . . . Old urine[63] rouses the senses of someone in a death-like state and drives the uterus downward. Sweet fragrances must be applied with pessaries to the area of the uterus.

Causes and Cures

340

Soranus,[64] *Gynecology* 3.26, 3.28.2, 3.29.5

The term *hysterical suffocation* derives from both the affected organ and one symptom, suffocation.[65] It denotes cessation of breathing, together with inability to speak and a loss of sense perception, caused by some condition of the uterus. In the majority of cases, the illness is preceded by repeated miscarriage, premature childbirth, long widowhood, retention of menses, menopause, or inflation of the womb.[66] Among women suffering the disease, these symptoms occur: swooning, loss of speech, labored breathing, seizure of the senses, clenching or grinding of the teeth, convulsive contraction of the extremities (though sometimes only weakness and collapse), swelling of the abdomen, retraction of the uterus, dilation of the chest area, bulging of the veins which criss-cross the face, chilling of the body, perspiration, and a failed or failing pulse. In general, the women recover quicky from the seizure, and usually they remember what happened. . . .

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[61] That is, toward a fragrant smell.

[62] The uterus "flees from" foul smells. Therefore, a foul-smelling object near the hysterical woman's nose or throat will cause the uterus to flee downward, back to its position in the lower body. A pleasant-smelling object near the vagina will attract the uterus and draw it down to its desired position.

[63] That is, applied to the nose.

[64] Earlier passages from this same author discussed fertility, contraception, and abortion; see selections 27, 32 and 34.

[65] *hysterical suffocation:* Greek *hysterike pnix* from *hystera,* "womb," and *pnix,* "suffocation."

[66] Although Soranus recognized that hysteria occurred most often in women who were unable to have children, he did not understand that its cause might be the psychological stress of being childless in a society which believed that a woman's main function was to bear children. In contrast with other ancient medical writers, however, Soranus did not believe that virginity was physically harmful.

One should make the patient lie down in a room which is moderately warm and bright, and rouse her as gently as possible from her seizure by moving her jaw, placing warm compresses over the whole middle part of her body, slowly straightening out each cramped limb, restraining the spasm of each extremity, and warming each chilled part by the laying on of bare hands. Then one should wash the face with a sponge soaked in warm water, for sponging the face in some way revives the patient. . . .

I strongly disagree with all those men who immediately irritate the inflamed areas and cause drowsiness or torpor by effluvia of foul-smelling substances. For the uterus does not issue forth like a wild animal from its lair, attracted by pleasant fragrances, nor does it flee from fetid smells.[67] It is, rather, displaced or contracted because of constrictions caused by inflammation.

WORKING WOMEN

Since the literary works that we use as source material for Roman civilization were written by upper-class men, we have much more information about men than about women, and more information about upper-class women than about lower-class women.[68] Yet there were obviously thousands and thousands of women in the Roman world who were working wives and mothers, women who were slaves or freedwomen or free women of the lower class. We know virtually nothing about their daily existence or how they coped with the often conflicting demands of work, children, and marriage.[69] They did not themselves write, and no one else wrote about them. Only their tombstones provide evidence that they once existed, and their epitaphs—a few from Rome are given here—tell us only the nature of their employment, not their feelings about it.[70] Note how young these women were at death.

A Dressmaker

341 *CIL* 6.9980 (*ILS* 7428)

To Italia, dressmaker of Cocceia Phyllis. She lived twenty years. Acastus, her fellow slave, paid for this tombstone because she was poor.

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[67] Soranus thus disagrees with Aretaeus, the author of the previous passage, a Greek medical writer who lived in the second century A.D.

[68] An upper-class Roman *matrona*—Arria, Fannia, Calpurnia, and Tullia are all examples—certainly did not work outside the home. And within the home, they had many slaves to cook, clean, and look after the children. Compare Pliny's description of Ummidia Quadratilla in selection 338: "during the idle hours which women have."

[69] Roman women did not have careers; they worked because they were forced to if they were slaves, or because their families would otherwise starve. Women without husbands were often destitute; see selection 42 on the woman forced to give away her daughter.

[70] On midwives, see selection 118. On prostitutes, see note 113 of Chapter V, and also selection 372. Women were reduced to prostitution because of poverty or slavery.

A Hairdresser

342

CIL 6.9732 (*ILS* 7420a)

Psamate, Furia's hairdresser, lived nineteen years. Mithrodates, the baker of Flaccus Thorius, put up this tombstone.

A Fishmonger

343

CIL 6.9801 (*ILS* 7500)

Aurelia Nais, a freedwoman of Gaius, sold fish in the warehouses of Galba. Gaius Aurelius Phileros, a freedman of Gaius, and Lucius Valerius Secundus, a freedman of Lucius, paid for this.

Farm Women

Selection 292 provides an account of the military career of Spurius Ligustinus, a republican era soldier, who served in overseas campaigns almost continually for 30 years. When he marched off to war, he left behind a wife, many children, and a farm. It would be interesting to learn how his wife was able to manage the farm and raise eight children while her husband was absent.

In selection 206, where Columella offered advice about the choice and treatment of slaves for farm work, he recommended that "the foreman should be given a female companion both to keep him in bounds and also to assist him in certain matters."[71] The following passage describes the duties of this female companion (and incidentally instructs us further about the many operations involved in maintaining a farm). Although slaves could not form legal marriages,[72] the relationship between the foreman and his female companion was probably parallel to that of a husband and wife.

344

Columella, *On Agriculture* 12.3.5, 6, 8 and 9

The forewoman must not only store and guard the items which have been brought into the house and delivered to her; she should also inspect and examine them from time to time so that the furniture and clothing which have been stored do not disintegrate because of mold, and the fruits and vegetables and other necessities do not go rotten because of her neglect and slothfulness. On rainy days, or when a woman cannot do field work out of doors because of the cold or frost, she should return to wool-working.[73] Therefore wool should be prepared and carded in advance so that she can more easily undertake and complete the required allotment of wool-working. For it will be beneficial if clothing is made at home for her and the stewards and the other valued slaves so the financial accounts of the *paterfamilias* are less strained.[74] She ought to stay in one place as little as possible,

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[71] Varro makes a similar proposal in selection 208 and adds that the female companion will bear the foreman's children. (Since the foreman and his female companions are both slaves, the children will become the property of the slave-owner.)

[72] See the introduction to selection 226.

[73] *wool-working:* The wool cut from the sheep needed to be cleaned of extraneous matter and untangled by carding. The wool fibers were then ready to be spun into threads that could be used to weave cloth.

[74] *paterfamilias:* the owner of the farm and the slaves. On the use of the word *familia* to mean "crew of slaves," see note 27 of Chapter VIII.

for her job is not a sedentary one. At one moment she will have to go to the loom and teach the weavers whatever she knows better than them or, if she knows less, learn from someone who understands more. At another moment, she will have to check on those slaves who are preparing the food for the *familia*. Then she will also have to see that the kitchen, cowsheds, and even the stables are cleaned. And she will also have to open up the sick-rooms occasionally, even if they are empty of patients, and keep them free of dirt, so that, when circumstance demands, a well-ordered and healthy environment is provided for the sick. She will, in addition, have to be in attendance when the stewards of the pantry and cellar are weighing something, and also be present when the shepherds are milking in the stables, or bringing the lambs or calves to nurse. But she will also certainly need to be present when the sheep are sheared, and to examine the wool carefully, and compare the number of fleeces with the number of sheep.[75] Then she must turn her attention to the slaves in the house and insist that they air out the furniture and clean and polish the metal items and free them from rust, and take to the craftsmen for repair other items which require mending.

Comfort Women

345 Varro, *On Agriculture* 2.10.6

With respect to breeding opportunities for the shepherds who remain continually on the farm, the solution is easy because they have a female slave companion at the villa, and the lust of shepherds does not require anything more than this. However for those shepherds who are in mountain pastures and forest areas and who take shelter from the rain in improvised huts rather than in the villa, many farm-owners think that it is expedient to supply them with women who can follow the flocks and prepare meals for the shepherds and make them more vigilant.

COSMETICS

For the Skin He Loves to Touch

Ovid, the poet who advised men on where and how to meet women,[76] also advised women about cosmetics that would help to attract men.

346 Ovid, *A Book about Facial Cosmetics* 51–60, 63–68

Now we will learn how we can appear bright and radiant even in the morning when sleep first deserts our tender limbs. First strip away the husks and the chaff from some barley, preferably the variety sent from Libya by boat. Clean two pounds of this barley. Moisten an equal amount of vetch with ten eggs. When the barley has dried in blowing breezes, crush it with a rough millstone turned by a lazy donkey.[77] Grind up along with the barley the horns of a lively young stag. . . . Add twelve narcissus bulbs stripped of their outer layers and pulverized on pure marble. . . . Then add nine times as much honey. If you pamper your face with such a mixture, your skin will be smoother and more radiant than your own mirror.

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[75] Roman slave-owners assumed that unsupervised slaves would steal and cheat them; see selections 189 and 203.

[76] See selections 73 and 382.

[77] For the situation of a donkey in a mill, see selection 210.

The Dangers of Hair Dyes

Roman men and women used various mixtures to dye their hair. Henna, for example, was quite popular. One of Ovid's girlfriends, however, had an unfortunate experience with one dye. Besides the information about hair dyes, this passage offers insights into how some Roman women treated their slaves.

347

Ovid, *Love Affairs* 1.14.1–18, 27, 28, 43–46

Didn't I tell you to stop messing around with the color of your hair? Now you have no hair left to dye! If you had left it alone, who had thicker hair than you? And when you let it down, it used to hang to your waist. It was very fine—so fine that you hesitated to curl it with curling irons—like the silk fibers the Chinese produce, or the threads which the spider spins with her slender legs when she weaves a delicate web under a deserted beam. But it was neither raven black nor golden blond; it was a mixture of the two, the color of cedar wood when the bark has been stripped away. And it was easy to manage, naturally curly, and didn't cause you any trouble. You didn't have to worry about hair pins or combs being caught in tangles and hurting you when they were pulled out. Your hairdresser was never bruised or scratched.[78] I used to watch her combing and arranging your hair, and you never had to grab a hair pin and stab her in the arm. . . .

I used to cry out to you, "It's a crime, a real crime, to burn such naturally lovely hair with dyes. You cruel woman, have pity on your head." . . .

Now your hair has fallen out, and you alone are responsible. You yourself mixed the poison and put it on your head. Now Germany will send you her captured locks of hair,[79] and a conquered race will save you from the embarrassment of baldness.

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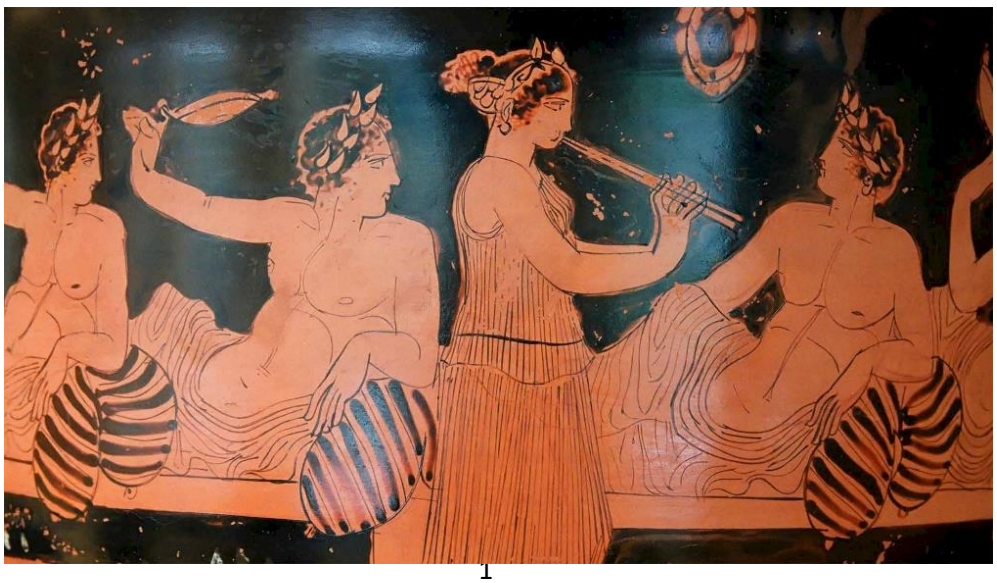
[78] Obviously some women would physically abuse their hairdressers (who were usually slaves) when combing out the tangles in their hair caused them pain. On the treatment of slaves, see Chapter VIII. Of course, most women could not afford a personal hairdresser.

[79] She will buy a wig. Wigs made from the hair of Germans captured in battle were very popular because the hair was naturally blond.

AS into A2 Bridging Work
Classical Civilisation
Love and Relationships

All reading you have to do is attached at the end of the booklet



All tasks are compulsory and you will be assessed on them when we return via marked written work, contributions to class discussion on articles and the depth and organisation of notes you make.

Warm up activity:

1. Read Mary Beard's article 'Women in power' and make notes, ready to discuss in the first lesson back. This article will warm up your brains for this module and for looking at women in the ancient world. (given to you in our last lesson)
2. Watch the following videos to get a general idea of Greek and Roman life; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6bDrYTXQLu8 and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GXoEpNjgKzg

Tasks:

3. It is always good to start a new module from an area that you are already familiar with; tragedy. Read Sarah Pomeroy's chapter on 'Women in tragedy verses Real women' and make notes, ready to discuss in the first lesson back. (given to you in our last lesson)

4. Read the rest of Lysistrata (you can either read the online version https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/Lysistrata.php or get the book https://www.amazon.co.uk/Lysistrata-Other-Plays-Penguin-Classics/dp/0140448144- this is the version I have). Write a one-page summary of the plot on p3 of this booklet.

5. Read Medea- online version here: https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/Medea.php or buy a second hand copy – definitely worth having your own copy! Answer the following questions on p 4.

6. Read the chapter on women in Greece (given to you in our last lesson) and make notes. Use p5 to help you build an image of what a typical Athenian woman's life was like.

7. Read the chapter on women in Roman society (given to you in our last lesson)- this chapter contains lots of primary sources on women in ancient Rome – use p6 to help you build an image of what real Roman women were like and how some women did not live up to Roman expectation.

Lysistrata, Aristophanes

My summary of the story:

What I think this play reveals about male Greek attitudes towards women:

Medea, Euripides

My summary of the story:

My opinion of Medea is:

This is because:

What I think this play reveals about male Greek attitudes towards women:

A typical Greek women

childhood

Marriage

clothing

Religion/festivals

Childbirth

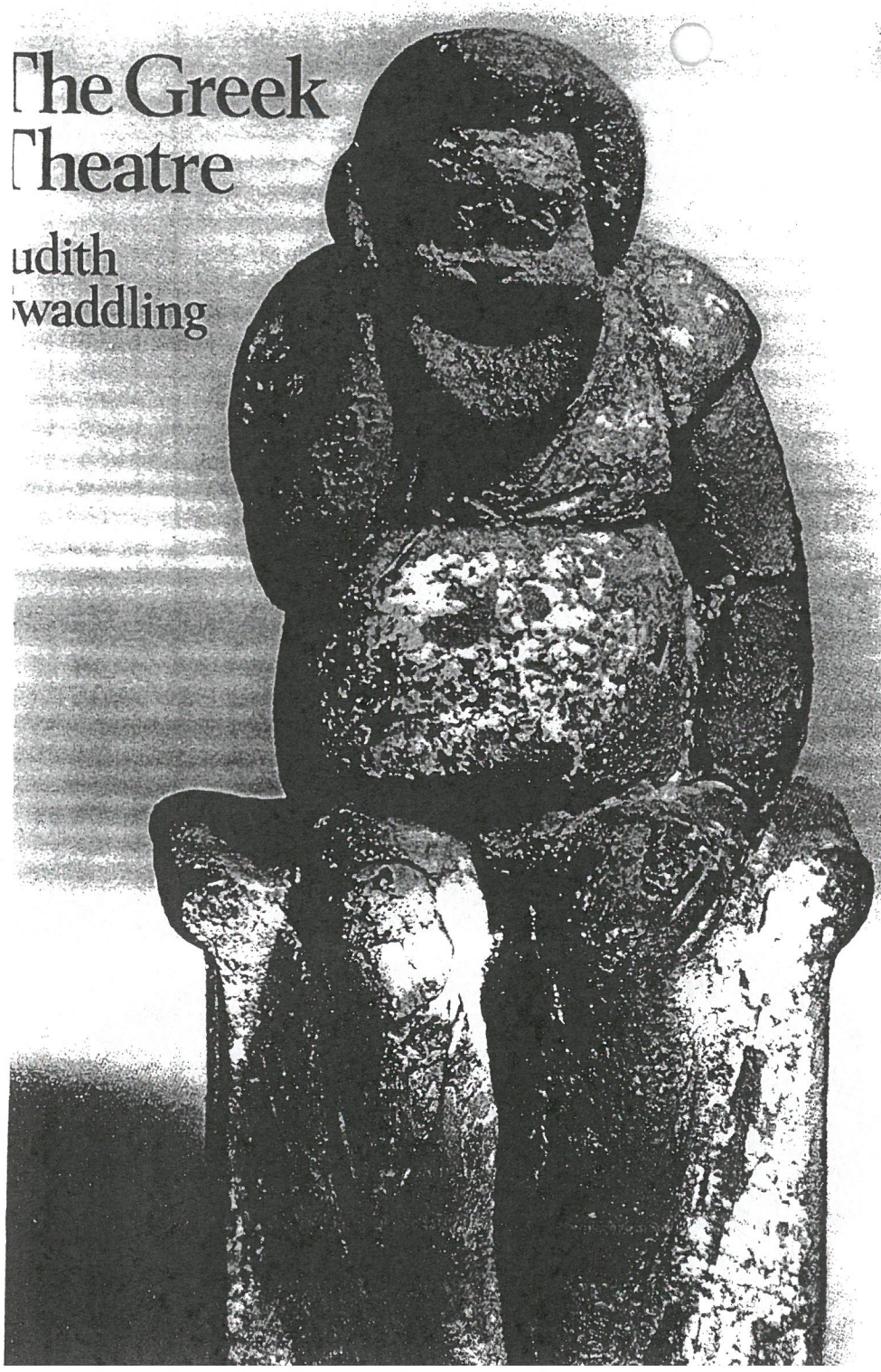
A typical Roman women

Typical expectations for women?

Which women did not conform and how/why?

The Greek Theatre

udith
waddling



(*Cover*) Wine bowl from Southern Italy: comedy scene with lover climbing ladder to girl at window (cf. Aristophanes, *Ecclesiazousae*) 360–340 BC.

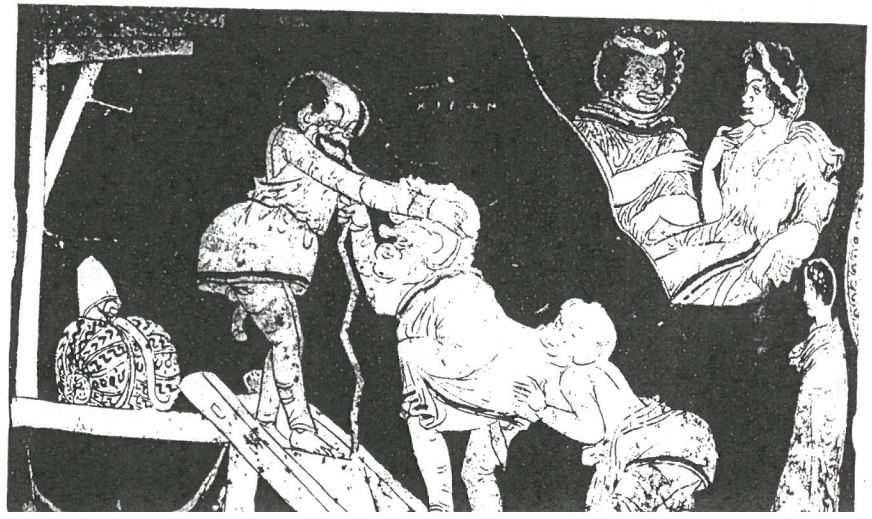
(*Left*) Slave seated on altar where he has taken refuge, mockingly raising hand to ear as though he cannot hear his pursuer shouting at him to leave it. Greek terracotta statuette made in Athens about 350 BC.

Parody of the myth of Cheiron (the centaur, enacted by an old man with a slave pushing from behind). The slave Xanthias helps him from further up the stairs leading into the 'Temple of Apollo' where Cheiron goes to be cured of blindness. *Top right*: two nymphs. *Below*: Achilles. Wine-bowl, made in Southern Italy about 380 BC.

Weird masks, outlandish characters, highly stylized acting and a choru posing or shifting about the stage in a series of exaggerated, rhythmi movements – these are probably the impressions that come to most peopl when they hear of 'the Greek theatre'. Today, it may well seem a strang and remote form of entertainment, but one has only to watch a goo production of a Greek drama to see the colourful spectacle come alive, t appreciate the impact of the tragedy, and the hilarity of the comedy.

The basic conventions of the Greek theatre, variously refined an modified through the ages, still form the principles of our modern theatre Even the words that we use – theatre, drama, scene, programme, orchestr – though some are now slightly changed in meaning, have been derive from the Greek. Not only are the ancient plays still performed in their ow right, in both local and national theatres, but updated versions hav always been popular. The Roman playwrights Plautus and Terence, th French dramatists Racine and Molière and our own Shakespeare, t name but a few, have all borrowed material, in the way of plots, themes o characters, from the Greek drama. Even today, farces like *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* owe a great deal to these ancien productions.

Where the ancient theatre differed very much from ours was in the par that it played in people's lives. Fortunately for us, both the Greeks an the Romans so enjoyed the theatre that they even decorated their house hold wares with representations from it. We find theatrical masks gracing the handles of bronze bowls and on terracotta lamps, scenes from plays pictured on bowls for mixing wine, wall paintings and floor mosaics, and masks made of stone, bronze and clay used as hanging decorations for the home. Tiny masks shaped in gold and others in the form of glass pendants



Certain stock characters from the Peloponnesian parodies were also retained–such as the comic version of Hercules, the roistering man and the impudent slave girl. On occasions episodes in the life of Dionysos, the original theme of the revels, were still performed.

Tragedy. Unlikely though it seems, tragedy was an offshoot of the satyr-plays. 'Tragos' meant 'one who dresses up and performs as a follower of Dionysos'. The goat was the sacred animal of Dionysos, and hence the satyr's goat-like appearance. A goat was also given as a third prize at the dramatic festivals, as we have seen.

According to the Greek writer Aristotle, tragedy developed from the dithyramb. It probably began to take shape when the subjects of the dithyramb became more varied; eventually there emerged one actor from the throng who discarded the satyr mask and assumed the costume of the individual whom he impersonated. Thespis is said to have created the first actor set in opposition to the chorus, about 534 BC, during the reign of the tyrant Peisistratos.

In the early fifth century BC, the tragedian Aeschylus created a second actor to permit freer development of the dialogue, and then Sophocles invented a third. Meanwhile the chorus, usually about fifteen in number, diminished in importance, and drama of a recognizably modern type evolved.

But the chief difference between ancient and modern drama lies in the music. The chorus was always accompanied by a musician on the double-pipes, to which they danced and the lines of the play were intoned. The

Terracotta statuettes made in Athens of actors in stock character roles: 'woman' with veil coyly pulled over face, Hercules, flirtatious girl.

double-pipes (*aulos*) had been used as far back as the seventh century company sacrifices, processions, and chorus singing and dancing.

Drama had in fact developed from poetry and song. It used the mater of the traditional epic poems, particularly Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, a the music of the lyric (lyric means the song to the accompaniment of t lyre). The marble relief by the sculptor Archelaos of Priene is carved wi figures who personify these elements.

Before about 480 BC, only mythological subjects were represented, b then Phrynichus, a pupil of Thespis, produced the first historic drama Though the events were no longer remote in time, they were still remote place. Several of the early historic plays were located in Persia: for e ample, Phrynichus' *Capture of Miletus* and Aeschylus' *Persians*. Phr nichus' *Phoenician Women* depicting the defeat of the second Persia invasion of Greece in 480–479 BC was first performed in 476–475 BC wi the statesman Themistocles as choregos. It has even been suggested th the first stage background to be used was the tent of Xerxes, captured the Persian defeat; it could have formed a background for many drama and in its grandeur probably resembled Persian palace architecture.

According to Aristotle, the tragic play fulfilled a purpose, namely purge the emotions by means of pity and fear. This revitalizing experien is very much akin to the effect of a religious ceremony. Tragedy was als believed to be a means of instruction, encouraging citizens to excel virtue both in public and private life. Sophocles is said to have bee appointed one of the generals in the expedition to Samos (440 BC) c account of political wisdom shown in certain passages of his *Antigone*.

Sophocles. Greek bronze head from a statue. Made about 300–200 BC.

Small jug showing flute-player with chorus of men dressed up as cocks; the vine sprays show that they are performing in honour of Dionysos. 500–480 BC.

Comedy. It is easy to understand how comedy was developed from satyr performances. Again, several actors were gradually set up in opposition to the chorus.

Whereas Athenian tragedy had attained its final form by the end of the fifth century BC, so that the fourth century simply saw the revival of the great tragedies of earlier days, the development of Athenian comedy continued. It is separated into three distinct phases. 'Old Comedy' coincides with the great period of Athenian tragedy, and culminated in the works of Aristophanes. By this time the political life of Athens began to deteriorate; when it was no longer an independent democracy, and free speech was curtailed, lampoons of public life became less appropriate, and the petty vices of private life and individuals were chosen for ridicule. 'Middle Comedy', which belonged to the fourth century BC, retained the old actor types.

Most of the terracotta and bronze statuettes which illustrate these characters belong to the period 400–350 BC, since grotesque forms and exaggerated features were not popular in Athens in the preceding years, when the city was at its height of artistic achievement. While some of these figures were no doubt sold individually others must have been made and sold in a complete set, to represent the cast of a play. Two such sets are now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York; they came from a tomb in Athens, where they were probably placed as favourite possessions of the dead man. Two similar examples are illustrated; one is an actor playing the part of a woman, since, just as in the Elizabethan theatre there were no actresses, and the other is a stock comic character, a sla ...as run away and taken sanctuary on an altar. The hand rais mockingly to his ear indicates that he is deaf to appeals to leave the safe of the altar.

In the 'New Comedy' the cumbersome padded costumes were discard and everyday clothes were adopted. The outstanding writer of the peri was Menander, whose numerous plays date from the fourth and ea third centuries BC. In thirty-three years, he wrote more than one hundr comedies. Once established, New Comedy became a tradition whi lasted several centuries, through the Roman revivals of Plautus a Terence.

Drama in Southern Italy

The Greek colonies of Southern Italy and Sicily took over the form tragedy already performed in the homeland. Aeschylus visited Sicil wrote plays there, and eventually died there in exile. There is a va ancient theatre in Syracuse, largely rebuilt in Roman times; here it w in 413 BC that the old men and women of Syracuse crowded to watch t fight in the harbour below, and saw their own ships win victory over t invading Athenians. The Roman biographer Plutarch tells how t Athenian prisoners were saved because of the esteem felt for Euripides Sicily; some were given food and drink for repeating his verses, and othe were released from slavery for teaching their masters some of his passage But the Western Greeks had their own type of comedy. This was a mim in which there were presented burlesques of mythology and daily lif Later the legendary tales of the heroes also became the subject of parod The master of this form of entertainment was said to be Rhinthon, wh perfected it in about 300 BC. The actors are called *phlyakes* or gossip and they are pictured on numerous South Italian vases. Their padde costumes are similar to those of the Old Comedy, and judging from th scenes represented, the performances were racy and uproarious.

Costume

Masks. Masks were not the original form of facial disguise used fo dramatic performances. The creative Thespis (see page 6) is said to hav treated his actors' faces with white lead, then covered them with cinnaba (a red oxide of mercury) or rubbed them with wine lees, and then h finally introduced masks of unpainted linen. His successor Choerilu made further experiments with masks, which would have been made o clay, or stiffened linen, cork or wood. Phrynichus is said to have intro- duced women's masks; this may mean that he was the first to have his chorus appear as women. All ancient actors, leaders and chorus members, were men.

Effects of misfortune sometimes made necessary a change to a fresh

hair cut off and pale cheeks; Oedipus, in the *Oedipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles, is seen with blood-stained face and blinded eyes.

Masks covering the whole head were of course worn by all the participants in the satyr-plays; the 'Pronomos vase' in Naples, called after the flute-player whose name is inscribed beside him on the vase, shows members of the chorus carrying satyr masks just like those of the satyrs revelling on the other side of the vase.

The use of large masks, with their exaggerated features, enabled the whole audience to see the characters more clearly. It also allowed the actors to change parts more quickly, for while the leading actor had only one part, his assistants might have up to six roles to play; sometimes in the comedies they had less than ten seconds to change parts. There is a statuette in Vienna of an old woman with grinning mouth holding the laughing mask of a young man, who must represent an actor in the midst of changing roles.

The most striking feature of the masks is their huge, trumpet-shaped mouth (see page 2). They are always wide open, allowing the actor's voice to come through clearly, and giving an impression of continual communication; the masks of the mime actors on the other hand always had their lips sealed. It used to be thought that the trumpet-mouths increased the volume of the voice, but recent experiments have proved this to be untrue. The theatres have such marvellous acoustics that a whisper uttered from the orchestra can be heard right up to the highest tier, without any aid at all.

The faces on various types of mask soon became traditional and remained almost unchanged for centuries. Pollux, writing in the second century AD, enumerates twenty-eight types of mask; the principal features of the different masks are mainly distinguished from one another by

(*Above left*) Tragic mask of Hercules

(*Above right*) Mask of the young Dionysos.

(*See also inside back cover.*)

the style of the hair, the colour of the complexion, the height of the style, and the expression of the eyes. The *onkos* style of hair-dressing found in some of the tragic masks (see page 2) preserves a fashion dating from around 500 BC, in which the long tresses of hair were brought forward and piled up in curls over the brow.

Another persistent feature of male masks, particularly in comedy, is the pointed beard cut in the form of a wedge, a fashion originating in the period of the Persian wars. To judge from surviving marble and bronze portraits, Aeschylus seems to have worn this type of beard.

Dress. Like the mask, the rest of the actor's costume was all-important in signifying identity and character to the audience.

The tragic actor's apparel was grand and elaborate. The colour and music of the theatre must have formed a splendid spectacle.

The setting of some of the early tragedies in the land of Persia provided the opportunity for colourfully ornamented and embroidered costume. Along with Dionysos, the goddesses of the Eleusinian Mystery cults, Demeter and Persephone, who also originated in the East, are often

Demeter, wearing elaborately decorated oriental costume similar to that worn by tragic actors. From cup made in Athens about 490–480 BC.

depicted in this type of robe. Dionysos also sometimes appears wearing the tall hunting boot, from which the *cothurni*, boots with high, [illegible]ly painted platform soles, were derived.

Aeschylus is credited with the introduction of most of the outstanding features of the actor's costume. The further enlargement of masks, onkoi and cothurni towards the end of the fourth century BC seems to indicate that tragic actors moved less and less around the stage, and relied increasingly upon expression of voice and elaborate gestures. This was incidentally very wise, since the perilous height of the shoes and weight of the masks must have put actors in grave danger of falling off the stage, if they ventured too close to the edge.

The dress of the tragic actors was similar to that of everyday life – a long tunic over which was worn a thick cloak – but more flowing and dignified. The actors wore padding uniformly over the body, so that the stature of the figure was altogether increased. The broad girdle worn by the tragic actor high up under the breast no doubt helped to keep the padding in place.

The costume of the comic actors, on the other hand, was, and was intended to be, quite ridiculous. The body was grotesquely padded and enclosed in a tight-fitting undergarment, such as we might call a body-stocking. This was usually dyed flesh-colour or red, but was sometimes decorated with stripes. Over the unwieldy body a short tunic was worn, and, until the New Comedy of about 330 BC, it was just too short to be decent. The arms and legs had to be left free for the actors to caper and cavort about the stage, but their clumsiness and any over-balancing would have contributed to the general fun (see illustrations on pages 1, 6, front cover and inside front cover).

Architecture

The plan of the ancient Greek theatre corresponds with the three elements of ancient drama – the circular orchestra for the chorus who provided dancing and music, the stage for the actors who presented the words, and the fan-shaped auditorium for the spectators.

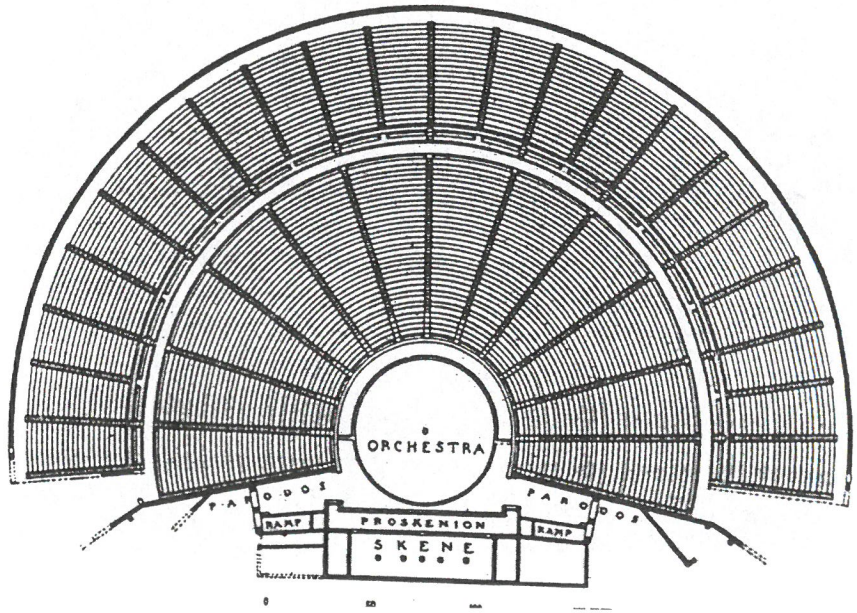
The auditorium was usually cut into the slope of a hill, and the sides of the hollow were faced with stone or marble seating, and divided into sections by gangways. Usually there was seating for as many as 18,000.

It seems that the plays were always performed to a full house; Plato mentions one audience of 30,000, and Aristophanes jokes that once the performance had started, the only way to get out of the theatre was to sprout wings.

All Greek theatres had circular orchestras, or dancing places, as excavations at Epidauros, Eretria, Sicyon, Megalopolis, Amphiraeus and Delphi have shown. In the centre or at the side of the orchestra there stood an altar, or *thymele*, dedicated to Dionysos; at Epidauros a circular plaque marks where this stood. Both the orchestra and altar are relics of the followers of Dionysos who performed dithyrambic dances and songs around the altar of the god. Most of the surviving Greek plays were written in the 5th century BC. At that time no part of the theatre was made of stone except for the foundations. The seats and stage were made of wood, and the floor was beaten earth or turf (see page 5). The stone theatres that we see today in parts of Greece date from the fourth century BC onwards, but the form was the same, the structure merely being made more permanent by the use of stone or marble. When the chorus lost some of its importance in Roman times, part of the orchestra was forfeited and an oblong stage was added. The whole of the stage building was called the *skene*, from which we derive our word scenery. The simple background of the stage must have made the actors in their colourful costumes stand out rather like the painted sculpture on a temple frieze. The narrow stage probably limited the movement of the actors, but we have already noted that the impact of the drama relied on spectacle, measured gestures and voice production.

In the fourth century the stage consisted of two floors; the lower, called the *proscenium*, had an entrance on either side, approached by ramps, while the upper floor or *hyposcenium* was decorated with paintings and surrounded by columns. The whole stage structure was roofed and walled and had three gates, like the façade of a palace or temple.

The first production for which these features were necessary was the *Orestaia* of Aeschylus, first performed in the year 458 BC. Most plays were set in a public square in front of a palace or temple, as though an important event in the life of a city were taking place before the spectators. The central doorway was the royal gate through which the leading actor (*protagonist*, literally 'first contestant') entered, while the right-hand gate led to the guest chamber and that on the left to the sanctuary. The two side



Plan of the theatre at Epidauros as it was constructed in the 4th century BC.

entrances also had their own conventional purposes – that on the right led to the countryside and the left to the city.

In Roman times, the authors Vitruvius and Pollux wrote detailed accounts of the ancient stage settings and scenery. Although it is difficult to determine how much of their evidence relates to the Roman and not the Greek theatre, they are both known to have derived information from earlier sources, and much of their writings must hold good. For example, their descriptions sometimes agree with the scanty remains of the classical theatres, or scenes painted on vases, and they describe devices known from extant fifth-century plays.

Before about 340 BC, background scenery consisted merely of a temporary structure leaning against the front wall of the building at the back of the stage which was probably used by the actors for changing, or storing scenery. In the beginning the backdrop was merely a framework of wood covered in skins, which were dried and tinted red. Such screens were first painted with pictures in the time of Aeschylus. It is interesting that this early scenery, painted by the artist Agatharchus, inspired philosophers to do the first research into perspective. It is Sophocles who is credited with the invention of scenery painting (*skenographia*). The backdrops are called by Pollux *katablemata*, or throw-overs, referring to the fact that they could be very quickly changed, or placed one over the other, during the short intermissions between the four plays which took place on each festival day. The katablemata might also be attached to the structures in the wings of the stage, which Pollux and Vitruvius described as prisms, differently decorated on each of the three sides, and capable of being rotated to indicate a different locality. Thus scenery for the four plays of the day could be easily accommodated on the prisms, the fourth backdrop being changed with the first during one of the performances.

Where the scenery failed to convince, there were always the brilliant descriptions of the dramatists to supplement the audience's imagination: a fine example is the opening scene of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* where the herald describes the flaring beacons in the blackness of night (the audience of course was in broad daylight) that announce the victory and homecoming of the king.

Devices

The most important device of the ancient theatre was the movable platform, or *ekkyklema*. Its purpose was to reveal an event inside the building. It consisted of either a rectangular platform which could be wheeled out through the doors of the stage-building or a rotatable circular platform, pivoted in the centre, with a screen across the diameter to fit the corresponding gap in the stage wall. It was a favourite device of Euripides who employed it, for example, in his *Hippolytos* when Phaedra is shown on a couch. It was particularly useful for revealing a murdered corpse, as in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*.

A more astounding spectacle was created by the 'flying machine' a

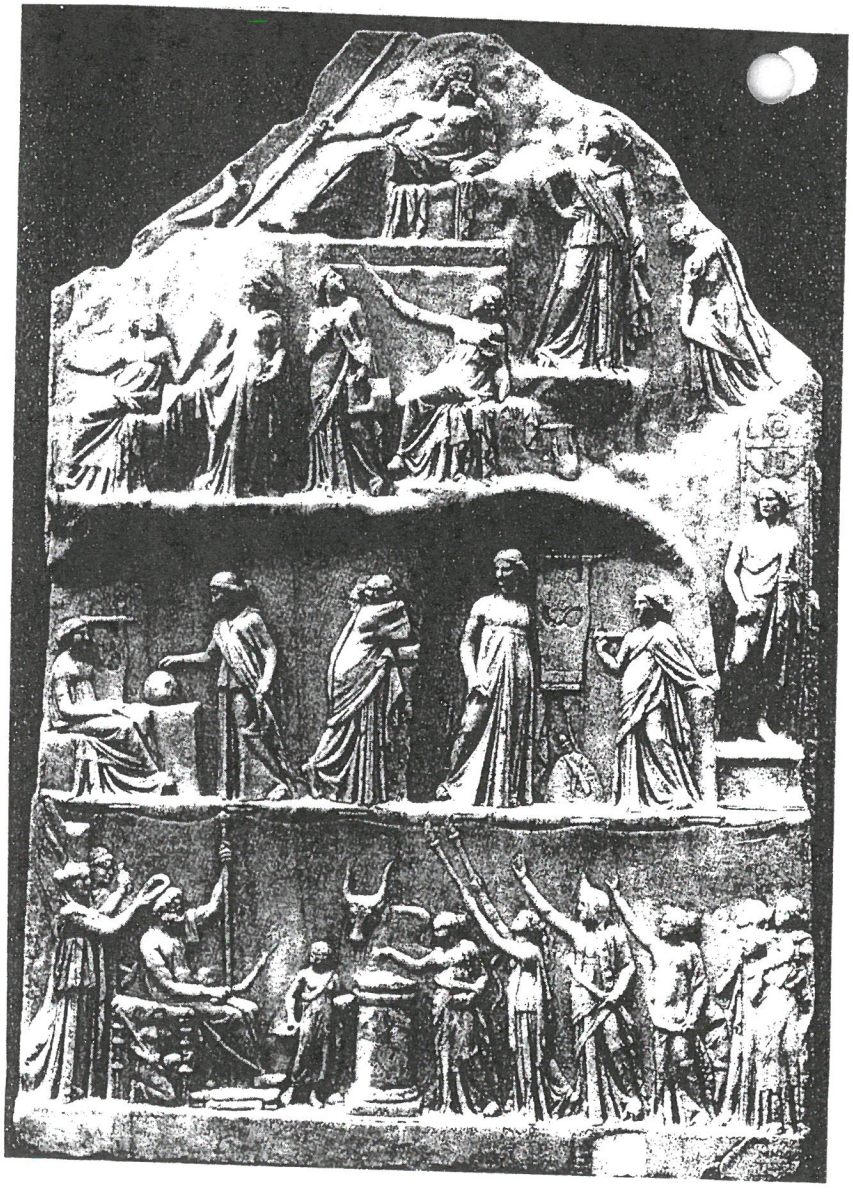
A scene from Euripides' *Oineus*. *From left to right*: Oineus, Periboia, Diomedes before an altar on which is the helpless Agrios, with a Fury rising up beside him (perhaps by means of the trap-door in the stage-floor). Wine-jar made in Southern Italy, about 340–330 BC.

crane behind the scenes which enabled characters to fly through the air. It was another device favoured by Euripides and he made ample use of it for his *deus ex machina*, (god out of a machine), who often appeared over the scene at the end of his plays. Aristophanes delights in parodying this piece of machinery; in his *Peace*, the character Trygaios flies to heaven on a dung-beetle and appeals to the stage-hand not to let him fall.

A useful means of producing a ghostly apparition was an underground passage leading to a trap door, enabling the figure to materialize suddenly before the audience. This would be used, for example, for the ghost of Darius in Aeschylus' *Persians*, or that of Clytemnestra in the *Eumenides*. It may be referred to on a vase painting depicting Euripides' *Oineus*, where a black Fury or demon is rising up beside the altar.

There must have been various other props and devices used by the ancient dramatist. In Aristophanes' *Frogs*, for example, the orchestra is supposed to be a lake full of frogs (the chorus), through which Dionysos rows a small boat, presumably one on wheels with a hole in the bottom through which he could propel the boat forward with his feet.

Sound-effects. The Greeks, not surprisingly, were also very resourceful when it came to creating sound effects. There were, for example, numerous ways to represent thunder, which would have been amplified by the excellent acoustics: pebbles were poured out of a jar into a large bronze vessel, bags were filled with stones and flung against a metal surface, or lead balls were dropped on a sheet of tightly stretched leather. There was an amusing way of providing lighting: a plank, with a flash of lightning painted on a dark background, was shot out of a box into a receptacle



Marble relief showing (*top*) Zeus with Mnemosyne (Memory), and (*below*) their children – the nine Muses. At the bottom is Homer enthroned in his sanctuary like a god, with figures representing the Iliad and Odyssey kneeling beside him. The masked figures on the right are Tragedy and Comedy, amid other personifications. The relief shows that all literary forms were thought to have originated with Homer. Greek, carved about 300–200 BC by Archelaos of Priene.

(*Right*) Tragic mask of hero.

(*Back cover*) The theatre at Dodona, 3rd century BC. Like other Greek theatres, it was in a magnificent natural setting. (Photo: R. G. Broomfield).

Further Reading

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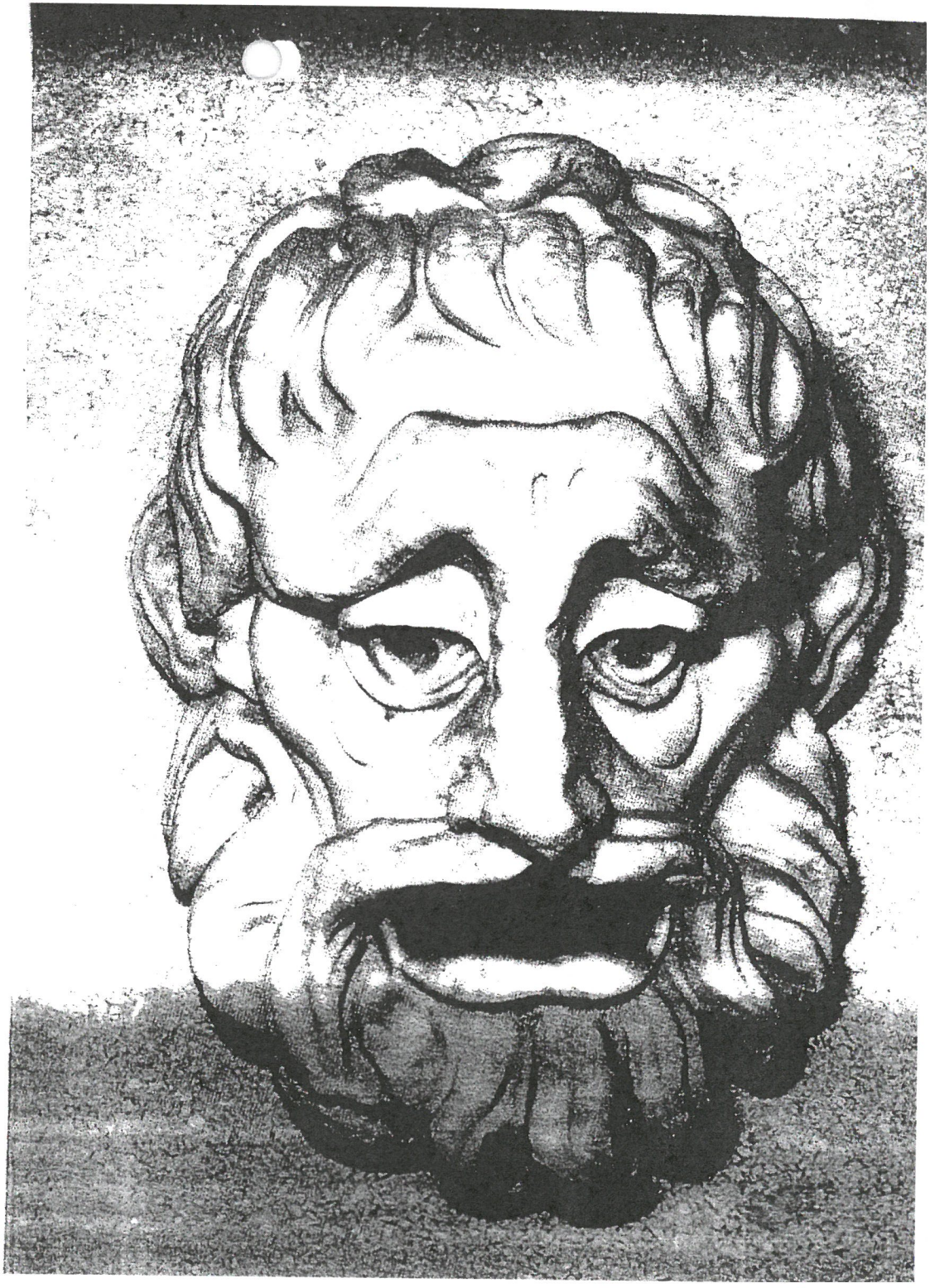

VI

IMAGES OF WOMEN IN THE LITERATURE OF CLASSICAL ATHENS

Women in Tragedy versus Real Women

IF RESPECTABLE Athenian women were secluded and silent, how are we to account for the forceful heroines of tragedy and comedy? And why does the theme of strife between woman and man pervade Classical drama? Before proceeding to complex explanations which are directly concerned with women, it is necessary to repeat the truism that the dramatists examined multiple aspects of man's relationship to the universe and to society; accordingly, their examination of another basic relationship—that between man and woman—is not extraordinary. It is rather the apparent discrepancy between women in the actual society and the heroines on the stage that demands investigation. Several hypotheses have been formulated in an attempt to explain the conflict between fact and fiction.

Many plots of tragedy are derived from myths of the Bronze Age preserved by epic poets. As we have observed, the royal women of epic were powerful, not merely within their own homes but in an external political sense. To the Athenian audience familiar with the works of Homer, not even an iconoclast like Euripides could have presented a silent and repressed Helen or Clytemnestra. Likewise, the Theban epic cycle showed the mutual fratricide of the sons of Oedipus. The surviving members of the family were known to be Antigone and Ismene. Sophocles could not have presented these sisters as boys. In short, some myths that provided the plots of

Classical tragedies described the deeds of strong women, and the Classical dramatist could not totally change these facts.

Those who believe in the historical existence of Bronze Age matriarchy also propose an answer to our questions: the male-female polarity discernible in Bronze Age myths can be explained by referring to an actual conflict between a native pre-Hellenic matriarchal society and the patriarchy introduced by conquering invaders.

The Bronze Age origin of these myths does not explain why Athenian tragic poets, living at least seven hundred years later in a patriarchal society, not only found these stories congenial but accentuated the power of their heroines. For example, in the *Odyssey* Aegisthus is the chief villain in the murder of Agamemnon, but in the tragedies of Aeschylus a shift was made to highlight Clytemnestra as the prime mover in the conspiracy. Electra, the daughter of Clytemnestra, is a colorless figure in mythology, and in the *Odyssey* Orestes alone avenges his father; but two dramatists elevated Electra and created whole plays around her and her dilemma. Similarly, Sophocles is thought to have been responsible for the story of the conflict between Creon and Antigone. Homer, it is true, showed how Calypso and Circe could unman even the hero Odysseus, who more easily survived other ordeals, but these two were immortal females. The mortal women in epic, however vital, are not equivalent in impact to tragic heroines, nor is their power such as to produce the male–female conflicts that tragedy poses in a pervasive and demanding way.

A number of scholars find a direct relationship between real women living in Classical Athens and the heroines of tragedy.[1] They reason that the tragic poets found their models not in the Bronze Age but among the real women known to them. From this theory they deduce that real women were neither secluded nor repressed in Classical times. They use as evidence, for example, the fact that tragic heroines spent much time conversing out-of-doors without worrying about being seen. This argument lacks cogency, since the scenes of tragedy are primarily out-of-doors and female characters could scarcely be portrayed if they had to be kept indoors. The proponents of this argument question how dramatists could have become so familiar with feminine psychology if they never had a chance to be with women. They ignore the fact that playwrights were familiar with their female relatives, as well as with the numerous

resident aliens and poor citizen women who did move freely about the city. At least one group of women—the wives of citizens with adequate means—probably was secluded.

It is not legitimate for scholars to make judgments about the lives of real women solely on the basis of information gleaned from tragedy. When an idea expressed in tragedy is supported by other genres of ancient sources, then only is it clearly applicable to real life. Ismene's statement that the proper role of women is not to fight with men[2] can be said to reflect real life, since it agrees with information derived from Classical oratory and from comedy. But when Clytemnestra murders her husband, or Medea her sons, or when Antigone takes credit for an act of civil disobedience, we cannot say that these actions have much to do with the lives of real women in Classical Athens, although isolated precedents in Herodotus could be cited for passionate, aggressive women (including a barbarian queen who contrived the murder of her husband with his successor; another who opposed men in battle; and a third who cut off the breasts, nose, ears, lips, and tongue of her rival's mother).[3] However, as images of women in Classical literature written by men, heroines such as Clytemnestra, Medea, and Antigone are valid subjects for contemplation.

Retrospective psychoanalysis has been used to analyze the experience of young boys in Classical Athens, and thus to explain the mature dramatist's depiction of strong heroines. According to the sociologist Philip Slater, the Athenian boy spent his early formative years primarily in the company of his mother and female slaves.[4] The father passed the day away from home, leaving the son with no one to defend him from the mother. The relationship between mother and son was marked by ambiguity and contradiction. The secluded woman nursed a repressed hostility against her elderly, inconsiderate, and mobile husband. In the absence of her husband, the mother substituted the son, alternately pouring forth her venom and doting on him. She demanded that he be successful and lived vicariously through him. The emotionally powerful mother impressed herself upon the imagination of the young boy, becoming the seed, as it were, which developed into the dominant female characters of the mature playwright's mind. The Classical dramatist tended to choose those myths of the Bronze Age that were most fascinating to him, since they explored certain conflicts that existed within his own personality. The "repressed mother" explanation works in inverse

ratio to the power of the heroines produced by the son: the more repressed his mother was and the more ambivalent her behavior, the more dreadful were the heroines portrayed by the dramatist-son.

Slater's theory is an interesting attempt to answer a difficult question. Some readers may abhor the interpretation of classical antiquity by means of psychoanalytic approaches. But since the myths of the past illuminate the present, it appears valid to examine them with the critical tools of the present. Still, there are problems with Slater's analysis, just as there were with the more traditional ones. First, although adult Athenians lived sex-segregated lives, it is far from certain that fathers were distant from children. Inferences from the modern "commuting father" have too much influenced Slater's view of antiquity. In fact, comedy shows a closeness between fathers and children: children could accompany fathers when they were invited out, and a father claimed to have nursed a baby and bought toys for him.[5] Second, the reader would have to accept Slater's premise that women constrained in a patriarchal society would harbor rage, whether or not they themselves were aware of it. As noted in the preceding chapter, the epitaphs of women assumed that their lives were satisfactory, although this evidence may be somewhat discounted since the inscriptions were selected by the surviving members of the family, most probably male. But even today many believe that women can find happiness in the role of homemaker, particularly when traditional expectations are being fulfilled. Thus Athenian women may well have lacked the internal conflict of, say, Roman women, who were plagued with the frustrations arising from relative freedom which confronted them with the realm of men, but tantalizingly kept its trophies just beyond their grasp. Is it more reasonable to suggest from a modern viewpoint that the boredom of tasks like constant weaving must have driven Athenian women to insanity, or, in contrast, to call attention to the satisfaction women may have felt at jobs well done?

I am not convinced that we can learn much about the Athenian mother from Slater, but his work is useful for the analysis of the male playwright's creative imagination. For explanations of the powerful women in tragedy, we must look to the poets, and to other men who judged the plays and selected what they thought best. The mythology about women is created by men and, in a culture dominated by men, it may have little to do with flesh-and-blood women. This is not to deny that the creative imagination

of the playwright was surely shaped by some women he knew. But it was also molded by the entire milieu of fifth-century Athens, where separation of the sexes as adults bred fear of the unfamiliar; and finally by the heritage of his literary past, including not only epic but Archaic poetry, with its misogynistic element.

Misogyny was born of fear of women. It spawned the ideology of male superiority. But this was ideology, not statement of fact; as such, it could not be confirmed, but was open to constant doubt. Male status was not immutable. Myths of matriarchies and Amazon societies showed female dominance. Three of the eleven extant comedies of Aristophanes show women in successful opposition to men. A secluded wife like Phaedra may yearn for adultery; a wife like Creusa may have borne an illegitimate son before her current marriage; a good wife like Deianira can murder her husband. These were the nightmares of the victors: that some day the vanquished would arise and treat their ex-masters as they themselves had been treated.

Most important, in the period between Homer and the tragedians, the city-state, with established codes of behavior, had evolved, and the place of women as well as of other disenfranchised groups in the newly organized society was an uncomfortable one. Many tragedies show women in rebellion against the established norms of society. As the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus makes clear, a city-state such as Athens flourished only through the breaking of familial or blood bonds and the subordination of the patriarchal family within the patriarchal state. But women were in conflict with this political principle, for their interests were private and family-related. Thus, drama often shows them acting out of the women's quarters, and concerned with children, husbands, fathers, brothers, and religions deemed more primitive and family-oriented than the Olympian, which was the support of the state. This is the point at which the image of the heroine on the stage coincides with the reality of Athenian women.

Masculine and Feminine Roles in Tragedy

The proper behavior of women and men is explored in many tragedies. This is not to say that it is the primary theme of any tragedy. Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* is about the workings of justice, but

the discussion of this tragedy in these pages will set aside the principal idea and focus on the secondary theme of sex roles and antagonisms.

Womanly behavior was characterized then, as now, by submissiveness and modesty. Ismene in *Antigone,* Chrysothemis in the plays dealing with the family of Agamemnon, Tecmessa in *Ajax,* Deianira in *Trachinian Women,* and the female choruses in tragedy act the role of "normal" women. Because of the limitations of "normal" female behavior, heroines who act outside the stereotype are sometimes said to be "masculine." Again, it is not a compliment to a woman to be classified as masculine. Aristotle judged it inappropriate for a female character to be portrayed as manly or clever.[6]

Heroines, like heroes, are not normal people. While in a repressively patriarchal culture, most women—like Ismene—submit docilely, some heroines—like Clytemnestra, Antigone, and Hecuba—adopt the characteristics of the dominant sex to achieve their goals. The psychoanalyst A. Adler termed the phenomenon "masculine protest."[7] In *Agamemnon,* the first play of the *Oresteia* trilogy, Aeschylus shows Clytemnestra with political power, planning complex strategies involving the relaying of signal beacons from Troy, outwitting her husband in persuading him to tread upon a purple carpet, and finally planning and perpetrating his murder. Unrepentant, she flaunts her sexual freedom by announcing that the death of Cassandra has brought an added relish of pleasure to her, and that her situation will be secure as long as her lover Aegisthus lights the fire on her hearth (1435–36, 1446–47). The double entendre is especially shocking because a woman traditionally lit the fire on her father's or husband's hearth.

Thus the chorus of old men of Argos considers that her ways are masculine and reminds her that she is a woman, addressing her as "my lady" (351). When it quizzes her as though she were a silly child, she answers with a brilliant, complex speech displaying her knowledge of geography (268–316; cf. 483–87). To a chorus slow to digest the fact that she has murdered Agamemnon, Clytemnestra impatiently retorts, "You are examining me as if I were a foolish woman" (1401). The chorus continues to meditate upon the fact that their king has been killed by a woman (1453–54). Had Aegisthus himself performed the murder, as he was reputed to have done in the *Odyssey,* the chorus would better have accepted it. The old men find

the reversal of sex roles in Clytemnestra and Aegisthus monstrous (1633–35; 1643–45).

In the *Eumenides,* which was the final play of the *Oresteia,* Aeschylus restores masculine and feminine to their proper spheres. Orestes, who chose to murder his mother in vengeance for her murder of his father, is defended by Apollo and Athena. The power of the uncanny, monstrous female spirits of vengeance (formerly called "Erinyes" or "Furies") is tempered and subordinated to the rule of the patriarchal Olympians. Henceforth, as Eumenides, or fair-minded spirits, they will have a proper place in the affections of civilized people.

The portrayal of the masculine woman as heroine was fully developed in Sophocles' *Antigone.* The play opens with the daughters of Oedipus lamenting the laws established by the tyrant Creon. Their brother Polyneices lies dead, but Creon has forbidden that the corpse be buried, as punishment for the dead man's treachery against his native land. While Antigone urges that they perform the burial rites, her sister Ismene seizes upon the excuse that they are not men: "We were born women, showing that we were not meant to fight with men" (61–62). She uses the frequently significant verb *phyō,* implying that it is by nature *(physis)* rather than by man-made convention that women do not attempt to rival men.

Creon, a domineering ruler, reveals particular hostility in his relations with the opposite sex. His prejudices are patriarchal. He cannot understand his son Haemon's love for Antigone, but refers to a wife as a "field to plow" (569). The sentiments of Apollo in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* (657–61; see p. 65) must be recalled here: since the male seed is all-important, any female will suffice. Apollo's idea is restated by Orestes in Euripides' *Orestes.*[8] Simone de Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex,* traced the phallus/plow–woman/furrow as a common symbol of patriarchal authority and subjugation of woman.[9] Moreover, as modern feminists have pointed out, the repressive male cannot conceive of an equal division of power between the sexes, but fears that women, if permitted, would be repressive in turn. So Creon, the domineering male, is constantly anxious about being bested by a woman and warns his son against such a humiliation (484, 525, 740, 746, 756).

On the other hand, Ismene—perhaps because she stayed at

Thebes while Antigone shared the exile of her father—has been indoctrinated into the beliefs of patriarchal society: men are born to rule, and women to obey. Antigone bitterly rejects her sister's notion of the natural behavior of women. Polynices is buried secretly, and Creon, the guard, and the chorus all suppose that only a man could have been responsible (248, 319, 375). Thereupon forced to confess to Creon that she has in fact buried her brother, Antigone refers to herself with an adjective in the masculine gender (464). Creon, in turn, perceives her masculinity and refers to Antigone by a masculine pronoun and participle (479, 496). He resolves to punish her, declaring, "I am not a man, she is the man if she shall have this success without penalty" (484–85). (Similarly, Herodotus notes that Queen Artemisia, who participated in Xerxes' expedition against Greece, was considered masculine, and that the Athenians were so indignant that a woman should be in arms against them that for her capture alone they offered a financial reward.) [10]

Feeling, then, that in daring to flout his commands Antigone has acted as a man—for a true woman would be incapable of opposition—Creon, when he declares sentence upon the sisters, asserts that "they must now be women." However, he continues to refer to them in the masculine gender (579–80). The repeated use of a masculine adjective to modify a feminine noun is noteworthy, because in classical Greek, adjectives regularly agree with the gender of the modified noun (the masculine gender may be used in reference to a woman when a general statement is made).[11]

We may note the male orientation of the Greek language, in which general human truths, though conceived as referring specifically to women, can be cast in the masculine gender. Perhaps this grammatical explanation will suffice when the change in gender is sporadic. However, the masculine gender used to refer to a female in specific rather than general statements—a rare occurrence in Greek—occurs with significant frequency in *Antigone*. It is, I believe, a device used by the playwright in characterizing the heroine who has become a masculine sort of woman. In her penultimate speech, Antigone explains her willingness to die for the sake of a brother, though not for a husband or child.

> For had I been a mother, or if my husband had died, I would never have taken on this task against the city's will. In view of what law do I say this? If my husband were dead I might find another, and another child from him if I lost a son. But with my mother and father hidden in the grave, no other brother could ever bloom for me. (905–12)

Herodotus also relates a story about a woman who, when offered the life of a husband, a son, or a brother, chooses a brother for the same reason as Antigone.[12]

A number of Sophoclean scholars have judged the speech spurious, or pronounced the sentiments unworthy of the heroine.[13] They consider the choice of a brother over a child bizarre. And yet, in the context of Classical Athens, Antigone's choice is reasonable. Mothers could not have been as attached to children as the ideal mother is nowadays. The natural mortality of young children would seem to discourage the formation of strong mother–child bonds. In addition, patriarchal authority asserted that the child belonged to the father, not the mother. He decided whether a child should be reared, and he kept the child upon dissolution of a marriage, while the woman returned to the guardianship of her father or, if he were dead, her brother. Thus the brother–sister bond was very precious.

The preference for the brother is also characteristic of the masculine woman, who may reject the traditional role of wife and mother as a result of being inhibited by external forces from displaying cherishing or nurturing qualities.[14] The masculine woman often allies herself with the male members of her family. In this context we may note Antigone's firm and repeated denunciations of her sister (538–39, 543, 546–47, 549). She also judges her mother harshly, blaming her for the "reckless guilt of the marriage bed," while the chorus, seeing only her father's disposition in her, calls her "cruel child of a cruel father" (862, 471–72). Her disregard of her sister is so complete that she actually refers to herself as the sole survivor of the house of Oedipus (941).[15]

In the end, Antigone reverts to a traditional female role. She laments that she dies a virgin, unwed and childless (917–18), and commits suicide after being entombed alive by Creon. In classical mythology, suicide is a feminine and somewhat cowardly mode of death. Ajax, like Deianira, Jocasta, and Creon's wife Eurydice, had killed himself because he could not live with unbearable knowledge. Haemon, like Phaedra, Alcestis, Laodamia, Dido, Evadne, and Hero, kills himself for love, justifying Creon's earlier concern over his "womanish" tendencies. Of all tragic heroines, Antigone was the most capable of learning through suffering and achieving a tragic

vision comparable to that of Oedipus. Her death erased that possibility.

The fate of Haemon illustrates the destructive quality of love. The chorus gives voice to this idea:

> Love, invincible love, who keeps vigil on the soft cheek of a young girl, you roam over the sea and among homes in wild places, no one can escape you, neither man nor god, and the one who has you is possessed by madness. You bend the minds of the just to wrong, so here you have stirred up this quarrel of son and father. The love-kindling light in the eyes of the fair bride conquers. (781–96) [16]

Antigone is a complex and puzzling play. According to Athenian law, Creon was Antigone's guardian, since he was her nearest male relative.[17] As such, he was responsible for her crime in the eyes of the state, and his punishing her was both a private and public act. He was also the nearest male relative of his dead nephews, and he, not Antigone, was responsible for their burial. Creon put what he deemed to be the interests of the state before his personal obligations.

The differences between Creon and Antigone are traditional distinctions between the sexes. According to Freud, "Women spread around them their conservative influence. . . . Women represent the interests of the family and sexual life; the work of civilization has become more and more men's business." [18] The civilizing inventions of men are listed by the chorus of *Antigone:* sailing, navigation, plowing, hunting, fishing, domesticating animals, verbal communication, building houses, and the creation of laws and government (332–64). These were mainly masculine activities.

The Greeks assumed that men were bearers of culture. For example, according to myth, Cadmus brought the alphabet to Greece; Triptolemus—albeit prompted by the goddess Demeter—brought the use of the plow; while Daedalus was credited with the scissors, the saw, and other inventions. The specific achievements of women—which were probably in the realm of clothing manufacture, food preparation, gardening, and basketmaking, and the introduction of olive culture by Athena—do not appear in Sophocles' list, nor in a similar list in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound.*[19]

Creon's lack of insight into the necessity of the duality of male and female led to the death of Antigone and to his own annihilation

as well. Creon's wife died cursing him. Moreover, in a society where sons were expected to display filial obedience, Haemon chose Antigone over his father and his choice was not held against him. His death was not a punishment for disobedience. *Antigone* and many other tragedies show the effect of overvaluation of the so-called masculine qualities (control, subjugation, culture, excessive cerebration) at the expense of the so-called feminine aspects of life (instinct, love, family ties) which destroys men like Creon. The ideal, we can only assume—since Sophocles formulates no solution—was a harmonization of masculine and feminine values, with the former controlling the latter.[20]

Euripides' Women: A New Song

> Streams of holy rivers run backward, and universal custom is overturned. Men have deceitful thoughts; no longer are their oaths steadfast. My reputation shall change, my manner of life have good report. Esteem shall come to the female sex. No longer will malicious rumor fasten upon women. The Muses of ancient poets will cease to sing of my unfaithfulness. Apollo, god of song, did not grant us the divine power of the lyre. Otherwise I would have sung an answer to the male sex.[21]

Thus sang the female chorus of Euripides' *Medea* in 431 B.C. Were they directly reflecting the attitude of the poet? Noting the absence of female tragedians, did Euripides turn his gift of poetry to compositions in behalf of women? Of all the images of women in classical literature, those created by Euripides pose the greatest dilemma to the modern commentator.

Among ancient critics, Euripides was the only tragedian to acquire a reputation for misogyny. In the comedy *Thesmophoriazusae,* by his contemporary Aristophanes, an assembly of women accuse Euripides of slandering the sex by characterizing women as whores and adultresses:

> By the gods, it's not out of any self-seeking
> That I rise to address you, O women. It's that
> I've been disturbed and annoyed for quite some time now
> When I see our reputations getting dirtied
> By Euripides, son of a produce-salesgirl,

And our ears filled with all sorts of disgusting things!
With what disgusting charges has he *not* smeared us?
Where hasn't he defamed us? Any place you find
Audiences, or tragedies, or choruses
We're called sex fiends, pushovers for a handsome male,
Heavy drinkers, betrayers, babbling-mouthed gossips,
Rotten to the core, the bane of men's existence.
And so they come straight home from these performances
Eyeing us suspiciously, and go search at once
For lovers we might hide about the premises.
We can't do anything we used to do before.
This guy's put terrible ideas in the heads of
Our menfolk. If any woman should start weaving
A wreath—this proves she's got a lover. If she drops
Anything while meandering about the house,
It's *Cherchez l'homme!* "For whom did the pitcher crack up?
It must have been for that Corinthian stranger!"
If a girl's tired out, then her brother remarks:
"I don't like the color of that girl's complexion."
If a woman just wants to procure a baby
Since she lacks one of her own, no deals in secret!
For now the men hover at the edge of our beds.
And to all the old men who used to wed young girls
He's told slanderous tales, so that no old man wants
To try matrimony. You remember that line:
"An old bridegroom marries a tyrant, not a wife." (383–413)

If he cuts up Phaedra,
Why should *we* worry? He's neglected to tell how
A woman flung her stole in front of her husband
For scrutiny under the light, while dispatching
The lover she's hidden—not a word about that!
And a woman I know claimed that her delivery
Lasted ten whole days—till she'd purchased a baby!
While her husband raced to buy labor-speeding drugs
An old crone brought her an infant, stuffed in a pot,
Its mouth stuffed with honeycomb so it wouldn't cry.
When this baby-carrier gave the signal, she yelled,
"Out, husband, out I say! I think the little one's
Coming" (the baby was kicking the *pot's* belly)!
So he runs out, delighted; she in turn pulls out
What had plugged up the infant's mouth—and he hollers!
The dirty old woman who'd brought in the baby

Dashes out to the husband, all smiles, and announces,
"You've fathered a lion—he's your spitting image
In all of his features including his small prick
Which looks just like yours, puckered as a honeycomb."
Why, don't we do such naughty things? By Artemis
We do. Then why get angry at Euripides?
We're accused of far less than what we've really done! (497–519) [22]

Since the borderline between levity and seriousness in Aristophanes' comedies is ambiguous, and the world is often topsy-turvy, in antiquity, as now, it has been difficult to decide whether he truly thought Euripides was a misogynist or the opposite. Influenced by Aristophanes, many biographical sketches written about Euripides after his death presented him as a misogynist and repeated the insulting charge that his mother was a vegetable-monger. According to Aulus Gellius, writing in the mid-second century A.D.:

> Euripides is said to have had a strong antipathy toward nearly all women, either shunning their society due to his natural inclination, or because he had two wives simultaneously—since that was legal according to an Athenian decree—and they had made marriage abominable to him.[23]

The ancient biographies of Euripides are unreliable, since they do not hesitate to cull material from the author's creations and apply it indiscriminately to his life. Therefore inconsistent with Gellius is the anecdote reported by Athenaeus at the end of the second century A.D.:

> The poet Euripides was fond of women. Hieronymus, at any rate, in *Historical Commentaries*, says, "When someone said to Sophocles that Euripides was a woman-hater in his tragedies, Sophocles said, 'When he is in bed, certainly he is a woman-lover." [24]

In addition to the pronouncements of ancient critics, the plays themselves provide evidence of misogyny, although one ought not attribute to a playwright the remarks of his characters. Apparently obvious sources are the anti-female pronouncements scattered through the tragedies. In Euripidean tragedy, misogynists like Hippolytus and Orestes (in *Orestes),* masochists like Andromache, aggressive women like Medea and Phaedra, and sympathetic female

choruses are equally capable of misogynistic remarks. In these statements women are usually lumped together as a nameless group, defined simply as the "female sex," in a manner rarely applied to males. These statements are platitudes, familiar to women even today, but are so arresting by their stark hostility that it is easy to overlook how few they are in the context of Euripides' extant work.

Some of the abbreviated platitudes are: "Women are the best devisers of evil." [25] "Women are a source of sorrow." [26] Others point out that if their sex life is satisfactory, women are completely happy;[27] clever women are dangerous;[28] stepmothers are always malicious;[29] upper-class women were the first to practice adultery;[30] and women use magical charms and potions with evil intentions.[31] The longest and best-known tirade against women was delivered by Hippolytus:

O Zeus, why, as a fraudulent evil for men,
Have you brought women into the light of the sun?
For if you wished to engender the mortal race,
There was no need for women as source of supply,
But in your shrines mortal men could have offered up
Either gold or iron or heavy weight of bronze
To purchase their breed of offspring, each paid in sons
According to his own gift's worth, and in their homes
They could live without women, entirely free.
Yet now to our homes we bring this primal evil,
And—without a choice—drain the wealth from our households.
Woman is a great evil, and this makes it clear:
The father who sires her and rears her must give her
A dowry, to ship off and discard this evil.
Then he who takes in his home this baneful creature
Revels in heaping upon his most vile delight
Lovely adornment, and struggles to buy her clothes,
Poor, poor fellow, siphoning wealth from his household.
He cannot escape his fate: gaining good in-laws
Brings joy to him—and preserves a bitter marriage;
But an excellent wife with worthless male kinfolk
Weights him down with good luck *and* misfortune alike.
A nobody's simplest to marry, though worthless,
A woman of guilelessness set up in the house.
I hate clever women. May my home never house
A woman more discerning than one ought to be.
For Cypris more often produces wrongdoing

In clever females. An untalented woman
Through lack of intelligence stays clear of folly.
No servant should have to come close to a woman.
Instead they should live among dumb, savage creatures,
So they would have no humans whom they could talk to
And no one who'd respond to the things that they say.
But now evil women sit at home and plan evils—
Plots their servants execute when they go outside.
And so, evil woman, you've come, to propose that
I sleep with her whom my father alone may touch.
I'll wipe out your words with streams of running water,
Drenching my ears. How, tell me, might I be evil
When I feel impure from even hearing such things?
Be certain my piety protects me, woman.
If my oaths to the gods hadn't caught me off guard,
I would not have refrained from telling my father.
But now, while Theseus is out of the country,
I'll depart from this house—and keep my mouth silent.
Returning when my father does, I shall witness
How you and your mistress manage to confront him.
I'll have firsthand knowledge of your effrontery.
Go to hell, I'll never have my fill of hating
Women, not if I'm said to talk without ceasing.
For women are also unceasingly wicked.
Either someone should teach them to be sensible,
Or let me trample them underfoot forever.[32]

I can scarcely believe that so subtle a dramatist as Euripides, who called into question traditional Athenian beliefs and prejudices surrounding foreigners, war, and the Olympian gods, would have intended his audience simply to accept the misogynistic maxims. Rather, he uses the extreme vantage point of misogyny as a means of examining popular beliefs about women. On the other hand, Euripides does not present a brief for women's rights. Not only is Greek tragedy not a convenient vehicle for propaganda, but the playwright saw too many contradictions in life to be able to espouse a single cause. Euripides is questioning rather than dogmatic. Judgments about his presentation of heroines vary, some critics believing he is sympathetic, some antipathetic.

My subjective estimate of Euripides is favorable. I do not think it misogynistic to present women as strong, assertive, successful, and

sexually demanding even if they are also selfish or villainous. Other feminists share my opinion, and British suffragists used to recite speeches from Euripides at their meetings. Yet, it is fair to add that conventional critics—who far outnumber feminists—judge that Medea and Phaedra disgrace the entire female sex, and label Euripides a misogynist for drawing our attention to these murderesses. The controversy that the doctrines of women's liberation invariably arouse among women is analogous to the dilemma posed by subjective judgments of Euripides. For every feminist who insists that women have the same capabilities (whether for good or for evil) as men, but that they have been socialized into their present passivity, there have been countless conservatives denying that women are what the feminists claim they are.

Many women perpetrate villainous deeds in Euripidean tragedy. However, old myths are paraded not to illustrate that the female sex is evil, but rather to induce the audience to question the traditional judgment on these women. Euripides counters the ideas expressed in the misogynistic platitudes by portraying individual women and their reasons for their actions. The crime of Clytemnestra had tainted the entire female sex ever since Agamemnon's judgment of her in the *Odyssey*.[33] Euripides reiterates the accusations but adds a strong defense for Clytemnestra in her speech to her daughter Electra:

> Tyndareus placed me in your father's care,
> So that neither I nor my offspring would perish.
> Yet he promised my child marriage to Achilles
> And left our household, taking her off to Aulis,
> Where the ships anchored, stretched her out above the flames,
> Then slit the white throat of my Iphigenia.
> Had it been to save our state from being captured,
> Preserve our homes, or protect our other children,
> One death averting many, I'd be forgiving.
> But because Helen proved lustful, and her husband
> Didn't know how to punish his wife's seducer,
> For the sake of these people he destroyed my child.
> In this I was wronged, but for this I would never
> Have behaved like a savage, nor slain my husband,
> But he returned to me with a crazed, god-filled girl,
> And took her into our bed—so the two of us,
> Both of us brides, were lodged in the very same house.[34]

Elsewhere, Phaedra ponders the moral impotence of humanity, not specifically of the "weaker sex," noting that people may know what virtue is, but not achieve it.[35]

Helen was reviled in every classical tragedy where her name was mentioned, including those by Euripides.[36] Yet Euripides also wrote an entire play, *Helen,* using the myth that she was not at Troy at all but imprisoned in Egypt, remaining chaste throughout the Trojan War.

Self-sacrifice or martyrdom is the standard way for a woman to achieve renown among men; self-assertion earns a woman an evil reputation. But in Euripides this formula is not so simple. Medea and Hecuba are lavishly provoked. They refuse to be passive, and take a terrible revenge on their tormentors. Medea murders her own children and destroys her husband's new bride and father-in-law with a magic potion. Hecuba kills the two children of her son's murderer and blinds their father. The desire for revenge is unfeminine,[37] as had been noted for Sophocles' Antigone; Hecuba is often referred to with masculine adjectives.[38] Her vengeance is considered so ghastly that she ends up metamorphosed into a barking bitch. Medea escapes, but since she clearly had loved her children, one can imagine her perpetual anguish. When I compare Euripidean to Sophoclean heroines, I prefer Euripides' Medea and Hecuba, for they are successful. Deianira, in Sophocles' *Trachinian Women,* naïvely mixes a potion intended to restore her husband's affection for her; instead, the potion tortures and kills him. Antigone courageously and singlemindedly defends her ideals, and is willing to die for them, but her last words dwell not upon her achievements but lament that she dies unwed. Medea and Hecuba are too strong to regret their decisions.

Euripides shows us a number of self-sacrificing heroines who win praise from the traditionally minded. But it seems to me that the playwright does not totally approve of them. Among self-denying young women, Iphigenia is willing to submit to the sacrificial knife, arguing that in wartime "it is better that one man live to see the light of day than ten thousand women."[39] Similarly, Polyxena wins the praise of soldiers for the noble way she endures being sacrificed to the ghost of Achilles.[40] Evadne kills herself because she cannot live without her husband,[41] and Helen is expected to do the same if she learned of her husband's death.[42] Alcestis died to prove her love for her husband, and thereby won honor for all women, but her

father-in-law suggests that she is foolish.[43] Euripides structures these plays so as to leave us doubtful whether the men for whom the women sacrificed themselves were worth it.

The double standard in sexual morality is implicit in many of the myths Euripides chose as the basis of his plots. He is the first author we know of to look at this topic from both the woman's and the man's point of view. Many husbands are adulterous. Enslaved after the fall of Troy, Andromache laments:

> Dearest Hector, I, for your sake, even joined with you in loving, if Aphrodite made you stumble. I often offered my breast to your bastards so as not to exhibit any bitterness to you.[44]

Some wives, notably Medea and Clytemnestra, reacted with overt hostility to their rivals and husbands. Hermione, on the other hand, reasoned that the legitimate wife was in a better position regarding money, the household, and the status of her children and that it was better to have an unfaithful husband than to be unwed.[45] Euripides appears to question the patriarchal axiom that husbands may be polygamous, while wives must remain monogamous, when he shows us Phaedra committing suicide because she merely thought about adultery and points out that women suspected of sexual irregularities are gossiped about, while men are not.[46] Euripides does not advocate that women should have the same sexual freedom as men, but rather suggests that it is better for all concerned if the husband is as monogamous as the wife.

Even when they are not essential to the plot, the horrors of patriarchy compose a background of unremitting female misery. Grotesque marriages or illicit liaisons humiliating or unbearable to women abound in Euripides. Andromache is forced to share the bed of her husband's murderer. Cassandra becomes the concubine of Agamemnon, destroyer of her family and city. Hermione marries Orestes, who had threatened to kill her. Clytemnestra marries Agamemnon, the murderer of her son and first husband. Phaedra is married to the hero who seduced her sister and conquered her country. Alcestis returns from the dead to "remarry" the husband who let her die in his stead.[47]

Euripides shows us women victimized by patriarchy in almost every possible way. A girl needs both her virginity and a dowry to attract a husband.[48] Women are raped and bear illegitimate children whom they must discard. The women are blamed, while the men who raped them are not.[49] When marriages prove unfruitful, wives are inevitably guilty.[50] Despite the grimness of marriage, spinsterhood is worse.[51]

Women as mothers always arouse sympathy in Euripides. All his women love their children and fight fiercely in their behalf.[52] Even Medea never stopped loving her children, although she murdered them to spite Jason. Women glory especially in being the mothers of sons, and the lamentation of mothers over sons killed in war is a standard feature in Euripides' antiwar plays.[53] Yet in patriarchal society the father is the more precious parent. The suffering of the children of Heracles in the absence of a father is the basic plot of the *Heracleidae.* Mothers whose husbands are dead refer to their children as "orphans."[54] Alcestis, when she chooses death, includes in her calculations that her children need a father more than a mother, but expresses some doubt whether he loves them as much as she does.[55]

In subtle ways Euripides reveals an intimacy with women's daily lives remarkable among classical Greek authors. He knows that upon returning from a party a husband quickly falls asleep, but a wife needs time to prepare for bed. The chorus of Trojan women relates that, on the night Troy was taken, "My husband lay asleep. . . . But I was arranging my hair in a net looking into the bottomless gleam of the golden mirror, preparing for bed."[56] Euripides recognizes that childbirth is a painful ordeal, that daughters are best helped by their mothers on these occasions, and that after giving birth women are disheveled and haggard.[57]

Although the dramatic date is the Bronze Age, the comments of various characters on questions of female etiquette in Euripidean tragedy anachronistically agree with the conventions of Classical Athens: women, especially unmarried ones, should remain indoors;[58] they should not adorn themselves nor go outdoors while their husbands are away, nor should they converse with men in public;[59] out of doors a woman should wear a veil;[60] she should not look at a man in the face, not even her husband.[61]

In the post-Classical period Euripides enjoyed greater popularity than the other tragic poets. His influence can perhaps be detected even among the early Christians who idealized the dying virgin as the most valuable of martyrs, and among whom—in a manner not

dissimilar to Euripides' Bacchantes—women spread the worship of a revolutionary cult which challenged established religion.

The women of Sophocles and Aeschylus have a heroic dimension which says little about women in Classical Athens. The women of Euripides are scaled down closer to real life, and in this respect the tragic poetry of Euripides approaches comedy.

Women in Aristophanes

Aristophanes is an appropriate bridge between Euripides and Plato, for he criticizes the radical views of both on women. The three authors touch on a number of the same topics, including women's sexual desires and the marriage relationship. Before proceeding, let the reader be duly cautioned that women were by no means the only victims of Aristophanic invective and ridicule—the comic poet was a critic and teacher of the entire society. It is also necessary to remember Aristotle's axiom that comedy presents people as worse than they really are, and that the literary genre itself demands obscenity, which is sometimes distinctly unfunny to a modern reader.

The three comedies in which women play the largest part are *Lysistrata* and *Thesmophoriazusae,* both produced in 411 B.C., and *Ecclesiazusae,* produced in 391 B.C.[62] These three plays reveal a range of attitudes toward women from misogyny to sympathy, and probably reflect, with the distortion to be expected in comedy, the feelings of the Athenian audience.

All the conceptions about women which are scattered through Aristophanes' other comedies are concentrated in *Lysistrata.* The play was performed in the twentieth year of the bloody Peloponnesian War. Many rational solutions to the political problems of Greece had been tried, without success. Aristophanes, in *The Birds,* produced in 414 B.C., had even imagined a peaceful commonwealth in the sky. In *Lysistrata,* he turned to another fantastically absurd solution: a sex strike on the part of the women of Greece. The women, led by the Athenian Lysistrata and aided by the Spartan Lampito, withdraw to the fortified Athenian Acropolis. A few ribald scenes with panting, sex-starved men show that the tactic works. The women achieve their objective. Peace is declared between the warring Greek states, and husbands go home with their wives. The

superficial elements of the plot thus appear complimentary to women: they have succeeded where men had failed.

Feminists may disagree over the granting or withholding of sex as a weapon against men, and classicists familiar with the bisexuality of the Athenians ponder the effectiveness of a sex strike.[63] More fundamentally, we can consider whether Aristophanes presents an attractive picture of women in his comedies. My impression is that Aristophanes was no more favorably disposed toward women than the ordinary Athenian.

The heroine, Lysistrata, is intelligent and successful, but she admits that her knowledge is derived from listening to her father and other older men talking. She is the vehicle of some of the most misogynistic jibes in the play, informing the audience that women are never on time and prefer drinking wine and sexual intercourse to all other forms of activity. She also feels the body of Lampito and contributes to the lewd appraisals of the physical attractions of the women who join the strike. Lysistrata exhibits hatred of the femininity in herself, but since she's a woman, we are ready to assume that her opinions about women must be correct.

Elements of *Lysistrata* reappear in other plays. Praxagora, the heroine of *Ecclesiazusae,* resembles Lysistrata, although her personality is less clearly defined. Praxagora admits that she acquired her skill in public speaking from listening to men. She is also highly critical of other women whose intelligence is not capable of carrying out the strategies she formulates for them.[64] In contrast to the sympathy between women which can be detected in Euripides, women in Aristophanes exhibit little loyalty to other women. Younger women are spiteful to older women when competing for a young man. Wives despise and envy prostitutes.[65]

The bibulousness and lust of women are common occasions for laughter in Aristophanes. It is illuminating to compare Euripides' treatment of the same themes. In the *Bacchae,* the tragic poet shows why women, confined to the loom and spindle, welcome the orgiastic release promised by the wine god. Likewise, in Euripides' depiction of Phaedra it is evident that he understands a woman's struggle against ungovernable erotic impulses. Aristophanes merely points to these vices as inherent weaknesses of women.

In *Lysistrata,* men are also lustful, but their urges are better governed than those of the women. The men in Aristophanes prefer heterosexual relationships. They enjoy looking at the unclothed

female body of Peace at the end of *Lysistrata,* and sexual desire for their wives ultimately compels husbands to abandon warfare. Yet, during the strike by wives, Aristophanes offers alternatives to men: homosexuals and female prostitutes, who were not invited by the wives to participate in the strike. In contrast to the men, the women are deprived of sexual relationships and break their oaths by sneaking off the Acropolis to return to their homes. The sex strike causes greater deprivation to women than to men, and can even be viewed as a strike against women. Sex-starved though they are, the women do not consider turning to other women for homoerotic gratification, nor does it occur to them to employ any of the famous male prostitutes of Athens, the youthful slaves reserved for the pleasures of men.

Women as well as men are viewed as gluttons. One reason for their objection to war is that their favorite gourmet treats, including a particular variety of eel, are difficult to obtain (336). On the other hand, the alimentary system particularly of men is referred to in numerous scatological jokes.

Aristophanes is probably most unkind in his depictions of older women. The vices detected in all women are particularly grotesque in old hags. They are nymphomaniacs, but their objects of desire are younger men.[66] They are drunken and lewd.

In Aristophanes, women's clothing can function as a symbol of degradation. Although it is fair to note that the exchange of clothing between husbands and wives in *Ecclesiazusae* merely disgruntles the men, Lysistrata suggests that a magistrate be dressed in women's attire to humiliate him. We are reminded of Euripides' portrayal of Pentheus in the *Bacchae.* Pentheus also felt discomforted by masquerading as a woman, but Euripides shows him as an unsympathetic character.

Expressions of compassion are rare in Aristophanes. Yet he records the anguish war can cause to women because of their family relationships. Mothers lose sons, and girls must abandon the prospect of marriage. Aristophanes was a firm believer in the nuclear family. He disliked Euripides' heroines for sabotaging their families by adultery and the introduction of supposititious children into the house, and he criticized utopian schemes that abolished the family.[67]

Women in Power

Mary Beard

In 1915 Charlotte Perkins Gilman published a funny but unsettling story called *Herland*. As the title hints, it's a fantasy about a nation of women – and women only – that has existed for two thousand years in some remote, still unexplored part of the globe. A magnificent utopia: clean and tidy, collaborative, peaceful (even the cats have stopped killing the birds), brilliantly organised in everything from its sustainable agriculture and delicious food to its social services and education. And it all depends on one miraculous innovation. At the very beginning of its history, the founding mothers had somehow perfected the technique of parthenogenesis. The practical details are a bit unclear, but the women somehow just gave birth to baby girls, with no intervention from men at all. There was no sex in Herland.

The story is all about the disruption of this world when three American males discover it: Vandyck Jennings, the nice-guy narrator; Jeff Margrave, a man whose gallantry is almost the undoing of him in the face of all these ladies; and the truly appalling Terry Nicholson. When they first arrive, Terry refuses to believe that there aren't some men around somewhere, pulling the strings – because how, after all, could you imagine women running anything? When eventually he has to accept that this is exactly what they are doing, he decides that what Herland needs is a bit of sex and a bit of male mastery. The story ends with Terry unceremoniously deported after one of his bids for mastery, in the bedroom, goes horribly wrong.

There are all kinds of irony to this tale. One joke that Perkins Gilman plays throughout is that the women simply don't recognise their own achievements. They have independently created an exemplary state, one to be proud of, but when confronted by their three uninvited male visitors, who lie somewhere on the spectrum between spineless and scumbag, they tend to defer to the men's competence, knowledge and expertise; and they are slightly in awe of the male world outside. Although they have made a utopia, they think they have messed it all up.

As well as describing imaginary communities of women doing things their way, *Herland* raises bigger questions, from knowing how to recognise female power to the sometimes funny, sometimes frightening stories we tell ourselves about it, and indeed have told ourselves about it, in the West at least, for thousands of years.

I've talked before about the ways women get silenced in public discourse. And there's plenty of that silencing still going on. We need only think of Elizabeth Warren being prevented a few weeks ago from reading out a letter by Coretta Scott King in the US Senate. What was extraordinary on that occasion wasn't only that she was silenced and formally excluded from the debate (I don't know enough about the rules of procedure in the Senate to have a sense of how justified, or not, that was); but that several men over the next couple of days did read the letter out and were neither excluded nor shut up. True, they were trying to support Warren. But the rules of speech that applied to her didn't appear to apply to Bernie Sanders, or the three other male senators who did the same.

The right to be heard is crucially important. But I want to think more generally about how we have learned to look at women who exercise power, or try to; I want to explore the cultural underpinnings of misogyny in politics or the workplace, and its forms (what kind of misogyny, aimed at what or whom, using what words or images, and with what effects); and I want to think harder about how and why the conventional definitions of 'power' (or for that matter of 'knowledge', 'expertise' and 'authority') that we carry round in our heads have tended to exclude women.

It is happily the case that in 2017 there are more women in what we would all probably agree are 'powerful' positions than there were ten, let alone fifty years ago. Whether that is as politicians, police commissioners, CEOs, judges or whatever, it's still a clear minority – but there are more. (If you want some figures, around 4 per cent of UK MPs were women in the 1970s; around 30 per cent are now.) But my basic premise is that our mental, cultural template for a powerful person remains resolutely male. If we close our eyes and try to conjure up the image of a president or (to move into the knowledge economy) a professor, what most of us see isn't a woman. And that's just as true even if you are a woman professor: the cultural stereotype is so strong that, at the level of those close-your-eyes fantasies, it is still hard for me to imagine me, or someone like me, in my role. I put the phrase 'cartoon professor' into Google Images – 'cartoon professor' to make sure that I was targeting the imaginary ones, the cultural template, not the real ones. Out of the first hundred that came up, only one, Professor Holly from Pokémon Farm, was female.

To put this the other way round, we have no template for what a powerful woman looks like, except that she looks rather like a man. The regulation trouser suits, or at least the trousers, worn by so many Western female political leaders, from Merkel to Clinton, may be convenient and practical; they may be a signal of the refusal to become a clothes horse, which is the fate of so many political wives; but they're also a simple tactic – like lowering the timbre of the voice – to make the female appear more male, to fit the part of power. Elizabeth I knew exactly what the game was when she said she had 'the heart and stomach of a king'. It's that idea of the divorce between women and power that makes Melissa McCarthy's parodies of the White House press secretary Sean Spicer on *Saturday Night Live* so effective. It's said that these have annoyed President Trump more than most satires on his regime, because (according to one of the 'sources close to him'), 'he doesn't like his people to appear weak.' Decode that, and what it actually means is that he doesn't like his men to be parodied by and as women. Weakness comes with a female gender.

What follows from this is that women are still perceived as belonging outside power. Whether we sincerely want them to get to the inside of it or whether, by various often unconscious means, we cast women as interlopers when they make it (I still remember a Cambridge where, in most colleges, the women's loos were tucked away across two courts, through the passage and down the stairs in the basement), the shared metaphors we use of female access to power – knocking on the door, storming the citadel, smashing the glass ceiling, or just giving them a leg up – underline female exteriority. Women in power are seen as breaking down barriers, or alternatively as taking something to which they are not quite entitled. A headline in the *Times* in early January captured this wonderfully. Above an article reporting on the possibility that women might soon gain the positions of Metropolitan Police commissioner, chair of the BBC Trust, and bishop of London, it read: 'Women Prepare for a Power Grab in Church, Police and BBC.' (Cressida Dick, the new commissioner of the Met, is the only one of these predictions yet to have come true.) Now, I realise that headline writers are paid to grab attention. But the idea that even under those circumstances you could present the prospect of a woman becoming bishop of London as a 'power grab' (and that probably thousands upon thousands of readers didn't bat an eyelid when they read it) is a sure sign that we need to look a lot more carefully at our cultural assumptions about women's relationship with power. Workplace nurseries, family-friendly hours, mentoring schemes and all those practical things are importantly enabling, but they are only part of what we need to be doing. If we want to give women as a gender – and not just in the shape of a few determined individuals – their place on the inside of the structures of power, we have to think harder about how and why we think as we do. If there is a cultural template, which works to disempower women, what exactly is it and where do we get it from?

At this point, it may be useful to start thinking about the classical world. More often than we may realise, and in sometimes quite shocking ways, we are still using Greek idioms to represent the idea of women in, and out of, power. There is at first sight a rather impressive array of powerful female characters in the repertoire of Greek myth and storytelling. In real life, ancient women had no formal political rights, and precious little economic or social independence; in some cities, such as Athens, respectable married women were almost never seen outside the home. But Athenian drama in particular, and the Greek imagination more generally, has offered our imaginations a series of unforgettable women: Medea, Clytemnestra, Antigone.

They are not, however, role models – far from it. For the most part they are portrayed as abusers rather than users of power. They take it illegitimately, in a way that

leads to chaos, to the fracture of the state, to death and destruction. They are monstrous hybrids, who aren't – in the Greek sense – women at all. And the unflinching logic of their stories is that they must be disempowered, put back in their place. In fact, it is the unquestionable mess that women make of power in Greek myth that justifies their exclusion from it in real life, and justifies the rule of men. (I can't help thinking that Perkins Gilman was lightly parodying this logic when she made the women of Herland believe that they had messed up.)

Go back to one of the very earliest Greek dramas to survive, the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus, first performed in 458 BC, and you'll find that its antiheroine, Clytemnestra, horribly encapsulates that ideology. In the play, she becomes the effective ruler of her city while her husband is away fighting the Trojan War; and in the process she ceases to be a woman. Aeschylus repeatedly uses male terms and the language of masculinity to refer to her. In the very first lines, for example, her character is described as *androboulon* – a hard word to translate neatly but something like 'with manly purpose', or 'thinking like a man'. And, of course, the power that Clytemnestra illegitimately claims is put to destructive purpose when she murders Agamemnon in his bath on his return. The patriarchal order is only restored when Clytemnestra's children conspire to kill her.

There's a similar logic in the stories of that mythical race of Amazon women, said by Greek writers to exist somewhere on the northern borders of their world. A more violent and more militaristic lot than the peaceful denizens of Herland, this monstrous regiment always threatened to overrun the civilised world of Greece and Greek men. An enormous amount of modern feminist energy has been wasted on trying to prove that these Amazons did once exist, with all the seductive possibilities of a historical society that really was ruled by and for women. Dream on. The hard truth is that the Amazons were a Greek male myth. The basic message was that the only good Amazon was a dead one, or – to go to back to awful Terry – one that had been mastered, in the bedroom. The underlying point was that it was the duty of men to save civilisation from the rule of women.

Hillary Clinton portrayed as Medusa, with Trump as Perseus.

There are, it is true, occasional examples where it might look as if we are getting a more positive version of ancient female power. One staple of the modern stage is Aristophanes' comedy known by the name of its lead female character, *Lysistrata*. Written in the fifth century BC, it appears to be a perfect mixture of highbrow classics, feisty feminism, a stop-the-war agenda and a good sprinkling of smut (and it was once translated by Germaine Greer). It's the story of a sex-strike, set not in the world of myth but in the contemporary world of ancient Athens. Under Lysistrata's leadership, the women try to force their husbands to end the long-running war with Sparta by refusing to sleep with them until they do. The men go round for most of the play with enormously inconvenient erections (which now tends to cause some difficulty and hilarity in the costume department). Eventually, unable to bear their encumbrances any longer, they give in to the women's demands and make peace. Girl power at its finest, you might think.

Athena, the patron deity of the city, is often brought in on the positive side too. Doesn't the simple fact that she was female suggest a more nuanced version of the imagined sphere of women's influence? I'm afraid not.

If you scratch the surface and go back to the fifth-century context, *Lysistrata* looks very different. It's not just that the original audience and actors consisted, according to Athenian convention, entirely of men – the female characters were probably played much like pantomime dames. It's also the fact that, in the end, the fantasy of women's power is firmly stamped down. In the final scene, the peace process consists of bringing a naked woman onto the stage (or a man somehow dressed up as a naked woman), who is used as if she were a map of Greece, and is metaphorically carved up in an uncomfortably pornographic way between the men of Athens and Sparta. Not much proto-feminism there.

As for Athena, it's true that in those binary charts of gods and goddesses that we make for ourselves, she appears on the female side. But the crucial thing about her in the ancient context is that she is another of those difficult hybrids. In the Greek sense she's not a woman at all. For a start she's dressed as a warrior, when fighting was exclusively male work (that's an underlying problem with the Amazons too). Then she's a virgin, when the raison d'être of the female sex was breeding new citizens. And she wasn't even born of a mother but directly from the head of her father, Zeus. It was almost as if Athena, woman or not, offered a glimpse of an ideal male world in which women could not just be kept in their place but dispensed with entirely.

The point is simple but important: if we go back to the beginnings of Western history we find a radical separation – real, cultural and imaginary – between women and power. But one item of Athena's costume brings this right up to our own day. On most images of the goddess, at the very centre of her body armour, fixed onto her breastplate, is the image of a female head, with writhing snakes for hair. This is the head of Medusa, one of three mythical sisters known as the Gorgons, and it was one of the most potent ancient symbols of male mastery of the dangers that the very possibility of female power represented. It's no accident that we find her decapitated, her head proudly paraded as an accessory by this decidedly un-female female deity.

There are many ancient variations on Medusa's story. One famous version has her as a beautiful woman raped by Poseidon in a temple of Athena, who promptly transformed her, as punishment for the sacrilege, into a monstrous creature with a deadly capacity to turn to stone anyone who looked at her face. It later became the task of the hero Perseus to kill this woman, and he cut her head off using his shiny shield as a mirror so as to avoid having to look directly at her. At first he used the head as a weapon since – even in death – it retained the capacity to petrify; but he then presented it to Athena, who displayed it on her own armour (one message being: take care not to look too directly at the goddess).

It doesn't need Freud to see those snaky locks as an implied claim to phallic power. This is the classic myth in which the dominance of the male is violently reasserted against the illegitimate power of the

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like Greek women

women, who even if they aren't aiming to be president of the US or a company boss, still rightly feel that they want a stake in power. And it certainly didn't appeal last year to sufficient numbers of American voters.

Even if we do restrict our sights to national politics the question of the way we judge women's success within it is tricky. There are plenty of league tables charting the proportion of women within national legislatures. At the very top comes Rwanda, where more than 60 per cent of the members of the legislature are women, while the UK is almost fifty places down, at roughly 30 per cent. Strikingly, the Saudi Arabian National Council has a higher proportion of women than the US Congress. It's hard not to lament some of these figures and applaud others, and a lot has rightly been made of the role of women in post-civil war Rwanda. But I do wonder if, in some places, the presence of large numbers of women in the national legislature means that that is where the power is not.

I'm also not sure that we're being quite straight with ourselves about what we want women in parliaments for. A number of studies point to the role of women politicians in promoting legislation in women's interests (in childcare, for example, equal pay and domestic violence). A report from the Fawcett Society recently suggested a link between the 50/50 balance between women and men in the Welsh Assembly and the number of times 'women's issues' were raised there. I'm certainly not going to complain about childcare and the rest getting a fair airing, but I'm not sure it's a good idea that such things continue to be perceived as 'women's issues', and – for me at least – they aren't the main reasons we want more women in parliaments. Those reasons are much more basic: it is flagrantly unjust to keep women out, by whatever unconscious means we do so; and we simply can't afford to do without women's expertise, whether it is in technology, the economy or social care. If that means fewer men get into the legislature, as it must do (social change always has its losers as well as its winners), I'm happy to look those men in the eye. → Darwinism

But this is still treating power as an elite thing, coupled to public prestige, to the individual charisma of so-called 'leadership', and often, though not always, to a degree of celebrity. It's also treating power very narrowly as something only the few – mostly men – can possess or wield (that's exactly what's summed up by the image of Perseus or Trump, brandishing his sword). On those terms, women as a gender – not as some individuals – are by definition excluded from it. You can't easily fit women into a structure that is already coded as male; you have to change the structure. That means thinking about power differently. It means decoupling it from public prestige. It means thinking collaboratively, about the power of followers not just of leaders. It means above all thinking about power as an attribute or even a verb ('to power'), not as a possession: what I have in mind is the ability to be effective, to make a difference in the world, and the right to be taken seriously, together as much as individually. It's power in that sense that many women feel they don't have – and that they want. W the popular resonance of 'mansplain (despite the intense dislike of the term felt by many men)? It hits home for us because it points straight to what it feels like not to be taken seriously: a bit like when I get lectured on Roman history on Twitter.

So should we be optimistic about change when we think about what power is and what it can do, and women's engagement with it? Maybe, we should be a little. I'm struck, for example, that one of the most influential political movements of the last few years, Black Lives Matter, was founded by three women; few of us, I suspect, would recognise any of their names, but together they had the power to get things done in a different way.

I'm not sure that culturally we've got anywhere near subverting those foundational stories of power that serve to keep women out of it, and turning them to our own advantage, as Thatcher did with her handbag. I have been playing the part of the pedant, objecting to *Lysistrata* being played as if it were about girl power (maybe that's exactly what we should be doing). There have been all kinds of well-known femini attempts over the last fifty years or more reclaim Medusa for female power ('Laugh with Medusa', as the title of one recent collection of essays almost put it) – not to mention the use of her as the Versace logo – but it's made not a blind bit of difference to the way she has been used in attacks on female politicians.

The power of those traditional narratives is very nicely, though fatalistically, captured by Perkins Gilman. There is a sequel to *Herland*, in which Vandyck decides to escort Terry back home to Ourland, taking with him his wife from Herland, Ellador: it's called *With Her in Ourland*. In truth, Ourland doesn't show itself off very well, not least because Ellador is introduced to it in the middle of World War One. And before long the couple, having ditched Terry, decide to go back to Herland. By now Van and Ellador are expecting a baby, and – you may have guessed it – the last words of this second novella are: 'In due time a son was born to us.' Perkins Gilman must have been well aware that there was no need for another sequel. Any reader in tune with the logic of the Western tradition would have been able to predict exactly who would be in charge of Herland in fifty years' time. That boy. □

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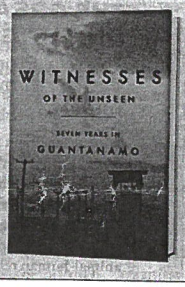

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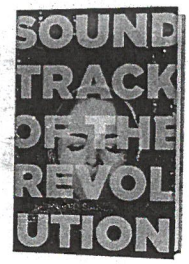

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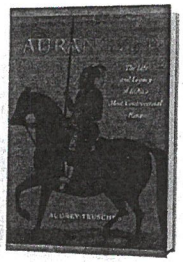

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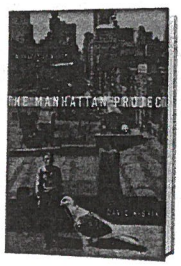

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Review and Reflect 5.4

1. Can you think of other societies which have a plant or fruit for their emblem? If so, does it say anything important about them?
2. How would you summarise the Greeks' attitude to drinking alcohol? How does it compare to attitudes to alcohol consumption today?
3. To what extent do you think that Greek male attitudes and assumptions about women and sex still survive in the modern world?

4. Athenian Women

It is very hard for us to know about the lives of Athenian women with any certainty. Women were not encouraged to have a voice, to the extent that, according to Thucydides, Pericles once said:

> The greatest glory of a woman is to be least talked about by men, whether they are praising you or criticising you.
>
> *Thucydides, 2.46*

Very few female voices have survived from the ancient Greek world, and those that have, such as the lyric poet Sappho (see p. 40), tell us only a little about the everyday lives of women. Therefore the written evidence we have comes exclusively from men; even the great female characters of Greek drama are male inventions. In spite of this, the sources do allow us to develop some idea of what a woman's life must have been like.

i. Childhood

The wreath of wool left hanging outside the front door after the birth of a girl symbolised her economic destiny as a housewife (the wreath of olives was equally symbolic for a baby boy). The birth of a daughter was often a cause of disappointment; whereas a son could inherit the family property and earn a living, a daughter would have to be married off with an expensive dowry. Baby girls were therefore more likely to be abandoned at birth than boys. Even if they were accepted, daughters were treated as inferiors at home; for example, a girl might be given a smaller portion of food than her brothers at mealtimes.

As children grew, the lives of boys and girls took widely different paths. A daughter was not sent to school; instead, she remained at home and learnt from her mother the roles and duties expected of an Athenian wife: spinning, weaving, cookery and managing the finances. She may also have helped to care for younger siblings. A few girls probably learnt to read, since some vase paintings show women

Fig. 5.13 A young girl cradles a hare; she is 'acting as a bear' in the service of Artemis at Brauron.

holding scroll-books, but it is likely that most women were illiterate. Likewise, probably only a small minority of girls learnt musical skills such as lyre-playing or singing.

One area in which girls could play a role outside the home was in performing certain religious tasks in honour of the city's goddesses. In the following lines, a chorus of Athenian women in a comedy of Aristophanes reflect on a girl's childhood:

> I became, at the age of just seven,
> An Acropolis child priestess.
> Then, after I'd served as a Grinder,
> To Brauron, aged ten, I went down,
> As a bear in the rites of the Foundress,
> And discarded my saffron-dyed gown;
> And finally I was selected
> The ritual basket to bear,
> With a string of dried figs for a necklace
> And a face most surpassingly fair.
>
> – *Aristophanes,* Lysistrata, *641ff.*

The first duty the women mention here is to have served as *Arrephoroi* (bearers of secret things); these were girls aged between seven and eleven who lived for a year on the Acropolis under the supervision of the priestess of Athena Polias; as we have seen on pp. 114–115, the girls performed important ritual duties at the Panathenaia; they were also responsible for grinding flour for sacrificial cakes.

The chorus next mentions the cult of Artemis (here described as the 'Foundress') at Brauron on the east coast of Attica. This seems to have been a festival of initiation into womanhood for girls of about ten years old, who were known as 'bears'. Vase paintings suggest that at the festival girls first wore a saffron robe, which they then discarded and took part in at least part of the ritual naked. Finally, they put on long white garments suitable for respectable adult women.

These rituals were important for girls since the same goddesses would oversee their lives as adults: Artemis as goddess of childbirth and Athena as goddess of spinning and weaving.

ii. Marriage

A woman's marriage was usually arranged to take place as soon as she reached puberty at the age of about fourteen. The arrangement was made between the *kyrioi* of two families; the girl was normally pledged to a man about twice her age. No thought was given to love or romance; instead, a marriage was seen as a pragmatic social and financial agreement between two families. The bride usually had little or no say about the man she was going to marry; indeed, some couples did not meet until their wedding day.

For many young women in their early teens, marriage must have been a very traumatic experience. A bride had to leave behind her own family to live with her new husband and his family. Some women were forced to move to another region of Attica, so losing regular contact with their relatives. It is, therefore, perhaps unsurprising that marriage was sometimes equated with grief. In the following fragment from *Tereus*, a lost tragedy of Sophocles, a female character, Procne, who has been deserted by her husband, laments the lot of married women:

> On my own, I am now nothing. But I have often looked upon a woman's nature like this, seeing as we are nothing. For, in my opinion, we live the sweetest life of all when we are young girls in our fathers' homes. For ignorance always rears children in happiness. But when we reach puberty and some understanding, we are pushed out and sold away from our ancestral gods and from our parents; some of us go to husbands who are strangers, some go to foreign husbands, some to joyless homes, and some to unfriendly homes. And all this, when a single night has yoked us, we must praise and consider to be happiness.
>
> *Sophocles, fr. 583*

Forced Marriage

Even today, our society has to contend with the damaging spectre of 'forced marriage'. This should not be confused with 'arranged marriage'. Many cultures in the world practise the custom of arranging marriages for their sons or daughters, but these marriages go ahead only with the consent of both bride and groom. Such marriages can be happier and longer lasting than the 'love marriages' which have become normal in Western society.

Crucially, a forced marriage takes place without the consent of the bride or groom. In the UK in 2013, the Forced Marriage Unit recorded giving advice or support related to a possible forced marriage in 1,302 cases, the majority involving girls and women aged twenty-one and under. Some campaign groups define forced marriage as a modern form of slavery; for its part, the United Nations declares that 'a woman's right to choose a spouse and enter freely into marriage is central to her life and dignity, and equality as a human being.'

The betrothal (enguē)

A girl could be betrothed at any age and was in fact legally married from this date. However, it was not uncommon for a betrothal to occur years before a girl reached marriageable age. Often the bride wasn't even present at the betrothal ceremony, which was an exchange of oaths between her father and the groom. The word for betrothal, *enguē*, which literally meant 'pledge' or 'security', reflects the sad truth that women were often treated as little more than items of property. The betrothal was a verbal contract between the two men; it followed a set form of words, an example of which survives in the following lines from Menander's comic play *The Girl with her Hair Cut Short*:

Pataikos, (bride's father) I give you this woman for the ploughing of legitimate children.
Polemon, (groom) I accept.
Pataikos And a dowry of three talents.
Polemon That's very decent of you.
Menander, *The Girl with her Hair Cut Short*, 1012–15

The two men next shook on the agreement in the presence of as many witnesses as they could muster. The latter were important since there were no formal legal or civil documents to be signed. Marriage was simply a private agreement between two families.

The dowry

The dowry was central to the marriage contract. Figures from law-court speeches suggest that the dowry was usually set at between 5 per cent and 20 per cent of a *kyrios'* wealth. Although it belonged to the husband, it was meant to give protection to a wife; for if a man wanted a divorce, he had to return the dowry in full to his wife's family. If he did not do so, then he was charged 18 per cent interest per annum on the value of the dowry.

If a woman's husband died, then her dowry passed onto her sons; if there were no children, then it was handed back to her family. There was also a particular law for the death of a man who left a daughter (or daughters) but no sons. His wealth and property were legally attached to the daughter, who became known as an *epiklēros*. Her name was read out in the assembly and she was married to the closest available male relative of the deceased. This ensured that wealth stayed in the immediate family.

A Dowry's Influence

Unmarried women whose *kyrioi* could provide a large dowry were highly sought after. Once married, these women could also use their dowry as a powerful bargaining tool, for a husband was more likely to treat his wife well if he feared losing such a prized financial asset. Some Greek writers were unimpressed by women holding such power: Plato commented that dowries could cause husbands to behave slavishly, while a fragment of Euripides' *Phaethon* describes a free man who has become 'a slave of his marriage-bed, having sold his body for a dowry'.

The wedding ceremony

The wedding itself took place over a period of three days, each of which had a name: the **proaulia**, the **gamos** and the **epaulia** (*-aulia* probably derives from the verb *aulisdesthai*, 'to spend the night'; thus the *proaulia* was held the day before the wedding night, and the *epaulia* the day after it). In the days leading up to the *proaulia* the bride would spend time at her home, preparing for the ceremony with her mother, other female relatives, friends and slaves.

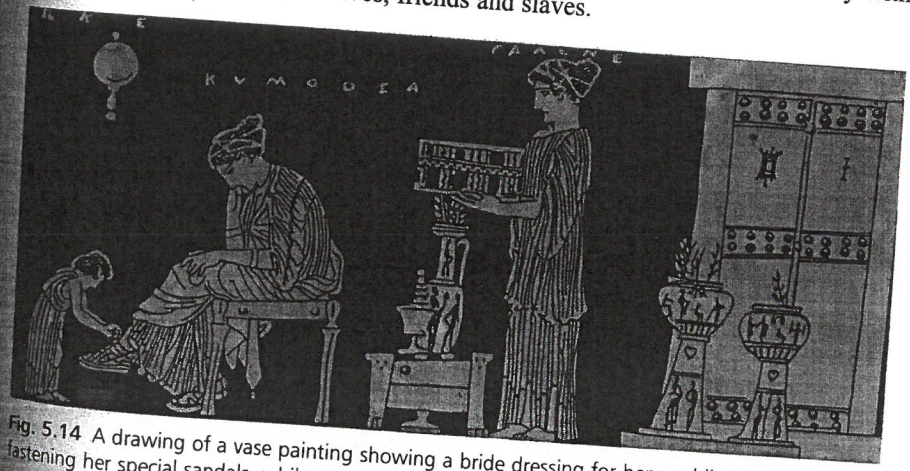


Fig. 5.14 A drawing of a vase painting showing a bride dressing for her wedding. A girl is fastening her special sandals, while a maid brings in a decorated box, possibly containing the wedding veil. A *loutrophoros* can be seen behind the chest in the middle.

offerings to the gods, in particular to Artemis, the virgin goddess. The bride would offer a lock of hair, childhood toys and clothing to the goddess to thank her for the protection which she had given during her childhood and to ask for her support in leaving the sphere of virginity; moreover, Artemis as goddess of childbirth would also be important in her future life. An anonymous author records the dedication of a girl named Timarete:

> Timarete, daughter of Timaretos, before her wedding, has dedicated her tambourine, her pretty ball, the net that shielded her hair, a lock of hair, and her girl's dresses to Artemis of the Lake, a virgin to a virgin, as is fit. Daughter of Leto, hold your hand over the child Timarete, and protect the pure girl in a pure way.
>
> Palatine Anthology, *6.280*

The day of the marriage ceremony, the **gamos**, started with the bride's ritual bath in holy water, which was meant to enhance her fertility. Water was drawn from a sacred spring and carried by a young child in a *loutrophoros*, a double-handled, painted vase especially used for wedding ceremonies.

Next came the dressing of the bride. She was adorned in the most expensive clothing possible; many families even hired the services of a professional wedding dresser. Her hair was arranged, and she was then bedecked with robes, a crown, jewellery and perfume. However, the most important item was the veil, which symbolised her virginity and was not removed until the marriage ceremony was over. Once the bride was ready, there followed the wedding feast in her father's house. Both families were present, although the men and the women dined at different tables. Expensive food was served, after which a libation was poured and musicians and singers performed. As the following lines suggest, a wedding was often a great celebration to which the entire community were invited:

> There is no occasion for a feast that is as conspicuous and much discussed as a wedding ... therefore, since there is no one who is unaware that we are entertaining and have invited people, we are ashamed to leave out anyone, and we invite all of our relatives and friends and connections of any type.
>
> *Plutarch*, Moralia, *666ff.*

The feast was one of the very few public social occasions in ancient Athens which involved women, and jokes about their drinking were common. For example, in Menander's comic play *Dyskolos*, the women at a wedding feast apparently soak up wine 'like sand'.

The procession

The day's most important event was the procession from the bride's house to the groom's house; this symbolised the bride's transfer from one *oikos* to another. It began in the evening with the groom symbolically dragging the bride from her

Fig. 5.15 A wedding procession. The bride and groom are in a chariot, two men carry torches, while two women follow behind carrying presents.

mother, and then leading her to a cart, in which she rode between the groom and the best man. The procession was a loud and raucous affair, attended by all the wedding guests and often many other townsfolk. It was conducted by the light of torches (believed to ward off evil spirits), and men with musical instruments sang marriage songs while women threw fertility symbols such as fruits and flowers at the couple. The bride's mother walked behind the cart carrying torches.

In the *Iliad*, Homer describes a series of wedding processions in a scene on the shield of Achilles:

> ... there were marriages and feasting, and they were escorting the brides from their houses through the streets under the light of burning torches, and the wedding-song rose loud. The young men were whirling in the dance, and among them *auloi* and lyres kept up their music, while the women all stood at the doors of their houses and looked on, admiring.
>
> *Homer*, Iliad, *18.491–6*

When the cart arrived at the groom's house, the bride was welcomed by her mother-in-law, who was also holding torches. The bride ate a quince, while the groom's friends burned the axle of the chariot to show that the bride could not now journey back to her old home. The couple were led to the hearth of the house, where they were showered once more with symbols of fertility: a mixture of dates, coins, dried fruits, figs and nuts.

The focus of the ceremony now moved to the marital bedroom, for the bride's loss of virginity was a key element of the wedding. Friends would prepare the bedroom with flowers and decorations and the groom would lead his bride in, after which the doors were closed. A friend of the groom would stand guard outside the doors, while friends of the bride would stand with him and sing songs, perhaps throughout the night, to reassure her and offer their support. They might also beat on the door to ward off evil spirits.

Early the next morning the couple were woken by friends singing outside their bridal chamber. The **epaulia** centred around the presentation of gifts to the bride, mainly by her new relatives. This was perhaps done to bind her more closely to her new home, although some have suggested that it was a compensation for her lost virginity of the previous night. One source records that brides were given items such as unguents, clothing, combs, chests, bottles, sandals, boxes, myrrh and soap.

iii. The Kyria

A married woman automatically became the leading female in her husband's family and assumed her role as the *kyria*. She was responsible for overseeing all the household tasks and carried a bunch of keys to symbolise her control of the storerooms, which contained all the food and resources required for the cold winter months. In the following lines, Xenophon relates instructions from a husband to his new wife:

> You will have to stay indoors, and send out the servants who have outdoor jobs, and oversee those with indoor jobs. You must receive the produce that is brought in from outside and distribute as much of it as needs dispensing; but as for the proportion of it which needs putting on one side, you must look ahead and make sure that the outgoings assigned for the year are not dispensed in a month. When wool is brought in to you, you must try to make certain that those who need clothes get them. And you must try to ensure that the grain is made into edible provisions. One of your responsibilities ... will probably seem rather unpleasant: when any servant is ill, you must make sure that he is thoroughly looked after.
>
> *Xenophon,* The Estate-Manager, *7.35–6.*

One of the most important of these duties was the spinning and weaving of cloth, which would take place in the *gynaikōn*. Cloth was very expensive in the ancient world as it was all made by hand. Therefore the household was saved an enormous amount of money if it provided all its own cloth. Cloth was used not just for clothes, of course, but for other household items such as curtains and sheets.

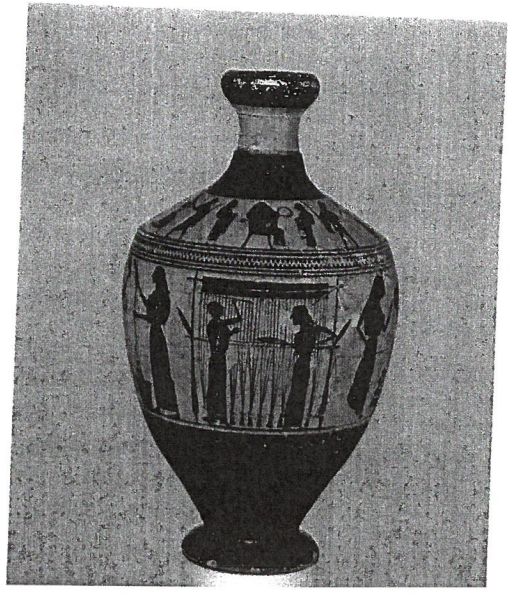
Clothing

Greek clothing was relatively straightforward. For a man the main item was the tunic, known as a *chitōn*. Over the top of this he often wore a cloak, a *himation*, which was a large rectangular piece of woollen cloth. Footwear ranged from light sandals to sturdy boots.

Women wore a type of *chitōn* which fell to the ankles and was fastened by brooches. Wealthy women could afford to wear linen rather than wool. The *himation* was often also used as a shawl, while many vase paintings depict women wearing it as a veil covering their faces. Indeed, it seems likely that women were expected to wear a veil whenever they went out in public.

Women would start with wool or flax stalks, which ideally came from their own animals or farms. A lot of work went into cleaning and preparing the raw wool and rolling it into loose balls, which were now ready for spinning. Vase paintings show women using knee-guards for this rolling process. The wool was then spun into

Fig. 5.16 A reconstruction of women's dress. The figure on the right is wearing the long tunic covered by a *himation* and a head-scarf. The figure in the centre has her *himation* wrapped around her.



time-consuming process was central to the working life of women.

iv. Childbirth

The first duty of a Greek wife was to produce a male heir who could inherit his father's estate. The central importance of this duty is shown by the language used to describe adult women. An unmarried woman was a *parthenos* (maiden) until she got married, when she became a *nymphē* (a married woman without children), but the real mark of womanhood was when she bore her first child – she was now known as a *gynē*.

Childbirth is difficult enough in the modern world. If a pregnancy survives complications, there follows the intense pain of labour. These difficulties were magnified many times for women in ancient Greece. Healthcare was extremely rudimentary and pain prevention was far less developed: women had to endure labour pains without anaesthetic. Miscarriage and death during labour were thus far more common than they are today. Medea, in Euripides' play of the same name, famously compares women giving birth with men fighting in battle:

> Men say of us that we live a life free from danger at home while they fight wars. How wrong they are! I would rather stand three times in the battle line than bear one child.
>
> *Euripides,* Medea, *248–51*

Midwifery

A later Roman writer, Hyginus, told an amusing if unlikely anecdote about how women came to be allowed to work as midwives at Athens. According to the tale, a young woman called Hagnodike disguised herself as a man in order to study medicine. Later, still disguised, she gained such a reputation as an obstetrician (doctor of childbirth) that some of her rivals grew jealous and brought a criminal charge of sexual corruption. For they believed that 'he' must have been seducing 'his' patients to have won such approval. Hyginus takes up the story:

> The judges of the Areopagus, in session, started to condemn Hagnodike, but she removed her garment for them and showed that she was a woman. Then the doctors began to accuse her more vigorously, and as a result the leading women came to the Court and said: 'You are not husbands, but enemies, because you condemn her who discovered safety for us.' Then the Athenians amended the law, so that free-born women could learn the art of medicine.
>
> *Hyginus,* Fabula, *274,10–13*

Although this story is probably not likely to be true, it does suggest the memory of a time when women had to fight to win the right to be involved in medicine. In the classical age, however, we know from Plato that Socrates' mother was a midwife, and it seems that by this time it was women beyond childbearing age who acted as midwives.

Although the *kyria* undoubtedly had a great deal of power at home, she also had great limitations imposed on her. She was legally the possession of her husband and had to obey his commands. She had no right to vote or take any part in the political system of the city (see p. 288). Indeed, a woman's freedom was severely limited once she stepped outside the front door. She could not buy or sell land, and she was prevented from buying anything worth more than a *medimnos* of barley, an amount which would support an average family for about six days. Although she could acquire property through gift or inheritance, it was always put under the management of the *kyrios*.

Women were actually discouraged from leaving the house and would usually need to be escorted by a male relative. This was to prevent unwanted attention from other men who might have provided a threat to the *kyrios*. Men felt great paranoia about their wives being seduced by other men, since they wanted to ensure their paternity of any children. Consequently there was an enormous double standard over sexual behaviour – men were permitted to sleep with whoever they wanted, including prostitutes and slaves, as long as it wasn't the wife of another citizen.

However, it was deemed a terrible and disgraceful thing for a married woman to sleep with another man. If she was caught with a lover, then her husband (or other male guardian) had the legal right to kill the offending man on the spot. However, in practice the husband would be more likely to ask for compensation or take him to court. The woman would also suffer terrible consequences – her husband was obliged to divorce her immediately, while she was also banned from all religious festivals, so that she lost all status in society.

In Their Own Words 5.3

Although in classical times it was unusual for a husband to kill a man whom he discovered was having an affair with his wife, there is one famous case where this did happen. You can read Lysias' defence of the husband, Euphiletos, in his speech *'On the murder of Eratosthenes'* (1.6–27).

In the case of poorer women, it was less practical for them to be so hidden away. They might have no choice but to leave the house regularly in order to perform basic tasks. Many women would have made a trip to the fountain on a daily basis to collect water, while there is evidence that some poor women had to take jobs as stallholders at markets or washer-women in order to make ends meet for their families. Such women were looked down on by the rest of society; for example, the comedies of Aristophanes frequently make fun of the tragic playwright Euripides by claiming that his mother used to sell vegetables in the *agora*.

Divorce

In legal terms, divorce was relatively straightforward in Athens, since no court case was required. If a man wanted to divorce his wife then he would just send her back to her own family, along with the dowry. The most common reason for divorce was probably the inability of a woman to produce a child (infertility was not often attributed to a man); a husband might also divorce his wife if he had the chance to marry an *epiklēros* in his own family. In practice, the divorce rate in Athens does not seem to have been high, partly because the loss of the dowry would often have been a serious financial blow.

It was very unusual for a woman to initiate a divorce. In legal terms, all she had to do was to return to live with her own family; however, if they did not want to accept her back then they could return her to her husband. This might happen if the family feared that they would find it hard to find her a new husband. A further factor which discouraged women from seeking divorce was that any children usually remained living with their father; by walking out on a husband, a woman was probably also walking out on her children.

In Their Own Words 5.4

Read chapter 8 of Plutarch's biography of Alcibiades. What can we learn about Athenian divorce from this passage?

Euripides himself produced one of the most famous passages which highlight how desperate women may have felt about their plight. In *Medea*, the heroine has fled to Corinth with her new husband Jason, with whom she has two children. After he divorces her in order to marry the princess of Corinth (a younger woman) she launches into a searing indictment of the treatment of women by men:

> Of everything that is alive and has a mind, we women are the most wretched creatures. First of all, we have to buy a husband with a vast outlay of money – we have to take a master for our body. The latter is still more painful than the former. And here lies the most critical issue – whether we take a good husband or a bad one. For divorce brings shame on a woman's reputation and we cannot refuse a husband his rights. We come to new ways of behaviour, to new customs – and, since we have learnt nothing of such matters at home, we need prophetic powers to tell us specifically what sort of a husband we shall have to deal with. And if we manage this well and our husband lives with us and bears the yoke of marriage lightly, then life is enviable. But if not, death would be welcome. For a man, when he has had enough of life at home, he can stop his heart's sickness by going out – to see one of his friends and contemporaries. But we are forced to look to one soul alone

By the end of the play, Medea is reduced to such rage and desperation that she murders their two children in order to exact on Jason the most painful revenge possible. Most controversially of all, Euripides allows Medea to escape punishment for her crimes by riding off to safety through the sky in a chariot given to her by the sun-god.

The Thesmophoria

Perhaps one occasion when woman could have some freedom came with Athens' one annual festival exclusively for women. It took place in the autumn and was a fertility festival which commemorated the myth of Demeter and Persephone. The name of the festival, *Thesmophoria*, was derived from the word *thesmophoros* ('law-giver'), an epithet given to Demeter which reflected the Greek belief that the goddess had played a vital role in bringing civilisation to mankind by revealing to them the laws of agriculture.

Only married women were allowed to take part in the festival. They camped out for three days and two nights in an area near the pnyx, the hill where the Athenian assembly met (see p. 209). This location was clearly symbolic: for a few days, married Athenian women took possession of the city's seat of government. The rites of the festival were a closely guarded secret, but we do know the outline of events:

- **Day 1**: The women set up shelters; some of them then went down into a nearby cave to retrieve the bones of piglets and images of male genitalia (fertility symbols) which had been left there. These were placed on the *thesmophorion*, the altar to Persephone and Demeter; later, they were scattered on the fields to promote fertility.
- **Day 2**: They fasted and sat on the ground, perhaps as an act of mourning in imitation of Demeter's grief for her daughter.
- **Day 3**: They celebrated the gift of children and prayed for blessings on them and on future families, as well as for good crops.

Such a festival may seem strange in a society where women's movements were normally so carefully controlled by their menfolk. However, there was an ancient belief in the correlation between the fertility of women and that of the earth. Therefore, many Greek men would have believed that these rites were vital to the prosperity of their society. Moreover, they would have felt that there was little danger of their wives being unfaithful, since the exclusion of all men from the festival was strictly enforced.

For women, the festival must have been a welcome chance to make new friendships and experience welcome freedoms. Aristophanes even wrote a play, *Women at the Thesmophoria*, in which the women plot to punish the playwright Euripides for misrepresenting the female sex in his plays. The women are portrayed in festive mode: drinking wine, complaining about their husbands and

AS

Classical Civilisation

Summer 2022 Bridging Work

All reading you have to do is attached at the end of the booklet

Name:

The 9 Muses:

Clio (History), Euterpe (Music), Thalia (Comedy), Melpomeni (Tragedy), Terpsichore (Dance), Erato (Love Poetry), Polymnia (Hymns & Mimic Art), Ourania (Astronomy), Calliope (Epic Poetry)

1. General Classics Knowledge

Mythology

- Greek Tragedy was based on well-known myths and religion was an intrinsic part of Greek society. Therefore, you need to make sure you know all major mythological stories and have a strong understanding of all their deities.
- **TASK 1: You need to research the main Olympian Gods and the most well-known myths associated with them and summarise this on the following table on p3-4.**
- Dig as deep as you can and read as many stories as you can in order to gain a good overview.

NB: the myths will change, sometimes drastically from source to source so do not worry if you get very different ideas to everyone else.

Good websites to research the gods and goddesses are the two links below:

- https://www.greekmythology.com/
- https://www.theoi.com/

Recommended books to expand your knowledge:

- *Orchard Book of Greek Myths* by Robert Graves (it looks childish, but the myths are told well and accurately)
- *Mythos* by Stephen Fry – a very current book. There is a lot of artistic licence in this one, but it is a very entertaining read.
- *Pandora's Jar* by Natalie Haynes – very current and interesting look at women in Greek myth
- *Classical Myths* by Jenny March

TASK 2: Major Mythological tales you need to research and create storyboards for:

- The Oresteia
- The Trojan war -from the judgement of Paris to the fleeing of Aeneas to found Rome

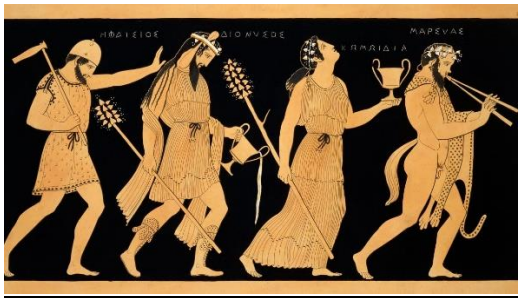
Your storyboard should be filled with creative and colourful images which clearly represent parts of the story. It can be realistically drawn or you can use symbols.

God/Goddess Add Roman name below the Greek names	God/Goddess of?	Symbols	Major mythological stories associated with them

Zeus			
Hera			
Athene			
Poseidon			
Hermes			
Apollo			
Dionysus			

Artemis			
Hestia			
Demeter			
Hades			
Aphrodite			

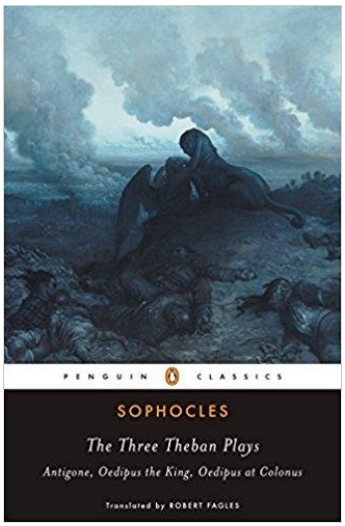
2. <u>Greek Theatre</u>

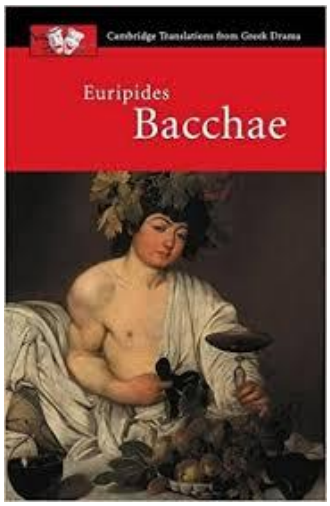


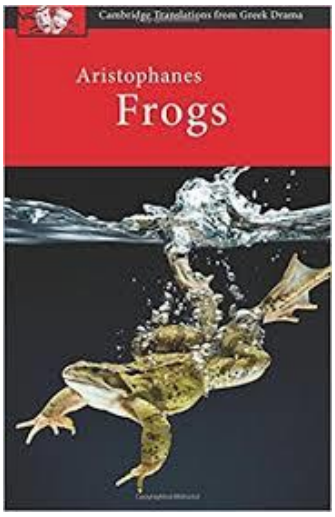
For the Greek Theatre unit, you will have to read three plays:

- *Bacchae* by Euripides
- *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles
- *The Frogs* by Aristophanes

Over the summer holidays, you must purchase the following copies of the plays:







TASK 3: Read the article on the origins of Greek theatre (given to you in the taster lesson)

TASK 4: Fill in the table on p7 which is full of key terms you will need to know when studying Greek theatre

TASK 5: you must read **Oedipus the King.**

TASK 6: You must then write an answer of about 500 words to this question: **Why do you think Oedipus the King is an effective tragedy?**

Success Criteria:

- Write in full paragraphs
- Make at least 3 separate points
- Support your answer with examples from the text

You must bring this with you to your first lesson of AS Classics in September

Key Terms

Term	Definition

catharsis	
chorus	
choral ode	
exodus	
hamartia	
hubris	
kommos	
monody	
parabasis	
parodos	
peripeteia	
prologue	
stasimon	
stichomythia	
tragic/dramatic irony	

AS into A2 Bridging Work
Classical Civilisation
Greek Theatre

All reading you have to do is attached at the end of the booklet

Name:

Greek Theatre

1. Revise all of the vases for a detailed test when we return to school.

2. Re-read all of the plays to ensure you have a really good understanding of the stories

3. Create a story board of 6 scenes for EACH of the three plays we have studied. Make it creative and bold, lots of colour, make the drawings realistic or

4. Answer the 30 mark essay on page 3 on Greek Tragedies using the 30 marker essay grid to help you structure the essay.

5. Read the scholarship by Paul Cartledge on Aristophanes' Frogs, which I gave you in class. Use the table on page 5 to help you summarise his arguments.

"A perfect tragedy should imitate actions which excite pity and fear, this being the distinctive mark of tragic imitation," (Aristotle *Poetics*). Evaluate whether you think that the emotions of pity and fear are elicited more effectively in Euripides' *Bacchae* or in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*.

(30 marks) *plan for 15 mins & write for 45*

Introduction:			
Point	**Evidence from play**	**explanation**	**Scholarship**
Conclusion:			

Some further tragedy based 30 markers to plan/think about for when we return:

1. *"Messenger speeches are the most exciting part of any Greek tragedy."* How far do you agree with this statement? In your answer you should include discussion of all four texts you have studied.

2. *"The agon is always by far the most compelling scene in a Greek tragic play.*" How far do you agree with this statement? In your answer you should include discussion of all four texts you have studied.

Paul Cartledge -Aristophanes and his theatre of the absurd

Topic/theme/area in the play	Summary of his argument
parabasis	
Character of Dionysus	
Sexuality	
Eleusinian Mysteries	
Role of the slaves	

l through the Great
mocratic counter-
ed war followed by
the hardships and
cident that he wrote
d produced in 388
(see chapter 7). His
of his second son,
amatic and political
usual acumen and

Chapter 1

High Days and Holidays: the Dionysiac Experience

'Nothing to do with Dionysos'

The *Frogs* is generally reckoned today to be the finest of Aristophanes' eleven surviving plays. Not only was he awarded a civic crown of sacred olive after its original victorious showing at the Lenaia of 405, but the play was also staged again during his own lifetime, indeed probably just a year after its first performance. In the fourth century some tragedies of Aeschylus were given a second airing, long after the playwright's death in 456, at a time when the Athenian tragic muse was in steep decline. But comedy after Aristophanes experienced no such deterioration, and it was Aristophanes whose posthumous decline was precipitous (see further, Postscript). What was it then that justified the precipitate revival of *Frogs*?

Our Hellenistic commentator was sure he knew: it was the famous *parabasis* (see chapter 2 for meaning of this), in which the Chorus dressed as raggedly-clothed initiates of the Eleusinian Mysteries made their plea ostensibly in the playwright's name for tolerance towards those Athenians who had 'mistakenly' been rather too energetic in the oligarchic cause during the troubled events of 411 (see chapter 5). That commentator was neither the first nor the last to treat an Aristophanic *parabasis* as a piece of deadly serious and 'straight' political rhetoric; and that reading of the *parabasis* would certainly help to explain the play's restaging in either 404 or 403, when reconciliation and tolerance towards oligarchs were unusually topical political themes. A more mundane reason for the repeat, though, might simply have been the difficulty of writing, commissioning and producing new plays during the upheavals of 405-3. But whatever the real reasons, I am sure that it was not for the *parabasis* alone, or even mainly, that *Frogs* was awarded first prize at its original performance. The principal reason, I venture to guess, was the role Aristophanes wrote for Dionysos.

Fig. 3. Attic red-figure cup attributed to Makron, c. 490 BC (Villa Giulia Museum, Rome). Dionysos dances ecstatically, drinking-horn in right-hand, thyrsus in left.

An ancient adage, more applicable to tragedy than to comedy, held that drama was 'nothing to do with Dionysos'. This was just a particularly vivid way of saying that there seemed to be nothing about the cult of Dionysos which necessarily and uniquely tied it to dramatic representations. Indeed, modern scholars share the perplexity of the ancients, and there is no agreed view on either the origins of Attic drama as such or on how and why drama should have been associated in Athens and Attica exclusively with various forms of the cult of Dionysos. Comedy, however, was more obviously connected with this god than was tragedy, even though it acquired dramatic form and official recognition later than tragedy. For the *kōmos* was a typically rustic rout or revel celebrating some high day or holiday within the

annual agricultural cycle and was liberally lubricated by the *spécialité* of Dionysos' *maison*, the fermented juice of the wine-grape. Still, there was no inevitable reason why the songs (*ōidai*) that accompanied the *kōmos* – hence *kōmōidia* – should have become formalised into comic drama.

On the other hand, once the connection had for whatever reason been made, it was a relatively straightforward one for the comic (as opposed to the tragic) poet to exploit. 'Wine, women and song' is a time-honoured masculine formula, and although real Athenian women played major parts in various cults of Dionysos (most famously or notoriously the sort of maenadic cult explored so savagely in Euripides' *Bacchae* just a couple of months after the first performance of *Frogs*), by a dramatic convention all the performers at the Dionysia and later the Lenaia festivals (dithyrambic choristers, chorus-members, actors, and probably the non-speaking extras too) were of the male sex.

Hence sexuality thrust itself forward as a naturally dominant Dionysiac theme, aided by Dionysos' ritual implication with fertility and growth. The wearing of the erect phallos by at least some of the actors in comic drama corresponded to the exaggeratedly male-dominated quality of the sexuality celebrated in Dionysiac rituals both on (as in the personified Phales of *Acharnians* 263-79) and off the stage. From sexuality and fertility it was a short step to bawdiness and obscenity of language and gesture, in Dionysiac drama as in real-life Athenian religious cults – for example, in the annual celebration of the Eleusinian Mysteries, which was open to both sexes, or the married women-only Thesmophoria. Finally, the wearing of masks (*prosōpa*, Latin *personae*) by all the performers in comedy may have had its origin in pre-dramatic mumming, but it was also well adapted to the peculiarly Dionysiac experiences of *ekstasis* (standing outside oneself) and *enthousiasmos* (receiving the god within oneself). Both involved a change of personality (as we say, in unconscious homage to the Latin etymology); and the easiest way to create the illusion of becoming someone else is to assume a mask.

In short, comedy at least did have rather a lot to do with Dionysos inasmuch as that god of fertility, regeneration and wine was a potent catalyst of self-liberating personality change. But that change occurred, and was allowed to occur, only within a controlled environment, that of state-sponsored religious rituals allotted their appropriate time and space within the civic festival calendar and communal

civic space (see below).

Aristophanes' Dionysos: 'rather ungodlike'?

In comedy, as in all carnival, there is an ingrained tendency for the norms of 'ordinary' life to be suspended, subverted or even turned on their heads. Aristophanes' Dionysos in *Frogs* exploits this tendency to the utmost. For 'he' turns out to be remarkably feminine, kitted out in a yellow dress and with a yellow (i.e. cowardly) streak in his nature to match. He, a god, changes places with his slave – a typically saturnalian motif aping the annual reversal of these roles at harvest-time by real men and their slaves, but given here by Aristophanes a 'naturalistic' twist,since his cowardly and effeminate Dionysos seems naturally servile. Dionysos' borrowing of the dress and equipment of the utterly virile Herakles serves merely to highlight his inadequacies above ground, which are exposed in a darker hue during his journey to Hades. The low point, perhaps, is reached when he shits himself in terror at the subterranean horrors of Tartaros (*Frogs* 479). But he scarcely acquits himself better when, as the divine patron of drama, he is called upon to exercise his (non-existent) artistic sensibilities in the life-and-death contest (*agōn*) to find the best of the dead tragic poets – 'best' in the sense of the one most able to save the city of Athens in its time of military, political and especially spiritual crisis.

There is more at stake in our interpretation of Aristophanes' Dionysos than mere judgment of his creation's artistic quality and merit. It would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that here lies one of the keys to unlocking the mystery of classical Athenian religion. For this Aristophanic Dionysos has been called 'rather ungodlike', which raises the question of just exactly what the Athenians did consider their gods to be like. Since they depicted them in their words and images in human form, anthropomorphically, it is tempting to agree with one leading authority that they were 'larger Greeks', superhuman beings, beyond the human partly because of their irresistible powers, partly thanks to their immortality.

To this view, however, two objections apparently arise. First, how does one square the remarkably, indeed pathetically human Dionysos of Aristophanes with, say, the Euripidean earthquake-delivering, mania-inducing Dionysos, let alone with the life-enhancing, consciousness-raising, mind-blowing Dionysos worshipped by the many Greeks of both sexes who chose to be initiated into Dionysiac mystery-cults that had nothing to do with the theatre?

Does one simply dismiss the Aristophanic god as a buffoon, a joke, a feaster in a banquet of licensed blasphemy? Or does one rather regard him as a figure of wish-fulfilment, deliberately made ridiculous for a finite and short time in a play, precisely because, when the Greeks were not playing, Dionysos was not at all a matter for ribald laughter but a force to be reckoned with?

This latter possibility leads into the other objection to the 'larger Greeks' view. Are the Olympian gods best seen as 'persons' at all, or should they not rather be assimilated to the other, usually collectively anonymous but always supernaturally and superhumanly powerful, divine agencies by which the Greeks felt their world to be moulded and manipulated – the Fates, the Furies, the Avenging Ones, and so on? In that case, calling the Aristophanic Dionysos 'rather ungodlike' would be an understatement, since he has clearly trespassed too far on the human side of the human/divine divide to qualify any longer for godhead.

The prudent answer to this conundrum, then, is perhaps to say that, in a manner desperately alien to post-mediaeval Christian ideas, the Greek and Athenian conception of deity embraced a little of all these seemingly contradictory versions of Dionysos. The same people whose 'official' explanation of why the gods got only the smell and not the substance of an animal sacrifice was that the Titan Prometheus had once tricked almighty Zeus, and who believed that the gods were obligated to repay the favour even of a mere sacrificial smell, could also see themselves in Shakespearian terms 'as flies to wanton boys', to be killed – like Pentheus in the *Bacchae* – for the gods' sport.

The Aristophanic Dionysos, then, was meant to be funny, but that was only part of this god's 'story' (*mythos*). Nor do I think it mere chance that for his main Chorus in *Frogs* Aristophanes chose a company of initiates in the Eleusinian Mysteries. Less than two years before, Alcibiades, who had been convicted of sacrilege for profaning the Mysteries in 415, had made a point of leading the Eleusinian procession after his pardon and return to Athens in 407; now in exile once again, Alcibiades was the major political talking-point of early 405. But apart from its topicality, the choice of Eleusinian initiates would also reassure the audience that the religious proprieties were not being entirely neglected even in the topsy-turvy carnivalesque world of the *Frogs*. Through their unremitting observance of this native but panhellenic cult (the Mysteries themselves were never good for a joke) they, the Athenians of the *theatron*, were justifying their

status among the gods' elect and helping to preserve the balance of nature.

Festivals of democracy: the Lenaia and Dionysia

Theatron originally was the collective noun for a group of *theatai* (spectators) and so became used for the place where the spectators spectated. In the Athens of Aristophanes that meant the Theatre of Dionysos cut into the south-east slope of the Acropolis hill. The technicalities of staging, including the physical setting of the dramas, will be dealt with in the following chapter. Here we shall be concerned with the religio-political, festival context within which the plays were just one, and not necessarily the most important, element.

Festivals were the beating heart of classical Greek religion. Above 300 such public, state-organised festivals are on record as being celebrated at more than 250 locales throughout the Greek world in honour of over 400 different deities (if we count Dionysos Lenaios as separate from Dionysos Eleuthereus, for example, as we properly should). The Athenians were particularly 'into' festivals, proud that they devoted up to 144 days of their calendar to them, more than any other Greek *polis*. The high number is explained chiefly by the size, diversity and historical origins of the Athenian state. By the time of Aristophanes' birth Attica, the 2400 square kilometres that constituted the state's territory (about the size of Luxembourg – or Derbyshire), had long been united and centrally administered. But in the years immediately surrounding his birthdate a second, no less important, political development had been the extension of democratic notions into the field of the state religion. Thus the Lenaia and more especially the Great or City Dionysia were not just religious festivals, but specifically democratic religious festivals, reflecting the Athenians' remarkable and pioneering development of this novel form of self-government. It was of the essence of democratic thinking that not just the social elite but all Athenian citizens should be able to participate equally in these relaxing and renovating holy-days.

The junior of the two dramatic festivals was the Lenaia, which is also far less well documented than the Great Dionysia. It was included in the festival calendar of sacrifices, inscribed on stone within the *Stoa Basileios* (see below) in the Athenian agora. There it duly appeared under the wedding month of Gamelion, sandwiched between two other festivals of Dionysos – the Rural Dionysia in Poseideion (which Dikaiopolis, hero of *Acharnians*, was so desperately longing to

Aristophanes at any rate. Thus against the solitary female of this class, the attendant of Persephone in Hades in *Frogs*, we have to set the following male slaves: the attendant of Lamakhos in *Acharnians*; the three slaves of Demos in *Knights* (the Paphlagonian, i.e. Kleon, and the two identified in antiquity as surrogates for Demosthenes and Nikias); Sosias and Xanthias, slaves of Bdelykleon, in *Wasps*; the anonymous slaves of Trygaios, Lamakhos and Kleonymos, and Kudoimos ('Uproar') slave of the War god in *Peace*; the slaves of Tereus the hoopoe in *Birds*, of Kinesias in *Lysistrata* and of Agathon in *Thesmophoriazusae*; Xanthias slave of Dionysos and Aiakos slave of Pluto in *Frogs*; and finally – the occasion for the present discussion – Karion slave of Khremylos in *Plutus*.

In Aristophanes' plays what stands out a mile is the difference in his characterisation of Xanthias in *Frogs* and of Karion, on the one hand, and the rest (Paphlagon is not really an exception, since he has become an Athenian citizen as early as line 335). That is to say, whereas the latter make only fleeting appearances or set the ball rolling and disappear, Xanthias and more especially Karion are characters in their own right, who participate in and guide the action. But whereas Xanthias is deliberately drawn as bold, resourceful and uppity, in order to bring out the paradoxical humour of his master Dionysos' cowardly indecisiveness, Karion is the prototype of the Greek (and Roman) New Comedy stereotype of the 'faithful slave'.

For the record, Karion (whose name was intended to suggest the region of south-west Turkey, Caria, from where many of the Athenians' slaves actually came) was just one, but the most trusted, of Khremylos' slaves. He had fallen into slavery, presumably in his native region, for economic reasons (147-8), and the audience would infer that he had been brought to Athens by slave-dealers and sold to Khremylos in the slave-market in the Athenian agora. It was a measure of his accommodation to his unsought lot that he spoke flawless Attic Greek. Thus far, perhaps, the audience's credulity might not have been unduly strained. Maybe such a slave as Karion was not merely a comic creation. But would a peasant-citizen like Khremylos really have had several slaves? And when he went to consult the Delphic Oracle, would he have shared the sacrificial meat even with his most trusted household slave and allowed him to wear the ritual wreath (21, 227-8)? Again, perhaps so. But would the slave have behaved towards his master almost as a social equal or even friend, not allowing himself to be bullied or threatened, let alone hit?

5

EMILY KEARNS

The Gods in the Homeric epics

A popular, somewhat pretentious, party game in certain circles not so long ago was to summarise a famous work of literature as briefly as possible: give the plot of Proust in one sentence, and so on. If we were thus to reduce the storylines of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* to the bare essentials, the Gods would not have to feature at all. Zeus's co-operation is not necessary, given the hero's larger-than-life status, to explain the disastrous effects of Achilles' withdrawal from battle, and neither do Poseidon or the Sun need to be invoked to account for misadventures at sea and the effect of twenty years' absence on a man's home. The party game was of course intended to provoke amusement by making the summary factually accurate but also entirely incongruous with the spirit of the original. Similarly, without the Gods the epics would be quite different from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* that we have, and surely also from the tradition that produced the poems. The (slightly longer) summaries given by the poems themselves, after all, give divine action a certain prominence: 'the plan of Zeus was accomplished', 'he took away from them the day of their return'; and the action of the *Iliad* begins with the question 'Which God caused them to quarrel?'[1] The words of the characters reflect a pervasive view that significant ideas, emotions and events are in some way caused by the intervention of a God.[2] Insofar as some concept of cause and effect is inherent in narrative, then, the divine must make its appearance; arguably it is not until Thucydides that the idea of a sustained narrative without the divine is born.

This causal function is not of course the only role of the Gods in the epic, and as we shall see it doesn't explain many of the distinctive features of

[1] 1.5, 1.9, 1.8.

[2] Although this concept of causation does not, or does not always, let mortals off the hook. It is one of the most conspicuous, and most discussed, features of the interaction between humans and gods that the same event has frequently both a divine and a human cause: so-called 'double motivation' or 'over-determination'. The fullest treatment is still Lesky (1961); standard and very clear presentations also in Dodds (1951) 1–18 and Willcock (1970).

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the epic Gods. For all the Homeric resonances of Herodotus' *Histories*, the contrast between his 'the God', or 'the divine', equally a key player in human affairs, and the individualised, highly personal Gods of Homer, could hardly be greater.[3] The Gods may perfectly well be implicated in the working-out of human affairs without making a personal appearance. But such appearances are a central and characteristic feature of the Homeric Gods, so that they are presented as characters in a sense equipollent to the human actors. So deeply embedded in the narrative style is that personal presentation that it occurs even when it causes logical difficulties. In *Odyssey* XII, when Odysseus' men have eaten the herds of the Sun, their guardian Lampetie informs their owner, her father Helios, and he in turn complains to Zeus, who agrees to destroy Odysseus' ship in vengeance. But all this is part of Odysseus' own narrative – how can he possibly know this? It is as though the poet suddenly realised the problem, pulled himself up with a start, and quickly found an explanation: 'I heard this later from Calypso, who was told it by Hermes' (XII.374–90). This highlights the singularity of the poet's own perspective, which goes far beyond the 'some God must have guided me' of his characters, or Herodotus' axiom that the divine principle acts by nature to upset things, and claims a knowledge of the Gods which – surely – no human being can possess. The audacity of this claim is somewhat softened by the introduction of the Muse or Muses as intermediary,[4] but it can still hardly be taken literally.

The Gods of the *Iliad*: who and where?

Book I of the *Iliad* introduces us not only to a world of divine causation and interaction, but to a whole society of Gods. Apollo, Athena, Hera, Zeus and Hephaestus make their appearance, and there are clearly other Gods who spend much of their time together, but also have separate homes, on the peaks of Olympus. The Gods indeed can be characterised as 'having Olympian homes' (I.18 and often). But there are also Gods such as Thetis who are able to travel to Olympus but who normally live elsewhere – 'in the depths of the sea, beside her aged father' (I.358). The picture is rounded out in subsequent books with the addition of further players: Ares, Aphrodite, Dione, Leto, Artemis, Hermes, and the messenger Iris all seem to have their homes on Olympus, while Poseidon, though at home in the depths of the sea which he rules, seems also to spend a good deal of his time with the other Gods on Olympus or on earth, presumably because as a son of Kronos and

[3] The Herodotean usage is present sporadically in the speech of human characters in Homer, e.g. XVII.218 ('*theos* (god) always brings like to like', clearly proverbial).

[4] See especially 2.484–5.

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brother of Zeus his status is rather higher than most of the non-Olympian Gods; he is even unwilling to accept Zeus's overall authority, though in the end he submits, grumbling (15.184–217).

Other Gods are mentioned in the *Iliad*, but they are scarcely or not at all characters in the action. There is Enyo, a female counterpart of Ares, who features in one battle scene but never on Olympus; there is Charis or Pasithea, the wife of Hephaestus (18.382–3). Of the Gods who are prominent elsewhere in literature and in cult, Hades and Persephone (mentioned, e.g. in 9.569) may be presumed to be out of the action because they are effectively confined to their own sphere, the Underworld. This is the final destination of the heroes, but as it marks the end it is never explored itself; even the other Gods would shudder if Tartarus were laid open (20.62–5). But the absence of Demeter and Dionysus is harder to explain. Since they are both mentioned in the text, it seems very unlikely that they were unfamiliar to Homer's audience, and the most likely explanation is that these deities were difficult to treat convincingly in a way appropriate to the story. Hera, Athena, Poseidon, were all prominent as patrons of Greek cities, *poliouchoi*: Apollo, and therefore, it could be assumed, his mother Leto and sister Artemis had strong connections with the Asiatic mainland.[5] It made sense, therefore, to show them as passionately involved in the action on behalf of their favoured human communities. Dionysus, on the other hand, though sometimes thought of as Asian, was by human descent Theban and thus Greek, and both he and Demeter spent most of their mythological time travelling from city to city teaching the benefits of agriculture and viticulture and establishing their own worship.[6] This did not always occur without trauma, but essentially these deities were benefactors of humanity in general, rather than partisans of one group or the other. To show them favouring Achaeans or Trojans would involve too radical a shift in their essential nature, so they can have no part in the story.

There are other differences between the Iliadic pantheon and those we know from other sources, differences which seem unlikely to be solely or even primarily chronological. Hephaestus is prominent in other early Greek literature, but only in a few Greek cities did he have a significant cult presence (one of these cities was Athens, which is why this fact is not always realised).[7] Iris was even less of a cult figure, though she too appears quite often in literary mythology.[8] But perhaps the most general and far-reaching distinction

[5] Although the view that he originated from here is too simple: see Burkert (1985) 144.

[6] See Flueckiger-Guggenheim (1983). [7] Burkert (1985) 167–8.

[8] The sum of her known cult appears to be one Delian sacrifice recorded in Semos of Delos, *FGrHist* 396 F5.

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between the Gods as they appear in the *Iliad* and the Gods as they were actually worshipped is the Iliadic conception of the Gods as precisely defined individuals, in the manner of human beings. Zeus, Hera, Aphrodite are individual characters as are Agamemnon, Odysseus and Diomedes, and you can no more speak of two Apollos than you could speak of two Achilleses. But where cult was concerned, it was demonstrably normal to speak of 'a God' meaning the God of a particular sanctuary, so that we would have the Apollo of this place and of that place, each with different qualities and traditions and yet still Apollo. This has continued as an ordinary way of thinking in some systems. In South India, Meenakshi at Madurai, Sivakami at Chidambaram, are different, but they are both Devi, the Goddess. In the Aegean, the Megalochari of Tinos and the Ekatontapyliani of Paros are different, but they are both the Panayia (the Virgin Mary). This double perspective is missing in Homer, as indeed in most of our literary sources or those that deal with panhellenic mythology. To be sure, each Homeric deity has his or her own array of favoured places; thus, for instance, Chryses prays to Apollo as frequenting Killa, ruler of Tenedos (1.38) and later Apollo deposits Aeneas in his temple on the Trojan acropolis (5.445–6). But here there are no ambiguities – whichever way you look at it, it is the same character who moves between the two places. This is a rather obvious point in regard to the narrative, but it is none the less important in differentiating the Homeric (or more broadly, epic/literary) Gods from those of other contexts.

There is a similar ambiguity affecting the location of the Gods, but here the epic is itself less definite. Our first impression, that the Gods live as an extended family, perhaps a rather unusual one, on Olympus, is to an extent modified in the course of the epic. They spend a lot of time in other places. They visit the Ethiopians en masse to attend sacrifices on a huge scale, but they may also attend any other place on earth where sacrifices are offered. They come to Troy and its environs to intervene in the action. Even Zeus, though he never comes to earth (or at least sea level),[9] moves from Olympus to Ida to get a better view. In fact, he is presented as worshipped on Mt Ida – he has a temenos and an altar there (8.47–8), and the human characters often address him as 'ruling from Ida' just as Chryses calls on Apollo 'ruling Tenedos', and Achilles, more remarkably, addresses Zeus as 'you who live far off and rule over wintry Dodona' (16.233).[10] They think of particular

[9] Although this is clearly implied by stories of his sexual union with mortal women, of which the poet is well aware, e.g. 14.323.

[10] Dodona is a very long way from Troy, but somewhat less far from Achilles' homeland of Phthiotis.

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Gods as living in particular earthly locations; it is the Gods as a group who 'have their homes on Olympus'.

But can the Gods really be in a place at all, in the sense that human beings are? The whole concept of prayer implies that the Gods can be present anywhere at will, or at least that they can hear and attend to their worshippers over vast stretches of space. When Achilles prays to the Zeus of Dodona, he is using a *modus operandi* which is quite different from his communications with him in Book 1, where he speaks to Thetis and Thetis intercedes with Zeus on his behalf, a procedure which suggests only a quantitative, not a qualitative, difference between Gods and humans. Since the characters of the *Iliad* pray and sacrifice quite a lot, the real-life assumption that the Gods are not subject to spatial limitations is certainly implied in the *Iliad*. But in keeping with the humanising depiction of the Gods, they are also sometimes shown as constrained by space, though to a lesser extent than are mortals. They must move from one place to another, but far more quickly and efficiently than humans can. Thus they may use the quickest means of transport known to humans, the chariot – but their horses and chariots can travel at high speed through air and sea. They can swoop down from mountain peaks like birds. Or, more plausibly perhaps, they can simply go as quickly as a man can think 'I wish I were in such-and-such a place' (15.79–83). It is hard to see why one method of transport is chosen over another. They can, however, all be taken as emphasising the superiority of Gods over mortals in their relative freedom from normal limitations.

Other passages seem to lay emphasis on the restrictions. Some places are far away even for the Gods. Thetis cannot contact Zeus until he comes back from visiting the Ethiopians with the other Olympians (and similarly, at the beginning of the *Odyssey*, Athena can act when she does because Poseidon is away in Ethiopia). Even when they are relatively near, the Gods do not always perceive everything. Zeus on Ida is notoriously distracted from the battle below by the seductive wiles of Hera (14.159–355), but even before this he has turned his attention away from Troy to study the affairs of the Thracians, Mysians and others (13.3–6), allowing Poseidon to interfere on behalf of the Achaeans. There is no sense that a God is different from a human, able to deal with many things at once – and yet this must be at least a passive, background hope of those who pray.

The Gods of the *Iliad*: interaction with humans

I have suggested that the Iliadic Gods are seen somewhat inconsistently as both like and unlike humans in the limitations imposed by locality. A parallel phenomenon is seen in the two types of divine–human interaction observable

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in the epic. On the one hand, there are the normal channels of communication between humans and Gods – prayer, sacrifice, dreams, oracles and so on – and on the other, there are modes which seem less plausible, more fantastic, and which at the same time evoke Gods who are more like humans – sexual and parental relations, for instance. The epiphany stands somewhere between the two groups, because Greeks of the historical period did experience divine epiphanies, yet not so frequently nor so – almost – routinely as do the heroes of the *Iliad*. These two types of interaction show not only a dichotomy in conceptions of the Gods, but also indicate something about humans: the heroes of the epic were men of another age, privileged to hold converse with Gods at a much lesser distance or a much more nearly equal level than is possible for us now. Divine limitations and human excellence go together; perhaps the famous dictum of 'Longinus',[11] that Homer made his men Gods and his Gods men, is not so far from the mark.

The heroes of the *Iliad* pray frequently, and in ways as far as we can tell that are strikingly similar to those of the Greeks of later times and 'real-life' situations. They pray with some special request in mind, they remind the Gods of their past benefits and promise gifts for the future if their prayer is granted. Very often they perform animal sacrifice, whether to bolster up their request or to make good a promise, or even as a pious preliminary to eating. The centrality of animal sacrifice to Greek religious practice is abundantly clear from other sources, and in the epic it is indicated from an Olympian perspective by the keenness of the Gods to receive sacrifice, wherever it may be performed and – other things being equal – their regard for those who offer it: Hector's generous offerings are the main reason given by Zeus for his favour towards the chief Trojan fighter (24.66–70). Nonetheless, it is also clear that in real life and less heroic situations, there were many less elaborate, less expensive and more usual offerings made to the Gods; but the characters of the *Iliad* are heroes of a past age, and offer only the grandest, most splendid gifts to the Gods. We miss, too, in the *Iliad* the regularly recurring ritual, the monthly or annual sacrifice so much a part of polis life. This must be due to the more purely narrative demands of a war story, describing dislocated communities; the Achaeans are far from their ancestral sanctuaries, and even for the Trojans, city life is hardly normal. The scene (6.297–312) where the Trojan women attempt to propitiate Athena, in response to a communication of the seer Helenus, has a dramatic urgency and relevance which would be lacking in more routine sanctuary scenes.

Helenus here represents another facet of communication with the divine which reflects more normal experience, the realm of the oracular and

[11] *Subl.* 9.7.

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prophetic. The oracular shrine is known to the *Iliad* (see Achilles' prayer to Zeus of Dodona, above), but the nature of the story demands that more prominence be given to the (mobile) individual who is skilled in *manteia*, the interpretation of signs and portents sent by the Gods. Here the Gods communicate at a distance, because the message that is conveyed is seldom of direct concern and relevance to the prophet, its first human recipient. However, sometimes signs are more obvious and can be interpreted by anyone – for instance, at 10.274–6 Athena sends a heron to the right of Odysseus and Diomedes, which they recognise as indicating her favour.

Direct communication with the Gods through a waking or sleeping vision was not uncommon during the historical period, but the waking form especially appears much more frequently in the *Iliad*. As ever, the Iliadic heroes were that much more privileged, that much closer to the Gods. For all that, when they do appear to humans the Gods very often put on a human disguise, typically for instance when they are encouraging their protégés or their favoured side. There is no consistency, though: in the most often cited of all these appearances, Athena is instantly recognisable to Achilles (1.199–200). As well as the frequency, it is the authorial perspective, the claim to knowledge about the Gods, which differentiates the Homeric accounts from any real-life experience. Athena appears to Achilles because she has been sent by Hera, who cares for both Achilles and Agamemnon and wishes to avert a fatal outcome. Typically, in fact, an epiphany scene is preceded by some narrative or description of the God who appears, an exposition of his or her motives, and often a communication with another divine figure. A further not uncommon feature of the Homeric epiphany is physical intervention, not to be found (one supposes) in real-life events: Aphrodite removes Paris from the battlefield in a cloud of mist (3.380–2), Apollo snatches Aeneas from Diomedes and takes him to recover in his temple on the acropolis (5.438–50). The importance of such episodes to the plot should make one rather sceptical about the claim that magical and supernatural elements are lacking in the *Iliad*.

Sometimes Gods intervene in human affairs without actually appearing to the humans involved. Hera puts it into Agamemnon's mind to encourage the Achaeans (8.218–9), or, more physically, Apollo destroys the Achaean wall like a child kicking a sandcastle to pieces (15.361–6). This is very much in line with expectations of the Gods' behaviour elsewhere, and has a close relation to their function as cause and explanation. What is distinctive is the attribution of clear personal motives to an individual deity, and even more so, the all-knowing perspective from which the narrative is told.

A notable feature not just of the epic but of Greek mythology in general, is the extent of sexual relations between divine and human characters. This

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and the consequent birth of heroes is the theme of the Hesiodic *Ehoiai*; the storyline of the Homeric epics does not suggest a particular prominence for the motif, and indeed most of the main heroes have human fathers, even grandfathers. But the propensity of the male deities to take human lovers and beget human offspring is nevertheless an important part of the divine background, from Sarpedon, son of Zeus and Laodameia (6.198–9), to charming vignettes such as that describing the birth of the Myrmidon Eudorus:

> . . . a maiden's son, borne by the lovely dancer Polymele, daughter of Phylas; the powerful slayer of Argos desired her when he saw her among the group of girls dancing for clear-voiced Artemis of the golden spindle. Straight away guileless(?) Hermes took her secretly to an upper room and lay with her, and she bore him a fine son Eudorus, exceedingly fast of foot and a good fighter. But when Eileithyia of the birthpangs brought him into the light and he saw the rays of the sun, strong Echeclus son of Actor offered countless gifts and took Polymele to his house, while the old man Phylas brought up and cherished the child well, loving him as though he were his own son. (16.180–91)

Such affairs and entanglements are not presented in any way as problematic. Much more difficult, and less common, are the affairs of Goddesses with mortal men. Since sex, to the Greek mind, normally implies the domination of the woman by the man, such relationships subvert the proper order of things and threaten the superiority of the Gods, which is why Calypso in the *Odyssey* claims that the male Gods always want to put an end to them (v.118–29), and why the immortal Thetis was reluctant to marry the mortal Peleus (18.432–4), and eventually left him. It is one more sign of the specialness of Achilles that he is the result of such a rare and paradoxical union. And of course there is implicit in the poems the awareness that divine parenthood was a feature of the age of heroes, a time when human beings were greater and somehow closer to the gods; such claims were made only very rarely (and with what degree of conviction?) for contemporaries.

The strangely omniscient standpoint of the epic narrator allows us to witness, not merely infer, certain things about the attitude of the Gods to the human beings who so preoccupy them. First, they are interested in mortals, and not just those of the Achaean cities and the Trojan plain; they visit the Ethiopians, they observe the affairs of the Thracians and Mysians (1.423–4, 13.3–6). Each deity has his or her favourites (and often un-favourites) among cities and individuals. They may give them special gifts, as Apollo gives a bow to Pandarus (2.826–7), or they may bargain with each other about their mortal preferences, as Hera notoriously would allow Zeus to destroy her favourite Achaian cities in return for the fall of Troy (4.50–4). Being

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passionately involved in promoting the interests of their protégés, they often come into conflict with each other. On one level, then, human affairs are an arena in which each God can act competitively against the others. But when this threatens to get out of hand, peace can be restored by getting things in perspective; it is not worth getting worked up over mere humans, after all (1.573–6, 21.462–7). This near contempt can be modified or varied with pity, especially by Zeus, who feels pity not only for his favourites like Sarpedon and Hector, but for the human condition in general: μέλουσί μοι ὀλλύμενοί περ, 'I care for them, mortal though they are' (20.21). Seeing the mistreatment of Hector's body, all the Gods except the most staunchly pro-Achaian feel pity (24.23–6). These two attitudes, pity and disregard, spring from an unquestioned superiority in strength, status and durability – almost everything, in fact, except ethical considerations, which though not absent from the *Iliad* are not a major concern of its Gods.

The Gods in the *Odyssey*: differences between the epics

When we think of the Gods of Homer, and especially of their relations with each other and the glamorous yet strangely uncomfortable world that they inhabit, it is mainly episodes from the *Iliad* that come to mind and form our picture. The one major exception, the story sung by the minstrel Demodocus of the adultery of Ares and Aphrodite and the vengeance of Hephaestus (VIII.266–366), has been convincingly interpreted as a sophisticated pastiche of Iliadic motifs.[12] Otherwise, though many similarities remain, the Gods of the *Iliad* seem to have been toned down in the *Odyssey*, to have become less colourful and less clearly individualised. Even the number of deities involved is diminished: Zeus, Athena and Poseidon alone are the main actors, with a few appearances from Hermes, and a number of non-Olympian Goddesses, immortal yet very specifically localised on earth (or, in the case of Ino-Leucothea, in the sea).

This last point is clearly related to the different focus of the *Odyssey* story, for although Odysseus is presented as a superhero, no doubt, he is still only one individual, and his affairs are not of such overwhelming importance that we could expect all the Olympians to take sides on the issue. Those Gods who do have an interest, however, are depicted along clearly Iliadic lines – in fact, the favour of Athena towards Odysseus is already shown and remarked on in the *Iliad* (10.245, 23.782–3). The hatred of Poseidon is a new motif, deriving from an episode in the *Odyssey* itself, but the type of relationship, originating in a personal affront, is entirely consonant with the motives for

[12] Burkert (1960).

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the Gods' enmities in the *Iliad*. Even within this framework, however, less play is made with the relationships of the Gods than we might expect if we took the *Iliad* as model. There are plenty of scenes between Athena and Zeus, with the Goddess pleading for help to be given to her favourite, but whereas Poseidon clearly hampers Athena's efforts (e.g. VI.325–6, 329–30) the opportunity for a full-scale quarrel between the two is passed over; rather, it is Poseidon's absence which gives the plot its impetus. It is as though the most spectacular elements of the Olympian scenes of the *Iliad* have been separated off and relocated, the fantastic into the sub-Olympian world of magic and monsters through which Odysseus travels, and the emotionally charged into the arena of human relations and human–divine relations. With the single exception of the Ares and Aphrodite story (which is, after all, only a song sung by a court entertainer), there is much less to offend and scandalise in the behaviour of the Odyssean Gods. True, they hardly satisfy Homer's critic Xenophanes' alternative conception of 'one God, greatest among Gods and men . . . neither in form nor in thought like human beings' (21 B23 DK), but though their behaviour is human, it is not spectacularly bad behaviour, nor, for the most part, are they made to look ridiculous. Where the function of the Gods of the *Iliad* often seems to be to contrast with the serious, heroic and tragic human characters, these Gods, though obviously more powerful than humans, at the same time form much more of a continuity of character with them. This is true both on a general level and more specifically in the main characters: it is in the *Odyssey* that the reason for Athena's favour towards Odysseus becomes explicit – she finds him appealing because he is like her, intelligent and devious (XIII.296–9).

'Gods behaving badly' is not then a theme prominent in the *Odyssey*, and this facilitates the much greater concern with human morality that they display in this epic. In the *Iliad*, there is some human expectation that Zeus, at least, will act to punish wrongdoing – but this is a view we hear only occasionally, mainly from Menelaus (3.351–3) and Agamemnon (4.155 ff.), who regard themselves as aggrieved parties. It has occasionally been denied that there is any real difference between the epics in this regard, because in the *Odyssey* also the bulk of the evidence for the Gods' interest in morality comes from the opinions of the human characters.[13] It is, however, an overwhelmingly more prominent theme among Odyssean characters, and in view of the clearly programmatic statement of Zeus at the poem's outset (1.32–43), that mortals' sufferings are due to their presumptuous folly (*atasthaliai*), it seems impossible to deny that the Gods think in moralistic terms. It is true that Zeus does not state '*We* punished Aegisthus', but the

[13] See Winterbottom (1989), Yamagata (1994).

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whole tone of the speech suggests his attempt to direct human beings in the proper ways of behaviour – a radical shift from the divine attitudes displayed in the *Iliad*.[14] Of course, the shift is not complete – we have already remarked that the motives of both Athena and Poseidon are essentially personal. But this point is not emphasised equally throughout the poem. Poseidon's anger is the motive force behind the first part of the story, the delayed and difficult return from Troy, but in the second half of the poem he fades out of the picture entirely. Nowhere does he appear encouraging the suitors in their insolent behaviour – indeed, it is Athena who makes them yet more overbearing and arrogant, so that Odysseus may be all the more angry and their punishment more certain (XVIII.346–8). The view of the Gods presented in this second half of the poem has moved still further from the Iliadic presentation of individuals in conflict. Now the Gods form a united front, rooting for the success of Odysseus, with Zeus at their head and Athena as active participant in the detailed working out of the plan. And this unity, it is strongly implied, is founded on a moral basis: personal favouritism apart, it is simply right that Odysseus should triumph over his enemies and be reinstated as ruler of Ithaca. The suitors are wicked men who deserve their punishment; it is not just the characters who tell us this, but the author himself: 'There would be no more unpleasant supper than this, which the Goddess and the strong man were about to place before them, for they had previously devised [or, they were the first to devise] unfitting things' (XX.392–5). It is Athena who leads the action, but she has the full and willing support of Zeus and, it seems, the Gods in general. Her Iliadic-style personal championship of Odysseus blends effortlessly into the more moralistic concept in which the Gods (eventually) restore the upright and punish the wicked.

'Homer's Gods' between epic and religion

Apart from a few Linear B documents naming individual deities, the Homeric poems are chronologically the first testimony we have to Greek perceptions of the Gods.[15] They also seem to have been formative; Herodotus' statement, that Hesiod and Homer 'made a theogony for the Greeks and gave

[14] A clear exception here is Zeus's anger with 'crooked judgements' in 16.384–88 – but this is a simile, not part of the main narrative. Within the main story itself, the bare facts might seem to support a 'justice of Zeus' interpretation (Lloyd-Jones (1983)). Paris is to blame, a Trojan broke the truce, Troy will fall, as Agamemnon predicts (4.160–8) – but although both offences are very specifically against areas of concern to Zeus (hospitality and oaths) we, unlike Agamemnon, can see Zeus's 'real' attitude. When this Zeus brings about the fall of Troy it will be with sorrow and not with righteous indignation.

[15] Unless with M. L. West we date the *Theogony* earlier (West (1966) 40–8).

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the Gods their eponyms and divided up their honours and crafts, and indicated their appearances'[16] is well known. Yet in some ways they seem to be unlike what we know of the Gods from later sources. Their interaction with humans, their relations with each other, though they have points of contact with what we know from elsewhere, are importantly different. This prompts us to ask at what level of seriousness or acceptance the Homeric deities were understood. Did the Greeks believe in the Gods of these myths?[17]

'Literal' belief is perhaps an impossibility. All talk about the divine is to a degree metaphorical, because it is necessarily beyond our everyday experience, and certainly beyond the closely related constraints of language. This is as true of the Greece in which the Homeric poems took shape as it is of the settings of the most sophisticated theological systems. That said, there are different kinds of metaphors and different reactions to them, different degrees of acceptance. If we talk about the divine as 'father' or 'mother', we are using a familiar relationship and experience to try to say something about the less clear and less familiar. If we tell a story such as that of the child Krishna making the whole universe appear in his mouth, we are making a statement, among other things, about the divine in human form. In the same way, we could understand, for instance, the aerial chariots of the Homeric gods as a way of saying that their users are not subject to ordinary spatial limits. But what are we to make of their quarrels with each other and their partisanship in human affairs? The quarrel scenes seem to be designed largely for entertainment, while the partisanship, if it is a metaphor, might seem to be telling us about the chanciness of human affairs rather than saying anything about the Gods; the Gods would themselves be part of the metaphor, not something to be explained or clarified. So here a metaphorical presentation of the Gods will have been built on and elaborated by other elements. On the other hand, if we do try to take quarrels and partisanship as statements about the Gods – as has been done in various contexts from antiquity onwards – their literal application is obtrusive and disturbing. Hence from a relatively early date Homer's depiction of the Gods was seen as problematic: in the late sixth or early fifth century, Xenophanes was famously blaming Homer and Hesiod for 'ascribing to the Gods all things that are shame and disgrace among mortals',[18] and proposing further that the divine is not like this, indeed not like human beings at all. Simple rejection of the 'miserable tales of poets',[19] not least by the poets themselves, was a popular strategy in the fifth century. After all, the Muses know how to tell many things that merely

[16] Hdt. 2.53.2. [17] Cf. Veyne (1988). [18] 21 B11 DK. [19] Eur. *Her.* 1,346.

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seem like the truth.[20] The alternative, promoted rather enthusiastically in the Hellenistic period and later, was to maintain that Homer's depictions of the Gods were not only metaphorical, they were also allegorical. In these systems, Homer's versions of the Gods were actually statements about the physical universe (Hera = air, Hephaestus = fire) or about ethical and psychological matters (Athena preventing Achilles from killing Agamemnon represents wisdom, argued at length in Heraclitus' *Homeric Allegories* of perhaps the first century AD).[21] This method involves radical rereadings of the whole texts of the epics, which then become puzzles to be read only with the help of a key. The problem of the Gods is solved at the expense of the poems.

The poems themselves – at least as it appears to us today – do the opposite. They pursue their vision of human heroism, glory and suffering at the expense of a plausible and satisfying treatment of the divine.[22] I said at the beginning that the outline stories of both poems could be told without reference to the Gods; these are not poems about Gods, but about human beings. These human beings inhabit a world of which the Gods are an unquestioned part, but still, within each epic, the Gods are there to illuminate, comment on and contrast with the depiction of human actions and the human condition. Of course in the process they bear more than a passing resemblance to the Gods as the Greeks knew them in other contexts. Consider for instance this scene from the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* (275–80), where the disguised Goddess reveals herself as divine to the amazed family which has given her hospitality:

> Saying this, the Goddess changed in stature and appearance, casting off old age and putting on beauty all around. A lovely perfume diffused from her fragrant clothes, and radiance shone far about from the deathless flesh of the Goddess, her fair hair flowed down her shoulders, and the close-built house was filled with light as bright as lightning.

All of this is entirely compatible with the epiphanies of the *Iliad*, but the effect is quite different. Demeter's changed appearance is described in attentive and loving detail, quite unlike the fast-paced description of the appearance of Athena to Achilles in *Iliad* 1:

[20] Hes. *Theog.* 27, cf. XIX.203. [21] On these interpretations, see Lamberton (1986).

[22] I should perhaps clarify that by this I mean a version of the divine which (although not necessarily problem-free) can reasonably be the object of relationship and belief. Modern readers who find plausibility and satisfaction in Homer's Gods are quite legitimately appreciating them as a way of saying something about the world that humans inhabit. They are not, I think, proposing to start worshipping these deities.

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> Athena came from the sky, for white-armed Goddess Hera had sent her, loving and caring for them both [Achilles and Agamemnon]. She stood behind him, and took hold of his fair hair, appearing to him alone; none of the others saw her. Achilles was amazed, and turned round. Straightway he recognised Pallas Athena – her terrible eyes shone. . . .

Here the shining of the eyes might be regarded as a very abbreviated form of the physical signs of divinity in the *Hymn* passage, and the amazement of Achilles certainly parallels that of Metaneira and her family. But the emphasis is firmly on Athena as a player in the (human-based) action, on what she does rather than how she is or how she appears.

The point comes through even more clearly when we consider the words that are spoken and the purpose of the epiphany. In line with what we have already been told, Athena tells Achilles not to kill Agamemnon but to withdraw from the fighting, thus creating the main plot-line of the *Iliad*. Demeter has been searching for her abducted daughter, and her interest in mortal affairs is tangential to this: she wishes to reward the family who have been kind to her, then rebuke them for their lack of understanding. She reveals her divine form in order to explain – too late – the real situation, and to announce what will happen next – the establishment of certain rites at Eleusis. A religious matter, in other words; something that relates to the following generations as well as those of the story itself,[23] and one in which human–divine relations are centred on, and move towards, the divine rather than the human. This is obviously not the intent of the epics. The account of Demeter in the *Hymn* is a compelling one, whereas the central figure in *Iliad* 1 is Achilles, and we get only a side-glimpse of what might make Athena compelling. Even Achilles recovers quickly enough from his astonishment to ask Athena why she has come – is it to witness the insolence of Agamemnon? But the family of Metaneira, and with them the poem's audience, are focused entirely on the Goddess; the child Demophon, the original stimulus for the whole episode, lies forgotten on the floor.

In this way, the Gods of epic have been subordinated as a central concern to human beings, and yet within the world of the poems, for the characters themselves, they remain superior. Even Achilles could not defeat the river-god: θεοὶ δέ τε φέρτεροι ἀνδρῶν, Gods are stronger than, or superior to, men.[24] The result is a double perspective. As long as we focus on the main

[23] Cf. *Hymn* 265–8, 274–5.

[24] 21.264. Diomedes wounds and so overcomes Aphrodite in *Iliad* 5 – so an individual mortal may excel an individual God in one particular field, especially when encouraged by another God. But we are told that those who try to subvert the hierarchy by attacking a God are not long-lived.

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drift of the poem, and what human–divine relations tell us about the human condition, we have a vision that is at once heroic and (especially in the case of the *Iliad*) tragic. If we allow the focus to shift to the Gods themselves – and the poet of the *Iliad* seems sometimes to encourage this, with his frequent scene-setting on Olympus – the result is entertaining, intriguing, but ultimately problematic. Certainly the Greeks tended to scepticism about the knowability of the divine, but that did not necessarily mean that any picture was as likely to be 'correct' as any other. In Homer, a way of speaking about the Gods which is properly metaphorical has been made literal, elaborated on and pushed to its limits. This is why 'belief' in the Gods of Homer could never be fully given and yet could not exactly be withheld either.

FURTHER READING

A very great deal has been written about the subject of the Homeric Gods; this note is extremely selective. On the religious background, a marvellous compendium of information and interpretation is Burkert (1985); pp. 119–25 deal specifically with the place of Homer. A very influential and largely persuasive overview of the Gods in Homer, especially in the *Iliad*, is to be found in Griffin (1980), especially 144–204. Although his main interest is in the literary function of the Gods, Griffin argues strongly for their 'reality'; so, from a different perspective, does Emlyn-Jones (1992). Among those who incline to the opposite view are Tsagarakis (1977) and Erbse (1986). Other perspectives on Gods and mortals are to be found in Thalmann (1984) and Kullmann (1992). Of the modern works cited in the notes to this chapter, Dodds (1951), Lloyd-Jones (1983), Willcock (1970), Winterbottom (1989) and Yamagata (1994) may be particularly mentioned.

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Over the summer, you will of course be expected to revise for the assessments in September. You will need to ensure that you have a very good understanding of all of the texts.

The World of the Hero

Tasks:

1. Read article Emily Kearns' article: 'The Gods in the Homeric epics' and note.
2. 'The gods and goddesses in the Odyssey ensure justice is served.' To what extent do you agree with this statement? [30]
3. Read the whole of the Aeneid. Fill in short summaries for each book in the initial booklet; complete long summary for Book 4 (Book 3 is not on specification).

Success Criteria for the essay:

- Handwritten essay
- You should write an introduction, spelling out your thesis, 5 paragraphs and a conclusion. 2 of these paragraphs are PEEL paragraphs; 3 of them are to be PEESEL paragraphs.
    - Point, Evidence, Explanation, Scholarship, Evaluate, Link
    - The scholars should be Kearns (article above), Rutherford (below), and one other article/chapter from your notes
- You must present an argument and reach a solid conclusion.

is changed or affected by circumstances and experience.[12] Odysseus too, though not a tragic hero, learns and develops through suffering: he undergoes 'an enlargement of experience and comprehension'.[13] In the course of this paper, I shall attempt to trace the main stages in this process of enlargement; I shall try also to show that the ethical framework, the 'philosophy', of the *Odyssey*, is less clear-cut and more realistic than is sometimes implied; and that Odysseus, though a complicated and not always virtuous character, is none the less a coherent one, and a proper vehicle for that philosophy.

Inasmuch as Homeric morality is upheld, however capriciously, by the gods, they naturally feature from time to time in this paper; but I do not propose to linger on the thorny questions of Homeric theology, or to treat in full such questions as the similarity or differences between Iliadic and Odyssean religion,[14] the programmatic remarks of Zeus in Book 1 of the *Odyssey*,[15] or the relationship of the divine pantheon in either poem to contemporary belief or cult.[16] It is hardly possible, however, to avoid offering a few preliminary comments, which I hope will be relatively uncontroversial.

In general, I take for granted the presentation of the Iliadic gods in a number of recent works, perhaps most conspicuously in the last two chapters of Jasper Griffin's eloquent study *Homer on life and death* (Oxford 1980). The gods of the *Iliad* are beings of terrible power and majesty, yet also often frivolous, selfish, vindictive, and above all able to abandon or ignore their human protégés, to turn their eyes away from mortal suffering.[17] In the *Odyssey*, the picture is obviously rather

[12] For the debate on Achilles see e.g. Griffin 50 n. 1; P. C. Wilson, *TAPA* 69 (1938) 557–74; F. Hirsch, *Der Charakter Achills und die Einheit der Ilias* (diss. Innsbruck 1965).
[13] C. W. Macleod, *Homer: Iliad xxiv* (Cambridge 1982) 23, speaking of Achilles.
[14] See e.g. E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the irrational* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1951) 10–11, 29–35; Griffin 164–5.
[15] See esp. Dodds (n. 14) 31–3.
[16] Wilamowitz, *Der Glaube der Hellenen*[3] vol. 1 (Basel and Stuttgart 1959) 311–34; G. Murray, *Rise of the Greek epic*[4] (Oxford 1934) 145, 265; G. M. Calhoun, in *A companion to Homer*, eds. A. B. Wace and F. W. Stubbings (London 1962) 442–50; W. Burkert, *Griechische Religion der archaische und klassische Epoche* (Stuttgart 1977) 191–6 (= Eng. tr., 1985, 119–25).
[17] I allude particularly to *Iliad* 13.1–9, cf. Griffin 131. Contrast *Il.* 16.388 and context, or Hes. *Op.* 248–55, passages which imply that the gods maintain a constant surveillance over the doings of mankind. In the *Odyssey*, note esp. the contrast at 7.78–81 (the departure of Athene to Athens and her place of honour), juxtaposed with αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεύς ('But as for Odysseus . . . ', 81), as the all-too-human hero prepares to enter

different; the problem is to decide precisely how different. We may observe that the gods appear less frequently, and that fewer of them are actually involved in the action. There are divine councils only at the openings of Books 1 and 5; Athene and Poseidon, though for different reasons deeply concerned with the destiny of Odysseus, seem prepared to forget about him for several years; and of all the gods in the *Odyssey*, only Athene has anything of the fullness of characterization which we find in the divinities of the *Iliad*. The gods are, then, less well known to us; and their purposes are obscure to the characters of the poem.[18] They move in disguise among men (esp. 17.482–7). Although they are said, and sometimes seem, to uphold justice, there are disturbing exceptions (in particular, the punishment of the Phaeacians by Poseidon, endorsed or at least condoned by Zeus himself, hardly corresponds to any human canons of justice);[19] and although in her plea to Zeus on Odysseus' behalf Athene praises the hero's piety (1.60–2, cf. 65–6), her own affection for him is based on their similarity of character (13.330–1).[20] In other words, the successful return and revenge of Odysseus is a special privilege, not a general law. Men should be pious, but piety does not automatically win rewards. Similarly, the gods may warn men, and (as we shall see) such warnings can never safely be ignored, but obedience may be impossible (as in the case of the starving companions of Odysseus in Book 12), and virtue and generosity, such as the Phaeacians

a new and unfamiliar society. Contrast also 5. 478 ff. with 6.41 ff. (C. W. Macleod, marginalia). For Virgilian developments of this vital contrast, see e.g. *Aen.* 5.859–61 (the falling, dying Palinurus contrasted with the effortless flight of the god); 10.464–73 (developing the passage of *Iliad* 13); 12.875–84.
[18] Note esp. the tactics of disguise and deception that Athene adopts in relation to Telemachus and Odysseus (contrast her openness with Diomedes in *Iliad* 5). See also 7.199–203: the gods' practice with the fairy-tale Phaeacians, who are akin to them (5.35, 7.56 ff., 19.279) offers a contrast to their behaviour with ordinary men. Further, H. J. Rose, *HThR* 49 (1956) 63–72.
[19] Note esp. that the Phaeacians are seafarers, protégés of Poseidon (and their king is his descendant, see 7.56–63).
[20] So too in the *Iliad* Aphrodite favours Paris, whose view of life and whose amorous gifts are like her own: cause and effect are inseparable (cf. *Il.* 3.39, 64–6, 391–4). The 'piety' of Odysseus is embodied in his sacrifices; compare the praise of Hector in *Il.* 24.34, 69–70 (cf. 22.170, etc.; Griffin 185 f.; *h.Dem.* 311–12 and Richardson's n.). It thus remains ambiguous, and deliberately so, how far the gods favour mortals for their virtue and how much they are swayed by personal motives and consideration of their own τιμή (honour). In the last book of the *Iliad* the poet seems to bring this question—whom and for what reasons will the gods support?—sharply into focus: cf. Macleod (n. 13) on 24.33–76 and add 18.356–68. Cf. nn. 44–5.

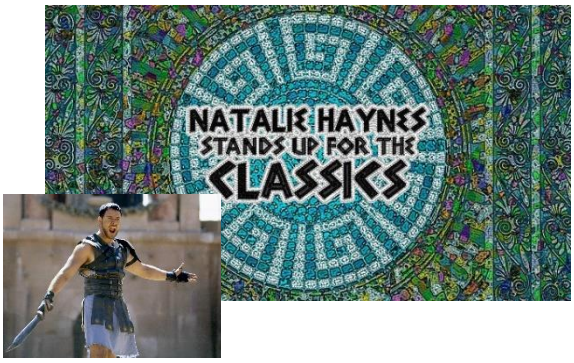
show to Odysseus, cannot always save the unfortunate mortal from the anger of the offended god. The actions of Poseidon and Helios in the *Odyssey* recall the ruthlessness of the gods of the *Iliad* when they act in defence of their honour.[21] The divine background of the *Odyssey* shows little change: the gods, like human kings and overseers,[22] may show favour to certain selected mortals, and may at times even feel under some ill-defined obligation to step in and exercise their authority in support of the just cause, but that is not their normal or perennial preoccupation.

Other suggested activities:

- Re-read the Odyssey
- Watch Troy (BBC version or film or both)
- Watch Massolit videos.
- Explore this website: https://www.bloomsburyonlineresources.com/ocr-as-and-a-level-classical-civilisation/world-of-the-hero_homer

General Classics enrichment ideas:

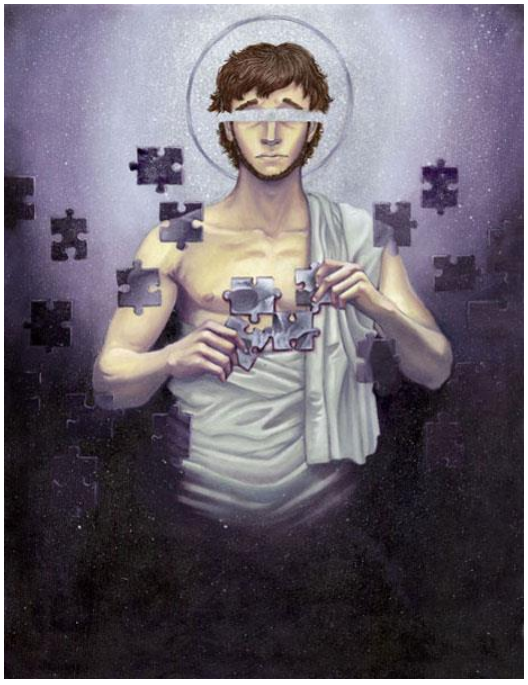
- Visit the Classics section of the school library and take any book out!
- Add Natalie Haynes' podcasts to your summer listening list: https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b077x8pc
- Watch Gladiator.



Oedipus Rex
Sophocles

Year 11 into 12 Bridging work
Classical Civilisation

Name:



Oedipus the King - some background notes

The following is a summary of the story so far when the Oedipus Tyrannus begins. A good deal of this information, however, comes from within the play, and the order it is revealed there is not the serial temporal order. Some of this information is not in the play at all. In that way this summary is misleading because Sophocles has chosen to reveal this information in a quite different order in the play. The only point of giving this summary is that without it some scenes might seem confusing to a modern audience. The original audience would have known versions of this myth, but could expect significant variants, some of which they might never have come across.

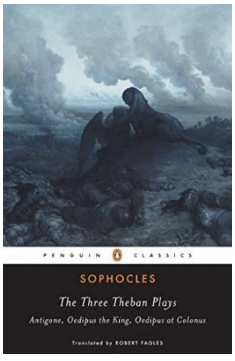
Summary

An oracle came to Laius king of Thebes in Boeotia saying that, if he had a child, the child would kill him. When his wife Jocasta did have a child he had it exposed on Mount Cithaeron, with its ankles pierced together. The child did not die, however, because Laius' man in pity handed the child to a Corinthian shepherd he met on the mountain. So the child went to Corinth where it happened that the king and queen, Polybus and Merope, were childless. They brought up Oedipus (Swollen-foot) as their own. When he was a young man he was taunted at a party by being called a bastard. He took this to Polybus and Merope who denied it, but he was still unsatisfied. So he went to Delphi and asked who his parents were. He received no reply except that he would kill his father and marry his mother. In horror at this he decided not to go back to Corinth but to journey away. At a crossroads he had an altercation with an unknown man and his followers, and killed all but one, including his father Laius. This party had been on it way to Delphi.

Journeying on he came to Thebes which at that time was beset by the Sphinx. The Sphinx had a riddle: Who is it that walks first on four legs, then on two, at last on three. Oedipus gave the correct answer: Man, who first crawls on four legs, walks on two legs as an adult and supports himself with a stick as an old man. He thus banished the Sphinx. The king of Thebes was dead (Laius) and Oedipus was asked to become king. He then married the widow Jocasta and in due time had four children, the boys Eteocles and Polyneices and the girls Antigone and Ismene.

A plague has come upon Thebes. This is a critical challenge to the state. Oedipus must rise to the occasion. He comes forth from the palace to address a group who have come to see him.

Now read the play and work your way through the booklet to help you understand the plot.
This is the book you need to buy →



SOPHOCLES : OEDIPUS THE KING

PRODUCTION :

- Circa 429BC
- 2nd place at the City Dionysia Festival

Read the prologue – Oedipus converses with the priest (p159 – 162)

What is the situation in Thebes at the start of the play?

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What positive and negative impressions do you form of Oedipus from his two speeches?

IMPRESSION	EVIDENCE / QUOTATION

"How could I fail to see what longings bring you here?"
Examine the irony in this statement.

What imagery does the priest use to describe the situation in Thebes? How effective do you find it?

Explain the reference to the Sphinx (p161)

What is the tone of warning in the priest's words on p161?

How does the priest view Oedipus during his speech?

What has Oedipus done in response to the situation?

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Do you find this section an effective opening to the play?

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A successful tragedy often involves the fall of a great figure through a *hamartia* (tragic flaw). In what way does this accurately describe Oedipus?
(The following website has useful information:
http://www.gradesaver.com/classicnotes/titles/oedipus/section4.html)

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At this stage of the play, do you admire Oedipus, sympathise with him, dislike him or ...?

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Read the prologue – Oedipus converses with Creon (p163 – 167)

What did the oracle suggest to relieve the plague?

Why does Oedipus insist on being given this news publicly?
Is this a good move?

What information are we given about the murder of Laius?

How is Oedipus shown not to appreciate the clues he is offered?
What does this show about him?

Read the parodos – The entry of the Chorus (p168 – 170)

What is the mood of the Chorus at the start of their ode?

How do the Chorus create sympathy for Thebes?

Read the soliloquy of Oedipus and his conversation with the Chorus (p171 – 175)

What is the proclamation of Oedipus?

How does Sophocles make use of dramatic irony in this section?

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What impressions do you have of Oedipus from this whole section?

IMPRESSION	EVIDENCE / QUOTATION

Read the first part of the conversation between Oedipus and Tiresias (p176 – 181)

What is Oedipus' attitude/mood in the first two pages?

ATTITUDE / MOOD	EVIDENCE / QUOTATION

How would you describe the behaviour of Tiresias during these two pages?

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How does Oedipus' reaction to the prophet change?
Is this change in attitude justified?

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What accusation does Oedipus make about Tiresias?
Is his paranoia defensible?

What is the counter accusation of Tiresias?

Discuss Sophocles' use of sight and blindness in this section?

What is Oedipus' *hamartia* in this section?

Read the second part of the conversation between Oedipus and Tiresias (p182 – 185)

How does Oedipus taunt Tiresias?

How does Oedipus reveal his arrogance here?

What is the reaction of the chorus to Oedipus?

What use does Sophocles make in this section of blindness/vision and light/darkness imagery?

What glimpses of the future does Tiresias give?

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"Riddles – all you can say are riddles, murk and darkness"
Is this a fair assessment of the way Tiresias converses with Oedipus here and elsewhere?

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What is the reversal of fortune (peripeteia) that Tiresias hints at in this section?

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How does Sophocles present Tiresias' accusation in such a way that the Chorus and Oedipus are reluctant to believe it?

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Read the choral ode (p186 – 187)

How do the Chorus react to the scene between Oedipus and Tiresias?

Why do the Chorus still show their allegiance to Oedipus?

Read the entry of Creon and the agon between Oedipus and him (p188 – 192)

How would you contrast the moods of Creon and Oedipus in their opening speeches?

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How does Oedipus reach the conclusion that Creon and Tiresias have been plotting against him?

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How does Sophocles make this scene dramatic?

DRAMA	EVIDENCE / QUOTATION

Read the remainder of the scene between Oedipus and Creon (p193 – 195)

Why does Creon not wish to be king?

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How persuasive do you find his arguments?

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How does Sophocles continue to make this scene dramatic?

DRAMA	EVIDENCE / QUOTATION

Read the entry of Jocasta (p196 – 199)

How does Jocasta act towards Creon and Oedipus?

What impression do you have of the nature of Jocasta here?

Why do you think Oedipus backs down?

Read the speech of reassurance of Jocasta and Oedipus' reaction to it (p201 - 204)

How does Jocasta seek to reassure Oedipus in his situation?

Does Jocasta show *hubris* in her comments?

Why does this revelation alarm Oedipus?

How is Oedipus' inquisitive nature revealed in this section?

How does Sophocles show his skill as an author in constructing this passage?

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Read the long speech of Oedipus and his dialogue with Jocasta (p205 - 208)

What are we told of Oedipus' prior life in Corinth?

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What aspects of Oedipus' character that we have seen elsewhere are revealed in his lengthy speech?

CHARACTER TRAIT	EVIDENCE / QUOTATION

How does Sophocles make the account of the murder of Laius dramatic?

STYLISTIC FEATURE	EVIDENCE / QUOTATION

What misunderstanding does Oedipus still have at the end of this speech?

Do you feel any sympathy for Oedipus at this point in the play?
Consider his actions, his personality and the role of fate?

What are Jocasta's feelings and concerns at hearing the news?
Do they differ to what she had expressed earlier?

Read the Choral ode (p209 - 210)

How do the Chorus react to Jocasta's rejection of oracles?

How do the words of the Chorus look back upon the events of the play?

Which single idea do you feel is most at the forefront of the choral ode?

Read the conversation between the messenger, Oedipus and Jocasta (p211 - 214)

What has Jocasta been doing?
How does this compare with her earlier sentiments?

How does Oedipus' behaviour now compare with that elsewhere in the play?

What is the messenger's news?

Explain the reactions of Oedipus and Jocasta.
How do we feel at this point?

Read the conversation between the messenger, Oedipus and Jocasta (p215 - 221)

"It's all chance, chance rules our lives. Not a man on earth can see a day ahead, groping through the dark. Better to live at random, best we can."

Explain the irony of these remarks.
Is this a fair assessment of the play?

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What new aspect of the prophecy does Oedipus now reveal?

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How does Sophocles create dramatic tension on pages 217 – 218?

METHOD	EXAMPLE / QUOTATION

What impression do you have of the nature of Oedipus from this section as a whole?

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What is the significance of Oedipus' name (p220)?

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Why is Jocasta silent for much of this section?

Read the dialogue between Oedipus, Jocasta and the Chorus (p222 - 224)

Explain and account for the differences in behaviour of Oedipus and Jocasta.

What is Oedipus' explanation for Jocasta's seemingly odd behaviour?

How would you describe the character of Oedipus in his speech on p224?

CHARACTER TRAIT	EVIDENCE / QUOTATION

What is the mood of the Chorus in their ode? Why do they behave in this way?

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Read the first part of the recognition scene (p225 - 228)

Discuss and account for the pace and nature of this first part of the scene.

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What are the reactions of Oedipus to the shepherd's refusal to talk?

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Where else in the play have we seen Oedipus behave in a similar fashion?

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Read the first part of the recognition scene (p229 - 232)

How is Oedipus' persistent nature (*prothumia*) shown in this passage?

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How does Sophocles show his skills as a writer in this section?

SKILLS	EVIDENCE / QUOTATION

What are your feelings towards Oedipus as the scene develops?

Read the choral ode (p233 - 234)

How does Oedipus fit in with the Aristotelian view of the perfect tragic hero?
(Use only the information given in this section)

Discuss the imagery used in this ode.

Read the speeches of the messenger (p235 - 237)

Discuss the behaviour of Jocasta before her death and the description of it by Sophocles?

How does Sophocles create both fear and pity for Oedipus (before he blinds himself) and Jocasta?

How does the vocabulary used by Sophocles add drama to this point in the play?

Why does Oedipus blind himself?
(Look at what he says here and consider what is said elsewhere in the play).

Compare this messenger speech with others that you have read.
Which do you find more effective and why?

Read the arrival of the blind Oedipus (p238 - 242)

What is the reaction of the Chorus as Oedipus is about to enter?

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Compare the differences in the presentation of Oedipus between his first and last appearances in the play.

FIRST APPEARANCE	FINAL APPEARANCE

Comment on the language and imagery used by Oedipus on pages 239 – 240.

Read the laments of Oedipus (p243 - 244)

According to his own words, why did Oedipus blind himself?

What rhetorical techniques does Sophocles use to convey the horror of Oedipus' actions?

RHETORICAL TECHNIQUE	EVIDENCE / QUOTATION

Read the arrival of Creon and his conversation with Oedipus (p245 - 247)

What impression do you have of Creon from the first page and a half of this section?

IMPRESSION OF CREON	EVIDENCE / QUOTATION

What requests does Oedipus make of Creon?

Read the arrival of Oedipus' children, Jocasta and Ismene (p248 - 251)

For whom do you feel most sympathy, Oedipus or his children?
Explain your answer by referring to this section only.

Do you feel, from what has been said earlier in the play, that exile is the right punishment for Oedipus?

How appropriate a summary of the play is the final statement of the Chorus?

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