

KLYTAIMESTRA: GENETIC AND GENDER
CONFLICT IN GREEK TRAGEDY

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ABSTRACT

Klytaimestra is depicted as the accomplisher of great evil, in Archaic and Classical epic, lyric, and tragedy in ancient Greece.¹ In the view of many, her characterization in ancient literature stands at the beginning of an enduring Western literary tradition of misogyny. In Homer's *Odyssey* (11.433-434) she is referred to as the woman who has permanently ruined the reputation of every woman in the world, including ἐσσομένησιν ὀπίσσω/ θηλυτέρησι γυναιξί, καὶ ἢ κ' ἐνεργὸς ἔησιν, “those of women-kind coming hereafter, *and even...* she who might be virtuous”. The negative characterization of this husband-murdering queen has been passed down, relatively unchanged, to the modern era, but more recent analysis questions this construction and reception. This thesis explores the characterization of Klytaimestra, primarily in the fifth-century BCE tragic *Oresteia* of Aiskhylos and the subsequent plays of Sophokles and Euripides, which present and explore Klytaimestra's character, and proposes that her fictional life-history be interpreted through a biopoetic analysis which acknowledges gendered behaviours and conflict in a context of evolutionary principles.

The analysis of the literary Klytaimestra through the lens of evolutionary psychology contributes to the critique of the patriarchal tradition of literary misogyny, which describes (and often defends) reproductive inequities across a wide range of human cultures. This thesis argues that the characterization of Klytaimestra in Greek literature, including tragedy, embodies the dynamics of genetic and gender conflict found universally across the human species (and across all doubly-sexed species). Klytaimestra's life-story reflects the struggle of a fictional but realistically situated woman for personal and reproductive success in the context of coevolutionary antagonism between male and female animals; in Greek literary works her dehumanization and matricide are predictable outcomes in the context of ancient Greek culture, which unashamedly idealizes and enshrines male mating strategies and priorities. Greek tragedy is an especially overt illustration of the gene-gender struggle, perhaps because it was created, performed, and enjoyed by men, in a patriarchal society which embraced gender difference and inequity.

¹ Spellings of terms and names in a thesis devoted to Greek literature in the original will – wherever possible – avoid conventional Latinization.

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ὄρεια τις ὡς λέαιν' ὀργάδων
δρύοχα νεμομένα, τάδε κατήνυσεν.

“As a mountain-haunting lioness ranging through the meadowland woods,
She accomplished these things.” E. *Elektra*. (1163-1164).

An Ancient Dedication, for an Evolutionary Ecosphere:

“I shall sing of well-formed Earth, mother of all,
and oldest of all, who nourishes all things living on land.
Her beauty nurtures all creatures that walk upon the land,
and all that move in the deep or fly in the air.
O mighty one, you are the source of fair children and goodly fruit,
and on you it depends to give life to, or take it away from,
mortal men. Blessed is the man you favor
with willing heart, for he will have everything in abundance.
His life-giving land teems with crops, and on his fields
his flocks thrive while his house is filled with goods.
Such men with just laws rule a city of lovely women,
while much prosperity and wealth attend them.
Their sons glory in youthful glee
and their daughters with cheerful hearts in flower-dances
play and frisk over soft flowers of the field.
these are the ones you honor, O revered goddess of plenty!
Hail, mother of the gods and wife of starry Ouranos!
For my song do grant me livelihood that gladdens the heart,
and I shall remember you and another song, too.”

Homeric Hymn to Earth, Mother of All. Trans. Athanassakis (2004).

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INTRODUCTION: TRAGEDY'S REALISTIC IMITATION OF REPRODUCTIVE ANTAGONISM

Scholars have long disagreed whether tragic myth offers any real information about ancient women's lives.² Some recent feminist classicists argue that myth may be used to construct at least a partial picture of female life in ancient Greece, even if only of how men perceived and portrayed women.³ Following new feminist-led interest in ancient women's lives, women in tragedy are sometimes viewed as transgressive, but some tragic women are ideal conformists, in cautionary contrast with others resisting male control.⁴ Furthermore, and pertinently to the focus of this study, women in myth figure principally as reproductive entities in relation to men, as daughters, attractive nubile maidens, or married wives.⁵

The following introductory discussion presents the background necessary to the claims of this argument: that evolutionary science can illuminate understanding of how characters are constructed and received in narrative; that Klytaimestra in Greek tragedy embodies gender conflict arising out of antagonistic coevolution in species with two sexes; and that Greek tragedy expresses the extreme concern of a highly androcentric culture with reproductive politics. In doing so, the discussion further seeks to demonstrate that scholarship that denies and demonizes the empirical findings from evolutionary biology, psychology, anthropology, and cognitive science is doing itself a disservice: it is both possible and desirable to be a feminist who incorporates evolutionary psychology into the study of ancient women because a feminist who incorporates scientific findings about human nature and the biosocial origins of patriarchy

² On the predominance of women in tragedy (and the impossibly powerful females in Greek myth generally) in contrast to real-world public life, see Dowden (1995:48); Blondell et al (1999b:x); Zeitlin (1996:5); Rabinowitz (2004:40); Mastronarde (2010:256).

³ On tragedy's contribution to study of real ancient women, see Sorum (1982:204); Dowden (1995:53, 56); Seidensticker (1995:156-157); Zelenak (1998:29); van Wees (2005). In Mastronarde's (2010:246) opinion, greater optimism that tragedy offers evidence of ancient Greek female experience derives from academic drive toward gender equity. For examples, see Foley (1981, 2001); Arthur (1984:8); Cantarella (1987:25); Loraux (1987); Rabinowitz (1993a, 1993b); Blondell (1995:11, 16, 19, 71); Seidensticker (1995); Zeitlin (1996); Wohl (1998); McClure (1999); Pelling (2000); and Griffith (2001). Cf. Dowden and Livingstone's (2011:11) critique of well-intentioned feminist scholars who place too much credence in myth as a source for historical attitudes toward women.

⁴ Examples of Sophokles' contrast of conformist, self-controlling females with unwisely immoderate sisters include Elektra and Khrysothemis (*S. Elektra*) and Antigone and Ismene (*Antigone*). On the difficulty of reading transgressive tragic female characters such as Antigone, Medeia, and Klytaimestra – all created by elite males – as reflecting real-life women's attitudes, see Griffith (1991:135); Henderson (1991:143); Buxton (1994:114); Blondell et al (1999a:48); Wilson (2000:129).

⁵ On the emphasis upon women's reproductive potential in Greek literature, see Dowden (1992:161-162; 1995:55).

stands a better chance of imagining effective ways to remake a more equal and inclusive world. So-called ‘biological (or genetic) determinism’ is a commonly-used but misplaced term in feminist and social analysis less familiar with scientific models and findings to denigrate evolutionary explanation. Reflexive rejection of science as an instrument of male hegemony ignores feminist female and male professional evolutionists and cognitivists who understand that humans are socially complex, evolved animals.⁶ Evolutionary literary criticism – biopoetics – is now an accepted (if occasionally contested) approach within literary studies, while the claim that evolutionary approaches to human behaviour is not incompatible with feminist perspectives has been made within the field of literary criticism (i.e., Easterlin, 2005, 2013; Vandermassen, 2005, 2011; Grant, 2017), as well as outside this field (i.e., Betzig, 1986, 1988; Hrdy, 1997, 1999a, 1999b, 2009; Campbell, 2002, 2006, 2013; M. Fisher, 2004; M. Wilson, 2005).⁷

While some mainstream critics have noted the obvious factor of reproductive politics in their interpretations of ancient Greek literature, few – until recently – employ an approach informed by evolutionary theory. This thesis aims to present an interpretation which incorporates and acknowledges traditional scholarship on the characters of Klytaimestra and her family – which has many apt and useful observations to make about gender conflict at the historic, political, and social context – but which also takes the interpretation of plot and character motivation to additional level, the sociobiological. Readings based in any single analytical perspective tends to overlook a broader humanist understanding; the biopoetic approach seeks to integrate an understanding of literature in its contemporary circumstance and in the context of individual authorial quality and tone, but also to further explain some literary aspects in terms of evolved human disposition, in order to correct, expand, and integrate many of the conclusions of

⁶ On the varied feminist and humanist objections to scientific method and an evolutionary perspective on gender and mating behaviour, see Bleier (1984); Lewontin et al (1984); Harding (1986, 1991); Hyde (1996, 2005, 2007, 2014); Tang-Martinez (1997); Eagly and Wood (1999, 2009, 2013); Rose and Rose (2000); Grosvenor (2002); Pedersen (2002, 2011); Harris (2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2011, 2013); Buller (2005a, b, c); Liesen (2007, 2011, 2013a, b); Harris et al (2013); Tarzia (2015); Zell et al (2015, 2016). The responses of evolutionary humanists, scientists and science-commentators to feminist and humanist misuse and misrepresentations of science have been many and varied; see, for example: Gross and Levitt (1994); Dennett (1995); Gowaty (1992, 1997a, 2003b); Buss (1996); Malamuth (1996b); Waage and Gowaty (1997); Koertge (1998a, 1998b); Singer (1999); Soble (1999); Segerstråle (2000); Kurzban (2002); Bricmont and Sokal (2005); Chomsky (2005); Vandermassen (2005, 2011); Tybur (2007); Zunshine (2007b); Sokal (2008); Tanaka (2010a, 2010b); Buss and Schmitt (2011); Sokol-Chang et al (2013); Tate (2013).

⁷ Biopoetics is a less-common term used to describe the evolutionary literary critical method; see Cooke (1990:3, 6-8), who derives the term biopoetics from the Greek *poesis* to describe a literary method of analysis that incorporates evolutionary science.

previous approaches of the critical tradition, most especially feminist literary analysis within the Classical Studies field.

All new approaches to literary analysis may make a useful contribution to literary study. Mainstream literary scholars have for many decades have tended to specifically reject sociobiological science, however, sometimes without examining the original scientific discussions with an impartial attitude. In the case of ancient Greek works of fiction, constructed in a time and place with vastly different views of appropriate gender identities and behaviours, a new perspective grounded in historic universals of evolved human psychology offers another effective tool for analysing gender conflict. Each of the works discussed in depth in this thesis assume at all times that all of the interactions between male and female characters are grounded in their (male) authors' view of what is predictable gender behaviour, of what is appropriate in the contemporary context, and of what poses a challenge or threat to the interests of the characters themselves. Specific episodes from the plays are discussed more deeply in light of the overall findings of evolutionary psychology research – which concludes that all behaviours and motivations are co-evolved and interdependent in function and expression – and of particular aspects of gendered behaviour, when these are strongly supported by the text. Chapter 1 explores individual aspects of a much wider human behavioural repertoire through the lens of evolutionary theory, but whenever one aspect is under discussion, it should be remembered that this aspect exists in necessary connection with many other psychological dimensions in individuals, and within and across genders. All behaviours also exist as particular expressions of optional responses to environmental circumstances; the behaviour of characters in Greek tragedy reflects universal human tendencies as expressed within the constraints of ancient Greek cultural moment.

Although there is some resistance within the humanities and Classical Studies disciplines to a scientific approach to literature, scholars do agree upon the selectively ideological nature of mythology in Greek tragedy; recurring narrative patterns in this genre reflect the most pressing contemporary concerns, and Athens utilized the publically-funded and state-controlled City Dionysia to protect its interests and further its democratizing and imperialist aims.⁸ According to some, the central message of Greek mythology is the natural right of male humans to possess

⁸ Lincoln (1999:207); Csapo (2005:9, 301-302). Cf. Doherty (2001:11), who suggests that some authors' ideological motivations were largely pre-conscious.

and control female humans.⁹ Women's lives in ancient Greece – or in well-documented Athens, at least – were defined by the politics of reproduction, and Greek misogyny is conspicuously focussed on male reproductive concerns; for instance, citizenship was linked to monogamous marriage, and the notion of equality between male-headed households depended on increasing paternity-certainty in legitimately begotten offspring, and tragedy often depicts such male concerns about lineage perpetuation and authenticity.¹⁰ The begetting of legitimate sons in the *oikos* was an ongoing issue in the real Greek world, and the genealogies of famous mythical heroes often depict the resolution of this problem.¹¹ A good deal of ancient literature is conspicuously concerned with matters of status, power, mating, genealogy, and kin relationships, no less so than contemporary fiction-plots, which, across genres, are just as concerned as ancient fiction with universal, innate, reproductively-driven behaviours. In one sense, mythology *is* genealogy.¹² Mythology confirmed through genealogy the right of aristocratic families to retain their power and influence, even in the democratic context, and so genealogy in fiction must be biologically plausible because a primary function of myth was the authentication of real-life political claims to power.¹³ The central premise of Greek mythology and culture is clear: women exist to bear men's children, but these offspring are not socially or legally their own. The Greek solution to the threat posed by uncontrolled female sexuality to androcentric civilization was to demonize women who subverted the legitimacy of men's heirs. Western cultures may have inherited many unattractive Greek ideals, including male control of female sexuality, but the suppression of female reproductive autonomy to male advantage is ubiquitous and universal throughout the human historic and geographic world.¹⁴

Whereas most modern scholars agree that Greek mythology evidences an androcentric, occasionally misogynistic world-view, fewer concur that conflict in the plots of tragedy arise out of or concern reproductive matters.¹⁵ This accords with the findings of some literary scholars, who see that fiction across eras and cultures is principally concerned with two basic

⁹ Dowden (1992:161-162); Powell (2002:85, 162).

¹⁰ Burkert (1979:6); Doniger (1999:305, 308-309); Wilson (2000:130).

¹¹ Segal (1986:165, 170-172); Dowden (1992:166-167; 2011:50); Segal (2004:132); Clark (2012:5, 130).

¹² Dowden (1992:11); Higbie (2007:241).

¹³ Buxton (1994:29); Zeitlin (1996:6-7).

¹⁴ On the cultural transmission of militarism, imperialism, slavery, racism, classicism, sexism and misogyny through Greek literature; see Rogers (1966:xv-xvi); Dickison (1973-1974:81); Pomeroy (1975: xii, x, 228-230); Gould (1980:55-57); Foley (1981:134; 1988:1301); Arthur (1984:7-8; 1994:214, 216); Moss (1988:15); Gutzwiller and Micheli (1991:66); Segal (1995a:12); Hall (1997b:93); Blanshard (2007:328).

¹⁵ On the widespread mythological conception of woman as a separate species, see Foley (1988:1306); Foxhall (2009:488). Cf. Lefkowitz (2007:x-xi), who challenge the notion that tragedy depicts misogyny at all.

life-stories: the struggle between males for social supremacy (granting increased access to fertile females), and the quest of both sexes to locate and secure the optimum mate; in both cases, the ultimate goal is reproductive success. Reproductive conflict is the sufficient condition for much mythological discord: sons struggle to attain reproductive maturity, and males secure access to high-value maidens (and sometimes already-married women) by any means possible, including violence.¹⁶ But is it possible to gain any understanding of human disposition from the analysis of Klytaimestra’s conflicts with husband and family, which is heavily constrained by the generic conventions of fifth-century tragic drama?¹⁷ According to our earliest and most evocative analysis of the forms and interpretation of tragedy – Aristotle’s fourth-century *Poetics* – tragedy constitutes the very best source of material for understanding human psychology, because poetry addresses the universals of human nature.¹⁸ Aristotle contrasts the universality of φιλοσοφώτερον καὶ σπουδαιότερον ‘philosophical and serious’ poetry to the particularity of history (*Poet.* 9.1451b5).¹⁹ Aristotle also defines καθόλου – ‘the universal’ – as τῷ ποίῳ τὰ ποῖα ἅττα συμβαίνει λέγειν ἢ πράττειν κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον, οὗ στοχάζεται ἢ ποιήσις ὀνόματα ἐπιτιθεμένη: τὸ δὲ καθ’ ἕκαστον, ‘those things of a type corresponding with that spoken and done in probability or necessity – poetry aims at this, setting out the creation of names afterwards’ (*Poet.* 9.1451b8-12).²⁰ Tragedy, then, according to

¹⁶ Hogan (1997, 2003a, 2003b, 2008a, 2008b); Abbott (2000, 2006, 2008). On rape in mythology as a viable and even noble male strategy for the founding of a city or colony, see Hall (1993a:112).

¹⁷ Many interpreters of the *Oresteia* acknowledge or insist upon the importance of certain Aristotelian generic constraints and conventions, particularly *mīmēsis* (‘imitation, representation, evocation’), *katharsis* (‘purgation or clarification’), and *kathalou* (‘human universals’). On the main scholarly positions on the meaning of *katharsis*, see Golden (1975:48). On Aristotle’s *katharsis* as a mechanism for ‘engaging emotional systems’, see *Poes.* 1449b25f; *Pol.* VIII, 7; *Rhet.* II, 5 & 8; *Nic. Eth.* II, 6. On the audience’s emotional experience of narrative leading to cognitive change – rather than purgation or purification, see Oatley (1994:71).

¹⁸ Sharrock and Ash (2002:269); Nussbaum (1992:1020-1021); Stalley (1995); Halliwell (1998); Shields (2007:396). Aristotle’s *Poetics* is highly esteemed by some as an authentic and well-informed work on tragedy; see Nussbaum (1986:8); Des Bouvrie (1990:61); Eden (2005:41); Belfiore (2009:628). For a useful summary of Aristotle’s findings on the prototypical or ideal tragic form, see Golden (1975:47-48). On the shortcomings of the *Poetics* as a source for understanding Greek tragedy, namely its selectivity, elitism, exclusions, and anachronisms, see also Vickers (1973:23, 33); Taplin (1977:25); Walton (1980:40); Vernant 1981:6; Fagles (1984:xi); Salkever (1986:276); Most (2000:24-26); Finkelberg (2006:61, 64, 71); Belfiore (2009:631); Woodruff (2009:614); Hall (2013:77).

¹⁹ Most (2000:19).

²⁰ de Ste. Croix (1992:25-26); Armstrong (1998:448); Eden (2005:43). Aristotle’s definition of καθόλου as the universal and the prototypical foreshadows debate in modern literary studies and linguistics about narrative and cognitive mechanisms for perceiving the world. See also Woodruff (1992:88), who argues that tragedy leads the audience to respond emotionally to universals *as if* they were historical particulars. Cf. Lear (1988:312) and Belfiore (1992b:359), who contend that critics should resist the view that universal poetry demonstrates anything about the human condition.

Aristotle, ‘imitates’ what is predictably typical of human life; literary niceties of setting and identity are simply wrapping for the plot.

In light of this, some contend that *mīmēsis* refers to the realism of poetry’s depiction of characters and situations – and the evocation of intellectual pleasure through the audience’s recognition of these – as opposed to history’s depiction of particular persons and events.²¹ Is the scripted tragic *mīmēsis* of the conflict between Klytaimestra and her husband realistic imitation?²² Does the Klytaimestra-Agamemnon conflict imitate the gendered antagonism experienced by real-life men and women? The plots and characters of tragedy in its distant Bronze Age setting were able to move the Athenian audience, and if the experience of tragedy meant nothing to audiences outside of Athens, then it would indeed have remained mired in a single moment of the far past, and in a single location, but ancient Greeks and contemporary modern audiences – across millennia – are able to find something familiar in the dynamics of this fictional family, and empathize with the characters of ancient tragedy.²³ According to Aristotle, the characters of tragedy experience events likely to occur to others, and respond as others might; conflicts are universal because the highest and lowest of citizens might suffer these tragic disasters equally. But why are the events of tragic drama – which imitates human life – necessarily tragic?²⁴

Aristotle argues that the kind of actions which should be imitated in tragedy are those leading to the unexpected revelation of enmity in friends, or of friendship in enemies; the result is a shift in the emotional state of the fictional tragic character, and the evocation of either pity or fear in the audience (*Poet.* 1452a1-52b1).²⁵ The created families of the *Oresteia* were human beings with realistic conflicts of interest and shifting loyalties; their crises were those experienced by many fifth-century Athenian families (perhaps by all human families): illicit

²¹ On audience pleasure in recognition of realism in tragedy, see Else (1986:155); Golden (1962:54). When the human mind is deceived through sufficiently realistic action, the same cognitive and emotional structures are triggered as when we ourselves are performing those same events; see Gottschall (2012:62). Golden (1976:446; 1976a:355); Armstrong (1998:455); Jones (1962:21, 24) and Heath (1987:100), however, argue that *mīmēsis* applies only to action, and not to character. Other purposes and effects of *mīmēsis* are suggested by Kitto (1966:146-147); Lear (1988:319, 321); Halliwell (2002); Woodruff (2009:616-617).

²² On the debate concerning Aristotle’s use of the term *mīmēsis*, see Goldstein (1966:569-570); Srivastava (1975:134); Shields (2007:382).

²³ Taplin (2007:5-6).

²⁴ On the misapplication of the term ‘tragic’ in modern parlance, see Most (2000:20-21).

²⁵ The imitation of character, according to Aristotle, should be both realistic, and yet endow the character with something greater, in the manner of a portrait-painter (*Poet.* 1454b1).

love affairs and unwanted pregnancies; expeditious marriages and hostile spouses; infidelities and illegitimate offspring; intergenerational disappointments; rivalry for power and position; and the real tragedies of rapes, murders, and the permanent loss of family members.²⁶ Reproductive conflict lies at the heart of the *Oresteia* family tragedy, as it does in modern fictional genres of all kinds.²⁷ The typical responses of tragedy's fictional humans to their unbearable life-catastrophes are the same as those of real, human people in the ancient world: despair, disillusionment, and sometimes death; excessive responses or irrational overreaction of characters to their suffering only lead to further suffering, however, as Klytimestra and her family are destined to learn.

To appreciate these tragic narrative scenarios, twentieth century classicists often utilize frames of psychologically or linguistically oriented critical interpretation developed outside of the classical tradition, including psychoanalysis, structuralism and narratology.²⁸ The most productive interpretations of myth utilize a multi-disciplinary synthesis of methodologically empirical approaches identifying the psychological motivations for and cognitive constraints upon the creation of narrative, on how and why the mind devotes attention to story, and on the social benefits to the human individual and group of participation in narrative.²⁹ Human psychology is now better grounded in biology, acknowledging the confluence of innate, genetic factors and environmental elements; converging evidence clearly confirms that evolved physical neurobiology underlies shared human psychological experience, including story-sharing, and myth is the ideal cultural product to illuminate the preconscious, evolved core of the human mind.³⁰

²⁶ On the reality of life for women in ancient Greece (and especially married women and mothers), see Lacey (1968); Pomeroy (1975, 1997); Sealey (1984, 1990); Patterson (1991, 1998, 2005); Schmitt-Pantel (1992); Reeder (1995); Ogden (1996, 1997) Cox (1998, 2011); Brule (2003); Sansone (2004); Lefkowitz and Fant (2005); Lyons and Westbrook (2005); Morris and Powell (2006); Salzman-Mitchell (2012).

²⁷ Slater (1968:186, 162); Ormand (2009:260).

²⁸ On this tendency, see Kirk (1972:76); Peradotto (1997:386); Dowden and Livingstone (2011:19). For examples of the application (and misapplication) of psychoanalytic literary analysis of the *Oresteia* within the classical tradition, see Rein (1954); Seidenberg (1966); Slater (1968, 1974); Rubinstein (1969); Klein (1975); Roberts (1975); Devereux (1976); Simon (1978, 1998); Caldwell (1989, 1990); Cixous (1994); Jacobs (2004); Lupton (2005); Bowlby (2006); Pollock (2006); Freud (2007). On (the errors of) psychoanalytic interpretations of Greek myth, see Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1981); Scalise Sugiyama (2001c); Eisner (2007); Fromm (2007). For examples of structuralist analysis of myth, see Frye (1951, 1957, 1998); Jakobson (1955); Vernant (1970); Burkert (1979); Sowa (2005); Lévi-Strauss (2007); Schopflin (2007).

²⁹ On the value of interdisciplinary analyses of myth, see Vernant (1980:206); Henrichs (1987:255); Sourvinou-Inwood (1991:16).

³⁰ Onega and Landa (1996:1); Richardson and Steen (2002:1-2); Bortolussi and Dixon (2003:3, 33); Zunshine (2007a:191, 194). On the continuing primacy of psychology in myth interpretation, see also Zeitlin (1986:124);

One analytical approach to literature closely adjacent to biopoetics (and often interacting with it) is the science of narratology, which seeks to explain and quantify narrative origins, structure, and function, and to identify the universal dynamics of cognitive process in production and consumption of narrative; narratology also explores how narrative answers some basic human psychological need.³¹ There is considerable debate within narratology about whether the evolution of human propensity to the pleasures of story is a beneficial and advantageous adaptation, or simply a by-product – a behaviour or invented trait such as handwriting or reading – with no discernible function in evolutionary history.³² Narratologists from Aristotle on agree on one point, however: certain features of narrative are universal.³³ Patrick Holm Hogan's (2003) extensive study of literature's features proposes a large number of literary universals across cultures, and three universal literary genres: Poetry, Prose Fiction, and, to a lesser extent, Drama, and two basic conflict tales – the predominantly popular quest-for-love romance-story (typically male for female), and the struggle-for-power saga (typically between males).³⁴ Prototype narratives are products of innate biological and cognitive structures as well as socially and environmentally shaped relations; these prototypical genres are frequently co-opted to the preservation of social hierarchy, but the core of conflict in all of them is the irresolvable clash of obligations between family, society, and self.³⁵

Dowden (1995:45). Cf. Boyd et al (2010:6), who believe that scientific enquiry into real-world human psychology facilitates study of human psychology in literature.

³¹ Martin (1986:100, 103); Darby (2001); Keen (2003:7). See also Frye's (1951, 1957, 1998) fundamental studies in story-archetypes.

³² For examples, see Hernadi (2002:26); Nettle (2005:56); Austin (2007:216-217, 219-220). Hogan (2008a:155-156); Vanderbeke (2012:119, 114-115). For a recent review of works discussing the development or evolution of fictional capacity in the human species, see Boyd (2018). On the failure of evolutionary explanations of the creative arts – Miller's (1998, 2000) courtship display hypothesis, for example – to take into account the extreme sociality in the human species, see Scalise Sugiyama (2001a:234-235); Buss (2008:422); Boyd (2009a:210). On the universal urge in humans to daily, phatic-narrative conversation about others' doings, in order to maintain affective, social, and political relationships with friends and associates, see Scalise Sugiyama (1996:403, 419-420; 2001a:221; 2001b:235, 238; 2005:190; 2008:259-260); Oatley (1999:109); Mar et al (2011:821). Tooby and Cosmides (2001:8-9) find that humans have specific cognitive adaptations for the processing of fictional worlds.

³³ From Aristotle to evolutionary literary scholars, cross-cultural, recurring patterns in mythological narrative, have been recognized but mainstream literary-studies in the humanities has long disapproved the notion of human cultural or literary universals. On humanities' resistance to models of universal patterns in literature, see Hogan (1997:223-224); Richardson (2000:569).

³⁴ Hogan (2003b:23, 65, 100). According to Hogan (2003b:32, 99), not all literary universals appear in every example of narrative. On the definitions and scientific utility of absolute and statistical literary universals, see Hogan (1997:228-229; 2011; 2012).

³⁵ Hogan (2003b:185, 251; 2008a:155, 158).

Narrative is a pre-literacy cognitive product of the human mind in a physical body; the ultimate aim of this biological brain is to survive in the material and social environment.³⁶ Human audiences appear willing to give a disproportionately large amount of cognitive attention – as well as material resources – to the consumption of dramatic narrative in theatre or film or television, and especially when the story centrally concerns social interactions; the submission of disproportionately substantial mental resources to the seduction of imagined worlds must offer advantage for the eager consumer of narrative.³⁷ The main benefit offered to humans by the imagination of fictional but humanly-real (or anthropomorphized) characters and events may be the development of the ‘theory of mind’, because the greatest environmental threat to individual humans was often simply other humans, while the capacity for empathy must be adaptive, in the sense that social groups of animals must accurately monitor the emotional states of their conspecifics for evidence of genuine danger and safety.³⁸ Fiction about the complex, multi-level intentions of other humans gives the mind exercise and valuable practice in meta-representation – an assumed omniscience, honed through exposure to the realistic depiction of fictional protagonists’ inner thoughts.³⁹ According to a number of findings of cognitive research, human pleasure in literature is a specifically emotional experience.⁴⁰ Story is not primarily intended to convey life-enhancing information about real-world environments, however; fiction is intended to be emotionally and physiologically stimulating, and readers and

³⁶ Turner (1991:vii-viii, 19, 22); Hernadi (2001:55).

³⁷ Hernadi (2001:55-56, 62); Nettle (2005:57, 62, 67-68, 73); Austin (2007:222, 224-225); Argo et al (2008:621).

³⁸ Zillmann (1995:41); Austin (2007:226-227). On mirror-neurons and Aristotle’s writings on imitation, namely the internal representation or simulation evoked in the reader or audience by the dramatic narrative, see Oatley (1994:53, 68-70); Mar et al (2011:284). The consumption of fiction is directly related – through the operation of mirror neurons – to the emotional-cognitive facility for empathy; see Zunshine (2003:271-273); Mar et al (2006); Djikic et al (2009:24); Gottschall (2012:67); Gansel (2012:96, 102). Cf. Dutton (2009:118-120), who concludes that literature exercises the faculty of empathy and reading the intentionality of others, and Carroll (1999a:169), who contends that it is the universality of plot themes in literature which explains the ability of the reader audience to empathize with literary protagonists. On mirror neurons and the mediation of human capacity for mind-reading and the empathic response, see Gazzola et al (2006); Jabbi et al (2007); Ramachandran (2007); Iacoboni (2008:78, 114, 119-120); Heyes (2010); Kosonogov (2012). In Hogan’s (2003:209) opinion, literature humanizes the audience, and thus society. See also Boyd (1998:13; 2009b:192; 2012b:11), who argues that repeated engagement with character in fiction refines our software for sociality, while the arts fine-tune the mind’s neural wiring, and Gottschall (2012:63-64), who further suggests that exposure to fiction rewires the brain, making it more efficient. For fiction as training in reading the intentions of others, see Vermeule (2004, 2010:14); Zunshine (2004); Abbott (2006:718).

³⁹ Austin (2007:228-229); Boyd (2001:200-201, 208). For other cognitive-empathic explanations for the development of narrative capacity, multi-level intentionality, and causation, see Velleman (2003); Zunshine (2006; 2007a:194-195; 2007b:295); Vermeule (2011:245-246, 250); Gottschall (2012:102).

⁴⁰ Carroll (1999a:169); Hogan (2003b:1, 89); Keen (2011:6n5).

authors experience real, physical reactions to character emotions in fiction.⁴¹ The audience of fiction feels as if the events in the fiction are happening to them personally, a hypothesis also backed by discoveries concerning the relation of mirror neurons to functional empathy; reader suspension of disbelief permits empathy or identification with fictional characters to the same degree as for real humans.⁴² Scholars, writers, and ordinary readers have argued that reading narrative fiction actively enhances a person's capacity for empathy – although little evidence appears to support this view – but it is apparent that empathizers and readers have relatively accurate mind-reading capacity.⁴³ Narrative empathy is especially high in humans with very active mirror neuron systems, and also in those considered better readers, while readers prefer characters inviting strong empathy.⁴⁴ The more realistic the narrative, the more intense the audience's emotional response is likely to be; from Greek theatre to modern TV serial, dramatic plots trace, with scrupulous attention to realistic depiction, the upheaval and disintegration of social and sexual relationships, and the subsequent realignment of social groups.⁴⁵ According to some, the type of fiction most likely to evoke empathy is that which depicts another's suffering, and drama is the fiction-type especially apt in evoking compassion for those who suffer, while audience empathy in dramatic contexts is more intense when individuals have personal experience of the same situation in their own life.⁴⁶ Greek tragedy, then, as the first documented form of enacted human drama, is an excellent beginning-place for the cognitively-grounded analysis of human disposition to narrative.⁴⁷

Through wild swings in literary methodology and perceived meanings, our comprehension of literature can become broader and deeper in equal measure, but many postmodern critics – psychoanalysts, poststructuralists, and gender-feminists – fail to account for the universal

⁴¹ Oatley (1994:53, 58, 61, 64, 72); Hogan (2003b:71); Keen (2007:xii; 2010:70; 2011:30); Mar et al (2011:822, 824).

⁴² Zillman (1995:45); Tooby and Cosmides (2001:8-9).

⁴³ Zillman (1995:43-44); Oatley (1999:110); Knobloch-Westerwick et al (2014:747, 762). For critique of this view, see Keen (2007:vii, 37, 121).

⁴⁴ Hogan (2003b:29); Keen (2007:viii; 2010:20, 61, 70, 80); Argo et al (2008:621). On the greater degree of empathy in women, especially for fictional characters, see Oatley (1999:113); Baron-Cohen (2005:478); Argo et al (2008:616).

⁴⁵ Nettle (2005:68, 70).

⁴⁶ Zillman (1995:40); Hogan (2003b:213). See also Sapolsky and Zillmann (1978); Zillmann (1991, 1995:43).

⁴⁷ Aristotle insists that the capacity to evoke emotion is the first requirement of good drama is; his discussion of the cathartic purpose of tragedy is of considerable interest to some cognitive critics. On Aristotle as the first narratologist, see Onega and Landa (1996:1); Oatley (1999:101, 115); Keen (2003:7, 78); Müller-Wood (2012:279-280).

appeal and enduring resonance of tragedy's characters and plots.⁴⁸ There is a need for a new paradigm for the interpretation of literary character and plot; Aristotle's quantitative analysis of tragic drama – which concludes that the plots of tragedy succeed best when they resonate with the universals of human experience, evoking emotion through realistic plot and characters – is such a paradigm. Tragedy works so well with audiences of all eras because it depicts in realistic imitation a timeless reproductive antagonism between men and women, and deliberately evokes emotional response in audiences through their unconscious recognition of that universal human conflict.⁴⁹ Evolutionary literary criticism acknowledges the existence of real humans' nature as a manifestation of innate, shared behavioural adaptations integrated with individual life-time experiences, and under the influence of unique environments; such an approach to human personality and life-experience has the potential to illuminate the life-history of the fictional Klytaimestra of ancient Greece. This iconic character is neither alien nor unknowable, but decidedly human, and her story continues to move audiences as strongly today as ever.

The first chapter of the argument explores the evolutionary literary critical method of biopoetics. Evolutionary explanations for the origins and functions of literature and the arts are presented, along with current criticism of sociobiological literary criticism. The chapter demonstrates how literature – including Greek tragedy – may be productively interpreted applying the biopoetic approach, and concludes that literature commonly and consistently depicts gender antagonism over the misalignment of sex-specific reproductive goals: the ultimate cause of historic patriarchy is antagonistic coevolution. Findings of evolutionary psychology on matters especially pertinent to an analysis of Klytaimestra and her family relationships are then summarized.

Chapters two and three then offer a new interpretation of Klytaimestra's literary life experience. Chapter two examines how Klytaimestra is characterized in archaic epic and lyric, and

⁴⁸ On mainstream (i.e., postmodern and politicized) views within the literary and classical traditions of sexuality and gender (and critique of those views), see Rubin (1975); Dover (1978, 1987, 2002); Foucault (1980); Keuls (1985); Skinner (1985, 1987, 1996, 2005); Goldhill (1986:55); Eagleton (1990, 1996); Halperin (1990); Winkler (1990); Richlin (1991); Foxhall (1994); Culler (1997); McManus (1997); Zelenak (1998); Karras (2000); Wolfreys et al (2001); Mendelsohn (2002); Wolfreys (2004); Golden (2006); Blanshard (2007); Roselli (2007); Slingerland (2008); Winegard (2008); Foxhall (2009); Rose (2009); Smith and Konik (2011).

⁴⁹ On the cognitive-psychology model of unconscious knowledge based on mental processing of information below the level of consciousness, see Augusto (2010).

Aiskhylos' late archaic-period dramatic trilogy, *Agamemnon*, *Khoephoroi*, and *Eumenides*. Chapter three progresses to classical-period tragedies which continue the *Oresteia* story: Sophokles' *Elektra* and Euripides' several tragedies featuring the Atreid family – *Elektra*, *Iphigeneia among the Taurians (IT)*, *Orestes*, and *Iphigeneia at Aulis (IA)*. Episodes from Euripides' *Helen*, *Andromakhe*, *Hekabe*, and *Troades* also contribute to the characterization of Klytaimestra and her family in the wider *Oresteia*. The 'wider' *Oresteia*-corpus includes all fifth-century plays featuring Klytaimestra's sister, father, niece, children and husband, along with literary allusions and references from the archaic and classical periods. The tragedies are discussed in chronological order of production because characterization builds in logical response to chronologically previous depictions, because reader comprehension defaults to *fabula* (events in logical chronological sequence) – as opposed to *sjuzhet* (the events as ordered by the author) – in the cognitive processing of narrative: when all of these tragedies (and other archaic works) are known to the reader, then that reader's mental representation of the Klytaimestra of Euripides' *IA* naturally precedes that of Aiskhylos' *Oresteia*.⁵⁰ The wider *Oresteia* places Klytaimestra at Aulis – the beginning of events – at the end of the fifth-century narrative sequence, but human cognitive preference for discerned *sjuzhet* (narrative coherence) over the overt *fabula* (narrative sequence of episodes) leads readers to perceive the events of Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* (405 BCE) as occurring *before* those in Aiskhylos' *Agamemnon* (458 BCE).

⁵⁰ The Russian Formalist model distinguishes the raw, chronologically ordered materials of the story (the *fabula*) from the (sometimes non-chronological) presentation of them (the *sjuzhet*); for discussion of *fabula*, *sjuzhet*, and temporal sequence in narrative, see Martin (1986:107); Onega and Landa (1996:30-31); Keen (2003:8-9, 74); Sternberg (2003a:326-327; 2003b:522); Csapo (2005:197-198). On selective story sequence, see also Oatley (1994:57-58). The stuff of narrative, according to Boyd (2009b:172-173), succeeds when it is readily comprehensible; in his (2012b:3) view, the cognitive processing capacity of the human mind operates best in chronologically linear narrative sequences, which capture attention most effectively.

CHAPTER I: BIOPOETICS AND EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY

Cognition, Narrative, Biopoetics ~ The Application of Biopoetic Criticism ~ Evolutionary Psychology and Evolution ~ Sex Differences in the Human Species ~ Nature and Culture ~ Mating Strategy ~ What Women Want ~ What Men Want ~ Mom and Dad Investors: Parental Investment and Disinvestment ~ Maternal Contingency ~ Paternal Uncertainties ~ Kin but not Kind ~ The Costs and Benefits of Marriage ~ Civilization and Domestication ~ Cooperation, Competition, Compromise ~ Gender Conflict, Antagonistic Coevolution, Patriarchy

Biopoetic literary criticism is an empirically-supported approach which contends that understanding of humankind's evolved heritage is a vital element of appreciation and critique of narrative. This chapter explains how biopoetic analysis contributes to understanding of literature as an expression of evolved human psychology: evolutionary explanations for the origins and functions of literature and the arts are presented, along with current criticism of sociobiological literary criticism. Fictional narratives cross-culturally and throughout time very frequently explore gender conflict in social contexts of gender inequity. The analytical approach of biopoetics is based upon the convergent findings of evolutionary psychology (EP); this chapter summarizes those findings, with an emphasis on evolved behaviours relevant to the life-history of Klytimestra and her immediate family as depicted in tragedy: mating strategies, parental investment and disinvestment, marriage and domestic arrangements, and coevolved gender antagonism as the original dynamic of institutional patriarchy.

Cognition, Narrative, Biopoetics

The existence of literature is surprising in terms of the amount of time and energy humans expend upon it, and the universality of this phenomenon supports an evolutionary explanation.¹ Literature can be an ideological tool, but story-making has an original, evolutionary purpose: the mind depends upon a biological body for existence, and so story-making must have adaptive

¹ For a variety of evolutionary explanations for the enormous levels of time, energy, and resources expended by humans on production and consumption of narrative, see Dissanayake (1982:145-146, 2008:161); Scalise Sugiyama (1996, 2001a, 2001b, 2005, 2008); Pinker (1997:528; 2007:171); Carroll (1999a:170-171, 2006b:41-43); Miller (1999, 2000, 2010); Tooby and Cosmides (2001:11-12, 24); Nettle (2005); Dutton (2009:105, 109); Gansel (2012:102-103).

value.² Evolutionary literary theory (ELT) scholars interpret literature using the findings of cognitive researchers concerning the evolved human mind and the grammar of narrative; biopoetic scholars attend to emotional pleasure in narrative more than cognitive psychologists, however, who are more likely to foreground story's adaptive power to convey useful information. Some ELT critics believe that the direct relationship of narrative to reality underlies its universal appeal. Biopoetic criticism demonstrates that much literature historically is deeply concerned with interaction and conflict between the sexes, as well as gender-role expectations and contraventions.³ Scholars disagree, however, as to whether mating strategy – a principal focus of much evolutionary psychology (EP) thought to date – is the primary or exclusive motivation for the evolution of narrative capacity: explanations for story-making range from the fundamental parent-offspring relationship to cognitively-sophisticated aesthetics.⁴ Literature reflects evolutionary mechanisms, but some view the various arts simply as byproducts of independently advantageous adaptations. Some traditional humanities scholars are sympathetic to the methodology and theory of evolutionary literary study, while offering various caveats on the approach.⁵ Others, especially those tending to a cognitive-studies perspective, view evolutionary literary study as a credible and productive approach.⁶

² On the various social, psychological, and survival benefits of story-telling, see Storey (1996:114); Tooby and Cosmides (2001:8-10, 21, 23, 25); Dutton (2009:105-106, 110, 126); Carroll et al (2010:213); Carroll (2012:54-55, 59-60); Gottschall (2012:48-49, 169); Saunders (2015:29). For a recent discussion of the evolution of story, see Boyd (2018).

³ On the preferential award of attention to the anomalous in fiction and to exceptional fictional characters, see Carroll (2005:92); Boyd (2014:A267, A269, A275-A276); Saunders (2015:29, 50).

⁴ Miller's (1999:72, 81-82, 86; 2000; 2010:158, 165) 'Courtship Hypothesis' contends that artistic products are (and always were) created primarily by (younger) males in order to impress females; cf. Dutton (2009:140). Miller's hypothesis ignores a better explanation of the origin of poetic communication: mother-offspring phatic communication; On the creation of narrative capacity through the evolution of ritualized action in other-child interactions – "making special" – see Dissanayake (1982:148-150; 1995:223; 2009:14, 148, 156-157; 2011:57). Dissanayake's (1974, 1979, 1984, 2009:151; 2011:66) "artification" hypothesis argues that mothers' conversation with their paralinguistic offspring employs the same phrasal structures, repetitions, and durations common to human poetry across cultures. See also Boyd (2008:140-142; 2009a:204, 210-211, 214). Scholars of aesthetic philosophy in basic agreement with Dissanayake's hypothesis include Easterlin (2005:621-634); Consoli (2014:46); Davies (2012:187-188); Saunders (2015:50-51).

⁵ For critical worries about ELT and reassuring responses to these, see Abrams (1997:117); Nagel (2005:552); Amigoni (2006:184); Carroll (2006:35-37, 40); Burghardt (2008:146-148); Boyd (2009b:232-233); Dutton (2009:100); Davies (2012:184). On humanities' ELT critics' necessary familiarity with Darwinian theory and neuro-cognitive sciences, see Vandermassen (2005); Burghardt (2008:144); Carroll (2008:112-113; 2010:56); Boyd (2010b:245).

⁶ On the value of ELT to humanities' subjects, see Boyd (2005:6-7); Gottschall and Wilson (2005:xxiv, xvii); Salmon (2005a:244, 256); Vermeule (2009:221); Carroll (2010:62).

The most prolific and influential scholars in the field of evolutionary literary criticism today have humanities backgrounds in academic English studies: Joseph Carroll, Brian Boyd, and Jonathan Gottschall. The publication of Carroll's *Evolution and Literary Theory* (1995) provided a focal point around which the various evolutionary explorations of the arts began to converge.⁷ In his (1999a:163, 165) opinion, evolutionary psychology explains why literature so often represents what humans appear to care about most, while literature foregrounds reproduction as one of the central shaping forces in the evolution of the human species (2008:106-107).⁸ Carroll (1999a:166) contends that literary critics need to study real-world psychology because literature deals with individual organisms, in their complex social environment.⁹ Thus, his (2004:189) vision of an evolutionary literary criticism seeks to integrate the best aspects of empirical evolutionary analysis and the humanities' appreciation of literature. Boyd (1998:5, 9-12) – another mainstream humanities critic who has also become well-informed about evolutionary biology and anthropology – also argues that cultural diversity is underpinned by universal and innate human psychology; he believes that an evolutionary analysis of literature enables a more accurate comprehension of human mind and experience, while liberating the critic from the mistaken view that reality is simply a sociolinguistic construct.¹⁰ Evolutionary literary critics, according to Boyd et al (2010:16-17) share a common belief in science's ability to generate real knowledge, which can in turn be successfully integrated with the critical expertise of the humanities. He (1998:12-13) contends that human pleasure in literary fiction arises out of the prolonged human disposition to play, and the close relationship of story to real-world human social experience; play increases cognitive abilities and rewards the human mind with pleasure because it enables risk-free practice for life.¹¹ So Boyd (2005:9) views the ability to perceive multiple levels of intention in others as arising out of the human disposition to shared attention to story, a mental faculty behind the cognitive development of Theory-of-Mind and an ability further honed through participation in narrative performance and gossip.¹² Gottschall (2001, 2004, 2008) is also a well-informed biopoetic

⁷ On the contribution of Carroll (1995) to the unification of previously disparate evolutionarily oriented literary critics, see Cooke (2008:150).

⁸ Carroll (1995:268; 1999a:164-165; 1999b:407); Boyd (2009b:163); Dutton (2009:132); Saunders (2015:29). Carroll (2010:54) also points out that ELT scholars are interested in many non-reproductive literary matters as well.

⁹ Carroll (1999a:166).

¹⁰ Boyd (1998:11-12).

¹¹ Boyd (1998:12-13); Boyd (2008:138-139; 2009b:14, 190; 2012a:71; 2012b:11).

¹² Boyd (2005:9). On multi-order intentional fiction, see the Introduction, p. 9. On the evolutionary importance of gossip see Boyd (2005:8-10; 2009b:164-165, 168; 2012b:10, 24; 2014:A269; 2018); Dutton (2009:118-120, and of human interest in sensational news, see Davis and McLeod (2003).

critic, who urges literature scholars to acknowledge that humans are still animals, constrained by biology and natural selection, albeit with complex minds in a complex social world (2007a:38; 2008a:13, 20, 26); consequently, the construction and reception of narrative is constrained by the nature of the evolved human mind.¹³ Thus, Gottschall's (2005a:201) quantitative analysis of fictional narrative confirms cross-cultural patterns in the plots and characters of story. Much biopoetic analysis of literature within the humanities tradition tends toward a consilient view, exploring the expression of innate dispositions within variable social contexts, constrained by environmental variables. Tanaka's (2010a, 2010b) consilient approach to the study of literature argues that cultural variability evokes the implementation of particular cognitive dispositions;¹⁴ in his view, literature is a comparatively recent "sliver" of a very long species history of social story-telling, and Homer, Plato and Aristotle are not distant ancients, but early moderns (2010a:43). Tanaka (2010a:43) suggests that the humanities' study of antiquity would undergo a "sea-change" if it took a realistic account of deep evolutionary time into its analysis. Biopoetic analysis has produced some very interesting interpretations of literature from various works of these Greek early moderns, from selected examples from the canonical classics of the Western tradition, and from some of the most popular genres of contemporary fiction.¹⁵

The Application of Biopoetic Criticism

¹³ See also Gottschall (2005:201, 210ff, 219; 2008a:52-53); Gottschall et al (2005:94). On humans as evolved animals, see Carroll (1996:214; 2006a:19); Gottschall and Wilson (2005:xviii); Gottschall (2007a:38; 2008a:8, 13, 20, 26, 160); Dissanayake (2009:160); Confer et al (2010a:110). On the mainstream literary criticism's denial (and ignorance) of biologically-grounded research into human nature in favour of fashions of personality-driven academic criticism, see Gottschall (2005:219-220; 2007a:39; 2008a:21); Gottschall and Nordlund.

¹⁴ Carroll et al (2010:218); Tanaka (2010a:37, 44). On consilient literary interpretation, see also Nordlund (2002). On postmodernism's antagonism to Wilson's *Consilience* (1998), see Carroll (1999b:397-398).

¹⁵ For examples of evolutionary analyses of literature, see Da Soller's (2010:95-96, 101, 107-108) evolutionary analysis of Latin and medieval literature; Richardson's (2000:554-555, 564) study of Romantic-era fiction; McEwan's (2005:11), discussion of English nineteenth-century novels; Easterlin's (2013:391, 397-399, 404) study of Brontë's *Jane Eyre*; and many studies of Austen's novels, including Boyd (1998:23); Carroll (1999a:168; 2004:210-211, 213); Kruger, Fisher and Jobling (2003); Kruger and Fisher (2005a; 2005b; 2008); Stasio and Duncan (2007); Strout et al (2010:317-319, 329-330); Easterlin (2013:393-394); Kruger et al (2014:A114, A116); Lyman (2016:xv); Oatley (2016:1). Scholars also approach drama using the biopoetic method; see Stiller et al (2003:398-406); Nordlund (2007:5, 199); Pinker (2007:163); Nettle (2010:323, 332); Boyd (2012a:72-74; 2014:A272-A273); Müller-Wood (2012:289). For examples of quantitative evolutionary analysis of literature, see Gottschall et al (2004:103, 108; 2005:86, 91-94, 96-97; 2008:174-176, 182-183, 185-186); Gottschall (2007b:354); Ingalls (2010:332, 337-339, 346-349). For examples of evolutionary approaches to romance fiction, see Gottschall and Nordlund (2006:450-452); Cox and Fisher (2009:386-387); Fisher and Cox (2010:305-306, 308ff).

Fiction is a particularly rich source of material supporting an evolutionary model of human attitudes and behaviour and scholars have applied the biopoetic approach to the analysis of extant historic literature, including Greek epic and tragedy.¹⁶ Biopoetic analysis of ancient literature enables non-classicist literary scholars to contribute to the understanding of archaic and classical Greek literature. Fox's (1995:135, 138-139, 143; 2005:133-134, 142-143) study of gender dynamics in the Greek epics, for example, finds a consistent pattern of intergenerational male conflict over younger, fertile-age females, a pattern mirroring that of human behaviour in the EEA (environment of evolutionary adaptation); the *Iliad* is primarily concerned with the centrality of the homosocial male bond in early warrior societies, while female-male interactions are secondary, and women pose a serious threat to the stability of male social interactions; marriage in ancient Greece was a duty.¹⁷

Gottschall's (2001, 2003, 2008) analysis of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* benefits from integration of evolutionary science with expertise in traditional literary criticism. In Gottschall's (2008:3, 22, 25, 36, 75) view, mythological literature – including Homer's epics, Hesiod's extant works and the summaries of the Epic Cycle – offers a wealth of evidence for the unending warfare of the end of the Aegean Dark Age; it is hardly surprising that the Akhaians considered the best of men to be those who could fight well. Homer's characters reveal much about the human species, and draw attention to aspects of the story which are often downplayed in other approaches, in particular the endless fighting between males and male sexual predation upon females belonging to other men.¹⁸ In Gottschall's (2008:49) view, selection has shaped men to compete for women, as well as for social and material resources to further their reproductive success. He also (2008:3-4, 55) contends that Homeric men are ultimately competing for access to fertile-age women, and to the proximate resources that further this aim, a basic conflict exacerbated by the shortage of fertile women as a result of polygyny and selective female infanticide; according to Gottschall (2008:47-48, 120, 124-125), polygyny consigns many men to wifelessness and reproductive failure because high-status males in the epics monopolise large numbers of females, as concubines, and as sex-slaves, in addition to serial wives: men therefore

¹⁶ Fox (1995:137). On the cultural origins of Greek myth, see Kirk (1970); Burkert (1979); Henrichs (1987); Edmunds (1990); Dowden (1992); Graf (1993); Penglase (1994); West (1997, 2007); Segal (1999, 2004); Powell (2002); Gantz (2004); Thompson (2004); Whitmarsh (2004); Lefkowitz (2007); Woodard (2007); Letoublon (2011); Lewis (2011); Clark (2012).

¹⁷ According to Fox (2005:142-143), ancient Greek epic highlights the fact that real men's lives also depended on loyal allies; marriage in ancient Greece was a duty which took a secondary place to homosexual bonds.

¹⁸ Gottschall (2008:46, 63, 75).

have much to gain through the enslavement of conquered women for sexual purposes.¹⁹ Gottschall (2001:284) argues that both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* depict disputes between men over illegitimate claims to highly-prized reproductive partners, and also allude to other famous tales of male competition for women; he also observes that killing other men in battle is always closely correlated with distribution of female captives, ranked by beauty, and thus reproductive success. When the men are not competing directly, in bloody hand-to-hand combat, these warriors also engage in pecking-order competitions – such as athletics and funeral games – to assert their prowess and dominance over other men; the prizes for these mock-warfare events are also often captured women.²⁰ Capture of a woman in Homer involves possession and use of her reproductive capacities; wartime rape in the human species as a universal behaviour which has always had as its ultimate purpose the sequestration of the enemies’ reproductive potential.²¹ The specifically reproductive value of captive women is shown by the lethal fury enacted by Odysseus upon his sexually active household female slaves, even though Odysseus has been absent for twenty years. As Gottschall (2008:103) further observes, male promiscuity has positive value in the world of Homer, while women (even slaves) within the *oikos* are expected to confine themselves to sex with the *kyrios* alone. The reality of sexual enslavement in the epics – despite Homer’s cosy scenes (*Il.* 9.663-668, 24.675-676) of Akhilleus and Patroklos sleeping beside their captive girls – is always rape, the theft of a woman’s reproductive capacity.²² Ancient real-world women, in Gottschall’s view, faced a reproductive predicament: the constant re-creation by men of the war-ridden environment quickly eliminated dispositionally non-violent males from the gene-pool, and so women had no choice but to opt for increasingly violent male bodyguards in order to secure protection from other men, including from their infanticidal urges; women are not to blame for the escalation of this behaviour in males, however, because they simply have no real, autonomous choices.²³ According to Gottschall, failure to gain and maintain reputation and dominance among a wide number of mammalian species results in significant reproductive failure to reproduce at all, and the human animal is no different; Homeric warriors are rapaciously greedy for material goods

¹⁹ Gottschall (2008:3-4, 44-45, 55, 138). On effective polygyny in ostensibly monogamous ancient Greece and the enslavement of fertile-age women, see also Scheidel (2009, 2011).

²⁰ Gottschall (2001:287-288).

²¹ Gottschall (2008:72).

²² Gottschall (2008:76). On the evolutionary advantage for men in wartime rape, see also Gottschall and Gottschall (2003); Gottschall (2008:76, 79-80).

²³ Gottschall (2003:44; 2008:108, 117-118; 2010:296, 304-305). Gottschall (2001:292) describes the *Iliad* as a pessimistic tale of “precocious killer apes”. On the evolution of “demonic” human males, see also Wrangham and Peterson (1996).

– the *basileis* are acutely aware of their need to garner massive surpluses of movable wealth, to maintain male alliance networks, and to offer significant treasures to an intended bride’s family – and boast about their possessions at every opportunity.²⁴ He also contends (2003:51) that while sociocultural factors may have a proximate effect on the social system of the Homeric Greeks, their behaviour is not the result of arbitrary misogyny; the ultimate cause lies in the outcome of sex-selective infanticide and favouring of sons.²⁵

Gottschall (2008:63, 65) also concludes that the same thematic conflicts drive the *Odyssey* as in the *Iliad*: the pursuit by men of other men’s women, and their outrage when their property is alienated.²⁶ He explores the depiction of Odysseus’ marriage to Penelope, the ideal woman from the male point of view – beautiful, loyal, persevering, sensible, and hard-working; she is old enough that her son Telemakhos is almost a man, yet her value on the marriage-market remains enormous.²⁷ While Odysseus holds the suitors accountable for despoiling his house, and harassing his wife, the sexual theft of his female slaves also evokes his fury. After twenty years of war and travail, alpha-male Odysseus cannot pause to enjoy his home, his wife, and his son: as soon as his patrimony is secure (through mutilating and slaying all those who have threatened it), he fully intends to embark upon more raiding of foreign peoples, to restore his wealth and reputation.²⁸

Boyd’s (2009b) analysis of Homer’s *Odyssey* explores how Homer captures and retains the audience’s attention.²⁹ Boyd (2009b:252) suggests that, while the *Iliad*’s theme is seizure of young women, the *Odyssey* is concerned with the capture of husbands: Kalypso, Kirke, and even Nausikaä all desire Odysseus as the ideal mate, while Penelope is yearning to renew their union as well. In his view, the *Odyssey* foregrounds the issues around mate retention in

²⁴ Gottschall (2008: 83-85, 49, 88-89, 90-93). On Homeric men’s violent oversensitivity to personal insult, see Van Wees (1992); Gottschall (2008:81-82, 133, 138). On the relationship of material wealth and male reproductive success in the literary context, see also Boyd (2010b:236-237).

²⁵ Gottschall (2003:51). On extreme son-preference in Homer’s epics, see Gottschall (2003:36). On the social and economic advantages of son-preference in the ancient world, see Gottschall (2003:37, 41-43; 2008:36, 130-134, 136-137).

²⁶ Gottschall (2008:63, 65).

²⁷ Gottschall (2008:64, 109-110).

²⁸ Gottschall (2008:148-149). As Boyd (2009b:302, 305) observes, Odysseus’ planned raids to restock his herds – in practice invasion and theft – are depicted as “prudent management”.

²⁹ He (2009b:221-222, 238) argues that the key to the appeal of the *Odyssey* – even more than the *Iliad* – is its attention-grabbing and memorable characters.

monogamous relationships.³⁰ Boyd also identifies another issue addressed in the *Odyssey*: the violation of *xenia*, or guest-friendship, and the consequences of this; disruption of social custom is decidedly attention-grabbing among humans and many other social primates, and invites severe retribution in all these species; the return of Odysseus delivers divinely ordained – and appropriate – retribution for the suitors' *hybris*.³¹

Classicists Deacy and McHardy's (2013) biopoetic discussion of spousal abuse and murder in Greek mythology agrees with a number of evolutionary literary scholars that Greek literature is concerned with proximate male competition for ultimate female reproductive resources.³² Their study includes a number of ancient narratives which reveal a thematic pattern of male anxiety in response to uncontrollable female reproductive powers; this contrasts with traditional critical views of patriarchal ideology as the cause of women's repression in ancient Greece. Deacy and McHardy (2013:994) also conclude that men's fear of female reproductive power is prominent in stories of violence toward and murder of pregnant women. Deacy and McHardy (2013:1006) conclude that the ancient sources depict male innate impulses to sexual proprietariness, mate guarding, uncertainty over paternity, and paternity guarding – drives which are also present in modern-day human populations; they argue that specialist analysis of themes and characters in classical literature can positively influence the future shape of evolutionary perspectives and believe, therefore, that evolutionary psychology can expand research frontiers in the field of Classics.

All of these evolutionarily-inspired interpretations of literature through the ages depend on a firm grasp of contemporary evolutionary science; Gottschall, Boyd, and Deacy and McHardy all agree on the consistent nature of aspects of gender-conflict in these ancient myths: male appropriation of women, in order to control and sequester female reproductive potential and to assuage male fears about paternity certainty. EP theories and conclusions about evolved behaviours and motivations are constantly being refined, and ongoing studies increase data and subsequent analysis, but there are few occasions in which current general understandings are overturned or completely reversed: the gendered behaviours of human males and females are

³⁰ Boyd (2009b:226).

³¹ Boyd (2009b:289, 306, 309). In the light of Zahavi's (1975, 1977, 1997) costly-signalling model of social interactions, *xenia* rituals show that by taking the approval of the gods seriously, people are also likely to take social expectations seriously. On costly-signally theory, see Buss (2009:359, 361-362). On *xenia*'s promise of good behaviour and Odysseus' response to the suitors' violation of *xenia*, see Boyd (2009b:227, 301-302, 311).

³² Deacy and McHardy (2013:995). See also Gottschall (2008); McHardy (2008b); Scheidel (2009).

simply culturally sophisticated versions of universal animal experience and response, evoked according to present environmental – including cultural – constraints and opportunities.

Evolutionary Psychology and Evolution

Evolutionary psychology argues that human motivations and behaviours – as with all other animal species – derive from universal, evolved, and innate dispositions, developed in perpetual response to ancestral, recent, and present environmental circumstances and shifts.³³ Although evolutionary psychologists (EPs) argue that adaptive mechanisms are universal, specific evoked behaviours also vary between cultures and between individuals within those cultures, the result of interaction of genetic predisposition and environmental contexts.³⁴ Evolutionary psychology – and thus evolutionary analysis of literature – firstly proceeds on the agreement that evolution underlies all aspects of animal biology, including the biology of humans; that evolution occurs by natural selection; and that evolutionary adaptation best explains the shape of human nature.³⁵ The second principle of evolution is natural selection: individuals with evolutionary fitness are those who pass their genes on more successfully relative to others of their species.³⁶ The third premise of evolutionary psychology is that evolution proceeds through proximate and ultimate causes.³⁷ Proximate causes reflect an individual's environmental and historical circumstances; ultimate causes derive from ancestral decisions and actions, and the consequences of these.³⁸ Evolutionary psychologists are also very interested in how individuals compete with others of their species through natural selection to survive and breed, and how individuals compete through sexual selection with others of the same sex for access to mates.³⁹

³³ For a review of fundamental EP works, see Weber (2006:148-149). On the many competing hypotheses within evolutionary psychology, see Winegard (2008:119n1); Buss and Schmitt (2011:780-781).

³⁴ Symons (1992:138-139); Buss (1995:5-6); Campbell (2002:9, 18); Gangestad et al (2006:91). On universal adaptations, previous evolutionary environments, and environmental contingency, see Tooby and Cosmides (1990:23); Campbell (2002:15-16, 2006a:84); Brown (1991:5-6; 2004:48-49); Geary (2010:278-279, 281). On the contribution of genetics, endocrinology, neuroscience, primatology, and environmental history to the constant refinement and improvement of Darwinian theory, see James (2008:3); Harper (2013:1006).

³⁵ Dawkins (1982:35); Symons (1992:147); Leger et al (2001:x); Wilson (2006:1481-1482).

³⁶ On the mechanisms of natural selection, see Daly and Martin (1996:10); Campbell (2002:8).

³⁷ On the distinction between proximate and ultimate (distal) goals, see Jones (1999:875-876); Campbell (2002:20); Winegard (2008:121-122).

³⁸ Symons (1979:5); Tooby and Cosmides (1997:14-15).

³⁹ On sexual selection in the human species, see Darwin (2006:1243-1245); Winegard (2008:120).

Evolutionary psychology is interested in how and why species-typical cognitive adaptations or mechanisms evolved, and what the specific problems they evolved to deal with actually were.⁴⁰ EPs (evolutionary psychologists) typically argue that adaptations were solutions to the problems our ancestors faced in the Environment of Evolutionary Adaptedness (*EEA*), rather than to those problems of modern life.⁴¹ Due to the span of evolutionary time required for the evolution of adaptations, there will be an occasional mismatch of evolved adaptation to a suddenly changed environment; any previous adaptive behaviour might also become maladaptive.⁴²

Males and females across species evolved distinct yet mutually reinforcing adaptive behaviours; gendered differences in psychology are ultimately grounded in anisogamy – the significant difference between males and females in gamete production and parental investment strategies – which in the traditional evolutionary theory (of Bateman (1948) and his followers) leads to female choosiness about mates and male eagerness to attract as many mates as possible.⁴³ The nourishing mother and her offspring universally constitutes the core human family; father(s) may or may not be a permanent member of this family, and when they are, confer survival advantage to the reproductive unit through social recognition of his status.⁴⁴ The belief that men and women have different natures is universal, as is a division of labour based on sex (or gender).⁴⁵ Evolutionary analysis confirms that a number of behavioural complexes are cross-culturally and consistently differentiated by gender, including mating strategy, openness toward sexual experience and gender-appropriate behaviour, jealousy and infidelity behaviours, social interactions, linguistic capacity, and representations of ideal sexual experience, in pornography and romantic fiction.

⁴⁰ Adaptations can occur with remarkable speed and phenotypes change over a relatively short period (in evolutionary time); see Williams (1966a). For useful definitions and explanations of adaptation, see Cosmides and Tooby (1997:6-7, 13-14, 16); Winegard (2008:119, 121); Confer et al (2010a:113); McKibbin (2014:209). On the specificity and complexity of cognitive adaptations, see Winegard (2008:121); Brown (2010:91); Confer et al (2010a:111).

⁴¹ See Cosmides and Tooby (1997:13); Barkow (2006:26); Winegard (2008:123). The pluralized ‘EPs’ always refers in this work to evolutionary psychologists, not to different forms of evolutionary psychology.

⁴² Barkow (2006:27); Harper (2013:991-992). On mismatch between ancient adaptations and modern behaviours in the twenty-first century, see Winegard (2008:122); Confer et al (2010a:111, 119).

⁴³ Winegard (2008:120-121). On Bateman (1948) and followers, see Chapter 1, pp. 43n193; 44-45; 44n198; 45n203.

⁴⁴ Brown (2010:89-90). On the rarity of direct fathering is rare in humans, see Barrett et al (2002:151); Campbell (2004:21); Buss (2009:361).

⁴⁵ Brown (2010:90-91).

Sex Differences in the Human Species

Sex-difference in mating strategy and preferences is one of the most contentious area of evolutionary explanations of human psychology and behaviour; men and women both possess a range of environmentally-triggered sex differences in mating psychology, but these differences are generally cross-cultural, and highly resistant to modification.⁴⁶ Evolved differences in mating strategy are also the cause of enduring sex differences in sexual orientation and degree of openness to sexual experience, differences which appear immune to cultural influence, and contrary to socialization theory.⁴⁷ There is abundant evidence from three decades of study into human sexual behaviour confirming significant gender dimorphism in physiology, psychology, and sexuality, and biophysiology studies suggest a central role for hormones and genetic mechanisms in the development of gender identity.⁴⁸ Men typically express a greater willingness to participate in more casual sexual activity – and a wider variety of sexual activities – than most (but not all) women do.⁴⁹ Women with relatively high sociosexuality ratings also tend to evidence more masculine qualities in personality and behaviour.⁵⁰ There are also differences in how the sexes promote and accept sexual encounters, and the degree to which these tactics and standards are successful.⁵¹ One enduring psychological difference creating conflict between the sexes is that of sexual manners: men and

⁴⁶ Okami and Shackelford (2001:195-196); Schmitt (2014:13); Conroy-Beam et al (2015:1082); Schmitt (2016). According to Goldberg (1999:56), innate sex differences may be increased through socialization. On innate gender-specific psychology and non-heterosexual mate preferences, see Lippa (2007:195-196, 207); Wood and Brumbaugh (2009:1241).

⁴⁷ Okami and Shackelford (2001:186-187); Stone et al (2005:271); Schmitt (2005b:262, 272); Malamuth (2007:1686); Lippa (2009:649-650). On sexual orientation and differences between males and females' mate preferences, see Lippa (2009:631); Norris et al (2015:1843, 1849-1850); Thornhill and Gangestad (2015:159-160). On heterosexual interactions as economic exchange, of males' sexual access to the restricted and therefore high-value commodity of female bodies, see Nordlund (2005:115-116); Geary (2010:212); Kornrich et al (2013:29). On the application of and limitations of Gangestad and Simpson's (1990, 1991, 1992) SOI (i.e., Sociosexual Orientation Inventory), see Ostovich and Sabini (2004:1264-1265); Schmitt (2005b:247); Jackson and Kirkpatrick (2007:382-383).

⁴⁸ On human sexual dimorphism, see Campbell (2002:11-12, 38-39); Barkow (2006:31-32); Geary (2010:xiv, 177, 319); Puts (2010:161); Hill et al (2017). On hormonal influence and gender identity, see Hines et al (2002:1678; 2011:80); Clark (2004:121); Auyeung et al (2009:144); Hare et al (2009:93, 95); Hines (2011:69); Hahn et al (2015:3531). On evolution, sexual orientation, and gender-identity, see Roughgarden (2017).

⁴⁹ Schmitt et al (2003:100-101); Schmitt (2005b:248; 2014:23-24). On men's greater sociosexuality and male antisocial traits, see Yost and Zurbriggen (2006:163); Webster and Bryan (2007:917). Clark and Hatfield's (1989:39, 51) foundational study found that no woman accepted an offer of cost-free sex under any circumstances, while a majority of men agreed; on further studies of this topic, see Schmitt (2014:24-25).

⁵⁰ On the unrestricted sociosexuality of high-value women, see Mikach and Bailey (1999:141, 148-149); Fisher and Cox (2009b:59).

⁵¹ Greer and Buss (1994:185, 197-198); Schmitt (2014:24).

women are frequently mismatched in terms of what causes personal offence, yet what offends most of all is often the other sex's relatively typical behaviour.⁵² Another aspect of human psychology insufficiently explained by social-learning theory is gender difference in jealousy about sexual or emotional infidelity, whether threatened or actual.⁵³ Men appear to be more jealous about female physical infidelity (which might result in a woman's production of another man's child) and women are more jealous in response to male emotional infidelity (which might result in a man's withdrawal of resources from his existing relationship).⁵⁴ An understanding of aggression – including sexual aggression – as grounded in evolved biology has obvious consequences for well-meaning attempts to redress sexual violence.⁵⁵ One gender difference between the two sexes affects wider cultural dynamics: males persistently attempt to enhance hierarchical relationships, while females try to reduce hierarchy and increase harmony in important social interactions; female superiority in articulation and communication is directly related to female advantage in peace-making and peace-keeping.⁵⁶

Reproductive unions are thus always a compromise between species-typical male and female attitudes and behavioural norms.⁵⁷ Only in private imagination or in published media tailored to each sex's preferences do males and females encounter members of the opposite sex who behave according to hope, but there is little – if any – convergence between the two worlds, confirmed in the obvious differences between male and female mating-literature: pornography illustrates male mating preferences, while (generic) romance-fiction, consumed almost

⁵² Buss (1989a:745). On the nature and incompatibility of differing male and female sexual attitudes, see Ellis and Symons (1990:549); Hyde (1996:114-116); Purnine et al (1996:386); Baumeister (2000:370); Meston and Buss (2007: 499-500); Schmitt (2014:23).

⁵³ For reviews of the EP literature on jealousy, see Schützwohl (2006b:290); Frederick and Fales (2014:13-14). On social dominance and openness to sexual infidelity in males, see Atkins et al (2001:736); Egan and Angus (2004:582-583); Wilson and Daly (2004:205). On female adultery and escape from suboptimum relationships, see Egan and Angus (2004:584-585); Brand et al (2007:107); Scelza (2011:889). On male sexual jealousy as a counter to female strategy of genetic-diversity, see Waage and Gowaty (1997:607); Fisher et al (2008:437).

⁵⁴ Campbell (2002:25-26); Shackelford et al (2002a:304, 306); Wilson and Daly (2004:204; 2009:275); Goetz and Causey (2009:261); Miller and Maner (2009:287); Weisfeld et al (2011:1165, 1171); Sagarin et al (2012:595-596, 611).

⁵⁵ On aggression and the misplaced predictions of social role theory, see Campbell (1999:203; 2004:14, 23, 258; 2007:365); Jones (1999:896, 899); Kempenaers and Forstmeier (2009:283).

⁵⁶ Geary (2010:252, 270). On politics and evolution, see Kronfeldner (2017). On gender-differences in language ability and negotiation skills, see McDonald et al (2012:676); Oberzaucher (2013:362); Geary et al (2014:404).

⁵⁷ Weisfeld et al (2011). On heterosexuality in the sexually dimorphic human species, see Marcus (1966:281n1); Leitenberg and Henning (1995:484); Salmon (2012:155); Schmitt (2014:23-24).

exclusively by women, explores female mating problems and preferences.⁵⁸ The study of men's and women's typically divergent erotic fantasy genres reveals important sex differences in human psychology; 'pornotopia' foregrounds a man's repeated physical orgasms with a variety of women; conversely, 'romantopia' climaxes only once, with the moment of a couple's mutual emotional bliss upon the hero's (binding) declaration of his eternal commitment to one woman.⁵⁹ Heroines in romance stories are never aggressively interested in sexual variety, and never seek out sex with impersonal strangers for its own sake.⁶⁰ Some conclude that male-centred pornography depicts optimum – i.e., short-term – male mating endeavour: low to zero-cost copulation with multiple, fertile partners.⁶¹

Conversely, romance fiction – the so-called 'female version' of pornography' – is one of the most direct expressions of female mating psychology and preferences.⁶² Critical (and political) denigration of romance fiction downplays the phenomenal success of the genre, which is intensely interested in the strategic adaptive problems specifically faced by females in the journey to find a mate.⁶³ Romance heroines – like real-world women – must effectively detect and avoid commitment pretenders and dangerous sexual opportunists.⁶⁴ The ultimate goal of romance-fiction is the enduring union of a likeable every-woman heroine with a physically invincible yet simultaneously emotionally tender man.⁶⁵ The initially difficult heroes of Romantopia all possess the qualities of a highest-value mate: he is always older than the heroine (and by an average of seven years), and he is always taller; adjectives describing the hero focus

⁵⁸ On romance fiction and pornography as phenomenally successful, accurately targeted mass-market erotica, see Marcus (1966:195, 211-212, 216, 273); Leitenberg and Henning (1995:484, 490); Regis (2003:108-109); Malamuth (2007:1684-1685); Saad (2007:228, 232); Salmon (2012:152, 154-156).

⁵⁹ Salmon and Symons (2001:61, 67, 69).

⁶⁰ Salmon and Symons (2001:61-62; 2010:475); Salmon (2004:222; 2012:155); Vandermassen (2005:176); Malamuth (2007:1685-1686).

⁶¹ Okami and Shackelford (2001:191); Salmon (2004:221); Malamuth (1996a; 2007:1684-1685); Schmitt (2014:26). On pornography's endless but completely unrealistic supply of young, attractive women desperate for impersonal, cost-free copulation, see McKee (2005:285-286, 288); Hald (2006:583); Salmon (2012:156).

⁶² On romance fiction as a female counter-fantasy to male pornography, see Mussell (1984:6); Ellis and Symons (1990:544-546); Dixon (1999:2-3); Salmon (2004:221).

⁶³ For second-wave feminist views of romance fiction as dangerous, antifeminist soft-pornography, see Douglas (1980:26-27); Snitow (1983:246, 252-254); Assiter (1988:101, 103-106). On feminism's errors about romance fiction, see Flesch (2004:28); Thomas (2012:210, 213). On romance fiction as empowering women and their hope of mutual love and respect; see Regis (2003:xviii, 14-15, 207); Flesch (2004:20); Zakreski (2012:1).

⁶⁴ Salmon (2012:157-158). On the heroine's virtues of integrity, loyalty, courage, intelligence, and generosity of spirit, see Williamson (1992:127, 130-131); Young (1992:122-123); Salmon (2012:152).

⁶⁵ Salmon (2004:221). Romance heroes are impossible contradictions, simultaneously alpha-male men's-men, and female-friendly house-husbands and ideal fathers; see Krentz (1992a:6); Dixon (1999:163); Salmon and Symons (2001:61-62).

on his muscularity, handsomeness, strength and size, his masculinity and energy, his sexual boldness and confidence, and his intelligence; he is of exceptional height, strength, intelligence, competence, and a willingness to take risks on behalf of the woman and her children.⁶⁶ Romance heroines gain the good genes of bad-boy cads, who have agreed to become strongly attached, sexually faithful, ideal dads.⁶⁷ According to the EP model, females are interested in short-term liaisons with men of bad character because they might conceive a promiscuous son with greater chances of reproductive success; Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy in extraverted, exploitative bad-boy males are highly heritable traits, because these males are also more sexually exploitative.⁶⁸ Men in romantic fiction willingly temper their bad-boy natures because they learn that happiness in life depends on marriage to one good woman.⁶⁹ According to the genre, women only win this game when they resist premarital sexual intercourse, get a binding proposal, and domesticate their chosen male into the female-friendly environment of emotionally and sexually monogamous marriage.⁷⁰ Descriptions of the romance hero's emotional experience fit female expectations, however, not male reality, and romance fiction is a female fantasy in which men willingly subordinate their own mating preferences to accommodate those of the female, just as pornotopia is a world in which optimum female mating strategy is sacrificed to accommodate male mating goals.⁷¹ Competition between specific individuals within any two-sexed species to achieve their optimum strategy is innate, but – in the human species at least – will be exacerbated or suppressed according to enviro-social constraints and opportunities, not to wishfulness or ideology; according to evolutionary science, nature and culture are coevolving aspects of human experience and existence within specific environmental contexts.⁷²

⁶⁶ Donald (1992:82); Whissell (1996:427-428, 430ff); and Gorry (1999), as cited in Salmon and Symons (2001:63-64); Salmon and Symons (2010:476).

⁶⁷ Williamson (1992:128-129). On women's interest in dads and cads in romantic fiction, see Kruger et al (2003, 2005).

⁶⁸ Jonason et al (2009:12-15; 2010; 2011:759); Jonason and Kavanagh (2010); Carter et al (2013); Grijalva et al (2015:261).

⁶⁹ Donald (1992:82-83). On romance fiction and the dangerous hero's journey out of self-destructive darkness, healed by the omnipotent heroine; see Cameron (1992:143); Guntrum (1992:152); Putney (1992:101).

⁷⁰ Mussell (1984:9, 123). On the true heart of the romance narrative: the liberation of the savage hero-beast into a female world of joyous love, see Cameron (1992:144); Krentz (1992a:5); Williamson (1992:127); Young (1992:122). On the central plot of modern romance – the discovery of eternal love between one man and one woman – see Whissell (1996:440-441; 1998:105, 107); Regis (2003:14); Michaels (2007:7).

⁷¹ On romance fiction as inaccurately – and dangerously – depicting male psychology to better fit female preferences, see Salmon (2004:223, 227); Malamuth (2007:1686); Salmon and Symons (2010:473-474). On the distance between reality and fantasy in heterosexual mating interactions, see Ogas and Gaddam (2011).

⁷² Barrett et al (2002:186, 220-221); Kurzban and Haselton (2006:151-152); Schmitt (2006a:116).

Nature and Culture

Therefore, explanatory models of human behaviour attend to cultural universals as well as cultural variation; evolutionary psychology does not replace existing explanatory paradigms, but augments them.⁷³ Human customs are necessarily innovative and adaptive responses to external, changing conditions, because nature is at the heart of culture.⁷⁴ While some aspects of culture are undoubtedly socially constructed and constrained by individual personality, culture is also both constrained and enabled by evolutionary mechanisms and there is always a natural limit to the possible range of cultural variation, because the human genome is finite.⁷⁵

The evolutionary paradigm offers a variety of approaches to the issue of interactions between evolution, nature, and culture.⁷⁶ These include Tooby and Cosmides's (1989) model of evoked culture (i.e., culture in consequential response to contingent environmental stimulation); Boyd and Richerson's (1985, 2001) dual inheritance theory (i.e., culture and genes in dynamic coevolution); and Lumsden and Wilson's (1981) model of gene-culture co-evolution (in which cultural behaviours enhance an individual's adaptation to a particular climate or environment).⁷⁷ The evoked culture model explains why particular human behaviours occur cross-culturally and persist through many generations, but all of these models incorporate transmitted culture, in which technicalities of human custom and belief are taught through deliberate instruction.⁷⁸ The interaction between nature and culture is best understood as gene-culture coevolution.⁷⁹ The best framework for analysing coevolved mating strategies – the

⁷³ Gangestad et al (2006:75); Schmitt (2006a:116). The best applications of an evolutionary paradigm integrate expert understanding of disposition to ultimate goals – human nature – with social science expertise in environmental, proximate expression of human culture; see Tooby and Cosmides (1992:115, 118, 122-123); Buunk et al (1996:362-363); Schmitt et al (2003:101); Nordlund (2005:11); Barkow (2006:29; 2010:1); Lippa (2007:208); Penke and Asendorpf (2008:24).

⁷⁴ On ancestral success and present-day dispositions, see Tooby and Cosmides (1990:58); Cosmides et al (1992:5).

⁷⁵ Schmitt et al (2003:101); Norenzayan et al (2006:348); Mameli (2007:22); Tidwell and Eastwick (2013:1629-1630). On the role of individual difference, alongside species-typical evolutionary and social factors, see Miller and Maner (2009:290).

⁷⁶ Gangestad et al (2006:76-79); Harper (2013:1007-1008).

⁷⁷ Lumsden and Wilson (1982); Boyd and Richerson (1985); Cosmides and Tooby (1989); Tooby and Cosmides (1989); Richerson and Boyd (2001, 2005). On the effects of geography and climate on human behaviour, see Crook and Crook (1988); Ehrlich and Ehrlich (2008:3); Kenrick (2006a:104).

⁷⁸ On the transmission of culture, see Baumeister et al (2005; 2006:130); Confer et al (2010a:118).

⁷⁹ On the very rapid response of genetic complexes to shifting environmental pressures, including cultural sophistication, see Baumeister et al (2006:129-130); Harper (2013:1009); Chapais (2014); Chapman (2015:16).

basis of gendered conflict – is one which adequately accounts for both innate universals and cultural variations.⁸⁰

Mating Strategy

Mating strategy is grounded in the identification – and exploitation – of an opposite-sex target's reproductive potential, recognizing the costs of investment in offspring.⁸¹ Mating strategy is differentiated by sex because males and females have a significantly different potential number of offspring they can produce in a single lifetime; while this discussion is primarily concerned with heterosexual reproductive motivations and behaviours, research on same-sex mating dynamics often confirms innate gender differences.⁸² Evolutionary psychologists argue that humans inherited multiple mating strategies from their hominid (perhaps even primate) ancestors; evidence of pre-agricultural human custom comes from contemporary hunter-gatherer societies.⁸³ Both sexes share certain mate-preferences; men and women want an agreeable partner in economic, social, and parental investment endeavours, and both sexes place heavy emphasis (particularly in long-term mating contexts) on character, kindness, generosity intelligence, and emotional stability.⁸⁴ Preference for goodness in a partner arises from an acute sense of self-interest, however, and although both sexes nominated kindness as important, it still ranks second overall for each sex; males' first priority is female attractiveness, and females' is male status.⁸⁵ Both sexes have a highly accurate understanding of what the other sex wants, however, and consistently work to be seen as willing to meeting those preferences; in the presence of women, men exaggerate their politeness, vulnerability, and interest in children, and

⁸⁰ Buss (1998:30-31; 2006a:239). Buss and Schmitt's (1993:204) *Sexual Strategies Theory* (SST) examines the mating-strategy problems and the environmentally-selected adaptations which resolve these problems, see Buss and Schmitt (1993:23, 205-206, 228); Buss (1998:19, 24); Schmitt (2003:99-100; 2005b:747, 766-767); Buss and Schmitt (2011:772-773, 781-782); Schmitt (2014:3, 6, 12-13, 22-23, 27-28).

⁸¹ Geary et al (2004:27).

⁸² Gangestad (2007:321). On the remarkable plurality of human mating arrangements – compared with other vertebrates – see Schmitt (2005a:277, 280); Low (2007:449).

⁸³ Campbell and Ellis (2005:423); Patton (2005:144-145); Buss (2006a:239); Low (2007:451). See also Marlowe (2004: 366-368, 372, 374), on mating strategies among the traditional (pre-civilization [sic]) Hadza of Tanzania.

⁸⁴ Regan et al (2000:1-2); Shackelford et al (2005b:448); Elliot et al (2010:399).

⁸⁵ On kindness as unreciprocated helpfulness at the cost of one's own interests, see Li et al (2002:953); on the so-called preference for kindness in potential mates as the wish that others direct their kindness toward oneself, see Lukaszewski and Roney (2010:36).

they also exaggerate their wealth (and their ability to gain further resources), alongside display of liberal generosity, including heroic, risky acts on behalf of others.⁸⁶

Sex differences in mating strategy are widely and robustly evidenced from hunter-gatherer cultures to modern-day societies, and even when both sexes engage in the same mating strategy they do so for different reasons, and enact that same strategy in different ways.⁸⁷ The interplay of sex difference and environmental contingency also exacerbates the complexity of mating relations.⁸⁸ Typically, individuals of each sex have to compromise upon their ideal mating preferences, however.⁸⁹ In some contexts, there is greater difference in preferences within each sex, rather than between the sexes in general.⁹⁰ The most persistent gender difference in mating strategy is that men are more reproductively successful when they target as many fertile women as possible; women, when they secure exclusive access to a well-resourced man. Males therefore primarily (but not exclusively) desire mate attractiveness, and, conversely, females are primarily attentive to the indicators of mate wealth, with education – in the Western cultural context, at least – a reliable proxy for earning potential.⁹¹

Cultural, individual, and environmental variables affecting sex difference in choice of mating strategy include marriage customs, gender identity, relative age and education-level of partners, ecological contexts, relative sex ratios, and degree of parental choice.⁹² There are many reasons for reproductive variance between individuals, especially males; cross-culturally, more males than females will never marry, nor produce even one child.⁹³ In polygynous cultures, every man with more than one wife deprives another man of reproductive opportunity.⁹⁴ Men who

⁸⁶ Buss (2003:103-104); Griskevicius et al (2007:85, 97-98); Iredale et al (2008:391); Kruger (2008:603); Sefcek and Sacco (2009:288); Sundie et al (2011:664); Van Vugt and Iredale (2013:3-4); Raihani and Smith (2015:1183).

⁸⁷ Schmitt (2014:22-23, 26-27). On contextually-triggered, largely unconscious cognitive algorithms governing mating strategy, see Hill and Reeve (2004:755); Perriloux et al (2010:40).

⁸⁸ Hatfield and Sprecher (1995:745); Schacht and Borgerhoff Mulder (2015:1).

⁸⁹ Gangestad and Simpson (2000:573); Waynforth (2001).

⁹⁰ Wiederman and Dubois (1998:165-166).

⁹¹ Buss and Schmitt (1993:225). On males' pursuit of access to fertile women, see Buss and Schmitt (1993:225); Barrett et al (2002:95); Campbell (2002:40). On independently wealthy, socially successful females' pursuit of men with relatively greater wealth and status, see Moore et al (2006:193); Schmitt (2014:11, 15).

⁹² Apparently arbitrary variables in complex mating activities actually reflect logical evolutionary responses to the specific cultural environmental constraints; see Gangestad et al (2006:90); Buss (2007:376); Geher et al (2008:10-11). On an individual's age and mate preferences, see Kruger et al (2010:420-421); Brumbaugh and Wood (2013:100, 105).

⁹³ Geher et al (2008:3); Lumley et al (2015:470).

⁹⁴ On polygyny and reproductive variance between males, see Buss and Schmitt (2011:774); Borgerhoff Mulder (2000:401); Puts (2010:160).

engender children do so at much higher rates than the most fertile women, even though more women than men tend to marry.⁹⁵ Male standards of mating are almost always lower than those of females, yet few men realise all of their mating aspirations.⁹⁶ Instead, males can improve their lifetime reproductive fitness by accommodating female preferences for long-term mating commitment, and substantial parental investment.⁹⁷ Another important variable controlling mating strategy universally and historically is parental choice, and the relative proportions of males and females within a population – the operational sex ratio (OSR).⁹⁸

Present-day modern mating preferences differ little from traditional ones, as demonstrated by newspaper, magazine, and internet romantic advertisements, by specifications for mail order mates, in data from speed-dating events, and in forced-choice or economic-style budget ranking of mating preferences: the contemporary mate-market is an arena of pragmatic individual self-interest.⁹⁹ Newspaper romantic advertisements consistently show that males are looking for young, beautiful, light-weight short-term partners, and that these males offer resources, and that females are looking for long-term relationships, offering beauty and youth and asking for resources.¹⁰⁰ Aging males who possess greater wealth are able to demand highest-quality mates, whereas aging females must lower their demands and offer casual sexual activity; despite this, they receive fewer responses, unless they are highly attractive, and more willing to engage in casual sexual activity.¹⁰¹ Women also experience declining reproductive returns at a higher level of education and income, because males tend to prefer females with less education than themselves, while for men the effect is an increasing one: females want males to have higher educational achievement as a reliable proxy for income.¹⁰² Women – generally from impoverished nations – also offer to be the brides of males from more prosperous societies, while males who seek mail-order mates are most often those who cannot secure female mates

⁹⁵ Low (2007:455).

⁹⁶ Campbell (2002:42); Buss and Schmitt (2011:774); Schmitt (2014:18, 23). Cf. Altmann (1997:325).

⁹⁷ Gangestad and Simpson (2000:586).

⁹⁸ Gangestad et al (2006:90). On OSR and the enactment of mating strategies, see Hesketh and Xing (2006:13271, 13273); Kruger and Schlemmer (2009:284); Li et al (2010:428-429); Griskevicius et al (2012:69); Kruger (2014:166-167); Schacht and Kramer (2016:1). On parental control of mate choice, see Apostolou (2008a:312-313; 2008b:456; 2009:895-899; 2010:45-46); Perilloux et al (2008:217, 231); Buunk and Solano (2011:105, 110); Schlomer et al (2011:510); Zietsch et al (2011:613, 605); van den Berg et al (2013:405, 410). On free choice of a mate as an historic anomaly, see Ferguson et al (2011:18).

⁹⁹ On romantic advertisements as a rich data-source for evolved strategies, see Campos et al (2002:395-396); Pawlowski and Koziel (2002:139). On mating economics, see Baumeister et al (2017).

¹⁰⁰ Thiessen et al (1993:209, 225-226); Schmitt (2014:15); Wiederman (1993:331).

¹⁰¹ Campos et al (2002:395, 403-404).

¹⁰² Pawlowski and Koziel (2002:139, 146); Schmitt (2014:11-12); Ong (2015:1816).

in their own cultural environments; those participating in mail-order mating typically follow evolved motivations and evaluations to the same degree as those placing and scanning romantic advertisements.¹⁰³ The most important factor for both sexes in speed-dating contexts is a speed-evaluation condition of physical appearance, suggesting that the bottom line for women as well as men is partner's genetic quality.¹⁰⁴ Forced-choice mating budgets show that while both sexes become more demanding in terms of minimum standards as contexts shift from short- to long-term mating, differences between the sexes are strongest in the short-term mating condition; males consistently attend to female attractiveness as the minimum standard, while females attend to male wealth and status, a difference exacerbated in conditions of extreme choice constraint.¹⁰⁵

Biological and cognitive mechanisms driving sex differences in mate preferences are generally unconscious devices; the unconscious mind impels the conscious self toward the best available object of reproductive interest through the process of 'limerence' – falling in love.¹⁰⁶ Erotic or romantic idealization is a human universal, and is largely resistant to cultural efforts to control the process.¹⁰⁷ Despite some cross-cultural variation in limerent expression, there is significant evidence that limerence is an effective adaptation.¹⁰⁸ Limerent attachment and separation patterns across cultures follow a three-to-four year cycle, thought to mirror the human hunter-gatherer round of pregnancy, lactation, and weaning, and prepares individuals for the natural mammalian cycle of parental investment: emotional attachment to enhance mate retention, conception, gestation, safe parturition, and then rearing of a child, suggesting that the most fundamental pattern of human mating was serial monogamy; polygyny may be a pattern

¹⁰³ Minervini and McAndrew (2006:111, 126-127).

¹⁰⁴ Kurzban and Weeden (2005:227, 240, 243); Todd et al (2007:15015); Finkel and Eastwick (2008:245; 2009:1290, 1293); Li et al (2013); Schmitt (2014:3, 10, 14, 19, 21-22, 24).

¹⁰⁵ Li et al (2002:947, 953; 2016:1); H. Fisher (2004:114, 144); Schmitt (2014:18-19); Fales et al (2016:78).

¹⁰⁶ Tennov (1979:170-173, 16, 1999); Fisher (1995:25-26); H. Fisher (2004:7-8, 22), Gottschall and Nordlund (2006:460). On the biochemical and neuro-psychological sequence of falling in love, see Aron et al (2005:237-238); Hogan (2008b:346); Acevedo et al (2012:145, 156); Randall et al (2013:1072, 1086, 1089); Wlodarski and Dunbar (2013:1419, 1421). On the many types and prototypes of love, see Aron and Westbay (1996:546); Weis (2006:1); Berscheid (2010:12-18).

¹⁰⁷ Tennov (1979:224); Jankowiak and Fischer (1992:150); H. Fisher (2004:13, 20); Nordlund (2005:114). On various cultural views of romantic love, see Dion and Dion (1988:286); Hatfield and Rapson (1996:18); Kim and Hatfield (2004:175); Schmitt (2006b:265); Stone et al (2008:453); De Munck et al (2011:128-129).

¹⁰⁸ Buss (2006b:65, 67); Kenrick (2006a:16-17, 20); Place et al (2012:547, 550).

imposed over this original.¹⁰⁹ Once limerence's reproductive work is done, passionate romantic love often fades, or becomes sedate attachment; involuntary loss of love mid-limerence can have serious consequences for all parties, however.¹¹⁰

Romantic attachment also helps couples withstand the temptation of other potential mates.¹¹¹ The most desirable romantic objects – highly attractive as potential reproductive partners – are very likely to be quickly snapped up, however, and mate-poaching is a widespread, commonplace strategy to extract the most high-value potential mates from present attachments.¹¹² Despite a conscious belief that they are not influenced by a man's relationship-status, single women are significantly likely to be more attracted to a man who is already in a successful mate-ship, but males are actively interested in females whether they are attached or not.¹¹³ The ubiquity of mate-poaching and the problem of mate retention both fuel the ever-present fear of partner infidelity: jealousy is the emotional force which fuels mate-guarding in both sexes.¹¹⁴ EPs argue that each sex possesses a gender-specific, evolved jealousy-adaptation designed to negotiate the different reproductive problems each sex faces.¹¹⁵ Buss and Haselton's (2005:506) review of studies concludes that men are hypersensitive to cues of sexual infidelity; women to cues of emotional infidelity; men are distressed by resource-rich rivals of higher status, women by younger, more attractive rivals; men with attractive mates exhibit more mate-guarding, as do women with resource-rich mates; for men, sexual infidelity is less forgivable and leads to break-up, while for women emotional infidelity is less forgivable, and leads to relationship termination; and men mate-guard more intensely around the time of their female partner's ovulation, because ovulating women are more likely to seek out extrapair sexual encounters.¹¹⁶ For both sexes, jealousy is the unconscious emotional warning activated

¹⁰⁹ Tennov (1979:247); Fisher (1995:24, 33-34); H. Fisher (2004:20-22, 78-79, 92, 133-135, 204-205); Kenrick (2006a:18). On the reproductive advantages and disadvantages of polygyny – including effective serial monogamy – see Fisher (1995:31, 33-34); Hendrick and Hendrick (1995:55-57); Schmitt (2006b:249-250).

¹¹⁰ H. Fisher (2004:23-24); Boutwell et al (2015:30, 33-34). On loss or failure of love and depression, slow decline, and even death of lovers, see H. Fisher (2004:14, 25, 153, 161, 163-165, 167-169, 172); Perilloux and Buss (2008:164, 179). On (men's) violent responses to impending loss of relationship, see Wilson and Daly (1998:202-203, 216); Peters et al (2002:262); Buss (2008:307, 348).

¹¹¹ Buss (2000:11).

¹¹² Davies et al (2007:714); Rupp et al (2009:93); Buss and Duntley (2011:413).

¹¹³ Parker and Burkley (2009:1016, 1018).

¹¹⁴ Buss (2000:14); Ein-Dor et al (2015:17).

¹¹⁵ Okami and Shackelford (2001:207, 209); Buunk and Dijkstra (2006:113-114); Miller and Maner (2008:414); Confer and Cloud (2011:129, 133).

¹¹⁶ Schützwohl and Koch (2004:249); Takahashi et al (2006:1299, 1305-1306); Kennair et al (2011:20); Bendixen et al (2015a:212; 2015b:272); Oberle et al (2016:1, 9).

by rivals of an imminent threat to a relationship, and evoking particular behaviours; jealousy is manifested in both sexes over an overlapping range and is strongly influenced by the jealous partner's perception of their own mate-value – the lower-quality mate of either sex will experience more jealousy.¹¹⁷ Male jealousy is assumed to be primarily sexual because of the risks of female-partner sexual infidelity to paternity certainty; female jealousy is more sensitive to the threat of male emotional infidelity, because this poses a risk to the continuance of existing relationships – and thus resource security – more than casual male sexual infidelity does.¹¹⁸ Male sexual jealousy functions to protect parental investment effort, and is clearly evolutionarily adaptive; cross-culturally, historic laws frame adultery as the infringement of a married man's ownership of his wife's reproductive potential.¹¹⁹ Potentially lethal jealousy occurs prototypically in older males over very young (and thus more fertile) wives.¹²⁰ Relatively typical jealousy is triggered by the perception of cues to imminent or actual infidelity; sexual proprietariness, on the other hand, depends on men's perceptions of male right of entitlement, and their belief in a moral responsibility to enforce a male's possession of a woman.¹²¹ Jealous males preferentially punish the female partner, whereas females target the female rival; compared to men, even enraged jealous women rarely kill a partner.¹²² Excessively vengeful, aggressively jealous mothers who lost their tempers easily would raise fewer children safely to maturity (and thus replicate their disposition); when wives do kill husbands, their actions are generally last-resort self-defence or defence of offspring in response to husbands' maladaptive, or morbid levels of sexual proprietariness.¹²³ An evolved sex-difference in jealousy is present universally, but most of all in the psychology of heterosexual males and females.¹²⁴

What Women Want

¹¹⁷ Buunk et al (1996:362); Okami and Shackelford (2001:211); Buss and Haselton (2005:506).

¹¹⁸ Buss (1997:177; 2000a:222); Buss and Haselton (2005:506); Buunk and Dijkstra (2006:113-114). On sexual proprietariness (in males) as evolved adaptation to counter real threats to paternity certainty; see Buss (1992:250-251); Wilson and Daly (1998:211-212). On males' sexual jealousy and marital and family homicide, see Daly and Wilson (1988:202, 206-207); Wilson and Daly (1998:221); Campbell (2002:257); Goetz et al (2008:483).

¹¹⁹ Daly et al (1982:11); Buss (2000:4-5).

¹²⁰ Wilson and Daly (1998:218-219); Campbell (2002:255).

¹²¹ Wilson and Daly (1998:202-203).

¹²² Buss (2006b:78, 80); Schützwohl (2008:97).

¹²³ Daly and Wilson (1988:202, 207, 295); Wilson and Daly (1998:202-203); Easton et al (2007:399, 401).

¹²⁴ Sagarin et al (2003:22); Confer and Cloud (2011:129-130, 132); Frederick and Fales (2014:1, 15).

According to evolutionary study, what women want most of all in a (male) mate is resources: firstly, evidence of actual or potential wealth, and secondly, a willingness to invest this wealth in her, and in her offspring.¹²⁵ EPs conclude that female reproductive success in traditional (i.e., pre-industrial) societies depends as much on male-controlled wealth as it does on genetic quality, and this pattern persists in more gender-equal modern nations; women in gender-equal Western nations persist in a logically-evolved preference for wealthy men, especially those publically consuming high-value goods, perhaps because women's mate-choices actually become increasingly limited as they improve their own socioeconomic status.¹²⁶ Thus, women frequently conceal their own high status (and especially education) specifically in order to attract higher-status males, because these tend to prefer lower-status females without advanced education.¹²⁷ The second important universal element in women's mate criteria is male status; males of any age who lack both resources and social position tend to be excluded from the marriage-pool.¹²⁸ Females benefit from mating with high-status males in at least three ways: her own status is elevated; she gains immediate access to greater material and nutritional resources; and she secures long-term access to supporting resources.¹²⁹ In cultures without monogamy or contraception, the relationship between male social status and production of children is immediate; in preindustrial societies, ruling males are well aware of the reproductive advantages of rank, and the great men in some historic cultures have been able to achieve stupendous numbers of offspring through hyperpaternity, but this necessarily excludes many other males from the mating pool.¹³⁰ Many high-status men in the modern world are in fact effective polygynists: they achieve more copulations, have more affairs with more partners, and are more likely to divorce and then remarry a succession of high-value, fertile women.¹³¹

¹²⁵ On female demand for essential reproductive resources (possessed in patriarchal cultures by males), see Buss (1991:401, 405; 1997:176, 178); Smuts (1991:409); Hrdy (2000:90-91); Aarssen (2007:1772); Thornhill and Gangestad (2015:162).

¹²⁶ Hopcroft (2006:106); Griskevicius et al (2007:97-98); Kruger (2008:608); Gray and Anderson (2010:66-67); Klasios (2014:2); Schmitt (2014:7, 11). On the demand of highly educated, highest-status Western women for highest-value male mates, see Ellis (1992:273-274); Kenrick et al (1996:32); Kruger and Fisher (2008:291). On persistent gender inequality in gender-equal nations, see Gracia and Merlo (2016).

¹²⁷ Bereczkei and Csanaky (1996:19); Buunk et al (2002:277); Geary (2010:213); Schmitt (2014:9).

¹²⁸ Klasios (2014:8-9); Schmitt (2014:10).

¹²⁹ Ellis (1992:268).

¹³⁰ On males' status and reproductive success in preindustrial cultures, see Betzig (1986:78-79; 1988:5); Daly and Wilson (1988:132); Elliot et al (2010:401-402); Klasios (2014:8-9); Schmitt (2014:10-11). On historic hyperpaternity and harems consisting of hundreds of fertile women, see Betzig (1986:82); Zerjal et al (2003:719-720); Aarssen (2007:1771); Oberzaucher and Grammer (2014:1, 4). For critique of the concept of hyperpaternity, see Einon (1998).

¹³¹ Schmitt (2005a:262); Hopcroft (2006:106); Buss (2008:362).

Male competition for alpha-male status with its extra reproductive rights is inevitable – even in truly monogamous cultures with liberal attitudes toward female mate-choice – because of greater remarriage rates for men, and because there are always more potential husbands than there are potential wives of fertile age; among preliterate peoples girls are generally married off as soon as they are fertile and so women are a short-supply resource.¹³² Men’s ranking in the male hierarchy is determined by and maintained through the display of resources and also through dominance behaviours.¹³³ The ability to dominate other males ensures a man’s priority access to political influence, resources, and to female mates; historically, a visible lack of dominance results in a man’s being deprived of his resources, and of any high-value women he possesses.¹³⁴ Highest-status, dominant males win greater sexual access to females for two reasons: females prefer them over subdominant mates, and other males cannot prevent alpha-males from poaching their mates.¹³⁵ Women prefer socially dominant males with a high level of prestige, a form of respect freely offered by peers and subordinates in acknowledgment of obvious technical and social expertise.¹³⁶ Males with high prestige have lower testosterone levels, exhibit facial femininity, are cooperative, non-violent individuals, and are more interested in (and are better) long-term partners and fathers – and women are well aware of this – while high-dominance males are associated (by others and by themselves) with short-term mating effort, and diminished production of offspring.¹³⁷ Cross-culturally, women differentiate between dominant, genetically superior males for purposes of impregnation and lower-testosterone but more prosocial males as companions and fathers; men with explicitly feminine

¹³² Symons (1979:150-153).

¹³³ On males’ display of resources, see Buss (2008:304); Hughes et al (2014:119). On dominance-hierarchies and reproductive success in primates and other socially complex species (including humans), see Jones (2003:314); Buss (2003:197; 2008:315, 358); Surbeck et al (2011:594). On the universality of the (male) power hierarchy in non-materialist traditional and egalitarian modern cultures, see Von Reuden et al (2008:402); Cheng et al (2010:334); Puts (2010:161-162).

¹³⁴ Kenrick (2006b:19); Puts (2010:166); Winegard et al (2014:35, 37). On the importance of reputation for the willingness to meet even a trivial challenge in front of peers, see Campbell (1999:211); Puts (2010:164); Winegard et al (2014:37). On the selection-advantage for males (and their families) of a secure reputation for the willingness to pursue vengeance, see Sadalla et al (1987:737); Archer (2009:258); Winegard et al (2014:35, 37, 40). On the dynamics of honour-revenge cultures, see Daly and Wilson (1988:128, 283); Nisbett and Cohen (1996); Figueredo et al (2004:336).

¹³⁵ Cummins (2005:691); Lukaszewski and Roney (2010:37); Puts (2010:164); Schmitt (2014:7-8).

¹³⁶ Snyder et al (2008:430, 439). On the essential cultural differences between dominance and prestige, see Henrich and Gil-White (2001:165, 180ff). On the recently evolved mechanism of prestige and the suppression of anti-social urges to aggrandizement, see Johnson et al (2007:348-349); Winegard et al (2014:35-36, 43).

¹³⁷ Mueller and Mazur (1998:387, 395); Johnson et al (2007:345); Kruger and Fitzgerald (2011:366-367, 369).

facial structures generally exhibit personal qualities of nurturance and patience.¹³⁸ One persistent physical attribute in males which correlates with status, power, income, and reproductive success is height; women consistently prefer their male mates to be taller than themselves, and so men consistently overstate their height in a variety of contexts, while women – aware that men prefer shorter women – understate their height.¹³⁹

Female preference for status, dominance, and height derives from the females' adaptive preference for good genes, especially in short-term mating contexts; women gain direct benefits from men with beneficial genes through increased offspring resistance to disease, and – when possible – the additional resources and protection, supplied by these men and indirect benefits in transmission of genes for health, height, and dominance to their male descendants.¹⁴⁰ In short-term contexts, women lower their usual standards for male resources to mate with attractive, genetic high-value males, especially during ovulation, even though they are aware that males with the best genes are less likely to invest in offspring.¹⁴¹ Attractive, symmetrical faces predict bodily symmetry, longer lifespan, and advantages in general reproductive physiology.¹⁴² Physical markers indicating a prospective male partner's possession of advantageous good genes include symmetry in face and body and skin-colour,¹⁴³ markedly

¹³⁸ Penton-Voak and Perrett (2000:39); Penton-Voak and Chen (2004:239); Waynforth et al (2005:410-411, 413); Johnston (2006:10-11); Kruger (2006:451); Pound et al (2009:157); Glassenberg et al (2010:1289-1290); Kruger and Fitzgerald (2011:366); Mileva et al (2014:115); Valentine et al (2014:806-807); Welling and Puts (2014:250). On the everyday problems for women of relationship with super-dominant mates, see Sadalla et al (1987); Snyder et al (2008:429); Geary (2010:206); Schmitt (2014:11).

¹³⁹ Schmitt (2014:12); Cheryan et al (2015:218); Stulp et al (2015:1).

¹⁴⁰ Gangestad (2007:323, 329); Puts (2010:164-165); Schmitt (2014:18-19, 21).

¹⁴¹ Provost et al (2008:65); McClintock (2011:250); Schmitt (2014:19); Welling and Puts (2014:249).

¹⁴² Rhodes et al (2005:196); Shoup and Gallup (2008:470).

¹⁴³ On females' preference for symmetry in male mates across a number of species, and the enhancement of their symmetry by both sexes, see Thornhill and Gangestad (2003:352-353); H. Fisher (2004:105-106, 111); Johnston (2006:10); Li and Kenrick (2006:483, 493); Gangestad (2007:330); Puts (2010:165); Schmitt (2014:25). On high genetic quality in males and masculine facial structure and voices, impressive musculature, and physical cues of testosterone level (i.e., reddish skin colour), see Gangestad (2007:329); Schmitt (2014:18-19); Kayser et al (2016:1).

masculine faces,¹⁴⁴ and lower voice (relative to other men).¹⁴⁵ Mate preferences for symmetry also respond very specifically to physical evidence of parasites and pathogens.¹⁴⁶ While intelligence is typically a basic requirement in female estimation of male attractiveness, creativity appears to be a luxury trait: nice to have, but not essential.¹⁴⁷ Female mate preference almost certainly explains the male disposition to risk-taking in certain age-groups; risk-taking enhances male reputation generally, increasing attractiveness to women.¹⁴⁸ Similarly, greater male willingness to engage in aggression and violence responds both to female preferences and to the harsh realities of intra-sexual male competition.¹⁴⁹ There are risks and costs of mating with aggressive males, but women and their offspring benefit from mates and fathers who are able to protect them from other men.¹⁵⁰ Despite optimistic visions of a primeval, pacifist paradise, archaeological analysis suggests that violent inter-group warfare was a cultural universal, originally and primarily a form of extreme male-male competition for access to fertile women.¹⁵¹ Across cultures a majority of women endorse male violence against out-groups, mostly for purely pragmatic self-interest in survival, but often simply for materialistic reasons;

¹⁴⁴ On masculine faces and hormonal indicators of inheritable genetic quality, see Thornhill and Gangestad (2003:356); Penton-Voak and Chen (2004:229); Johnston (2006:10-11); Pound et al (2009:153, 156-157); Moore et al (2010:721); Kruger and Fitzgerald (2011:366). On facial masculinity as a predictor of men's pursuit of sexual experience, see Shoup and Gallup (2008:469-471); Kruger (2006:460-461); Kruger and Fitzgerald (2011:366). On male beards as a dominance signal to other males, see Archer (2009:260); Puts (2010:165-166); Dixson et al (2016:1); on women's association of male beardedness with antisocial behaviours and attitudes, see Snyder et al (2008:427). Masculine facial shape may have evolved because of female preference or male-male competition (or both); see Puts (2010:162); Haselhuhn and Wong (2012:574); Stirrat and Perrett (2012:718, 720); Valentine et al (2014:810).

¹⁴⁵ On male vocal pitch and female perceptions of masculinity, see Hughes et al (2014:119-120); O'Connor et al (2014:73, 75); Puts et al (2014:80); Thornhill and Gangestad (2015:154).

¹⁴⁶ Low (1990; 2007:454); Gangestad et al (2006:80-81, 87); Stone et al (2008:447); Puts (2010:164).

¹⁴⁷ On evolution and the function of creativity, see Miller (1999:72, 79); H. Fisher (2004:143-144); Haselton and Miller (2006:61); Buss and Shackelford (2008:141); Prokosch et al (2009:18-19); Puts (2010:167); Hughes et al (2014:120). On (artistic) creativity and negative reproductive outcomes, see Andreasen (1987:1288); Post (1996:545); Nettle and Clegg (2006); Kyaga et al (2011:373, 377; 2013:83); Power et al (2015:953, 955); Karwowski et al (2016).

¹⁴⁸ Farthing (2005:171); Baker and Maner (2008:394, 391); Kruger (2008:609-610); Sylwester and Pawlowski (2011:695); Greitemeyer et al (2013:19, 33).

¹⁴⁹ Daly and Wilson (1988:284-285, 294); Archer (2009:263); Terburg et al (2009:290); Buss and Duntley (2011:413). On societal strategies used to moderate males' tendency to greater aggressiveness, see Barrett et al (2002:269); Campbell (2005:645); Winegard et al (2014:36, 41).

¹⁵⁰ Buss (2008:298, 316); Kempnaers and Forstmeier (2009:283); Snyder et al (2011:127, 129).

¹⁵¹ On the fantasy of peaceful primitive cultures, see Smith (2007:81); Buss (2008:319); Puts (2010:162). On potentially lethal male-male competition among humans for females, see Symons (1979:144-145, 148, 151-152); Wilson and Daly (1985:59); Buss (2008:296).

females view war-heroes as more sexually attractive, and that male war heroes sire many more offspring than other males (including pacifists).¹⁵²

Given that female mating preferences have historically been subject to social constraints advantaging male mating strategy, how useful is it really to address female choice in discussions of what women want in a male mate?¹⁵³ Women consistently utilize different criteria and adjust their mate-standards when enacting different mating strategies; female choice is strongly influenced by environmental and socioecological constraints.¹⁵⁴ Like men, very few women live in an ideal world in which they can have it all, and so freedom of choice is a relative notion.¹⁵⁵ The present Western marriage pattern of serial monogamy is much more likely to permit female choice, and was perhaps the prevalent type of human mating strategy before the rise of polygynous elites. In modern monogamous cultures, women establish their own resource-base by marrying later, working before and after marriage, and exercising control over the size of their families.¹⁵⁶ What women want in men responds to external, environmentally contingent factors, but also to females' internal, physiological cyclic variables.¹⁵⁷

What Men Want

What men want in a sexual partner, on the other hand, is more straightforward under all circumstances, according to EP: males firstly want youth and secondly beauty in their female partners.¹⁵⁸ What males actually get is constrained by a wide range of factors, including social contexts.¹⁵⁹ Male preference for female youth is universal, because this preference correlates

¹⁵² Goldstein (2001); Smith (2007:86); Johnson and van Vugt (2009:281); Rusch et al (2015:367).

¹⁵³ Some insist that EP claims of female choice in traditional contexts are wildly overstated; see Apostolou (2007:403); Gray and Anderson (2010:241); Ferguson et al (2011:18). For a review of studies examining female preferences in male mates, see Salmon (2012:154-155).

¹⁵⁴ Cashdan (1998:134); Penton-Voak et al (2003:264); Kenrick (2006b:25); Buss and Shackelford (2008:142); Puts (2010:165); Thornhill and Gangestad (2015:153).

¹⁵⁵ Cashdan (1998:134); Urbaniak and Kilmann (2003:413); Buss and Shackelford (2008:134); Buss and Schmitt (2011:774).

¹⁵⁶ Low (2005:76, 78).

¹⁵⁷ Wilbur and Campbell (2010:754). On female mate choice and female fertility cycles, see Haselton and Miller (2006:64); Gildersleeve et al (2013:522); DeBruine (2014:263); Schmitt (2014:20); Welling and Puts (2014:250); Thornhill and Gangestad (2015:159). Some studies show that males calibrate their mate-seeking and guarding behaviours to unconsciously perceived physical cues of women's internal hormonal shifts; see Lund and Miller (2014:113); Schmitt (2014:21).

¹⁵⁸ Li and Kenrick (2004:483); Perilloux (2014:123); Schmitt (2014:17).

¹⁵⁹ Kenrick et al (1996:40); H. Fisher (2004:108); Low (2005:66); Schmitt (2014:14).

directly with female fertility.¹⁶⁰ While females prefer male mates who are consistently three to four years older relative to themselves, males throughout life prefer a fixed target age-range of (optimally fertile) females aged between twenty and thirty years old.¹⁶¹ In cultures with socially imposed monogamy, males will in effect be limited to that one partner only, and so prefer females with reliable cues of maximum life-time fertility potential.¹⁶² A preference in males for youthful – and therefore more fertile – females is more likely to be selected for, especially in contexts of strict lifetime monogamy.¹⁶³ Male demand for youthful female beauty also correlates with physiological health and genetic quality, and not just fertility.¹⁶⁴ The relationship between female attractiveness and actualized fertility success is not as straightforward in post-industrial contraceptive-using cultural contexts as status and dominance is for males, however.¹⁶⁵

Male attention to beauty in women is attuned to specific female physical characteristics indicating fertility and health status, including body size and shape, face, and skin; some suggest that although there must be some kind of beauty prototype, against which individual instances are measured, it may be that avoidance of ugliness – based on cues of genetic flaws – is the real mechanism employed in judgments of attractiveness.¹⁶⁶ Customary elements of female

¹⁶⁰ EPs identify the peak of female fertility and attractiveness as occurring at various ages: middle-twenties – Buss (1992:250; 2008:142); between fifteen and eighteen years – Symons (1992:143); a typical fourteen year-old – Schmitt (2014:14). On neoteny and female attractiveness, see Magro (1999:148); Puts (2010:168). Cf. Gowaty (1992:240); Hrdy (1997:4).

¹⁶¹ H. Fisher (2004:109); Buss (2006a:246-247; 2008:142-143); Winegard (2008:121); Geary (2010:208-209); Klasios (2014:4); Schmitt (2014:13-14, 16, 21-22).

¹⁶² Buss (1997:177); Barrett et al (2002:95).

¹⁶³ Liu and Lummaa (2011:433, 441); Cloud and Perilloux (2014:136); Klasios (2014:9).

¹⁶⁴ On symmetry and genetic prototypicality in females as signals to males, see Rhodes et al (2005:186-187, 196-197); Gueguen et al (2009); Brand et al (2012:167); Lindell and Lindell (2014:769-770). Attractiveness of the object is maximally important for mate-seeking males across sexual orientation; it is much less so for women seeking mates; see Buss (2003:62-63); Wood and Brumbaugh (2009:1242); Schmitt (2014:18).

¹⁶⁵ On the maladaptive consequences of an escalating arms-race between women in modern, media-driven cultures to meet impossible standards of beauty, see Mealey (1999:234); Abed (1998); Salmon (2004:228); Saad (2007:245); Ferguson et al (2011:19-20); Baumeister et al (2017). For discussion of the unexpectedly negative effect of extreme attractiveness upon female reproductive success, see Mathes et al (2005); Pawlowski et al (2008:457, 459); Jokela (2009:342, 348); Schmitt (2014:15).

¹⁶⁶ Symons (1992:143). On cross-culturally preferred elements of the ideal female face, see Cunningham et al (1995:275); Henss (1995:479); Johnston (2006:9); Jones (2014:99). On male preferences for female faces digitally-manipulated to be highly symmetrical and strongly feminine, see Johnston and Franklin (1993:196-197); Grammer et al (2002:98, 101, 108-109). On beautiful faces, super-averageness and ideal prototyping, see Grammer et al (2002:96-97); Hogan (2008b:340); Potter and Corneille (2008:615); Park and Ackerman (2011:334); DeBruine (2014:262).

attractiveness are biological adaptations universally designed to signal mate-quality.¹⁶⁷ The recognition of female body size and shape as a key aspect of male mating preference begins with Singh's (1993) foundational study, which concludes that WHR (waist-to-hip ratio) – not female bust-to-waist ratio (BWR), as previously assumed – is the primary indicator of female estrogen levels, and thus fertility.¹⁶⁸ Others suggest that BMI (body mass index) is a much more accurate predictor of male interest than WHR;¹⁶⁹ WHR demonstrates pregnancy status, fertility potential, and (perhaps) ovulation, whereas BMI demonstrates female ability to gestate and nurture an infant, while females with low WHR (and symmetrical breasts) are judged by males to be the most attractive of all, especially in contexts of short-term mating effort.¹⁷⁰ Male preferences for female shape also intersect with cultural and historical factors, but WHR is subject to strong selection pressures, and the basic preferred shape remains the same, however.¹⁷¹ Other studies also emphasize the effect of individual and socio-cultural variables on the basic pattern of male preferences for the female body, but the reasonable and most recent approach to the various findings of many studies is that male preferences for female bodies reflects the environmentally evoked interaction of WHR and BMI (body mass index) in combination.¹⁷² When given a mating budget, males often seem unwilling to trade off between body and facial attractiveness, especially in the short-term mating context; males give greater weight to female facial attractiveness when assessing a female for long-term mating suitability, however.¹⁷³ The structure of the female face and the shade of skin offers males significant information about female reproductive potential.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁷ Lippa (2007:202); Tadinac (2010:501); Buss and Schmitt (2011:776); Klasios (2014:9-10).

¹⁶⁸ On earlier models of BWR, see also Wilson and Brazendale (1974); Wilson et al (2005). On Singh's (1993) model of the 0.68-0.72 range WHR as an authentic indicator of female fertility and health, see Henss (2000:501, 508); Schützwohl (2006a:223, 228); Confer et al (2010b:349); Puts (2010:168-169); Karremans et al (2010:182); Cloud and Perilloux (2014:139-140, 147-148).

¹⁶⁹ For critique and response, see Tovée et al (1999:216); Tovée and Cornelissen (2001:391, 401); Singh et al (2010:176).

¹⁷⁰ Singh (1993:304; 1995:465; 2002:89); Confer et al (2010b:349); Swami and Harris (2012:409); (Cloud and Perilloux (2014:137-138).

¹⁷¹ Singh (1993:296; 2002:89; 2006:365); Freese and Maland (2002:313); Ember et al (2005:266); Smith et al (2008:52); Singh and Singh (2011:723); Bovet and Raymond (2015:1, 9).

¹⁷² Furnham et al (2005:1823); Cornelissen et al (2009:343); Gründl et al (2009:1064, 1068); Brooks et al (2010:2243); Perrilloux et al (2010:34-35); Cloud and Perilloux (2014:141). On female LBR (i.e., leg-to-body ratio), the attractiveness of relatively small feet in females (a fetish grounded in biological evidence of age), and FA (fluctuating asymmetry) as a cue of genetic quality, see Sugiyama (2005:319); Pokrywka et al (2006:1693); Cloud and Perilloux (2014:136-137, 141).

¹⁷³ Currie and Little (2009:409); Confer et al (2010b:348, 352); Cloud and Perilloux (2014:147).

¹⁷⁴ On males' cross-cultural preference for lighter-skinned females (which correlates with fertility), see Van den Berghe and Frost (1986:87); Grammer et al (2002:96); Hopcroft (2006:104); Madrigal and Kelly (2007:471);

According to evolutionary analysis, then, what men want in a mate is youth and beauty, whereas possession of resources, status, and dominance are viewed as predominantly male features attracting female interest.¹⁷⁵ Primate studies show that although females, especially mothers, attend to status-rankings in order to improve their position in the hierarchy, their social dynamics do not mirror male-male jockeying for rank.¹⁷⁶ When women acquire more equal control over resources, they increase their demands for attractiveness in male mates, but men approve of increased dominance in females only when high-status women are dominant toward other females.¹⁷⁷ Studies conclude that males consistently prefer a subordinate femininity in their female mates.¹⁷⁸

Males compete with males to impress (or to seize) potential female mates, but intra-sexual female competition – more subtle than male-male competition, but no less intense – often centres on a woman's defence of her own offspring, or defence of her right to a man's resources.¹⁷⁹ Male hierarchies across species are horizontal and antagonistic between same-age peers; female hierarchy tends to be generational, and daughters share and support their mothers' status; physical and psychological intimidation determine male hierarchy, whereas female rank is established through the use of social weapons such as coalitionary cliques and outright ostracism.¹⁸⁰ Yet there is clearly social and reproductive disadvantage in high status for females in contrast to the highest-ranked men in the same social domain: education, which enables individual women to improve their own status through career-options, also increases female age for first marriage (constricting lifetime reproductive capacity). Highest-ranked

Russell (2009:1211); Elliot et al (2010:401-402, 410); Lewis (2011:159); Schmitt (2014:16); Thornhill and Gangestad (2015:155).

¹⁷⁵ On female oppression of lower-class females as a fact of primate life, see Hrdy (1999b:243-244); Campbell (2007:367); Ingo et al (2007:np); Surbeck et al (2011:590, 594); Liesen (2013b:46, 48).

¹⁷⁶ Benenson (1999); Campbell (2002, 2004, 2006); Liesen (2013b:52-53). For a recent discussion of gendered primate status-seeking behaviours, see Foerster et al (2017).

¹⁷⁷ Lukaszewski and Roney (2010:37). On the relationship between female social authority and female demand for partner attractiveness, see Moore and Cassidy (2007:66).

¹⁷⁸ On males' attitudes to female dominance, see Campbell (1999:211); Brown and Lewis (2004:406-407); DeWall and Maner (2008:328, 338).

¹⁷⁹ Cashdan (1999:221); Hrdy (1999b:246); Campbell (1999:207; 2004:18); Geary et al (2014:399-400). According to Sear and Mace (2008:11), in the absence of the biological mother, the presence of other adult females can be detrimental to children's survival.

¹⁸⁰ Benenson (1999:216; 2009:268); Cummins (2005:691); Puts (2010:169). According to Campbell (1999:208-209), males prefer a clear hierarchy over social harmony, because hierarchy enables a unified group of males to dominate (and eliminate) other groups. Cf. Boehm (1999).

females are increasingly restricted in their pool of potential mates, because women across cultures prefer higher-status males as mates and men prefer lower-status females.¹⁸¹

Intra-sexual female competition for mates – focussed on specific points of male mating strategy, namely female beauty and chastity – is inevitable, however, given the astonishing level of human male investment in offspring.¹⁸² Females cannot all get access to the best genetic mates, or to the males providing the best resources, or to the best male parental investors, and so natural selection will therefore favour the evolution of female-female competition – along with secondary sexual characteristics – to secure preferential access to the best males.¹⁸³ Females’ most commonly preferred type of aggression is indirect verbal aggression, because attacks on rivals can be successfully concealed and rivals’ reputations can be destroyed at little to no cost to the aggressor.¹⁸⁴ Conflict in female groups is one of the few occasions human females build coalitions, often as tools to suppress other females’ reproductive cycles.¹⁸⁵ Women’s intra-sexual derogation is the only measure in which female aggression exceeds that of males.¹⁸⁶ Pay-off for ostracism and the derogation (often through false rumour) of same-sex competitors’ appearance and sexual reputation is the destruction of a rival, and increased access to a coveted male.¹⁸⁷ There are social risks for women in using malicious derogation as a tool to eliminate rivals, however.¹⁸⁸ Males who attend to female derogators are presumably gathering insider information on the authenticity of a potential mate’s genetic quality and on the likelihood of her propensity to casual sex.¹⁸⁹ Female aggression is ubiquitous, highly targeted, and usually non-lethal; the most common targets are female rivals – co-wives and others – while non-kin

¹⁸¹ Townsend (1999:235); Low (2005:79); Huber et al (2010:578, 583).

¹⁸² Campbell (1995:121); Puts (2010:160); Schmitt (2014:17). On female physiological threat-responses to images of attractive women, see also Hazlett and Hoehn-Saric (2000:49, 55); Baenninger et al (1993:302).

¹⁸³ Puts (2010:157, 168); Rosvall (2011:1135).

¹⁸⁴ Burbank (1987:82, 88); Campbell (1999:209-210).

¹⁸⁵ Low (2000:174, 186-189); Campbell (2004:20); Hrdy (2005:299); Benenson et al (2008:1031-1033); Ferguson et al (2011:170); Liesen (2013b:49). On females’ suppression of rivals’ reproductive activities, see M. Fisher (2004:S283); Benenson et al (2008:1019, 1031-1032); Campbell (2013:178); Fisher (2013:30-32); Geary et al (2014:401-402); Welling and Puts (2014:247-248). Females can also benefit from directly killing other females’ existing offspring, see Townsend et al (2007:R356).

¹⁸⁶ See Österman et al (1998:1); Campbell (1999:203); Geary (2010:245).

¹⁸⁷ Campbell (1999:210; 2004:22, 20-21); Fisher and Cox (2009a:141); Fisher et al (2009a:289, 303; 2010:274-275); Fisher and Radtke (2014:72, 74, 77); Welling and Puts (2014:247-248).

¹⁸⁸ Fisher and Cox (2009a:151); Ferguson et al (2011:17-18).

¹⁸⁹ Fisher and Cox (2009a:150). On women’s persecution of promiscuous women because they undercut the market-rate for females’ exchange of sex for male resources, see Winegard et al (2014:42).

husbands are the males most likely to attract physical violence from females.¹⁹⁰ The only arena in which female violence is accepted and admired, however, is in the defence of children, or to avenge injury done to them – and only when no male is present to undertake the duty.¹⁹¹ The evolved disposition to maternal investment in women – whose infant offspring would die without their mother – keeps female-female competitive aggression at rates below those of males.¹⁹²

Females are evolutionarily selected, through competitive (and mostly nonlethal) conflicts over access to highest-quality males, so to what degree can we conclude that male choice has directly affected the evolved psychology of the human female?¹⁹³ Males do have exacting standards for females under a long-term mating scenario: youthfulness and body shape indicative of high fertility; beauty and symmetry indicating good genes; and a disposition to fidelity ensuring paternity certainty.¹⁹⁴ Most males are generally forced to settle for less than first choice, however; because highest-quality women are rarely available: only a few very high-quality men get to pick and choose, and always at the expense of other males. Furthermore, despite EP's premise concerning the men's active maximization of reproductive opportunity, no man – no matter how attractive – can mate in the real world with all of the women he chooses, while some especially low-quality men will never be selected by any woman for even a first date.

Any woman's successful pursuit of a highest-status male might endow her offspring with superior genes and social advantage, but since almost all females are highly likely to be mates at some point, natural selection suggests that it is female capacity to keep an infant alive – against the depredations of competing females and infanticidal males – which most strongly determines female reproductive fitness. Reproductive success requires more than finding and falling in love with the ideal mate; although EP research sometimes focusses upon mating strategy and behaviour, ultimate reproductive success depends upon successful gestation,

¹⁹⁰ Burbank (1987:70-71, 92-93); Cross and Campbell (2011). According to Burbank (1987:95, 83-84), blood-relations, especially male kin, are the group least likely to be attacked by women.

¹⁹¹ Burbank (1987:94); Fox (1999:224). On stigmatizing stereotypes of female aggression as masculinized, deviant, pathological, and an undesirable loss of self-control, see Campbell (1999:203, 211-214); Salerno and Peter-Hagene (2015:581).

¹⁹² Campbell (1999:203-204; 2004:23; 2006b:253; 2007:367; 2013:179); Pellegrini and Archer (2005:239).

¹⁹³ Cf. Geary et al (2014:394, 407), who contends that because females compete for the best males, those males are indeed exercising at least a minimal form of choosiness, contrary to Bateman's (1948) and William's (1966a, 1966b, 1975) findings.

¹⁹⁴ According to Schmitt (2014:23), in short-term contexts, men demonstrate little to no choosiness about potential sex partners.

delivery, and rearing of offspring.¹⁹⁵ For the majority of human history, this has not been easy; some estimate the number of children lost before puberty – for most of human prehistory and history – to around 50 per cent.¹⁹⁶ The ability to maintain a working relationship with parental allies enables mothers and selected alloparents to supply the resource-greedy human infant in relative safety, ensuring the transmission of a woman’s specific genotype, and therefore disposition.¹⁹⁷

Mom and Dad Investors: Parental Investment and Disinvestment

The science of parental investment and kinship relations begins with the altruism and kin-investment analyses of William Hamilton (1963, 1964a, and 1964b) and Robert Trivers (1971, 1972, 1974), following Angus Bateman’s (1948) conclusions about anisogamy and mating behaviours. In the human species, successful parental investment generally requires the help of others, especially the kin-group.¹⁹⁸ Parents in post-subsistence cultures with institutionalized inheritance of property also typically exert significant control over offspring marriages, making mating an intergenerational business.¹⁹⁹ Hamilton’s (1963:354-355; 1964a:1-2) “genetical mathematical model” of altruism and inclusive fitness predicts that relatives offer each other assistance based on the relative degree of genetic relationship, because relations’ reproductive success advantages some of one’s own genes.²⁰⁰ An evolutionary paradigm foregrounds the inevitability of parent-child conflict over share of parental time and energy because parents and offspring are always related to each other genetically by fifty-percent only, yet 100% to themselves.²⁰¹ Parents – however much they consciously attempt to be fair – ultimately tailor

¹⁹⁵ Kenrick and Trost (1987:90); Campbell (2002:16, 60; 2006a:86).

¹⁹⁶ Campbell (2002:52); Geary (2010:146); Gray and Anderson (2010:92-93).

¹⁹⁷ Altmann (1997:329).

¹⁹⁸ On support for Bateman’s (1948) and Trivers’ (1972) contributions to evolutionary theorizing, see Buss and Barnes (1986:569); Buss (1992:263-264); Landolt et al (1995:3, 18); Shackelford et al (2005b:447-448, 456); Schmitt (2014:22). On problems with traditional parental-investment frameworks, see Keller et al (2001:358); Hill et al (2011:1288); Brown et al (2009); Schlomer et al (2011:497); Geary et al (2014:394, 407); Schacht et al (2014:216). On altruism and group selection, see also Sober and Wilson (1998); Wilson (2005); Wilson and Hölldobler (2005); Reimers and Oakley (2017). On the evolutionary importance of non-paternal alloparenting, see Lancaster (1991:5).

¹⁹⁹ Apostolou (2010:39).

²⁰⁰ On the complexities and applicability of Hamilton’s Rule and inclusive fitness, see Burnstein (2005:528); Kurland and Gaulin (2005:456, 476); West et al (2006:R482); Cronk and Gerkey (2007:463); Gardener et al (2011:1020, 1040); Schlomer et al (2011:498). On social-science misunderstandings of the kin selection model, see Park (2007:860, 868-869); West et al (2011:233, 240).

²⁰¹ On parent-child and sibling-sibling conflict over family resources, see Kenrick (2006b:20); Salmon and Malcolm (2011:93); Schlomer et al (2011:498).

their investment decisions according to offspring reproductive potential, but also to ongoing parental advantage and opportunity.²⁰² Trivers (1971:35, 45) applies Hamilton's hypotheses to human evolution and concludes that reciprocal altruism in humans is universal across cultures, and arises out of extended lifespan, social stability, and prolonged parental care; in his opinion, altruism is really a form of self-interest. Following Bateman's (1948) assumption of male variance in reproductive success, Trivers (1972:138, 142, 174) argues that disparities in anisogametic investment create sex-differences in parental investment, including male mate-abandonment (which frees the male to further mating opportunities), and male sexual proprietariness (in order to protect what parental investment he does offer).²⁰³ Trivers (1972:139; 1974:249-250) also contends that, because parental investment capacity is a finite resource, parents invest in each child according to that offspring's reproductive potential; offspring therefore compete for parental investment, giving rise to parent-offspring conflict over relative degree of investment in each child. The Trivers model of parental investment explains how individual children in post-industrial small-family societies receive the most time- and wealth-intensive parental hyperinvestment ever recorded, although all human parental investment is hyperinvestment in comparison with other social species.²⁰⁴ There are also constraints on parental investment behaviours, because environmental resources are always naturally finite, and so pragmatic decisions must be made about which children will repay investment.²⁰⁵ Trivers and Willard's (1973:90-91) sex-ratio hypothesis contends that parents of all species preferentially invest – indirectly through differential nurturance, or directly by elimination through infanticide – in the sex which will engender the greatest number of grandchildren (in practice, most often male offspring).

Maternal Contingency

²⁰² Schlomer et al (2011:502). On differential parental investment in offspring, see also Kenrick et al (1990:97); Buss (2008:228); on competition between offspring, see also Campbell (2002:38); Avinun and Knafo (2013:87, 98); Klahr and Burt (2014:578-579).

²⁰³ For criticism, and suggestions for various improvements to the Bateman-Hamilton-Trivers model of parental-investment and family relationships, see Keller et al (2001:358); Korchmaros and Kenney (2001:262); Griffin and West (2002:15); West et al (2006:R483); Beaulieu and Bugenthal (2008:253-254); Mifune et al (2010:109, 115-116); Hill et al (2011:1288); Schlomer et al (2011:497); Schacht et al (2014:216).

²⁰⁴ Wilson and Daly (1992:292); Hrdy (2000:83); Aarssen (2007:1774); Sayer (2010:21-22); Del Giudice and Belsky (2011:78). On hyperinvestment in modern, post-industrial cultures, see Borgerhoff Mulder (2000:391-392); Sobotka (2004); Myrskylä et al (2009); Gray and Anderson (2010:98); Hansen (2012:51); Newson and Richerson (2013:162); Georgios (2015).

²⁰⁵ On the constraints of local ecology and the resource base on human reproduction, with different outcomes for the sexes, see Lancaster (1997:481); Borgerhoff Mulder (2000:391, 401, 403); Geary and Flinn (2001:5); Aarssen (2007:1768); Schlomer et al (2011:502).

Despite the entrenched but inaccurate cultural stereotypes of unconditional, selfless maternal love and nurturance, selective parental investment is the human norm, and mother-offspring conflict an inevitability.²⁰⁶ Pregnancy is sometimes a successful compromise between fetal capture of the mother's body, and maternal survival, and sometimes a fatal struggle for either or both.²⁰⁷ The maternal body is equally self-interested and mothering is contingent, specifically responsive to infant viability.²⁰⁸ Offspring competition is also the cause of mother-child weaning conflicts, because lactation requires significant maternal resources, which a mother could give to existing or potential children.²⁰⁹ It is often argued that ancestral women spent almost all of their adult life either pregnant, breast-feeding, or both; breast-feeding is more demanding than pregnancy itself, and lactation in most species poses a significant risk to maternal life and safety.²¹⁰ Even in cultures with comparatively high levels of active fathering, lifetime maternal costs are always significantly greater for women than are the costs of paternal investment to men.²¹¹ Animals who have the option of becoming either sex compete – even at the cost of death – to avoid the costs of being the gestating sex.²¹² The enormous costs and constraints of maternal investment also give rise to coevolving counter-adaptations in each sex designed to maximize reproductive success.²¹³ Even in modern Western nations, giving birth still poses significant lifetime risks of mortality, especially after the birth of sons or twins.²¹⁴ Because of the massively disproportionate yet lifetime-limited investment of mothers in

²⁰⁶ Hrdy (1977, 1981); Buss (2008:224); Gorelik et al (2011:388). On the contribution of feminist evolutionists to the new view of contingent maternity in mammals, see Daly and Wilson (1994:123); on traditional concepts of shared or partible biological paternity (when two fathers contribute sperm to a single pregnancy), see Hrdy (1999b:xxiii, xxi; 2000:87-88; 2009:155); Sear and Mace (2008:9); Mesoudi and Laland (2007:1273, 1277).

²⁰⁷ Trivers (1974:254); Campbell (2002:61); Sugiyama (2005:299); Buss (2008:225). On the self-optimizing parasitism of the fetus (and the fetus' paternal genome) upon maternal systems, see Salmon (2005b:515); Salmon and Shackelford (2011:7); Schlomer et al (2011:505); Chapman (2015:12-15).

²⁰⁸ On discriminative parental solicitude or the strategic allocation of maternal investment, see Hagen (1999:325, 352-353); Bereczkei (2001:197, 209); Beaulieu and Bugenthal (2008:249, 254); Salmon and Shackelford (2011:7).

²⁰⁹ Martin (2009:173); Salmon and Shackelford (2011:6); Schlomer et al (2011:507). On zero-sum conflict for resources between offspring and parents, see Wilson and Daly (2004:212); Geary (2005:483; 2010:1159).

²¹⁰ Daly and Wilson (1988:41); Hagen (1999:332-333); Sugiyama (2005:299-300); Lummaa (2007:400); Cameron and Garcia (2013:137). On maternal depletion syndrome, see Hagen (1999:333); Lummaa (2007:401).

²¹¹ Campbell (1999:204-205; 2002:38, 51); Badcock (2000:150); Gottschall (2007b:353); Gray and Anderson (2010:91-92); Cameron and Garcia (2013:133).

²¹² Badcock (2000:151-152); Arnqvist and Rowe (2005). As Arnqvist and Rowe (2005:38, 156-157) point out, all living individuals will opt for someone else to do the greater share of mutually beneficial work – especially the work of reproduction – if they can arrange it.

²¹³ Borgerhoff Mulder (2000:392); Opie and Power (2008:176); Liu and Lummaa (2011:433, 439).

²¹⁴ Lummaa (2007:400-403); Smith (2007:88); Kruger et al (2010:421).

offspring, the loss of a child for women is catastrophic for lifetime reproductive success.²¹⁵ The so-called post-maternity period of female life is a significant element in female reproductive performance, especially in the production of food, which evolutionists struggle to explain.²¹⁶ According to the cooperative breeding hypothesis, menopause occurs because offspring survival depends on more than one actively interested and nurturing (and therefore female) care-giver.²¹⁷

Hrdy (1999b:xiii, xviii, xx) makes it quite clear that a mother's love is not unconditional; her debunking of the nuclear-heterosexual model of parental care argues that human males have little spontaneous interest in infants; it therefore seems more likely that older females with mothering expertise – alloparents and grandmothers – assisted with offspring care.²¹⁸ Cooperation between matrilocally resident female kin preceded male-male coalition-building and hominid families probably depended firstly on coresidential female kin coalitions, and only secondarily – if at all – on male hunting.²¹⁹ The mutual provision of care and food to infants by female alloparents initiated a runaway evolutionary cascade in brain-size, slow development, lower birth-rates, longer infancy and childhood (but shorter lactation-dependency), and early menopause but longer lifespan.²²⁰

Paternal Uncertainties

Across species, parental investment is most often entirely maternal investment, often in cooperation with female kin, but – in comparison with other mammalian species – some male humans provide an unusual amount of paternal care.²²¹ If parental investment is basically maternal investment, and alloparenting is mostly allomothering, what exactly is the exceptional

²¹⁵ Daly and Wilson (1988:41); Salmon (2005b:508); Campbell (2007:367). On increased maternal mortality as an effect of child-loss, see also Li et al (2003); Espinosa and Evans (2013:371, 377, 380).

²¹⁶ On the unusually long post-maternal age period in human women, see Turke (1997:3); Campbell (1999:205); Hrdy (1999a:280-281); Barrett et al (2002:167); Jamison et al (2005:108, 111); Volland et al (2005:1-2); Cant and Johnstone (2008:5332); Opie and Power (2008:182); Morton et al (2013:1). On older women's provisioning abilities, see Hrdy (1999a:280-282; 2000:83).

²¹⁷ Volland et al (2005:5). On the benefit of grand-mothering in long-lived species, see also Hrdy (1999a:266-267, 273, 280-282; 2000:83; 2014:66-67); Foster et al (2012:1313); Brent et al (2015:746); Lahdenperä et al (2016:1).

²¹⁸ Hrdy (1999b:xiii, xviii, xx; 2000:85-86; 2005:297; 2009:143-144, 259, 261).

²¹⁹ Opie and Power (2008:186); Newson and Richerson (2013:155-157); Van Noordwijk et al (2013:209).

²²⁰ Hrdy (2005:311); Mace and Sear (2005:143-144); Newson and Richerson (2013:158-159); Van Noordwijk et al (2013:207-208, 210).

²²¹ Smuts and Gubernick (1992:1); Geary and Flinn (2001:15-16); Gray and Anderson (2010:15-16, 100, 110). For a recent discussion of evolutionary mechanisms and family structure and dynamics, see Flinn (2017).

paternal investment in humans? Males in constant association with a female have significantly suppressed testosterone, suggesting that so-called paternal investment might be little more than evoked suppression of aggression, resulting in less likelihood of the infanticide of a woman's existing children.²²² Some doubt that men have been selected to offer any truly effective childcare.²²³ Human male primary caregivers tend to ignore their own infants whenever the biological mother is present; in fact, males of almost all species preferentially invest the majority of their time and energy into mating attempts.²²⁴ The perception of difference between the sexes' parental investment is a longstanding one: Aristotle for instance, observes that "mothers love their children more than fathers, because parenthood costs the mother more trouble" *Nicomachean Ethics* (9.7.7); in his opinion, mothers also have more love for their offspring because they are more certain than fathers of their biological relation to the child.²²⁵ Across all species, specialist female investment in the matriline greatly outweighs male investment in offspring – even willing and enthusiastic fathering – and any female who depends exclusively on the assistance of fathers and paternal kin in child-rearing will soon be outcompeted in the reproductive landscape. The mother-family social unit is universally the mammalian default, and survival of immature offspring in the human species is seriously compromised in the absence of the biological mother; among most species – including humans – following his minimum investment of sperm, a male's active parenting is sometimes helpful, but not essential to infant survival.²²⁶ Father-absence is in fact the default scenario among hunter-gatherer peoples, and the greatest negative effect of father-absence is offspring's reduced access to resources. Single-parent families with sufficient resources tend to do as well as two-parent families, while families with two well-resourced female parents do best of all, probably as a result of having double the amount of highly-focussed and competent parental – i.e., maternal – care.²²⁷ Impregnating males often remain with females (and collaterally,

²²² Burnham et al (2003:119, 121); Gray et al (2006:333); Gray and Anderson (2010:217-219); Gettler and Oka (2015:32).

²²³ Case et al (2001:286); Sear and Mace (2008:8); Campbell (2013:179).

²²⁴ Biblarz and Stacey (2010:7, 16); Geary (2005:483; 2010:159, 161). On the adaptiveness of male disinterest in childcare, see Sear and Mace (2008:9); Buss (2008:228); Hrdy (2009:167).

²²⁵ Aristotle *Nic. Eth.* 9.7.7. Trans. Rackham (1996:243).

²²⁶ Hewlett (1992a:172-173); Campbell (1999:205; 2002:38, 43, 60; 2013:179); Salmon and Symons (2001:67); Quinlan (2003:376, 384); Mace and Sear (2005:153); Newson and Richerson (2013:160). On father-absence and daughters' best-choice fast-track life-history strategy (i.e., teenage motherhood), see Lancaster (1991:8); Quinlan (2003:376); Campbell (2004:21); Kaplan and Gangestad (2005:85-86); Low (2005:79); Hrdy (2009:150-151); Gray and Anderson (2010:122); Cameron and Garcia (2013:141).

²²⁷ Marlowe (1999:391, 393, 396); Hawkes et al (2001:134); Lummaa (2007:399); Biblarz and Stacey (2010:16-17). For father-absence studies, see Quinlan (2003:377); Sear and Mace (2008:5-8); Gray and Anderson (2010:141); Campbell (2013:179).

offspring) simply to ensure reproductive fidelity and future sexual access; nevertheless, in some father-present families, men invest as minimally as absent fathers.²²⁸ In many traditional peoples, males invest minimally, and often only in response to relative mother-absence.²²⁹

If fathers are relatively unnecessary to infant survival, father-presence has positive effects on increasing numbers of a female partner's offspring.²³⁰ In traditional cultures, the presence of fathers also increases child survival principally through the protection of a man's own offspring from opportunistic infanticide committed by other males.²³¹ Active fathering also predicts significant social advantage for older children.²³² A significant positive contribution of male parents is simply ensuring that sons are imprinted with and display the correct forms and levels of masculinity, a prerequisite for successful integration into male social hierarchies.²³³ What passes for ideal fathering also differs radically between societies, and the social advantage of parents' marriage to offspring may be in the infant's access to the (designated) father's kin: as a result, heterosexual pair-bonding would logically become selected for over the course of many generations.²³⁴ Nonetheless, there is significant variation between fathering styles, even in highly-investing human fathers, because paternal investment evolved in response to a range of ancestral environments and is flexibly expressed according to present circumstances; there are, however, many social pressures on modern men not to become equal (or, worse, primary) caregivers of their own offspring, including pressures from the female parent.²³⁵

²²⁸ Nettle (2008:421).

²²⁹ Burbank and Chisholm (1992:186); Betzig and Turke (1992:127); Hames (1992:105-107); Griffin and Griffin (1992:316-317); Hurtado and Hill (1992:52); Morelli and Tronick (1992:252).

²³⁰ On the male reproductive strategy of quantity of offspring over quality, often through the shortening of inter-birth intervals, see Gangestad et al (2006:80); Campbell (2013:180); Klasios (2014:8n9). The question of males' contribution of food to mates and offspring debates two positions: whether men hunt to 'share' meat with women and children, or if men hunt to 'show-off' and gain status among other men. For various positions on actual calorific contribution of male meat-hunting, see Bliege Bird (1999:69-72); Hrdy (1999a:268; 2000:85; 2009:149, 152); Marlowe (1999:395); Hawkes et al (2001:113, 133-135); Hawkes (2004:458, 462); Patton (2005:139-141); Hannagan (2008:469); Opie and Power (2008:180); Sear and Mace (2008:1); Klasios (2014: 8n7, 8n8, 9); Thornhill and Gangestad (2015:165).

²³¹ Mace and Sear (2005:144); Sear and Mace (2008:8-9); Geary (2010:147-148); Gray and Anderson (2010:123).

²³² On fathers' strategic enhancement of their children's socioeconomic status, see Anderson et al (1999:405-406); Geary and Flinn (2001:46); Mace and Sear (2005:148-150); Nettle (2008:416, 421-422).

²³³ Biblarz and Stacey (2010:13-14).

²³⁴ Chapais (2008); Henrich et al (2012); Newson and Richerson (2013:159-160). According to Hewlett (1992b:xiii, xi, xviii), many non-Western cultures view male participation in childbirth and physical care of infants as unnatural. See also Harkness and Super (1992:206-207, 210); Flinn (1992:78-79).

²³⁵ On facultative paternal investment, shaped and constrained by ecological factors, see Sear and Mace (2008:8, 13); Hrdy (2009:161-162). On divorced men's decisions to invest or disinvest in offspring, see Geary (2000:73); Gray and Anderson (2010:136). On social disapproval of overly involved fathers, see Sayer (2005:298); Berdahl

Because paternal investment in the human species is most definitely a biocultural anomaly, many EPs conclude that paternal care is actually mating effort.²³⁶ Women express significant interest in images of men who appear to be interacting positively with children.²³⁷ The key to the reciprocal relationship of paternal investment with mating effort is marital quality within a context of co-residence.²³⁸ Cross-culturally, men's confidence in paternity certainty directly determines the quantity and the quality of paternal investment in existing, co-resident offspring; males who cared little about whether the infants they were investing in were theirs or not would soon be eliminated from the genepool by cuckoo opportunists.²³⁹ Even in a modern post-industrial society with ideals of gender-equity, many agree that male outrage over unjust cuckoldry is justified.²⁴⁰

Paternity certainty is in practice female sexual fidelity, something women agree to exchange to ensure paternal investment.²⁴¹ Fathers are not the only interested paternal kin making investment decisions based on perceptions of paternity certainty: patrilineal grandparents, uncles and aunts, and even cousins all have the potential to make significant contributions to children's survival; the helpfulness of grand-kin depends upon the degree of paternal certainty, compounded through both gender and generation of the infant's descent-line; a maternal grandmother is most certain of her investment, while the paternal grandfather is least likely to be certain of genetic relation, and least likely to invest in grandchildren.²⁴² Human males are atypical in their level of investment in offspring, but they are equally remarkable in the degree of anxiety they express over actual or perceived infidelity, and the lengths they will go to enforce paternity certainty, which in an internally conceiving and gestating species can never

and Moon (2013:342, 347-348). On mothers as gatekeepers who undermine fathers' direct participation in parenting, see Kruger and Fisher (2008:293); Jia and Schoppe-Sullivan (2011:106, 116-117).

²³⁶ Gibson (2009:184); Geary (2010:163). Conversely, in Geary's (2005:494; 2010:167-168) opinion, females' sexual and emotional investment in a male partner is actually co-parenting effort to evoke paternal investment.

²³⁷ Gray and Anderson (2010:138-139).

²³⁸ Parke (1995:41); Anderson et al (1999:407-408, 425); Campbell (2002:59); Geary (2005:496; 2010:162-163).

²³⁹ Key and Aiello (1999:21); Apicella and Marlowe (2004:371); Anderson et al (2007:1); Gray and Anderson (2010:114); Puts (2010:168); Park and Ackerman (2011:334).

²⁴⁰ Barkow et al (1992:246-247); Wilson and Daly (1992:290, 307-308). On cultural mechanisms to suppress cuckoldry, see Barrett et al (2002:179); Aarssen (2007:1769); Gray and Anderson (2010:106, 114).

²⁴¹ Lancaster (1991:6).

²⁴² Sear et al (2003:25); DeBruine (2004:152); Gibson and Mace (2005:479-480); Chastil et al (2006:215, 219-220); Kenrick (2006b:26); Sear and Mace (2008:10); Bishop et al (2009:67); Euler (2011:181, 184); Tansanken et al (2011:407).

under natural circumstances be one hundred percent, in contrast to maternal confidence.²⁴³ Male fears are real, but studies disagree on the exact degree of actual non-paternity in populations, with rates estimated from 1.7% to 29.8 %.²⁴⁴ No study of human populations has ever found zero rates of non-paternity of offspring, however, and the human species cannot be said to be strictly monogamous, because women and men are equally involved in infidelity.²⁴⁵

Accommodating male demand for paternal confidence is an adaptive behaviour, because males who doubt their paternal relationship to children who are supposedly theirs are more likely to abuse or even kill both mother and children. Men make fixed decisions about their paternity at the time they first learn of a woman's pregnancy, based on their perceptions of the mother's behaviour during the impregnation window, and, as men's confidence in paternity declines, they are more likely to divorce a wife, and to steadily reduce economic investment in existing children; serious doubt may result in harm to those children.²⁴⁶ Women have developed behavioural counter-strategies designed to assuage male concerns about cuckoldry, but the most ubiquitous cross-cultural counter-strategy is attention to the faces of new infants: new mothers and maternal kin tend to remark upon the facial resemblance of the new-born baby to the putative father – especially if the child is male – and often specifically on the occasion of the father and paternal kin first viewing the baby; adults intensely scrutinize a baby's face to identify aspects of the face which are like those of the father or his kin, even though infants actually resemble their mothers in the earliest months of life but there is no corresponding spontaneous comparison – by any kin – of the infant's features to the mother or her kin.²⁴⁷

²⁴³ Buss (2000:4; 2008:228); Campbell (2002:245).

²⁴⁴ Buunk et al (1996:360); Anderson (2006:513, 516); Chrastil et al (2006:218); Gray and Anderson (2010:104-105).

²⁴⁵ Thornhill and Gangestad (2008:312).

²⁴⁶ Anderson et al (2007:1), Gray and Anderson (2010:111); Schroeder et al (2016:219). On male perceptions of lack of paternal resemblance and increased likelihood of domestic abuse, see Burch and Gallup (2000:429); Buss (2008:207); Welling et al (2011:1240). On the suppression of natural male inclination to violence toward immatures when men are confident of their biological relationship to a child, see also Hausfater and Hrdy (1984:xxv); Daly and Wilson (1994:122, 131, 1996:17); Buss (2008:228); Anderson (2011:104, 106). On the nondisclosure of accidental discovery non-paternity to putative fathers by medical practitioners to avert direct harm to those children, see Bellis et al (2005:753); Gray and Anderson (2010:115, 118).

²⁴⁷ Daly and Wilson (1982:69; 1998:44); McLain et al (2000:11); Alvergne et al (2007:135); Geary (2010:157); Welling et al (2011:118). On the arms-race of persuasion and skepticism about infant resemblance to fathers, see Burch and Gallup (2000:434); McLain et al (2002:11, 21-22); Platek et al (2002:159, 164-165; 2003:86, 81; 2004:395, 402-403; 2005); Apicella and Marlowe (2004:372); Bressan and Grassi (2004:140); Alvergne et al (2007:135, 142; 2009:67; 2010:7); Gray and Anderson (2010:112); Welling et al (2011:118); Dolinska (2013:285). On women's various behavioural counter-strategies to assure putative fathers and paternal kin of paternity, see Apicella and Marlowe (2004:372); Koyama et al (2006); Glocker et al (2008; 2009); Doslukhambetova and

Evolutionists agree that the purpose of the social custom of kin-recognition is to evoke the designated father's investment in the infant, and the acceptance of the infant into the wider social world.²⁴⁸

Kin but not Kind

Paternal recognition of their own children for purposes of investment is a specific manifestation of kinship affiliation, and establishment of kinship affiliations is vital to human offspring survival, because in the ancestral alloparental context, there is significant advantage in handing an infant into the care of an individual with inherent goodwill toward the shared genome.²⁴⁹ Humans possess specific cognitive apparatus for the identification of kin, and for altruistic, kin-focussed behaviours which enhance offspring survival.²⁵⁰

According to some, early humans computed kinship through observation of who co-resided with the biological mother, and for how long.²⁵¹ In this view, maternal care is the original basis of both kinship and kin-recognition, and so social relations evolved prior to the social construct of fatherhood.²⁵² The relationship between investment in kin and successful reproduction is clear; individual humans benefit enormously from having access to close kin, and women benefit most from having matrilineal kin at hand, because alloparenting is most often allomothering, and matrilineal female kin provide the highest-quality support.²⁵³ Maternal grandmothers want their daughters (and their grand-children) to survive, while paternal grandmothers are also more likely to want a daughter-in-law to produce as many offspring as

Manstead (2011:106). On women's willingness to have their children take the father's name as a declaration of paternity, see Wilson and Daly (2004:200).

²⁴⁸ Buss (2008:207, 228). Alvergne et al (2009:61-62, 67) observe that fathers invest more in children who both look like, and smell like, themselves.

²⁴⁹ On the patrilineal bias in human kinship networks, see Cronk and Gerkey (2007:465).

²⁵⁰ Jones (2003:315-316); Lieberman et al (2007:730); Platek and Kemp (2009); Welling et al (2011:118); West et al (2011:237-238).

²⁵¹ Lieberman et al (2007:727). Warneken and Tomasello (2009:455, 468) argue that all pre-linguistic infants are inclusively altruistic, and only learn as they grow who the most appropriate recipients of that social tendency are. See also Olson and Spelke (2008).

²⁵² Lieberman et al (2007:728). On the investment algorithms of men in matrilineal societies, see Betzig (1988:12); Cronk and Gerkey (2007:468-469). On matriliney's association with stable horticulture, and patriliney's correlation with expansionist pastoralism, see Holden et al (2003:99); Cronk and Gerkey (2007:468-469).

²⁵³ Bereczkei (1998:284); Key and Aiello (1999:24); Rohde et al (2003:271); Gibson and Mace (2005:155, 479); Hrdy (2009:239). On eldest daughters' deferral of reproduction because they are cohabiting with (and providing co-parental assistance to) their own mothers, see Bereczkei and Dunbar (2002).

possible in as little time as possible; maternal aunts and uncles invest more in offspring than paternal kin do, and even the mother's father invests more than the father's mother; women forced to live in patrilineal and polygynous cultures typically express a second-best preference for sororal or close-kin polygyny, which better supports their maternal effort.²⁵⁴ In contrast with ancestral populations, humans now socialize with a much greater proportion of non-kin than with kin.²⁵⁵ Humans cooperate to unprecedented levels with non-kin, but greater altruistic behaviour is still always reserved for the most genetically related, in preference to friends, and lastly, unrelated neighbours.²⁵⁶ Women in patrilocal human cultures tend to interact with female kin and kin-like friends, while males establish strong, hierarchical bonds with other males, kin and nonkin.²⁵⁷ Kin relations are not always unconditionally beneficial for the closely related, however; sibling rivalry is a universal phenomenon, and sibling loyalty is ambivalent at best, although siblings will unite in the face of threat from outside the family.²⁵⁸

Adoption of children is also strongly influenced by degree of genetic relatedness between child and adoptive parent, and in traditional and modern societies alike occurs most often – and most successfully – between closely related kin.²⁵⁹ While adoption of orphans occurs in some animal species – and even between species – it is evidenced in all known human cultures; in non-kin adoptions, adoptees benefit economically, and adopters benefit through increased social standing and expansion of their own mating opportunities, as well as increased survival prospects for remaining children.²⁶⁰ Not all adopted children enjoy a successful placement in their adoptive families, but outcomes for offspring in stepfamilies are statistically bleak.²⁶¹

²⁵⁴ Hrdy (1999b:xxv; 2009:246); Yanca and Low (2004:9); Mace and Sear (2005:151, 156); Bishop et al (2009:66). Parental cooperation in shared offspring is actually more likely to occur harmoniously between close-kin female allomothers than between supposedly monogamous biological parents; see Key and Aiello (1999:21); Daly and Wilson (1996:11-12).

²⁵⁵ Jones (2003:316).

²⁵⁶ Burnstein (2005:529); Kenrick (2006b:24); Madsen et al (2007:354); Stewart-Williams (2007:193, 198); Rachlin and Jones (2008:120, 122); Hill et al (2011:1286, 1288).

²⁵⁷ Ackerman et al (2007:365, 369); Madsen et al (2007:355); Park and Ackerman (2011:336-337); Oberzaucher (2013:355).

²⁵⁸ Salmon and Shackelford (2011:8); Schlomer et al (2011:510). On expectations of altruism among siblings and kin, see Kruger (2001:323, 328-329). On sibling-loyalty among polygamist Mormons, see Jankowiak and Diderich (2000:125); Pollet (2007:176); Martin (2009:181).

²⁵⁹ Cronk and Gerkey (2007:465); Gray and Anderson (2010:74); Volk (2011:122).

²⁶⁰ Silk (1990:30-31); Volk (2011:121-123).

²⁶¹ Buss (2008:228); Gray and Anderson (2010:143). Daly and Wilson (1999:365) conclude that risk of harm for stepchildren is universal and ubiquitous. On stepchildren's greater risk of death, see Daly and Wilson (1985:197, 32; 1994:129). On EP's acceptance of the Daly-Wilson theoretical model of increased step-parental risk of abuse and filicide, see Campbell (2002:59); Buss (2008:228); Schlomer et al (2011:509).

Divorce, remarriage and step-family experience have been prevalent for a long time cross-culturally, but optimistic views of the possible benefits of blended families – and the attribution of stepfamily dysfunction to post-industrial capitalism – are not backed by the ethnographic record.²⁶² The stepfamily-effect is for the most part the result of mother absence, since the presence of biological fathers in stepfamilies does not appear to protect offspring from abuse by step-mothers; stepfathers pose more lethal risk to offspring than abusive stepmothers do, however, because – physically – men are more dangerous generally.²⁶³ The real question is why stepfamilies exist at all: evolutionists conclude that step-parenting is mating effort.²⁶⁴

New mates – especially males – tend to invest as little as possible in a new partner's previous offspring: stepfather investment tends to occur in the presence of the mother, and almost always ceases if and when the present sexual union breaks up; for many, the stepfamily life is more similar to being in a single-parent household.²⁶⁵ From an evolutionary perspective, however, females benefit more from securing a second male mate than they do from prioritising the welfare of their existing offspring; mothers who put their existing children first in a second union risk the dangers of marital conflict for themselves, along with the abuse of their children.²⁶⁶ Men willingly enter a relationship with an encumbered woman because a stepfathers' lifetime fertility is only negatively affected if there are more than two co-resident stepchildren; some genetically and behaviourally lowest-quality men must tolerate being stepfathers in order to sire any children at all.²⁶⁷

²⁶² Daly and Wilson (1994:121, 127); Rohwer et al (1999:385-386); Berger et al (2008:627); Martin (2009:182); Anderson (2011:97); Schlomer et al (2011:509).

²⁶³ Daly and Wilson (1998:5-6, 60-62); Apicella and Marlowe (2004:372); Bellis et al (2005:752); Berger et al (2008:626); Anderson (2011:102). The key predictor of reduced investment in offspring is the presence of a step-parent, especially a stepmother; see Zvoch (1999:453, 461); Case et al (2000:797, 781; 2001:269, 285); Tooley et al (2006:224, 229); Cronk and Gerkey (2007:465).

²⁶⁴ On the evidence of step-parental behaviour (including minimal tolerance of a woman's children) as mating effort – courtship – of the mother, see Daly and Wilson (1994:125; 1998:64); Anderson et al (1999:408); Rohwer et al (1999:367, 385-386); Salmon (2005b:512); Anderson (2011:105). Abusive stepparents are generally competent parents to their own offspring within the same domestic residence, however; see Daly and Wilson (1985:197; 1994:129; 1998:7, 29, 31, 50); Mesnick (1997:243); Daly and Wilson (1998:50). On the tendency of stepparents to be especially abusive to stepchildren when they also have natural children of their own, see Harris et al (2007:85, 92, 94).

²⁶⁵ Anderson (2011:103). Cf. Gray and Anderson (2010:154-155), however, who contend that stepfathers and biological fathers of non-resident offspring are alike as parents in actively investing as little as possible.

²⁶⁶ Wilson and Daly (1998:226). On the elevated rates of women's resort to refuges and of men's murder of wives in step-father families due to males' sexual proprietariness, see also Wilson and Daly (1998:226; 2004:211); Goetz et al (2008:483-484).

²⁶⁷ Anderson et al (1999:408); Gray and Anderson (2010:157).

Raising offspring is an immensely costly business in the animal world. Discriminative parental solicitude in humans is an aspect of kin selection and infanticide is an unpleasant but universal behaviour across species, which advantages parents (and would-be parents) by eliminating less viable offspring.²⁶⁸ All of the factors determining a decision to commit infanticide in animals are also evidenced in the human species; neglect is the least violent form of disinvestment in unwanted infants, and historically has not been detrimental to the reproductive success of male (or female) parent.²⁶⁹ Outright infanticide is simply the most visible and dramatic manifestation of parents' differential investment in offspring, reflecting parents' estimations of viability of an infant in the present environment; among humans, such disinvestment decisions are largely unconscious.²⁷⁰ In some traditional cultures – given the alternatives – infanticide is essentially the most humane option, and social mechanisms exist to distance the parents from the loss of a delivered child.²⁷¹ Mothers' assessments of the sub-optimality of the environment for infant survival give significant attention to their own relative wealth and opportunity.²⁷² Women and men are both likely to commit infanticide because of the perceived 'problem' of uncertain paternity, and illegitimacy is also a strong predictor of pregnancy termination; the older a single mother is, however, the less likely she is to sacrifice this last chance at reproduction.²⁷³ Lack of effective paternal support is also a strong predictor of maternal disinvestment, in the form of abortion, infanticide, or postpartum abuse and neglect of children.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁸ On infanticide as a universal and widespread reproductively pragmatic and prosocial practice among humans, avoided only in exceptional times when the total population was smaller than desired, see Hausfater and Hrdy (1984:xxvi); Scrimshaw (1984:439-440, 450); Johansson (1984:463); Oliverio (1994:106); Barrett et al (2002:178); Campbell (2002:49). Infanticide is a fact of life, even in modern nations, and infanticide accounts for one third of all accidental-injury deaths in the modern US; see Johansson (1984:463); Mesnick (1997:242); Spinelli (2005:15). On post-partum depression as a rational maternal disinvestment mechanism for minimizing investment in less viable offspring in a suboptimum environment, see Kurland and Gaulin (2005:467); Buss (2008:217).

²⁶⁹ On the infanticide of non-kin offspring as a wildly successful 'take-over' strategy for males across species, see Packer and Pusey (1983:716-718, 721); Hausfater and Hrdy (1984:xvii-xviii); Smuts (1995:7); Daly and Wilson (1998:11, 16); Packer (2000:830); Broom et al (2004:261); Van Schaik et al (2004:149); Balme and Hunter (2013:791).

²⁷⁰ Hausfater and Hrdy (1984:xxvii); Scrimshaw (1984:458-459).

²⁷¹ Scrimshaw (1984:339-440, 449); Oliverio (1994:108-109); Barrett et al (2002:44, 178, 202). Parental infanticide is the preferred and least disruptive method of disinvestment in traditional cultures, especially in hostile social, economic, or ecological environments, or in the event of a less viable infant; see Hrdy (1979:13); Hausfater and Hrdy (1984:xvii-xix); Daly and Wilson (1988:294); Oliverio (1994:117); Mesnick (1997:242); Rohwer et al (1999:371); Low (2005:75); Kurland and Gaulin (2005:466); Salmon (2005b:509); Schlomer et al (2011:502-503).

²⁷² Scrimshaw (1984:449, 460-461) also observes that while the age of the infant strongly predicts who will do the actual killing, it is most often the mother who bears the duty of necessary infant elimination.

²⁷³ Barrett et al (2002:181, 186-187); Buss (2008:219).

²⁷⁴ Betzig (1988:10); Campbell (2002:50-51); Bourget et al (2007:76).

There are also significant patterns of gender differences in aggressive infanticidal disinvestment: neonaticides and pathological filicides are mostly committed by women, while males predominantly commit family-homicide and retaliating filicide, as well as purely accidental or unintended filicide.²⁷⁵ Neonaticidal women share a number of characteristics: they are younger, less likely to be married, conceal their pregnancies (sometimes even from themselves), do not seek help or prenatal care, and have no real plan for parenthood.²⁷⁶ Filicides after the first week of the infant's life tend to be committed by fathers, especially those enacted in later childhood.²⁷⁷ Filicidal fathers also demonstrate a number of common circumstantial factors, including low status, unemployment, financial difficulties, below-average education, social isolation, expectation of relationship breakdown, and actual separation.²⁷⁸ Many of the disinvesting forms of infanticide – neonaticide, unwanted-child filicide, and fatal abuse filicide, for example – are not accompanied by parental suicide, which tends to be associated with men's murder of older children.²⁷⁹

Parents also make selective disinvestment decisions based on an infant's sex; females are most often disinvested in for reproductive-economic reasons, but the parent of a male child is more likely to enjoy a greater number of grandchildren.²⁸⁰ The popular perception of infanticide is that sons are favoured in parental investment while daughters are highly expendable.²⁸¹ It is reproductively effective to invest in sons during times of prosperity, and in daughters during periods of socioeconomic adversity.²⁸² In fact, the majority of infanticide victims across the whole world are actually male, which may be related to the greater incidence of malformations in male offspring.²⁸³ Institutionalized sex-selective infanticide of daughters is ultimately linked with hypergamy: when women marry up within a strict class system, then women in the highest

²⁷⁵ Bourget et al (2007:76-77); Harris et al (2007:92); Liem and Koenraadt (2008:166, 168, 170, 172); Dawson (2015:162, 170). Daly and Wilson (1988:82) suggest that, since family homicides are invariably committed by males, the main motive is male sexual proprietariness.

²⁷⁶ Bourget et al (2007:76).

²⁷⁷ Bourget et al (2007:75, 78-79); Liem and Koenraadt (2008:168, 172). Liem and Koenraadt's (2008:172) study observes that one quarter of filicidal fathers kill a child to intimidate a leaving spouse.

²⁷⁸ Bourget et al (2007:78).

²⁷⁹ Bourget et al (2007:76); Liem and Koenraadt (2008:172).

²⁸⁰ Hausfater and Hrdy (1984:xxxiii); Johansson (1984:463); Scrimshaw (1984:447). On the ubiquity of manipulation of the sex ratio of offspring across species, see also Thogerson et al (2013:2-3).

²⁸¹ For a review of studies on female infanticide in East Asian nations, see Fuse and Crenshaw (2006:360).

²⁸² Betzig (1988:9); Badcock (2000:187); Barrett et al (2002:191, 200); Fuse and Crenshaw (2006:360).

²⁸³ Liem and Koenraadt (2008:172).

classes have fewer marital options, and so families disinvest in unneeded daughters; preferential female infanticide is most prevalent in agricultural-patrilineal societies with entrenched marriage-dowry customs.²⁸⁴ Although selective disinvestment in sons is traditionally associated with very adverse socio-environmental conditions, socioeconomically liberated women in fully developed modern cultures demonstrate a distinct, aesthetic preference for daughters.²⁸⁵ When the pressure to invest primarily in males of the patrilineal family is removed, women may prefer to invest in female kin – who offer more satisfying emotional attachments – a far cry from Freudian models of primal, sexualized opposite-gender relationships within the family.²⁸⁶

Freud's psychosexual model of kin relationships is no longer supported in a number of fields, and scientifically-oriented enquiry into incest is converging on Westermarck's (1891/1921) hypothesis of evolved incest avoidance. Westermarck (1891:192-193) grounded his analysis of kinship, sexuality, and marriage in Darwin's theory of evolution, and was himself dismissive of social explanations for incest avoidance; he viewed humans as natural animals in a natural world, and concluded that the rules governing their sexual attractions and aversions were therefore likely to be the same.²⁸⁷ Westermarck recognised that social forms of disgust about incest grow out of the individual's innate, psychological disgust, and not vice versa: sexual aversion to specific individuals was a kind of reverse-imprinting, the result of shared residence during early childhood; numerous studies support the Westermarck co-residence hypothesis.²⁸⁸ Neurocognitive studies supports a view of the mind as specifically geared to detect cues of relatedness (i.e., knowledge of childhood co-residence (including co-residence with non-kin) gained through observation of maternal investment in siblings; olfactory evidence for genetic similarity; and early female maturation and dispersal away from male kin) to facilitate avoidance of potential inbreeding.²⁸⁹ Evolutionists agree that incest-avoidance mechanisms

²⁸⁴ Scrimshaw (1984:455-456); Bereczkei and Csanaky (1996:28-32); Badcock (2000:184-185); Barrett et al (2002:152, 181, 189-190, 195-196); Low (2005:73-76).

²⁸⁵ Higginson and Aarssen (2011:60, 63); Zaman and Fivush (2013:593-594).

²⁸⁶ On Freud's great mistakes about family psychosexual dynamics, see Buss (2008:24, 225-226).

²⁸⁷ Lieberman (2006:112).

²⁸⁸ Barrett et al (2002:222); Harper (2013:994-995); Lieberman (2006:112, 114); Antfolk et al (2012:217). On critical development periods for negative imprinting, on Israeli kibbutzim, see Shepher (1971a, 1971b, 1983); on Chinese *sim pua* marriages, see Wolf (1966, 1968, 1970, 1995); and on Lebanese cousin-marriages, see McCabe (1983). For discussion and review, see Wolf and Huang (1980); Fessler and Navarrete (2004:278, 288); Silverman and Bevc (2005:300-302, 306); Lieberman and Hatfield (2006:285-289).

²⁸⁹ Fessler and Navarrete (2004:277); Silverman and Bevc (2005:300, 307); Lieberman (2006:110, 113-114); Antfolk et al (2012:222); Lieberman and Lobel (2012:26, 32).

function to enhance reproductive success, through denying the expression of bad genes.²⁹⁰ The Westermarck effect appears to be stronger in females – especially during ovulation –perhaps because parental investment costs are always greater for women; the rates of mortality and morbidity of inbred populations are twice as high as in genetically diverse groups.²⁹¹ Parent-offspring incest-avoidance mechanisms are evident in animal species, especially between mothers and sons, contrary to Freud’s Oedipus-Complex which posits the son’s attraction to the mother and envy and hatred for the father as chief competitor for her sexual favours.²⁹² Intergenerational male-male conflict is better explained as sexual rivalry between two grown men over sexual access to unrelated women, especially those controlled by the alpha-male father; biological mothers conflict with their husbands because – for logical, evolutionary reasons – mothers want their own sons to access family resources as quickly as possible in order to begin reproductive life.²⁹³ Ruling men’s exclusive sexual access to fertile women is often enshrined in marriage arrangements; women’s sexual availability (as well as the fruits of their labour) is also heavily determined by patriarchal marriage – the most common type of formal mating structure in the human species.

The Costs and Benefits of Marriage

Marriage is a universal human custom, but – according to the literary record – men are somewhat conflicted about the costs and benefits of the matter. Darwin (1838) sets out the potential benefits of marriage from a male point of view: a clean, nicely-furnished house; a cheerful housekeeper, charming companion, and nurse in old age; the immortality of offspring; and a “nice soft” wife who is a recreational “object”, and – wonderfully – “better than a dog anyhow”.²⁹⁴ The benefits of remaining single are persuasive: liberty to do whatever one likes without compromise, and being able to socialize with clever men rather than time-wasting relations. The costs of marriage, however, are unbearable: distraction from the real business of

²⁹⁰ Silverman and Bevc (2005:292).

²⁹¹ Haig (1999:96); Fessler and Navarrete (2004:277); Silverman and Bevc (2005:295-296); Tooby and Cosmides (2005:29); Lieberman (2006:113); Geary (2010:373); Antfolk et al (2012:217, 22); Welling and Puts (2014:247).

²⁹² H. Fisher (2004:102); Silverman and Bevc (2005:296); Antfolk et al (2012:222). Daly and Wilson (1988:116-117) contend that while maternity certainty is 100%, paternity is never so, and thus – statistically – paternal incest is always less likely to result in genetic defects. See also Haig (1999:96-97), who contends that stepfather-stepdaughter incest is the most common form of intergenerational domestic sexual abuse of all because of (men’s) conscious awareness of non-paternity and therefore absence of mutation risks.

²⁹³ Barrett et al (2002:204, 206); Buss (2008:226-227).

²⁹⁴ Darwin, C. R. “This is the Question Marry Not Marry”. [Memorandum on marriage]. (7.1838) CUL-DAR210.8.2 (Darwin Online, <http://darwin-online.org.uk/>) Ed. John van Wyher.

life – intellectual work; financial and emotional investment in potentially ungrateful children; having to work rather too hard to support the family; and having to accommodate the contrary wishes of a wife. In the end, the ultimate cost of not getting married is too great: “groggy & dingy” old age without the support of wife or children. Having talked himself into marriage, Darwin then ponders his father’s advice to marry early: he himself leans toward delay, because marriage is no better than “slavery”, but the thought of growing old alone persuades him that he should trust to chance, and attempt to become a “happy slave”, while taking care to ensure that things are to his liking. Six months later, Darwin married his thirty-year old first cousin, Emma Wedgwood; this ‘nice soft wife’ bore him ten children, the last of which was delivered when she was 48; she spent a good deal of her life also nursing her husband (as well some of their children) through illness, suggesting that his ‘slavery’ as a husband was not as demanding as her efforts as wife. Darwin (1838) never discusses the benefits of mutual love – rather, he specifically hopes to avoid engaging in ‘terrible’ time-wasting emotional relationships with his family – but he is acutely aware of the wife’s drain on his financial resources. None of Darwin’s (1838) lists include any social or material benefits an ‘enslaved’ husband might bestow upon his wife (or children), while a wife’s duties appear to involve, first and foremost, her husband’s comfort, especially in old age; in this model, wives are investing heaviest of all in husbands, not in offspring. Evolutionists generally agree with Darwin that men view marriage as a trade-off between freedoms and opportunities for social and reproductive benefits, but few evolutionary analyses examine marriage from a specifically female point of view of benefits and costs.²⁹⁵ More than 90% of humans will be married at some point in their lives, and, despite the potential ubiquity of polygamy, most marriages in the world involve a union between two genetically unrelated individuals; husband and wife do not (usually) share the loyalties forged in kinship ties.²⁹⁶ Human marriage is not tied to reproductive relationships alone, but involves many purely social relations between large numbers of individuals, and humans frequently choose to marry and remain married long after reproductive endeavour is over, or in the absence of any offspring; reproduction is not essential to stable and successful marriage.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁵ Cf. Schmitt (2014:12), who argues that the heavier-investing sex (i.e., women) gain a great deal from marriage, while men gain increased reproductive success from investing in their offspring, Campbell (2002:247), who observes that because monogamous marriage is so costly for males, they must reap some benefit from it, and Barret et al (2002:209), who contend that human marriage arrangements aim to maximize individual fitness.

²⁹⁶ Buss (1995:18); Campbell and Ellis (2005:421); Fisher (2006:104); Schmitt (2014:12). Campbell (2002:251) describes marriage between naturally conflicting males and females as a “fragile institution”, likely to collapse.

²⁹⁷ Wilson and Daly (1992:309); Anderson et al (1999:409).

Marriage – in practice – gives one man secure access to at least one fertile woman, and enhances his ability – in theory – to avoid provisioning another man’s offspring.²⁹⁸ Getting married in many cultures also allows a male to become recognized as a true man.²⁹⁹ In traditional cultures, formalized marriage also benefits women more than mere cohabitation: their children will be recognized as legitimate members of the community, and as wives, they are at less risk than cohabiting women of suffering domestic violence or murder.³⁰⁰ Marriage to the right (but rare) sort of man is essential to reproductive success for women, and – in the female view – the right sort of man is one willing to commit to the exclusive nature of marriage as a sexual and financial institution.³⁰¹ Being seen to be willing to commit also makes men more attractive to the right sort of women – the youngest, most beautiful ones – and offers men a number of advantages: increased paternity certainty; increased offspring survival; increased return on investment in multiple grandchildren; increased social status; and secure in-law male allies.³⁰² The wrong sort of man is very unlikely to enjoy the many benefits of marriage; while unattractive males are less likely to marry, only the most unattractive females are likely to experience very negative effects on fertility, mainly through their marriage to lowest-quality males.³⁰³

Reproductive behaviours in the human species have long been structured by the many forms of marriage; nevertheless, traditional marriage is not romance, but a political alliance and economic exchange between kin groups.³⁰⁴ Arranged marriages – the most prevalent form of marriage historically – enable the governing generation to ensure the future of their lineage.³⁰⁵ Males make agreements about which women belong to which males for exclusive sexual purposes, while the married couple and their children are established within the social hierarchy.³⁰⁶ Reproduction within marriage has a higher chance of success and offspring are

²⁹⁸ Klasios (2014:3).

²⁹⁹ Buss (2008:140).

³⁰⁰ Goetz et al (2008:484); Musick and Bumpass (2012:1, 6); Stavrova et al (2012:1063); Mernitz and Dush (2016:233).

³⁰¹ Buss (2008:109, 140); Gillespie et al (2010:159); Klasios (2014:3).

³⁰² Wilson and Daly (2004:205); Buss (2008:140).

³⁰³ Buss (2008:107, 140); see Schmitt (2014:17).

³⁰⁴ Barret et al (2002:203-204). On marriage as inter-group alliance, see Daly and Wilson (1996:14); Rodseth and Wrangham (2004:390); Gray and Anderson (2010:63); Geary et al (2014:397). On marriage as the exchange between males of female reproductive capacity as a valuable commodity subject to market forces (and returnable on the failure of female fertility), see Daly and Wilson (1988:188-190); Wilson and Daly (1995:114); Barrett et al (2002:181); Sugiyama (2005:303-304).

³⁰⁵ Walker et al (2011:2); Newson and Richerson (2013:160).

³⁰⁶ Symons (1979:123, 131-132).

more viable, even in gender-liberated, post-industrial nations.³⁰⁷ It takes a typical hunter-gatherer three or four years to rear an infant, a period when marriages in the human species often spontaneously break down.³⁰⁸ The purposes of marriage are multiple: economic cooperation between role specialists; sex opportunity; and the social production of offspring. Popular evolutionary explanations for the origin and persistence of formalized marriage in human cultures include the provisioning hypothesis, the bodyguard hypothesis, the supremacy of male mating preferences under polygyny, monogamy, and even polyandry, and the self-reinforcing contribution of formally contracted marriage to human civilization itself; hypotheses less explored by evolutionists include male exploitation of female domestic labour – housework – and the advantage to men provided by wives’ attention to husbands’ health.³⁰⁹

EPs contend that ecological and social environmental contexts determine marriage arrangements among humans, but marriage systems are not always the same in practice as mating strategies.³¹⁰ Monogamy (in all its various forms), appears to be the working default for humans across environments; polygyny may be the ideal mating strategy for males but is generally achieved only by a few, privileged males, in highly defined social circumstances, and polyandry is very rare, and occurs most often in hostile ecologies, and tends to involve the marriage of one woman to a set of cooperating brothers.³¹¹

Monogamy may be a second-best or working compromise for both sexes, but there are benefits in exclusive marriage for both sexes. The benefits for males of monogamy are many: improvement of relationships with other males through decrease of mating competition and

³⁰⁷ Gray and Anderson (2010:72). On the contribution of marital stability and quality to reproductive success, see Berezkei and Csanaky (1996:33); Gonzaga et al (2008:119).

³⁰⁸ Campbell (2002:262); Nordlund (2005:115); Schmitt (2005a:261).

³⁰⁹ Gray and Anderson (2010:61). On the origins of human marriage in male provisioning of females, see Winking et al (2007:1643); Chapais (2011:33); Gavrillets (2012:9923, 9926-9927). On women’s provision of the majority of foodstuffs for hunter-gatherer families, see Campbell (2002:263-264, 2004:17); Hawkes (2004:465); Hrdy (2005:297). On the bodyguard hypothesis, which positions preferred males – “husbands” – as protectors of women and children from other males; see Mesnick (1997:243); Wilson and Mesnick (1997:509-511); Hawkes et al (2001); Campbell (2002:243-244); Hawkes (2004:462-463, 465); Puts (2010:164); Vandermassen (2011:740). On monogamous pair-bonding among some primates and lowered rates of opportunistic infanticide by males, see Harcourt and Greenberg (2001:911-912); Campbell (2002:244); Borries et al (2011:685); Opie et al (2013:13328).

³¹⁰ Quinlan (2008:227, 236); Henrich et al (2012:658-659).

³¹¹ According to Hrdy (2000:75), evolutionary theory typically assumes that the one male-one female model of mating is a mutually beneficial system, but there greater benefits to men of polygyny, and to women of partible paternity, or polyandry. See also Haddix (2001:47, 58); Schmitt (2005a:263); Kenrick (2006b:29); Starkweather and Hames (2012:163). On the unexpected ubiquity of polyandry in the human species, see Price et al (2010:471); Starkweather and Hames (2012:149); Gowaty (2013:877).

increase of cooperation in alliances; the opportunity for even lower-rank males to achieve at least some mating success; institutionalized access to sexual activity; increased paternity certainty; exclusive possession of one female's lifetime reproductive potential; and perhaps most importantly, the improved survival of offspring; the costs of cuckoldry for men within the context of monogamous marriage are enormous, however, because the price paid in mistaken investment by men can never be recouped. Women gain in monogamy through access to additional resources (including, perhaps, food) for herself and her children; through guaranteed protection of herself and offspring from other males; and through having to provide sexual access to only one male. Women also lose, however, because the genetic diversity and thus quality of her offspring is restricted; because she is exposed to sometimes lethal male sexual proprietariness; and because she must constantly guard her only mate from female competitors, who prefer to poach currently-married men.³¹²

Evolutionary analysis divides monogamy into two types: ecologically imposed monogamy (EIM), which occurs when offspring would not survive without the intensive nurturance of two parents, and socially imposed monogamy (SIM), in which men agree to restrict themselves to one woman and her offspring in return for the social benefits of citizenship and inheritance laws.³¹³ In modern societies, so-called 'serial monogamy' is in practice lifetime polygyny, most often practiced by males.³¹⁴ Polygyny – cross-culturally the most popular form of marriage because it requires less compromise of male sexual inclinations – does not always result in increased numbers of offspring.³¹⁵ Some draw attention to the intrinsic relationship between economic development, personal property, patrilineal inheritance, and a man's need to ensure he leaves at least one male heir.³¹⁶ Polygyny compounds socioeconomic inequity, however, and is also associated with social dysfunction; the tendency for one man to sequester and

³¹² On benefits, costs, and compromises of marriage between sexes with divergent reproductive goals, see Hrdy (1999a:232); Campbell (2002:233, 249-250, 262; 2004:17). On the cultural evolution of monogamy, see MacDonald (1995); Scheidel (2009:280); Geary (2010:212, 244); Fortunato (2011:87); De la Croix and Mariani (2012:1); Henrich et al (2012:659).

³¹³ Geary and Flinn (2001:47); Low (2007:455); Archer (2009:261); Geary (2010:173); Harper (2013:1011). The widely accepted distinctions between SIM, EIM, and polygyny were first proposed by Alexander et al (1979).

³¹⁴ Barrett et al (2002:102); Campbell (2002:41-42); Low (2007:453); Archer (2009:259). In contemporary, strictly monogamous serial-marriage cultures elite men control the availability of divorce, and men are much more likely to remarry after divorce, whereas previously-married women find it hard to remarry men at all; see Käär et al (1998:149); Jokela et al (2010:911); Puts (2010:163-164); De la Croix and Mariani (2012:1, 3-4, 31, 38).

³¹⁵ Marlowe (1999:402; 2004:374); Campbell (2002:242); Borgerhoff Mulder (2000:401); (Fisher 2006:104); Gray and Anderson (2010:63). The genetic record of the human species confirms that ancestral marriage patterns included monogamy and polygyny; see Labuda et al (2010:353, 356, 358); De la Croix and Mariani (2012:1).

³¹⁶ Low (2005:73). See also Hartung (1982); Cowlishaw and Mace (1996).

impregnate as many high-quality females as he can support – in contemporary and traditional cultures alike – means that some men produce a greater lifetime proportion of offspring, while a subset of men never marry and reproduce and more men than women individually have a greater number of offspring.³¹⁷ Polygyny offers some benefits to women (especially if the co-wife is close kin): the support of other women within the heterosexual marriage spreads the load of constant pregnancies (albeit at the cost of the ever-increasing division of the husband's patrimony).³¹⁸ On the other hand, the three principal reasons for verbal and physical violence between co-wives are sexual jealousy, unequal distribution by the husband of resources among wives and children, and a husband's subsequent marriage; a polygynous husband may also be devoting much of his time to adulterous affairs, in the hope of securing more wives.³¹⁹ Polygyny is rarely women's best first-choice, because costs greatly outweigh benefits – second wives' fertility is often actively suppressed by first wives, through psychological impairment, or through infanticide of offspring – but in an androcentric culture the advantage to the reproductive fitness of males is sufficient justification for the persistence of the marriage custom.³²⁰

Wherever there is marriage, there is almost always divorce, but historically divorce has been more available for men than for women.³²¹ Traditional justifications for divorce are very likely to include failure of female fertility – including the apparent failure of female old age – rather than lack of love or happiness; in traditional societies, failure of female fidelity also predicts divorce.³²² Many individuals, especially men, divorce as a necessary prelude to remarriage to a more desirable partner; women tend to divorce while they are still young, men as they age, because both are seeking to re-enter the marriage market with maximum resources – female

³¹⁷ Campbell (2002:44); Aarssen (2007:1769); Buss (2008:297). According to Scheidel (2009:282-283, 288), strict (albeit serial) monogamy and citizen equality in the Greco-Roman world rested upon a stratum of resource inequality, sanctioned chattel slavery, and effective reproductive polygyny. On increased male physiological dysfunction and mortality rates due to higher levels of testosterone among competitive males in polygynous societies, see Campbell (1999:205).

³¹⁸ Borgerhoff Mulder (2000:404). Women are at times very willing to engage in polygyny; see Symons (1979:154, 224-225); Yanca and Low (2004:21); Apostolou (2007:408).

³¹⁹ Symons (1979:246); Burbank (1987:93-94).

³²⁰ Campbell (2002:248); Low (2005:68-69); Geary et al (2014:397, 401). Polygyny also depends on emotional distance between man and his wives and man and his offspring; see Jankowiak and Diderich (2000:134, 132); Low (2007:451); Gray and Anderson (2010:121); Geary et al (2014:398).

³²¹ Campbell and Ellis (2005:423).

³²² Betzig (1986:83; 1988:8; 1989:76); Buckle et al (1996:368, 374-375); Campbell (2002:251-252, 258); Gray and Anderson (2010:78).

fertility and male wealth.³²³ The more children a woman has, the less likely it is that she will remarry, and the presence of co-resident children belonging to the woman makes the remarriage more likely to fail, because males are averse to other men's offspring.³²⁴ Marriage is a contract of compromise between conflicting male and female reproductive strategies, but in patriarchal contexts divorce renegotiates that treaty in favour of the maximum reproductive fitness of the husband.³²⁵ In modern cultures female dissatisfaction with male contribution to marital happiness now accounts for increasing numbers of divorces, but – although women with more economic power in modern cultures are able to initiate divorce more readily – women married to extremely wealthy males are still least likely to initiate divorce.³²⁶

Civilization and Domestication

According to some evolutionists, the greatest adaptive advantage of marriage in human culture – especially monogamy – lies in its enhancement of prosocial behaviour, and thus upon the development of civilization.³²⁷ In this view, society benefits through reduction in crime because more males are stabilized in monogamous marital units; through increased paternal investment in children; through decreased physical and emotional clausturation of females because males are competing less intensively for them; and in greater assortative mating, with subsequently better domestic relations.³²⁸ Others dispute the effect of marriage upon more prosocial behaviour.³²⁹ If the historic institutionalization of monogamy represented potential

³²³ Buckle et al (1996:368).

³²⁴ Buckle et al (1996:363, 371, 375); Campbell (2002:259-260). Gray and Anderson (2010:155) suggest that remarriage for women with existing children only occurs at all because some lower-quality men can never win mates who have never been married before.

³²⁵ Buckle et al (1996:363-364). Married couples divorce most of all during their years of peak fertility as existing children become minimally independent, and again after the child reaches reproductive capacity; see Badcock (2000:159); Campbell (2002:260-261); Nordlund (2005:115).

³²⁶ On greater female economic independence and greater female options for divorce, see Buss (2003:213); Jackson et al (2014:118). On women's reluctance to divorce wealthy husbands, even in gender-equal nations, see Campbell (2002:258, 266).

³²⁷ Sampson et al (2006:465); Walker et al (2011:4); De la Croix and Mariani (2012:9); Henrich et al (2012:657, 659-660, 666); Lundberg and Pollak (2015). Polygyny is sometimes viewed as the predecessor to the more civilized full realization of marriage – monogamy; see Lagerlöf (2005; 2010); Gould et al (2008); De la Croix and Mariani (2012:2, 37); Henrich et al (2012). Cf. Chapais (2013:59), who argues that one of the reasons that monogamy developed from polygyny was simply because males in increasingly complex social contexts could no longer afford to invest in many sons.

³²⁸ Sampson et al (2006:465) Burt et al (2010:1309); Geary (2010:373); Gray and Anderson (2010:232); Campbell (2013:180); Chapais (2013).

³²⁹ Bereczkei and Csanaky (1996:21, 31-32); Fortunato and Archetti (2010:149).

reproductive victory for lower-ranked males, ruling-class men still enjoyed reproductive advantage because intragroup competitiveness (over women) is diverted outward into intergroup competition (over territory and resources), and so rulers' access to many fertile females.³³⁰ More probably, the primary social purpose of all types of marriage is the legitimate transmission of property, wealth, and social obligations between families.³³¹

Marriage in complex civilizations clearly benefits individuals' reproductive success, and possibly contributes to successful civilization of group-living, but few evolutionists are interested in how the apparently natural division of labour within the heterosexual pair-bond household actually benefits one sex to the cost of the other. The benefits reaped by men's foisting of domestic work onto wives is better addressed in discussion of gendered behavior by sociologists and historians.³³² Contemporary sociologists view sex differences in housework as a problem, but studies of hunter-gatherer, and (presumably) Paleolithic daily life suggest that gender divisions in domestic labour originated in an ancient context to the benefit of both sexes; social science studies ignore the obvious correlation of division of labour to better reproductive outcomes.³³³ In traditional (and many modern) marriages the wife simply replaces the mother in providing food; in the production and care of status-appropriate clothing; and in the maintenance of a healthy and harmonious domestic habitat. Housework is work that almost all women automatically undertake for the benefit of their dependent offspring, but in homes with or without children the wife – even when employed outside of the home – is traditionally expected to provide, without payment, domestic services to at least a minimally sufficient standard for the benefit of an unrelated adult male – her husband; in this sense, co-residing

³³⁰ Campbell (2002:247, 249; 2004:17).

³³¹ Cowlshaw and Mace (1996:87, 92-93); Wilson and Daly (2004:205); Low (2005:74; 2007:456); Mace and Sear (2005:153); Gray and Anderson (2010:71).

³³² For social-theory explanations of why – despite gender equity – apparently ideologically liberal (or liberated) women in paid employment still do significantly disproportionate share of the family's domestic chores, compared to husbands; see Juster et al (2003:40-41); Davis et al (2007:1248); Cha (2010:303, 305-306); Geist (2010:218); Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard (2010:771-774); Sayer (2010:21, 23); Bianchi et al (2012:55-56); Jackson et al (2014:106-107); Yavorsky et al (2015).

³³³ Lancaster (1991:4-5); Browne (1998); Kuhn and Stiner (2006:953, 955-956); Davis et al (2007:1249, 1258-1259, 1265); Weisfeld et al (2011:1171). Whenever the local ecology supports it, males in traditional cultures universally prefer to do less work and provisioning, leaving women to support the family; see Hawkes et al (2001:135-136). In ancient Greece, manhood was partially defined by not having to work for a living, and so a man's own living was worked by his slaves, his employees, his wife, and his co-resident female kin; see Cohen (2003). On women's domestic role and men's role in the public world, see Homer *Il.* 6.490-493.

husbands are opportunistic freeloaders on female domestic effort.³³⁴ Furthermore, the formalization of marriage and the production of children increases the unequal gendering of housework.³³⁵ There is no country where males do much more than about one third of domestic labour, and in any country, women always do more than men.³³⁶ Women's reproduction of the domestic environment, as Darwin's personal journal observed, is one of the primary benefits of marriage for men, freeing them to attend to more important tasks such as the economic creation of wealth, and social interaction with other men.³³⁷ In some traditional cultures, women's reproductive success is tied to their status within the community as a good home-maker; the threat to women's peer-evaluated ranking may be more than some women will stand – even among egalitarian societies – and they are reluctant to give up supervisory rights over standards of domestic order, and actively resist male participation in child-care.³³⁸ Men in the present era devote greater effort to interacting with children, but childcare within the home is still viewed as a relatively low-status feminine occupation – compared to masculine engagement in the competitive workplace with its substantial financial rewards.³³⁹

The second great contribution of marriage to civilization is the gain in health status of married men, because women are still also primarily responsible for family health.³⁴⁰ Darwin was correct in his view of marriage as a benefit to men's health, especially in old age; males experience more benefit from marriage (and remarriage) than women in terms of health outcomes. Wives do significantly more emotional healthcare of their husband, and men are very likely to divorce sick wives who need care, whereas sick wives sometimes seek divorce

³³⁴ In modern Western cultures, males are still heavily dependent on females for both sexual and domestic service; see Geary (2010:250); Puts (2010:160-161, 164, 169). Campbell (2004:22) points out that a non-contributing or freeloading adult male drains family resources as much as a very large and demanding child. On the relative importance of co-opted female domestic labour (i.e., childcare, housekeeping, and unpaid recreational sex) in marriage, see Aarssen (2007:1772-1773).

³³⁵ Hook (2006:642); Davis et al (2007:1258-1259, 1263-1265); Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard (2010:768); Bianchi et al (2012:56); Yavorsky et al (2015).

³³⁶ Hook (2006:639, 654); Geist (2010:217); Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard (2010:767); Sayer (2010:31); Kornrich et al (2013:27); Lyonette and Crompton (2014). Female perceptions of unfairness in the gendered division of housework between men and women leads to a decline in marital quality, conversely, while wives become happier when men do more housework, men doing more domestic chores become less happy; see Frisco and Williams (2003:52, 67); Sevilla-Sanz (2010:225); Yodanis (2010:187).

³³⁷ See Darwin's (1838) deliberations on marriage above, pp. 57-59; 58n294.

³³⁸ Hook (2006:655); Rucas et al (2006:49); Stirrat and Perrett (2012:718).

³³⁹ Sayer (2005:298); Bianchi et al (2012:58-60); Berdahl and Moon (2013:345).

³⁴⁰ Gray and Anderson (2010:228-229, 334); Kaptjin et al (2010:66); Drefahl (2012:462-463); Musick and Bumpass (2012:4). Drefahl (2012:469, 472) finds that married and cohabiting couples both had significant advantages in health over singletons, especially single men living with other male singletons.

because husbands continue to expect greater participation in household duties by such wives.³⁴¹ The health benefits of reduced testosterone in husbands living with women (and children) disappear upon divorce.³⁴² The quality of a marriage also has a significant influence on health outcomes, although marital quality is assessed, by both older men and older women, on how well the husband is cared for by the wife, while marital functionality is gauged by the benefits to the husband.³⁴³ The wife's marital happiness is a chief determinant of health for both spouses, however, because when the wife is happy, she devotes more time to a husband's health (and doing so contents her); when a husband is unhappy with his marriage, he may still receive benefits to his own well-being as long as his wife is still happy – the converse is not true, possibly because – whether they are happy or not – men on average provide much less active nurturance to wives under all conditions, including when a wife is unwell.³⁴⁴

Cooperation, Competition, Compromise

Raising a viable offspring to reproductive maturity requires prosocial cooperation between individuals within the wider kinship group, and – at a wider level – within civilized human society, but all evolved organisms are also self-interested, and in constant competition. Males and females compete with others of the same sex for the best available mates; siblings compete for maximum parental investment; and males and females likewise compete with each other to optimize their own reproductive success. Despite the romantic pull between the sexes, what is reproductively optimal for one is necessarily detrimental to the other: compromise is the usual result.³⁴⁵ Gender differences between the various forms of strategic interference, including hypervigilance, jealousy, and sexual proprietariness in both sexes; battering of wives and girlfriends by males; sexual coercion and rape of females, and male overperception of female sexual interest; females' counter-skepticism about male commitment, the evolution of concealed ovulation, and the female counter-strategy of infidelity; and mate guarding in both sexes. EPs agree with many feminists that all of these behaviours are strategic male control of females, to male advantage and significant female cost; the evolutionary explanation of marital

³⁴¹ Jackson et al (2014:106-107); Karraker and Latham (2015:420, 432).

³⁴² Gray and Anderson (2010:232, 238).

³⁴³ Carr et al (2014:930, 944).

³⁴⁴ Campbell (1999:206); Musick and Bumpass (2012:2-3); Eastwick (2013:185); Carr et al (2014:930, 944).

³⁴⁵ This is a discussion of psychology underlying reproductive behaviours between heterosexual males and females, but study of non-heterosexual individuals generally supports the evolutionary model; see Leitenberg and Henning (1995:490).

assault contends that domestic violence aims to control female sexuality, because of the reproductive consequences of sexual behaviour. The ‘battle of the sexes’ is a well-entrenched truism, but the real victory in the compromise between the sexes lies substantially in many if not most cultures with the reproductive strategy of males, facilitated by greater male strength, and by greater male capacity to alliance-building.³⁴⁶ Patriarchy is the institutionalized advantage of males at the expense of females, but much of the conflict between sexes in the human species at the proximate, social level is directly attributable to the ultimate-level arms-race of antagonistic coevolution.³⁴⁷

In order to achieve their own reproductive goals males and females engage in various forms of strategic interference through sabotaging the self-interested behaviour of their partner.³⁴⁸ Both sexes are distressed and angered by behaviours which limit their own respective reproductive aims: women when males aggressively pursue sexual intimacy, either with themselves or outside of the relationship, and men when women withhold or delay sexual consummation, or demand reward in exchange for sex.³⁴⁹ Males and females do not want their mates (or even their potential mates) to be engaged in sexual activity outside of an existing relationship – even when they themselves exploit the benefits of infidelity. Human, androcentric culture is traditionally lenient toward male infidelity, and averse to female sexual freedoms outside of marriage, because the primary function of marriage in most human societies is the production of legitimate (male) heirs in a property-transmitting context, and so men tend to behave in ways to protect their investments: sexual proprietariness, mate-guarding, mate-battering, and rape of women within marriage are all behavioural reflexes of males’ desire to ensure, enhance, and retain paternity certainty, and males control their female kin in the same way as they do wives because their fertility is a valuable, exchangeable commodity which can enrich a man’s own mating opportunities.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁶ Peters et al (2002:263); Buss (2008:321); Wilson and Daly (2009:273).

³⁴⁷ The publication of Dobash and Dobash (1979) marked a shift in feminist perceptions of assault within marriage as institutionalized control.

³⁴⁸ Buss (1989a:735; 2003:13) defines strategic interference as adaptive behaviour intended to disrupt mating strategy of the opposite-sex partner. On men’s mate-guarding and insistence on frequent intercourse with a partner, male detection of ovulation, and mechanisms to assess cues of paternity in infants are interference strategies evolved to counter the female strategic option of infidelity, see Thornhill and Gangestad (2008:292-293; 2015:173).

³⁴⁹ Buss (1989a:735-736; 2001a:221-222; 2008:323). On intense emotional reactions in both sexes to perceived strategic interference, see Buss (2001a:219, 222); Vandermassen (2011:742).

³⁵⁰ Wilson and Daly (1992:301, 313); Hrdy (1999b:177).

Sexual proprietariness is predominantly a male emotional response to the possibility of unsanctioned or autonomous female sexual activity and the universality of sexual proprietariness in males demonstrates that a female disposition to infidelity existed as a plausible threat to paternity certainty in ancestral populations: a threat to men's inherited belief in their property right over their wives and female blood-kin triggers a very real sense of trespass and outrage.³⁵¹ Uxoricide is more often committed by men in response to wives leaving that union; murder of husbands by wives is not sexual proprietariness, but a last resort to defend themselves or their children.³⁵² The reasonable man and outraged husband (or father) traditionally enjoys a special license-to-kill in the event of illicit intercourse with a woman; but in no historic legal code did women ever have recourse to such natural justice in the event of a husband's adultery.³⁵³ Males enjoy legal and social sympathy for murders committed after catching a wife in flagrante delicto, but men do not belong to women in a parallel way, and husband-killing wives receive little if any sympathy.³⁵⁴ Mate-guarding – overtly physical, or more subtle, and covert – is the behavioural component of sexual proprietariness in both sexes; males risk severe reproductive penalties in failing to retain their mate, but females who fail to guard their mates also face significant costs, through loss of resources, protection, and status derived from the male's social position; females are alert to the threat of female rivals to the security of resources, and enact a variety of mate-guarding behaviours as much as males, albeit with less overt or lethal consequences.³⁵⁵

Mate-guarding is a common and adaptive behaviour across many species and is in humans largely pre-consciously triggered by gender-specific potential threats: strategies include preventing competitor access to mates, preventing competitors from stealing mates, and the active prevention of female defection through material inducements and also confinement; mate-guarding strategies in the human species include concealment through social sequestration; monopolization through extreme supervision; threat of break-up; derogation of competitors and potential rivals; display of wealth (gifts); appearance enhancement; sexual

³⁵¹ Daly and Wilson (1988:82); Buss (1995:12); Wilson and Daly (1998:229; 2004:205; 2009:275-276); Thornhill and Gangestad (2003:347, 349); Campbell (2006a:71); Goetz et al (2008:482, 484); Miller and Maner (2008:413-414).

³⁵² Daly and Wilson (1988:199-200, 219; 1992:313); Wilson and Daly (2004:206).

³⁵³ Wilson and Daly (1992:305, 310-311, 313).

³⁵⁴ Schneider (2000:117).

³⁵⁵ Buss (1988a:293-294); Paul et al (1993); Jankowiak et al (2002:85, 92, 97, 99); Thornhill and Gangestad (2003:347); Hughes et al (2004:3); Chapais (2017).

favours; visible signs of affection and commitment in public to deter others; and possessive ornamentation (i.e., rings, and sometimes tattoos); more extreme behaviours include vigilant checking by self or deputies at unexpected moments, and physical violence toward interlopers and potential poachers.³⁵⁶ The two most prevalent mate-retention tactics are resource display (for males), and appearance enhancement (for females) and both sexes when they are in long-term, stable relationships engage in commitment-manipulation tactics, including discussion of marriage, pregnancy, resource display, and love and care behaviours.³⁵⁷

Such tactics are necessary because mate-poaching is a prevalent and serious threat, given that more than half of all males and females admit to attempting to poach a mate away from another committed relationship.³⁵⁸ Enforced claustration of females to forestall such poaching is an ancient practice intended to protect a man's valuable investment in his marriage, and is strongly correlated with social status and inheritable wealth.³⁵⁹ Jealous male violence toward women has been viewed with leniency and sometimes approval by almost all known cultures, but the physical intimidation of misbehaving or departing women by jealous male mates is often the preliminary step to the murder of women.³⁶⁰ Human men who kill female partners tend to do so under one of two conditions: perception of infidelity, and threat of relationship termination, especially if the female is relatively young, and most especially if the husband is considerably older.³⁶¹ Cross-culturally, the wives most at risk of marital violence are those who are young and thus maximally fertile; domestic violence aims to deter fertile females over whom males

³⁵⁶ Buss (1988a:293-294; 2002:23-25, 27, 29); Wilson and Daly (1992:301; 1995:121); Thornhill and Gangestad (2003:346; 2015:173-174); Goetz et al (2005:749, 751, 761); Graham-Kevan and Archer (2009:450); Buss and Duntley (2011:416); Miner and Shackelford (2010:11).

³⁵⁷ Miner and Shackelford (2010:11); De Miguel and Buss (2011:563, 578-580).

³⁵⁸ Buss (2002:25).

³⁵⁹ On claustration of females, see Dickemann (1979a; 1979b; 1981); Wilson and Daly (1995:121; 2009:277-278). On the benefit of female claustration in protection from infanticidal males, see Mesnick (1997:243); Archer (2009:263); Wilson and Daly (2009:288). Cf. Campbell (1999:205).

³⁶⁰ Wilson and Daly (1995:114; 1998:202, 228); Peters et al (2002:255). On the cautionary abuse and last-resort murder of straying women as part of male-male competition for dominance, see Daly and Wilson (1988:205); Smuts (1996:256); H. Fisher (2004:176-177); Goetz et al (2008:483); Easton and Shackelford (2009:343-344); Rosenfeld (2009:427-428); Wilson and Daly (2009:284-285); Goetz and Romero (2011:169-170, 174). On men's violent response to female mates' actual or threatened infidelity to protect men's reputation among other males, see Goetz et al (2008:483); Miller and Maner (2008:414).

³⁶¹ Wilson and Daly (1998:216); Peters et al (2002:262); Buss (2008:307, 348).

have the most legitimate and incontestable entitlement – wives – from jeopardizing the husband’s paternal certainty.³⁶²

Popular perceptions of partner abuse have altered substantially in the last hundred years, however: from a widespread tendency to respectful non-interference in men’s private matters mainstream cultures in many nations have shifted to intense disapproval and vilification of violent men, and state support for battered women and their children.³⁶³ A record of persistent and escalating previous abuse by a husband – of wives or of children – is the most common reason for a wife’s eventual resort to spousal murder.³⁶⁴ When women do commit murder in self-defence, however, they have to use weapons to compensate for greater male physical advantage, and so male targets are more likely to die.³⁶⁵ Although men’s battering of women is the most common (and socially excused) crime committed in modern Western cultures, female resistance to male violence is considered the greater social crime.³⁶⁶ Women who attempt to resist and survive threats to their lives by husbands are traditionally viewed as horrible figures who undermine civilized values, however; it is almost impossible for any husband-killing woman – no matter how much provocation she faces – to win public sympathy.³⁶⁷ Walker (1989, 2006, and 2009) developed a model of cyclic battering to explain women’s return to abusive relationships, but her Battered Woman Syndrome (BWS) has attracted as much criticism as support, and does not explain women’s recourse to murder of

³⁶² Wilson and Daly (1995:129); Smuts (1996:230, 232); Goetz et al (2008:481, 484). On females’ higher risk of partner-abuse in the absence of supportive female kin, or when male alliances are strong in a non-egalitarian patriarchal state, see Smuts (1996:239, 241); Archer (2009:264); Rosenfeld (2009:430).

³⁶³ On the history and development of the battered women’s movement from the 1970s on, see Tierney (1982:207); Gondolf and Fisher (1988:1); McColgan (1993:508); Rothenberg (2003). The politicization of domestic violence over many decades has to a limited extent decriminalized murder by battered women; see Noonan (1996:219); Shaffer (1997:33); Wallace (2004:1749, 1759).

³⁶⁴ McColgan (1993:513); Easton and Shackelford (2009:343-344); Gray and Anderson (2010:79).

³⁶⁵ Burbank (1987:85, 88, 91).

³⁶⁶ Nicolson (1995:201-202); Morrissey (2003:68-69); Snyder et al (2011:128). On views of self-defending, historically battered women as heinous, see Browne (1987:183); Foster et al (1989:273); Gillespie (1989:viii-ix); Grant (1995:315); Schneider (2000:146).

³⁶⁷ Schneider (2000:113, 115). On the biases of male judges and jurors against battered women (and their sympathy for male abusers), see Wells (1994:275); Schuller and Vidmar (1992:283); Russell and Melillo (2006:235); Terrance et al (2014:11). On the non-utility of traditional, male-oriented self-defence law in the case of a battered woman’s murder of her batterer, see Gillespie (1989:xiii); McColgan (1993:515, 528-529); Nicolson (1995:188-189, 203-205); Hodge (1998:154); Morrissey (2003:70-71, 99-100); Wallace (2004:1752-1754). On views of battered women who kill as necessarily either mad-or-bad mentally-compromised criminals, see Nicolson (1995:201-202); Stubbs and Tolmie (1999:714-715); Noh et al (2010:110, 126).

abusing husbands as a final and permanent escape.³⁶⁸ Despite societal support for battered wives and children, and a mixed level of acceptance of BWS defences in legal systems, well into the twenty-first century there is still general disapproval and a lack of forgiveness for battered women who actively fight back against male violence, especially if only on their own behalf.³⁶⁹

In the past fifty years there has also been a recognition that rape is a form of abuse, an offence against the autonomy of the concerned woman, not against the rights of her male owner; no man – even the husband – is now viewed as possessing an automatic right to rape.³⁷⁰ The human species demonstrates a number of unique cultural features pertinent to the analysis of rape: male-male alliances upholding male control of women; non-sexual economic pair-bonding, giving males additional reasons to control females; the use of rape as penalty for female noncompliance; the use of rape as a reward for male assistance; rape as a focus of male bonding rituals; the greater tendency of males to engage in opportunistic rape during the breakdown of civil society; and rape of the enemy's women as a method of punishing enemy males in the context of civil and gang warfare.³⁷¹ In the human species rape also occurs when male partners are excessively jealous in disposition; when women engage in more actual infidelity; when women repeatedly refuse to consent to intercourse with the existing partner; and when couples are breaking up.³⁷² Until very recently, men possessed the legal (and social)

³⁶⁸ On the acceptance and application of Walker's model of BWS in the courts of in a number of Anglophone nations, see Wells (1994:275); Hodge (1998:155-156, 159); Stubbs and Tolmie (1999:717, 720-721, 724n75); Schneider (2000:115); NZLC *Report 73* (2001:2); Morrissey (2003:76); Rothenberg (2003:777); Mirchandani (2004:33-34, 36); Savage (2006:761, 767, 769); Kimmel and Friedman (2011:586); Douglas (2012:367); Sheehy et al (2012:468-469, 492). For a critique of Walker's (1989:256, 267; 2006:145-146) 'battered woman syndrome' (BWS) – which describes a patterned 'cycle of violence', which includes tension-building between the woman and man, acute battering of the woman by the man, and then the man's apparent loving contrition – especially critique of Walker's methodological and conceptual shortcomings, see Faigman (1986:647); Browne (1987:176-177); Dutton (1992-1993:1233-1234); Schuller and Vidmar (1992:280, 287); Dutton and Painter (1993:620); Downs and Gerstmann (1996); Noonan (1996:192, 216); Jordan (1998:102); McMahon (1999:23, 33-34); Schneider (2000:6, 113); NZLC *Report 73* (2001:2-3, 16); Morrissey (2003:77-78); Rothenberg (2003:771, 782, 784); Wallace (2004:1757-1758); Oakley (2011:49).

³⁶⁹ Browne (1987:11, 159, 174); Follingstead et al (1989:253, 268); McColgan (1993:515-516, 525); Gagné (1996).

³⁷⁰ Rape is a ubiquitous sexual behaviour among some species, and is often strongly correlated with males' enforcement of paternity certainty; see Lalumière et al (1996:299); Wilson et al (1997:457); Malamuth et al (2005:396); Goetz et al (2008:485-486); McKibbin et al (2008:87-88); Goetz and Romero (2011:175); McKibbin (2014:211). Many primate species also utilize rape as intimidation to enforce long-term exclusive male access to particular females; see Thompson (2009:349, 365-366); Wrangham and Muller (2009:452-453, 455); Feldblum et al (2014:2855).

³⁷¹ Malamuth et al (2005:397); Thompson (2009:366); Wrangham and Muller (2009:457-460).

³⁷² Goetz et al (2008:486-487); Starratt and Alesia (2014:204).

permission to force sexual intercourse within marriage, and also to prevent a wife from leaving an unhappy marriage.³⁷³ Despite a multiplicity of obvious cultural contexts for male sexual coercion, rape demonstrates the inherent conflict between optimal male and female mating strategies; the original evolutionary benefit to males was probably reproductive opportunity, and effective success.³⁷⁴ The act of rape is outright theft of (female) reproductive capacity, which advantages male reproductive success at severe cost to females. The serious costs to females of sexual aggression include the potential loss of her current mate, permanent damage to her sexual reputation and future mate-value, and strategic interference with her mate-choice – meaning she may have to bear a child sired by a man she has not chosen – and the rejection (and sometimes punishment) of the woman by her existing male partner, especially within marriage, and most particularly when the woman is of fertile age.³⁷⁵ The agreement of many evolutionists that rape constitutes one of many adaptive and viable strategies in the male repertoire has not endeared the evolutionary perspective to social constructivists and feminists.³⁷⁶ The feminist view of rape specifically downplays or denies physical sexual desire, and excludes reproductive motivation and outcomes in favour of rape as an exclusively social act of misogyny by which all men exercise control over all women; biology, behaviour, and environment are never divorced in reality, however, and the position of feminism and social constructivism on rape hinders the eradication of rape-behaviour.³⁷⁷ According to Jones (1992:832, 902-903, 907), unhelpful socialization “meta-myths” of rape disproved by a wealth of empirical studies include the notions that only humans rape, that sexual desire is irrelevant

³⁷³ Wilson and Daly (1992:312); McColgan (1993:522-523).

³⁷⁴ Some contend that men’s evolved mating strategies fall into three types: honest courtship, deceptive courtship, and coercion; see Shields and Shields (1983); Thornhill (1996:98); Jones (1999:855-856); McKibbin et al (2008:89); Vandermassen (2011:734). Females’ universal instinctive (but irrational) fear of stranger-rape suggests that theft of their reproductive capacity by invaders was a significant problem in ancestral periods; see Jones (1999:855-856); Gottschall (2004:129-130); McKibbin (2008:94). Estimations of rape-conceptions place the rate from 1% to as much as 18%; see Lalumière et al (1996:299-300); Gottschall and Gottschall (2003:3-4); Thornhill and Gangestad (2008:317); Thompson (2009:362-363, 367). On the selective advantage of rape for patriline, see also Pinker (2002:367-368). Rape also occurs in non-reproductive contexts, suggesting that the behaviour occurs in combination with males’ disposition to lethal violence; see Jones (1999:902-903).

³⁷⁵ Wilson and Daly (1992:305-306); Buss (2008:331, 334).

³⁷⁶ For examples, see Hagen (1979); Alexander and Noonan (1979); Shields and Shields (1983); Thornhill and Thornhill (1983); Ellis (1989, 1991); Thornhill and Palmer (2000:183). For a discussion and critique, see Vandermassen (2011:733-735).

³⁷⁷ On the necessity of an empirical understanding of the evolved causes of rape as a tool to minimize or eliminate the behaviour, see Malamuth (1996b:280); Pinker (2002:368); McKibbin et al (2008:87); McKibbin (2014:210). For a discussion of feminist and social science default theory of rape as systematic enforcement of male supremacy, see Vandermassen (2011:732); she (2011:738-739) contends that sexual coercion in all species – including humans – ultimately aims to control female reproductive activity.

to rape, that sexual attack does not discriminate between women, that experience of harm is equal across all women, that fear of rape is socially conditioned and dependent on social contexts, and that rape behaviours are socially learned. The best analyses of rape acknowledge the complex interaction of biological factors – such as the inevitable conflict of interests between the sexes based on parental investment – with social behaviours which have historically increased male control over resources.³⁷⁸

The male disposition to sexual aggression against females is also exacerbated by the male cognitive overperception of female sexual interest, explained by error management theory (EMT).³⁷⁹ Different gender thresholds exist for perceiving sexual interest – most often the male overperception of active female receptivity to sexual engagement – resulting in much misunderstanding and ill-feeling between the sexes.³⁸⁰ Men's thresholds for reading sexual interest are unrealistically low because the benefits to men (when in doubt) of always inferring female sexual interest include the very occasional success in opportunistic sexual encounter, even though the costs of misperception are very often substantial.³⁸¹ Men's tendency to over-read sexual opportunity results often enough in actual sexual encounters for the error to be adaptively selected for.³⁸² Study suggests that women also experience an over-perception response to men's attempts to seduce them: commitment skepticism protects women from the reproductive consequences of mistaken faith in an opportunist male's declarations of sincere personal attachment.³⁸³ Women who carefully appraised and then secured a male mate's emotional commitment would have borne and raised more children to reproductive maturity.³⁸⁴

³⁷⁸ Wilson et al (2003:676-677); Thompson (2009:368); Vandermassen (2011:741, 744-745).

³⁷⁹ For a review of overperception hypotheses, see Koenig et al (2007:414-416). For various overperception models, see Abbey (1982:830; 1987:173, 190-191); Shotland and Craig (1988:66); Greer and Buss (1994:186); Lalumière et al (1996:313); Haselton and Buss (2000:81); Buss (2001a:220-221; 2003:145); Haselton (2003:34-35); Farris et al (2008b:61, 58); Perilloux (2014:119-123); Schmitt (2014:24).

³⁸⁰ According to Farris et al (2008b:48, 56, 60), there is a very real relationship between men's disposition to sexual coercion and cognitive deficits in perception generally in many men. See also Greer and Buss (1994:199); Haselton and Buss (2000:82, 88-89); Perilloux (2014:120, 127-128). On the general human bias to overperception and positive self-delusion in a variety of domains, see Hill (2007:118, 121); Haselton and Buss (2009:522); La France et al (2009:281); McKay and Dennett (2009:493); Stillman and Maner (2009:124); Vandello et al (2009:1209-1210); Johnson et al (2013:476-477).

³⁸¹ Buss (2003:145).

³⁸² Buss (2001a:221); Geher et al (2008:15).

³⁸³ Haselton and Buss (2000:88); Buss (2001a:221; 2003:145; 2007:377; 2008:328); Geher et al (2008:15; 2009:343, 345); Perilloux (2014:126).

³⁸⁴ Geher (2009:343). Geher (2009:331) concludes that females oversexualize male intentions in both short- and long-term conditions.

Overperception and skepticism lock women and men into a spiral of suspicion and reassurance, and have shaped the mating strategies of both sexes.³⁸⁵

Concealed ovulation in human females is another form of strategic interference, and males correspondingly possess evolved mechanisms to detect peak fertility; women report greater interest in extra-pair sexual activity (or fantasy) around ovulation, and males engage in more vigilant, proprietary monitoring and counter-infidelity strategies in the days preceding ovulation: the suppression of physiological signals of ovulation in females almost certainly provoked an escalation in evolved capacities for deception and detection; males would become hypersensitive to the visible and olfactory cues of female fertility; male mate-guarding also increases under three conditions: when partners are young, fertile, and not already pregnant.³⁸⁶ Deceiving existing mates about extra-pair sex partners is a highly effective strategy to maximize mating success for both sexes, but male desire for variety and quantity of sexual experience – whether concealed or not – is at odds with female strategy of awarding targeted sexual access to a few, discreetly chosen high-quality males; sexual coercion of primarily fertile-age female mates enables males to bypass the natural constraints placed on male reproductive ambitions by women seeking better-quality inseminators, but is one of the persistent causes of conflict between the genders.³⁸⁷ Although evolutionists disagree on explanations for why and how human women – uniquely – lost the external display and internal awareness of estrous, the strategic concealment of ovulation in females may be a response to males' proprietary coercion.³⁸⁸ In Thornhill and Gangestad's (2015:170-171) opinion, concealment of ovulation in females and mate-guarding by male pair-bond mates is the result of selection under antagonistic coevolution.

³⁸⁵ Geher et al (2008:15-16). Males also regard their persistence in sexual suggestion as flattering to women, and are confused when women are offended by it; see Abbey (1987:191). Men may view all interactions with women as sexualized to some degree, even in contexts that are clearly professional rather than social; see Abbey (1987:192); Haselton and Buss (2000); Farris et al (2008a:348; 2008b:50-51, 59).

³⁸⁶ Thornhill and Gangestad (2003:349; 2008:319, 328).

³⁸⁷ Lindstedt and Mokkonen (2014:1, 3). Tooke and Camire (1991:345, 354, 359-361) observe that males' active deceptive strategies of feigned kindness, commitment, sincerity, and resource acquisition ability are highly effective in securing copulations, whereas female manipulation of appearance is better classed as 'passive deception'.

³⁸⁸ On the evolutionary logic of partial or selective concealment of ovulation, see Symons (1979:139); Buss (1995:19); Welling and Puts (2014:245, 253); Chapman (2015:9); Thornhill and Gangestad (2015:149). For a critical review of various evolutionary explanations of concealed ovulation, including Hrdy's (1979:34; 1997:18) paternity confusion hypothesis, see also Wilson and Daly (1992:299).

Ovulation, in fact, is only selectively concealed, primarily from existing male partners, suggesting that the harvesting of good genes in the restrictive context of resource-driven pair-bonding is the ultimate evolutionary cause of the so-called ‘loss’ of visible cues of ovulation; women exhibit a preference – through physical cues, vocal pitch, and provocative dress – while ovulating in a natural fertility cycle for handsome and strongly dimorphic men with masculine facial structure, facial symmetry, distinctive symmetrical-male smell, lower-pitched voices.³⁸⁹ The preferences of ovulating women for masculine males outside of a long-term union suggest that good genes are the primary motivating interest for women most likely to conceive.³⁹⁰ Women wish to attract the sexual interest of the best genetically-endowed males available, but avoid conceiving to less-endowed long-term mates during ovulation, so they tend to resist their present mate’s restricting behaviours, and refuse him sexual access.³⁹¹ Selective concealment of ovulation in the human species is really an infidelity or cuckoldry mechanism enabling women to conceive offspring with the best genes, and then raise them in a safe, secure, and sufficiently-resourced home.³⁹² Concealed ovulation and shifting or cyclic female preferences suggest that – like some other species – human females pursue a mixed strategy, seeking out good-genes and greater resources as well as competent co-parenting.³⁹³

Almost every EP discussion of female infidelity employs language that privileges the male point of view – that female infidelity is a breaking of faith and a compromise of male well-being – but genetic diversity is good for a species, including males, and so female infidelity should be referred to with a term acknowledging the benefit. Although reproductively advantageous to women, female infidelity posed a real problem for males in developing human societies; androcentric laws and social attitudes aim to protect the property rights of the married male, but must necessarily deny the material and genetic benefits to women of multiple mating behaviour; even the possibility that a woman might be gestating a child sired by another man is sufficient social and legal reason in many cultures for a husband to terminate a marriage – and

³⁸⁹ Penton-Voak et al (1999:741); Gangestad et al (2002:975, 981); Koehler et al (2002:233); Roberts et al (2004:S270); Puts (2005:388); Feinberg et al (2006:215); Gangestad et al (2006:78); Little et al (2007:633); Miller et al (2007:375); Schwarz and Hassebrauck (2008:282); Bryant and Haselton (2009:12); Anderson et al (2010:804); Roney et al (2010:742); Haselton and Gildersleeve (2011:87).

³⁹⁰ Penton-Voak and Perrett (2000:39); Gangestad et al (2006:78).

³⁹¹ Thornhill and Gangestad (2008:314; 2015:174); Welling and Puts (2014:248-249).

³⁹² Thornhill and Gangestad (2008:327-328; 2015:171); Starratt and Alesia (2014:203-204). On the vexed question of whether ancestral women themselves were aware of their ovulatory status, see Bröder and Hohmann (2003:391); Welling and Puts (2014:244-245).

³⁹³ Penton-Voak et al (1999:741-742).

sometimes the woman – but the converse is rarely true.³⁹⁴ The male drive to ensure paternity appears to influence almost every society's attitudes to female sexuality: disapproval of female infidelity, marital rape of fertile-status women, and the strange social category of bastardy are all traditionally legally-sanctioned responses to the strategic evolution of concealment of ovulation by females; universally, males are expected to express rage at their discovery of a wife's adultery, and legal systems have long held provocation by infidelity to murder to be equivalent to provocation to murder in response to physical assault on self or close kin.³⁹⁵ EPs disagree about the actual prevalence of infidelity in male and female humans, with wildly different rates.³⁹⁶ Nor do researchers agree on how infidelity affects rates of non-paternity for offspring even within stable relationships: some estimates place the rate of 'cuckoo-babies' as high as 30%, others as low as 3%, but the existence of male sexual jealousy indicates that the cuckoldry rate is not and never has been zero.³⁹⁷ Differences in parental investment are based in the inconvenient reality of internal fertilization in one sex only: women invest under conditions of 100% certainty in their genetic relationship to their children, but – barring absolute clausturation – men are necessarily asked to believe they are fathers, and paternal certainty is always a matter of faith.

There are distinct gender and age differences in the practice of infidelity, with men being more open to casual infidelities for themselves, not for their wives, while women turn to infidelity primarily to escape an unsatisfactory union.³⁹⁸ Ovulating women committing infidelity are also primarily seeking good genes from highly masculine males (and experience greater rates of orgasms with them), despite their preference for affairs and marriage with less aggressive,

³⁹⁴ The term 'adultery' clearly focalizes the dilution and diminishment of men's paternal certainty within marriage; see Symons (1979:141); Campbell (2006a:72). The benefit to women of short-term mating with multiple partners includes economic and material resources, good genes, opportunities for mate-upgrading, long-term goals, and emotional manipulation of current mates; see Greiling and Buss (2000:929); Buss (2008:195-196).

³⁹⁵ Wilson and Daly (1998:203; 2004:208); Thornhill and Gangestad (2008:317).

³⁹⁶ Thompson (1983:18); Hansen (1987:388); Buss (1989a:736); Bellis et al (2005:750); Stone et al (2005:270).

³⁹⁷ Citing Bellis and Baker (1990) and (1995), Campbell (2002:44) argues that blood-tests prove a cuckoldry rate of 5-30%. Geary (2010:158) nominates a 3-10% cuckoldry rate, with rates as high as 20% in lower socioeconomic and first-world settings. Puts (2010:163) suggests that – based on low 10% rates of non-paternity among some hunter-gatherers – early humans were relatively faithful, but ten percent is a relatively low number (given the typical infidelity rate of 50% among humans), unless you are aiming for a wife-infidelity rate of zero percent; see Symons (1979:306). According to Symons (1979:244), male preference for female faithfulness is a human universal.

³⁹⁸ Schmitt's (2014:26) review of the literature contends that male rates of physical infidelity are consistently higher than female rates, across all cultures. Wiederman (1997:173); Buss (2003:90); Stone et al (2005:269); Brand et al (2007:106-108); Schmitt (2014:22, 26).

slightly feminine-faced males.³⁹⁹ The decision to commit adultery – even for women – may also involve some degree of conscious or unconscious disinvestment in existing offspring.⁴⁰⁰ Infidelity occurs for a variety of proximate reasons, but is ultimately an adaptive reproductive strategy for both sexes: in the ancestral environment, infidelity was always a successful strategy for men, while women frequently benefitted from covert extra-pair affairs.⁴⁰¹ Both sexes are expert in concealing their infidelities, and the so-called ‘accidental discovery’ of an affair is often in fact an engineered, strategic revelation.⁴⁰² Men’s perception of female infidelity – even in the absence of material evidence – is the primary cause of spousal homicide: the benefits for women of extramarital sex must therefore outweigh the possible costs, even of potential death. The advantages to women of infidelity (as a form of polyandry) include having a backup protector and provider during the absence (or in the death) of an existing mate through illness, injury, or intra-sexual violence; increasing a woman’s own social status and self-esteem; additional access to meat; access to especially healthy genes and genetic diversity as a hedge against environmental shifts; having the opportunity to trial-run and up-trade mates; greater fertility and more robust offspring; and producing sons of sexier males, who in turn would attract more mates: all of these enhance an individual women’s overall reproductive success.⁴⁰³ Discovery of infidelity has significantly negative social and personal consequences for both sexes, however; discovery of infidelity often leads to thoughts of suicide or of murder, and eventual recovery from the discovery has been likened to experience of posttraumatic shock; few if any who have been betrayed in this way ever recover real trust in their infidelitous partner, and men and women are equally likely to inflict punishment upon discovery of sexual betrayal, and also to force their mates to withdraw from extra-marital sexual activity.⁴⁰⁴

Gender Conflict, Antagonistic Coevolution, Patriarchy

³⁹⁹ Thornhill and Gangestad (2003:355, 359); Kruger (2006:460).

⁴⁰⁰ Buss (2008:185); Wilson and Daly (1998:211-212); Tsapelas et al (2010:27).

⁴⁰¹ On the physical and psychological evidence for universality of sperm competition and extra-pair copulation as a very widespread female reproductive strategy, see Wilson and Daly (1992:29); Baker (1997:163); Buss (2000:18); Greiling and Buss (2000:962); Shackelford et al (2002b:125); Thornhill and Gangestad (2003:345-346, 352, 358); Shackelford et al (2005a:377-378); Goetz et al (2008:486); Goetz and Shackelford (2009:452); Puts (2010:165); Paul and Kobach (2014:59-60); Welling and Puts (2014:248); Pham and Shackelford (2015:269).

⁴⁰² Brand et al (2007:103).

⁴⁰³ Hrdy (1997:15; 2000:78); Wilson and Daly (1998:211-212); Buss (2000:19-20); Greiling and Buss (2000:929, 954); McLain et al (2000:22); Buss (2003:87-88, 90-91, 213-214, 221); Gray and Anderson (2010:78); Tsapelas et al (2010:28-29).

⁴⁰⁴ Jankowiak et al (2002:91, 98); Bellis et al (2005:752); Lusterman (2005:72); Buunk and Dijkstra (2006:111).

Human women are psychologically and physiologically adapted for extra-pair copulations because women and men do not share a perfect alignment of genetic interests; females and males are in a perpetual, sexually antagonistic, coevolutionary “arms-race” of gendered conflict.⁴⁰⁵ The arms-race of deception and detection is one of the most dynamic areas of gender conflict between the sexes: for example, men know women are seeking commitment in a mate and so their willingness to play up this intention is a logical male strategy.⁴⁰⁶

Gender conflict exists at all stages of mating interaction between men and women: falling in love rarely occurs simultaneously (despite the stuff of story), and persuasion – sometimes unwelcome – is an inevitable element of romantic engagement; couples in love clash over when to initiate first intercourse and over subsequent frequency of sexual activity; long-mated pairs argue perpetually over distribution of marital resources between the partners and to close kin (including children and step-children); and few if any couples experience a simultaneous falling out of love, so that termination of a romantic relationship is almost always traumatic; once married, wives find that husbands spend too much time and resources outside of the family (because the men are seeking to maintain or increase their social status), while husbands consider their wives make unreasonable demands on their time and energy (which women generally seek as support for child-rearing): each view the other as selfish and self-centred.⁴⁰⁷ The use of evolutionary psychology to explain gender conflict is better informed by understanding antagonistic coevolution; in general, escalating sexually antagonistic coevolution is the biological norm for all doubly-sexed reproductive behaviour.⁴⁰⁸ Williams

⁴⁰⁵ On the asymmetry of evolutionary interests and the inevitable arms-race conflict between optimum adaptations in the two sexes across species, see Trivers (1972:174); Smuts (1995:5-6); Cashdan (1998:144); Borgerhoff Mulder (2000:404); Campbell (2002:35); Gangestad et al (2002:981); Gangestad (2003:224); Thornhill and Gangestad (2003:363-364; 2008:306, 314); Haselton et al (2005:3); Buss (2006b:73; 2008:322); Haselton and Miller (2006:64-65); Goetz and Shackelford (2009:449-450, 453); Härdling and Karlsson (2009); Klasios (2014:7-8). For a review of the literature on sexual conflict, see also Goetz and Shackelford (2009:454); Buss and Schmitt (2011:769-770); Shackelford et al (2012:3); Thornhill and Gangestad (2015:163-164). On Parker’s (1979, 2006) sexual conflict theory as the great challenge to traditional views of gendered adaptations and manipulations in evolutionary biology, see Buss and Duntley (2011:412).

⁴⁰⁶ On the escalating coevolution of females’ desire for commitment and males’ feigning of commitment, see Haselton et al (2005:19); Buss and Duntley (2011:412).

⁴⁰⁷ Betzig (1986:6); Dobash et al (1992:84); Käär et al (1998:139-140, 148-149); Jokela et al (2010:911); Buss (2002:23; 2003:150-151); Buss and Duntley (2011:412).

⁴⁰⁸ Arnqvist and Rowe’s (2005) *Sexual Conflict* is an accessible and exemplary entry-level work on antagonistic coevolution; see Brooks (2005:294). On the inevitability of sexual conflict at all levels of biology, see Gavrillets et al (2001:531); Hosken and Stockley (2005:R535); Andersson and Simmons (2006:298); Chapman (2006:R744). On EPs’ understanding of sexually antagonistic coevolution, see Gavrillets et al (2001:531); Buss (2007:377); Shackelford et al (2012:11); Thornhill and Gangestad (2015:174). For examples of antagonistically coevolved

(1966a:184) first mentions an evolutionary battle of the sexes, yet evolutionary science long viewed reproduction as a necessarily co-operative endeavour, and sexually antagonistic coevolution remains peripheral to most analyses of gender interactions, including that of evolutionary psychologists: although Trivers (1972) and Dawkins (1976) did address the issue of sexual conflict, it was Parker (1979, 2006) who first gave central attention to the topic of conflict between the evolutionary interests of the two sexes.⁴⁰⁹ Recent discussion in the field suggests that it is not so much the ubiquity of sexual conflict that requires explanation, but the successful coexistence of two separate sexes at all.⁴¹⁰ In species with two sexes, sexually antagonistic coevolution is inevitable because both sexes cannot achieve their respective optimum reproductive outcomes except at the expense of the opposite sex; coevolution never truly resolves reproductive conflict, and, despite the utility of compromise between the sexes, the evolutionary arms race never achieves a dynamic of stable equilibria.⁴¹¹ Bluntly stated, humans are selected for effective genetic reproduction rather than domestic harmony.⁴¹²

The co-evolutionary arms-race between men and women has much in common with the endless battle between speed and pursuit between predator and prey.⁴¹³ Furthermore, the so-called ‘complementarity’ of the sexes is a pleasant fiction, because in the natural world there is significant lifetime disadvantage in being born female, carrying the major load of reproduction

arms race adaptations in males and females – many of which are coincidentally lethal (almost always for females) – see Gavrilets et al (2001:532); Gangestad (2003:225-226; 2007:324-325); Gage (2004:R378); Hosken and Stockley (2005:R535-R536); Lessells (2006:305); Chapman (2015:2). On the collateral costs to females and offspring of male traits evolved to maximize male success, see Packer and Pusey (1983:719); Van Schaik and Janson (2000); Van Schaik et al (2004:149); Arnqvist and Rowe (2005:45, 49-50, 53, 107); Hosken and Stockley (2005:R535); Balme and Hunter (2013:791); Chapman (2015:1-2, 10). On feminist discussion of antagonistic coevolution which draws attention to aspects of female life often simply ignored, see Hrdy (1997:23); Bird (1999:72-73); Borgerhoff Mulder and Rauch (2009:202).

⁴⁰⁹ Tregenza et al (2006:229); Chapman (2015:1).

⁴¹⁰ Arnqvist and Rowe (2005:2, 7, 226); Chapman (2006:R744); Tregenza et al (2006:230).

⁴¹¹ Arnqvist and Rowe (2005:16); Haselton et al (2005:3, 17); Thornhill and Gangestad (2008:291, 293). On antagonistic coevolution and evolutionary equilibrium; see Hosken et al (2001:489). On the compromise of reproductive interests in formalized human mating systems – marriage – see Gray and Anderson (2010:75); cf. Low (2007:456-457), who observes that marriage is universally pre-g geared to male advantage. On anisogamy as the ultimate cause of sexual conflict, see Gage (2004:R378); Arnqvist and Rowe (2005:7); Chapman (2006:R744; 2015:1); Lessells (2006:307); Wedell et al (2006:999); Borgerhoff Mulder and Rauch (2009:204, 211); Fromhage and Jennions (2016:1).

⁴¹² Symons (1979:123-127); Buss (2003:13, 152); Buss and Duntley (2011:418).

⁴¹³ Buss and Duntley (2011:412). On antagonistic sexual coevolution – and thus gender conflict – as the leading evolutionary force in rapid speciation and thus genetic diversity in species, see Chapman et al (2003:46); Hosken and Stockley (2005:R536); Tregenza et al (2006:233).

as well as being subject to sometimes lethal male sexual persistence.⁴¹⁴ Males of all species have a range of adaptations which exploit the captive commitment of the gestating sex – females – to their greater investment in offspring.⁴¹⁵ Males frequently establish reproductive advantage by ensuring they engender as many offspring as possible upon each of their females, whereas females are seeking to maximize quality of offspring over quantity.⁴¹⁶ Male and patrilineal pressures on wives to produce multiple offspring beyond their natural carrying capacity result in earlier death for women, who in patriarchal contexts are easily replaced.⁴¹⁷ Female resistance strategies to male adaptations can include favouring preferred males, while avoiding or actively resisting others.⁴¹⁸ Another female strategy for coping with persistent male sexual harassment is voluntary polygyny; females in many mammal species prefer to be part of a large harem – despite the dilution of resources and paternal investment this entails – as they will be protected from sexual harassment and sometimes coincidental death by persistent but non-dominant males.⁴¹⁹ Although dominant harem-owning males themselves pose a significant risk to females, many of the male traits that decrease female fitness – social dominance and sexual aggressiveness, for example – are the same traits that females actively seek out, leading to a competitive escalation in male aggressive behaviour.⁴²⁰ The gender mismatch of evolved human reproductive strategies is obvious in traditional cultures, but remains integral – to some degree – in all human cultures.⁴²¹ The ethnographic record provides a wealth of evidence for the wholesale exclusion of women from the centre of culture, and the stringent control of

⁴¹⁴ On the non-complementarity of the sexes' reproductive adaptations, see Lancaster (1991:2); Moore et al (2001:520); Chapman et al (2003:41). On the unresolvable arms-race of sexual conflict between males and females, see Buss (2003:167); Thornhill and Gangestad (2003:348-349); Haselton et al (2005:3-4). On males' mating-persistence as a form of sexual harassment which can inflict severe costs on females, see Gavrillets et al (2001:535); Gage (2004:R378); Arnqvist and Rowe (2005:48, 56, 77); Darden and Watts (2012:186). On the potential lethality of monogamy for females, see Holland and Rice (1999); Rice (1992; 1996); Chapman et al (2003:44; 2015:5). On genomic imprinting in the tug-of-war between maternal and paternal genes as the fetus attempts to harvest as many resources as possible from the maternal environment, see Campbell (2013:179-180).

⁴¹⁵ On intra- and inter-locus conflict, see Chapman et al (2003:42-43; 2015:5); Arnqvist and Rowe (2005:10); Rowe and Day (2006:277); Borgerhoff Mulder and Rauch (2009:203); Goetz and Shackelford (2009:450).

⁴¹⁶ Arnqvist and Rowe (2005:96); Huber et al (2010:582).

⁴¹⁷ Sear et al (2003:38-39); Borgerhoff Mulder and Rauch (2009:208); Chapman (2015:12).

⁴¹⁸ Arnqvist and Rowe (2005:47).

⁴¹⁹ Arnqvist and Rowe (2005:57-58).

⁴²⁰ According to Lessells (2006:306, 311), males rarely inflict lethal damage upon the mothers of their own offspring.

⁴²¹ Cf. Hannagan (2008:469), who notes that among hunter-gatherer groups, females exercise considerably more control over their own reproductive goals; in her view, civilization actively disadvantages women. Chapman (2015:16-17) suggests that reproductive exploitation in humans is a universal male disposition, however.

women by men, who fear female sexual power and fertility.⁴²² Control of female reproductive capacity is without question a cultural universal, and males have long been permitted to kill their women for infidelity, even in contexts of little to no evidence.⁴²³ In the endless round of antagonistic coevolution the successful social restriction of women represents the absolute triumph of male reproductive advantage, but male success also has serious and negative consequences for women and children struggling to survive in a world geared to adult male demands.⁴²⁴

Evolutionists view political, social, and personal forms of patriarchal oppression as the proximate cultural expression of ultimate male reproductive goals; patriarchy is the political expression of male social dominance over women but the roots of men's attempts to control women lie firmly in the antagonism intrinsic to all species with two sexes.⁴²⁵ Patriarchy is also universally motivated by males' greater need to establish social dominance over other men, and the institutionalization of female subjugation is incidental to this: male pursuit of power for paternity opportunities has negative consequences for all lower-status males as well as for females, who by definition can never gain – in the eyes of men – the same status as publically esteemed males.⁴²⁶ Feminists who are also evolutionists make connections between proximate behaviours and ultimate causation in their analyses of patriarchy.⁴²⁷ Evolutionists – including

⁴²² Rodseth and Novak (2009:301). According to Rodseth and Novak (2009:303), inter-sexual hostilities in traditional cultures provides public evidence of a man's prioritization of his male alliances over marital relations.

⁴²³ Puts (2010:167).

⁴²⁴ Gowaty (1992:235); Hrdy (1997:1-2, 24, 26). Ultimately, females must accept whichever cultural strategy that permits the survival of at least some of their children; see Arnqvist and Rowe (2005:35, 79); Borgerhoff Mulder and Rauch (2009:201). Part of this strategy involves the selection of mates able to protect and supply a mate and offspring; see Buss and Duntley (1999:219; 2011:412); Buss (2003:212, 214); Vandermassen (2005:188). In Hrdy's (1997:27-29) view, when human patrilineal lineages compete to monopolize material resources, females are left with no alternatives but to support the prevailing patriarchal regime, and power becomes exponentially concentrated in the leading male lineages with each generation. See also Buss (1989b); Buss and Duntley (1999:219); Smuts (1995:18); Campbell (2006a:72).

⁴²⁵ On the origins of patriarchy in the transition to sedentary agriculture and the transmission of men's property – including female humans – to legitimate male children, see Lerner (1986:212-213, 217); Lancaster (1991:7-8). While Hrdy (1997:5) agrees with Lerner (1986) that patriarchy precedes the historic period, she believes patriarchy's ancient origin lie further back than the Neolithic, in the pre-hominid era, as males began to control the material resources essential to reproduction.

⁴²⁶ Okami and Shackelford (2001:189); Aarssen (2007:1770).

⁴²⁷ For feminist evolutionists' attempts to correct scholarly male bias and mistake in evolutionary analysis of gender conflict, see Smuts (1995); Gowaty (1992); Wilson and Mesnick (1997); and Vandermassen (2010). See also Fedigan (1986); Gowaty (2003a, 2003b); Fehr (2012); Fisher et al (2013); Meredith (2013); Hamblin (2014). For discussion, see Buss and Schmitt (2011:779).

women, and feminists – also conclude that women as well as men perpetuate patriarchy.⁴²⁸ Hrdy (1997), for example, identifies the origins of modern patriarchy in the behaviour of primates and prehomnids.⁴²⁹ In her (1997:13, 22-23, 25) view, hominid female sexual assertiveness and male violence as a response to this is under-examined in evolutionist discussion; just as primate males seek to enforce paternity through testis size, competitive sperm, exclusion of rivals, and the guarding of females, so human males cooperatively police female behaviour through confinement, supervision and gossip, subversion of female compliance, and socio-legal constructs such as inheritance custom and laws.⁴³⁰ Hrdy (2000) also challenges traditional assumptions about the relationship of ancestral polygyny and patrilocality, with the development of patriarchy; in her opinion, patrilocality and polygyny are not inflexible outcomes of human evolution, but are associated with the rise of post-Neolithic agriculture and pastoralism.⁴³¹ Campbell's (1999) analysis of female competition, evolution, and patriarchy agrees that anthropologists have too easily accepted the patrilocal model of human patriarchy, assuming the compliant dispersal of wives away from natal kin.⁴³² Campbell (1999) also challenges the myth of the subordinate, pacifist human female – which does not accord with evolutionary reality – contending that refusal to acknowledge the existence of female violence assists in the perpetuation of male control through a reputation for physical superiority.⁴³³ Gowaty (1992) points out that males are not indiscriminately proprietary; their

⁴²⁸ Low (1989); Buss (1996); Lopreato and Crippen (1999); Campbell (2002); Vandermassen (2005:184-185, 188-189).

⁴²⁹ In Smuts' (1995:1-3) view, an evolutionary background helps explain how culturally sophisticated and elaborated patriarchy arose from a relatively simple form of primate gender conflict, predating the rise of the present human species.

⁴³⁰ Smuts (1995:6-7) agrees with most other evolutionists (and feminists) that sexual coercion in a variety of primate species (including humans) has two aims: to increase mating opportunities for the aggressor, and to dissuade the female from pursuing mating with other males, but primate females evolved distinct strategies to resist aggressive vigilance and control by larger, stronger males, including female coalition with other females, and female friendships with other, lower-ranking males.

⁴³¹ For example, Hrdy (2000:88-89) contends that chimpanzee females who remain at their residence of genetic relatedness enjoy higher rates of reproductive success, and the daughters of dominant females are only forced to emigrate in resource-poor environments.

⁴³² Campbell's (2002:242, 246-247) analysis of the factors predicting the so-called 'transition to patriarchy' follows and expands upon Gowaty (1997a, b) and Smuts (1995), and observes that female dispersal among primates is a prime predictor of male tactical success in controlling females. Official marital residence also determines women's experience of reproduction and family life; on the effects of patrilocal, matrilocal, and flexible marital residence, see Wilson and Daly (1995:114); Rodseth and Wrangham (2004:392-393); Yanca and Low (2004:9, 20); Hrdy (2005:300, 305-306); Low (2007:456).

⁴³³ Campbell (1999:214).

interest in control of female sexuality is highly selective and focussed primarily on high mate-quality females belonging to them.⁴³⁴

Smuts (1995) agrees that women do not experience patriarchal oppression to an equal degree: in her view, humans share many evolved strategies and counter-strategies with other primates, and – like some primates – human females have historically exchanged their first choice of promiscuity for pair-bonding, despite the high costs to themselves of male protection from other males, in this model, sexually exclusive marriage is the foundational institution of human patriarchy: males respect each other's rights to particular females, and in return gain the right to coerce their own females at will; domestication also restricts female movement, making it easier for males to monitor their mates, and increasing female dependence on male-distributed resources.⁴³⁵ Smuts (1995:12ff) argues that the human species exhibits a high degree of gender inequity for a number of reasons: reduced kin support for females through patrilocality; male-male alliances directed against female resistance; male control of essential resources; increased variance in male wealth and power, and a corresponding vulnerability of females to particular males; female complicity to perpetuate patriarchal inequity; and the enhancement of linguistic ability across genders, which enables males to institutionalize their control through customary and religious ideologies of male dominance and superiority.⁴³⁶ Low's (2005) discussion of the ecological and demographic constraints upon women similarly contends that although conflict between the sexes is biologically inevitable, marriage systems which restrict female choice to one man only invite infidelity, and the historic slide of sedentary humans into serial, socially imposed monogamy only functions best for both sexes when they are able to exercise the option to extra-pair sexual activity.⁴³⁷

⁴³⁴ Gowaty (1992:244).

⁴³⁵ Smuts (1992:11). She (1995:18) follows Buss's (1989, 1994) view that women willingly comply with a variety of self-restrictions and mutilations to enhance paternity certainty because males control essential resources. On women's self-claustrating behaviours – including debilitating beautification practices – as reassurance to males that females are willing to sacrifice personal freedoms in exchange for continued access to resources, see Gowaty (1992:242).

⁴³⁶ Smuts (1995:12ff). Smuts (1995:11, 18-19, 22) concludes that patriarchy – founded in the desire of males to control female fertility, and the normalization of violence to achieve this control – arose through several mechanisms: female dispersal and the fracture of female-female alliance; strengthening of male-male alliance; increasing control of resources by men; increasing hierarchical and repressive social networks among men; and the support of patriarchy by women themselves.

⁴³⁷ Low (2005:68-69, 71, 75, 80). Cf. Geary (2010:270-271), who contends that feminism itself is an evolved female counter-strategy, a behavioural complex developed to disable institutional male control of female sexuality.

Klytaimestra's tragic life-time experience is depicted across a variety of ancient texts and clearly demonstrates the evolved motivations and behaviours discussed in this chapter: mating strategies, parental investment and disinvestment, marriage and domestic arrangements, and coevolved gender antagonism. Modern responses to her character and to her immediate family are determined by our contemporary values concerning right and appropriate relationships between spouses, parents and children, and reproductive family and political state. In the ancient world, institutionalized patriarchy was the normal and desirable social arrangement; Klytaimestra is a species-typical woman in an extreme androcentric environment. Perceptions of her as an iconic battler against battering may suit modern political sensibilities but cannot be presumed to reflect the intentions and interpretations of actual fifth-century male poets, tragedians, and audiences, who all benefitted from institutionalized male reproductive advantage. The increasingly sympathetic representation of the mother bereft of daughter, dignity, and life is better explained by the late fifth-century war-weariness of Euripides, who owed much of his popularity to his skilled depiction of women generally, and of women as unpredictably dangerous agents in a hostile, patriarchal environment specifically. As the following chapters will show, Klytaimestra in archaic poetry was initially the seduced (and seductive) tool of revenge in an intra-sexual male competition for power; in classical poetry she represents the importance in monogamous society of the wife and mother, and how such a woman might respond to the ambitious (male) warmongery which threatens the continuance of family and the stability of organized human life.

CHAPTER II: THE ARCHAIC KLYTAIMESTRA

This chapter illustrates the underlying contribution of biology to narrative theme and characterization, through exploring the ways in which men and women are typically portrayed in archaic-era literature, and in which Klytaimestra and her family are depicted specifically. While ancient Greece may be understood as a culture which enshrined male reproductive advantage in many of its customs, stories, and laws, there was considerable anxiety in fictional narratives over female compliance with male expectations. Mythological narratives foreground the dangers of infidelity to paternity certainty, and the conflict that wives face in balancing loyalties to blood-kin with new attachments to a husband and his *oikos*. The following section explores the relative importance of reproductive biology to theme and characterization in popular archaic works leading up to Aiskhylos' *Oresteia*, exploring the influence of these works on later fictional representations of Klytaimestra's life-history.¹ Attention is increasingly given in archaic-period fiction to Klytaimestra as the villainous murderer of her husband just as the legally-recognized wife was becoming more important as the reproductive vessel for men's recreation of the recently-invented legal (and exclusively male) citizen. By the time of the *Oresteia*, the dangers of female sexuality for paternal certainty and legitimate offspring are resolved through the designation of women as a necessary but potentially destructive means to human – androcentric – civilization. Ancient stories frequently attribute unacceptable but persistent behaviour to a family curse working itself out through a moral offender's descendants. While this offers an early explanation for inheritable, sociopathic disposition, in the case of Klytaimestra and Agamemnon and their troubled family, what has been inherited by their respective lineages is clearly differentiated by gendered mating strategy: the bad behaviour of the daughters of Tyndareos is almost exclusively seeking sexual partners outside of their formalized marriages, while the sons of Tantalid steal each other's wives, seize each other's thrones, and murder closely-related children – including their own children. Descriptions of women and the feminine in many archaic works explain Klytaimestra's persistent characterization in literature as an exemplar of female 'evil'; the 'accursed' Klytaimestra is exceptional in that, in addition to infidelity, she seeks to defend her reproductive rights – against overwhelming cultural odds – and succeeds in eliminating one of the males who poses a persistent threat to her offspring.

¹ On the influence of the Epic Cycle, Homeric and Hesiodic narrative on Aiskhylean tragedy, see Lloyd-Jones (1970a:7); Herington (1985:139-140); Davidson (1988:46); Baldock (1989:25); Garner (1990:21).

The Accursed Klytaimestra

The so-called ‘crimes’ of women against men in ancient narrative can be explained by evolutionary psychology’s findings about women’s typical strategic interference with optimum male reproductive behaviours; Klytaimestra’s responses to her husband’s bad behaviour are predictable in the context of gender-conflict as a manifestation of coevolved antagonism, but are culturally extraordinary in the sense that androcentric Greek culture massively privileged male reproductive advantage. The story of Klytaimestra’s dysfunctional family in fifth-century tragedy responds in a range of previous archaic narratives to consistent aspects of her life-story: the murder of Agamemnon by his wife and her lover; the return of Klytaimestra and Agamemnon’s child Orestes, with his male cousin Pylades as companion; and the revenge-killing of Klytaimestra and Aigisthos. Homer’s earlier epic – a pervasive influence on later works – introduces the Atreid household to audiences; his poems idealize men as loyal to allies in battle, and as rightful controllers of their household; the ideal wife in his work is chaste, dwelling quietly inside the home, guarding her husband’s possessions, and producing his heirs, while bad wives disrupt men’s households.² Klytaimestra in the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is depicted generically as the sexually treacherous, cunning wife pitted against her husband, the returning war-hero. Critics debate whether Agamemnon’s faults are outweighed by his heroic ‘magnificence’; some conclude that critics too often forgive his ‘disagreeable’ nature.³ Yet Agamemnon’s murder and Orestes’ heroic vengeance against Aigisthos and Klytaimestra are repeatedly alluded to in the *Odyssey* in order to provoke Telemakhos to proper manly behaviour.⁴ Although the poem never directly refers to the manner of Klytaimestra’s death, Nestor’s cautionary tale of Klytaimestra’s initial resistance to seduction suggests that Penelope will yield to infidelity, because it is assumed that all women lack self-control; it is implied that an adulterous Penelope would suffer her cousin Klytaimestra’s fate: matricide.

² On Homer’s ideal paradigm of masculinity, see Zeitlin (1996:29-30); Graziosi and Haubold (2003:60, 68-71, 74). On ideal women in epic, see Easterling (1988:15); Seaford (1994:12); Graziosi and Haubold (2003:75); Foley (2005:105-106, 111, 116-118).

³ On the war-hero’s “disagreeable” actions redeemed by “magnificence”, see Lloyd-Jones (1962:195). Agamemnon’s willingness to slay unborn children is more than disagreeable. On Homer’s Agamemnon as utterly repellent, a failure as a leader and as undermining all notions of nobility, see Gantz (1966:582, 664); Garner (1990:173); Taplin (1990:62, 65, 67, 71, 78-81); Greenberg (1993:194, 198, 203); Castleden (2005:247).

⁴ References to the *Oresteia* story occur in the *Odyssey* at 1.32-47, 298-300; 3.193-198, 232-235, 248-275, 303-310; 4.90-92, 517-537, 11.385-456, 13.383-384, 24.19-22, 96-97, 191-202.

Nevertheless, the early books of the *Odyssey* foreground the schemes of Agamemnon's ambitious cousin – Aigisthos son of Thyestes – as primary regicide; according to Nestor, only Aigisthos' charming seduction of Klytaimestra transformed the honest-natured wife into an adulterous co-conspirator (*Od.* 3.262-272), ignoring Agamemnon's sacrifice of his and Klytaimestra's eldest child (in Homer's *Iliad*, her name is Iphianassa, in later tragedy, the murdered daughter is called Iphigeneia). This Klytaimestra appears to bear her husband no resentment for her daughter's sacrifice. Aigisthos' corruption of the originally 'honest' (*Od.* 3.266) wife into a woman who ruins the reputation of all women thereafter (*Od.* 24.201-202), making the murder of Agamemnon by Aigisthos the cause of Orestes' urge to revenge (*Od.* 1.29-30, 35-40, 46-47, 296-302; 3.232-235).⁵ Yet a little later Telemakhos obscures the fact that Agamemnon was easily killed by describing Aigisthos as 'cowardly and inferior' (*Od.* 3.248-252), while Nestor's praise to Telemakhos of the 'avenging' Orestes ignores the bloody death of a woman at the hands of her own son (*Od.* 3.301-312).⁶ The *Odyssey* is not interested in how Orestes committed matricide, or even why Aigisthos and Klytaimestra respectively had individual cause to kill Agamemnon, but becomes more and more interested in the outrageous crimes of Klytaimestra while she was alive; Agamemnon's death in the traditional Atreid narrative begins as the murder of one powerful Tantalid by another, but now the focus becomes a wife's sexual betrayal of her husband.

Accepting this new focus, some critics read the *Odyssey* as contrasting bad wife Klytaimestra and good wife Penelope, juxtaposing good and bad marriage; Odysseus declares that nothing is better than a harmonious household, in which the successful partnership of a man and his wife confound their enemies and delight their friends (*Od.* 6.182-185).⁷ Nevertheless, the real climax of the tale is not the restoration of household harmony, but of manly honour through the bloody destruction of sexual rivals and cruel punishment of his sexually insubordinate slaves; Aristotle (*Poet.* 34 55b18-23) summary of the *Odyssey* is cursory, but identifies one man's struggle to secure his household wealth: there is no mention of Penelope or any other woman at all. The inharmonious marriage of Klytaimestra and Agamemnon is one to dismay friends

⁵ According to some, the *Odyssey* actually argues for Klytaimestra's innocence because the plot was Aigisthos', and her complicity was also part of the gods' plan. See Wolfe (2009:694); Roisman and Luschnig (2011:8). Note the early confirmation (*Od.* 1. 36) by Zeus – the all-knowing judge of men – that Aigisthos was the murderer of Agamemnon.

⁶ The *Odyssey* also ignores the failure of Menelaos to avenge his brother's murder. Menelaos is careful to deflect blame for his brother's death onto others (*Od.* 4.90-93).

⁷ Wohl (1993:19); Zeitlin (1996:20); Edmunds (1997:423); Felson and Slatkin (2004:92, 103-104, 113).

and delight enemies; however, it is Klytaimestra's reputation which will to be forever tarnished, beginning in the *Odyssey* with the hostile testimony of the embittered ghost of Agamemnon (*Od.* 11.409-453). Klytaimestra is to be the wickedest woman ever, Agamemnon insists; her evil is so powerful as to infect all women yet to be born, even those who are good (*Od.* 11.427-434). Immediately after the ghostly Agamemnon's attribution of Klytaimestra's evil nature to all females, Odysseus suggests that all of the seed of Atreus is in fact afflicted by the schemes of women because the Atreids bear the hatred of Zeus (*Od.* 11.436-438); Agamemnon (*Od.* 11.451-453) immediately begins to attribute to Klytaimestra alone the treacherous murder, redirecting blame away from Aigisthos. By the end of the poem he gives witness that Klytaimestra was the primary killer, and his cousin and enemy Aigisthos the secondary conspirator (*Od.* 24.96-97).⁸ Others – including gods – have always told a different story about who is responsible for Agamemnon's death: Aigisthos.⁹ In Book 11 it was Aigisthos who deceived Agamemnon, feasting him and slaughtering him like an ox, but ultimately he is sidelined and disappears completely; Klytaimestra's singular culpability is now fully established (*Od.* 24.199-202). In the shade-world of Hades the slain suitor Amphimedon relates to Agamemnon all that has occurred since Odysseus' visit to the underworld (24.121-190); Agamemnon then delivers an address – ostensibly to Odysseus, far away in the world of the living (although there is no suggestion Odysseus can hear this) – praising the virtues of the good Penelope, whose immortal fame the gods will honour with song; Klytaimestra will suffer a song of hatred for murdering her husband, however, and all women will share her reputation (*Od.* 24.192-202). No logical reason is ever given as to why all women should not share the reputation of the poem's good woman Penelope, whose personal virtue is at least as great as Klytaimestra's evil.¹⁰

Homer's extant works have strongly influenced critical appraisals of Klytaimestra, but other literary representation of the Trojan War characters seem to reference works from the Epic Cycle – now lost – more often than Homer's poems do.¹¹ The story of Klytaimestra is

⁸ On the transferral of guilt to Klytaimestra through the *Odyssey* as excusing later misogyny toward women generally, see Wohl (1993:36); Felson-Rubin (1994:100, 106).

⁹ See 1.29, 35-39 (Zeus); 3.196-198, 3.263-275, 3.309-310 (Nestor); 4.90-92; 4.529-535 (Menelaos); and 3.235 (Athena, who identifies Klytaimestra's role in the plot, if not actual murder). Even Agamemnon assigns principal blame for the actual murder to Aigisthos (*Od.* 11.409-412).

¹⁰ *Thouk.* (2.45) describes the desirability of social invisibility for women.

¹¹ The Epic Cycle includes *Titanomachy*, *Oedipodia*, *Thebais*, *Epigoni*, *Alcmaeonis*, *Kypria*, *Iliad*, *Aithiopsis*, *Little Iliad*, *Ilioupersis*, *Nostoi*, *Odyssey*, and *Telegony*; see Burgess (1996:78-79, 94); Castleden (2005:242-248); Most (2006:lxv).

mentioned in Proklos' extant summary of the eleven-book *Kypria*, which helps to reconstruct the natures of the protagonists in the Atreid family conflict.¹² According to Proklos, Agamemnon was irrationally infatuated with Briseis – which angered Akhilleus – as a mechanism of Zeus's intentional obstruction of the Greek cause in the Trojan War; Agamemnon was also unwise in boasting that he is a better archer than Artemis, causing Artemis to demand the sacrifice of Agamemnon's daughter, Iphigeneia; through the lie of an arranged marriage to Akhilleus Agamemnon brought the girl to Aulis, but Artemis set a deer in her place as sacrificial victim, and sent Iphigeneia to Tauris (*Kypria* 43-50).¹³ Proklos' summary of the *Kypria* never mentions the feelings of either Iphigeneia (or her mother Klytaimestra) or the pathos of the sacrifice;¹⁴ rather, it makes it clear – as does Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women* (fr. 19, 17-18) – that the intended sacrifice of Iphigeneia was not the act of Agamemnon alone (as in tragedy or Hesiod), but of the Akhaians. Proklos rounds off the family saga by observing that at the time of Agamemnon's death, Orestes was still a child, and so Menelaos by default was the obligatory Atreid avenger; Menelaos' failure to avenge his brother thus compelled Orestes to become his own mother's killer. The lost epics of the Cycle clearly pick up on many details omitted in Homeric works: Agamemnon is an unappealing figure in this summary, while Klytaimestra – and her lover Aigisthos – are entirely absent.

Following archaic epic, Klytaimestra appears in Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, which makes human women members of a baneful tribe created to be a grievance for men, instruments of Zeus's revenge upon the human-friendly Prometheus; in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, the adulterous Klytaimestra (and her sisters) are simply tools of Aphrodite's vengeance upon their father Tyndareos.¹⁵ Critics differ on whether Hesiod's invention of the 'tribe of women, an evil for men' is evidence of deliberate misogyny, however.¹⁶ Hesiod is

¹² Burgess (1996:80-81, 87; 2002:234-237; 2005:345-346). The *Kypria* was attributed to either Stasinus of Cyprus, or a Kyprias of Halikarnassos; the identity of Proklos is also in doubt, as a number of ancient scholars shared that name; see Burgess (1996:81n19).

¹³ On the *Kypria* as we have it, see Griffin (1990:141); Burgess (1996:82); Castleden (2005:244).

¹⁴ Lubeck (1993:27). Klytaimestra appears in the epitome of the *Nostoi*, where she shares the killing of her husband with Aigisthos; see Gantz (1966:667).

¹⁵ Critical discussion of negative depiction of women in archaic works often centres on Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, but the lost epics and Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women* were very influential on later tragedy and lyric; see Most (2006:lxv).

¹⁶ For the debate on Hesiod's profound and exceptional misogyny, and its perpetuation in Western culture to the modern day, see Brenk (1972); Marquardt (1982:283, 288n9); Sussman (1984:64-65, 79); DuBois (1992:108, 113); Zeitlin (1995b:51); Aguirre Castro (2005:23). On the mythological message about Pandora's influence upon men's experience of life, see McLaughlin (1981); Marquardt (1982:291); DuBois (1992:103, 112); Zarecki (2007:27-29). On Pandora as an artefact and tool of deception (*WD* 67-68), see Zeitlin (1995b:68-70). On

clearly preoccupied in *WD* and *Catalogue* with the threat of female reproductive capacity to paternal power and patrilineality, in both divine and mortal realms.¹⁷ His depiction of conflict among gods and humans demonstrates the collision of strategic interests in a doubly-sexed species: in *Theogony*, Gaia is the reproductively autonomous parent of her son (and future husband) Ouranos (*Theog.* 126-127), and then of the great sea Pontos, again without male input (*Theog.* 131-132); once reproductive endeavour in the divine lineage becomes heterosexual, the first great gender-conflict is the *agōn* between the earth-mother and the male who desires to control her reproductive capacity.¹⁸ Gaia enlists her sons' support against her husband who, after siring a vast number of offspring upon her, will not permit these children independent maturity; however, there is no suggestion that the first mother might ally with her daughters, perhaps because Ouranos' daughters have no interest in replacing the father as chief inseminators of any available females. Gaia reveals to her sons the sickle of grey adamant, telling them that their father is ἀτάσθαλος, 'reckless, presumptuous, wicked' (*Theog.* 164), because he has worked κακὴν λώβην, 'an evil outrage' (*Theog.* 166); in his desire to interfere with their emergence into the world he is πρότερος γὰρ ἀεικέα μήσατο ἔργα, 'the first to have in mind shameful deeds' (*Theog.* 163-166). The first great wrong in the world may be the male's interference with his female mate's reproductive success: the second evil (*Theog.* 160) is the female's attempt to resist her male mate's control.

Hesiod's primeval conflict sets the pattern for subsequent male-female antagonism in Greek myth: a cunning female disempowers the ruling male, leaving the way open for her preferred favourite to replace him. This leads some to argue that the gods' constrain the "procreative power" of the female deities because this threatens the stability of male rule; but the real issue is that the reproductive maturity of a son benefits the mother's genotype, whereas immortal, reproductively active husbands who sequester the majority of breeding-age females deny their sons' reproductive opportunity.¹⁹ Gaia's son Kronos is enthusiastic about his mother's plan to

Hesiod's dehumanization of Pandora through denial of her reproductive ability, see Sussman (1984:89); Loraux (1993, 2000).

¹⁷ Rose (1992:126). On the *Catalogue's* enshrinement of certain patrilineal lines for political purposes, see Rose (1992:97); Aguirre (1998: 462, 467); Aguirre Castro (2005:20, 20n8); Most (2006:xx, xxx).

¹⁸ The often unnoticed but striking structural feature of the narrative is the separation of the two divine lineages of Chasm (Chaos) and Earth (Gaia), and the lack of intermarriage between them. On the heterosexualization of the gods, see Sussman (1978:61, 73); Marquardt (1982:284); Most (2006:xxx).

¹⁹ See Clay (2005:31), for example. Cf. Sussman (1978:62), a mainstream classicist writing before the development of an evolutionary literary perspective, who argues that the male gods who try to prevent the birth of their own children do not do so out of conscious antagonism against the female, but in fear of their male offspring's natural and predictable desire for maturity and power.

castrate the oppressor Ouranos (*Theog.* 173-182), but as soon as he is enthroned, this son also suppresses female reproductive capacity, raping his sister Rhea (*Theog.* 453), and cannibalizing Rhea's new-born infants, to pre-emptively neutralize a son's threat to paternal power (*Theog.* 463-465). Mother Rhea repeats the pattern of female insubordination through superior thinking – this time enlisting the support of her parents – in undermining her husband's control of her fertility (*Theog.* 459-474). Young son Zeus, liberated from paternal repression through maternal cunning, grows to maturity; he liberates and enlists the support of his uncles, previously bound by their brother Kronos (*Theog.* 501-506). Zeus gains the upper hand in the cosmic gender conflict by appropriating female cunning: after securing his throne, he consumes Metis the goddess of intelligence, derailing the prophesy of Earth and Sky that Zeus will one day be replaced by a son sired upon her. Before settling into official marriage with his royal sister Hera, Zeus proceeds to engender as many children as possible on many other goddesses (*Theog.* 886-920). The last lines of Hesiod's *Theogony* bring to a close the origins of the immortals, and introduce the seemingly endless descent-lines of mortals (*Theog.* 1019-1022).²⁰

Hesiod's *Works and Days* picks up after the fall of flawed humankind: the Trojan heroes destroyed through warfare (*WD* 156-168) were the fourth race created by Zeus: Klytaimestra and her kin belong to this lost era, immediately prior to Hesiod's own time. Hesiod contrasts the 'hard-working' husband's virtues with the wife's natural vices of indolence and talkativeness (*WD* 174-175). The *WD* is also obsessive about the dangers of women's insatiable and unconstrained hunger for food, for sex, and for procreation (*WD* 694-705); for instance, Hesiod fears the over-sexed wife, because, left to their own desires, women drain male energy through wanting too much sex (*WD* 586), exposing their husband to premature old-age due to sexual heat (*WD* 694-705). In fact, there is good evidence that women universally consistently supply the family with more calories, and contribute more to the maintenance of the family and the household generally; in regard to sexual appetite, female partners of males also desire much less sex than males, while husbands (and husbands' families) are much more likely to pressure women to bear additional offspring.²¹ The later depictions of Klytaimestra return to this over-

²⁰ The opening of the now fragmentary *Catalogue of Women* (1.1-5), repeats almost exactly the last words of *Theogony*, (1019-1022). On the dating and authorship of the Hesiodic *Catalogue*, and its status as a direct sequel to the *Theogony*, see Janko (1982:86-87, 198); West (1985a:1-2, 127-128, 136-137); Aguirre Castro (2005:24-25); Hunter (2005:1-2); Osborne (2005:16); Most (2006:lv).

²¹ On women's greater contribution cross-culturally to household management and the production of calories, see Chapter 1, pp. 28; 46-47; 46n212; 47n216; 49n230; 65-66; 65n332; 65n333; 66n334; 66n336. On women's comparatively massive contribution to the production of offspring (with subsequent danger of maternal depletion,

sexed wife motif, making Klytaimnestra's unconquerable lust for Aigisthos – in the absence of her husband – the real reason for her treachery. Hesiod's energy-draining, gluttonous females contrast with Homer's beautiful, skilled women busily increasing their aristocratic husband's wealth; yet neither Hesiod nor Semonides ever mention the hardship to women of childbearing and rearing in a subsistence economy. Hesiod's advice (*WD* 403-407) on how to stave off famine suggests that lack of food was an ongoing reality in his time, making the worst kind of wife is the one who ambushes her husband's dinner: this would hardly be surprising if she is pregnant or lactating during famine (*WD* 694-705).

One male child is all that is required of the fertile female (*WD* 375),²² as long as women increase the man's house by producing offspring of appropriate paternity; Hesiod's fable for princes (*WD* 225-247) insists that the just man is rewarded with a child who resembles him, while the punishment of the unjust is female infertility. Hesiod's representation of women as necessary but costly – even dangerous – vessels for the production of men's heirs is echoed in some of the fifth-century tragedies that follow him, suggesting that Homer's ideal of harmonious marriage between like-minded men and women has somehow broken down, while Hesiod's anxieties in *WD* about paternity certainty are certainly not specific to archaic Greece.²³

The *Catalogue of Women* – generally attributed to Hesiod, but now only extant in fragments – was very well-known to ancient readership, especially to later mythographers.²⁴ The *telos* of the *Catalogue* is the formulaic founding of the genealogy of rulers, the Trojan War, and the end of the Heroic Age, and this poem has little to say about the mundanities of household matters.²⁵ Such genealogical mythologies are frequently viewed by traditional peoples as indisputable,

see Chapter 1, pp. 46; 46n207; 46n209; 46n210. On the universality of a normally greater sexual drive in males – compared with females – see Chapter 1, pp. 22-23; 23n49; 24n53; 25; 25n61. On patrilineal pressures on women to produce greater numbers of offspring (usually more sons), see Chapter 1, pp. 49n230; 81. On women's uncontrollable and excessive hunger for food, sex, and society, see also Semonides (*Poem* 7: 84-94).

²² On the ambivalence of ancient Greeks (in male-authored sources, at least) to the burden of potentially disappointing offspring, see Zeitlin (1995b:52); cf. the chorus of Euripides' *Medeia*, who definitely have strong opinions on the obvious pros and cons of parental investment (*Med.* 1081-1115).

²³ On the importance of infant facial resemblance to the father to infant survival, see discussion in Chapter 1, pp. 51-52; 51n246; 51n247. On lenient attitudes toward concubinage and illegitimacy in the archaic period and less emphasis on adultery and female sexuality in Homeric epic than in later tragedy, see Foley (1981:150).

²⁴ Cohen (1986, 1989); Fowler (1998:2); Most (2006:lxv-lxvi). On the *Bibliothēkē's* use of the *Catalogue* as primary source, see Most (2006:li). On Merkelbach and West's (1967) orthodox ordering of the *Catalogue's* fragments, see Fowler (1998:2); Osborne (2005:5).

²⁵ On the *CW* as genealogy, see West (1985a: 8-9, 11, 27); Rose (1992:97-98); Fowler (1998:1, 3-4, 18); Hunter (2005:3); Irwin (2005:39, 60); Scodel (2005b:181); Doherty (2008:73).

sacred truth, but often distort the real process of procreation, obscuring the common reality of lineage extinction in favour of present political requirements. Women are frequently described in *CW* as θαλερήν, from θάλλω, ‘blooming, fresh youth’: the obvious implication is blooming nubility, in common with real-world male human standards of female attractiveness, and the *Catalogue*’s real, persistent plot is male desire for females’ physical beauty, beginning with Pandora and ending with Helen.²⁶ The *CW* outlines through many generations the desirability of named women, how they are impregnated by particular men, and the subsequent birth of offspring. In the Hesiodic *Catalogue*, female fertility is no unwelcome drain on resources but results in the creation of heroes, and great families; the adulterous siring of some women’s children by gods (rather than husbands) simply serves to establish and elevate particular descent-lines. While some scholars contend that the *Catalogue* reveres female ancestors and female fertility, these female protagonists are defined solely by their fertility potential, and its successful capture; all of the apparently strong and independent females of the *Catalogue* – Mestra (*Cat.* fr. 69-71) and Atalanta (frs. 47-51), for example – are properly subdued through marriage by the end of their episode, emphasized by the frequent reflexes of the verb δαμάζω ‘overpower, break in, make subject to a husband’.²⁷ This narrative pattern highlights the finding that marriage universally is the exchange between males of proprietary rights to a female’s fertility: the narrative episodes of the *CW* demonstrate the need to domesticate women because contemporary sixth-century Greeks were intensely worried about whether a married woman’s first allegiance belonged to the husband or to the father. Fifth-century democratic Athenian citizenship laws insisted that all married women still belonged to their natal families, because the daughter as *epikleros* might be reclaimed to produce an heir to her patrilineal *oikos*.²⁸ The production of a husband’s child mitigated this problem, supporting the cross-cultural view of marriage as an institution validated through the creation of offspring.²⁹

²⁶ Cf. Osborne (2005:5, 21). On male criteria for female beauty based on physical indicators of youth as a proxy for peak fertility, see Chapter 1, pp. 30-31; 38-41; 39n160; 39n164; 39n165; 39n166.

²⁷ For discussion, see McLeod (1991:13); Ormand (2004:303, 313-314, 325, 332-333); Aguirre Castro (2005:22-23); Clay (2005:26-27); Irwin (2005:49); Osborne (2005:13, 19); Doherty (2008:73).

²⁸ On the *epikleros*, see Patterson (1998:65); Ormand (2004:329-330, 334, 334n87); Foxhall (2005). See also Isaeus (*On the Estate of Pyrrhus*) 3.64. Fifth-century tragedies such as Aiskhylos’ *Suppliants* and Sophokles’ *Elektra* and *Antigone* foreground the problem of divided female loyalties. Euripides’ *Medeia* demonstrates the potential outcome when women abandon natal family and foolishly transfer their loyalty to a husband.

²⁹ On traditional marriage as a legal transaction (or purchase of fertility) between a woman’s father and husband with the production of the husband’s heir as the true fulfilment of that contract, see Chapter 1, pp. 48; 60-63; 60n304; 62n313; 68.

The *Catalogue* introduces the reader very early to the three beautiful Tyndarides (the daughters of Tyndareos) – Timandra, ‘cow-eyed’ Klytaimestra, and Phylonoe, as beautiful as the goddesses (*Cat.* fr. 19) – and only later turns to the descent of their Atreid husbands, Agamemnon and Menelaos. Klytaimestra is married to Agamemnon on account of her beauty; their children are Iphimede, Elektra, and Orestes (*Cat.* fr. 19). The matrilineal descent of Klytaimestra runs back through the famous Leda (*Cat.* fr. 19), to grandmother Demodike, who once rejected the largest number of marriage offers ever known (*Cat.* fr. 18-19). In the *CW* Iphimede is the Tyndarid who is sacrificed but saved and made immortal by Artemis; Orestes, on reaching puberty, takes vengeance on his own mother as his father’s murderer (*Cat.* fr. 19). Klytaimestra’s father is cited elsewhere as the pitiable sire of three unfaithful daughters (*Bibliothēkē* 3.10.7), but the *Catalogue* shows that their unfaithfulness is Aphrodite’s punishment upon their father for forgetting her honours (*Cat.* frs. 19, 247).³⁰

These accursed Tyndarides are described by Hesiod in *CW* as ideal wives and mothers, the better, perhaps, to emphasize the inhumane cruelty of Aphrodite’s subsequent vengeance.³¹ Timandra, the fertile wife of Echemos, bears him a son, Laodokos (*Cat.* 19, *Paus.* 8.44.1); Helen, like her ancestress Demodike, is a prize sought by many suitors, who come themselves or send agents, and offer rich gifts (precious metal objects, livestock, and skilled female slaves) for her hand in marriage (*Cat.* 154a, b, c, d, e-155); she bears her husband ἄελπτον ‘beyond hope’, a female child, Hermione (*Cat.* 155).³² The *Catalogue*’s Klytaimestra is as beautiful and desirable as every other famous ancestress; she is also a fertile wife, bearing two daughters (the sacrificed daughter is here called Iphimede), and one son to her husband Agamemnon (*Cat.* fr. 19). Elektra, who will figure so importantly in tragedy, also appears here for the first time in literature (*Cat.* fr. 19), but does not yet play a part in the killing of Klytaimestra.³³ All three daughters of Tyndareos exemplify the fears of men over wifely insubordination – they commit

³⁰ Demodike’s father is Agenor (*Cat.* fr. 10), also the ancestor of the Atreid lineage. Demodike’s ancestress Kalyke is the daughter of Aeolus (*Cat.* fr. 10), the grandson (through Hellen, *Cat.* frs. 5, 9) of either Deukalion (*Cat.* fr. 4), the son of Pandora and Prometheus (*Cat.* fr. 3), and the first male progenitor of the Greeks, or of Zeus, the king of gods (fr. 5). Tyndareos’ genealogy, if it appeared in the *Catalogue* (which seems likely), has not survived; other sources, such as Apollodoros’ *Bibliothēkē* fill the gaps in the Tyndarid lineage. On the Tyndarides as instruments of Aphrodite’s curse upon a man, see Osborne (2005:20); Stesikhoros *PMG* 223.

³¹ Brothers Tyndareos and Ikarios produce the worst and best wives in the mythic tradition: Klytaimestra and Penelope; see West (1985a:157).

³² According to one scholion on Euripides’ *Elektra*, Hesiod’s Helen also bears a son – Nikostratos – to Ares (*Cat.* 248).

³³ There is no sign in the *Catalogue* of Sophokles’ compliant Khrysothemis, or any of the four daughters of Agamemnon found in Homer (*Il.* 9.144-147).

adultery and abandon their husbands – but only Klytaimestra adds mariticide to infidelity, and only her infidelity is distinguished as immoral through the description of it as *παρέλεκτο*; nevertheless, being afflicted by Aphrodite’s curse is the only reason offered in this work for her coming to lie down beside Aigisthos (*Cat.* 247).³⁴ The *Catalogue* specifically attributes Iphimede’s death to the Akhaians – not to her father Agamemnon – and answers the apparent problem of Iphigeneia’s death – suggesting that there might have been earlier questions about this – by insisting that the slaughter happened by the will of Artemis, and that Agamemnon’s slain daughter is now Hekate, immortal goddess (*Cat.* fr. 19, 20a, b).

Klytaimestra’s heritage is relatively unburdened by self-destructive tendencies, but the *Catalogue* reminds its audience that kin-killing is rife among the Atreid clan (*Cat.* fr. 133). The descent-line of Atreid Agamemnon begins with Aeolus’ daughter, Kalyke, whose descendant Porthaon sires three daughters upon Laothoe: Eurythemiste and Stratonike and Sterope (*Cat.* fr. 23). Sterope’s granddaughter Hippodameia marries Pelops and produces sons Atreus and Thyestes, and three daughters; Lysidike, Nikippe, and Astydamea (*Cat.* fr. 133).³⁵ The *CW* points out that ἀρήϊος ‘warlike’ Atreid Menelaos does not woo Helen himself, relying on the more persuasive influence of his brother Agamemnon (*Cat.* frs. 154, 155).³⁶ The threat to Agamemnon’s personal reputation as a successful marriage-maker on behalf of his brother may explain why he is so personally offended by the unilateral dissolution of Menelaos’ marriage by the absconding Tyndarid Helen.

This is also the unhappy family tree of the unhappy Tantalid Aigisthos – cousin to the magnificent Agamemnon, just as evil Klytaimestra is cousin to the circumspect Penelope; Atlas’ daughter Sterope was the mother of Oinomaos by Ares, the contentious god of war; Oinomaos then fathered Hippodameia, who betrayed her father for love, and married Tantalid Pelops, paternal grandfather to the Atreids and Thyestids. Hippodameia’s husband Pelops was

³⁴ According to Irwin (2005), *παράλεγω*, ‘to pluck superfluous hair, to lie beside’ is usually applied to contexts of passionate or secret sex, and deception. Instances of this verb may also be found at *Il.* 2.515, 6.198, 14.237, 16.185, 20.224; 24.676; *Od.* 11.242; *HHaph.* 167; *Hes. Theog.* 278. One of these (*Il.* 14.237) refers to Hera’s plan to seduce her husband.

³⁵ The *Catalogue* makes Pleisthenes – the son of Atreus and Aerope – and Kleolla the parents of Agamemnon, Menelaos, and Anaxibia: the children are raised by their grandfather Atreus only because of Pleisthenes’ early death (*Cat.* 137b). Cf. *Cat.* fr. 138, which makes Aerope the wife of Pleisthenes, and mother to Agamemnon and Menelaos.

³⁶ Despite his dubious reputation in tragedy for bravery, Atreid Menelaos is twice described in this work as ἀρήϊος ‘warlike’ (*Cat.* 155).

fathered by the child-murdering Tantalos, who persistently offended many gods by exploiting and abusing his privileged relationship with them; Hippodameia and Pelops created Thyestes, who mounted the bed of his brother Atreus, and later impiously sired – upon his own daughter – the adulterous and kin-killing Aigisthos. Brothers Thyestes and Atreus competed for the rule of the kingdom, and Atreus forced his brother to unwittingly eat his own children. Thyestes’ son Aigisthos triumphed over Atreus’ son Agamemnon and took the throne; Agamemnon’s son Orestes later retook that throne, and is said to have slain Aigisthos’ son Aletes. The *Catalogue*’s extant fragments demonstrate that the whole Tantalid genealogy is riddled with intra-familial disputes in a manner not attested in the Tyndarid line: fights over women; theft of other men’s wives; competition for power between brothers; conflict between kin; and habitual offence against the gods. Other works show that these crimes provoke many curses upon and within the Tantalid family, yet it is the one curse of infidelity borne by the innocent daughters of Tyndareos which receives marked notice in Hesiod: the manifold sins and ensuing curses of the kin-killing Tantalids receive no mention whatsoever. Hesiod’s *CW* may appear to be kinder to its female protagonists, but the author’s (and perhaps the audience’s) anxieties about female fidelity are the same as those of *Theogony* and *WD*: nothing – even slaughter of existing children, and forcing the gods to consume human flesh – outweighs the catastrophe of illegitimate offspring, making husbands into cuckolds.

These two accursed households also feature in celebratory archaic *epinikia* by Xanthos, Stesikhoros, Simonides, Semonides, and, most notably, Pindar, contemporary with the continued performance of Homeric epic and Hesiodic poetry: these lyric poems strongly influence depictions of Klytaimestra and her family in fifth-century tragedy.³⁷ Xanthos, according to Aelian (*Varia Historia* 4.26:fr.2P), wrote an *Oresteia*, and introduced for the first time the idea of Elektra’s unwilling virginity (e-lektra, ‘bed-less’); before Agamemnon’s death, it seems, she had simply been called Laodike.³⁸ According to Athenaios’ account (*Deip.* 513A: fr. 1P), Stesikhoros of Himera subsequently borrowed from Xanthos in his *Oresteia*.³⁹ Stesikhoros’ lost two-book *Oresteia* is thought to be much more influential (especially on Simonides, Pindar, and the later Aiskhylos); in comparison with Homer, Stesikhoros highlights

³⁷ On the influence of archaic *epinikia* upon later literary forms, including tragedy, see Bowra (1964:197); Podlecki (1984:251-252); Nagy (1990:385, 404-405, 409-410, 433; 2007:22-23); Race (1997:31); (Segal 1998:2-3); Kurke (2000:60, 85-87); Greenwood (2006:313).

³⁸ See Baldry (1971:111); Garvie (1986:xvii); Campbell (1989:5, 42); Bakogianni (2011:19). Homer refers to Agamemnon’s daughter Laodike (*Il.* 9.145), and her sisters Khrysothemis and Iphianassa.

³⁹ Garvie (1986:xvii); Ewans (2000b:xxvii-xxviii).

the moral wrongdoing of Klytaimestra, and he increases the prominence of her children in the events.⁴⁰ His version is also thought to depict Aigisthos' threat of violence toward Orestes, who – as in the later tragedies – is spirited away on the same day as Agamemnon's murder.⁴¹ Stesikhoros' *Oresteia* may be the first work to make Klytaimestra the sole killer of Agamemnon, and the Erinyes make their first known appearance here (*PMG* 217).⁴² While Stesikhoros did not invent the sacrifice of Iphigeneia (first seen in the *Catalogue* and the *Kypria*), his *Oresteia* seems to agree with their version: Iphigeneia is saved and then immortalized by Artemis.⁴³ Stesikhoros' retelling of the story does not address how Aphrodite's curse caused the infidelity of the three Tyndarides.

At some point after the production of Stesikhoros' *Oresteia*, Simonides of Keos (sch. *E. Or.* 46 [fr. 44P]; *P. Oxy.* 2434 fr. 1 a [fr. 103P]) turned to the story; his work – now lost – is thought to follow Stesikhoros in some details, as does Pindar's later work.⁴⁴ While Semonides of Amorgos did not produce an *Oresteia*, his *Poem 7, On Women* does allude to another errant Tyndarid, Klytaimestra's sister Helen; this satirical poem has undoubtedly contributed to the tradition of Western misogyny, perhaps even as much as Hesiod's Pandora-narrative. In this work Semonides begins by agreeing the women are different from men, because the gods made them that way; he then likens women to a number of animals in character and behaviour, almost always in a denigrating manner.⁴⁵ According to Semonides, women are lazy, greedy, and unkempt to the point of ugliness, defiant, demanding, meddling, untameable, shrewd, deceptive, and sexually repulsive.⁴⁶ The redeeming (and only) good qualities of Semonides' bee-woman (84-94) – industry and submissive fertility – are atypical, and rarely found; Semonides undercuts his praise of her, warning his audience that even the good wife exploits her husband's approval and trust all the better to betray him, so that his neighbours laugh at him (111-114). Like Hesiod, Semonides positions women as instruments of Zeus, insatiable for food and sex, and work-shy, created to be a bane for men; marriage is the 'greatest pain of all',

⁴⁰ Prag (1985:74, 76); Garvie (1986:xviii); Scodel (2005b:184). The Stesikhoros fragment concerning Klytaimestra's dream featuring the snake with blood-stained crest, and the king, a son of Pleisthenes clearly precedes Aiskhylos' later scene in *Khoephoroi*, discussed below.

⁴¹ Pontani (2007:210).

⁴² Arthur (1984:49). According to Graf (1993:157) it was from Hesiod's *Catalogue* that Stesikhoros took the depiction of Klytaimestra as primary murderer of Agamemnon.

⁴³ Gantz (1966:582-84).

⁴⁴ Garvie (1986:xxiv); Podlecki (1987:3).

⁴⁵ Lloyd-Jones (1975). On the similarities between Semonides' and Hesiod's hypersexualized women as banes for men, see Osborne (2005:22-23).

⁴⁶ Cf. Hesiod's juxtaposition of the naturally virtuous husband with the wife's natural vices (*WD* 174-175).

and ‘Helen’s War’ – the culmination of the woes which women inflict upon men – led to the death of many (118-122). Semonides’ poem highlights the dangerous evil of all women, whereas epinician poems – a genre primarily celebrating male success in cultural and sporting competition – is little interested in Klytaimestra’s moral offences; nevertheless, she makes a small but significance appearance in two of Pindar’s *epinikia*.

Pindar lived and composed well into the century of Athenian tragedy, and is considered the most accomplished of many archaic (and classical) lyric poets.⁴⁷ Incidental textual survival makes Pindar’s lyric the most accessible to analysis. The idealization of excellence as an inherited virtue is one of the central aims of the Pindaric odes, and inherited excellence in the Pindaric ode is demonstrated in an individual’s strength, courage, and good looks, as well as moral qualities, and noble character.⁴⁸ Transmission of excellence through the patriline from father to son demands rigid control of female sexuality and fertility to ensure paternal certainty, and Pindar’s depiction of Klytaimestra in the *Pythian 11* highlights the dangers of adultery.⁴⁹ His *epinikion* for Thrasydaios of Thebes, dated at either 474 or 454 BCE, makes a somewhat tenuous connection between the place where Thrasydaios gained a victory – Kirrha at Phokis – and Pylades of Phokis, who had once hosted Orestes (*Pyth.* 11.12-16); the ode then lurches into Orestes’ family history (12-16), and the exploits of Klytaimestra, from whose ‘heavy hands’ the infant Orestes is rescued (17-18).⁵⁰

Pindar’s *Pythian 11* is not especially kind to Klytaimestra, but this ode is no kinder to her husband Agamemnon. The latter part of an *epinikion* sometimes offers a reflective moral commentary that resonates with the ode’s focal myth; here it muses on the value of moderation, humility, and good reputation, in contrast to the arrogance of the excessively wealthy and powerful (51-58). Agamemnon is not specifically identified, but the ode earlier refers to Atreus’ heroic and ambitious son, who stole from the Trojans their opulent treasures (29-34);

⁴⁷ On Pindar’s excellence, see Podlecki (1984:208); Race (1997:2); Kurke (2000:82); Sharrock and Ash (2002:44). Gerber (1997:253) gives Pindar’s likely birth as 522/518 BCE, making him at least a contemporary of Aiskhylos. Our earliest datable Pindaric ode is the *Pythian 10*, from 498 BCE.

⁴⁸ On the themes of Pindaric ode, see Bowra (1964:316); Podlecki (1984:238-239); Walsh (1984:45-46); Rose (1992:150-151, 160-161); Sharrock and Ash (2002:46-47).

⁴⁹ On female sexuality in early Greek literature sexuality as a potentially uncontrollable magical force, and stringent patriarchal control as the only solution, see Bowra (1964:279, 287); Podlecki (1984:213); Segal (1986:52, 165, 170; 1998:107); Race (1997:19); Greenwood (2006:315).

⁵⁰ On the dating of this ode, see Race (1997:366). Garvie (1986) prefers a pre-*Oresteia* (Aiskhylos’ version) date of 474 BCE for *Pythian 11*, as does Bakogianni (2011).

he burned their houses and caused the death of the Trojan prophetess (Kassandra) – even though it is Klytaimestra who dealt the death-stroke (19-21). Most importantly, Pindar raises the question of the treacherous Klytaimestra’s motivation (22-25): was it the death of Iphigeneia? Or was it Klytaimestra’s seduction by another man? Pindar slyly implies it could have been both; while Homer refers only to Klytaimestra’s funeral and the feast given her by Orestes, Pindar does not deny by omission the death of Iphigeneia, nor does he refrain from describing Orestes’ slaughter of his mother (37).

We cannot know exactly how Klytaimestra’s killing of Kassandra and Agamemnon played out in the original *Kypria* – which influenced so many later works – but Pindar’s eleventh *Pythian* may be the first extant work to associate Iphigeneia’s sacrificial death with Klytaimestra’s sexual treachery, and the first to position the mother as a distinct danger to the son and the primary murderer of her husband.⁵¹ While the blame is shared between Klytaimestra and Aigisthos in some pre-Aiskhylean fragments, *Pythian 11* seems to follow Stesikhoros in centralizing Klytaimestra’s desire for vengeance and her guilt for the act so that some scholars conclude that Pindar’s lyric poem in turn directly inspired and informed Aiskhylos’ characterization of the tragic Klytaimestra, whose hand alone wields the blade that slew Atreid Agamemnon.⁵²

This section illustrated the increasing narrative interest in Klytaimestra as a greater danger to her husband’s lineage than his traditional enemy Aigisthos. The ancient struggle between the two patrilineages of Atreids and Thyestids for control of the kingdom becomes less important than the possibility that the husband Agamemnon is being cuckolded in his absence; Klytaimestra’s illicit sexual relationship with his political rival replaces her grief for her expeditiously slain child as reason for hatred of Agamemnon and her culpability for her husband’s murder is magnified.

The next section on the three tragedies of Aiskhylos now known as the *Oresteia* explores the way in which both Klytaimestra and Agamemnon are redrawn in the fifth-century context: the

⁵¹ Pindar’s Agamemnon and Orestes are as heroic as they are in Homer’s telling; see Gantz (1966:672); Robbins (1986:4).

⁵² Prag (1985:77-78); Lesky (1966a:256); Garvie (1986:xxv); Wolfe (2009:697-698); Bakogianni (2011:20). Cf. Prag (1985:79, 86), who maintains that iconographic evidence demonstrates that Klytaimestra’s centrality in Agamemnon’s murder was not the innovation of either Pindar or Stesikhoros; rather, Aiskhylos’ tragedy made the definitive change in the depiction of Klytaimestra and her experience.

greedy, belligerent general of earlier narratives becomes the beloved father and master of the household, and the originally well-behaved guardian of the house seduced by her husband's political rival is now a strong, fully focussed enemy of the Atreid patriline. This change in characterization leads some to contend that the *Oresteia* becomes the most important source for the depiction of Klytaimestra in all later literature.⁵³ The treacherous Aigisthos of earlier epic becomes a sword-shy accessory to the fact of Agamemnon's assassination. Klytaimestra's avenging children attract a lot of audience sympathy; their allegiance is conspicuously and absolutely to their male parent; her own speeches throughout Aiskhylos' trilogy tend to be interpreted according to critics' liking or dislike of her. Any possibility of children supporting the mother against the reproductively oppressive father is now just ancient mythological fancy, and the narrative systematically eliminates all the motive force of Iphigeneia's sacrifice through ignoring it once the mother's vengeance is accomplished. References made by many of the characters – including Klytaimestra – to reproductive aspects of human life indicate how much of a threat the female power of fertility can be to male rule in a patriarchal world, and how central women's potential misuse of this power was to their social being.

Aiskhylos: The Oresteia

Aiskhylos was born into a late archaic-era aristocratic family, probably around 525/524 BCE.⁵⁴ Ancient lists of victories at the City Dionysia demonstrate the supreme excellence of Aiskhylos as playwright, and the enormous contemporary popularity of his work; the *Oresteia* – his final production and the pinnacle of his creative success – won first prize in 458 BCE.⁵⁵ According to Aiskhylos' self-composed epitaph, however, the most important facts of his life are his citizenship of Athens, his patrilineal descent, his participation as a soldier in the battle of Marathon, and his fame – among his enemies – as an intimidating adversary; there is no mention whatsoever of his success as playwright.⁵⁶ Aiskhylos' hope for eternal glory as a warrior – not

⁵³ Goldhill (1992:51); Rutherford (2012:307).

⁵⁴ Cf. Lattimore (1953:1-2), who argues that the later date of 513/ 512 BCE is more probable. Aiskhylos famously died in 456 BCE visiting Gela, Sicily. Sommerstein (1996:16-17); Sommerstein (2002:33); Storey and Allan (2005:93). Cf. also the *Marmor Parium* (*FGrH*. 239, ep. 48). On Aiskhylos' aristocratic background, see Storey and Allan (2005:93).

⁵⁵ On Aiskhylos' numerous Dionysia victories, see Sommerstein (1996:20-21; 2002:33-34; 2008:ix); Saïd (2005:218); Storey and Allan (2005:93). On the supreme dramatic excellence of the *Oresteia* see Norwood (1948:102); Gagarin (1976:57); Trypanis (1981:143); Macleod (1982:144); Lesky (1983b:70); Goldhill (1986:5); Sommerstein (1996:65); Zeitlin (1965:463; 1996:12, 87, 119; 2005:199); Anderson (2005:213).

⁵⁶ Aiskhylos fought at Marathon 490, and at Salamis and Plataia in 480/479; see Lattimore (1953:1); Spatz (1982:1); Sommerstein (1996:24, 2002:33); Storey and Allan (2005:93).

as playwright – is important for understanding his depiction of war and warriors in the *Oresteia*.⁵⁷ Critical attitudes toward the playwright's warmongering generally influence interpretations of Klytaimestra as a woman who challenges her husband's commitment to military victory at all costs.⁵⁸

Many scholars from the nineteen-seventies on began to view gender dynamics and conflict as the primary concern of the *Oresteia*.⁵⁹ Marriage is the bloodiest ground of gender-conflict in many Aiskhylean tragedies; the *Oresteia* and the *Danaïdes* both address the problem for (male) civilization of women who refuse to submit to husbands.⁶⁰ Some believe that the *Oresteia* resolves the irreconcilable collision of women and men through the divine endorsement of patriarchal marriage.⁶¹ Husband-murder becomes an evil equivalent to the murder of a father, and both of these crimes outweigh the sin of matricide, and the mother-murderer Orestes becomes the idealized defender of gender hierarchy.⁶² Others argue that the trilogy's central problem is family conflict and that conflict between *oikos* and *polis* is the focus of the trilogy, leading to the family problem of female sexuality in the political context of male citizenship; in modern social-conflict theory, family issues are inseparable from gender issues.⁶³ The Athenians enjoyed the *agōn* of court-room debate, and many of the Klytaimestra-tragedies demonstrate the ambience of a legal trial; it is no surprise that a cultural love of competition and conflict in the legal context imbues the arguments of the main characters in the *Oresteia* corpus, and this thesis reads them in this mode.

⁵⁷ On pro-militaristic imperialism in Aiskhylos' works, see Blundell (1989:13); Schaps (1993:515); Zelenak (1998:61). On Aiskhylos as anti-militarist and critic of overt nationalism, see Lattimore (1954:3); Gagarin (1976:93); Rosenmeyer (1982:171); Sommerstein (1996:424); Mitchell-Boyask (2008:14).

⁵⁸ On changing interpretations of Aiskhylos' intentions and political shifts in modern critics, see Bowie (1993:10-11); Goldhill (1986); MacEwen (1990a:11).

⁵⁹ On the *Oresteia*'s concern with gender relations, see Beye (1975:322); Gagarin (1976:88); Fagles and Stanford (1977:87); Carne-Ross (1981:53-54); Winnington-Ingram (1983a:84, 1983b:101); Konishi (1990:13); Zeitlin (1990:103-104, 1996:123); Goldhill (1992:37, 42); Sommerstein (1996:255-256); Zelenak (1998:47); Foley (2001:203); Harris and Platzner (2008:10); Mitchell-Boyask (2008:116); Sommerstein (2008:xi).

⁶⁰ On female rejection of marriage in Aiskhylos' *Oresteia* (and *Danaïdes*) see Garner (1990:131); Zeitlin (1996:91). For further discussion of gender matters in Aiskhylos' *Danaïdes* trilogy, see Burian (1974:9); Spatz (1982:73); Winnington-Ingram (1983b:70); Herington (1986:98); Ewans (1996:1); Zeitlin (1996:123); Zelenak (1998:47); Storey and Allan (2005:245).

⁶¹ Garner (1990:37, 40, 46, 100); Zeitlin (1996:123-124); Bakogianni (2011:4).

⁶² Burnett (1998:103).

⁶³ Goldhill (1986:153, 249; 1992:51); Conacher (1987:5); Blondell et al (1999a:49); Collard (2002:xliv).

Not all female characters are in conflict with all male characters, but gendered family conflict is foregrounded in the *Oresteia* through the juxtaposition of particular character types. The hyper-sexualized Klytaimestra's transgression of a traditional femininity is enhanced by the uncertainty of Aigisthos' masculinity; any man mated to an overtly sexual, dominant woman is viewed with scorn (and not only in an ancient, overtly androcentric context) but Klytaimestra and Aigisthos in the *Khoephoroi* (*The Libation-Bearers*) may be the only romantic couple in the *Oresteia* – in any tragedy, perhaps – who live together without discord.⁶⁴ The *Oresteia* differs from epic tradition in making the unnaturally autonomous Klytaimestra (almost) exclusively responsible for her husband's death, and – where pre-tragic representations of the murder make Orestes enact his revenge firstly on Aigisthos, the primary murderer of his father – in Aiskhylos' trilogy Klytaimestra's murder is now the central climax.⁶⁵ The elevation of Klytaimestra as chief homicide side-lines Aigisthos as Agamemnon's personal and political *ekthros*, but Aigisthos makes it clear that he is ἐχθρὸς ἤ παλαιγενής, 'a long-time enemy' of Agamemnon (*Aga.* 1637-1638), and this Thyestid has as much cause as Klytaimestra against the heirs of Atreus, and he also has as good a claim to the throne of Argos as his deposed Atreid cousin.⁶⁶

Understanding Aiskhylos' reinvention of Klytaimestra as a desperate woman in an uncompassionate man's world also depends on the various witness-statements of those who interact with her: her husband, her children, and the trilogy's supporting characters.⁶⁷ Character-witnesses are a common means to sway a jury's perception of acts committed by a defendant; when a person's own children are willing to testify against them, observers tend to conclude that the defendant is seriously unlikable. For instance, the Watchman's attitude to Klytaimestra, discussed below, is one of fearful compliance, and his dark hints imply that

⁶⁴ On the contrast between the inverted gender-behaviours of Klytaimestra and Aigisthos, see Vickers (1973:348, 396); Zeitlin (1996:92); Sommerstein (1996:267); Wohl (1998:103); Zelenak (1998:66). For disparaging critical descriptions of Aiskhylos' Aigisthos, see Kitto (1968:64); Rosenmeyer (1982:218); Rehm (1992:94).

⁶⁵ On Aigisthos as primary homicide in early iconography see Prag (1985: 1-2, 5, 10, 19). On the shift of iconographic depictions of the story across the archaic period reflecting Aiskhylos' invention of Klytaimestra's ambivalence and hostility toward her son, see Gantz (1966:673-674); Vermeule (1966:6, 10-11); Garvie (1986:xxiii); Sommerstein (1996:200). On the side-lining of Aigisthos and the expansion of Klytaimestra's role in order to shift focus onto gender-conflict in marriage, see Gantz (1966:674-675); Winington-Ingram (1983a:91).

⁶⁶ Foley (2001:206) is one of the few to acknowledge Aigisthos' right to vengeance. Tantalid Aigisthos also shares the right to suffer the family curse; see Norwood (1948:106); Belfiore (2000:10).

⁶⁷ On Aiskhylos' characterization of Klytaimestra, see Anderson (1932:313); Norwood (1948:104, 106); Latimore (1953:9); Vickers (1973:58, 382); Betensky (1978:12); Baldock (1989:37). Des Bouvrie (1990:319); Van Erp Taalman Kip (1996:126); McClure (1997:130); Wolfe (2009:699).

something is not right in this palace ruled by a woman.⁶⁸ Klytaimestra also conflicts with the *Agamemnon*'s chorus of elderly citizens, whose overt attitude toward the queen is of grudging respect; they view women in general with contempt, however.⁶⁹ Although Orestes and Elektra do not appear in the first play, *Agamemnon*, the *Oresteia* expands the traditional narrative's characterization of Klytaimestra's hostile daughter and returning son, who replace Klytaimestra as central protagonists of the second play *Khoephoroi*; after this Elektra disappears completely, while Orestes in *Eumenides* is peripheral to the play's *agōn* between ancient female and new patriarchalist gods. Critics disagree on whether the *Oresteia* is one unified three-act dramatic unit or is three quite individual plays focussing on different characters, but more important is the relationship between the three tragedies and the trilogy's concluding satyr-play *Proteus* (now lost); this work points out that if Orestes had only waited a few days longer, the returning Menelaos would have righteously avenged Agamemnon's assassination, saving his nephew from the terrible sin of mother-murder.⁷⁰

Some scholars recognize the central importance of reproductive biology in the trilogy: the female capacity to mother children is challenged and then disproven in the *Oresteia*; father-right now underpins the ideal civilization of the trilogy's triumphant conclusion.⁷¹ In *Agamemnon* Klytaimestra's right to avenge her own child is challenged; in *Khoephoroi* her claim to be the real mother of Orestes is undermined; and in *Eumenides* her capacity as a woman to be a biological mother at all is adjudged invalid. The sacrifice of Iphigeneia symbolizes the destruction of the natural (and reproductively certain) mother-daughter bond in favour of the socially central – but less biologically certain – father-son alliance. Everyone who matters chooses for the male, and the *Oresteia* celebrates the formal restructuring of society to accommodate male reproductive supremacy; maternal right is set aside forever for the sake of (male) civilization.⁷² Only Klytaimestra and her Furies choose for the female, and their protests are nullified.

⁶⁸ Some view the watchman as an unsympathetic character; Vickers (1973:349); Rosenmeyer (1982:217); Heath (1987:1).

⁶⁹ On Klytaimestra's conflict with the chorus, see Winnington-Ingram (1983b:73); Ley (2007:196).

⁷⁰ On the unity of the trilogy, see Jones (1962:70); Winnington-Ingram (1983b:73); Garvie (1986:xxxv-xxxvi); Zelenak (1998:66); Rosslyn (2000:11); Sommerstein (2002:37); McLeish (2003:39); Buxton (2007:178); Sewell (2007:118). *Proteus* is thought to depict a spoof of Menelaos' journey back to Argos, and mentions the murder of Agamemnon by Aigisthos; see Halleran (2005:200); Sommerstein (2010b:79).

⁷¹ Zeitlin (1996:170); Zelenak (1998:69); Murnaghan (2005:239-140); Wohl (2005:150); Goldhill (2007:147).

⁷² On the victory of male political-marriage systems over biological, female-centric kin structures in the *Oresteia*, see Gagarin (1976:89, 101); Goldhill (1986:152). On the *Oresteia* as the founding document of the shift from mother-right to patriarchal law, see Anderson (1932:319); Komar (2003:29).

The victory of Olympian deities over the Erinyes comes at a very high cost: the divine denial of Klytaimestra's motherhood acquits a mother-killer and disempowers the traditional guardians of moral virtue. The *Oresteia*'s richly explicit yet unambiguously repugnant mother-murder starkly contrasts with Homer's ambivalent references to Agamemnon's death, and the epic tradition in which Klytaimestra's offstage death is discreetly matter-of-fact. Aiskhylos' trilogy is mostly concerned with the moral question of whether Agamemnon 'deserved' his death or if Orestes is morally justified through duty or obligation to seek revenge; thus, some conclude that the *Oresteia* aims to justify and exonerate the traditionally immoral matricide as an appropriate remedy to the unthinkable sin of husbandicide.⁷³ Every action undertaken in the trilogy only seems to result in horrific consequences, and the real message of the trilogy may be that humans will always make unjust moral decisions, but most especially when exposed to the persuasive speeches of others. Indeed, each play of the *Oresteia* contains a single crucial moment of persuasion: Agamemnon is persuaded to tread on the tapestries; Orestes is persuaded to murder his mother; and the Erinyes are persuaded to forgo their pursuit of the matricide.

The preceding section has raised the question of how the *Oresteia* has been received and interpreted by ancient and modern audiences. The trilogy has long been read as an illustration of gender conflict at the social and political level, but much less as a parable of reproductive antagonism within a two-sexed species. Each play focusses on a different aspect of the struggle of males and females to exert greater control over the production of offspring: the *Agamemnon* addresses the unforeseen but entirely predictable consequences of one man's unilateral disposal of his child in support of war; the *Khoephoroi* responds to the events of the first play – after an amazing narrative interval of ten years – with the story of how children in a patrilineal culture are compelled by social circumstances to persecute their mother for her act; the *Eumenides* weighs the respective moral sin of the murders of father and mother, and resolves the question in favour of the father, through the denial of the obviously biological fact of motherhood. The suppression, subversion, and subordination of ancient female powers – mortal and divine – is the origin of human civilization, and patriarchal Athens is the most civilized nation of all.

⁷³ On the *Oresteia* – and Orestes' acquittal – as a justification of the cultural shift from *dikē*-vengeance among individual families to state-controlled administration of justice, see Murray (1940:196); Solmsen (1949:188); Zeitlin (1965:487n44, 494-495); Kitto (1968:91); Ferguson (1972:108); Gagarin (1976:79); Carne-Ross (1981:48-49); Winnington-Ingram (1983b:75); Schaps (1993:508); McDonald (2003:13); Clark (2012:144). Others contend that the trilogy's resolution only perpetuates the original form of bloody justice-seeking; see Lloyd-Jones (1962:187, 1983b:57); Gagarin (1976:66, 68).

Klytaimestra's noncompliance with her husband's primary allegiance to his military allies over his blood-kin is utterly negated, and the path to Greek predominance over the known world receives divine approval to wage war as widely as possible.

The *Agamemnon* is concerned with how a mother deprived of her child might plot against her husband; Klytaimestra's adultery in his absence is an open secret, but he somehow arrives home oblivious, in company with his new war-captive concubine or second wife, and falls to her scheme. Despite all evidence, modern critics (like some ancient authors) have long failed to grasp the profound effect on women of losing a child, and so work very hard to construe her motivation as sexual; as the following discussion of the first play in the trilogy will reveal, Klytaimestra dares to kill her husband not because she is jealous over her husband's new lover, or because she is in love with Aigisthos, but because she is driven by grief for Agamemnon's murder of her cherished child.

Aiskhylos: Agamemnon

Some scholars view the first play of the *Oresteia* – *Agamemnon* – as the *epitome* of Greek tragedy.⁷⁴ Critical responses to Aiskhylos' characterization of Klytaimestra and her husband range from awestruck admiration to disgusted revulsion, but critical sympathy toward either Klytaimestra or her husband in *Agamemnon* often reflects attitudes to gender-conflict, and admiring one seems to require disparaging the other.⁷⁵ According to some, the *Agamemnon* explores retribution and vengeance; others contend that the play is simply concerned with Agamemnon's return and fall.⁷⁶ However, an inherited disposition among the Pelopids to child abuse and catastrophic misfortune is clearly an issue in this play.⁷⁷ The chorus' impartial

⁷⁴ Tucker (1935:5); McLeish (2003:43).

⁷⁵ On the *Agamemnon*'s Klytaimestra as “a superb, gorgeous, dauntless figure... complex in emotions [and] direct in action”, see Anderson (1929:150). See also Zelenak (1998:60), who argues that the contrast between the “indecisive” Agamemnon and the “strong-willed” Klytaimestra is the play's “dramatic axis”. On Agamemnon as disappointing, “conceited, heavy-witted, pompous”, see Norwood (1948:103). On Klytaimestra and Aigisthos as repulsive and shadowy villains, see Denniston and Page (1957:xxxvi); Mastronarde (2010:68).

⁷⁶ On retributive vengeance in the play, see Lattimore (1972:74); Gantz (1983:68-69); Lloyd-Jones (1983b:58); Ireland (1986:23). On Agamemnon's return, see Heath (1987:19); Garner (1990:36); Dihle (1994:102); Sharrock and Ash (2002:39).

⁷⁷ On inherited family vengeance and violence and the Atreid family curse, see Lloyd-Jones (1970a:7); Conacher (1987:4); Goldhill (1992:29); Sharrock and Ash (2002:39). On the record of child abuse in the Atreid house, see Jones (1962:93) and Knox (1979:36). On the essential difference between the curse and inherited guilt – curses are public proclamations, while inherited guilt behaves more like an irresistible force of nature, and so the Erinyes act even when not formally evoked – see Sewell-Rutter (2007:59, 79).

witness-description of the Greek general's decision-making process in the *Agamemnon's* lengthy opening scene, Klytaimestra's cross-examination of her husband in the pivotal carpet-scene, and Cassandra's summing-up later in the play – an omniscient oracular vision as reliable for ancient audiences as any modern surveillance footage is for modern juries – all offer judgement on the direct causes of Agamemnon's assassination (or execution): his ancestors' evil and his own error in choosing to sacrifice Klytaimestra's child.⁷⁸ The chorus also verifies Agamemnon's complicity in his own demise in a number of testimonials: in their recitation of the story of the omen of the hare and eagles (*Ag.* 105-159); in their discussion of learning-through-suffering (160-183); in their account of the pitiable sacrifice of Iphigeneia (198-249); and in the parable of the treacherous lion-cub (716-781).

Aiskhylos sets aside the *Kypria's* traditional episode of Agamemnon's personal *hybris* toward Artemis from the choral *parados*, however; instead, he locates Artemis' anger in the omen of the hare and eagles (105-159), an episode many critics consider damning evidence for Agamemnon's guilt.⁷⁹ The identification of the Atreid brothers as the cruel pair of eagles in the choral ode occurs early in the play (42-44, 48-61, 109-110, 114-125), demonstrating that these twinned kings are equally guilty of impious violence. The imagery of the eagles deprived of their offspring (48-61) is frequently interpreted to refer to Menelaos' loss of a wife; but the metaphor of parental grief and fury over the loss of young more obviously points to the rage of Klytaimestra, deprived of her young. The feasting eagles visible to all are settled on the right side of the house, and thus the omen is interpreted as favourable, but the repeated refrain of the chorus – 'cry woe, woe, but let the good prevail' (121) – is an automatic touch-wood to avert ill-fortune, revealing the covert, sinister possibilities of the omen. Artemis – out of pity for the mother deprived of her offspring – conceives a hatred for the eagles, and the chorus immediately repeats their apotropaic plea (134-138). Ultimately the omen revisits the horrendous fates of all of the unfortunate offspring of the accursed house, however: Artemis loves the δρόσοισι λεπτοῖς 'vulnerable young' of μαλερῶν λεόντων, 'fiery lions' (139-145), and this is but one of the references to the Atreids as lions.⁸⁰ Kalkhas is forced to conclude that the omen is paradoxically δεξιὰ μὲν, κατάμομφα δὲ 'fortunate, but inauspicious' (145), calling upon Apollo

⁷⁸ Vickers (1973:357) describes the long choral *parodos* as "a miniature tragedy" in itself; Kitto (1968:67) contends that the twenty-minute ode is the intellectual foundation for the entire *Oresteia*.

⁷⁹ On the centrality of this ode to understanding the theme of (male-inflicted) suffering in whole trilogy, and the moral problem of Agamemnon's guilt, see Ferguson (1972:77); Vellacott (1984:64); Peradotto (2007:212, 219).

⁸⁰ Cf. Euripides' Klytaimestra as a mountain lion roaming the meadow (E. *El.* 1163-1164); was this Aiskhylos' fiery lioness simply seeking her unfledged, stolen cub, removed to the human (or male) world of civilization?

to prevent Artemis from hindering the Akhaians' mission (146-150); he also warns that further sacrificial slaughter will evoke φοβερὰ παλίνορτος/ οἰκονόμος δολία μνάμων μῆνις τεκνόποινος, 'a frightening, recurring and treacherous household-keeper and avenger of children, never forgetting wrath' (154-155).

Many critics, agreeing with Kalkhas that the eagles of the omen stand for the Atreides, conclude that Agamemnon is fully responsible for Iphigeneia's death; Agamemnon – through ἀνάγκη, 'necessity' (218) – willingly takes up the yoke-strap, and so cannot escape the inevitable reaction to his action. This yokestrap of necessity is not put upon him – the verb is ἔδω (from δύω, 'cause to plunge in' or 'get into' in the indicative); Agamemnon does it to himself and, in consequence, his change of heart is self-induced. But Artemis does not demand the sacrifice: she merely offers Agamemnon the choice to kill his child or cancel the war. Artemis' angry response to the eagles' feast is also inspired by Agamemnon's declaration to his brother Menelaos in the *Iliad* (6.57-60) that not even the unborn of Troy will escape, an association that Aiskhylos could reasonably expect his audience to make through his allusion to the hare's unborn.⁸¹ Many critics correctly identify Iphigeneia, the child of the accursed Atreid clan, as the hare's offspring in the omen.⁸² If Iphigeneia is the offspring slain before her time, then the bereaved hare must be Klytaimestra, whose child was torn from the *oikos* and murdered by the need of the Atreids.⁸³ Research indicates that the loss of a child can have extreme effects on the biological mother; if the manner of that loss is irrational filicide, the mother's desire to protect further offspring can also result in extreme action, as it does in Aiskhylos' retelling of the story.⁸⁴ The omen's true reference could not be clearer: an unweaned child of lions will be

⁸¹ Artemis' hares were traditionally spared by wise hunters (according to Xenophon, *Cyn.* 5.14). Artemis' cultural associations with the hare in the context of the omen are also evoked by archaeological evidence at her Brauron shrine of statues of young girls each holding a hare; female initiates at Brauron also wore a distinctive saffron-robe like the one worn by the sacrificed Iphigeneia. See Peradotto (2007:220-221); *Suda*, 'arktos e Brauroniois'; Aristoph. *Lys.* 641-647.

⁸² On the eagles' unnatural feast, Thyestes unholy meal (*Aga.* 1242), and the ancestral crime of filicide and cannibalism, see Zeitlin (1965:483); Vickers (1973:354); Carne-Ross (1981:43-44, 46); Whallon (1981:81-82); Vellacott (1984a:145); Seaford (1989:89-90); Heath (1999a:27-28; 1999b:403); McLeish (2003:43); Hall (2010:217). Cf. Lebeck (1971:35). According to Seaford (1989:91), αὐτότοκον πρὸ λόχου μογεράν πτάκα θυομένοισιν (137) can mean either 'sacrificing the poor trembling hare with her young before birth' or 'sacrificing a poor trembling female, his own child, on behalf of the army'.

⁸³ Garner (1990:29) views the abducted Helen as the eagle's lost child; however, the grieving eagle deprived of its young more credibly evokes Klytaimestra robbed of her child, rather than the men of the Atreid *oikos*, deprived of a wife. See also Zeitlin (1965:482); Knox (1979:28); Saxonhouse (1984:21); Heath (1999a:19).

⁸⁴ On maternal response to loss of a child, see Chapter 1, pp. 46-47; 47n215; 55n272; on mothers' proactive elimination of child-killing males, see Chapter 1, pp. 69; 71-72.

destroyed by the Atreid eagles; this act – which Artemis deplors – will enable the army to achieve their terrible aim, but at the price of misfortune, since the guardian of the house will, through treachery, bring vengeance for the death of that vulnerable child, just as other murders of children have been avenged in the past. The chorus also understands that Kalkhas’s words predict the fate of the royal family, and they repeat their apotropaic incantation, (156-159). The audience also knows – even if the Akhaians at Aulis did not – that Iphigeneia will not be the only price to be paid for the successful military expedition.

The chorus follows the omen episode with a discussion of *πάθει μάθος* (*pathei mathos*) ‘learning through suffering’ (160-183, 250-253). The choral passage states that ‘he who put mortals on the right path to understanding, he who, holding power, set up the state of suffering as law, and so the memory of pain trickles into consciousness and into the heart, and good sense comes to the unwilling, a favour which comes with force from the gods seated on the august seats of power’ (176-184). The chorus is unhelpfully unclear as to who precisely is suffering, and who is learning, and critical discussions offer a variety of possible referents.⁸⁵ Although suffering is experienced by numerous individuals in this tragedy, the suffering in this so-called ‘Hymn to Zeus’ is often thought to refer to men’s – human – experience generally and to Agamemnon’s in particular.⁸⁶ The chorus’ observation on learning-through-suffering is followed directly by the account of the fleet stranding at Aulis, however, and the announcement of the remedy for the delay – the polluting sacrifice of Agamemnon’s child; good sense, they say, will eventually come to someone through the suffering resulting from this sacrifice, while men’s lengthy reflection upon their errors will be a deeply unpleasant memory. But most of the characters in the *Oresteia*, even after suffering as a direct (or indirect) result of Iphigeneia’s sacrifice, do not find any good sense, and the only character reflecting in unpleasant memory upon her death appears to be her mother.

⁸⁵ Cf. Smith (1980:ix), who argues that *pathei mathos* in fact refers to “learning through bitter experience”, and Gagarin (1976:149-150), who argues that the critical problem of who learns and why confuses Aiskhylean Zeus and the Judaeo-Christian God; *pathei mathos*, in his opinion, refers to learning about the certainty of divine retribution, not to receiving any higher wisdom. Cf. Sommerstein (2010b:178), who rightly suggests that the phrase *pathei mathos* does not require the sufferer to be the one who learns. See also Booth (1976).

⁸⁶ Smith (1980:vii, ix, 25).

Unsurprisingly, some critics also conclude that, despite the divine gift of suffering, no one learns anything to redeem all the misery of the sacrifice.⁸⁷ Agamemnon certainly refuses to ‘learn’ that the costs of war are too great for either the *demos* or his own family to bear – he later implies that he would do it all over again, if required (934) – while those witnessing the suffering from a distance – the wilfully oblivious chorus – also fail to learn anything remotely useful about life.⁸⁸ Only the suffering Klytimestra changes, through discovering that the primary loyalty of Agamemnon is to political power, rather than to his *philoï*. The chorus now turn their full attention to the beginnings of suffering for the mother deprived of her young: Agamemnon’s sacrifice of Iphigeneia. This was no typical infanticide, or even filicide: Iphigeneia was a healthy young female, and did not represent a drain on parental investment.⁸⁹

Aiskhylos deliberately draws Iphigenia’s sacrifice in the worst possible light in the *Agamemnon*’s first ode. As soon as the Atreids hear the prophet’s interpretation of the omen, they accept the unholy – and thus potentially perilous – sacrifice of Iphigeneia as inevitable: the chorus foreground the suffering of the Atreid kings, who are greatly aggrieved by Kalkhas’ interpretation of the omen, striking the ground with their staffs, and being unable to restrain their tears (195-248). Sacrificers traditionally induce in the sacrificial animal a token assent to its impending death, but the Atreids know that there can be no assent to this impious act, and together with their allies silence Iphigeneia’s resistance through bridling her mouth, averting the curse she would certainly utter if she could (235-237). The chorus – who were not present – reports her silent, heart-rending plea for mercy, clear to see in her pitiful glance (240-241). Yet, although they have reported every detail of the lead-up to the awful killing, they then declare that they cannot describe the killing because they themselves ‘did not see it’ (248). The chorus have received a detailed account of events, and we should assume that Klytimestra was also informed of her daughter’s enforced suffering at Aulis. Despite the chorus’ hope that all ‘will turn out well’, as the closest ‘guardian of the land’ also wishes (255-257), nothing good could come of such a sacrifice: the welcome given by guardian Klytimestra to her husband

⁸⁷ Some conclude that critical discussion of the *Oresteia* massively overinterpret the matter of learning-through-suffering, because no one in the trilogy learns anything useful, and the expression never occurs elsewhere; see Vickers (1973:65); Smith (1980:23). On the failure of the play’s characters to learn from their own suffering, see Dodds (1960:29-30); Guepin (1968:222-223); Smith (1973:7); Vellacott (1977:113-114); Ireland (1986:25).

⁸⁸ On the chorus’ lack of understanding of events, see Smith (1980:41); Gantz (1983:76-77); Fletcher (1999:45, 47).

⁸⁹ On the essential differences in infanticide, filicide, and parental disinvestment, see Chapter 1, pp. 55-57; 55n268; 55n271.

Agamemnon is certainly not going to turn out well, because Agamemnon's deed in Aulis did not turn out well for Klytaimestra and her daughter. Much is made of the covert treachery of Klytaimestra in response to Agamemnon's pitiless sacrifice of Iphigeneia, but the chorus' next testimonial about the pet who betrays its master shows that bloody treachery in some circumstances is entirely predictable.

The ode's so-called 'parable' of the lion-cub episode – like the earlier omen of the hare and eagles – is critically interpreted to refer to a variety of real persons within the play – Helen, Agamemnon, Klytaimestra, Aigisthos, Menelaos, Orestes – and even the Trojans Paris and Cassandra; some argue that this multiplicity is intentional, others struggle with the idea of Klytaimestra's lover – and Agamemnon's cousin – Aigisthos as a house-destroying lion, even a craven one⁹⁰ A more obvious candidate is Helen, the Atreid wife who unexpectedly brought catastrophe upon the Greeks, and the lion-cub parable does follow closely upon the chorus's diatribe on the evils of Helen (681-716): as the charming lion-cub matures and becomes destructive, betraying its human family (though with divine approval and assistance) (735-736), so Helen initially comes to Troy as a calm and gentle spirit of love (737-749), but was really sent by Zeus as *νυμφόκλαυτος Ἐρινύς*, 'a Fury, a bride bringing woe' (749), a punishment for Paris' contravention of *xenia*. The delightful orphan-cub is reared by the whole family, but the parent most betrayed is the *kyrios*, head of the household (717-726). Yet, as the chorus imply (727-736), this story is all about ancestral *ethos*: the first sin of the lion-cub is the *δαῖτ' ἀκέλευστος* 'unbidden feast' (731) of the *oikos*' sheep-flock: the grief of the *oikos* befouled in sheep's blood resonates with Cassandra's later descriptions of the sin of Atreus' impious feast (1089-1091, 1096-1097, 1214-1222).⁹¹ The chorus are also at pains to point out that, while

⁹⁰ On the parable's lion-cub as a symbol of the Atreid household, see Zeitlin (1965:483); Knox (1979:34); Carne-Ross (1981:29); Saxonhouse (1984:21); Vellacott (1984a:147); Heath (1999a:24-25, 38); and Rose (1992:200). Knox (1979:31) points out that the house of Pelops also bore the heraldic device of the lion. On the *ethos* of the lion-cub as referring to the inherited disposition to evil of the Tantalids – including Aigisthos – see Vickers (1973:362-363); Knox (1979:28); Rose (1992:201). In Jones' (1962:123) view, the real problem of Aigisthos as the lion-cub is the incompatibility of the parable's treacherous lion with critical fixations with "leonine noble courage". While the Atreid house is associated with lions (enhanced in popular consciousness by the imagery of the Lion-gate of Mycenae), this alludes to bloodthirsty dangerousness, not nobility; real lions are not noble and compassionate protectors, and both male and female lions are savage and dangerous, especially to other lions' (or lionesses') cubs, and in their wild state, lions can also be ruthless consumers of humans. On the Atreid killing-lions, see also Orestes and Pylades as twin lions in *Orestes* (1400-1424, 1554-1555), and Klytaimestra as the lioness roaming through the meadow in *Elektra* (1163-1164).

⁹¹ Cf. Vickers (1973:362-363), who notes that the fondness of the lion-cub for "playing" with children – *euphilopaida* (721) slyly suggests a fondness for eating them – and the house of Atreus was famous for its feasting upon children.

some believe a household's misfortune derives from excessive prosperity, real catastrophe arises because of a man's impiety, which creates a never-ending cycle of offence within the family; only the *oikos* who follows a straight path of justice can avoid inheriting a disposition to misfortune (750-762).⁹²

Every Tantalid murderer was hand-reared within this befouled *oikos*, generation after generation maturing to betray their own kin in bloody butchery. It is often thought that the lion is an appropriate symbol for rulers due to its noble and brave nature, but Agamemnon's description of his campaign in Troy boasts frankly that he is ὑπερθορὼν δὲ πύργον ὀμηστῆς λέων/ ἄδην ἔλειξεν αἵματος τυραννικοῦ, 'a lion eating raw flesh, leaping over the tower, licking up its fill of royal blood' (827-828). Much is made of this family's innocent surprise at the treachery of the growing lion-cub – as if an apex predator should be grateful for captivity, and suppress its natural behaviour around domesticated prey-species – but events in the Tantalid history also show evidence of entirely predictable, evolved or natural mammalian reproductive strategy: just like lions, the Tantalid males steal other males' females and murder existing offspring in order to assert dominance and enhance their reproductive success, while at least one female seeks to defend further offspring from being killed, risking her own demise. Klytaimestra – like many females across many species – seeks to eliminate a male known to pose a genuine danger to her young; in human women, however, this kind of violence is approved only under the strictest of contexts.⁹³

Following the ode's final episode of bloody death within the house, there are further references throughout the play to the self-destructive effect of Agamemnon's own *ethos*. Aiskhylos portrays, through the eye-witness accounts of those around Agamemnon in Aulis, the man who provoked Klytaimestra's revenge for the sacrifice of her daughter. Some scholars deplore the king's shortcomings; some admire the character enormously; others insist that estimations of Agamemnon's *ethos* must simply acknowledge normative ancient Greek standards of gender, kingship, and marriage.⁹⁴ Some insist that Agamemnon is exonerated from all guilt for his

⁹² On the negative divine response to human prosperity, see *Hdt.* 1.32.1, 3.40, 7.10.

⁹³ On approval of females' violence under limited conditions – even when enacted to protect children – see Chapter 1, pp. 33; 41; 41n179; 43; 43n191.

⁹⁴ On Agamemnon's bloodthirsty, arrogant, evil nature, see Sturgeon (1914:105); Stanford (1942:115-116); Vellacott (1984a:145; 1984b:64). For more favourable views of Agamemnon, see Fraenkel (1950:374, 388, 429); Lloyd-Jones (1970a:7; 1983b:67); Dover (1973b:66); Otis (1981:8-10, 13); Pope (1986:13, 20, 23); Crane (1993:117), and Whallon (1980:51), who interprets Iphigeneia's sacrifice as evidence of Agamemnon's piety.

actions by reason of his success as a military general.⁹⁵ Yet, following a damning discussion of evil and unjust men who get their punishment from ‘Ruin’ (782-783), the chorus address Agamemnon directly as βασιλεῦ, Τροίας πολίπορθ’/ Ἀτρέως γένεθλον, ‘king, sacker of Troy, offspring of Atreus’ (782-783), the same three aspects of Agamemnon’s identity that lead to his self-selection as the sacrificer of Iphigeneia.

Agamemnon has very little to say in the trilogy’s first play, but upon appearance his kingly *hybris* fills the stage.⁹⁶ In his opinion, he and the gods are equally responsible for the punishment of Troy for Helen’s abduction, which gives him full bragging rights (810-813); the chorus earlier confirmed that the gods enabled this general to subjugate Troy and enslave its occupants (355-361). Agamemnon only falls prey to Klytaimestra’s persuasion because he truly believes that the mighty foot that trampled Troy has become too good to touch the earth of his native land (905-907). But while Agamemnon is still alive, the chorus express reservations about his brutal – and impious – military ventures; only once he is dead do they euphemize his city-sacking and greatly regret the fall of this ‘most gracious guardian’, destroyed by a mere woman, (1451-1453).

All the characters in this and following plays in the *Oresteia* – have good reason to fear and hate the city-sacking general – yet, in this fictional account, they increasingly idolize and adore him. Prestige is a form of respect freely-given in recognition of expertise, but as we will see, Agamemnon’s rather inept rule depends more on bluster and threat of violence.⁹⁷ Athena’s blessing in *Eumenides* of ‘plenty of warfare’ (*Eum.* 864) for the city-sacking Athenians is a curse for the survivors of war, however, and Euripides’ *Troades* portrays the warmongering Agamemnon – before the events of the *Oresteia* – as a much less sympathetic man and general. Similarly, Euripides’ *Hekabe* of 425 BCE – the immediate prequel to Agamemnon’s homecoming – exposes the war-leader as a liar, quite ready to expediently contravene religious scruples (*Hek.* 749-753, 798-806, 852-860, 1122-1123). Euripides’ *Hekabe* was produced decades after the *Agamemnon*, but the history of this fictional family was a matter of tradition through the fifth century, and earlier: Euripides uses the closing scene of the *Hekabe* to highlight

⁹⁵ On Agamemnon as an ideal Bronze Age king from the imperialist Athenian point of view, see Smith (1973:4-5); Rosenmeyer (1982:220-222); Hogan (1984:72); Sommerstein (1996:365); Zelenak (1998:61).

⁹⁶ On Agamemnon’s vain pride, see Lattimore (1954:12; 1972:74); Ferguson (1972:85); Lawrence (1976:103); Winnington-Ingram (1983a:86); Baldock (1989:37); Rabinowitz (2008:95).

⁹⁷ On prestige and dominance, see Chapter 1, pp. 35-36; 35n136.

how this stupid and morally ambivalent man proceeds directly to his demise in Aiskhylos' *Agamemnon*. The prophet Polymestor proclaims that both Agamemnon and Cassandra will die by the hand of Klytaimestra, the οἰκουρὸς πικρά, 'bitter mistress of his house' (1277), but Agamemnon's response ignores all warning of his destined death by his wife; instead, his foolish reference to the 'travel-controlling breezes' returns the audience to the beginning of the expedition at Aulis and Iphigeneia's death to appease Artemis, and – like the chorus of *Agamemnon* – this self-deluded man hopes 'all will be well at home' on his arrival (1289-1292). All will not be well at home, however, as an earlier exchange between the defeated Trojan queen and the arrogant, foolish Agamemnon suggests (883-885). This depiction of Agamemnon as a self-serving, lying fool was not an invention of Euripides; the allusions in this text are intertextual in-jokes for an audience who had full access to versions of the Atreid history, extant or now lost, and who knew that a woman's strength would one day demand his respect. The 425 BCE audience of the *Hekabe* knows that Agamemnon will be slain by the same female strength he dismisses, and by the single woman whom he ought to have expected – having been warned by Polymestor – would be his appointed killer. As Aiskhylos' embittered Klytaimestra welcomes her husband into the palace in 458 BCE, every member of the audience knew from their reading of Homer that all would go very badly at home for this hubristic king; Euripides' later work simply makes explicit the true cause, persistently evidenced in all mythological literature, of the foolish king's downfall – his own persistent self-delusion and lack of judgement.⁹⁸

Nonetheless, some critics maintain that Aiskhylos' Agamemnon sensibly sacrifices his daughter out of duty to his allies, but Agamemnon is only too aware of the hypocrisy of these military alliances.⁹⁹ Upon his return to Argos (*Aga.* 838-840), he declares that loyalty between friends is εἶδωλον σκιᾶς 'a shadowy phantom' (839); furthermore, the other leaders of the army only appear friendly, but are in truth his enemies (840). Yet, according to the chorus, Agamemnon worries that, if he refuses to sacrifice Iphigeneia, he will become a 'deserter of the fleet, failing his allies' (212-213). In this context, 'failing' is not about betrayal of friendship or trust, but of self-interest, and what his allies represent to him. Either he slays his own child,

⁹⁸ On the evolutionary function of self-delusion, see Chapter 1, p. 74n380.

⁹⁹ On Agamemnon as the dutiful leader, see Dover (1973:66); Vickers (1973:352). In Sommerstein's (1996:363-365) opinion, Agamemnon acts not from a sense of duty to his people, but for simple political expediency; furthermore, the issue is not failing his allies, but losing them: see also Winnington-Ingram (1983:83); Sommerstein (2010b:167). According to Gantz (1983:77n39), Agamemnon cannot abandon his own expedition.

or he ‘fails his alliance’ (213), and thus forgoes all power and prestige.¹⁰⁰ He sees immediately that the pollution of kin-murder does not outweigh the evil of losing his military alliance, and so – according to the chorus – he makes himself believe that what this awful thing the army wants is not wrong:

παυσανέμου γὰρ θυσίας
παρθενίου θ’ αἵματος ὀρ-
γᾶ περιόργω σφ’ ἐπιθυ-
μεῖν θέμις,

‘to madly desire the sacrifice of a maiden’s blood to still the winds is customary and right’ (214-217).¹⁰¹

He rounds off his careful consideration with the ubiquitous, optimistic hope that all will turn out well (217).¹⁰² Aiskhylos’ fifth-century Greek army purportedly mad for war foreshadows the end of the *Oresteia*, when Athena’s gift of external warfare (the conquest of many cities) becomes a blessing for the expanding Athenian empire.¹⁰³ The chorus’ testimony concerning Agamemnon in this play is suspect, however, because the events are ten years gone, and are being retold by men who were not even at Aulis.

Some disagree that Agamemnon panders to the army’s desires only for the sake of his alliances.¹⁰⁴ Others insist that the army possess no real power to prevent Agamemnon deciding

¹⁰⁰ While ἀμαρτόν is often translated as ‘failing’ or ‘offending against’, I opt here for ‘lose’; other critics have also chosen this meaning, a possible referent which would also have been understood by original audiences, presumably. Even if Agamemnon offends against his allies, the immediate result will almost certainly be that he loses them.

¹⁰¹ The *LSJ*, however, glosses περιόργως (suggested here as ‘madly’), as ‘very angry’, or ‘wrathful’, and cites *Agamemnon* (216) as an example of this. The army have no reason to be angry, because their wives were not taken by Trojans; to desire the blood of a maiden is the initiating act of their madness.

¹⁰² Whatever Agamemnon chooses, all will never be well; this blind and impossible optimism is something tragedy returns to time and again.

¹⁰³ Gagarin (1976:91-92) observes that Agamemnon’s difficult decision is logical and coherent, and that Aiskhylos by no means condemns Agamemnon’s allegiance to the male, militaristic values-system. Aiskhylos – whom the long-haired Persian remembers – is no pacifist; he wanted the world to remember that he was, first and foremost, a successful soldier. On Agamemnon’s actions as entirely admirable within his competitive, success-oriented culture, see Gagarin (1976:12); Winnington-Ingram (1983b:98).

¹⁰⁴ On Agamemnon’s fear for the loss of his prestige, see Sommerstein (2008:25n47).

in favour of his child.¹⁰⁵ Some conclude that Agamemnon's so-called 'dilemma' expresses the central gender conflict between militaristic-male and domestic-female worlds.¹⁰⁶ In many cultures – including ancient Greece – hyper-masculinity and military success are mutually reinforcing, and this war-leader's easy decision is predetermined by the inescapable demands of the warrior *ethos* of his time and place; the potential loss of military opportunity is hard to remedy, and the loss of reputation for lack of *andreia* is often permanent.¹⁰⁷ As Agamemnon's situation very clearly indicates, ruling males in traditional (and arguably, modern) cultures depend upon the maintenance of coalitions with other powerful males and male-led groups.¹⁰⁸ In a results-culture context, Agamemnon's support of this particular human sacrifice only confirms his *andreia*, making him even more fit to rule; there is after all established remedy for pollution, even that resulting from the murder of one's own children. Similarly, the ubiquity of honour-killing cultures in the human record suggest that the maintenance of males' status in patriarchal contexts is generally more important than preserving the lives of women or extant offspring.¹⁰⁹ Agamemnon is persuaded by the much greater cost of what would be lost, if he chose for his daughter's life: the command of many thousands of respectful men is an unmatched benefit, and this Tantalid *kyrios*, after all, has three (or perhaps four) expendable daughters, after all.¹¹⁰ Agamemnon's decision, in Aiskhylos' retelling, reflects EP findings that in evolved, opportunistic, androcentric mating systems, public status always outweighs private attachment for males. In fact, the choice between male glory and death of innocents is faced by every war-leader ever known, and a man who is prepared to kill other people's children can always be persuaded to kill his own when circumstances necessitate.¹¹¹ The ultimate result for

¹⁰⁵ Smith (1973:7); Gantz (1982:12-13, 75-76); Sommerstein (1996:365; 2008:24n46). On Agamemnon's and Menelaos' debate in Euripides' *IA* as confirming Agamemnon's power to choose either way, see Lesky (1966b:81).

¹⁰⁶ Wohl (1998:70); Zelenak (1998:132).

¹⁰⁷ On *andreia* as a social force in ancient Greece, see Strauss (1993); Cartledge (1998); Fisher (1998, 2009); Fox (1998); Foxhall (1998); Bassi (2003); Cohen (2003); Deslauriers (2003); Graziosi and Haubold (2003); Clarke (2004); Roisman (2005); van Nortwick (2008).

¹⁰⁸ On male coalitions and hierarchies, see Chapter 1, pp. 24; 35; 35n133; 41; 41n180; 49; 53; 84n436.

¹⁰⁹ On honour-cultures, male reputations, and murder of women, see Chapter 1, pp. 18; 33; 33n118; 35n134; 37; 54n266; 56n275; 62; 68-69; 70n360; 83-84.

¹¹⁰ On Agamemnon's 'loss of allies' (*Aga.* 213) as an unparalleled catastrophe which is all it takes to tip the scales of decision, see Lesky (1983a:17-18). Cf. Agamemnon's justifications to Klytimestra in Euripides' *IA* (1255-1275), which review all the points raised in his self-debate in Aiskhylos: it would be more terrible if he did not commit the sacrifice; the army is large and desperate to wage war; the war cannot proceed without Iphigeneia's death. In addition, the army will kill him, his wife, and all their children if thwarted, and the real purpose of the war is to prevent the abduction of wives: he has no choice but to (unwillingly) obey his real master, Hellas. If his reasoning is flawed in Aiskhylos, it is ridiculous in Euripides.

¹¹¹ On the benefits and costs to men of being an alpha-male, see Chapter 1, pp. 25n66; 34-36; 34n130; 35; 37; 37n151; 41; 41n180; 48; 61-63; 67; 81-82.

Agamemnon in return for the sacrifice of Iphigeneia is not greater wealth, glory, and power, however, but the permanent loss of kingship, life, and honour, slain by the hand of a single woman.

Furthermore, winning the position of alpha-male in an intensely competitive culture is a mixed blessing across species; males may sire more offspring, but tend to live shorter lives, and die though violence.¹¹² Agamemnon himself is under no illusions about the negative social consequences of success: as he observes, the less fortunate loathe to see another's prosperity, even close friends (832-837). Critics often assume that the Argive commoners are genuinely loyal to Agamemnon, but the King is not loved as much as the Watchman's opening lines imply (32-35). The chorus of Argive elders may proclaim that their Atreid king deserves to be richly honoured above all mortals for his victories (529-532), but less than one hundred lines earlier they are muttering darkly that the ultimate reward for the excessively-praised, overly prosperous man is to be struck down by Zeus's thunderbolt (468-471). As the chorus in this play observe, the possession of wealth is no guarantee that a man will finish life without attracting divine disapproval, especially when an *oikos* has more than is necessary (369-378); furthermore, when a rich man is also impious, he has no chance against the displeasure of the gods (381-384). The chorus also anticipate that Agamemnon – the target of gods and black Furies – will face assassination because he is responsible for many deaths, including many young men of his own people (32-474, 451-466). Klytaimestra and her lover actually rule with the tacit support of the *demos*, and the chorus leave us in no doubt that the threat of citizen rebellion against the returning king is genuine.¹¹³ The chorus of elders eagerly inform on their fellow-citizens, pouring forth tales of potential treachery to Agamemnon (807-809), yet they fail to warn him of the actual and more dangerous treason committed by his wife and cousin; Agamemnon's response to any threat from the *demos* is simply that he will cure any misbehaviour through violence (848-850). The chorus liken the angry talk of the *demos* to a curse upon the house (456-457), and Klytaimestra's later observation that Agamemnon is ἐράσιμον πόλει, 'desired by the city' (605) is doubly ironic: the people want him back just as much as she does, and for exactly the same reason: his slaughter of their innocent offspring. According to Agamemnon, the army ἐπιθυμεῖν 'set their hearts upon' (or 'greatly desired') the

¹¹² On the negative health-effects of being an alpha-male, see Chapter 1, pp. 35; 37; 37n151; 61-62.

¹¹³ On disaffected citizens' support of Aigisthos in the absence of this king, see Lattimore (1972:74). Denniston and Page (1957:xii) draw a parallel between the returning Agamemnon and the successful but corrupted Spartan general Pausanias, who was killed in 470 BCE by his own, dissatisfied people, after returning home after war.

bloody sacrifice of Iphigeneia (216), yet, as the herald observes, those who survived the war-venture do not think their gains outweighed their pains (573-574). Nor will Agamemnon's victory counterbalance his own eventual pain. The anger of the *demos* is aimed solely at the Atreids (447-451), and the chorus agree that the Atreids' military venture demonstrated poor judgement and was θράσος ἐκ θυσιῶν 'voluntarily reckless' (799-804).

Agamemnon the General has dishonoured his office in the hope of personal gain, and Agamemnon the King returns to rule through blatantly brute force; the *demos* do not love him, although their loyalty may be enforced through fear.¹¹⁴ The upholding of reputation for a ruler's willingness to respond rapidly to dissidence is essential to a male's continued power.¹¹⁵ The chorus expects that Agamemnon will root out all citizenly dissent (807-809), but he quite unabashedly plans to set the *demos* 'right' through use of fire or knife (848-850). The chorus accept his policy declaration without comment, yet when Aigisthos threatens them with mere arrest and confinement in darkness (1621-1623, 1639-1642), they describe him as an aspiring tyrant (1628-1632).¹¹⁶ Agamemnon the home-coming Husband also has little to recommend him: those familiar with Homer (*Il.* 1.112-115) know that, in front of all his allies, Agamemnon preferred Khryseis (his captive slave) to his royal-born wife Klytimestra. For all Klytimestra's protestations of joy as he arrives at the palace, Agamemnon's first words to her (*Aga.* 914-919) identify her as her mother's child, rather than as his own wife; he disapproves her actions and declarations of love; and he commands her to stop doing what she is doing; there is no mention in his greeting of love, or of the pain of their separation, as there is in her speech to him.¹¹⁷ In the context of the ancient Greek (literary) world, however, real men felt no discomfort in expressing positive emotion about masculine honour, duty to nation, or willingness to war.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ On Agamemnon's inheritance of power, which he retained through fear rather than goodwill, see also *Hdt.* 1.9.3.

¹¹⁵ On the alpha-male's necessary willingness to enforce authority through brutal violence, see Chapter 1, pp. 18; 33; 33n118; 35n134; 36n138; 37; 37n149; 56n275; 62; 69; 70n360; 82-83; 83n430.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Agamemnon's tyrannical threats against dissenters – burning and the knife – and the traditional, oozing-pitch torture of the Greeks, which the chorus hope will be the fate of Klytimestra and Aigisthos (*Khoe.* 267-268). See also Sommerstein (2008:247n58).

¹¹⁷ On Agamemnon's homecoming speech to his wife as "cold, impersonal, and unsympathetic", see Stanford (1942:116).

¹¹⁸ For the positive, emotional experience of dying for one's country in real-world Athens, see Thucydides' report of Perikles' patriotic praise of the war-dead in his *Funeral Oration* (*Thouk.* 2.36-2.43). On Greek warfare and masculinity, see van Wees (1992, 1998, 2007). On warfare and the construction of gender, see also Goldstein (2001).

Agamemnon is the archetypal Greek real man and war-hero, willing to sacrifice everything – including members of his own *oikos* – for the glory of his house and of his nation. In a shame-culture, he has little choice if he wishes to retain his status and position.¹¹⁹ Upholding of one’s reputation is the primary motivator of action among mortals, nations, and gods alike; the potential loss of public reputation in ancient Greece is the greater crime than filicide: the Atreids had no choice in a shame-culture but to muster an army against the great city of Troy to remedy the “gross insult” to their masculine honour through warfare. Individually, Agamemnon’s reputation as man and leader depends upon convincing the public that he is personally willing to risk impossible costs, and his escalating commitment to a protracted, increasingly disastrous war is a typical reaction to the sunk-costs experience of those investing in impossibly risky endeavours; consequently, he works hard to shift perceptions of the costs of war into appreciation of the benefits.¹²⁰ The glory-seeking Agamemnon yields to Klytaimestra’s persuasion only because Klytaimestra cleverly frames acquiescence to her suggestions as yet another personal victory for him, and thus as further evidence of his superiority; Agamemnon cannot escape his need to win, a masculine ‘necessity’ which will lead to his inevitable ruin.

Agamemnon places all the blame for his change of heart over Iphigeneia’s sacrifice upon *ἀνάγκας* ‘necessity’ (218), and insists that this necessity is the avoidance – at all costs – of *ξυμμαχίας ἀμαρτῶν* ‘losing his allies’ (212).¹²¹ But Agamemnon’s real error is that – instead of carrying out the culturally-required murder of his child with public display of patriotic duty as well as reluctant dismay – he willingly embraces the sacrifice with an excessive passion utterly inappropriate to the action, and so the act becomes one of *atē*, ‘ruin’ or ‘madness’.¹²² Some identify the *παρακοπά* ‘frenzy’ sent by Zeus (223) as the cause of Agamemnon’s

¹¹⁹ On the evolutionary selection of men’s disposition to uphold status and power, see Chapter 1, pp. 17; 22; 28; 29n91; 31-32; 34-36; 34n126; 34n130; 35n133; 35n134; 37; 39; 41-43; 49n230; 49n232; 56; 69; 70n360; 83.

¹²⁰ On irrational escalation of commitment or sunk-cost fallacy, see Sleesman et al (2012); Kelly and Milkman (2013). On the impossible costs of Agamemnon’s victory, see Lattimore (1953:10); Saxonhouse (1984:19-20); Sommerstein (1996:427).

¹²¹ Some scholars view this so-called necessity as sufficient excuse for his decision; see Lesky (1966b:81; 1983a:17); Dover (1973:65); Heath (1987:18); Buxton (2007:184), but others do not: Conacher (1987:14); Rabinowitz (2008:102).

¹²² On Agamemnon’s unseemly enthusiasm for the sacrifice of his child, see Edwards (1977:30); Lesky (1983a:18, 22; 1983b:114); Seaford (1989:91-92n27); Nussbaum (1985:249-250; 1986:33, 35-36). Others dispute the importance of *atē* in Agamemnon’s decision-making process in the *Agamemnon*: Gantz (1982:11); Hammond (1972:97); Seaford (1989:91-92). On *hamartia* ‘mistakes’, *atē* ‘temporary insanity’, and divine displeasure at individual *hybris* in Aiskhylos’ work, see Dawe (1967:109); Bremer (1969:133); Ferguson (1972:33); Stinton (1975); Østerud (1976); Sherman (1992); Saïd (2005:220).

madness.¹²³ But Klytaimestra's trap to catch the king's conscience proves irrefutably that this 'madness' is actually just Agamemnon's habitual *ethos*: Agamemnon is perfectly well-suited, through inherited disposition and individual character, to his role of child-killer; he is a man willing to forgo sound-mindedness, at Aulis, solely on the say-so of some person with authority (933-934), and he continues to behave just as unsoundly in the present moment before the doors of his own palace in Argos.¹²⁴ Although some critics contend that Agamemnon is just another victim of the family *ethos*, unable to extricate himself from his terrible situation, others argue that Agamemnon's moral crimes were so extensive as to preclude any appeal to the family curse alone as inspiring his crimes.¹²⁵

The question of whether Agamemnon had any real choice and therefore any moral culpability in the matter of his daughter's sacrifice has also been enthusiastically debated.¹²⁶ While in Homeric epic there is no moral offence in rightful killing, there is also no difference in consequences created by accidental or intentional murder, and no mitigating factors; murderers can cleanse themselves of pollution for any kind of killing through appropriate ritual and are able to compensate their victim's family with sufficient payment.¹²⁷ Yet Agamemnon does not seem to view his divinely ordained filicide as requiring any purification, although – according to the chorus' report – his internal debate about the imminent sacrifice shows that he understands that this killing is somehow wrong, musing that 'overboldness' leads men to 'unholy, shameful behaviour', with the result of 'suffering' (205-224); despite this awareness, as the chorus further testify (224-227), Agamemnon is brought to his decision by no one else but himself. To search for evidence of free will in Aiskhylos' rewriting of a well-known

¹²³ Dawe (1967:110); Beck (1975:72); Lloyd-Jones (1962:192; 1983b:71); Peradotto (2007:237).

¹²⁴ On Agamemnon's off-stage "capture" by Ate as repeated in this play's carpet-scene, see Edwards (1977:29).

¹²⁵ On Agamemnon as an unwilling victim, caught up in the consequences of his father's ancient crimes, see Denniston and Page (1957:xxiii-xxix); Lloyd-Jones (1962:190, 197, 199; 1970a:10-11; 1971:87; 1979:23; 1983b:69, 71); Nussbaum (1985:247; 1986:34). On Agamemnon's inheritance of the evil Atreid disposition, see Murray (1940:193-195); Sommerstein (1996:366-7); Peradotto (2007:235-236, 242); Sewell-Rutter (2007:66, 75-76); Hall (2010:212-214); Fletcher (2012:38, 42). On Pelops' curse upon Atreus and Thyestes for their murder of their half-brother Khrysippus, see Hellanikos (*FrGrHist* 4 F 157); *Thoukydides* (1.9.2).

¹²⁶ On divine intention in the play as deliberately relieving Agamemnon of moral culpability, see Whallon (1961:84); Fontenrose (1971:83); Goldhill (1986:197); Nussbaum (1986:33); Pope (1986:21); Saïd (2005:226). On Agamemnon's immoral act, and the great price he must pay, see Murray (1940:192-193); Vickers (1973:354-355); Gagarin (1976:9); Knox (1979:32); Gantz (1982:10-12); Lesky (1983b:16).

¹²⁷ On Greek views of murder, see Gagarin (1976:8-9). On Aiskhylos' tragedy and ancient Greek views of guilt as transferable, contaminating, and inheritable, see MacNeice (1936:7); Ferguson (1972:33); Gantz (1982:1); Lesky (1983b:112); Parker (1983:201n65); Sommerstein (2002:39); Storey and Allan (2005:244); Sewell-Rutter (2007:18, 59, 79).

narrative is a mistake, however: Iphigeneia is destined to be sacrificed; Agamemnon is destined to kill his daughter; and Klytaimestra is destined to kill her husband. The better question is why Agamemnon's immoral crime of impious sacrifice and Orestes' immoral crime of impious matricide should be equated – as it is by so many of the commentators within (and outside of) the *Oresteia* – with Klytaimestra's crime of mariticide.¹²⁸

Whereas Agamemnon's and Orestes' actions are often viewed by critics as being evoked by external forces, and therefore open to debate about culpability, Klytaimestra's willingness to be the *alastōr* of the *oikos* on behalf of her daughter is viewed as the desire of no one but herself, leading to discussion about how Aiskhylos shapes audience perceptions of her true inner nature, motivation and behaviour. In fact, Klytaimestra's *ethos* shifts in response to external, previous, and off-stage events all outside of her control, transforming her from compliant wife and mother to avenging Fury; after her on-stage *aristeia* she changes once again, her grandeur diminishes and she is a proper, humbly deferential *gyne* as she once was for Agamemnon, her superior intelligence now subverted to soothing her husband Aigisthos' bluster.¹²⁹ Aiskhylos introduces her by degrees to the audience in the opening speech of the Watchman's opening speech: the first mention of her states that she possesses 'a heart like a man's' (7-11); then she is 'Agamemnon's wife' (26-29); thirdly – in her presence and by direct address – she is 'Tyndareos' daughter' (83-84); and only lastly is she 'queen Klytaimestra' (84). Klytaimestra is presented as a woman with man-like cunning, a man's wife, and a man's daughter: only lastly she is a named, female individual, with her own social status. She identifies herself, however, as mother and avenger of a daughter (1521-1529), roles conceptually at odds with Greek expectations of proper female being – she also specifically denies she is Agamemnon's wife (*Aga.* 1499). Kalkhas also (obliquely) predicts that she will be the avenger of a child (150-155). Only after the murder of her existing husband does she willingly embrace the proper *ethos* of wifehood.

The chorus' interactions with the queen also demonstrate an ambivalence toward this anomalously intelligent, powerful woman.¹³⁰ Education and status are both qualities in women

¹²⁸ Dodds (1960:26-27). On the trilogy's repeated thematic emphasis on corrupted sacrifice, including Iphigeneia's unlawful murder (*Aga.* 151), see Zeitlin (1965:464, 472-473, 480, 489); Heath (1999a:29).

¹²⁹ On Klytaimestra's return to conventional femininity after the murder of Agamemnon, see Vickers (1973:387, 424); Michelini (1979:155); Rosenmeyer (1982:239); Schenker (1999:655); Rutherford (2012:305).

¹³⁰ On the original audience's inability to reconcile female mental capacity with social constraints on female activity, see Rose (1992:229).

that are tolerated rather than sought by males seeking mates across cultures; women seeking male mates are careful to conceal or downplay these qualities.¹³¹ Klytaimestra appears from within the palace, and the chorus immediately offer their respects to ‘her power’, exercised when the ‘male throne’ is empty (258-260). They make no claim that Klytaimestra has attempted to usurp direct rulership; her ‘power’ derives solely from her continued position as Agamemnon’s wife. Furthermore, if the male throne was occupied – properly – by a male, there would be no need for them to offer reverence to a woman; obviously, Aigisthos has not – as so many critics assume – taken possession of the throne. Despite the Watchman’s acknowledgement of her ‘man-like intelligence’ – and the chorus’ own claims about the reverence due a queen – they refuse to accept her news about the beacon; rather, they instantly presume that her knowledge must come from persuasive dream or foolish rumour (264-273). At this, Klytaimestra protests their likening of her ‘wits’ to those of a young child (274-277). Just once the chorus acknowledge her intelligence, but – like the Watchman – they cannot accept that a woman could be wise in her own right; her εὐφρόνως ‘gracious’ speech is therefore like that of ἄνδρα σώφρον’, ‘a sensible man’ (351). Despite their lip-service belief in her man-like πιστά τεκμήρια ‘trustworthy evidence’ (351-352), as soon as she leaves the stage the chorus revert to their distrust of female intellect, criticizing women’s disposition to ‘precipitous and fruitless credulity’ (483-487).

Even when Klytaimestra stands over the indisputable reality of Agamemnon’s bloody corpse, the chorus still cannot accept her claims to autonomous capacity, responding to her declaration that this deed is her own with incredulous amazement (1399-1400). Like Agamemnon, suffering has taught these old men nothing. Klytaimestra’s contemptuous reply to their wilful blindness warns them that she is fearless, and does not care whether they accept her or not (1401-1404). Too late, the chorus perceive the possibility of female power, but even now they view this as exceptional; Klytaimestra’s great cunning and enormous pride must be the result of her exposure to φονολιβεῖ ‘flowing blood’, which has φρήν ἐπιμαίνεται ‘driven her mad’ (1426-1428); the chorus believe that Klytaimestra’s deranged mind is responsible for her arrogant words, and their reference to ‘flowing blood’ may refer to menses, the monthly event that helps distinguish females from males, and which – according to traditional belief – incapacitates female mentation.¹³² In fact, Klytaimestra is motivated – not maddened – by the

¹³¹ On males’ preference for female mates with less intelligence, education, and status than themselves, see Chapter 1, pp. 29-30; 29n91; 34; 34n130; 41-42; 56.

¹³² On this allusion to blood and female menses, see Sommerstein (2008:174-175n303).

flowing blood of a daughter, and her hands will soon become red with the flowing blood of a husband. No one in this play exhibits genuine respect for Klytaimestra, or compassion for her long-grieved loss; the Watchman, the chorus, Agamemnon – even Aigisthos – all treat her as uninformed, unimportant, or peripheral and instrumental. As some observe, in the subsequent *Oresteia* plays, almost every character is aggressively antagonistic toward her, and seeks to present the worst possible picture of her nature.¹³³ Even her beloved Aigisthos never directly addresses Klytaimestra in the *Agamemnon*, being primarily concerned with his own ancient enmity against the Atreids.

Scholarship on Klytaimestra's *ethos*, motivation, and culpability is abundant and enthusiastic; critics argue that she is one of the most impressive, complex, and fully realized characters in tragedy.¹³⁴ Critical interpretations of Klytaimestra range from horror to positive delight in her magnificence.¹³⁵ Some critics draw attention to Klytaimestra's purported impiety, others to the transgressive quality of Klytaimestra's persuasive utterances: some conclude that there is truth in her statements, others that her speeches are ambiguous.¹³⁶ One aspect of Klytaimestra's *ethos* which always attracts interest is the integrity of her maternal disposition.¹³⁷ Another is Klytaimestra's female μῆτις 'cunning intelligence', so often the focus of male anxiety in Greek

¹³³ Zelenak (1998:62-63); Hall (2010:212).

¹³⁴ Tucker (1935:9); Stanford (1942:116-117); Ferguson (1972:79); Gould (1980:56); Otis (1981:57); Rosenmeyer (1982:255); Pool (1983:114-115); Bell (1991:133); Easterling (1993:18). On the complex Klytaimestra who attracts both critical admiration and revulsion, see also Rosenmeyer (1982:235); Foley (2001:205); Sharrock and Ash (2002:41); Fletcher (2012:44). Ancient sources with information on Klytaimestra's fictional life and character include: Apollodoros 3.10.6; Homer *Il.* 9.145, 287, 13.365, 24.299; *Od.* 1.28, 30, 298, 3.263, 4.365, 518, 524, 11.400, 422, 24.96; *Dictys Cretensis* 1.20; *Pausanias* 2.16.5, 18.5, 22.4; Aiskh. *Aga.* 1260, 1492, *Khoe.* 732, 931; Eur. *Or.* 26, 162, 804, *El.* 1245; Soph. *El.* 11, 35, 296, 530, 1346, 1405; Tzetzes on *Lykophron* 1099; Hyginus *Fab* 77.

¹³⁵ For extreme dislike of Klytaimestra, see Whallon (1980:139); Otis (1981:57); Pope (1986:18-19); Heath (1987:21); Zeitlin (1996:650); Wilson (2000:131-132). On Aiskhylos' depiction of a magnificent Klytaimestra as intentionally sympathetic, see Saxonhouse (1984:11, 30); Vellacott (1984:72); Storey and Allan (2005:247). For positive views of Klytaimestra, see Norwood (1948:103-104); Lattimore (1954:13; 1972:75); Foley (1981:133); Vellacott (1984:105); Ferguson (1987:18).

¹³⁶ On Klytaimestra's "impious transgression" of the code of *xenia*, see Roth (1993:5). On the transgressive Klytaimestra's, impiety toward the dead, see Hame (2004:513). On Klytaimestra's rhetorical, persuasive power, see Stanford (1942:119-120); Goldhill (1986:4); Rosenmeyer's (1982:237-238). On Klytaimestra's duplicity, see McClure (1999:27); Rabinowitz (2008:98); Rutherford (2012:299); Fletcher (2012:48). Vellacott (1984:69) warns that while critics often accuse Klytaimestra of deceptive lies, Agamemnon's lies to facilitate Iphigeneia's death are often ignored, as are the accomplished lies of Orestes in *Khoephoroi*. On Klytaimestra's utterances as truthful for those willing to hear her, see Lattimore (1954:14); Saxonhouse (1984:16). On the authenticity of Klytaimestra's claims, see also McClure (1997:113); Bushnell (2007:49).

¹³⁷ On Klytaimestra's dematernalization in the *Oresteia*, see Hame (2004:535); McClure (2006:82).

literature.¹³⁸ While the forceful *ethos* of the queen is clearly the heart of the *Agamemnon*, some scholars argue that the queen’s characteristic τόλμα – ‘recklessness, overboldness, daring’ – proves that she is a dangerous villain.¹³⁹ Such criticism reflects the EP finding that dominant behaviours in women are widely disapproved, except in defence of children, or when enacted against other women.¹⁴⁰ Critical discussion of Klytaimestra’s transgressive behaviour is often far from dispassionate or impartial, however; some insist that Klytaimestra rightly deserves her literary reputation for wicked evil; others that an innately admirable Klytaimestra is forced to husband-murder only through the evil behaviour of others.¹⁴¹ The most heated question in scholarship on Klytaimestra is her moral culpability in killing Agamemnon: is she sincere in attributing Iphigeneia’s murder as the cause of his death?¹⁴² If anything, motives for Klytaimestra’s murder of her husband are over-numerous, and over-determined; every possible explanation for his death is suggested in turn throughout the play, including Aigisthos’ independent desire for vengeance against the Atreid patriline.¹⁴³

Klytaimestra’s apparently cryptic speech of welcome as Agamemnon crosses over the red fabric is an anguished but elaborately coded affidavit offering a personal account of her experience and motivation:

ἔστιν θάλασσα, τίς δέ νιν κατασβέσει;
 τρέφουσα πολλῆς πορφύρας ισάργυρον
 κηκῖδα παγκαίνιστον, εἰμάτων βαφάς·
 οἶκος δ’ ὑπάρχει τῶνδε σὺν θεοῖς, ἄναξ,

¹³⁸ On Klytaimestra’s – and Greek women’s – dangerous intelligence, see Vickers (1973:358); Winnington-Ingram (1983a:102); Saxonhouse (1984:15); Rose (1992:229); Lefkowitz (2007:175); Carson (2009:3). For the possible origin of the ‘cunning Klytaimestra’, see Homer’s *Odyssey* (*Od.* 11.422-428).

¹³⁹ Zeitlin (1965:651); Lesky (1983b:106); Rosenmeyer (1982:236); Pool (1983:106); Sommerstein (1996:202); Komar (2003:32); Rutherford (2012:299). On τόλμα as alluding to ‘transgressive villainy’, see Jones (1962:121); Carne-Ross (1981:21).

¹⁴⁰ On dominance in women, see Chapter 1, pp. 41; 41n178; 81.

¹⁴¹ On the distinctive metaphorical imagery of the *Oresteia* and perceptions of Klytaimestra’s evil nature, see Stanford (1942:89-90, 94); Peradotto (1964:379, 381, 383, 387, 388, 390); Vickers (1973:360); Rabinowitz (1981:159-160); Baldock (1989:20); Mace (2002:36, 45); Sewell (2007:99); Rutherford (2012:130-131). Cf. Norwood (1948:103-104), who argues that Klytaimestra only “sins” because of her accursed husband’s ambition, and Vellacott (1984:9), who argues that Klytaimestra only acts because no one else will see justice done.

¹⁴² On Iphigeneia’s murder as the genuine reason for Agamemnon’s death, see Garvie (1996:140); van Erp Taalman Kip (1996:119). Cf. Rosenmeyer (1982:236-237), who contends that Klytaimestra’s actions are the result of her rage against her restriction as a domesticated woman in the very male world of Greek society.

¹⁴³ Cf. Neuberg (1991:54n20) who argues that Aiskhylos had no interest in motivation, only with action and reaction.

ἔχειν: πένεσθαι δ' οὐκ ἐπίσταται δόμος.
πολλῶν πατησµὸν δ' εἰμάτων ἂν ἠϋξάµην,
δόμοισι προυνεχθέντος ἐν χρηστηρίοις,
ψυχῆς κόμιστρα τῆσδε μηχανωµένη.
ρίζης γὰρ οὔσης φυλλὰς ἴκετ' ἐς δόµους,
σκιὰν ὑπερτείνασα σειρίου κυνός·
καὶ σοῦ μολόντος δωματῖτιν ἐστίαν,
θάλλπος μὲν ἐν χειμῶνι σημαίνεις μολόν·
ὅταν δὲ τεύχη Ζεὺς ἀπ' ὄµφακος πικρᾶς
οἶνον, τότε ἤδη ψῦχος ἐν δόμοις πέλει,
ἄνδρὸς τελείου δῶμ' ἐπιστρωφωµένου.

‘There is a sea – who will ever staunch it? – which nourishes an enormous, endlessly-renewed flood of purple dye, worth its weight in silver, for the drenching of fabric. Of this, through the support of the gods, the household already holds plenty, lord; yet the house does not know painful labours. Many trappings upon the household’s garments would I have vowed, if it had been so commanded by an oracle, as the price for the governance of this life. For while there is a root, foliage comes into the house, stretching to cast shade to the hound of Sirius [i.e. the hottest time of the year]. And you have come to the very hearth of our home, as the signal of warmth in winter; whenever Zeus makes wine from bitter, unripe grapes, then already the winter-chill enters into the house, when the all-ruling man frequents the home’ (958-972).¹⁴⁴

Who indeed will staunch the endless sea of bloody misery which Agamemnon has unleashed upon the world? The fabric he steps upon as she speaks is the sea of crimson blood he poured out as he trampled his way from Aulis to Ilium. That flood of precious purple provides the dye to drench the garments of the Atreid household, unoppressed by material poverty, but this house remains ignorant of the painful labours required to produce the real wealth of the house – children – who can never be replaced.¹⁴⁵ Agamemnon behaves as if his children – the true wealth of his household – are an endless resource; in theory this may be true for men, but it can never be the case for women, whose average optimum lifetime potential appears to be five

¹⁴⁴ On the association of the star Sirius and the hottest time of the year, see Sommerstein (2008:113n205).

¹⁴⁵ Morell (1996-1997:158) argues that the implied abundance of fabric in the never-poor *oikos* (Aga. 964) alludes to “excessive wealth”.

offspring (with perhaps seven as an upper-limit). Is Klytaimestra suggesting (963-964) that she also would act impiously in order to bring Agamemnon home to his reckoning? Or is she mocking Agamemnon's flimsy excuse for trampling upon the house's wealth – Iphigeneia – at the command of an oracle? The last part of Klytaimestra's complex speech is specific to the environment and agriculture of ancient Greece, but where on earth would anyone 'harvest' immature grapes in winter? All of the seasons here are out of joint, she implies, and the tyrannical man jeopardizes the home, like unnatural warmth in the midst of winter when fruit-bearing branches require a sufficient period of frost. And Zeus is not the proper god appointed to oversee the creation of good wine! The unripe grape of the house, a tender treasure worth its weight in silver, has been harvested out of season, and by the very lord of the *oikos* who ought to protect the wealth of the house from the hostile environment outside. Klytaimestra's painful labours go unhonoured and her precious child made into bitter wine; the unnatural wine might be made according to the will of Zeus, but Agamemnon was his vintner, and Klytaimestra is going to prune this household's root deep at its foundation. There is no warmth here for the man who wanted to conquer the world, through the murder of a *philos*.

Despite this cryptic confession, critics persistently query Klytaimestra's motivation: is it really revenge for Iphigeneia, or love of Aigisthos, or jealousy of Kassandra; is she evil or just the unwitting instrument of divine plan or of the Atreid family curse?¹⁴⁶ Pindar in his *Pythian 11* offers a choice between motives for Klytaimestra's plan – the murder of Iphigenia, the love of Aigisthos, and the jealousy over Kassandra – but Aiskhylos incorporates and expands on all three. Some suggest that Klytaimestra simply aims to seize power in her own right.¹⁴⁷ Some draw attention to the astonishing omission in Aiskhylos' *Oresteia* of Agamemnon's killing of her first husband and son, a feature of the story reintroduced in Euripides' *Iphigeneia at Aulis*.¹⁴⁸ Klytaimestra's own account of her motivation ignores the Trojan campaign, her affair with Aigisthos, or the obsessive sexual jealousy so often attributed to her: she only desires vengeance upon Agamemnon's for the murder of her child, and it is Agamemnon's infidelities in general

¹⁴⁶ Hammond (1972:94); Bell (1991:135); Sommerstein (1996:202); Rutherford (2012:306). On the obvious validity of Klytaimestra's primary motive of Iphigeneia, see Gagarin (1976:64); Saxonhouse (1984:17-18); Sommerstein (1996:361); Loraux (1998:51). Despite the evidence of Hesiod's *Catalogue*, few critics address the influence on Klytaimestra of Aphrodite's curse of infidelity upon the three daughters of Tyndareos.

¹⁴⁷ Lattimore (1972:75); Foley (1981:151); Sommerstein (1996:192); Storey and Allan (2005:98); Fletcher (2012:41).

¹⁴⁸ Gantz (1966:550). According to Euripides' *IA*, Agamemnon killed her first husband in the course of his taking power in Argos.

which offend her as a secondary motive; Cassandra is merely the latest instance of this, and her arrival simply serves – as Klytaimestra testifies – as a *παροψώνημα*, ‘side-dish’ to the greater pleasure in the accomplished vengeance (1446).¹⁴⁹

Other critics do concede that Iphigeneia’s murder – and her mother’s subsequent pain – were serious and sufficient motives for Klytaimestra’s acts.¹⁵⁰ Klytaimestra’s own statements highlight the hypocrisy of a community which turns a blind eye to the expeditious killing of a child; in the closing scenes of the *Agamemnon* she admits to now being the object of savage hatred, but points out that no one has ever suggested that Agamemnon should be reviled for his hideous act (1412-1421). Her freely-confessed motivation for the murder could not be more explicit: in later response to the chorus’ complaint that their king’s death is *ἀνελεύθερον*, ‘shameful’ (1518), Klytaimestra replies that Agamemnon has received the rightful price of treacherous sin against the *oikos*, for his victim was her body’s own *ἔρνος* ‘scion’ (1521-1529). Klytaimestra’s confession also reminds her audience that she slew Agamemnon with the assistance of the divine powers, ‘Ate and the Erinys’ (1433). The biased chorus cannot respond to Klytaimestra’s truthful testimony, but must resort instead to personal invective, accusing Klytaimestra of being mad, proud, and cunning. Nevertheless, and despite all of Klytaimestra’s clear references to the impious killing of Iphigeneia as the reason for Agamemnon’s death, some persistently deny that the slaughter of Iphigeneia was motivation for Klytaimestra’s revenge, and that her adulterous love for Aigisthos outweighs all other factors.¹⁵¹

Still others maintain that Klytaimestra’s principal motive is love for Aigisthos – apparently the play’s ‘romantic object’ – insisting that only a woman’s love for a man could inspire the killing of a husband.¹⁵² However, in accord with EP findings, battered or abused women are most

¹⁴⁹ On the death of Thyestes’ children at the hand of Atreus as the motivation for Aigisthos’ participation in the murder (something too many critics conveniently forget), see Schaps (1993:508). On the murder of Agamemnon as the result of many “male abuses”, such as the sacrifice of Iphigeneia and the feast upon Thyestes’ sons, as well as the slaughter of the innocents of Troy, see Murnaghan (2005:235-236).

¹⁵⁰ On the unthinkable cruelty of Agamemnon’s murder of Klytaimestra’s child, see Sturgeon (1914:104-105); Bell (1991:264); Loraux (1998:49). For sources on Iphigeneia’s death with and without rescue, see Aiskh. *Aga.* 184 ff., 1412 ff., 1521 ff., Soph. *El.* 563 ff. Cf. Pind. *Pyth.* 11, 32 ff. For details of the death in Latin poets, see *Lucr.* 1 84 ff., *Prop.* 3, 7, 24, *Virg. Aen.* 2, 116; contrast *Ov. Met.* 12, 27 ff., *Ep. Pont.* 3, 2, 59 ff., *Juv.* 12, 119.

¹⁵¹ Tucker (1935:5); Hammond (1972:92); Lloyd-Jones (1979:22); Whallon (1980:138); Winnington-Ingram (1983a:91); Lefkowitz (2007:175).

¹⁵² On Klytaimestra’s adultery as the motive for Agamemnon’s murder, see Vickers (1973:361); Griffith (1995:85); Whitmarsh (2004:185). On audience (and critical) over-reading of Aigisthos as “love-interest”, see Vellacott (1984:112).

likely to kill a husband or partner as a last-resort measure to defend children or their own lives. The adultery explanation also overlooks how the death of a child affects a mother at the socio-biological, emotional, and physiological level; mothering is not the same as fathering, and it is perhaps difficult for some critics to appreciate quite how sufficient the motivation of her daughter's death would have been to Klytaimestra.¹⁵³ On the other hand, there is undoubtedly real love between Klytaimestra and her paramour: she diffuses the tensions between her lover Aigisthos – ‘dearest of men’ – and the chorus of elders, pleading with him to avoid doing evil – and he obeys (1654-1666). Such harmonious heterosexual, monogamous coupledness is an atypical behaviour in male-authored Greek literature: Agamemnon's scornful denigration of Klytaimestra as his wife in the *Iliad* (1.113-115) contrasts with Klytaimestra's sincere declarations of attachment to Aigisthos in *Agamemnon* (1435-1437). Klytaimestra's chosen union with Aigisthos is clearly an improvement – for her – upon her forced marriage to Agamemnon, however; presumably, Klytaimestra and Aigisthos dwell together happily as husband and wife for many years. Klytaimestra earlier confirms that Aigisthos is ‘well-intentioned’ toward her (1436); she describes him as the man who αἴθη πῦρ ἐφ’ ἐστίας ἐμῆς ‘kindles my hearth’ (1435).¹⁵⁴ Klytaimestra's final words to Aigisthos are ones every Greek husband would approve from the appointed guardian of his *oikos*: ‘I, and you, prevailing, we will set the affairs of the house in order’ (1672-1673).¹⁵⁵ Finally, a few others – bizarrely – contend that the disgruntled wife's sexual jealousy of Cassandra's relationship with Agamemnon motivates Klytaimestra's unnatural rage.¹⁵⁶ Married women's difficulty with the custom of concubinage was (and is) a genuine concern, but this view of jealousy as motive assumes that Klytaimestra is still in some way emotionally attached to Agamemnon.¹⁵⁷ The war-captive Cassandra is not the target of a jealous woman who fears she will be side-lined by

¹⁵³ Some conclude that the *Agamemnon*'s characters also fail to grasp the reality of a bereaved mother's grief, see Saxonhouse (1984:20); Sommerstein (1996:263). On the increased mortality of mothers due to loss of a child, see Chapter 1, pp. 46-47; 47n215; 55, 64n264.

¹⁵⁴ It hardly matters whether ‘kindling my hearth’ is or is not an allusion to sexual activity: they are, after all, explicitly lovers; the allusion reveals no new information to the audience, and is one of the play's cheaper throwaway-entendres.

¹⁵⁵ Aigisthos' own declaration that, ἐκ τῶν δὲ τοῦδε χρημάτων πειράσομαι ἄρχειν πολιτῶν, ‘Out of the property of this man I will endeavour to rule the citizens’ (*Aga.* 1638-1639), suggests that the wealth of the Tantalid estate will be used for favours, and also perhaps for mercenaries.

¹⁵⁶ Sturgeon (1914:106); Denniston (1939:xvi); Lattimore (1972:75); Rabinowitz (2008:102). No original version of the myth suggests that there was ever ‘love’ between Agamemnon and Klytaimestra (as there was ‘love’ between Paris and Helen).

¹⁵⁷ On the *Agamemnon* as depicting wifely reaction to culturally-typical concubinage, see Wilson (2000:132).

the husband she loves, but incidental, collateral damage in a war waged by a woman who has become the *ekthros* of the man she happens to be married to.

That this Klytaimestra is the divinely-appointed – and personally eager – *alastōr* tasked to avenge the murder of a child within the house is something signalled early in this play.¹⁵⁸ Kalkhas' interpretation of the omen at Aulis warns that the sacrifice of Iphigeneia – the 'unfledged' offspring of the lion Agamemnon – will bring about the vengeance of a cunning housekeeper, the Wrath which remembers and avenges a child (154-155).¹⁵⁹ The chorus later identify the same *daimon* bestriding the slain king (1468-1474). Klytaimestra herself agrees that she is become τὸν τριπάχυντον/ δαίμονα γέννης 'the thrice-fattened *daimon* of this family' (1475-1479).¹⁶⁰ Zeus himself has approved Klytaimestra's earnest prayer for successful vengeance (973-975), earlier uttered after she outlined Agamemnon's wasting of the wealth of the house in an endless sea of blood, and the chorus agree that, in her role as *alastōr* of the *oikos*, Klytaimestra has been the instrument of παναιτίου πανεργέτα 'all-causing, all-powerful' Zeus (1481; 1485).¹⁶¹ Agamemnon's death is in part divine justice for the terrible costs of war: the uncountable dead at Troy, including the deaths of many Greeks (62-63, 406-408). She is Zeus' appointed agent of vengeance on behalf of 'the young' for the ancient sins of Atreus χαλεποῦ θοινατῆρος, 'the appalling feast-giver' (1502-1504).¹⁶² Aigisthos – as everyone knows – is Agamemnon's ἐχθρὸς ἢ παλαιγενής 'ancient-born enemy', but in response to the chorus's accusations of cowardice, Aigisthos explains that Klytaimestra was better-placed to be an effective avenger (1636-1637). If Aigisthos was known to be Agamemnon's enemy, he would not have been admitted to the king's presence, however brave and ready to commit violence Thyestes' son might have been. It also suggests, if nothing else, that Aigisthos was

¹⁵⁸ On the power of avenging spirits, see also Euripides' Hekabe (*Hek.* 685-686, 946-949).

¹⁵⁹ Goward (2005:55) translates these lines as 'there awaits a fearful resurgent crafty housekeeper, mindful Anger, avenger of her children'; in her opinion, this person might be either Klytaimestra or the *daimon*, but the translation as it stands clearly identifies a female housekeeper and her children, offspring an *alastōr* cannot be said to have.

¹⁶⁰ In Klytaimestra's oath – μὰ τὴν τέλειον τῆς ἐμῆς παιδὸς Δίκην./ Ἄτην Ἐρινύον θ', αἴσι τόνδ' ἔσφαξ' ἐγώ, 'by this slaughter, accomplished on behalf of my child, by Justice, by Ruin (Ate), by the Fury, and by me' (*Aga.* 1432-1433) – she and the Fury are separate entities. On her embodiment as the family *alastōr*, see Neuberger (1991:45-46). Although Klytaimestra identifies herself as the currently incarnated *alastōr* of the house, some critics argue to the contrary; see Bremer (1969:127); Lloyd-Jones (1983b:61); Neuberger (1991:50-51); Fletcher (2012:42). Cf. Sewell-Rutter (2007:84), who observes that the *alastōr* is a single identity-less entity who identifies itself with one particular mortal at a time.

¹⁶¹ On Klytaimestra is the divinely-appointed agent of retribution against the death-mongering Pelopids, see Anderson (1929:154); Kitto (1968:69); Lloyd-Jones (1983a:102); De Romilly (1985:51); Saïd (2005:225).

¹⁶² On the chorus' painfully slow realisation that family vengeance is the reason for Agamemnon's death, see Neuberger (1991:60-61).

not present in the palace at the time of the murder. Klytaimestra has been the most effective – and willing – instrument of Zeus and must suffer the inevitable consequences, but now hopes that she can now negotiate with the family *alastōr*, announcing her intention to forgo any further quest for vengeance and the wish that the spirit of ἀλληλοφόνους, ‘mutual slaughter’ will depart forever to plague some other house; she will also give up a significant part of the house’s wealth to buy freedom from the μανίας ‘frenzy’ of kin-killing within the *oikos* (1568-1576). After the murder, she declares that the deed was not her own; more important, however, is her statement that she is also no longer the wife of Agamemnon (1497-1499).¹⁶³ Klytaimestra’s references to herself as a wife – before the murder – are excessively saccharine, dripping with ironic, antagonistic intent (600-604, 606-612); after the murder, she also calls Agamemnon ἐμὸς/ πόσις, νεκρὸς δέ, ‘my husband, a corpse’ (1404-1405).

Disavowing her status as Agamemnon’s wife was the only way for Klytaimestra to reconcile the irreconcilable: a husband should be dear, but her husband had become her *ekthros* ‘mortal enemy’ (1637), giving her the moral authority and social obligation to murder him (and a good reason to ally with Agamemnon’s other *ekthros*, Aigisthos). The dilemma represented in *Agamemnon* demonstrates the insoluble divide between the androcentric ideal of the wife as the upholder of a husband’s social and reproductive advantage and the biological necessity of the mother as producer and preserver of one’s own children. Receiving the beacon’s message, Klytaimestra yearns for a happy outcome, likening the event to εὐάγγελος μὲν... / ἕως γένοιτο μητρὸς εὐφρόνης πάρα, ‘good news... born from a mother in the kindly time of night’ (264-265). Alluding to childbirth reminds us that she is herself a mother, but one who has been deprived of her own night-born offspring; the happy event she hopes for is the death of her child’s killer. Klytaimestra later discloses that, while waiting at home for his return, she received πολλὰς... κληδόνων παλιγκότων ‘many awful reports’, of Agamemnon’s death by another’s hand; these rumours caused her to attempt suicide (861-876). The chorus, of course, assumes that any right-minded woman would not want to go on living after the death of a beloved husband, but Klytaimestra is enduring life only for the opportunity to accomplish by her own hand the yearned-for assassination of Agamemnon. Sleepless nights were once filled

¹⁶³ On Klytaimestra’s disavowal of herself as wife, see Neuberg (1991:62). Roth (1993:3) argues that Klytaimestra is an “outsider with the status of guest” in the Atreid household. Once she is unmarried from Agamemnon, Klytaimestra is no longer of his *oikos* at all (assuming she ever was). In Lattimore’s (1954:9; 1972:73) opinion, Klytaimestra is simply “estranged” from her husband. Cf. Holst-Warhaft (1992:155), who observes that from the very beginning of the *Agamemnon*, Klytaimestra “behaves like a widow”.

with tears, but that fountain eventually dried, and long mourning for Iphigeneia has hardened her; now she simply abides until his return is certain, and her vengeance may be accomplished in full (887-891).¹⁶⁴

She rejoices at Agamemnon's arrival: everything is long-prepared over sleepless nights of planning, in accordance with justice and with the help of the gods (911-913). Tormented nights of scheming will result not in the homecoming the strutting general imagines he is due, but in divinely-approved justice which she herself will dispense. Afterwards, Klytaimestra confesses that the present events all proceed from *πάλαι/* *νείκης παλαιᾶς ἤλθε* 'an ancient quarrel from long ago' (1377-1379). Agamemnon returned is no husband and *philos*: he is *ekthros*, the murderer of her child, and worse, he has frankly admitted that he would be quite happy – under certain circumstances – to once again do whatever he is told, which invites the question of whether his violence will ever cease. Battered women with prolonged experience of male violence – and an expectation of further harm – sometimes resort to the pre-emptive removal of the threat to surviving offspring. From a sociobiological perspective, the absence of an older child's father typically results in life-time disadvantage – except when that father is a habitual filicide.

Agamemnon is such an established filicide, who – assuming Euripides' and Hyginus' later accounts drew upon traditional material – has already killed two of her children.¹⁶⁵ This marriage is irretrievably voided through his sacrifice of the child she bore him: as the ritual words of the marriage-*enguē* – 'I hand over this woman to you for the purpose of ploughing children' (Menander, *Frag.* 720) – suggest, ancient Greek marriage was sealed by the production of offspring; marriage could also be dissolved by the removal of children.¹⁶⁶ This aspect of the narrative storyline is not mere fiction: the dissolution of marriage following the extinction (or nonproduction) of offspring is a universal practice in many if not most cultures

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Klytaimestra's evocation of the sea, and her question about who could possibly dry it up (958).

¹⁶⁵ On Klytaimestra's previous marriage to Tantalos (son of either Thyestes or Broteas), see *Paus.* 2.22.3; on Agamemnon's murder of Klytaimestra's first child and husband, see Euripides' *IA* (1146ff); cf. also Lyons (2003:125).

¹⁶⁶ On the foundation of ancient Greek marriage in the production of children, see Sturgeon (1914:110); Visser (2000:152; Roth (1993:4-5); Visser (2000:152); Hame (2004:528). On the murder of Iphigeneia and the "severance" of Klytaimestra's union with Agamemnon, see Mitchell-Boyask (2006:277). On the destruction of this tragic couple's marriage as a mismatch of reproductive strategies, see Beye (1975:323); Gagarin (1976:94); Saxonhouse (1984:18-19).

throughout recorded history.¹⁶⁷ Filicidal fathers acting outside of law and convention forfeit their membership within the family, and this is why Klytaimestra is no longer bound to Agamemnon. Dissent in the Atreid household over the murder of Iphigeneia embodies the primal gender conflict between the sexes' respective reproductive strategies: Agamemnon's sacrifice of Iphigeneia compromised Klytaimestra's role as wife, mother, and woman, and not only because women at that time were so defined by their reproductive capacity; Klytaimestra's fury at his politically-motivated child-killing is a natural – not monstrous – behaviour across species.¹⁶⁸ A human woman in ancient Greece dishonoured in marriage – her motherhood trampled – could not take vengeance on her own account, however, and did not have the support of her society to do so, whereas a male who murders a female in the pursuit of honour is a hero.¹⁶⁹

Archaic Greeks agreed that vengeance should be a male-only pursuit, but nowhere in the many versions of the myth does any man close to her step up to avenge the murder of Iphigeneia, or even to discuss the possibility: Aigisthos cares only for his own vendetta against the house of Atreus; Iphigeneia's maternal grandfather Tyndareos, presumably, is perhaps too old to act; nothing is said of her uncles, Kastor and Polydeukes.¹⁷⁰ Orestes agonizes over whether killing his mother to avenge his father is the right thing to do, but he never once acknowledges the obvious insult to his mother's honour, or that Klytaimestra was acting to avenge the offence against his sister; the Hesiodic narrative pattern of son's support of the oppressed mother no longer pertains.¹⁷¹ If Klytaimestra transgresses gender boundaries, it is because she has no choice; this is problematic for ancient audiences and modern scholars alike, who cannot agree on whether the character of Klytaimestra – who exhibits more *andreia* than any other male in the play – is intentionally 'masculinized' in this play.¹⁷² But Klytaimestra does not want to be

¹⁶⁷ On divorce due to the 'failure' of female fertility, see Chapter 1, pp. 60n304; 63.

¹⁶⁸ According to Sharrock and Ash (2002:67-68), any woman who attempts and succeeds in addressing insult to her honour must be depicted in Greek literature as a monster.

¹⁶⁹ Blondell et al (1999a:51). Cf. Vernant (1981:22), who argues that Iphigeneia's sacrifice was the result of Agamemnon's political ambition, not of piety.

¹⁷⁰ On vengeance as a male prerogative, see Vickers (1973:30).

¹⁷¹ Kronos and Zeus in Hesiod's *Theogony* (173-182, 494-496) both act against their own fathers upon their respective mothers' behalf.

¹⁷² On the disturbing superiority of Klytaimestra to the men around her, see Gagarin (1976:93); Rutherford (2012:297). On Aiskhylos' deliberate masculinization of Klytaimestra, see Winnington-Ingram (1983a:84; 1983b:101); Gill (1986:270); Baldock (1989:34); McClure (1999:260); Visser (2000:151); Fletcher (2012:47). Cf. Lefkowitz (2007:175), who rightly contends that Klytaimestra is only viewed as masculine because characters cannot conceive of a naturally intelligent woman. Others point out that Klytaimestra flexibly incorporates aspects

a man; despite what some critics suggest, she clearly wants to be a woman with a man, just not the dangerous one who habitually kills her children. As soon as she has dispatched her personal *ekthros*, she willingly defers to her present husband. Some read Klytaimestra as some kind of proto-feminist, whose real motive is to acquire for herself – and thus for all women – the same social autonomy as men.¹⁷³ In the real, human world, however, women are more likely to compete with other women, and remove them from the field in socially aggressive, but non-violent ways; direct inter-sexual competition occurs rarely, if ever.¹⁷⁴ Her willing deference to Aigisthos suggests that what she really insists upon exercising is reproductive autonomy – the right to bear and raise her offspring without men’s lethal interference. Others conclude that Klytaimestra’s subversion of conventional femininity is simply a narrative device for thematic purpose, and some suggest that – rather than being actively masculinized – she is progressively de-feminized through the *Oresteia*.¹⁷⁵ In the natural world, however, seeking to eliminate filicidal males is not an unfeminine wish, but a profoundly typical, maternal – and thus female – inclination.

Other questions concerning the gendering of her motivation to revenge remain unaddressed, however: nobody in the *Oresteia* – except for Klytaimestra – accuses the kin-killing father Agamemnon of unacceptable evil, and mother Klytaimestra is the only person (and only woman in all extant tragedies) significantly and specifically affected by her Iphigeneia’s death.¹⁷⁶ It is also often assumed that the report that Agamemnon’s Erinyes have the duty to pursue Orestes if he fails to kill Klytaimestra is correct, but no one worries about whether Iphigeneia’s Erinyes pressured Klytaimestra to kill Iphigeneia’s murderer, or threatened to punish her for failing in this. The escalating but law-abiding progression of murder and then vengeance for murder grinds to a halt in *Oresteia*, because no one – neither human nor deity – is allowed to punish

of both genders in her character, sometimes for deceptive purposes; see Michelini (1979:156); McClure (1999:70-71, 79).

¹⁷³ Responding to Winnington-Ingram’s (1983b:105) view that Klytaimestra acts to “strike a blow for her personal liberty”, in reaction to her husband’s “abhorrent dominance”, Saxonhouse (1984:14) points out that reading Klytaimestra as politically envious and ambitious frames all human social relations as driven by (masculine) desire for dominance: cf. Vickers (1973:1973:423n33). Lattimore (1954:12), Winnington-Ingram (1983a:87; 1985:286), and Fletcher (2012:47) all suggest that Klytaimestra’s real aim is to become her own *kyrios*. Cf. Goldhill (1986:152); Zeitlin (1996:1).

¹⁷⁴ On intrasexual competition, see Chapter 1, pp. 29; 37; 41-42; 42n185; 63; 78; 81n415; 85. On other women as the most typical targets of female competitive behaviour, see Chapter 1, pp. 41-43; 41n175; 42n182; 42n185; 42n189; 43n193; 63; 70.

¹⁷⁵ Beck (1975:87); Visser (2000:155, 157).

¹⁷⁶ Only Iphigeneia and Orestes in Euripides’ *Iphigeneia among the Taurians* veer dangerously close to actual criticism of the filicidal Agamemnon (*IT* 924-928), and Orestes quickly deflects the conversation.

Orestes, making his matricide an exempted category of killing.¹⁷⁷ Critics and gods alike cannot agree on the relative moral weighting of Agamemnon's filicide, Klytaimestra's mariticide, and Orestes' matricide. Some critics conclude that an 'evil' Klytaimestra's 'guilt' is definitively 'proven' in *Agamemnon*.¹⁷⁸ Others maintain that Klytaimestra has little, if any, reason to feel guilt.¹⁷⁹ And some admire her prosecution of the immoral, evil behaviour of others.¹⁸⁰

Klytaimestra in this first play of a trilogy steeped in court-room flavour stands as chief prosecutor and judge of Agamemnon's moral culpability; the *Agamemnon*'s so-called 'carpet-scene' is a 'cross-examination' of the king concerning his part in Iphigenia's murder (*Aga.* 931-957). Agamemnon's commission of the sacrifice is never in question; the questioning of the man who tramples on the wealth of the house examines his mental state at the time of the offence. Klytaimestra leads the accused through a sequence of questions into conviction by self-incrimination.¹⁸¹ The core question of the carpet-scene's interrogation is: Are you the kind of man to trample the wealth of the house again at the urging of an expert? The culmination of the response (or confession) is: Yes, I am a man who would do that. In response to Klytaimestra's re-enactment of his impious trampling upon the beautiful treasure of the house, Agamemnon himself is chief witness that such a shameless act should strike fear into the mortal's heart (923-924), because the likely fate for such a mortal is to be struck down with malice (946-949). The chorus' earlier testimony that his submission at Aulis to the yoke of necessity was voluntary is the point of moral law on which he is – rightfully – convicted.¹⁸² Agamemnon's admission that he is a man who would willingly act this way again is swiftly followed by Klytaimestra summing-up (958-974), and then the delivery of justice in the form

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Euripides' *Orestes*, in which Tyndareos and the Argive *demos* both wish Orestes to suffer the consequences of his mother-murder.

¹⁷⁸ On Klytaimestra's guilt, see Solmsen (1949:193); Hammond (1972:99); and O'Daly (1985:1). On her guilt, even for a justified act, see Fontenrose (1971:83); Spatz (1982:103); Sommerstein (1996:257). Garvie (1996:143) claims that it is necessary to Orestes' success that we forget Klytaimestra's real justification for her act, while Wolfe (2009:692-693, 702) maintains that an incontestably evil Klytaimestra was a useful example of woman-gone-bad in the Greek social context.

¹⁷⁹ On the murder of her husband as fully justified, see Neuberg (1991:64); van Erp Taalman Kip (1996:130). In Bell's (1991:136) opinion, for example, Agamemnon was publically obsessed with Klytaimestra's sister; he then killed his own daughter; and later he brought a concubine into her home (along with Cassandra's illegitimate twins), all of which made Klytaimestra a victim of male mating strategy in conflict with female optimum strategy.

¹⁸⁰ On the modern view of Klytaimestra as a complex and primarily positive female character – who bravely and righteously murdered an unlikable, failed general who committed a morally unacceptable filicide – and who has nothing to regret, or feel guilty about, see Loraux (1987:8); Thompson (2004:204-205).

¹⁸¹ Morrell (1996-1997:153) also views the carpet-scene as a test of Agamemnon's character.

¹⁸² For a summary of critical readings of this complex scene, see Morrell (1996-1997:141-142n4).

of immediate, off-stage execution (1343-1345). Klytaimestra is the complainant in this case; her loss is a significant one and she has the moral right to prosecute the slayer of her child; with every response Agamemnon confirms the rightness of her indictment.

Some scholars view Agamemnon's line-by-line capitulation to Klytaimestra's persuasion to walk upon the fabric unfurled before him as the most important aspect of the scene, and even of the play.¹⁸³ Critical sympathies for characters are often aligned according to how this generic *agōn* is read.¹⁸⁴ Some conclude that Agamemnon yields in full consciousness of his disposition – and culpability – for evil.¹⁸⁵ Some suggest that this scene eliminates audience sympathy for Agamemnon the compulsive winner, who loses this *agōn* – and to a woman.¹⁸⁶ Still others conclude that the scene represents the universal [sic] fear of the female's corrupting power of persuasion.¹⁸⁷ Scholars also take different positions on Klytaimestra's 'masculine' intellect and persuasive power in this traditional rhetorical *agōn*. Some contend that her points are logical – and therefore persuasive in their own right; others conclude that Agamemnon yields to her persuasion either because he is too polite to refuse, or because it is his destiny; some suggest that she wins this particular battle between the sexes out of strength, while he is bound by the singular weakness of men – the desire for a glorious reputation.¹⁸⁸ Agamemnon has been acting out of the typical strategic motivations for males in a culture which indulges their mating preferences: the increase of his reputation is always his primary goal, and he fails to see the price in this case – his own human life – is too high, just as the price he paid at Aulis to hasten his glory was too high.

The εἴμασι 'fabrics' (921) is variously interpreted as carpet, garments or robes, and also as sacred tapestry.¹⁸⁹ But however it is conceived, critics and characters alike all agree that this

¹⁸³ On Agamemnon's capitulation to Klytaimestra's masterful demand as the play's climax, see Denniston and Page (1957:151). Cf. Dodds (1960:28); Vernant (1970:287; 1992:39); Peradotto (2007:237).

¹⁸⁴ For examples, see Fraenkel (1950:429, 426, 441-442); Denniston and Page (1957:151); Simpson (1977:94); Lloyd-Jones (1979:17-18); Ireland (1986:25); Flintoff (1987:124-125).

¹⁸⁵ Hammond (1972:92); Easterling (1993:22). Cf. Crane (199:121-122).

¹⁸⁶ Tucker (1935:6); Thomson (1966:259); Otis (1981:38); Vellacott (1984a:145); Dover (1987:158).

¹⁸⁷ Taplin (1978:82, 142) in particular notes the struggle for power between the sexes in the scene; cf. Winnington-Ingram (1983a:87-88); Heath (1987:21).

¹⁸⁸ On various reasons why Agamemnon yields to her rhetoric, see Lloyd-Jones (1970a:11); Simpson (1977:101); Goldhill (1986:12, 1992:54-56; 2007:111); Dover (1987:151); Meridor (1987:39); Konishi (1989:217, 220); Martin (2007:40); Hall (2010:68). Hammond (1972:98); Simpson (1977:98-99); McClure (1997:120-121).

¹⁸⁹ For a summary of the long debate about the εἴμασι 'fabrics', see Morrell (1996-1997:155-156nn20-21).

fabric should not ordinarily be trampled upon.¹⁹⁰ Many critics prefer a reading of red – with obvious connotations of blood – for the πορφυρόστρωτος ‘purple’ fabric (910), but this downplays the importance of purple as a marker of extreme social and material value.¹⁹¹ This scene refers repeatedly to trampling, alluding to the impious waste of material wealth, but some contend that Agamemnon is reluctant to step onto the fabric because he simply does not wish to risk accusations of public *hybris*.¹⁹² Others conclude that a vain and ambitious Agamemnon simply cannot resist any opportunity – even if impious – to outshine other powerful males.¹⁹³ This depiction of the returning victorious hero-king accords with studies that find, across many social species, no male is likely to resist a public challenge to his authority and status; to back away from the opportunity to demonstrate dominance results in an immediate loss of position in the male hierarchy, and this is true for humans as well.¹⁹⁴ Agamemnon’s rapid collapse before Klytaimestra’s urgings shows that both husband and wife know what’s truly important to male aristocrats: victory, prestige, dominance, and demonstrable status. Klytaimestra uses his predictable response – and his blindness to this – to achieve her goal.

The pivotal carpet-scene clearly has an important narrative function, although scholars debate its purposes. Agamemnon’s necessary acceptance of Klytaimestra’s request mirrors the ritual

¹⁹⁰ Critics agree that the unmatched material or monetary value of the laboriously finished, expensively dyed fabric is the real point of the episode: see Flintoff (1987:120-121); Crane (1993:125, 131); Rabinowitz (2008:98). On the fabrics as women’s work – perhaps marital robes – wantonly destroyed by a man, see Rabinowitz (1981:174); Morrell (1996-1997:146, 157); Scheid and Svenbro (1996:85n5); Lyons (2003:93); McNeil (2005:1-2, 8n16). On the sacrilegious act of *πατεῖν*, ‘trampling’ in this scene (and long ago at Aulis), see Jones (1962:87, 89); Fagles and Stanford (1977:32); Taplin (1977:311, 313; 1978:79); Rosenmeyer (1982:61-62, 288); Vellacott (1984:71, 79); Crane (1993:118, 121); Wohl (1998:88); Sewell (2007:99).

¹⁹¹ On the fabrics as red to allude to the blood-letting throughout the narrative, see Ferguson (1972:86); Goheen (1972:108, 111); Vickers (1973:367); Taplin (1978:81); Segal (1981:55); Carson (2009:6). On the scene’s reference to dipping fabric in dye and Klytaimestra’s earlier allusion to dipping bronze in blood (612), see Lyons (2003:116); Sommerstein (2008:72n126). In Rosenmeyer’s (1982:61-62) opinion, no modern staging offers the same impact as the allusion to the immeasurably precious *porphyra*-dye, but Mitchell’s (2000) staging of the play unfurled a sewn patchwork of little girls’ dresses – all dyed red – for the king to strut upon, provoking enormous emotional response in the audience.

¹⁹² On the destruction of excessive wealth as an apotropaic assertion of power, see Crane (1993:119, 128-129). On the jettison of goods to save a ship during a storm see also Aristotle (*Nic. Eth.* 3.11 10a8-11). On the political ramifications of the aristocratic (or ‘Eastern’) habit of deliberate wastage of opulent wealth, see Fagles (1984:x); Rose (1992:206, 208); Crane (1993:123-124, 135); Easterling (1993:20).

¹⁹³ On the egotistic and hubristic Agamemnon’s eager acceptance of an honour usually reserved for the gods, see Vickers (1973:366); Lawrence (1976:100); Lloyd-Jones (1983b:68); Winnington-Ingram (1983a:88); Konishi (1989:219). Cf. Pope (1986:22-23), who argues that Agamemnon is a “true democrat”, who ‘steadfastly attempts to decline the honour due to him’. On Agamemnon’s need for prestige, see Peradotto (2007:237).

¹⁹⁴ For discussion of how male status is central to male reproductive success, see Chapter 1, pp. 17; 22; 28; 29n91; 31-32; 34-36; 34n126; 34n130; 35n133; 35n134; 37; 39; 41-43; 49n230; 49n232; 56; 69; 70n360; 83. On the importance of being seen as willing to defend status, see Chapter 1, pp. 18-19; 35n134; 70n360.

nodding of the bull's head at the altar, alluding to that previous sacrifice of Iphigeneia 'like a beast' at Aulis; Klytaimestra plans to kill him whether he accepts her invitation to the altar or not, however.¹⁹⁵ The scene is an important lie-detecting test of Agamemnon's *ethos*, and of his disposition to impious filicide: Klytaimestra is attempting to establish – as sufficient justification for her intention to murder – whether Agamemnon was and still is the kind of man to willingly trample the house's precious thing, and so she specifically asks him ἠϋξω θεοῖς δείσας ἄν ᾧδ' ἔρδειν τάδε, 'would you, being in fear, have vowed to the gods, do such a thing?' (933).¹⁹⁶ The significance of the question and answer explains the two previous exchanges, in which Klytaimestra requests that he answers her next question honestly, and he assures her that he will do so (931-932). She is simply trying to ascertain if her remaining offspring are at risk – he has, after all, already dispatched her first and second children, and was able to reconcile himself to murder with some enthusiasm. Without hesitation Agamemnon affirms that he has already trampled – with very little persuasion – upon the precious wealth of the house, and he would do so again, εἴπερ τις, εἰδώς γ' εὔ τόδ' ἐξεῖπον τέλος, 'if someone, knowing well such matters, had ordained it as an end' (934). His admission confirms that killing of Iphigeneia was 'ordained' by just such an expert, and thus he nods his head to Klytaimestra's hand.¹⁹⁷ The trampled embroideries under his feet bear silent witness to his willingness, upon the urging of others, to destroy women's careful, patterned work of both children and embroideries; trampling the hours and hours of female creative effort and love.¹⁹⁸ Klytaimestra knows well that her investment in her treasured child was disproportionately greater than that of Iphigeneia's father, but traditional critical commentary overlooks the significant difference in

¹⁹⁵ On the correlation between Agamemnon's symbolic consent and the actual consent of the animal to its own sacrifice, see Thomson (1966:259); McDonald (2003:15). Cf. Lattimore (1964:39), who reads the scene as "curious", because Agamemnon will die whether he "chooses" or not.

¹⁹⁶ On Klytaimestra's enquiry is an invitation to an admission of guilt, see Fraenkel (1950:422-423), and Winnington-Ingram (1983b:92), who argues that the self-incrimination in the carpet-scene has been in the air since the earliest choral ode, in which Agamemnon was willing to sacrifice δόμων ἄγαλμα 'a treasure of the house' (208), on 'the unquestioned authority of a religious expert' (186).

¹⁹⁷ On the first step upon the fabric as a sign and confirmation that Agamemnon is now condemned to die, see Vellacott (1975:133); Fagles and Stanford (1977:32); Simpson (1977:95); Taplin (1978:82-3); Conacher (1987:38); Easterling (1993:24); Macintosh (1994:82). On the capitulation as a confession of guilt for the unholy trampling upon the sacred at Aulis, see Fontenrose (1971:106); Lebeck (1971:76-77); Vickers (1973:367-368); Fagles and Stanford (1977:32); Conacher (1987:37-38); Konishi (1989:218); Rehm (1992:80); Rutherford (2012:316).

¹⁹⁸ An unspecified but large number of beloved sons of the *demos* were lost in the war: Macintosh (1994:82) who argues that the tapestries allude to the sea 'flowering' with corpses (659). Cf. Aiskhylos' reference to the sea filled with corpses in his earlier *Persai* (419-421), an image of an endless sea of death not unknown to the war-wise audience of the *Oresteia*.

mothers' and fathers' parental care and investment; EP research points to the importance of this aspect of parental investment in the events of the play.¹⁹⁹

Klytaimestra now has all the confession she requires to justify his execution; all that remains is her summing-up and declaration of sentence, and this follows at once. The lines of Klytaimestra's speech as Agamemnon is proceeding slowly over the tapestries are as ponderous and obscure as any black-capped judge's pronouncement.²⁰⁰ As she muses on who would dry up the sea with its 'ever renewed' precious purple (959-960), the audience is fully focussed upon the slow tread of the one person who has already dared to drain it dry: Agamemnon.²⁰¹ According to most scholars, the carpet-scene ends with Agamemnon's disappearance into the house, but Klytaimestra's cryptic soliloquy (958-975), her exit, and the subsequent death-cries of Agamemnon (1343, 1345) are essential elements in this unified scene of trial, conviction, and execution. Klytaimestra is the appointed agent of the gods' continuing displeasure over Tantalid crimes, and, in her own right, is the proper prosecutor of her daughter's murderer; having dispatched her *ekthros*, she now has a further target – the foreign princess who poses a previously unanticipated but significant threat to her own children's future reproductive prospects.

Critics differ on the purpose of Cassandra in the *Agamemnon*, but, in agreement with evolutionary findings about innate male models of female perfection, Cassandra is objectified as the beautiful, young, sexually-compliant *geras* who is immediately loyal to her new owner – juxtaposed in stark contrast to the play's sexually treacherous wife.²⁰² The Greeks – like

¹⁹⁹ On the much greater reproductive work done by women – in gestation, labour, lactation, and domestic maintenance – see Chapter 1, pp. 46-49; 46n207; 46n209; 46n210; 46n212; 61; 65-66; 65n333; 66n334; 66n336; 81; 81n414; 81n421.

²⁰⁰ Cf. Morrell (1996-1997:163), who agrees that the ironic 'root and leaves' imagery of the second half of the speech frames Agamemnon's murder in terms of his crime against her reproductive success.

²⁰¹ Cf. the earlier mention of ἀνθοῦν πέλαγος Αἰγαῖον νεκροῖς/ ἀνδρῶν Ἀχαιῶν, 'the Aegean Sea carpeted with the bodies of Akhaian men' (*Aga.* 659-660), and the parallel between the purple-red dye of the Aegean Sea's murex and the blood of the slain, and the reference to wine made from the 'unripe grape', in the presence of the 'man of power' in the house (970-972). The cultured members of Aiskhylos' audience would have been aware of Homer's 'wine-coloured sea' (*Il.* 2.613, 5.771, 7.88, 23.143, 23.317; *Od.* 1.183, 2.421, 3.286, 4.474, 5.132, 5.221, 5.349, 6.170, 7.250, 12.388, 19.172, 19.274). Lattimore translates this as 'wine-blue', but since Homer also uses the term to describe the colour of cattle (*Il.* 13.703; *Od.* 13.32), a deep brownish-red seems appropriate, making a connection between a blood-coloured sea and wine made with the blood of an 'unripe' daughter.

²⁰² On Cassandra's traditional depiction as *geras* in the *Kypria*, see Goward (2005:46). On female youth and beauty as indicators of maximal fertility, see discussion in Chapter 1, pp. 38-39; 39n160; 43. In Cassandra's case, she adds a royal lineage to the mix. On male fantasy, see Chapter 1, pp. 25-26; 25n58; 25n61; 25n62; 26n71; on male expectation of female sexual loyalty, see Chapter 1, pp. 33; 33n118; 50; 69-70; 77; 77n392; 77n397; 84n435.

many Bronze and Iron Age cultures – knew the realities of life for enslaved war-prizes, but Aiskhylos makes the royal Cassandra of Troy distinctly approving of her captor in her descriptions of him – λέοντος εὐγενοῦς, ‘the noble lion’, and hostile to her captor’s wife and her secret paramour – δίπους λέαινα, ‘a two-footed lioness’, who is συγκοιμωμένη/ λύκῳ, ‘sleeping with a wolf’ (1258-1260). Despite having good political reason to loathe Agamemnon as an *ekthros*, Cassandra offers no criticism of her own enslavement, nor of Iphigeneia’s murder. Cassandra’s compassion toward the city-sacking Agamemnon is incongruous with her enmity for the Greeks in general, and her view of herself as Agamemnon’s doom, but the enslaved princess’s forgiveness of her rapist – and the man responsible for the death of everyone she loved – prepares the audience for the increasing dehumanization of Klytaimestra throughout the *Oresteia*: many view the death of this apparently compassionate girl as the beginning of the slide of a wronged mother’s righteous vengeance into callous and gratuitous violence.²⁰³ Yet this apparently senseless act also invites an evolutionarily-oriented analysis.²⁰⁴ The hatred between wife and concubine – in the *Agamemnon* at least – is mutual, and an important part of the mythical construction of the evil Klytaimestra comes to us in the testimony of the one woman who could potentially benefit most from the primary wife’s displacement: Cassandra.

The death of the so-called ‘innocent’ Cassandra at the hands of Klytaimestra is often cited by modern scholars as being one of Klytaimestra’s unambiguously evil acts, but Cassandra’s death in the *Oresteia* is narratively unimportant to the disintegration of this family, and no character ever suggests that it requires vengeance.²⁰⁵ None of Cassandra’s kin are able to avenge her (almost all of them are dead), and no Greek has any social or personal obligation to uphold her honour. But, as outlined below, Cassandra fulfils two specific and important roles in this tragedy. Firstly, Agamemnon is the specific quarry of Klytaimestra – for his murder of Iphigeneia – and of Aigisthos – for Atreus’ murder of Thyestes’ children – but, quite plausibly, his death must also be sought by this captive Trojan, and her enslavement is the means to her

Cf. Missing White Woman Syndrome as the reflexive emphasis in popular media (especially visual media) upon young, nubile, high-status and paler-skinned women as more interesting victims of abduction, violence, rape, and murder; see Moody et al (2008); Wanzo (2008); Liebler (2010). On Cassandra as a “fantasy” of female self-sacrifice to the will of men, see Wohl (1998:113). On Cassandra as a “corrective” for Klytaimestra, the bad wife and murderess, see Doyle (2008:57).

²⁰³ On the singular emphasis on Cassandra in the iconographic record as rape victim, rather than in her role as truth-seeing prophetess, see Prag (1985:59-60).

²⁰⁴ On wifely rage at concubines in tragedy, see Murnaghan (2005:236). Murnaghan (2005:241-242) rightly observes that tragic women – but not men – view marriage as an exclusive relationship, and act to secure their union.

²⁰⁵ On Klytaimestra’s evil murder of Cassandra, see Mossman (2005:355).

own vengeance against him. Cassandra's appearances and utterances show that Agamemnon's destined death – or destiny itself – is manifestly overdetermined: Klytaimestra's hand wields the blade that kills her husband, but (at least) two others have his death as a dedicated goal.

Secondly, Cassandra's vision of the terrors of the house of the Atreids offers divinely-inspired expert-testimony on Atreid evil and the inevitability of Agamemnon's death;²⁰⁶ she attests that the family home is

μισόθεον μὲν οὖν, πολλὰ συνίστορα
αὐτόφωνα κακὰ καρτάναι,
ἀνδροσφαγεῖον καὶ πέδον ῥαντήριον,

‘an utterly god-hating one, privy to many evil kin-murders and decapitation, a house of butchery, and a place of defilement’ (1090-1092).

Every detail in her account is historically correct, and the chorus can make no denial of these words; they merely comment blithely on this stranger's ability to unearth murder (1092-1093). Cassandra accurately identifies the pitiful victims of Atreus – slaughtered, screaming babies – and simultaneously sees their roasted flesh being consumed by their own father (1096-1097). Cassandra foresees how Agamemnon will die at Klytaimestra's hand (1107-1110, 1114-1117) but the chorus now rejects her vision (1105-1106, 1112-1113). Cassandra confirms that the historic crimes demand a tremendous remedy: the sacrifice of Agamemnon: whether or not Klytaimestra is guilty because she delivers the killing blow, his death is destined to occur.

Despite the argument of some critics that Cassandra never criticizes Agamemnon, she rejoices at his imminent murder, crying *στάσις δ' ἀκόρετος γένει/ κατολολυξάτω θύματος λευσίμου*, ‘let the insatiate tribe shriek over the accursed victim doomed to death!’ (1117-1118). The chorus castigates her for inciting a Fury (1119-1120), but never disputes that Agamemnon is accursed and thus doomed to die. Following the vision of her own death (1172), Cassandra

²⁰⁶ According to McClure (1999:25), the Greeks associated virginity with truth-speaking; Cassandra's frenzied allusions are imbued with mystical, oracular authority by the chorus, who attempt to establish the authenticity of her virgin status. Her descriptions of Agamemnon as both the net, and the bull caught in the net (*Aga.* 115, 1126-1127) draw upon the cultural imagery of the ancient Mycenaean bull-hunt, which is likely to have a significance recognized by fifth-century Greeks. On the Bronze Age Vaphio gold cup with its image of the netted bull, see Prag (1985:81).

confirms that the house is full of Furies, as a result of the family's ancestral evil-doing (1184-1190). Cassandra refers to Aigisthos as the cowardly lion who presently occupies the lord's bed, even though he has his own, quite serious plans for vengeance upon the house of Atreus (1217-1225).²⁰⁷ However, Klytaimestra is in fact the only member of this *oikos* able to kill Agamemnon without adding to the endless family woe, for she alone is not related to her victim by blood.

As she crosses the threshold to the death she has foreseen, Cassandra bears witness that all the members of the house – both edifice and bloodline – φόνον... πνέουσιν αίματοσταγῆ, 'breathe blood-dripping murder!' (1309). Her account of revenges across time is possibly the world's first narrative montage, pertinent flash-backs and flash-forwards centred upon one outcome: Klytaimestra is going to be Agamemnon's mortal judge and executioner. Cassandra's divinely-inspired expert testimony falls upon the ears of a selectively disbelieving audience, however.²⁰⁸ Because of Apollo's curse, all of the Trojan princess's oracles are traditionally doubted, yet when she prophesies her own death, the Argive elders remark that even a new-born could understand her (1162-1163); they also fully comprehend her vision of slaughtered children (1242-1243).²⁰⁹ But as soon as they hear about Agamemnon's coming fate, their perceptive capacity collapses (1245).²¹⁰ Perhaps an ox is standing upon the chorus' ears, as it earlier stepped upon the Watchman's tongue, and a god is misdirecting their understanding in order to facilitate Klytaimestra's purpose, because Trojan Cassandra's gleeful warnings are very specific: 'Troy's destroyer', unaware of Klytaimestra's true intent, is 'about to suffer an evil fate' (1226-1230). Cassandra desperately declares that the Elders are about to behold 'the doom

²⁰⁷ The expression λέοντ' ἄνακτιν actually means 'impotent lion', but Sommerstein (2008:147n263) – like many others impressed with leonine character – prefers 'wolf', in order to contrast Aigisthos with the 'noble lion' Agamemnon. Aigisthos, as a descendant of the royal lineage of Tantalos and Pelops, is a 'blood-licking lion' just as much as Agamemnon (827-828), with just as much right to rule in Argos. The *LSJ* glosses ἄνακτις as 'without strength, impotent, feeble, of unwarlike men': Aigisthos, often described as cowardly, may simply be that horror of fifth-century manhood – a pacifist.

²⁰⁸ Cassandra's enumeration of Atreid sins also prepares the audience to accept that real Furies – which they cannot yet behold – are infesting the Atreid *oikos*; see Zeitlin (1966:645); Vickers (1973:374-375, 377-378); Heath (1987:22). On Cassandra's revelation confirming Kalkhas' earlier (unheeded) warning about the treacherous housekeeper who will avenge children (*Aga.* 152-155), see Schein (1982:14); Roth (1993:7).

²⁰⁹ On Cassandra's acceptance of death by Klytaimestra as an essential aspect of Cassandra's own revenge upon Agamemnon, see Papadopoulou (2000:526).

²¹⁰ Sommerstein (2008:150n270) points out that the literal meaning of their declaration at 1445 is 'I am running, having fallen out of the chase'. Cf. the chorus' earlier declaration that Cassandra has the ability of a keen-scented hound (1092).

of Agamemnon' (1246).²¹¹ They affirmed this woman's oracular powers (1213), but now they deny this particular warning, and insist she hold her tongue (1247). But not all of her visions are so infallibly accurate.

Kassandra's final prophecy concerns the return of Orestes and the death of Klytaimestra (1280-1282), and is utterly wrong about one aspect of his arrival: the exile is not coming to exact vengeance for this Trojan princess's death, but for his father alone. Kassandra's lengthy 'eyewitness' testimony concerning the wrongful killing of children in this house is also flawed in one obvious respect: she completely omits any mention of Agamemnon's sacrifice of Iphigeneia.²¹² The grieving queen's pain for a slain daughter is of no interest to this foreign princess – who has enough of her own *philoï* to avenge, and good reason to delight in the death of Agamemnon's dear ones – and Klytaimestra herself is a tool of Kassandra's own vengeance-scheme; perhaps because of this, critics differ as to whether Aiskhylos' characterization of the vulnerable but self-interested Kassandra serves to waylay audience sympathy for Klytaimestra.²¹³ The presence and speeches of Kassandra in the *Agamemnon* proves that there are at least three avengers independently seeking to murder Agamemnon for the crimes of the house: Aigisthos, for the slaughter of Thyestes' children, Klytaimestra for the sacrifice of Iphigeneia, and Kassandra herself for the annihilation of Troy.²¹⁴

All of the tragedians likely drew on previous, thoroughly intertextual traditions for aspects of Kassandra's character; in Euripides' later *Troades* (415 BCE), Kassandra reveals (*Tro.* 363-364) that her marital relationship with Agamemnon will also result in her enemy Klytaimestra's death.²¹⁵ Euripides likely drew upon many of the same sources as Aiskhylos – although these may now be lost – and his virgin oracle Kassandra is certainly no innocent; a royal princess with barely-contained supernatural powers, she curses Agamemnon and prays to be the instrument of his death, delighting in the foreknowledge that she will be personally responsible

²¹¹ μῦθος can refer to 'fate, destiny, or doom', as well as 'death', especially death through violence. The chorus ought to be alerted by her words.

²¹² On Kassandra's omission of the death of Iphigeneia, see Vickers (1973:377); Vellacott (1984:105); Wohl (1998:112).

²¹³ On the demonic and monstrous Klytaimestra's sadistic murder of the innocent and sympathetic Kassandra, and the alienation of audiences, see Macleod (1982:142); Schein (1982:15); Rehm (1992:90-91); Wohl (1998:107); Zelenak (1998:64).

²¹⁴ On the enmity of the princess for the wife of Agamemnon, see Croally (1994:130); Seaford (2005:35); Mitchell-Boyask (2006:272).

²¹⁵ Critical sympathy toward the innocent Kassandra emphasizes that she is a war-captive, whose whole world has been destroyed; see Dué (2006:151).

for Agamemnon's demise and the destruction of the Atreid house (356-60, 404ff, 461).²¹⁶ Scholars rarely acknowledge Cassandra's aspiration to vengeance in discussions of who is culpable for the murder of Agamemnon.²¹⁷ Cassandra is not the only character in extant tragedy claiming (or confessing) to be the doom of Agamemnon: Aiskhylos' Aigisthos rejoices that, he, the third child of a wretched father – along with the Furies – has schemed for Agamemnon's death (1577-1582, 1604-1611).²¹⁸ Critical interpretations of the *Oresteia* make much of Klytaimestra's sexual jealousy of the incoming concubine as a cause – sometimes the prime cause – of Klytaimestra's murder of her husband but the Kassandras of Aiskhylos and Euripides are equally eager for the blood of Troy's enemies, and to be chosen as Agamemnon's concubine is clearly very convenient to Cassandra's aim.²¹⁹ Euripides' Trojan princess also embraces her ordained death at the hands of Agamemnon's wife, because it is the price to be paid for the success of her quest to destroy Greece. Euripides makes Cassandra keen to serve Agamemnon's bed in her role as Fury and avenger of Troy's destruction (356-360), but Aiskhylos reveals little to nothing about Cassandra's own feelings about her desire for political vengeance upon the house of Atreus through concubinage or marriage to Agamemnon, and almost all of her speeches are focussed on the evils of the house she is about to enter. Like Aiskhylos, scholars ignore Cassandra's politically-motivated, quite natural desire for the death of the Greeks' leader (and his household), and – like the *Agamemnon*'s chorus – are primarily interested in whether this Cassandra is or is not a virgin.²²⁰

Kassandra's sexual innocence is pivotal to traditional interpretations of the *Oresteia*'s Klytaimestra, whose wicked killing of an innocent virgin-victim is the one crime most

²¹⁶ Aiskhylos may never have viewed Euripides' *Troades*, but many alternative versions may have been available to both tragedians. Cf. Garner (1990:165), who insists that Euripides' Cassandra is also Aiskhylos' Cassandra.

²¹⁷ Croally (1994:131) views Cassandra's desires for vengeance as "somewhat disquieting", but from the Greek point of view, to seek the destruction of an enemy is not disquieting, but natural and good. On Cassandra's "peculiar happiness" in *Troades*, see Lloyd-Jones (1992:64).

²¹⁸ Sophokles' *Ajax* also calls upon Furies to kill the Atreids along with the whole Greek army; see Moss (1985:121).

²¹⁹ On Cassandra as Erinyes and instrument of vengeance upon Agamemnon through either marriage or concubinage, see Gregory (1991:164); Davie (1998:181); Kovacs (1999:5-6); Papadopoulou (2000:523); Burian (2009:15-16, 19).

²²⁰ If modern critics are intensely interested to establish whether Cassandra slept with Ajax, or with Apollo, or with Agamemnon, or even with the whole crew of Agamemnon's ship, the ancient Greeks were no less concerned, according to Debnar (2010:129). On Cassandra's sexual status, see Vermeule (1966:6); Vickers (1973:374); Gagarin (1976:95); Lee (1976:xvi); Rehm (1994:47); Scodel (1998:147); Wohl (1998:107, 114-115); Mossman (2005:355); Mitchell-Boyask (2006:269, 273); Doyle (2008:57); Debnar (2010: n9:9, 129-130, 132-133, 135).

frustrating to sympathetic modern interpretations of her character.²²¹ Aiskhylos' chorus are also curious as to whether she and Apollo coupled in the procreative sense (*Aga.* 1207), to which she replies that ξυναινέσασα Λοξίαν ἐψευσάμην, 'having consented, I cheated Apollo by lying' (1208). It is not clear whether the cheating refers to whether she still had any virginity to give Apollo, or if she cheated Apollo by sleeping with him, but then refusing to conceive or bear his child,²²² but the *Agamemnon*'s allusion to Apollo cheated of this chance of fatherhood suggests that this same god's defining pronouncements concerning reproduction and gender in this trilogy's third play (*Eumenides*) should be read with a certain degree of caution, to say the least: nevertheless, Apollo's pronouncements on the nonexistence of motherhood in that third play directly influence audience and critical perceptions of the trilogy's matricide, and Klytaimestra's reputation for evil.²²³ According to Cassandra herself (1080-1081), however, her impending destruction at Klytaimestra's hands is the result of Apollo's animosity, because Apollo – to whom she had falsely promised her maidenhead – has brought her to Argos to die alongside Agamemnon (1138-1139).

The reneging Cassandra and the thwarted Apollo are clearly parties to a ruined marital arrangement, but the nature of Cassandra's marriage to Agamemnon – a central element in negative discussion of Klytaimestra's motivation to murder – is less clear. The *Oresteia* is full of reproductive politics in the most fundamental sense, but those who argue that Klytaimestra's murder of the innocent Cassandra exceeds the necessities of vengeance overlook the *Oresteia*'s deliberate omission of three traditional narrative elements related to succession issues: the possible existence of Cassandra's unborn offspring; Cassandra's potential to produce further rivals to Klytaimestra's son Orestes, and Aigisthos' need to eliminate all of his enemy's Agamemnon's sons, including any by concubines. The marriage of Agamemnon and Cassandra occurred long before their arrival at Argos – evidenced in the arrival of their living children in Argos in some myths – an inconvenient element of the traditional tale many *Oresteia* critics neglect.²²⁴ According to Poseidon in *Troades*, Agamemnon will – at some point after

²²¹ On feminist dismay at Klytaimestra's murder of Cassandra, see McEwan (1990); Rehm (1992:90); McCoskey (1998:51-52); Komar (2003:24); Mitchell-Boyask (2006:280).

²²² In Schein's (1982:12) opinion, the fruitless prophecies of Cassandra are her punishment for denying Apollo the fruit of her womb.

²²³ For discussion of Apollo as a failed husband, a rapist, and a father of forcibly engendered children, see Kitto (1958:43); Ferguson (1972:87); Scafuro (1990:150); Sommerstein (1996:261, 367); Mitchell-Boyask (2006:276, 295); Doyle (2008:62).

²²⁴ On Agamemnon's sexual activity with Cassandra in Troy, evidenced in Euripides' *Hekabe*, see Debnar (2010:133-134). See *Hek.* 120-122, 127-129, 826-829. On Cassandra's twin sons with Agamemnon, see Gantz

leaving the shores of Troy – γαμῆ βιαίως ‘forcibly marry’ his captured Trojan princess (*Tro.* 41-44); furthermore, his use of λέχος (noun sg fem dat epic poetic, of λεχώ), ‘woman in childbed’, suggests a very real intention to breed from his *geras* Cassandra. Cassandra herself has foreseen in *Troades* that consummation with the already-married Agamemnon is a necessity (357-358), because it will incite Klytaimestra to murder her husband.²²⁵ That the fact of their marriage was widely accepted in the mythic corpus is also suggested in Euripides’ *Hekabe*, when Agamemnon does not contest Hekabe’s assertion that his sexual marriage with Cassandra entails moral obligation to Cassandra’s family (*Hek.* 834, 852-860). The proper purpose of concubines in ancient Athens was to provide legitimate sons in the *oikos* lacking an heir, but Klytaimestra has already provided Agamemnon with a fine son.²²⁶ Aiskhylos’ audience would have appreciated this as they watched Agamemnon ordering his long-suffering Tyndarid wife to make a concubine of royal blood welcome in the house, recognizing that Agamemnon directly contributes to Cassandra’s death (and his own), because any man arrogantly bringing home a concubine could not expect his wife to approve a rival within the *oikos*.²²⁷

Concubines in real-world marriages across cultures and periods are always a threat to a wife’s enjoyment of family resources, including the husband’s time and loyalty; conflict between wife and concubine is a natural consequence of this competition. Occasionally, such competition results in death, most often of the newly-introduced concubine.²²⁸ Thus, once in Argos, Cassandra’s immediate focus is on discrediting the legitimate wife. Klytaimestra correctly views Cassandra as her personal *ekthros* not because of sexual jealousy but because this concubine might potentially replace her, a very reasonable response of any woman striving to survive the patriarchal conditions which advantage male reproductive strategy.²²⁹ Some mainstream critics read the relationship between Klytaimestra and Cassandra through a feminist-tinted lens: Wohl’s (1998) discussion, for example, assumes a natural commonality between Cassandra and Klytaimestra because they are both women, when they are in fact geopolitical enemies, now in direct competition for the apex alpha-male’s favour; any of their

(1966:675); Bell (1991:135). *Pausanias* (2.16.6) identifies these sons as Teledmos and Pelops; the scholium to *Odyssey* 11.420 also refers to Teledmos the son of Cassandra and Agamemnon. The mythic corpus also insists that Cassandra’s children were killed not by Klytaimestra – as one might predict – but by Aigisthos. See *Paus.* (2.16.7); Bell (1991:110); Debnar (2010:133).

²²⁵ Scodel (1998:147).

²²⁶ See Foley’s (2003:87-105) chapter on concubines in ancient Greece, especially p. 94.

²²⁷ Sommerstein (1996:374); McCoskey (1998:45).

²²⁸ On lethal competition between co-wives, see Chapter 1, pp. 42-43; 42n185; 63.

²²⁹ Cf. Vellacott (1984:89-90), who argues that Cassandra is determined to become Agamemnon’s only wife.

surviving children will one day be in conflict for the power and resources of the kingdom. So, Cassandra's hatred of the Greek Klytaimestra is politically motivated but the captive also has good cause for personal animosity toward the queen, because the second wives of polygynous marriages face a difficult life, and their children are more likely to suffer a violent death.²³⁰ Studies show that first-wives benefit from the death of their competitors' infants.²³¹ Despite this, the enslavement of women (despite euphemisms likening the slavery to marriage) was a fact of life for the ancient Greeks, and the original reception of Cassandra and Klytaimestra's hostile interactions probably reflected audience experience and expectations; what has the royal Klytaimestra to gain from friendship with a conquered barbarian princess in a world where all women – royal or enslaved – are to all intents and purposes owned by their male *kyrios*? Aristocratic Greek women were generally not interested in feminine solidarity to counter males' rule; Hekabe in *Troades*, for example, willingly encourages and then exploits Agamemnon's sexual use of her living daughter in order to get vengeance for her slain son.²³² The threat to reproductive resources alone is a parsimonious and plausible explanation for Klytaimestra and Cassandra's animosity, and while Agamemnon's twin sons by his captive are absent in this play, from the first wife's point of view, Cassandra might already be carrying a son of Agamemnon to rival Klytaimestra's own descent-line. Klytaimestra has every evolutionarily logical reason to eliminate the threat Cassandra's potential sons might pose to her own offspring.

Kassandra's loyalty to the man who has enslaved her sometimes bewilders mainstream critics, as does Klytaimestra's animosity toward the exiled orphan. Cassandra does everything in her power to alert the chorus to the wife's impending betrayal of her husband, as her warning about the danger of the cow to the bull demonstrates (*Aga.* 1125-1129). There is, of course, one circumstance in which a cow would be rightly expected to attack, and possibly even overcome a bull – in defence of her threatened calf; Agamemnon has killed two of Klytaimestra's children, which suggests he may do so again if he thinks it necessary. Females across species will defend their offspring, and murder of husbands is most likely to occur in conditions of threat to

²³⁰ See discussion in Chapter 1 about the compromised fertility of second wives, pp. 42n185; 63.

²³¹ On the infanticide of second-wives' offspring, see Chapter 1, pp. 41n175; 41n179; 42n185.

²³² In McCoskey's (1998:39-40, 45) opinion, Klytaimestra is not forced to make Cassandra her enemy, but chooses to ignore their similarities, distancing herself from the concubine in order to retain her position in the male-dominated hierarchy. McCoskey (1998:51) also argues that Klytaimestra's denial of solidarity with Cassandra mirrors Athene's later denial in *Eumenides* of solidarity with Klytaimestra, but Athena has little to gain from affiliation with other females in a world in which her *timē* depends upon allegiance to the father alone.

offspring from their own father.²³³ Fired by her vision of Agamemnon's death, Cassandra is horrified at the thought of a woman able to betray the man with whom she shares a bed (1107-1109), and she highlights the wife's betrayal of the sexual relationship (1115-1118); if the marital bed is viewed as endowing both reproductive partners with equal rights – which in a patriarchal sexual-slavery culture is never the case – then Cassandra as a potential reproductive rival is hypocritically offended, because the security of Klytaimestra's bed in terms of parental investment has been betrayed by her husband with Cassandra herself. Klytaimestra takes just as much delight in denigrating her rival, aiming her bitter insults squarely – as predicted by evolutionary findings concerning intrasexual female competition – at her rival's sexuality (1437-1443), following species-typical denigration between female sexual rivals.²³⁴ Standing over the corpses of her husband and his concubine, Klytaimestra accuses them both of having had sex with 'many' others (1438-1442).²³⁵ Cassandra's murder brings Klytaimestra almost as much pleasure as Agamemnon's brutal death (1446-1447), and this bloodthirsty antipathy toward the captive concubine provokes much critical dislike for the queen; but – apart from living to ensure Agamemnon's death – Cassandra and Klytaimestra have nothing in common. Once the three are brought together in Mycenae, the destiny of Agamemnon is assured, and so the princess willingly enters the palace dripping with evil to embrace her own terrible fate; ultimately all of the royals in this unfortunate triangle will die in this 'house of butchery and defilement'.

Following the successful assassination her husband and his concubine, the so-called 'exultation-scene' presents Klytaimestra triumphant in her quest: but – according to some – this moment of glory signals her fall as a sympathetic character. She boasts of her husband's murder to the chorus,

παίω δέ νιν δίς: κὰν δυοῖν οἰωγμάτοι

²³³ On women's aggressive defence of offspring, even from larger, stronger husbands, see Chapter 1, pp. 33; 41; 41n179; 43; 43n191; 69; 71-72.

²³⁴ See discussion of derogation and female-female competition in Chapter 1, pp. 41-43; 69; 83.

²³⁵ On Klytaimestra's use of the 'obscenity' ἰσοτριβής, lit. 'mast-rubber' (*Aga.* 1443) to describe Cassandra, see Young (1964); Koniaris (1980); Tyrrell (1980); Borthwick (1981); Sommerstein (2008:175n306); Debnar (2010:137n60). It is hard to imagine alpha-male Agamemnon allowing his valuable *geras* to be the sexual toy of his entire crew. Cf. Whallon (1980:56), who argues that Cassandra could not be Agamemnon's *geras* if Ajax had raped her, but married women (and mothers) could certainly still be *gerai*: examples include Andromakhe, Helen, and even Hekabe. See also Mitchell-Boyask (2006:269, 271, 274-275). Cf. Debnar (2010:131), who points out that reference to Ajax' rape of Cassandra is not evidenced until the 3rd century BCE.

μεθῆκεν αὐτοῦ κῶλα: καὶ πεπτωκότι
τρίτην ἐπενδίδωμι, τοῦ κατὰ χθονὸς
Διὸς νεκρῶν σωτῆρος εὐκταίαν χάριν,

‘I struck him then, two times, and although he gave two cries, his limbs collapsed, and, his having fallen, I delivered a third blow! This was a gift of Zeus of the Underworld, saviour of the dead, to whom I prayed.’ (1382-1387).

All subterfuge is over – and all subtlety set aside. She then launches into her famously self-condemning speech;

οὕτω τὸν αὐτοῦ θυμὸν ὀρμαίνει πεσών:
κάκφυσιῶν ὀξειᾶν αἵματος σφαγῆν
βάλλει μ’ ἐρεμνῆ ψακάδι φοινίας δρόσου,
χαίρουσαν οὐδὲν ἦσσαν ἢ διοσδότῳ
γάνει σπορητὸς κάλυκος ἐν λοχεύμασιν.
ὡς ᾧδ’ ἐχόντων, πρέσβος Ἀργείων τόδε,
χαίροιτ’ ἄν, εἰ χαίροιτ’, ἐγὼ δ’ ἐπεύχομαι.
εἰ δ’ ἦν πρεπόντων ὥστ’ ἐπισπένδειν νεκρῶ,
τῶδ’ ἄν δικαίως ἦν, ὑπερδίκως μὲν οὖν.
τοσῶνδε κρατῆρ’ ἐν δόμοις κακῶν ὄδε
πλήσας ἀραιῶν αὐτὸς ἐκπίνει μολών,

‘In this way, having fallen, he choked out his own soul, and snorted up a blast of sacrificial blood; he hit me with a dark drop of bloody dew – I rejoiced no less than when the refreshment sent by heaven, covers the germinating sown wheat-seed. This is how it is, elders of Argos, rejoice if you will, but I myself glory in it! If it were fitting to make a libation to the dead, this would be just; nay, more than just. So many are the accursed evils of the house; this man has filled a mixing bowl which he himself has come to drink up’ (1389-1394).

Here, at last, is the answer to her earlier query: the endless Atreid ‘sea of evils’ requires a great remedy; she has forced Agamemnon to drain the bitter wine made from the unripe grape he slew himself.

Only something truly disturbing could alienate the *Oresteia*'s audience from the bereaved mother with a definite axe to grind (or sword to swing); this exultation-speech – the cryptic resolution to her previously cryptic soliloquy – gives critics unsympathetic to Klytaimestra much material, and in the view of some, the exultation is strongly sexualized.²³⁶ Even sympathetic, feminist critics struggle with Klytaimestra's characterization in this scene, and some find the imagery of the spurting 'rain' of the king's blood (1390-1392) especially unnerving.²³⁷ Others counter that Klytaimestra's exultations express an injured mother's natural feeling of justified satisfaction.²³⁸ Moreover, in ancient Greece, the killing of one's *ekthros* in vengeance for an injury to one's *timē* (honour) properly inspired righteous exhilaration.²³⁹ Klytaimestra's exultation may discomfort some unused to intense public displays of emotion – especially female display of unfeminine delight in bloody vengeance – but her joy in the accomplishment of her purpose is something – perhaps – that ancient Greek audiences would appreciate better than many moderns, who can only conclude that her exultation is evidence that this female character has been masculinized.

The *Agamemnon* is the great tragic *aristeia* of Klytaimestra the Avenger. In this play she demonstrates the natural female capacity of maternal protectiveness, dangerous to any person or thing threatening her offspring, including those children's violent father. EP study suggests that aggressive violence in women is cross-culturally disapproved, with the one exception of their having to defend children; yet Klytaimestra's ability to remove a proven and ongoing threat to her family's well-being often offends some modern sensibilities, generally because they view the trilogy as progressively dematernalizing and victimizing Klytaimestra – a view which negates the explicit maternity of her 'violent' action. Aiskhylos' Klytaimestra is not an unnaturally violent individual; she murders only the man who slew one (or two, as we later learn) of her children (and the concubine who might successfully displace her and her

²³⁶ In O'Daly's (1985:1, 5) opinion, scholars attribute the "moral deterioration" in Klytaimestra's character to this very moment, the *Agamemnon*'s "emotional climax". For examples, see Stanford (1942:25); Vickers (1973:381-382); Otis (1981:48); Baldock (1989:35); (1990:97-98). On critics' sexualization of the exultation-speech, see Pulleyn (1997:565-567); Zelenak (1998:65).

²³⁷ Rabinowitz (1981:173-174); Wohl (1998:108). O'Daly (1985:10) views the imagery of the "fertilizing rain of blood" more positively, evocative of the painful yet joyful process of giving birth; cf. Raber (2000:310).

²³⁸ Vellacott (1977:114; 1984:69-70); Heath (1987:23).

²³⁹ The death of one's enemy was the quintessential deed inspiring "inexpressible joy", according to Dover (1987:158). On the unspeakable bliss of victory over enemies from an ancient Greek point of view, see also Xen. *Hiero* 2.15.

offspring). And yet, *Khoephoroi* and *Eumenides*, the next two plays in the *Oresteia*, show that, in a world where paternal status determines offspring viability and life-time success, her offence is now also viewed as a crime against her children's social well-being.²⁴⁰ As a biological woman and mother, Klytaimestra acted to preserve her reproductive honour, but ultimately she fades from view, finally seen on stage as a ghost, fighting for any kind of honour at all. The trilogy concludes with father-right enshrined by the gods as the entirety of a child's parental heritage; mothers no longer have any kind of right to their own children, legally, emotionally, or even biologically.

Aiskhylos: Khoephoroi and Eumenides

The glorious, exultant Klytaimestra of the *Agamemnon*'s final scene is not to be found in the *Khoephoroi*; she appears very little in the trilogy's second play, and when she does, the imposing grandeur of the *Agamemnon*'s queen is nowhere to be found. The *Khoephoroi*'s fading Klytaimestra is the locus of her remaining children's full attention, even before she appears. The real subject of this tragedy, however, is her children's plan for vengeance, and the pivotal moment of the play is the fixing of Orestes' resolve to kill his own mother.

The play's action takes place ten years after the assassination of Agamemnon, and the shift in the queen's nature, or *ethos*, will have profound effects on all subsequent literary manifestations of the character. Modern critics often interpret Aiskhylos' *Khoephoroi* in relation to later *Elektras*, but the original audience experienced the *Khoephoroi* only in relation to the preceding *Agamemnon* and the following *Eumenides*.²⁴¹ But in all of the 'Elektra' plays (*Khoephoroi*, Sophokles' *Elektra*, and Euripides' *Elektra*, and – perhaps – *Orestes*), Klytaimestra is evaluated according to the audience's degree of sympathy for her miserable daughter and son; Aiskhylos' characterization of the Atreid siblings in *Khoephoroi* – and how in turn they portray their mother – therefore encourages audience acceptance of Klytaimestra's matricide as necessary and justified.

²⁴⁰ On fathers' contribution to children's social position, see Chapter 1, pp. 49; 49n232.

²⁴¹ Our modern understanding of the trilogy and its effect in original performance would certainly be altered if we possessed a complete copy of the generically-required satyr-play, which usually provided humorous perspective on story-events.

Orestes's opening words paint the queen as scheming and villainous.²⁴² But Klytaimestra in *Khoephoroi* is no villain: from her very first speech, she is the proper lady of the *oikos*, greeting honoured guests with welcoming words, and the promise of warm baths and soothing bedding (*Khoe.* 668-673).²⁴³ She is also a genuinely loving wife to Aigisthos, distraught upon hearing from Orestes that he has killed her 'beloved' husband (893).²⁴⁴ Yet – according to Orestes – this is the same woman whose viperish daring would infect anyone who touched her, causing their flesh to rot (994-996). This attack upon her character is followed by his wish that he might never share his house with such a wife, even though he be destroyed by the gods through childlessness (1005-1006). If nothing else, this comment shows how central marriage to a wife was in the fifth-century to the production of a man's legitimate heirs – but Orestes' declaration also demonstrates just how great a sacrifice he is prepared to make to avoid the evil of an adulterous woman: a refusal to engender offspring is a conscious decision that strains against the default, evolved disposition of all typical individuals in a reproducing species, as well as the prevailing contemporary cultural ideals of patriliney.

Some critics agree with Orestes's report of Klytaimestra's deceptive and dangerous female nature; others insist that the *Khoephoroi*'s Klytaimestra is distinctly unfeminine, even dangerous; the characterization of her daughter supports this.²⁴⁵ Aiskhylos presents Elektra as a better example of the race of women, and the first speeches of this feminine exemplar have much to say about the evils of Klytaimestra. She stands at the tomb of Agamemnon full of complaint, elaborating her grievances against her mother: chief of these is her conviction that she has been demoted to the status of a slave, while the rightful heir Orestes has been exiled and deprived of his rightful possessions; Klytaimestra and Aigisthos are *ὑπερκόπως... γλίουσιν* 'arrogantly luxuriating' in wealth which Agamemnon 'worked' to get, and which is now rightly Orestes' (124-151), although Elektra has also been deprived of her rightful family dowry – typically gifted to girls ten years younger than Elektra is at the time of *Khoephoroi*.²⁴⁶ Aristocratic Agamemnon's 'working for wealth' involved raiding, warfare, and the slaughter

²⁴² Likewise, Sommerstein (2008b:295n140) interprets the meaning of Klytaimestra's name as meaning *Κλυταίμηστρα* – 'famous plotter'.

²⁴³ Klytaimestra's hospitable sentiments are only ambiguous if one chooses to read them so; for Lloyd-Jones (1970c:6), they are "sinister and ambiguous", but for Anderson (1932:305), Klytaimestra's "dignity" in her first appearance is "flawless". Klytaimestra's third speech (*Khoe.* 707-718) is also graciously hospitable. Cf. the chorus' comments (629-630), on the incompatibility of female audacity and the domestic hearth.

²⁴⁴ On Klytaimestra's genuine love for Aigisthos, see Anderson (1932:305).

²⁴⁵ Whallon (1958:272); Lloyd-Jones (1970c:6); Ferguson (1972:93); Zelenak (1998:67); Sewell (2007:104).

²⁴⁶ On the gift of dowry to girls, see Sommerstein (2008:229n26).

and enslavement of many, including the chorus of slave-women standing at her side, but Elektra's grievance is simply that Orestes should be luxuriating in their slavery instead of Klytaimestra and Aigisthos.²⁴⁷ Elektra uses her forced absence at the moment of Agamemnon's death – she claims to have been locked up within the house – to justify her inability to prevent the murder and the desecration of the corpse afterwards; but her exclusion as mourner is also an offence against her honour (444-449). She is also furious that Agamemnon's burial occurred without mourning and without the participation of the citizenry, offending against his status as a king; in her eyes, Klytaimestra is a δαΐα/ πάντολμε μᾶτερ, 'dreadful, all-daring mother' (429-433). Orestes may be destined to be the patrilineal 'hero' whose hand will dispose of Klytaimestra, but Aiskhylos' Elektra wants only to return to an *oikos* properly ruled by males and is no less her mother's *ekthros*.

Both children on first appearances take all opportunity to demonstrate the depth of their enmity toward Klytaimestra, but the play's emotionally-charged recognition-scene sees the children escalate their antipathy for their mother.²⁴⁸ At no time in Elektra's and Orestes' cataloguing of Klytaimestra's crimes in their prayer to the gods do they make any reference to parent Agamemnon's dreadful all-daring crimes against his own family; Elektra tells Orestes that since she cannot love her mother she gives Orestes that share of love, along with that she owes to a sacrificed sister, but the agent of this sister's sacrifice is not named (240-241). Instead, Elektra's outraged reference to ἡ τάπερ/ πάθομεν ἄχαια πρός γε τῶν τεκομένων 'the pains which we have suffered, and, indeed, from our own parent' (418-419), highlights Klytaimestra's exceptional cruelty to the children of the house (and is a casual confirmation of Klytaimestra's natural maternity worth noting in light of Apollo's later insistence that the mother is no parent); at this point it seems to be accepted that parents should act to support the lifetime success of their offspring, an expectation audiences of all eras would understand.

Aiskhylos' characterization of Elektra as a victim requires agreement that those who have oppressed her are villains; audience sympathy for the miserable daughter therefore inspires

²⁴⁷ On economic opportunism for goods and slaves as a normal aspect of aristocratic male life in Homeric epic, see Jackson (1993); Rihll (1993); Thalmann (1998).

²⁴⁸ The *Khoephoroi*'s recognition-scene attracts considerable critical responses, in part because of its reappearance with 'variation' in Sophokles' and Euripides' later plays; see Kitto (1968:81); Ferguson (1972:92), who contends that the recognition-scene – recycled from Stesikhoros' work – is simply "fatuous"; and Davidson (1988:52-53).

dislike of the apparently abusive mother.²⁴⁹ Audience identification with Elektra’s beloved brother Orestes also encourages support of his hatred for his mother. The play’s first lines make it clear that Orestes’ mother – who he insists inflicted an ignoble death upon his father through hidden treachery – is now his implacable *ekthros* (1-3b).²⁵⁰ Orestes’s later exultation over the bloodied corpse of his mother also describes Klytaimestra as having ‘carried’ the once-dear children of her husband, offspring who are now her mortal enemies (991-994); Klytaimestra’s physical maternity will be thoroughly undermined in the next play. Elektra earlier resented the bad behaviour of her ‘parent’ (418-419), but the *Khoephoroi*’s chorus now declare that the ties of blood between Orestes and Klytaimestra are of no importance compared to the relationship between son and father (828-830), preparing the audience for Apollo’s later assertion in *Eumenides* that the mother is no kin of the child whatsoever. Whereas critics are often shocked by the blatant irrationality of his ‘sudden’ proposition, in fact the audience’s ‘naïve physics’ of biology is being progressively triggered in order to be more effectively undermined by the ‘prosecution’s closing-address’ in the trilogy’s climax.²⁵¹

Orestes ignores his father’s failings but foregrounds Klytaimestra’s dishonourable rejection – through adultery – of her husband Agamemnon. The son’s anger over his mother’s sexual disloyalty toward his father clearly goads Orestes to commit matricide:

πρὸς αὐτὸν τόνδε σὲ σφάζαι θέλω,
καὶ ζῶντα γάρ νιν κρείσσον’ ἠγήσω πατρός:
τούτῳ θανοῦσα ξυγκάθευδ’, ἐπεὶ φιλεῖς
τὸν ἄνδρα τοῦτον, ὃν δ’ ἐχρῆν φιλεῖν στυγεῖς,

‘I want to slaughter you beside that man, for while living, you held him superior to my father. Dying, you will lie with this man, since this man you love, while hating him whom you ought to love!’ (904-907).

²⁴⁹ On Aiskhylos’ narratively irrelevant Elektra, see Lloyd-Jones (1970c:5); Ferguson (1972:97); Hogan (1984:109); Baldock (1989:110). Cf. Auer (2006:250), who contends that the secret collaboration between Elektra and the chorus is pivotal in persuading the irresolute Orestes to act (in fact, it is Pylades’ ruthless insistence that really clinches his decision).

²⁵⁰ On this reconstruction of the prologue, which diverges from the Oxford text, see West (1985b); Griffith (1987).

²⁵¹ On naïve physics – the innate principles and expectations about how the natural, physical world operates – see Smith and Casati (1994); Butterfield and Ngondi (2016).

Those familiar with the *Iliad* may think back to Agamemnon's disloyal boast (*Il.* 1.113-115) that he considers a captive woman not inferior to the wife who has given him four children and carefully managed his prosperous household. Orestes may be righteously insulted by the fact that that Klytaimestra did not love his father, but the audience knows Agamemnon did not love her any better than his captured slave, and – according to other versions of the story – he has slain not one but two of her children.²⁵² Sent away from home as a baby, he now has no personal emotional attachment to the woman who bore him, but sees every social and material reason to uphold his patrimonial aspirations.²⁵³

Critical sympathy for Orestes also provokes reflexive dislike of his *ekthros* Klytaimestra; critics disagree, however, on the positivity or negativity of Orestes' characterization.²⁵⁴ Tormented by doubts over the authenticity of the oracle – although apparently not by doubts over the rightness of killing a mother – Orestes justifies the planned matricide for a variety of reasons: he is overwhelmed by grief for his father; he is infuriated by the misappropriation of his household wealth; and he desires to liberate his city from the tyrannical rule of *δυοῖν γυναικοῖν* 'a pair of women' (*Khoe.* 297-304). Orestes' hesitancy contrasts strongly with Elektra's resolve and the boldness of Pylades; ultimately, Orestes is persuaded by Pylades' argument that respect for the Delphic oracle and upholding sworn oaths is more important than respect for one's parents, and that it is better to have humans than gods as enemies (900-903).

Simple affection and grief for a father, on the other hand, are incidental to or even absent from Orestes' urge to vengeance and even his concern for his father's reputation centres on family patrimony, not on personal affection: standing at his father's grave, Orestes wishes that Agamemnon had been killed violently in battle, rather than at the hand of a woman, so that his descendants could have borne his death in foreign war much more easily, because they would have shared in their father's glory (345-353). Orestes' view – that dying gloriously in war overseas and being buried on foreign soil is preferable to ignoble death at home – is also in contrast with the chorus of elders' complaint in *Agamemnon* that their sons were wasted in war,

²⁵² Cf. the Aigisthos of Euripides' *Elektra*, a man who – despite the views of some critics – is as hospitable and gracious as Klytaimestra of Aiskhylos' *Khoephoroi*.

²⁵³ Rutherford (2012:2) argues that Orestes has inherited his mother's "monstrous character", but Orestes' disposition to impious murder need not have come from his maternal parent.

²⁵⁴ On Aiskhylos' Orestes as a poor example of a hero, see Jones (1962:96, 152); Dyer (1967:175-176); Vellacott (1984:29); Roth (1993:8). For more sympathetic readings of the character, see Lloyd-Jones (1979:13); Peradotto (2007:239-240).

and their bodies never returned home for proper burial. His attempts to attract Zeus's support are entirely pragmatic, reminding the father of gods that, if not 'rescued', the house of Agamemnon – θυτήροσ... μέγα 'the great sacrificer' – will perish, and Zeus' altar will no longer receive offerings of oxen (255-261).²⁵⁵ There is no moral shame in their 'buying' the assistance of the divine and the dead; Orestes reminds the spirit of his deceased father that it is in Agamemnon's own interest to support them, not out of love but because he will be dishonoured among others in Hades if his children cannot provide feasts for his spirit (483-485). Orestes' promise – to behave with filial piety – is conditional on receipt of Agamemnon's help, however.²⁵⁶ The chorus also focus on material motives for the matricide, observing that either the house of Agamemnon will perish forever, or θεϊόσ Ὀρέστησ, 'godlike Orestes' (867) will liberate the city and regain his power and wealth (859-865).

Both of Klytimestra's children in this play are acting out of material self-interest of equal force to their moral imperatives, entreating the deceased Agamemnon to assist them in returning Orestes to control of the *oikos*, and both will benefit according to gendered reproductive strategies, opportunities denied to them while Klytimestra and her new husband control the kingdom. Once Aigisthos is eliminated, Orestes will become king in his own right, but he will also be able to get (buy) a husband for the 'stranded virgin' Elektra (480-482).²⁵⁷ Elektra willingly agrees to bargain her future share of material goods as an offering to Agamemnon's tomb in return for his assistance in her quest to be a wife (486-488). Both of the children are also at pains to identify themselves – ignoring Menelaos and his children – as the last living members of the house of Atreus (405-409); unless Orestes receives his help, Agamemnon's own chance at immortality will be lost, because the Pelopid seed will be wiped out forever (503-504).²⁵⁸ In the absence of a happy childhood spent in the company of either parent, Orestes is

²⁵⁵ Cf. Athene's similar bribe of the Erinyes in *Eumenides*. Reference to the great sacrifices(s) made by Agamemnon is not coincidental.

²⁵⁶ According to Auer (2006:272), both children expect that the impending improvement in their own status will in turn be of benefit to the deceased Agamemnon, with future sacrifices from Orestes, and offerings out of Elektra's marriage-portion.

²⁵⁷ In Sommerstein's (2008b:273n104) opinion, μόροσ 'fate, destiny' presumably refers to the proper life Elektra ought to be leading, as a married woman.

²⁵⁸ On Orestes and Elektra as the so-called last "sperma" of the Pelopid house, see Saxonhouse (1984:22). Orestes and Elektra may believe they are the only living members of the house, but the gods prevented the returning Atreid Menelaos from avenging his brother. In a number of other texts (i.e., the *Odyssey*, 3.309-312, Euripides' *Elektra*, 1278-81, and *Orestes*, 52-56), Menelaos – another Atreid and living seed of Pelops – is permitted to arrive home only after Klytimestra's death. Menelaos also has one living, legitimate child, and is (according to Pausanias 2.18.6) the father of illegitimate sons – Megapenthes and Nicostratos.

fully focussed on what he can salvage from his situation: the rightful inheritance of social and material advantage in a strongly patriarchal community, and the recovery of his patrimony is an absolutely valid reason for revenge – alongside filial piety and respect for the gods (301). The children’s determination to preserve the patriline, through the son’s control of family resources, and the daughter’s acquisition of a suitable husband, demonstrates what matters most in a reproductive context to each sex: Orestes’ success depends on his own status (and public perception of his willingness to defend his honour), and Elektra’s on her being the wife of a high-status male (to be purchased with sufficient dowry).

Many of Orestes’ justifications for matricide are self-contradictory, however: the house is on the point of extinction, yet he would be glad to die if triumphant; he dares his mother’s furies because he fears those of his father; and he wishes to redeem his father’s honour on earth – despite the chorus’ assertion that Agamemnon already dwells in honour in Hades (354-362).²⁵⁹ Orestes also seeks vengeance simply out of fear for his own life: in response to a frightened Klytaimestra’s warnings to him about her ἐγκότους κύνας, ‘wrathful hounds’ (924) – a mother’s Furies – he replies, τὰς τοῦ πατρὸς δὲ πῶς φύγω παρῆς τάδε; ‘But how can I escape those of my father, letting this go?’ (925). Agamemnon’s Furies – who have never yet made an appearance in any tragedy – have been hiding for ten years, whereas Klytaimestra’s Furies appear almost instantaneously. Both Atreid children are in more tangible danger of death from their human enemies than from Agamemnon’s Furies (which have never appeared in any extant tragedy); Orestes tries to quieten Elektra’s noisy celebration of his return (233-234) because he is well aware that his mother and his father’s cousin Aigisthos are likely to react badly to the children’s plot to assassinate them.²⁶⁰ But almost all of the peripheral characters are in agreement with the children’s plan, and it is unclear as to who nearby might overhear and betray the young Agamemnids; the chorus of slaves in *Khoephoroi*, for example, are no less committed than the Atreid heirs to the destruction of Klytaimestra.²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ Orestes is willing to die (and so wipe out the very last Pelopid) once he has accomplished his work (*Khoe.* 438). The chorus observes that if Agamemnon had been slain at Troy, he would even now be ruling among the spirits of all the others killed there, since he had been a king in life (354-362). Cf. Akhilleus’ eye-witness account of life in Hades (*Od.* 11.488-491), where ruling as a king is less preferable even than living in the real world as a thrall.

²⁶⁰ The matricidal son is also in conflict in Euripides’ *Orestes* with Menelaos his closest (i.e., patrilineal) kin, and with his matrilineal grandfather Tyndareos as well.

²⁶¹ See *Khoe.* 75-81; 423-25; 935-36.

The ‘character’ of this chorus is much more important to audience perceptions of Klytaimestra than their status as mere slave-women suggests; older than Elektra – perhaps considerably so – they are possibly captives taken by Agamemnon before the Trojan expedition (171).²⁶² The chorus declare that it is right to suppress their resentment of those who enslave them, and to approve what their masters do (75-83), yet they quite clearly resent their present masters, Klytaimestra and Aigisthos; in fact, they view Elektra and Orestes as their ‘proper’ masters, and weep for their sufferings. The chorus also reiterates the tragedy’s central message: only those related by blood can properly perform revenge, and to this end they further target Orestes concerning the shameful mutilation of Agamemnon’s corpse (439-443).²⁶³ Their query as to what compensation there may be for spilled blood is slyly ambiguous (48): more blood is required by the Fury who comes (400-404), and their ‘preferred’ master Orestes will no less become the object of the Furies’ justice for Klytaimestra’s death.

Although there is no evidence that Klytaimestra herself has ever harmed any of them, the chorus’ hatred for her is intensely personal; their first direct mention of Klytaimestra describes her as δύσθεος γυνά, ‘that godless woman’ (46).²⁶⁴ Urging Elektra to vengeance, they insist that retribution for enemies – by implication, even kin – is a righteous act before the gods (122-123). They gleefully declare that they would like to see Klytaimestra (and Aigisthos) suffer the terrible torture of being coated with pitch and then burned alive (267-268).²⁶⁵ The chorus’ great *kommos* – the so-called ‘Ode of Bad Women’ – contributes to the general accusations of specifically female evil against Klytaimestra (585-652).²⁶⁶ The message of this ode seems to be that ἔρωσ ἀπέρωτος, ‘love without love’ (600) – i.e., sexual desire – is only an evil found in women, and one which threatens mate-ships among humans and beasts alike (599-601). According to EP research on short-term mating, as well as sexual fantasy, it is in fact men who

²⁶² On the paradoxes of the *Khoephoroi*’s chorus, see In Vellacott (1984:113); Baldock (1989:41); McCall (1990:4, 23, 26); Rehm (1992:59).

²⁶³ According to Sommerstein (2008:267n99), Agamemnon’s corpse was desecrated in order to forestall a ghost’s vengeance.

²⁶⁴ See also Orestes’ first invective against Klytaimestra, which describes her as the ‘woman’ who killed Agamemnon ‘by concealed treachery’ (3b).

²⁶⁵ On being burned alive while covered with pitch, see also Aiskh. fr. 118; trag. adesp. 226a; Plat. *Gorgias* 473c; and Hesychius k4849. See also Sommerstein (2008:247n58).

²⁶⁶ On the “intense, ferocious misogyny” of this ode, see Rose (1992:244). On this ode’s contribution to the dematernalization of Klytaimestra, see Saxonhouse (1984:23). In Vellacott’s (1984:111) opinion, the bitter chorus is voicing the play’s single message: all women are damned by the actions of a few. Cf. Ferguson (1972:95).

are eager for impersonal sex.²⁶⁷ According to the chorus (*Khoe.* 602-638), females falling to this dangerous ‘love without love’ include Althaea, daughter of Thestius, who killed her own son Meleagar; Skylla, daughter of Nisius, who killed her father for love of conquering Minos; and the Lemnian women, who killed their husbands. The chorus concludes its cautionary tale of evil murderesses with reference to

δυσφιλὲς γαμήλευμα, ἀπεύχεται δόμοις
 γυναικοβούλους τε μήτιδας φρενῶν
 ἐπ’ ἀνδρὶ τευχεσφόρῳ,
 ἐπ’ ἀνδρὶ δηίοις ἐπικότῳ σέβας.
 τίω δ’ ἀθέρμαντον ἐστὶαν δόμων
 γυναικείαν τ’ ἄτολμον αἰχμάν,

‘[a] hateful marriage, abominable to the household, female schemes of a cunning mind, against an armoured man, destroying with ill-will all reverence for a man; I value the hearth in a home left unscorched, and a woman not emboldened by a warlike temperament’ (625-630).

Some contend that the ode aims to indict all women as potentially dangerous, but the irreverently overly-bold woman with a cunning mind is clearly Klytaimestra.²⁶⁸ Before we even meet the queen in person for the first time, the chorus authoritatively reports the ominous dream that has prompted Elektra’s libation upon Agamemnon’s tomb (523-524), the famous nightmare (in part borrowed from Stesikhoros) which prophesies Klytaimestra’s betrayal and death at the hands of her son.²⁶⁹ The chorus’s early reference to the ‘shocking’ dream (32-43) implies that – until this past night – Klytaimestra and Aigisthos have ruled Argos for ten years

²⁶⁷ On the tendency of males – rather than females – to seek out impersonal, commitment-free sexual experience, see discussion in Chapter 1, pp. 18; 23; 23n49; 25-26; 25n58; 25n61; 25n62; 26n71; 30; 33; 60; 67; 74-75; 75n387; 77; 77n398; 79; 79n406.

²⁶⁸ Lefkowitz (2007:176) observes that these women are evil not because they murder, but because they murder male kin; on slaughter of kin as the most abhorrent form of murder, see Vickers (1973:402).

²⁶⁹ On Stesikhoros’ early sixth century extended lyric account of Orestes’ matricide and subsequent confrontation with the Furies (fr. 219 Page 1962) as the origin of Klytaimestra’s dream in *Khoephoroi*, see (Anderson 2005:122-123); Sommerstein (2008:xii-xiii). The specific (and brief) mention in the existing fragment of Stesikhoros’ ‘*Oresteia*’ is: ‘A serpent with the top of its head stained with gore seemed to her to approach, And out of it the Pleisthenid king appeared.’ (n39: Page 1962: fr. 42.) For a more informed analysis and comparison of the parallels between the breast-baring scenes in Aiskhylos’ *Khoephoroi* and Homer’s *Iliad* (22.82-85), see O’Neill (1998:216).

without any previous ill omens; perhaps the gods were waiting for Orestes to grow up, in preference to Agamemnon's brother as avenger.

The chorus details this dream, after informing Orestes that the godless Klytaimestra has sent a libation to appease Agamemnon's spirit (523): they say that Klytaimestra gave birth to a snake, swaddled it like a baby, and fed it from her breast – where her blood is mixed with the milk (527-533). This dream is not the first appearance of a snake in the *Oresteia*: Cassandra (*Aga.* 1233) describes Klytaimestra as a snake; and Orestes insists that he and Elektra were orphaned by a viper's killing his father (*Khoe.* 247-249). In his prayer to his father's tomb, Orestes enthusiastically identifies himself as the snake, and cites his mother's dream as justification for his intended matricide (540-550). Klytaimestra herself realizes too late the dream's meaning; her final on-stage words agree that Orestes is the snake she has borne and nourished (928-929).²⁷⁰ Critics (and especially psychoanalytic critics) argue that the dream represents a deeply disturbed mother-child relationship, but they almost always interpret this episode from the child's perspective, and never address the question of how women in an audience might absorb this appalling sadosexual experience.²⁷¹ The dream shows that women can and do feel ambiguity about a physical motherhood which can bring pain, disappointment, and increased risk of death – as well as joy – but critics sympathetic to Orestes and Elektra are typically more interested in whether or not the Atreid offspring suffer from Klytaimestra's maternal 'insincerity'; those sympathetic to the children's view of things are forced to conclude – against evidence – that all and any positive feelings she expresses about motherhood must be feigned.²⁷²

Stesikhoros' original version of Klytaimestra's dream is reshaped to a very specific purpose in Aiskhylos' play. The fact of Klytaimestra's motherhood is massively over-denied in the *Oresteia*, because Aiskhylos wishes to justify the matricide in *Khoephoroi*; he therefore has to

²⁷⁰ See *Herodotus* (3.109), who (erroneously) states that the viper's young 'take revenge' on their mother for killing the father during copulation, eating their way out of the female's body. See also O'Neill (1998:219-220); Sommerstein (2008:245-246n53).

²⁷¹ Psychoanalytic interpretation ignores ambivalence in women toward maternity, in preference to a child-centric perspective, an approach also seen in mainstream critical discussion. For examples, see Whallon (1958:271); and Bowman (1997:136, 138), who manages to analyse every possible aspect of the dream, except for the physically sadistic act inflicted upon the biological mother. Cf. Watson (2012:np), who suggests that the dream represents the natural fear of the female that she will lose her life in bearing a child. Euripides' *Medeia* (*Med.* 250-251) states an obvious fact when she declares that giving birth to children can sometimes kill mothers, just as men sometimes die fighting men in battle.

²⁷² See, for example, Whallon (1958:274). Reflexive disbelief in women's testimony about their life-experiences is hardly new, and has been adequately addressed in many other fields of inquiry and advocacy.

work very hard to distance the avenging, devoted mother of the first play from the adulterous woman who dies by the sword in the second play. He does this in two ways: through accusations that Klytaimestra is a ‘false’ mother, and through the claims of others that they are Orestes’ ‘true’ parents. Elektra, the Nurse, and even the household of Strophios (the father of Pylades and husband of Agamemnon’s sister Anaxibia) are all thrust forward in *Khoephoroi* as the ‘real’ nurturers of the young Orestes. Elektra announces early in the play that the hated woman ‘with ungodly spirit’ who bore her is no mother (190-191).²⁷³ Instead, Klytaimestra will be replaced for her by a brother; Orestes will receive the love due a mother, for Elektra hates Klytaimestra, πανδίκως ‘with all justification’ (240-241). Perhaps following these attacks, some critics view Klytaimestra’s desperate appeal to reverence for motherhood with suspicion,²⁷⁴ even though the only ‘evidence’ that Klytaimestra is lying about her grief for the purportedly deceased Orestes comes from one hostile witness loyal to the Atreid *oikos*, and one who also vies for the position of ‘true’ mother of the heir: Orestes’ Nurse.²⁷⁵ The ‘family’ Nurse was reliably more loyal to the male’s *oikos* than the introduced daughter of a competing *oikos* would ever be, but (virtually) no critic ever suggests that ‘mother-rivalry’ covertly motivates the *Khoephoroi*’s Nurse.²⁷⁶

Based solely on this Nurse’s biased report, some insist that Klytaimestra’s flaws as a mother are very real.²⁷⁷ The Nurse claims to have ‘mothered’ Orestes, which most critics assume means that she breast-fed him, contradicting Klytaimestra’s desperate appeal to the respect due the mother’s breast at which he so often fell asleep while suckling (896-898). Orestes also specifically likens his experience of suckling from Klytaimestra to that of the snake in the dream; violent, and potentially deadly. That the Nurse may have suckled Orestes does not entail that Klytaimestra never has, and even if his mother never fed him herself, this does not prove

²⁷³ On Elektra’s denial of Klytaimestra’s maternity, see also Saxonhouse (1984:23).

²⁷⁴ In Whallon’s (1958:274) opinion, for example, the “unloving” Klytaimestra’s plea for her life is a “cold and desperate deceit”.

²⁷⁵ See, for example, Stanford (1942:115); Ferguson (1972:96-97). Some critics accept without question the Nurse’s accusations about Klytaimestra’s duplicity; see Goheen (1972:120-121); Saxonhouse (1984:23); Goldhill (1986:15); Burnett (1998:112). According to Karydas (1998:2-3), the traditional status of the *trophos* (Nurse) as one of the family in Greek society enhances the credibility of Aiskhylos’ character in this play.

²⁷⁶ Karydas (1998:65) is one of the few (if any) to suggest that this Nurse’s pronouncements might be biased or self-interested.

²⁷⁷ Garner (1990:39); Rabinowitz (2008:103). Cf. Whallon (1958:274). Some argue that Klytaimestra’s maternal feelings are sincere, however, and that the trilogy acknowledges her active mothering; see O’Neill (1998:225); Saïd (2005:229); Lefkowitz (2007:176).

that she does not love him.²⁷⁸ Upper-class and patrilocally-married women were (and are) pressured to conceive as many children as possible in as short a time as possible (generally at a cost to their own health), and these mothers were traditionally forced to hand their infants over to wet-nurses.²⁷⁹ Accusations that Klytaimestra is a poor mother are deliberate misinformation, because there is no evidence in the text to suggest that she does not love her offspring. If Elektra (or Orestes) had been sacrificed at Aulis, their mother would have been just as vengeful.²⁸⁰

Collapsing Klytaimestra's maternity also enables her enemies to overinflate the idea of Agamemnon as a good father, even though it was father Agamemnon who slew his own child; while Klytaimestra has been forced by circumstances to heavily disinvest in Orestes and Elektra, she never attempts to kill them. Orestes and Elektra are in deep denial about their father's sin; the compulsive idealization of Agamemnon as the adored father – by almost everyone in the play – occurs despite their awareness of the τῆς τυθείσης νηλεῶς 'pitiless sacrifice' of his own child (*Khoe*. 242); the idealization of Agamemnon throughout the trilogy is in no way incidental to the increasing vilification of Klytaimestra, however. Orestes accuses his mother of abandoning him, and of 'selling' him out of the house (913-915), but according to Klytaimestra, she sent him to the house of a friend – his paternal aunt and her husband – for his own safety (914). It hardly seems likely that Orestes was sold to an unfriendly *oikos*, especially as cousins Orestes and Pylades are the best of friends. The fact that Pylades – the one eligible bachelor still friendly to the house – will also benefit materially after Klytaimestra's death through marriage to an well-dowered Atreid daughter is somewhat neglected in critical discussion of Klytaimestra's matricide. Far from being an inadequate mother, Klytaimestra is a strongly attached, active supporter of her previous husband's offspring: her support for her surviving Atreid children confirms EP findings that the presence (and positive intervention) of the biological mother prevents a stepfather from eliminating unwanted, existing offspring from a female's previous unions – a common practice across species.²⁸¹ Thanks to her intervention,

²⁷⁸ Saïd (2005:229) and Lefkowitz (2007:176) also seem to assume that Klytaimestra did in fact suckle her son.

²⁷⁹ On the species-typical early weaning and outsourcing of lactation of aristocratic children in order to expedite rapid conception of further children by aristocratic mothers, see Hrdy (1999a, 2009). On critical ignorance of the actualities of upper-class use of wet-nursing, and mistaken assumptions about Klytaimestra's affection toward her offspring based on this "failing", see Vellacott (1984a:154-155).

²⁸⁰ On Klytaimestra's genuine love for all her children, see Anderson (1929:145); Margon (1983:296-297); Vellacott (1984:74-75). Other sources show that Klytaimestra appears to have happily borne some number of Aigisthos' children (S. *El.* 585-590; Hyg. *Fab.* 122, 124).

²⁸¹ On the protective presence of biological parents, see Chapter 1, pp. 41n179; 48; 54.

Orestes is saved, and so owes his mother his life twice over.²⁸² Klytaimestra's response to the news of Orestes's death is also exactly what you would expect of a sincerely attached mother: she wails about ruin, and she blames the family curse for continuing to strip her of her loved ones (691-699). Klytaimestra's previous attempt to bargain with this family curse (*Ag.* 1569-1573) has come to nothing: by the time of Euripides' *IT*, Pelops' spear – a cherished but malign reminder of patrilineal sin – is still lurking in the inner chambers of the house. Just a few lines later (718), she describes the event as συμφορᾶς 'a misfortune'. This is the woman who described in exultant detail the killing strokes she gave her husband: if she felt any happiness – or even just relief – at the news of Orestes's death, she would not trouble to conceal it; she and Aigisthos have been the uncontested rulers of Argos for ten years, and she need deceive no one about her true feelings.

Klytaimestra's tears upon hearing the 'fake news' of Orestes' death are scripted as real, and the only reason to doubt her grief depends upon the testimony of a hostile witness, biased evidence too rarely challenged. The Nurse claims that Klytaimestra is only pretending sorrow in front of the servants, and is really laughing at events, while she herself is full of genuine misery, remembering all the hard, unpleasant labours she undertook for the infant Orestes, received straight from his mother after birth and raised for his father (737-763). Klytaimestra emphasizes her emotional pain at the never-ending loss of her beloved children, while the Nurse dwells simply upon her loss of time and effort. Yet – according to critics' comparison of their speeches – the Nurse's 'love' for Orestes is somehow more 'authentically maternal' than that of the actual mother.²⁸³ The Nurse's further assertion that the news will bring joy to Aigisthos (743-744) is thrown into question by Aigisthos' actual response: he may not love Orestes, but he calls the news οὐδαμῶς ἐπίμερον, 'by no means delightful' (840), and ἄν φέρειν δόμοις/ γένοιτ' ἄν ἄχθος αἵματοσταγῆς φόνῳ 'another blood-reeking burden of slaughter for the house to bear' (839-843). If Klytaimestra has saved Orestes' life in sending him away, and if her maternal grief at his apparent death is genuine, then the chorus' overwrought ode detailing the evils of women who slay their own kin – something which Klytaimestra has never done – is

²⁸² Agamemnon killed the child of Klytaimestra's first husband as part of his takeover attempt on the throne and on the woman; presumably the incoming Aigisthos would have killed the child Orestes, unless this had been prevented. On 'take-over' infanticide across species, including humans, see Chapter 1, pp. 49n231; 55n269; 61n309.

²⁸³ On Klytaimestra's insincere grief, see Vickers (1973:403); Pontani (2007:221). Cf. Taplin (1978:145) and Gamel (1999b:37), who contend that her tears are genuine and persuasive. Margon (1983:297) is one of the few to view this accusation of the Nurse as propaganda, fuelled by "antipathy" against Klytaimestra.

just another attempt to misdirect the audience: other critical views for the killing of a ‘bad’ Klytaimestra as deserved are equally in need of serious re-examination, beginning with the children’s appeal to ‘the will of the gods’, and their claims about the ‘necessity’ of material goods.

The oracle of Loxias-Apollo as motivation for Klytaimestra’s murder is frequently cited in critical discussion, and many agree with Orestes that his matricide is the result of divine will – even of divine compulsion – just as Agamemnon’s sacrifice of Iphigeneia was divinely motivated.²⁸⁴ Orestes hopes that Zeus – well aware of all events – will give testimony that the matricide was just (984-989).²⁸⁵ Loxias outlines the unlovely consequences to Orestes of ignoring the oracle: madness; leprosy; exile; assaults by the Erinyes; and the loss of his own life, forsaken by all friends (269-296), and – as Orestes observes – the oracle Apollo has never told untruth (559). Loxias fails to warn Orestes that even if successful he will be pursued by disease-bringing powers from beneath the earth, however, and that he himself has no power to prevent the assaults of the Furies because they will be generated irresistibly by a mother’s blood; when Orestes realizes that he cannot avoid madness and the pursuit by the Erinyes, he announces his intention to seek Apollo’s help once more, because only Apollo’s command compelled him to commit kin-murder (1026-1039). At this point he is conspicuously silent about being motivated by material considerations, a silence shared by those viewing his murder of Klytaimestra as a noble or heroic urge.

The children’s materialism is the one motivation for matricide attracting confusion, and the least critical discussion, perhaps because it does not suit modern perceptions of ‘noble’ tragedy’s treatment of religious and social conflict.²⁸⁶ Neither of the Atreid children are the

²⁸⁴ Zeitlin (1965:495-496); Lloyd-Jones (1970c:6); Sommerstein (1996:199); Fletcher (2012:45). On Apollo’s threats against Orestes, see also Sewell-Rutter (2007:97). Cf. Garvie (1986:xxx), who argues that Orestes is free to disobey the “commands” of the gods, and Gagarin (1976:76), who argues that from a legal position, Orestes is absolutely culpable, whether or not the gods commanded the act. See also Jones (1962:100); Sharrock and Ash (2002:39).

²⁸⁵ Nobody denies that Orestes committed a bad action, but, as Athena represents her father in securing Orestes’ acquittal in *Eumenides*, it could be said that Zeus does approve the matricide, and so natural penalty for the act is waived. Aigisthos, on the other hand, ἔχει γὰρ αἰσχυντήρος, ὡς νόμος, δίκην, ‘[he] received justice as an adulterer, according to law’ (*Khoe.* 990). Athenian law permitted the killing of an adulterer, but only if the offender was caught committing the adulterous act.

²⁸⁶ Cf. Kitto (1968:83), and Sommerstein (1996:367), who both recognize Orestes’ materialism; most critics massively understate the lack of resources as motive, however, despite constant reference to it in the play. Jones (1962:144), for example, contends that the play’s suggestion of “anxiety about inheritance” is “contextually

least bit embarrassed about the importance of recovering their family possessions, however; to the Greeks, Orestes' desire to secure his patrimony actually confirms his noble status. In her speech over Agamemnon's tomb, Elektra bewails the use of family property by her mother and Aigisthos (135-139): not only is the proper heir deprived of the family wealth, but worse, two enemies, neither of whom are Atreids, are getting all the benefit of it. As Klytaimestra is being murdered inside the house, the chorus confirm that the alienation of Atreid property is a central element of the revenge (942-945). Standing over the corpses of Aigisthos and Klytaimestra, Orestes holds the liberation of Argos, the restoration of paternal honour and the repossession of his despoiled wealth in equal importance (973-974).²⁸⁷ Agamemnon's wealth that he worked so hard to get – according to Elektra (*Khoe.* 135-139) – has been alienated from his patriline. The children's loss of their father would have benefitted them both if only Agamemnon's death had been appropriate to his high station.²⁸⁸ The humiliating death of their father – at the hand of a woman – is clearly hazardous to their social status, but critical discussion ignores the potential threat to Orestes' and Elektra's material and social wellbeing of Klytaimestra's future children by Thyestid Aigisthos.²⁸⁹ Sibling-competition to control mundane wealth is won by the Atreids in Aiskhylos' *Oresteia*, but neither the death of Klytaimestra nor the acquittal of Orestes can control the ancient family *daimon*; *Oresteia*-sequels foreground Atreid Orestes' eventually lethal conflict with his maternal half-siblings, Thyestids Aletes and Erigone.²⁹⁰ In some versions, Orestes kills Aletes and retakes the throne, and also plots to kill Erigone – but in others he marries his half-sister and produces a doubly Pelopid child, Penthilos.²⁹¹

unsatisfactory”, and “unconvincing”. Others view the surviving children as more obsessed with the family's position and power; see Ferguson (1972:94); MacEwen (1990b:20).

²⁸⁷ The only other instance of *πορθήτορας* ‘despoilers’ (974) in the tragic corpus is Klytaimestra's reference to Agamemnon as *πορθήτωρ*, the ‘sacker’ of Troy (*Aga.* 907).

²⁸⁸ On the benefits of a father's noble death, see Auer (2006:265, 272).

²⁸⁹ Cf. Bell (1991:177), however, who observes that Elektra is morally “outraged and alienated” by the birth of Klytaimestra's children to Aigisthos.

²⁹⁰ Aigisthos' and Klytaimestra's offspring – Aletes and Erigone, and Helen, a daughter – are said to have been slain by Orestes during his murders of his mother and her lover; Bell's (1991:228) source is Ptolemaeus *Hephaestion* 4, quoted by Photius *Library* 479. On Aletes, see also Hyginus (*Fab.* 122). Sophokles' Elektra specifically acknowledges the existence of Klytaimestra and Aigisthos' other offspring in her tirade of woes (*S. El.* 585-590). Erigone, in some stories (and perhaps in lost tragedies by Sophokles and Philokles), continued to make trouble for the children of her father's enemy Agamemnon; see Gantz (1966:682).

²⁹¹ Orestes married Erigone – after his marriage to Hermione – and sired Penthilos upon his half-sister; see Bell (1991:187). Orestes also marries his cousin Hermione (after events in Euripides' *Andromakhe*), because no other family is prepared to unite with a matricide.

The persistence of troubles for the ‘winning’ Atreids after Klytaimestra’s death show that the consequences of kin-killing are always worse than any benefit; matricide is a moral crime attracting a mother’s Furies. Scholars diverge wildly on just how much guilt attaches to the matricide of Klytaimestra, but the children’s pursuit of vengeance ends no one’s suffering, because guilt is unavoidable, and the killers all suffer ruin for their evil acts.²⁹² Sorrowing over her father’s grave, Elektra foresees that ruin is unconquerable, and evil is everywhere (337-338). Similarly, the chorus despair that blood-vengeance creates unending ruin because the hand stained by murder can never be purified (66-74); later they see that Orestes comes to save the house, but brings only death, and there is no knowing when ruin will cease (1068-1076). The chorus’ anguish over kin-murder is selectively fixated on the menfolk of the *oikos*, however: the troubles of the house derive firstly from Thyestes, forced by Atreus to eat his own children, and then from the murder of Agamemnon; the many impiously slain Tantalid children and Klytaimestra, the impiously murdered mother, are studiously ignored. The slaughter of innocents, it is clear, is insignificant compared with the assassination of a brutal but successful war-criminal.²⁹³ The true first cause of Atreid ruin actually goes further back than this chorus cares to admit: the accursed Tantalids are the authors of the *oikos*’ unending cycle of ruin, and so must also provide their own remedy (466-475). What keeps the personified deity Ate awake and active is the willingness of each generation to commit atrocity – under the guise of vengeance – in order to secure power; the urge to compete and win is sanctified by a thin veneer of religious justification, and because the gods – reputedly – approve the unending cycle there can be no escape. The final words of the chorus in the play concern the power of the personified Ate or Ruin (1076): to avenge death with death never brings the spirit of Ate to sleeping rest, and this is confirmed by the immediate appearance of the Erinyes in the first scene of the next play, where only the subterfuge of Olympian Apollo can lull them into slumber. The return of the heir Orestes has no power to force the ancient evil out of the house, any more than the maritidal Klytaimestra’s earlier plea for the Pleisthenid spirit of vengeance to decamp to some other house (*Aga.* 1569-1573); only the intervention of gods in the next play will forestall it.

²⁹² On the moral resolution of the play in ruin unending, see Lesky (1983b:82); Heath (1987:26). Some contend that the endless cycle of Ruin is the consequence of the much earlier sins within the family, not recent crimes; see Whallon (1958:275); Ferguson (1972:95). Others argue that Orestes’ mother-murder far exceeds all earlier crimes of the family; see Lesky (1966b:85); Garvie (1986:xxxii-xxxiii); Conacher (1987:102). On the family crimes, see Chapter 2, pp. 96-97; 120n125; Chapter 3, pp. 214-215; 254n213, and the Conclusion, pp. 296-297.

²⁹³ On the play’s erasure of Iphigeneia’s cruel death and the moral redemption of Agamemnon who slew his own daughter at Aulis, see Ferguson (1972:92-93); Vickers (1973:394); Vellacott (1984a:107-108); Rabinowitz (2008:104).

The chorus may pray for a cessation of the cycle of vengeance, but further acts of bloody justice cannot bring the violence to a halt (*Khoe.* 803-806). As the chorus observe, the murder of Agamemnon was accomplished by κλυτὰ βυσσόφρων Ἐρινύς, ‘the famous, deep-thinking Fury’ (649-652). In the first play of the *Oresteia*, far-famed, deep-thinking Klytaimestra channelled this *erinys* of vengeance, but the house’s spirit of ruin now occupies another; the crimes continue, and each one outdoes and obscures the horror of the previous offence. The appearance of the Furies to Orestes alone suggests that Orestes bears the focal blame for an act actually committed by three of Pelops’ descendants: himself, his sister, and his cousin.²⁹⁴ Orestes’ apparent ‘contrition’ comes much too late, but his regret is not for the loss of a mother, but is really for himself and his remaining family, polluted by his act (1016-1017).

The *Khoephoroi* closes in chaos. If Orestes’ act was not impious, then he would not be the target of the Furies, but the wrathful hounds of his mother – which she specifically warned him about (924) – are attracted by the fresh blood of his mother on his hands (1054-1055), confirming the magnitude of his impious crime. To the best of every character’s ability, a dehumanized Klytaimestra has been depicted as deserving bloody death, and this hounded Orestes is now the focus of all audience sympathy and approval. His suffering – only earned through his impious act of matricide – now completely obscures Agamemnon’s equally impious sacrifice of Iphigeneia and Klytaimestra’s subsequent ten years of grief. Aiskhylos’ *Eumenides* ‘resolves’ the question of moral right to murder by exonerating all male murderers, but the price of peace is enormous; prosocial ancient female divinities charged with the supervision of ancient laws determined by the primacy of biological relationships are effectively subverted, through a kind of double-think denial and judgement against Klytaimestra’s – and by extension, all women’s – fact and right of biological motherhood. Critical discussion acknowledges this trilogy’s neutralization of female power, but gravitates to ‘more interesting social issues’ affecting public life: the political suppression of private blood-feud and the development of civilized systems of justice. The *Eumenides* in no way seeks to eliminate the violent cycle of

²⁹⁴ On the appearance of the Erinyes as indicating Orestes’ madness and the working out of the curse, see Brown (1983:19); Garvie (1986:xxix); Sewell-Rutter (2007:98).

vengeance, however; instead, violent killing is subsumed under civic control, and Athens will – by the gift of the gods – benefit through aggressively imperialist military ventures.²⁹⁵

Critics have long acclaimed Aeschylus' *Eumenides* as a positive depiction of social progress, but the role of misogyny in this developing 'civilization' has more recently attracted analysis informed by feminism.²⁹⁶ Scholars who laud the play's success in progressing society from revenge-feud to law should recall that all of the ruling males in this narrative kill reproductive rivals in order to secure power: Zeus killed Athena's mother Metis, ostensibly in order to control Wisdom, but actually to forestall the birth of a serious rival; Agamemnon killed Klytaimnestra's first husband and son, in order to secure her as mate, and then killed her first daughter, to increase his own status and thus reproductive potential; and Aegisthos killed Agamemnon, to return kingship to his own paternal line. Views of the *Eumenides* as a wonderful parable for a civilized democratic city ignore the inconvenient fact that this civilization is founded on denial of female reproductive autonomy. Some elements of the play's narrative are traditional, but Aeschylus also made significant innovations to the story.²⁹⁷ Although she appears only briefly in this third play of the *Oresteia*, Klytaimnestra as an implacable ghost is viewed by some as a more imposing character than ever before.²⁹⁸ Even this frightening ghost makes no mention Iphigeneia's sacrifice in this play, however, and some conclude that the *Eumenides* completes the reversal of audience sympathy for Klytaimnestra.²⁹⁹ Only the Pythia of Delphi and fugitive Orestes are human (and Elektra does not appear at all in *Eumenides*) but all of the play's other characters are supernatural: Klytaimnestra is a ghost; Athena and Apollo are Olympians; and the Erinyes, daughters of primeval Night, are hideous and implacably dangerous ancient deities.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁵ The social centrality of internal family-feuds of the rich and powerful are set aside in favour of civilized killing – external warfare – but the real consequences of this institution – moral corruption and insatiate enslavement – will be the subject of Euripides' later *Oresteia* plays.

²⁹⁶ Ferguson (1972:106); Sommerstein (1989b:24-25); Sharrock and Ash (2002:41); McDonald (2003:18); Mitchell-Boyask (2008:108).

²⁹⁷ On innovations to the story, see Dover (1957:236); Ferguson (1972:102); Brown (1983:30); McDonald (2003:17). On the Erinyes' pursuit of Orestes, and Apollo's protection of the matricide are the stable elements of the story, see Podlecki (1987:4); Sommerstein (1989b:5).

²⁹⁸ On the ghostly Klytaimnestra in *Eumenides* as "impressive", see Kitto (1968:88). Cf. the self-pitying and pitiable ghost of Agamemnon in Book 24 of the *Iliad*.

²⁹⁹ Kitto (1968:92); Vickers (1973:410); Baldock (1989:39).

³⁰⁰ Critics struggle to identify Orestes as the central tragic figure in this work; see Norwood (1948:113); Ferguson (1972:105-106); Vellacott (1984b:41). Hall (2010:223) suggests that the tragedy's hero is actually the chorus of Furies, whose 'narrative problem' is resolved through their personal transformation.

Although some scholars have praised this play's trial-scene as the mechanism of a civilizing process – and this play of the trilogy is the one most ostensibly framed as a court-room *agōn* – others deny that the play depicts actual contemporary legal process.³⁰¹ The outcome of the trial of Klytaimestra's killer – set upon the Areopagus – is the mythological first step in Athens' path to cultural glory, and critics have read the *Oresteia* as alluding to political events of the day, most especially the Argos treaty of 462 BCE; the political background to the *Oresteia* of 458 BCE was a complex culmination of factors – reform of the Areopagus, the assassination of Ephialtes, and Perikles' ascendancy – leading to the trilogy's unlikely resolution under the aegis of the traditional Athenian Areopagus.³⁰² If Aiskhylos had wanted to write a straightforwardly political play (albeit with supernatural elements), he could well have done so, as his *Persai* of 472 BCE (with its informative ghost) demonstrates.³⁰³ The primary *agōn* in his *Eumenides* is not between democratic Athenian citizens and aristocratic oligarchs backed by Sparta, however, but between ancient female divinities from beneath the earth and modern, patriarchal gods from Olympos, who are battling over the right to adjudicate human moral matters. Orestes does not deny that he enacted the matricide – his only real defence – and does not propose that the matricide was just; only that he acts out of fear, prompted by Apollo. Orestes' main defence is technically that of self-defence, and *Eumenides* is the first drama to formally engage in 'character assassination', blaming the victim for her own death.³⁰⁴ The personal honour of the woman murdered by her own son is thoroughly trampled in the course of this contest, along with that of those ordained to avenge her; the ghost of the unavenged Klytaimestra is wandering

³⁰¹ Vellacott (1977:118; 1984b:124); Sommerstein (1989b:16; 2010a:26); Mitchell-Boyask (2008:102). See also Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 57.3. On the social and moral duty of kin to avenge murder, see Else (1957:429); Plat. *Laws* 9.872e. Some suggest that the Erinyes take the role of legal prosecutors because there are no human descendants to avenge Aigisthos and Klytaimestra in the traditional manner; see Lloyd-Jones (1970b:2); Mitchell-Boyask (2008:29).

³⁰² On political events of the day, see Schaps (1993:506-507); Debnar (2005:10) Sewell (2007:94-95). On Aiskhylos' attitude toward the historic function of the Areopagus, see Dover (1957:234, 236); Mitchell-Boyask (2008:103); Sommerstein (1996:100, 418-421). On Aiskhylos as pro-democratic, and the Athens in *Eumenides* as the realized ideal of Ephialtes' political aims, see Ferguson (1972:110); Vickers (1973:105); Fagles (1984:xiv). On the play's relation to Ephialtes' reform of murder-laws (and his subsequent assassination), see Rose (1992:246-256); Storey and Allan (2005:109); Mitchell-Boyask (2008:101); Rabinowitz (2008:38); Sommerstein (2010b:154). See also Plut. *Per.* 10.8; Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 25.2, 4; *Antiphon* 5.68; *Diodoros* 11.77.6.

³⁰³ Critics differ as to how (or if) the play's *agōn* between divinities reflects social conflict between contemporary Athenian groups; see Vellacott (1984b:121); Bowie (1993:12); Griffith (1995:82); Wohl (1998:65); Anderson (2005:123). Cf. Sewell-Rutter (2007:106), who contends that critical emphasis on the purely political overlooks the extreme characterization of the avenging Furies of Klytaimestra.

³⁰⁴ Sommerstein (2010a:29-30). On the persecution of Klytaimestra in this play, see Vellacott (1984b:124).

in the world because she is not honoured by society in Hades (*Eum.* 95-102).³⁰⁵ Klytaimestra reminds the Erinyes that she has prepaid for their advocacy with exclusively-offered libations, gifts, and feasts, and she calls to them in order to save her very soul (*Eum.* 106-116); Orestes somehow still eludes their judgement. In their dream, the Erinyes are still doggedly pursuing the matricide, however (130-133), and it is only Apollo's power that holds them in his temple; Klytaimestra eventually manages to awaken them but too late: Orestes, even though his hands are still stained with his mother's blood, has escaped, and the Pythia – the official voice of Delphi – confirms that Orestes is

δ' ἐπ' ὀμφαλῶ μὲν ἄνδρα θεομυσῆ
 ἔδραν ἔχοντα προστρόπαιον, αἵματι
 στάζοντα χεῖρας,

‘a man, abominable to the gods, perched upon the omphalos, seeking purification for pollution, his hands dripping with blood’ (40-42).³⁰⁶

The Furies track the matricide through the scent of human blood, which Orestes cannot shake off, no matter how much he washes (246-254). Yet Orestes insists that the call of the blood on his hands is fading, because a piglet has been sacrificed on his behalf beside Apollo's hearth (280-283). A mother's blood is difficult to recall once it vanishes underground (261-263), however. The Erinyes possess the ability to pursue the polluted Orestes firstly because they dwell beneath the earth, and secondly – although Hesiod's Erinyes are daughters of Earth – Aiskhylos makes them parthenogenetic daughters of the non-Olympian goddess Night (416-417).³⁰⁷ As the daughters of Night, they have a sacred duty to perform – to follow and punish with madness the man who murders a mother – but they are being thwarted in their ancient duty by Apollo, and thus deprived of their rightful honour (312-396). Orestes may claim that he has been completely purified by sacrifices of suckling animals and running water alike (445-452) but if he was truly free from pollution, then his hands would not still be dripping blood; these

³⁰⁵ Presumably, she must still be wandering, since the suborned Erinyes failed to avenge her honour; see Sommerstein (2008:367n33).

³⁰⁶ Although the Pytho is relating an event that has just happened, she is telling the story using the present tense for narrative emphasis.

³⁰⁷ On the descent of the Erinyes, see Lloyd-Jones (1970b:1); Sommerstein (1989b:8). Cf. Vellacott (1984b:116) warns that the term ‘Fury’ is a Latinization of the original Greek, and carries a connotation of “blind irrationalism”, which distorts the Greek conception of them as a kind of “law of nature”.

Furies have no trouble in tracking him and only the intervention of Olympian Apollo can prevent his capture.³⁰⁸

Aiskhylos made these ancient and all-powerful blood-hunting female deities the legal defenders of Klytaimestra's honour because of their symbolic importance to the ancient Greeks.³⁰⁹ The dramatic impact of these distant figures of ancient legend is difficult to estimate, but outside of Aiskhylos' *Oresteia*, the Erinyes enjoyed a traditional role as implacable avengers.³¹⁰ There is clearly some connection between these ancient entities, and the 'Semnai' of Athens, but – according to some – Aiskhylos' use of the term 'Eumenides' to describe the existing Areopagus *semnai* ('solemn'; 'august'; 'awe-inspiring') fertility-deities is another narrative innovation.³¹¹ Characterization of the Erinyes-Eumenides as litigators bolsters dramatic tension by pitting implacable powers against an ordinary man, a perennially appealing narrative scenario, even when the protagonist is a flawed anti-hero. Erinyes as guardians of community morals protect parents against abuse by children, punish those who fail their oaths, and – in the *Iliad* (19.407ff) – monitor and prevent even other gods' contravention of the laws governing supernatural power.³¹² Aiskhylos' Erinyes have no compassionate interest in Klytaimestra personally, only in their duty to attend to contraventions of ancient law: crimes in the family's history failing to attract the Erinyes' attention include Klytaimestra's adultery (as well as Agamemnon's infidelities, and Helen's); the historic Thyestean feast; Agamemnon's recent wartime atrocities.

³⁰⁸ Cf. Sommerstein (2008:386-387n67), who argues that Orestes' ability to interact with other men shows he is no longer polluted.

³⁰⁹ The earliest recorded appearance of the Erinyes seems to be a reference to E-ri-nu on Linear-B tablets (KN 200, KN 208) from Mycenae. See Ventris and Chadwick (1973:127, 306-307, 411, 476); Podlecki (1987:7). Sewell-Rutter (2007:82-83) suggests that the Erinyes were a relatively unimportant remnant from pre-archaic Mycenaean religion, whereas Sommerstein (1989b:6) contends that the Linear-B reference to the Erinyes originally alluded to a Peloponnesian goddess, probably the Arcadian goddess later known as Demeter-Erinyes. Aiskhylos may have been exploiting audience awareness of Demeter's and Klytaimestra's common reputation as deprived, angry, avenging mothers. Cf. Brown (1984:264-266; 278n117), who views any connection between the Erinyes of *Eumenides* and Demeter-Erinyes as unlikely, and suggests that Euripides may be responsible for equating the Erinyes with the Eumenides, in *Orestes* (408 BCE).

³¹⁰ On the Erinyes' precedence over Olympians and mortals alike, see Sewell-Rutter (2007:88).

³¹¹ Lloyd-Jones (1970b:2); Podlecki (1987:5); Sommerstein (1989b:11-12). Cf. Brown (1984:202-263), who argues that the term 'Semnai' is not a name but a kind of job-description, applied to a number of deities.

³¹² Lloyd-Jones (1970b:1); Brown (1984:280); Podlecki (1987:7); Sommerstein (1989b:7). For literary examples, see *Il.* 9.454, 571; 21.412; *Od.* 2.135, 11.279-280; on the Erinyes of Oidipous' father Laios, see Pind. *Ol.* 2. 38-42; *Hdt.* 4. 149 (cf. *Paus.* 9. 5. 15). Cf. Brown (1983:28), who argues that the Furies of one crime are not necessarily those of another but come into being anew with each crime. Else (1957:427-8) – citing Plato's *Laws* (9.865a-869e, 871a-874d) – points out that those who kill under certain circumstances (i.e. the justifiable homicide of thieves, *in flagrante* adulterers, and kin-killing slaves) are free of pollution and require no purification or pursuit by Furies, as is the man who kills his brother in self-defence, or in military combat.

The *Eumenides*' Erinyes are primarily concerned with Klytimestra's matricide as an act of disrespect for parents.³¹³ That such powerful entities are willing to defend her suggests that her cause is a just one; even the father-avenging Orestes did not have good reason to kill his own mother, something with which at least some viewing the play might agree.³¹⁴

Respect for their long-held status cannot prevent the fall of these guardians of virtue, however.³¹⁵ The transformation – and constraint – of their traditional function is essential to understanding why Klytimestra has to die unavenged. Some argue that the matrilineal Erinyes are deliberately juxtaposed with the patriarchal Olympians.³¹⁶ Others conclude that the complete neutralization of the Erinyes by the end of *Eumenides* demonstrates 'political resolution' at the divine level.³¹⁷ The confrontation between the two types of deity is intensely acrimonious and personal, however.³¹⁸ Apollo boasts that he has forced the Erinyes to slumber while Orestes makes his escape, and he also subjects the Erinyes to purely gratuitous insult:

κακῶν δ' ἕκατι κάγέροντ', ἐπεὶ κακὸν
 σκότον νέμονται Τάρταρόν θ' ὑπὸ χθονός,
 μισήματ' ἀνδρῶν καὶ θεῶν Ὀλυμπίων,

'they were born of evil, since they dwell in evil darkness, in Tartaros beneath the earth, the objects of hatred of men and Olympian gods' (67-73).

³¹³ Jones (1962:150); Gantz (1966:680-681); Vellacott (1984b:158); Sewell-Rutter (2007:90).

³¹⁴ According to Beck (1975:67), the trilogy addresses whether Klytimestra is evil enough to deserve being killed by her own child. Some research indicates modern audiences tend to approve Klytimestra's case over that of Orestes; see Gamel (1999). Cf. Michelini (1979:158), who argues that the complaint of the Erinyes about blatant disrespect also likely evoked the sympathy of an Athenian audience obsessed with social recognition.

³¹⁵ On the Furies as dangerous, death-dealing females, forced to become useful contributors to the state's prosperity, see Thompson (2004:98). Mace (2004:58) draws attention to the description of the Erinyes in the *Oresteia* as ἄπα 'without offspring' (*Eum.* 1033; *Aga.* 752; *Khoe.* 1006), suitable to their status as "barren, aged virgins"; in her opinion, however, they have a power of "giving birth" to "acts of retributive bloodshed". See *Pausanias* (1. 28. 6), on Aiskhylos' innovative representation of the Semnai/Erinyes as having snakes in their hair. On the contrast between the beautiful Erinyes in contemporary visual depictions and the beastly, hideous, shrivelled, bat-like Furies in Aiskhylos' *Eumenides*, see Maxwell-Stuart (1973:83-84); Heath (1999a:33-35); Taplin (2007:58-59). Apollo thinks they should dwell in the cave of some blood-drinking lion (*Eum.* 193-194), but the Furies are already dwelling among blood-drinking lions – Tantalid filicides, cannibals, and matricides.

³¹⁶ Vellacott (1984b:121-122).

³¹⁷ Kitto (1968:89-91).

³¹⁸ Cf. Athena, who does not appear to hate the Erinyes as deeply as Apollo does.

Upon discovering that Apollo has aided their quarry – a matricide – to escape (149-154), the Erinyes’ insult to the Delphic throne and *omphalos* dripping with polluted blood is just as offensive, despite the truth of their observations (162-167). In fact, many of their arguments against Apollo’s case are so incontestable that he can only respond by resort to outrageous insult. The Erinyes point out that, although Apollo claims to be speaking for Zeus in valuing the life of a father higher than that of the mother, Zeus himself overthrew his own father, and took his throne (640-642). Apollo cannot deny this inconvenient history, and so responds ὦ παντομισῆ κνώδαλα, στύγη θεῶν, ‘O utterly loathsome beasts, hated by the gods!’ (644).³¹⁹

Apollo cannot deny that Klytimestra has not killed any of her own blood-kin, and that Agamemnon’s blood has not evoked any Fury: the Erinyes testify that they take no interest in the murder of men by wives, because that is not death by kindred (210-212). Apollo’s response illustrates the new zero-tolerance approach of the *polis* to the insupportable crime of husbandicide; in his view, the real matter of the trial is the respect due to the sacred institution of marriage, a social custom owing little to ancient blood-ties, but a pillar of the new democratic civilization of patriarchal Athens. He accuses the Furies of holding the ‘vows’ of Zeus and Hera – the goddess of marriage – in contempt, and he further insists that the closest, dearest ties between mortals derive from Aphrodite, and so the ‘bed’ of the married couple is greater than sworn oath (213-218). This contention is one of Apollo’s principal arguments defending Orestes on the charge of matricide, but it is hard to imagine that Aiskhylos’ original audience agreed with him; arranged marriage in ancient Greece (or in Athens, at least), had little to do with ‘close, dear ties’ between males and females, and everything to do with the production of legitimate children and the prosperity of the *oikos*. The notion of monogamous – sexually-exclusive – marriage, essential to the survival of the state, was something of a hot issue in Athens at this time; how could ‘Kyprian’ relations – which for men occurred in many acceptable contexts outside of marriage – count for more than an oath sworn before the gods? There is some humour in Apollo’s reference to the sacred marriage-vows of Hera and Zeus, whose deeply troubled marriage according to legend failed to embody the Athenian ideal of female compliance with male reproductive advantage. Despite this, as the *hieros gamos* (sacred marriage) and supposed model for the human institution, it deserves consideration for what it

³¹⁹ On the contrast between the polite rationality of the Erinyes, and the discourteous invective of Apollo as a distraction to the issue, see Vellacott (1984b:119).

may reveal about the marital relationship, in fiction and in reality, and how this influences the depiction and reception of the character of Klytaimestra.

Archaic Hera was originally much more important than her husband Zeus, something demonstrated by the archaeological presence of her many magnificent temples.³²⁰ The *Iliad* (4.50-52) positions Hera as the ultimate authority over a number of important cities in Atreid territory: Argos, Mycenae, and Sparta, while Hera herself boasts in the *Iliad* (18.364-366) that she is the preeminent female deity, a position deriving as much from her own birth as from being wife to the king of gods. The *Homeric Hymn to Hera* (1-5) also celebrates the authority of this queen, who enjoys at least equal position with her husband Zeus, reckoning her descent through the female line. All of this begs certain questions: Why should Hera – the goddess most likely to resent the husband who claims superiority – preside over the institution of human marriage in an unashamedly patriarchal culture?³²¹ While Zeus' promiscuous (and forced) adultery with women divine and mortal goes unpunished (despite his wife's antipathy), Hera's sexual jealousy attracts her husband's condemnation and occasional violence; furthermore, Greek authors assigned sexual pleasure in marriage not to Hera, but to another goddess. Physical love between Hera and Zeus in mythological literature is generally the result of some cunning strategy: Hera's seduction of Zeus – who does not desire his wife – depends upon the magic of Aphrodite's girdle, which Hera has borrowed for this very purpose (*Il.* 14.187ff), and on appropriate bribes to the god of Sleep (*Il.* 14.236-241, 267-279). When her own social position on Olympos is never under any threat, why does she object so much to Zeus's sexual dalliances? After all, none of his bastard offspring are likely to overthrow the divine *status quo*.³²² Although he hates her, and reacts to Hera's rebellions with violence, Zeus never moves to divorce his sister, the Olympian queen.

Hera's reputation for being a 'difficult' wife rests primarily on her endless antagonism toward her husband's bastard offspring, especially Zeus's son Herakles, but her hate-filled plots are

³²⁰ On the predominant worship of Hera in the late Bronze Age, see Burkert (1985:131-132); O'Brien (1993:11); Blundell (1995:34-35); Spawforth (2006).

³²¹ Although Hera is often cited as the divine patron of marriage, she is not always the principal marriage deity across Greek states; see Clark (1998:15-16). In Burkert's (1985:134) opinion, marriage-myths involving Hera are never happy experiences, but end in social chaos.

³²² Cf. Clark (1998:16), who argues that the conflict between Hera and Zeus is over the threat to her position.

really aimed at her husband.³²³ The long lists in *Iliad* (14.315-328) and *Theogony* (886-920) of Zeus's sexual adventures do not even include all of his unions and offspring, as the extant *Homeric Hymn to Selene* (14-18) demonstrates. Most immediately previous to his union with Hera, Zeus's marriage to Leto produces the highest-status gods Apollo and Artemis. Only then does he take Hera as his wife, producing the relatively unimportant Hebe, Ares, and Eileithyia; Zeus then produces Athena, the favoured child of his heart, by himself (*Theog.* 921-929); Athena, however, is not his own production, but a conceptus stolen from another wife, the goddess Metis. Angry Hera was the perfect avatar of the typical Greek wife in an androcentric culture which approved men's extramarital sexual behaviour; hyper-sexual, promiscuous Zeus cannot be stopped by either his jealous wife or the mortal women he takes by force.³²⁴ Hesiod's *Theogony* records their first conflict, which is over reproductive matters: all of his unions before her produce beautiful children – and mostly daughters (the best way to ensure that a father will never be overthrown by a son), and Hera is the last of Zeus's many divine 'wives' (*Theog.* 886-920). Zeus never loves any of Hera's children as he loves the daughter he managed to produce without her; according to Homer, Zeus views their natural son Ares as 'the most hated of the gods' (*Il.* 5.890-891). Hera is primarily wife, and so her relationships with her own offspring are relatively unimportant in myth, but as the archetypally wicked stepmother she receives significant attention in mythological narrative.³²⁵ Approaches to the problem of Hera's step-motherhood have long been influenced by fashions in critical theory, including psychoanalytic literary study, and feminist-gender analysis. Slater's (1968:11) study of Hera, marriage, and the ancient Greek psyche argues that the divine marriage of Hera and Zeus reflects the reality of Greek marriage – male sexual license, and step-motherly jealousy of rivals' offspring.³²⁶ Moreover, although critical views of Hera depict her as unreasonably jealous of her husband's affairs and bastards, Hera's pain and outrage are the realistic and predictable responses of an

³²³ Burkert (1985:134). The production of Leto's offspring before his union with Hera does not mesh with the tale of Hera's refusal to allow Leto to give birth out of marital jealousy.

³²⁴ Herakles and Zeus are Greek ideals of hyper-masculinity – victorious in battle and inexhaustible in sexual endeavour; see Burkert (1985:128-129). According to Burkert (1985:128-129), the ancient mythographers arrived at a figure of one hundred and fifteen "loves of Zeus". On the non-consensual nature of Zeus' sexual unions, Zelenak (1998:26); Barnes (2006:109).

³²⁵ Burkert (1985:132-134); Blundell (1995:34-35). On step-motherhood and the evil stepmother motif in Greek literature in the ancient world, see Watson (1995). The Greek narrative stereotype of the malicious stepmother is a universal literary stereotype also evidenced across cultures (and one which belies the actual figures for actual step-parental infanticide, most often carried out by step-fathers). See also discussion of step-parental disinvestment, abuse, and murder, in Chapter 1, pp. 53-54; 53n261; 54n263; 54n264.

³²⁶ For critique of Slater's (1968) and Caldwell's (1989) psychoanalytic approaches to motherhood, see Doherty (2001:57, 65).

abused wife and stepmother in a polygynous culture.³²⁷ This royal marriage is certainly not founded on ‘the sanctity of sacred vows’, but on male domination and infidelity and female resentment: the *Iliad* outlines several episodes in which Zeus delights in aggravating his wife simply for amusement (*Il.* 4.5-6; 8.407-408), but Hera’s suspicious responses to his schemes (*Il.* 1.536-543) are met with terrible threats and reminders of previous abuse (*Il.* 1.561-594; 15.14-22); unsurprisingly, the sight of her husband fills Hera with hatred (*Il.* 14.153-158).

The *hieros gamos* of Hera and Zeus is in fact a bitter bond between an angry, battered wife and an adulterous bully.³²⁸ Yet critics often accept Apollo’s contention that marriage has been ‘blessed’ by the marriage of Hera and Zeus, an assertion central in evaluating the relative ‘moral’ offense of Agamemnon and Klytaimestra.³²⁹ In truth, neither Zeus nor Agamemnon behave respectfully toward their wives, and Apollo’s declaration simply reflects double-standard attitudes of his contemporaries to marriage.³³⁰ In a patricentric culture Zeus’s ‘disrespectful’ marriage counts as culturally successful, however: his wife ultimately obeys him; he enjoys access to any woman he wants; and he never faces threat of divorce. Klytaimestra’s resistance to Agamemnon’s lack of respect is a cultural anomaly. Despite Apollo’s pronouncement about the sanctity of human marriage vows, human marital relations in the *Oresteia* follow the persistent mythological model of conflict in divine marriage, because most of these myths about Zeus and Hera, their parents Rhea and Kronos, and their grandparents Gaia and Ouranos centre on typically human reproductive conflicts, in adultery, the production of children outside of marriage, and males’ violent suppression of autonomous female fertility through harm to offspring.

Apollo – the most favoured son of Zeus and Leto – is a god very closely associated with the Athenian ideals of admirable masculinity, but this god with a conspicuous lack of wife (and

³²⁷ On the natural antipathy between co-wives in polygynous cultures, see Chapter 1, pp. 41-42; 42n185; 53; 63. Cf. Beye (1975:159), who argues that Hera’s anger at Zeus’s infidelities reflects real-life conflict in Athenian marriage, which defined women solely as child-bearers, and Blundell and Williamson (1998:4), who observe that the angry Hera’s harm-doing would never be tolerated in real Greek wives by their menfolk.

³²⁸ In Blundell’s (1995:35) opinion, the mythological Hera is a good source for Greek men’s attitudes to marriage and motherhood. According to Clark (1998:24), the primary theme of the Zeus and Hera mythic corpus is not marriage, but “marital discord”.

³²⁹ On marriage and the tensions between men and women in a patriarchal culture, see Ferguson (1972:103); Macleod (1982:136); O’Brien (1993:174).

³³⁰ According to Kells (1961:169-170), even if Apollo’s claim is correct, it is Agamemnon who initially desecrated the marriage-bed.

reproductive success) argues fervently about the supremacy of the marriage vow.³³¹ Whether the oracle of Delphi is any kind of reliable witness is a significant thread running through the play.³³² According to the Pythia, Apollo-Loxias is his father Zeus's prophet (*Eum.* 19), and Apollo himself declares that he cannot lie, because the throne of his oracle is authorized by Zeus (615-618). Apollo also promises Orestes that he will not, under any circumstances, betray him (64-66); by his own admission, Apollo is equally liable for the murder of Klytāimēstra, because he induced the son to kill his mother (82-84). In reply to the Erinyes' accusation that he alone is culpable for Klytāimēstra's death, Apollo agrees that the cause of the matricide lies with his oracle, and that he himself gave shelter to the matricide afterwards (199-205). Apollo admits to Athena his responsibility for the matricide, and claims that his suppliant Orestes has been purified within his temple (576-581). Orestes's statement in evidence to Athena insists that he killed his 'black-hearted' mother in part because Loxias foretold great suffering for him if he did not (*Eum.* 458-467). The chorus's cross-examination of Orestes also establishes Apollo's responsibility for the oracle which led to Klytāimēstra's death (593-596). Based on all this testimony, Orestes's legal defender should also be standing trial for Klytāimēstra's death, but – as the chorus's examination of Apollo ascertains – it is Zeus the Father of Gods and Men who is ultimately responsible, having ordered the matricide in retaliation for female audacity against male rule (622-639). The legitimacy of Klytāimēstra's case appears to be discredited at this point, but Apollo is about to play his greatest argument of all, one which invites serious question, but which will – when accepted by Athens' patroness – disempower not just Klytāimēstra, but all women, everywhere and for all time.³³³

Critics struggle with Apollo's denial of biological maternity; generally not because of doubts about the authority of his oracle, however, or because even he himself as an abettor of matricide has an obviously vested interest in having Klytāimēstra's matricide acquitted. Discussion centres more often on whether Apollo's fake-fact 'biology' represents contemporary

³³¹ Herakles' marriages and experience of fatherhood are also poor models for male behaviour; in madness he murders his first wife Megara and their children, and on his death-bed he hands his concubine Iole off to his son.

³³² There are many references in Thουκυδίδης to Athenian faith in the oracle of Apollo. See *Thouk.* 2.8, 17, 47, 5.103, 8.1. Cf. Roberts (1984:17), who contends that the original audience of the *Oresteia* may not necessarily have approved or believed the Delphi oracle – for example, Plutarch *De Pythiae oracularis*, *De defectu oraculorum* (*Moralia V*); and Cicero *De Divinatione* – and Sewell (2007:147-148), who points out that no other god is the target of so much scepticism in tragedy as Delphic Apollo.

³³³ Interpretation of this scene is often influenced by critical attitudes toward the shining – but duplicitous – figure of Apollo; see Kitto (1968:92-93); Fontenrose (1971:85). On the unscrupulous Apollo's shadier side, see Roberts (1984:71, 81); Vellacott (1984b:47); Rehm (1992:105).

understanding of reproduction; did the Athenians truly believe – or did they just want to believe – that women are simply vessels for male seed? The chorus’s interrogation of Orestes deliberately sets up the context for Apollo’s denial of female reproductive agency: in reply to the Erinyes’ assertion that they never hounded Klytaimestra because she was not kin to Agamemnon, Orestes idly wonders whether he himself is even blood-kin to his mother (605-606). The Furies’ response is intense, and very specific: πῶς γὰρ σ’ ἔθρεψεν ἐντός, ᾧ μαιφόνε,/ ζώνης; ἀπεύχῃ μητρὸς αἷμα φίλτατον; ‘How else did she nurture you within her girdle, you blood-guilty man? Do you reject your mother’s blood, closest of all?’ (607-608). Orestes’ ‘patsy-question’ musing immediately evokes Apollo’s view on whether the killing of his mother Klytaimestra was just (609-613); Apollo prefaces his reply with the reminder that his oracle never lies, and that Zeus is behind all his oracular pronouncements (615-618). The chorus – unaware of where their direction of questioning is going to lead them – ask how an impious matricide could expect to hold any power of office (653-654). Apollo’s speech in reply not only denies the female reproductive power, but through the spurious analogy of Athena’s ‘creation’, attributes true parenthood to males alone. This is an argument far beyond the needs of his case; as infallible oracle, his pronouncement that Zeus was ultimately responsible for the matricide ought to have been justification enough for the death of Klytaimestra. Klytaimestra may be the worst wife ever (by Athenian standards), but what need has the defender of Orestes to destroy her capacity for motherhood – and by implication, the maternal capacity in all women?

Apollo’s declaration is a litany of biopolitical lies:

οὐκ ἔστι μήτηρ ἢ κεκλημένου τέκνου
τοκεύς, τροφὸς δὲ κύματος νεοσπόρου.
τίκτει δ’ ὁ θρώσκων, ἢ δ’ ἄπερ ξένῳ ξένη
ἔσωσεν ἔρνος, οἷσι μὴ βλάβῃ θεός.
τεκμήριον δὲ τοῦδέ σοι δεῖξω λόγου.
πατήρ μὲν ἂν γένοιτ’ ἄνευ μητρός: πέλας
μάρτυς πάρεστι παῖς Ὀλυμπίου Διός,
οὐδ’ ἐν σκότοισι νηδύος τεθραμμένη,
ἀλλ’ οἷον ἔρνος οὔτις ἂν τέκοι θεός,

‘She who gives birth is not the mother of the child; she is only the nurse of the freshly-sown embryo. He who mounts is the parent; she preserves the foreign fruit, which the god then leaves unhindered. I give to you a sure sign of this testimony. A father may create without a mother: close by is a witness, the child of Olympian Zeus, who was not produced in the darkness of the body, but is the sort of offspring otherwise not borne by a god’ (657-666).

Apollo’s expertly-spun lie flatters Athena’s exceptionality and idealizes her uniquely close relation to the Father of Gods, but the τεκμήριον ‘sure example’ of Zeus’s ‘motherless’ creation was nothing of the sort: Athena was originally engendered in the usual manner within Metis and Metis—still pregnant—was later devoured by Zeus, continuing a long history of cannibalism by male gods to preserve their superior power (in this instance to prevent the production of the son destined to overthrow Zeus).³³⁴ It is in fact the Furies—the fatherless daughters of Night—who are the only truly parthenogenetic goddesses in this story, something the audience might well have known; Athena was originally the product of both male and female, while the Erinyes’ mother was not impregnated by any male.³³⁵ Greek cosmogony is replete with female deities—including Zeus’s wife Hera—who give birth without any male input: the converse is rarely evidenced. Athena is a more effective mother-denier than Apollo, however, and feels no ambivalence about her loyalties to the male.³³⁶ Following a distasteful exchange between an offensive Apollo and the affronted Erinyes (713-733), Athena announces that she will cast her vote for Orestes, for one simple reason;

μήτηρ γὰρ οὔτις ἐστὶν ἢ μ’ ἐγένεατο,
τὸ δ’ ἄρσεν αἰνῶ πάντα, πλὴν γάμου τυχεῖν,
ἅπαντι θυμῶ, κάρτα δ’ εἰμι τοῦ πατρός.
οὔτω γυναικὸς οὐ προτιμήσω μόρον
ἄνδρα κτανούσης δωμάτων ἐπίσκοπον,

³³⁴ On Zeus’s deception and consumption of Metis, who was on the point of giving birth to Athena, see Hesiod’s *Theogony* (886-920). Cf. the *Greater Hymn to Athena* (5-12), which says nothing at all about Metis. On the parentage of Athena as an inappropriate argument, see Saxonhouse (1984:27-28).

³³⁵ While some accounts state the Erinyes originated in the drops of blood from Ouranos’ severed genitalia, other myths, including *Eumenides* (321) define them as the offspring of Nyx, Primordial Night. See also *Lykophron* 432; Virg. *Aen.* 6.250; Ovid *Met.* 4.453.

³³⁶ Homer’s Zeus, on the other hand, is not always for the daughter; see *Il.* 4.20-23; 8.39-40, 417-422, 370-374, 444-445, 460-461.

‘there is no mother who gave birth to me, and, with all my heart, I approve the male sex in every way, except in the matter of marriage. I am utterly of the Father. Thus, I will not value the fate of a woman who killed her husband, the guardian of the house’ (734-740).

Athena’s statement agrees with Apollo’s obvious lie, and makes it clear that ideological affiliation is more ‘true’ than biological reality.³³⁷ As an avowed virgin this patroness of Athens will never be the guardian of any man’s house, and so will never be torn between allegiance for husband or father; as far as she is concerned, she has no mother, she will never be a mother, and so she has nothing in common with women who bear children, and especially not with a woman who suffers the loss of a daughter. Nothing is ever said in (extant) myth about Metis’ personal experience of painfully losing both child and life. Athena does not care that her own mother has been eliminated by her father, any more than Elektra cares that her father has slain her sister, because they are androcentric good girls. Apollo’s very unbiological theory of biology only sways the outcome of the trial because Athena – who casts the deciding vote – does not deny that she is solely the child of Zeus, and thus without a mother. Athena’s vote acquits the young man for choosing his father over mother (and over slain sister) because – like her paternal half-brother Apollo, and her only (remaining) parent, father Zeus – she approves of Orestes’ vengeance on behalf of the patriline. Critics debate the narrative importance of the Olympians’ denial of female parenthood, however, and how this influences audience sympathies for Klytimestra and her killer.³³⁸ If Apollo can win the point, then the Erinyes’ right to vengeance is made void, but in this play they are never permitted to answer his point; if they did, he would likely lose.

Critics also disagree on whether Apollo was voicing the understanding of the contemporary public about reproductive biology, but the archaeology of ancient animal husbandry demonstrates that the role of the female in breeding was fundamentally well-understood,

³³⁷ On the “fact” of Athena’s (and Dionysios’) motherless creation, see Zelenak (1998:70). Both these deities were necessarily conceived and gestated in the wombs of women, who were later killed by Zeus, who then preserved – and appropriated – their offspring.

³³⁸ On the ineffectiveness of Apollo’s speech, see Gagarin (1976:102-103); Hogan (1984:1720); Ireland (1986:29). Cf. Hester (1981:267); Kovacs (1998:149); and Sewell (2007:113), who all contend that Athena’s judgement is made independently of Apollo’s posturing. On the statement as the crucial climax of the play, see Vickers (1973:636); Gagarin (1976:88).

contributing to the domestication and refinement of livestock useful to humans.³³⁹ As upper-class breeders of horses and hunting dogs, and as farmers who bred livestock of all kinds, many – if not most – Greeks would certainly have known the biological essentials, and the philosophical topic of generation and the relative contributions of male and female was of considerable interest to many Greeks.³⁴⁰ Some critics conclude that *Eumenides* consciously aims to neutralize the frightening female power of biological reproduction, inconveniently necessary to the cultural reproduction of the androcentric *polis*; others argue that the play depicts the male desire to usurp the disturbing power of reproduction for themselves.³⁴¹ One argument against audience acceptance of Apollo's argument is Greek epikleracy: if a man's daughter did not transmit something important in her own right, then any woman could have borne a dead man's brother's seed successfully in order to protect the inheritance.³⁴² Given the inevitability of paternity uncertainty, social arrangements preferentially based on verifiable kinship or blood-relations must always favour the female; while the presence of own kin provides social support for married females, the absence of female kin is associated with reproductive outcomes which favour the patriline.³⁴³ Female Athenians held the biological power to transmit males' property and citizenship – as the Greeks defined it – but they did not enjoy social, legal powers in their own right: Apollo's revisioning of biological fact should be read in the context of Athenian comprehension and worries about legitimacy, inheritance, citizenship, and power.³⁴⁴ There was no good reason for Athenian males to view themselves as the sons of women – unless a woman, as their patriarch's only child – is the transmitter of their patrilineal status. In Greek cultural terms, all children borne by Klytaimestra are legally

³³⁹ On Plato's interest in how the best examples of each sex could be bred under controlled conditions (*Rep.* 459e), see Campbell (1989:57).

³⁴⁰ On contemporary belief about the contribution of females and males to reproduction in relation to Apollo's declarations (and Athena's approval of these), see Kember (1971, 1973); Vickers (1973:435n37); Gagarin (1976:102); Campbell (1989:56); Mayhew (2004); Bakogianni (2011:37). See also Aristotle, *De Generatione Animalium* (716a5-23, 727a2-30, 727b31-33, 728b18-31, 765b8-20, 763b, 766a17-30, 783b26-784a12): Aristotle's discussion argues that pure male semen contains the human spore, while women's menstrual fluid provides the necessary nourishment. Others argue that the Greeks would have rejected Apollo's unbiologically based theory; see Mitchell-Boyask (2008:119); Hall (2010:222-223).

³⁴¹ On how Apollo's denial of maternity completes the transformation of Iphigeneia's loving mother into the enemy of Orestes, see Vickers (1973:413-14); Zeitlin (1965:492); Saxonhouse (1984:26); Burnett (1998:111).

³⁴² On the epikleracy, see Rabinowitz (1993:5).

³⁴³ See further discussion in Chapter 1, pp. 41n179; 47-48; 50; 65n333; 52-53; 71n362; 81; 83; 83n430; 83n432; 84; 84n436.

³⁴⁴ On Athenian legitimacy, Rosenmeyer (1982:361); Burkert (1985:142); Goldhill (1986:59). Several tragedies – *Alope*, *Antiope*, *Auge*, *Danae*, *Ion*, and *Melanippe Sophe* – all depict men's fear of lineage extinction, and many plays address the fear of a daughter's son – exposed at birth – returning and displacing the preferred (and proper) patrilineal line; Seaford (1990:161).

and socially their father's children. Because sons in patrilineal Athens are always 'of the father', and so Atreid Orestes is logically the natural *ekthros* of Klytaimestra his father's killer: what is unexpected in the *Oresteia* is that Tyndarid Klytaimestra refrains from expediting the death of her enemy's son.³⁴⁵ There has been a great deal of critical debate about the 'murdering mothers' of Greek mythology, but filicide by mothers – excepting the famous hostilities of Medeia – is actually relatively rare in myth; women who kill their children in Greek literature do so primarily to restore the honour of their natal family, and they never attract the same reputation for loathsome evil which attaches to Klytaimestra, perhaps the only woman in myth to act on behalf of dishonoured female kin.³⁴⁶

Like Apollo, Athena chooses to act on behalf of the male litigant, and she is willing to do whatever is necessary in order to exonerate Orestes; in order to achieve the desired result, she will introduce the concept of mitigation and cast her own vote to break the verdict-tie.³⁴⁷ In reply to the chorus's direct accusation that Orestes chose to become a matricide (425), Athena enquires as to his intention: was he compelled or was he in fear (426)? The chorus' astonished response to this admits to the possibility of justification for mother-murder (428). The Erinyes' case is founded on the natural law of action and consequences: Athena offers acquittal on a legal technicality. Although Orestes' trial shows him as equally innocent and guilty, the real issue is the struggle between divinities to administer justice; it is not surprising that the goddess of warfare wins the legal *agōn*.³⁴⁸ Some critics conclude that the *Eumenides*' lauded resolution is in fact a miscarriage of justice, and that the victory of patriarchalist deities over the ancient protectors of blood-rights reflects the politics of gender-inequity in early fifth century Athens. The female-defence team of Erinyes is bribed, threatened, overthrown and suborned, and the

³⁴⁵ Klytaimestra's expectation that Orestes will inevitably become her worst living enemy is contextually realistic; see Loraux (1998:39); Komar (2003:39). Visser (2000:155) points to the impossible situation of the married woman: her own children belonged to her husband's patriline, but she still belonged to her own natal family, and always would.

³⁴⁶ On misogyny, misandry, and ambiguous motherhood in ancient Greece and Greek mythology, see Slater (1968, 1974); Burnett (1998:178). On maternal filicide and vengeance on behalf of natal blood-kin in tragedy, see Burnett (1998:179); Visser (2000:155, 158).

³⁴⁷ One aspect of the drama that has attracted a disproportionate degree of critical attention is the quite unnecessary question of whether Athena casts a tie-breaking or a tie-creating vote, but whatever the vote, Orestes by tradition must be acquitted. On Athena's manipulation of the verdict to avoid offending the Erinyes, who she rightly fears (*Eum.* 480-481), see Lloyd-Jones (1970b:4); Gagarin (1975); Seaford (1995:210-211). For a review of scholarship on the question before 1980, see Hester (1981:265).

³⁴⁸ On Orestes as both innocent and guilty, see Fagles and Stanford (1977:82). On the defeat of natural justice and the victory for the gender status-quo, see Gagarin (1976:77-78); Vellacott (1977:120-122); (2010:226-227). On the narrative necessity of Athena's victory, see Carne-Ross (1981:57).

verdict of a hung jury set aside to ensure that a mother-murderer is acquitted by a judge who proudly admits to a definite gender bias.³⁴⁹

Critics draw attention to the convoluted gender dynamics of the *Oresteia*'s apparent resolution of gender conflict in the *Eumenides*.³⁵⁰ The slow progress of the *Oresteia* inevitably culminates in divorcing Orestes from his matrilineal heritage, just as the goddess Athena has always been. Some contend that Athena incorporates male and female perspectives, but gender-balanced Athena never once experiences the true female life-experience typical in a preindustrial context of universal female-marriage without contraception: mating, marriage, gestating, birthing, and child-rearing.³⁵¹ Some even suggest that Athena's femininity makes her a natural ally to women.³⁵² Critics also debate the root causes of gender conflict in the *Eumenides*.³⁵³ Some suggest that, ultimately, issues in this play cannot be resolved because conflict between the genders in the real world is irresolvable.³⁵⁴ The triumphant transformation of the subdued Erinyes for the betterment of human society is the result of direct threat of force and blatant bribery, and their feelings and wishes – let alone their ancient duties – are of no interest to the Olympian regime, yet many critics persist in reading the resolution of the play as a positive gain for human civilization.³⁵⁵ Like the Olympians of ancient Greek myth, history (or literary

³⁴⁹ On Athena's biased judgement, see Sharrock and Ash (2002:41); Mitchell-Boyask (2008:117). Cf. Conacher (1987:211), whose perception of Athena's avowed "prejudice" actually follows the text, rather than critical fantasy ideals about the goddess' "impartial benevolence".

³⁵⁰ Winnington-Ingram (1983a:100; 1983b:126); Burkert (1985:141). Cf. Seaford (1995:214), who argues that "gender confusion" is resolved at the end of *Eumenides*.

³⁵¹ On the gendering of Athena in the *Eumenides*, see Spatz (1982:130); Hogan (1984:176); Herington (1986:143); McClure (1997:133); Storey and Allan (2005:105); Sewell (2007:114). Ancient works depict Aiskhylos' calm and noble administrator as possessing a sometimes bloodthirsty nature; in the *Greater Hymn to Athena* (3), Athena is a mighty defender of cities, and the *Odyssey*'s Athena is the scheming, undefeatable, and bloodthirsty ally every Greek male hopes for (*Od.* 13.394-396; 22.256, 22.273; 22.297-299). On the personification of Athena according to the ideological requirements of an imperialist Athens, see Burkert (1985:135-40); McClure (1997:132); Kennedy (2009:2). On the mythological exaltation of the motherless Athena in the myths of patriarchal Athens as an expression of male desire to live in a world without women, see Loraux (1993:11); Raber (2000:311); Komar (2003:8).

³⁵² Lefkowitz (2007:178).

³⁵³ On the subordination of matrilineal kin-relationship to the structural necessities of patrilineal marriage, see Thomson (1946:288); Sourvinou-Inwood (2003:243); Rabinowitz (2008:107). Athena and Poseidon's conflict over the patronage of Athens (Varro's story, in Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* 18.9) becomes the aetiology for the suppression of female citizenship right, and the social supremacy of males; narrative elements of Varro's myth of patriliney also appear in Aiskhylos' trilogy. On the conflict between Athena and Poseidon as responsible for the gender-inequities among human men and women, see Seaford (1995:216); Mitchell-Boyask (2008:31-32).

³⁵⁴ Carne-Ross (1981:58).

³⁵⁵ On the *Oresteia* and the creation of civilization, see Dodds (1960:23); Lloyd-Jones (1970b:4-5); Vellacott (1984b:32, 124-125); Baldock (1989:33); Sewell-Rutter (2007:89, 101).

analysis) is written by the victors, and the suppression of female reproductive autonomy is no less central to covertly androcentric civilization in the modern world than it was in a more overtly patriarchal ancient culture. Views of Klytaimestra are shaped by the necessary (albeit preconscious) acceptance of this cultural imperative.

Orestes departs the stage, apparently released from all consequence for his matricide, but the real peril in this story is not resolved at all: the defeated Erinyes despair for the loss of their honour, and the loss of respect for the ancient laws (778-792). The Furies foresee great famine for Athens, the natural result of such disrespect (*Eum.* 784-788); as the *Greater Hymn to Demeter* shows (305-307), famine was at times a terrible, tangible reality for ancient Greeks, who through bitter experience knew the enormous power of offended gods to inflict suffering upon humankind. Athena denies their loss (795), but she also tries to settle out of court, offering the Furies certain compensations if they agree to drop the case and withhold their wrath: these include thrones beside altars in an underground dwelling (804-807). The chorus' response is simply to repeat their expectation of calamity for the city and for the citizens of Athens (808-821). Athena then resorts to the stick, threatening to employ the thunderbolt to which only she and Zeus have access – followed quickly by the promise of sacrifices from Athenians, if they yield to her will (826-836). The chorus bewail this treatment (837), protesting their dishonour to their great mother Night (842-847). Athena magnanimously declares that she will forgive the Erinyes' angry objections – in recognition of their greater age – but reminds them that, through the favour of Zeus, she holds the upper hand; while they are much wiser, she is still wise enough, through the gift of wisdom from Zeus (848-850). Zeus appropriated this wisdom from Athena's mother; Athena – the motherless spirit of Athens – is also about to appropriate beneficial powers, this time of fertility, from the matrilineal Erinyes; in the patriarchal culture of ancient Athens, the biological product of a female body – Orestes – becomes the putative product and legal possession of the male citizen father. Athena's bribes also depend, as she is at pains to point out, on the Furies' cooperation in the restraint of the natural male tendency to civil conflict (862-863). She prefers men's innate urge to conflict over status – ἐν ᾧ τις ἔσται δεινὸς εὐκλείας ἔρωσ, 'in the one who experiences terrible lust for glory' – to be directed toward plenty of external war-making, which will bring in wealth enough to make offerings to the Furies (864-865).³⁵⁶ If critics are looking for an aetiology of progressive civilization in this

³⁵⁶ On Athena's blessing of plenty of external conflict as a mechanism to dissuade civil conflict (and as proof that Aiskhylos was a supporter of militarism), see Spatz (1982:91); Sommerstein (1989b:31-32; 2002:40; 2008:xv; 2010b:132-133).

play, the EP finding that the redirection of intrasexual male competition for wealth and status into aggressive actions outside of the social group is more likely to lead to the eventual supremacy of that group is a more reasonable candidate; encouraging males to place the well-being of the abstract state over the lives of mere individuals – including non-combatants – within that group is an inevitable outcome of this disposition.

The turning point of this potentially catastrophic *agōn* between Zeus's favoured child and the ancient upholders of moral goodness is Athena's declaration that ἔξεστι γάρ σοι τῆσδε γαμόρω χθονὸς/ εἶναι δικάϊως ἐς τὸ πᾶν τιμωμένη, 'it is possible for you to become rightful landowners in this country, and honoured in all matters' (890-891). She is now offering the Erinyes the ultimate bribe – the right to become legally certified Athenian citizens, and – from the Athenian point of view – no enticement could be greater. The reconciliation between the disputants quickly turns to contractual details concerning the material prosperity of the Athenian peoples; Athena will ensure that no *oikos* will prosper without the aid of the Furies, and in a moment the Erinyes' moral authority is lost forever (894-900). Having succumbed to Athena's bribes, the Erinyes enquire as to which blessings they should bestow upon the Athenians (902); Athena specifies beneficent climate and the blessings of patriarchal Athenian civilization: agricultural fruitfulness, fertility of livestock, and the continuation of human lineages – especially in pious *oikoi* – but the greatest gift of military victory is hers alone to give (904-915).

Athena's triumphant welcome to the safely subordinated Erinyes also usurps control of their original, retributive function: the Furies' hostile wrath must in future crush the man whose ancestors have committed sins, even the man who loudly boasts of his success (930-937). Who on earth could this allude to but the Atreids, including Agamemnon, and his heir Orestes?³⁵⁷ Athena earlier offered the Erinyes the function of enhancing citizen prosperity; now, as she reveals, the Furies will bring both great happiness and great grief to the human race (950-955). But the Furies have exactly the same duties as they had previously, one of which is to afflict the descendants of those who have committed sins.³⁵⁸ The Erinyes' response to Athena's statements are peculiar, given the previous events within the *oikos* of Orestes: they forbid that

³⁵⁷ In fact, the 'loud boaster' could refer to any of the major characters in the trilogy: Agamemnon, Klytaimestra, Aigisthos, and even Orestes, all of whom glory in their deeds. All of these characters – even Klytaimestra – are also the descendants of humans who have been cursed for their actions (or in the case of Tyndareos, inaction).

³⁵⁸ Athena offers powers over fertility to the Erinyes which are rightly the domain of the existing Semnai, already resident beneath the Areopagus; see Sommerstein (1989b:11).

men should die ‘prematurely’, and they ask of their sisters the Fates that all lovely young women should live and get husbands (956-967). How can any man die before his time, when everything is of Zeus? And what about the lovely young woman of the *Agamemnon*’s first ode, the unripe grape who never had a husband? How can the Furies proudly acclaim the Fates as their sisters ‘of the same mother’, if – as Apollo insists – the mother is no parent? If Apollo spoke truly – and Athena was his primary witness in this respect – then Orestes is rightly acquitted; why then this late allusion to motherhood, and the following references of the processional escort to the Furies’ as children of the great goddess Night (1034), who – as the mythic record agrees – conceived them without male seed?

Critics disagree as to the aftermath of the play’s conflict resolution.³⁵⁹ The play’s triumphant ending covertly undermines its own internal logic, however, with allusions and references to some very inconvenient outcomes.³⁶⁰ The likely consequences of the trampling of natural *aidōs* – ‘respect’ – is one of the unfortunate truths the play’s ending glosses over: how can there ever be a happy ending in a world which exonerates matricide? The chorus once warned that if mother-slaughter prevails, then all ordained laws would come under threat, and parents should expect much suffering at the hands of children (490-498). The best way to maintain social order is through fear of consequence, and if their jurisdiction is overruled, human behaviour will decline (522-525); the altar of Justice must not be impiously spurned and trampled – for the purpose of material gain – and those who disrespect their parents must suffer the inevitable punishment (538-548). The victories in the *Oresteia* – the sack of Troy, the Aulian sacrifice to bend the winds, the treading upon precious fabrics, the slaughter of a mother, the acquittal of Orestes, and the subversion of the guardians of law – are all iterations of the same disastrous crime: the desecration of *aidōs*. The Erinyes fear that if they are demoted, natural justice will be trampled; they are not demoted, but set to become the bloodthirsty hounds of Athens, rather

³⁵⁹ On the play’s satisfactory ending, see Rabinowitz (2008:108); Rutherford (2012:182). On the transformation of the Erinyes into apparently empowered, radiantly beautiful, benign guardians and foreign resident foreigners’ of Athens, see Lloyd-Jones (1970b:3); Walton (1980:5); Roth (1993:14-15). Cf. Vellacott (1977:118, 1984a:157). Vellacott (1977:120-121) concludes that the audience’s positive reception of the defeat of *aidōs* foreshadows the real-life decline of morality in Athens, which led to the “appalling collapse” of city life through war. See also *Thoukydides*, 3.82-84.

³⁶⁰ The Furies are confined in darkness underground, Klytaimestra is slain, scorned, and wandering as a ghost, and Elektra – an instrument in her own mother’s death – becomes in successive tragedies a maddened, immoral, and pitiful figure; see Foley (1981:157); Komar (2003:41). On the false resolution of the trilogy to the benefit of the male and the disadvantage of the female, the disempowerment of the Erinyes, the disenfranchisement of women, and Orestes’ lack of remorse, see Gagarin (1976:97-98, 100); Saxonhouse (1984:27-29); Vellacott (1984a:75, 156; 1984b:35); Storey and Allan (2005:246); Lefkowitz (2007:178).

than the guardians of *aidōs*. The existence of violence per se is not challenged in the course of creating civilization, but the question of when aggression may be justified is definitively settled through divine agreement: Athenians – male citizens – should not waste their war-making gift in civil dispute (with other citizens, at least), but in expansionist warfare, and individual (and non-citizen) members of an *oikos* – even children – may be sacrificed without consequence to enable this. Orestes' victim was the enemy of her own husband and his patriline, but more importantly, of the greater imperial project, and so Aiskhylos' *Oresteia* finds the way to ennoble Agamemnon's filicide, to exonerate a matricide, and utterly excuse a mother's murder.

This section has illustrated how one of the most popular tragic trilogies of all time depicted the birth of human civilization in making males the true parents of children. Despite the obvious logic of Klytaimestra's case against her husband for murder of their child, through narrative sleight-of-hand, the *Oresteia* is always for the male, sanctifying murder of women who kill husbands, even the terrible sin of matricide. This chapter shows how the story of Klytaimestra, already undergoing thematic shifts, completes the depiction of Klytaimestra as a woman who committed the worst kind of crime: husbandicide. The murder of children, the murder of mothers, and the destruction of ancient moral values: all count for nothing against the centrality of the patriline in the developing democratic empire of patriarchal Athens. The *Oresteia* was acclaimed in its own time, and extant tragedies produced after it all respond to it in important ways. As the next chapter will show, Sophokles approved the genius of Aiskhylos, and repeated the basic story. Sympathy for Klytaimestra's biological motherhood is entirely suppressed in his *Elektra*, and his Atreid children abominate their mother as an even more despicable figure than in Aiskhylos, however. Euripides, on the other hand, chose to explore some of the inconsistencies in the previously two-dimensional view of the evil queen, culminating in a posthumously produced tragedy damning the filicidal Agamemnon, and leaving his audience in no doubt that Klytaimestra had every good reason to plan her immoral husband's demise.

CHAPTER III: THE CLASSICAL KLYTAIMESTRA

This chapter investigates how the two extant tragedians from the second half of the fifth century handle the story of Klytaimestra and her broken family. Aiskhylos' *Oresteia* (458 BCE) portrayed the necessary subordination of women's reproductive powers to the husband-led family in the mid fifth-century *polis*; the later Atreid plays of Sophokles and Euripides depict the inevitable consequences of this in women's alienation from their own children. Both tragedians freely (if unwittingly) employ the frame of reproductive politics to convey their particular messages about the behaviour of the Athenian state, but each chooses to emphasize a very different aspect of Klytaimestra's mythic character: Sophokles' drama plays up the destruction of the family through wifely adultery, while Euripides draws attention to men's disruption of the mother-offspring relationship. Tragedy in later fifth-century Athens was profoundly affected by the long Peloponnesian War between the Athenian-led Delian League and the anti-Athenian alliance led by Sparta; patriotic, compulsive expansionism ultimately resulted in the downfall of the Athenian empire. Sophokles and Euripides reveal, in Klytaimestra's life-experience within the filicidal Atreid *oikos*, the creation of gender conflict through a political need for aggressive violence in men and compliant domesticity in women. Sophokles' *Elektra* features a young woman deprived of the marriage and children she yearns for, in paradoxical juxtaposition with extreme – even unnatural – patrilineal affiliation with her deceased father and absent brother, combined with an excessive hatred for a remarried mother. Sophokles seems to approve the heroic, aristocratic Orestes and his struggle to regain his ancestral throne, but the four plays of Euripides question the slaughter of a vulnerable, aging queen by a brutal young man, followed by his realization that this murder was unforgivably wrong; the apparent victory of matricide becomes a disaster for everyone concerned. EP research suggests that the most closely-related individuals give each other the most support and attachment, but the lives of Klytaimestra's children will be deeply disrupted by the murder of such close kin. Euripides' *Elektra* gives Klytaimestra a reasonable voice in self-defence of her killing of Agamemnon; the *Iphigeneia amongst the Taurians* offers Iphigeneia an opportunity to recall her loving and beloved mother; the *Orestes* shows how the Atreid siblings' natural – and morally appropriate – remorse for the wrongful killing of their mother is subverted through appeal to self-interest and spite; and the *Iphigeneia at Aulis* shows how the military ambition of Agamemnon tore his family apart, as well as how Klytaimestra as the fictional standard for female evil in subsequent Western literature was originally a good wife and mother.

Some critics contend that the three Elektra-plays of Aiskhylos, Sophokles, and Euripides – the plays most fundamental in perceptions of Klytāimēstra as a killer and mother – are alike in their characterization of Klytāimēstra as an adulteress; others maintain that the tragedians differ substantially in their portrayal of Klytāimēstra and her interactions with her daughter Elektra.¹ Critical interpretation of Klytāimēstra’s family relationships in Sophokles’ *Elektra* frequently depends on whether critics perceive Euripides’ play as responding to Sophokles’ play: reading Euripides’ sympathetic Klytāimēstra as a deliberate refutation of Sophokles’ unpleasant mother positions Sophokles’ as the first of the two *Elektra*-plays.² Some critics – with good evidence – argue that the sequence is Aiskhylos-Euripides-Sophokles, placing Euripides’ *Elektra* perhaps a decade before that of Sophokles’.³ While the dating of the plays cannot – on available evidence – be definitively asserted, others argue for a sequence of Aiskhylos-Sophokles-Euripides.⁴ Euripides’ marked abhorrence in *Elektra* (and *Orestes*) of the casually committed matricide in Sophokles’ drama suggests that this the correct sequence; this thesis assumes that Sophokles’ *Elektra* precedes that of Euripides, and that Euripides’ work is a response to at least some of Sophokles’ assumptions.⁵ A good case can be made on a number of points that Euripides found some fault with Sophokles’ telling.

A biopoetic analysis influenced by narratological studies also supports a reading that Euripides’ *Elektra* responds in narrative structure and thematic development to an earlier version by Sophokles. Assuming evolutionary principles of increasing intelligence and competition, one

¹ For critical views of the stylistic relationships between the three *Elektras* of Aiskhylos, Sophokles, and Euripides, see Whitman (1951:161); Jones (1962:272); Vickers (1973:553-557); Baldock (1989:110); Harder (1995:29); McDonald (2003:59); Anderson (2005:131); Bakogianni (2011:196). On Sophokles’ Klytāimēstra and the Klytāimēstra of Pindar’s *Pythian* (11:22-25), see Jones (1962:152).

² On the sequence of the two *Elektras*, see Murray (1965:77); Kovacs (1998:142). On Sophokles’ *Elektra* as a remedy-response to Euripides’ *Elektra*, see Post (1953:151); Vellacott (1984b:151). On the dating of Sophokles’ *Elektra*, see also Owen (1936). On Sophokles’ revisioning of the story, see Kirkwood (1958:35); Jones (1962:157-159); Gantz (1966:682); Burton (1980:192); Walton (1980:21); Segal (1981:257, 268); De Romilly (1985:68); Davidson (1988:49, 71-72; 1999-2000:119); Garner (1990:123); Bowman (1997:136n13).

³ Lesky (1972:392-394); Collard (1981:2); Harder (1995:15); Kovacs (1998:142); March (2001:22); and cautiously, Lloyd-Jones (1994:8-9). Storey and Allan (2005:115, 257) place Sophokles’ *Elektra* as late 410s. On the respective dates of the *Elektras*, with Euripides’ as the prior play, see Mastronarde (2010:34) (E. *Elektra* around 420); Ley (2007:112-113) (E. *Elektra* after 421 but before 415, and S. *Elektra* after 411 but before 409).

⁴ On an earlier Sophoklean and a later Euripidean *Elektra*, see Ferguson (1972:381); Sale (1973:viii); Arnott (1981:179); Sewell (2007:154); Roisman and Luschnig (2011:32). Cf. Cropp (1988:li), who prefers 420-419 for Euripides’ play, with Sophokles’ *Elektra* earlier still.

⁵ See also Denniston (1939:xxxv); Segal (1966:521n61); Conacher (1967:202n9); Walton (1980:26); Cropp (1988:xlvi-xlix); Lembke and Reckford (2010:15); Roisman and Luschnig (2011:31-32). On Euripides’ *Orestes* as a fourth *Elektra*-play, see Vickers (1973:553-554).

would expect human appreciation of narrative complexity to increase as a function of literary aesthetic, and, because artists would aspire to top each other's achievements, that audiences would expect more over-the-top experiences to stimulate their sensibilities. In light of this, Euripides' *Elektra* can be read as a scornful, outraged, over-the-top response to Sophokles' *status quo* crowd-pleaser, which approves the heroic Orestes' matricide. There are aspects of characterization and plot in Euripides' play which would likely have attracted Sophokles' attention, but which go unremarked in his *Elektra*. Euripides' *Elektra* is manifestly dismissive of inherited nobility, a concept promoted as natural and desirable in Sophokles' play, while the humble contrition of Euripides' Klytaimestra in *Elektra* also passes unanswered in Sophokles' *Elektra*, which features a one dimensional queen motivated by self-interest rather than evil.

Sophokles: Elektra

Sophokles' late fifth-century *Elektra* revisits Aiskhylos' *Khoephoroi*, but his characterization of Klytaimestra, Elektra, and Orestes differs substantially from the *Oresteia* of 458 BCE. The *Oresteia* reflects a period of imperial expansion and prosperity, but Sophokles' *Elektra* was produced during the Peloponnesian War, when the might of Athens was in decline. It seems that Sophokles' peers thought of him as a model citizen and an excellent tragedian; modern critics agree that Sophokles was a wealthy, patriotic, moral conservative, twice elected general for Athenian military campaigns, whose family wealth came from the manufacture of military arms, and who believed in inherited excellence.⁶ While Sophokles' work is less directly political than that of Aiskhylos or Euripides, he is interested in the power of the human spirit to endure adversity.⁷ Sophokles' conflicted, suffering, lonely heroes do not always inspire admiration; they often monopolise the stage at the expense of the chorus, whose traditional role is substantially reduced.⁸ Nevertheless, scholars ancient and modern agree that Sophokles had a particular gift for the creation of character, and one of the most distinctive features of

⁶ Jameson (1971); Gregory (2002:147); Sewell (2007:152); Scodel (2012:30). Sophokles was born in 497/6 at Kolonos and died in Athens in 406/5; on the outline of his life, see the *Marm. Par.*, the *Life of Sophokles*, and the hypothesis to *Oidipous Kolonos*. On Sophokles as a model citizen, see Bowra (1967:49); Buxton (1984:3); Lloyd-Jones (1994:6); Sommerstein (2002:41); Storey and Allan (2005:111-112).

⁷ On Sophokles' interest in human endurance, see Bowra (1966:143-144; 1967:44); Walton (1980:19); Lesky (1983b:196); De Romilly (1985:67); Sommerstein (2002:44, 46-47); Storey and Allan (2005:116, 130).

⁸ On Sophokles' isolated, heroic figures, see Easterling (1983:145); Storey and Allan (2005:120-123). On the strength and agency of Sophokles' chorus, see Sommerstein (2002:45).

Sophokles' *Elektra* is the centrality – and exceptionality – of the individual.⁹ There is disagreement concerning Sophokles' female protagonists: some view these fictional women as independent, active agents, others as women who act to uphold traditional androcentric values and views about acceptable female roles; according to others, however, Sophokles' tragic vision is thoroughly pessimistic about the institution of marriage.¹⁰

This study reveals how reproductive concerns underlie the narrative theme and characterization in Sophokles' *Elektra*, through the eponymous protagonist's manic desire to marry and reproduce before her fertility declines, and through her resentment of her mother's continuing production of children in a second marriage. Elektra and Orestes are both specifically concerned to regain control over their patrilineal inheritance, in contrast to their sister Khrysothemis, who is willing to live harmoniously with her mother and stepfather. Sophokles' play has much to say about the social dangers of speech: the unreliability of hearsay figures heavily in the play, as does Elektra's inability to control her emotive – hysterical – outbursts. In this *Elektra* the chorus alludes to the Erinyes, but the expected Furies do not appear; the only monstrous female to be found is in Elektra's hostile descriptions of her mother, but every appearance of Klytaimestra undermines this account.¹¹ The tragedy ostensibly aims to obscure (or at least excuse) the death of Iphigenia and instead draw attention to female adultery as an unspeakable moral crime, but the characterization of Elektra as an unreliable commentator and the actual appearance of a rational, compassionate Klytaimestra both undermine this overt aim.

Sophokles' *Elektra* is the only extant work by Sophokles featuring Klytaimestra and Agamemnon's family. Critics differ on how the characterization of the eponymous Elektra exemplifies the play's thematic concerns, and are divided on the topic of Klytaimestra's matricide between optimists, who view the murder as just, and pessimists, who view the play's

⁹ According to the ancient *Life of Sophokles* (21), Sophokles had exceptional, concise powers of characterization. See also Lattimore (1964:5); Trypanis (1981:159-160); Easterling (1983:140; 1977:129); De Romilly (1985:71-72); Budelmann (2000:88-89); Fotheringham (2000:np); Scodel (2005a:243). On the particular emphasis in Sophokles' *Elektra* upon character psychology, see Norwood (1948:142); O'Brien (1964:18-19); Jones (1962:145, 159); Trypanis (1981:155); Hogan (1991:270-271); Dunn (2012:99).

¹⁰ On the character of Sophokles' female protagonists, see Trypanis (1981:148); Wiersma (1984:55); Sommerstein (2002:56-57); Storey and Allan (2005:120). On Sophokles' ambivalence about women and the bleakness of marriage, see Hall (1994:xi-xii); Lyons (2003:124); Patterson (2012:381).

¹¹ For the origins, manifestations, and social function of the Erinyes (and their later manifestation in Latin literature as Furies), see discussion in Chapter 2, pp. 106n77; 156; 163-165; 167-168n301; 168-172; 168n303; 168n305; 169n307; 170n309; 170n310; 170n311; 170n312; 171n315; 171n318; 172n319; 178-179; 178n335; 184-185; 184n358; 185n359; 185n360.

tone as one of dark injustice.¹² One recurring theme in this *Elektra* is the tension between hearsay and credulity. Khrysothemis believes the evidence of her own eyes about the discovery of the lock of hair upon Agamemnon's tomb, and wants her sister Elektra to believe her report of it (*El.* 885-890), but Elektra persuades Khrysothemis to doubt what she has seen (920-933), and to rely instead upon the hearsay account of Orestes' death – despite it being a convincing one – which the audience knows is a deceptive lie, and upon the funerary urn supplied to her. Elektra's own ability to distinguish truth from falsehood is highly unreliable: on the one hand, she proclaims that she is not such a fool as to believe that the dead (i.e., Agamemnon) can rise again (940-941), but, during her declarations of joy over Orestes (1315-1317), she asserts that if she saw her father now, she would believe he had miraculously returned to life; tellingly, the chorus earlier observed (*S. El.* 137-139) that Elektra can never raise her father from the lake of Hades.

Khrysothemis' report of Klytaimestra's dream to Elektra (417-425) is a hearsay sequence of multi-layered narrative intentionality.¹³ In that dream, Klytaimestra is a first-level witness of events; but she then retells those events to the Sun; this report is overheard by some unnamed person in the palace; 'this one' (τις, 417) relates the eavesdropping to Khrysothemis; Khrysothemis relates this account to Elektra; and all of this is witnessed by Sophokles' audience, including the modern reader.¹⁴ The five-times-reported dream places an Agamemnon returned to life (419), once more at the side of his queen, and in possession of the ruling sceptre of Mycenae. Elektra declares that it must be Agamemnon who has sent the 'ugly' dream to spur his son to revenge, and so enable both Orestes and Elektra to honour him with rich gifts, but her disposition to believe repeated stories – along with the play's overall exploration of expeditious lying – casts her interpretation into serious doubt.

The greatest liar in the play is Orestes, who urges the Paidagogos to announce under oath that Orestes is dead (47-48); furthermore, in Orestes' opinion, οὐδὲν ῥῆμα σὺν κέρδει κακόν, 'nothing which is said for gain is evil' (61). The characterization of Orestes as shameless deceiver is problematic for those arguing that the heroic matricide is a just and noble act, but the Greeks did view lying as justified under certain circumstances: Xenophon, for example, observes that men must invent lies to suit the current purpose, and that lying is the most

¹² Grene (1957:124); Lesky (1966a:290); Segal (1981:249); Bowman (1997:131-132); Wright (2005b:172).

¹³ On multi-order intentional fiction, see the Introduction, p. 9.

¹⁴ It is because of this dream that Khrysothemis has been sent with offerings to the tomb of Agamemnon.

profitable policy in wartime (*Hipp.* 5.9).¹⁵ That Orestes lies to his grief-stricken sister – his only true *philos* in the palace – is much harder to justify, because he can be in no doubt as to the loyalties of those living within the palace; Elektra's later declaration to the urn reveals that Orestes has previously entrusted her with many secret messages about his plan to punish Klytaimestra (*El.* 1153-1156). Fully aware of her loyalty for himself and of her hatred for his *ekthroi*, her brother lies about his own death, reiterating that Orestes' ashes lie within the funeral-urn in his hand (1098-1118). The entire play is only 1510 lines long, but Orestes conceals his true identity from her right up until line 1223. Once Elektra is finally in on the deception, she repeats the lie about the contents of the urn to Aigisthos (1452-1455), acting on the chorus' advice that Aigisthos could be ensnared through deception (1437-1441).

The persistent deception practiced by the supposedly noble and sympathetic characters in this play is echoed by their inability to distinguish between reality and fantasy. Elektra's initial failure to recognize the mature Orestes is quite reasonable, yet Khrysothemis (presumed to be Elektra's younger sister) has no difficulty in recognizing a single lock of his hair on first sight. Elektra's declaration to Orestes that she could never forget his visage, even in troubled times (1285-1287), makes no sense, given that she completely failed to recognize him in earlier conversation (1106 ff.). Elektra's inability to recognize the servant into whose hands she entrusted her beloved little brother is also unaccountable (1344-1350): young Orestes may be expected to change radically in the course of ten years, but an adult man does not change so much in that same time. Elektra never acknowledges that she was completely wrong about the hair – Khrysothemis finds and correctly identifies Orestes' hair – and the *Elektra*'s recognition-scene restates the thematic message that people do not, in fact, possess the ability to see what is true, even when it is clearly in front of them, and especially during troubled times.¹⁶

Perceptions of Klytaimestra in this play depend on audience sympathy for her daughter Elektra; Elektra is Klytaimestra's estranged child and *ekthros*, characterized through the depiction of a sequence of character-portraits of the moody Elektra in conflict with the others.¹⁷ One third of this play is over before Klytaimestra appears, but Elektra and her friends tell us a great deal

¹⁵ On the strategic (and moral) value of lying, see also Xenophon, *Agésilaios* (1.17); *Anabasis* (2.6.22); *Kyropaedia* (1.6.31-34). On expeditious lies in time of war in ancient Greece, see also Hesk (2000); Danzig (2007); Jay (2010).

¹⁶ On Khrysothemis' powers of perception, see Gellie (1972:118-119).

¹⁷ Grene (1957:123); Kirkwood (1958:35, 136); Campbell (1989:18). On the prominence or centrality of female characters (including the chorus) to this play; see Jones (1962:142-143); Musurillo (1967:94); Gellie (1972:106); Burton (1980:186); Lloyd-Jones (1994:167); McLeish (2003:86).

about her; Elektra's first speech (86-120) dwells upon the pitiful loss of her father – we learn that her mother and her mother's lover split Agamemnon's head open with an axe (97-99) – and Elektra alone laments him (100-102), with the obvious implication that Agamemnon's wife Klytaimestra ought to have undertaken this duty. The partisan and bloodthirsty chorus' address to the grieving Elektra agrees that Klytaimestra is *δυστανοτάτας... ματρός* 'an unfortunate mother', who has enacted *δολερᾶς ἀθεώτατα... ἄλόντ' ἀπάταις* 'ungodly treachery through deception'; Agamemnon has perished, *κακῶ τε χειρὶ πρόδοτον* 'betrayed by her evil hand', and their greatest hope is that she will be destroyed (121-127).

Elektra's suffering in *ἀκόρεστον οἰμωγὸν*, 'insatiable lamentation' (123) is the root of critical dislike of the queen, but to what degree is Klytaimestra truly responsible for Elektra's unhappiness in Sophokles' retelling? This biased witness is the blindly devoted child of Agamemnon, the resentful step-daughter of Aigisthos, the exploitative sibling of a kind and gentle Khrysothemis, the survivor (and denier) of her sister Iphigeneia's slaughter at Aulis, and the devotee of her much younger, but dominant brother Orestes. Klytaimestra's prayer for continued life and prosperity observes that not all of her children oppose her with hatred (*S. El.* 650-654); it cannot be the case that she refers to Orestes (who does hate her), and it might be the case that she refers to the compliant Khrysothemis, but her observation suggests very strongly that Klytaimestra and Aigisthos have produced at least one other child. Elektra, in fact, complains to Klytaimestra about her *παιδοποιεῖς*, 'conceiving children' by the man who killed Elektra's father, and casting out her previous, legitimate children (*S. El.* 589-590). A young woman in a pre-contraceptive context who has successfully borne three or four offspring before is likely – after ten years of second marriage – to have produced further children; interpretation of Elektra's vilification of her mother must take the apparent existence of these rival siblings into account.

Elektra's present suffering is actually of her own making, and as the characterization of sister Khrysothemis demonstrates, unnecessary; similarly – despite the accusations of Elektra and her supporters – Sophokles' Klytaimestra is a lesser mortal, nothing like Aiskhylos' majestic and threatening Klytaimestra in the *Agamemnon*.¹⁸ While Elektra's breast bleeds from the many blows she inflicts upon herself (89-90), there is – despite critical assumptions – no direct

¹⁸ Bowra (1944:236, 239-240); Gellie (1972:113-115); Vickers (1973:568); Stevens (1978:114). On Elektra as the most malevolent character in this play, see Baldock (1989:106-107).

evidence that Klytaimestra is also beating her; Klytaimestra may exchange verbal abuse with her daughter, but claims that she has never done her daughter violence (520-524). Elektra declares (to Orestes, while she is still unaware of his true identity) that her mother uses violence and other torments against her (1196), but if Sophokles wanted a villainous Klytaimestra who had been beating Elektra, he would have had her admit it; his Klytaimestra is unafraid to say exactly what she thinks, and admits to the murder of Agamemnon readily enough (526-527). Her willingness to reveal her attitudes is also indicated by her insistence that Agamemnon's decision to sacrifice Klytaimestra's child instead of one of Menelaos' offspring was wrongful, because the expedition was for the sake of Helen and Menelaos; furthermore, she feels no regret for the death of Agamemnon, because even Iphigeneia, if she could speak, would acknowledge the foolishness of Agamemnon's judgement (536-551). Elektra completely dismisses Klytaimestra's motivation in motherhood, and only ever alludes to Agamemnon's killing of her sister Iphigeneia when forced to defend her father's sacrifice (563-576). Klytaimestra accuses Elektra of foolishness in refusing to understand that Agamemnon's death for Iphigeneia's sake was inevitable; the particular pains of motherhood are evident in her declaration that in begetting Iphigeneia, Agamemnon suffered less pain than Klytaimestra did in bearing her (528-533). Elektra responds that Klytaimestra has shamefully killed Elektra's father, which outweighs any possible justification, righteous or not (558-560); the shameful of Agamemnon's death requires a necessary vengeance, and like her mother before her, the loss of a *philos* provokes in Elektra a dark urge to violence, culminating in an exultation over bloody revenge.¹⁹

Some critics – completely persuaded by the various characters' reports – conclude that Sophokles' Klytaimestra is indeed an utterly evil, beastly adulterer who deserves punishment by horrible death.²⁰ This Klytaimestra personifies the imagined fears of the Athenian man: that a weak-willed, evil-minded woman, who over-reacts and lacks self-control, would jeopardize the patrilineal *oikos*, a cautionary example for both men and women; if anybody in the play can be accused of emotional over-reaction and loss of self-control, it is not Klytaimestra, but Elektra, who is constantly being told by her friends and allies to be quiet and exercise self-

¹⁹ Cf. Bowra (1944:239-240), who agrees with Elektra's assertion that husband-murder can never be justified.

²⁰ Denniston (1939:xxix); Bowra (1944:232); Whitman (1951:153, 163); Kitto (1958:14); Lesky (1966a:288); Ferguson (1972:548); Sale (1973:17); Burton (1980:224); Kitzinger (1991:313); Roisman (2008:111).

control.²¹ Elektra's testimony is unabashedly partial, and her account of her mother opens with the statement that their relationship is one of ἔχθιστά 'most bitter enmity' (261-262). Yet many critics accept Elektra's argument (560-562, 591-592) that Klytaimestra's act of vengeance was motivated solely by her illicit love, rejecting Klytaimestra's direct testimony that the murder of Iphigeneia is her reason for the mariticide.²² Elektra reports that Klytaimestra sits about in the palace, taking pleasure in Agamemnon's death, and insulting him in her laughter and feasting (S. *El.* 277-281); she even jeers at her avengers during her last moments.²³ Many embrace this hearsay report of Klytaimestra's celebration as sufficient evidence of her evil, but we do not directly witness any of this behaviour in the play, which only appears in Elektra's hostile witness-statement.²⁴

Critics sympathetic to Elektra point to the lack of remorse in Sophokles' Klytaimestra for the killing of her husband.²⁵ Delight over conquered enemies was expected and approved by Greeks; why should Klytaimestra regret her proper vengeance against the man who killed her child?²⁶ Like her mother, Elektra has waited many years for the opportunity to exult in fulfilment of revenge, but unlike Klytaimestra in the *Agamemnon*, Elektra's exultation in Sophokles' play has rarely attracted critical condemnation and disgust. Victory sometimes involved desecration of an enemy's corpse, and Elektra commands that Aigisthos' corpse be thrown to those who will properly bury him – beasts and birds (S. *El.* 1487-1489). The Greeks viewed vengeance upon enemies as a necessary, honourable, and morally excellent behaviour, but to be eaten by dogs and birds was an appalling fate, from the Greek point of view. Critical expectation that Klytaimestra should repent of her act also reveals a view that Agamemnon's sacrifice of her child was a forgivable crime, and therefore insufficient motivation for vengeance. In ancient Greece, harm is always due to enemies, and vengeance is always due to those who have killed one's blood-relatives, even for those *ekthroï* who once were *philoï*. In

²¹ On Klytaimestra as lacking self-control, see Wolfe (2009:705-706). On the atypical and immoderate emotionalism of Elektra, see Norwood (1948:143); Baldock (1989:105); Dunn (2012:103). On Elektra's histrionic outbursts, see also Bowman (1997:147).

²² On adultery as Klytaimestra's real reason for killing Agamemnon, see Bowra (1944:328); Jones (1962:151); Sale (1973:8); March (2001:12). Winnington-Ingram (1980:220) and Burnett (1998:137) offer unsympathetic readings of Klytaimestra and her grief for Iphigeneia.

²³ On the audience's loss of sympathy for Klytaimestra in response to her debauchery, see Bowra (1944:239-240); Burnett (1998:133-135).

²⁴ Sale (1973:6); Winnington-Ingram (1980:232); Wright (2005b:182).

²⁵ See, for example, Lesky (1983b:162-163, 297).

²⁶ On the fate of Aigisthos' corpse, see Kitto (1958:52); Gellie (1972:128); March (2001:19-20). On Klytaimestra's failure to properly perform the death-ritual for Agamemnon, see also Seaford (1985:316-317).

order to justify Orestes' matricide, Sophokles needed to destroy Klytaimestra's status within the *oikos* as *philos* and mother.²⁷ He does so partly by eliminating Aiskhylos' earlier intense emotional confrontation between mother and son, and by undermining Klytaimestra's maternal function, transferring it to others. Elektra's speech to the urn which she believes holds Orestes' ashes conveys the explicit message that Klytaimestra is no longer the children's mother, but is first and foremost her *ekthros*, 'enemy' (1153). Yet this apparent enmity from the woman who used to be her mother is not evidenced, as Klytaimestra has never renounced her parentage of the children who despise her; when she hears the terrible news of Orestes' death, Klytaimestra observes that δεινὸν τὸ τίκτειν ἐστίν: οὐδὲ γὰρ κακῶς/ πάσχοντι μῖσος ὧν τέκη προσγίγνεται, 'To give birth is a marvellous strange thing; for, having experienced evil from them, a person does not hate one's offspring' (770-771). That Orestes no longer poses any danger comes as some reprieve, yet Klytaimestra still does not hate either of these children (770-771). Khrysothemis actually reports that Elektra is going to be imprisoned in exile, not killed (S. *El.* 379-382), while Klytaimestra asks to live in peace alongside those of her children who do not hate her (S. *El.* 657-658), and says nothing about killing those who do hate her. Imprisonment of Elektra when Aigisthos is present – to protect her from her own self-destructive behaviour – and Klytaimestra's willingness to let Elektra free when Aigisthos is absent demonstrates her compassion for her troubled child.²⁸ Elektra loathes a mother who is for the most part relatively civil to her, but adores a brother who is at times short-tempered and annoyed by her devotion; she worships her dead, filicidal father, but treats her living, affectionate sister as beneath her contempt – until that sister proves useful.²⁹

No expression of motherly affection will persuade Elektra to abandon her hatred of Klytaimestra. Left on stage with the chorus, Elektra proclaims that Klytaimestra is only pretending to love Orestes, but is secretly gloating over his death (804-807), persuading some critics that Klytaimestra's grief at the false news of Orestes' death (766-768) is feigned, or minimal, at best.³⁰ Klytaimestra has logical reason to be pleased about the news, because the alienated and threatening Orestes – in conspiracy with a 'blood-sucking' Elektra – was plotting

²⁷ In the view of many critics, the play is full of references and incidents which seek to undermine Klytaimestra's maternal nature; see Ferguson (1972:539), for specific examples.

²⁸ Cf. Sale (1973:8), who argues (based on S. *El.* 379-382 and 657-658) that Klytaimestra wishes for the death of both her children. Cf. Ferguson (1972:540).

²⁹ On Elektra's seriously dysfunctional relationships with all her family members, see Segal (1966:504).

³⁰ Kirkwood (1958:57); Blundell (1989:151); Roisman (2008:107); Perris (2011:6-7). On her conscious suppression of a natural and authentic grief, see Sommerstein (2010b:239).

her death, even in exile, so that she could not sleep easily (775-787); however, her lines actually give no evidence of gloating, but indicate that she is genuinely distressed. For example, she views her preservation through Orestes' death as *κακοῖς*, 'by means of misfortune' (768), not happy accident. If Elektra's misery in living with her father's murderers is real enough (*S. El.* 262-264), then Klytimestra's daily endurance of the angry, obsessively grieving Elektra, alongside the constant expectation of death at her son's hand, is equally obvious to an unbiased audience. Elektra wants only to be accepted (and acceptable) as her father's loyal daughter; to be useful to her father's son and heir is a part of her self-identification; this invites better consideration of what is driving her rejection of her mother, the only biological parent still available to her.

The co-residential presence of the biological mother is one of the consistently minimal necessities predicting offspring survival through childhood (and strongly indicating stepdaughter survival at most ages), but Elektra protests throughout the play that she is the daughter of the father alone, and that her wretched mother is no mother at all (273-274, 597-598, 1194) – even though Elektra is rather more her mother's daughter in character than she herself would care to admit.³¹ The first words of the chorus to Elektra describe her as the 'daughter of a most unfortunate mother' (121-122), but the play makes her conspicuous rejection of her matrilineage a priority; the Paidagogos' opening address to Orestes praises his glorious patrilineage as 'son of Agamemnon, the general of Troy' (1-2), and early in the play Elektra proclaims her allegiance and affection for Agamemnon (86-120). Her mother was of royal lineage, but a father's status and reputation is what matters most in almost all human cultures, and especially in the ancient Greek context.³² But Elektra's listed miseries demonstrate the contradictions of her position as an assassinated – and humiliated – king's daughter: she has lost her father to impious murder by a mother; she is enslaved within her own father's house; although fully mature, she lacks husband and children of her own; and she suffers the absence of Orestes, the one full-blood kinsman who might alleviate all of her sorrows (254-309). But many of these woes are the result of her chosen responses to her situation: even the sympathetic chorus warn her that her persistent, extravagant displays of mourning can have

³¹ On the protective factor of biological parents to offspring in stepfamily marriages, see discussion in Chapter 1, pp. 41n179; 48; 54. On Elektra's actual – and increasing – similarity to her mother, see Scodel (1984:86); Des Bouvrie (1990:257).

³² On the primary descent of the Atreid siblings from the male parent in all of the wider-*Oresteia* plays, see Wheeler (2003:387-388).

no positive effect on her situation (140-143), because her excessive sorrowing is only making things worse for her (217-219).³³ Although the chorus speak out because they care about Elektra's well-being, she rejects their sensible advice to avoid creating misery out of misery (235), and is adamant that she will never cease lamenting (229-232), which is the only proper behaviour of εὐγενῆς γυνή 'the nobly-born woman' (257-260).

According to Elektra, her mother torments her by pointing out that Elektra is not the only one to have lost a dear one, cursing her to be caught in lamentation forever (289-292). Klytaimestra has been mourning her own devastating loss for much longer than Elektra has been lamenting the death of her filicidal father, but Elektra studiously ignores and denies the effect of Iphigeneia's death on her mother.³⁴ Elektra insults her mother – and in direct speech, rather than her hearsay testimony of Klytaimestra's insults – with the accusation that she is more tyrant than mother (597-598). Yet Klytaimestra has prevented Aigisthos from executing Elektra: she has not arranged for the assassination of Orestes; and she lives harmoniously enough with offspring who do not hate her (650-654), even the daughter (Khrysothemis) fathered by her enemy Agamemnon. If Elektra would only curb her endless lamentation, then she would enjoy all of her rightful advantages in life, but in response to the patient and compassionate Khrysothemis' pleas for moderation, Elektra replies that she has nothing to gain from self-restraint, since she lives 'miserably, but sufficiently' (352-354); Khrysothemis points out to Elektra that her life would be more agreeable if only Elektra would think more sensibly (394). Elektra refuses to think sensibly about a good many things, however, including her confused ideas about her family.

Elektra not only insists that Klytaimestra is no mother (1194), but also that she herself was Orestes' real care-giver – even before Agamemnon's death – to the point of claiming that it was she who saved Orestes from murder (1132-1133).³⁵ With the death of her brother, Elektra's nursing investment has now come to nothing; she also denies that any other woman in the whole

³³ On Elektra's mental deformation through unnaturally extended, extreme mourning, see Carson (2009:78).

³⁴ According to Bell (1991:177), the teenage Elektra's experience of her mother's angry infidelity outweighed any negative effect of her sister's murder by their own father; cf. (*S. El.* 585-588). Lack of feeling for female kin is not atypical in women surviving patriarchal social structures; see Blundell (1989:153). On the potentially lethal effects of loss of offspring for women, see Chapter 1, pp. 46-47; 47n215; 55, 64n264.

³⁵ On Sophokles' reinvention of Elektra as nurturer and rescuer of Orestes, see Jones (1962:147); Gantz (1966:676); Lesky (1983b:165); Rosslyn (2000:34).

house was ever as good a nurse as she was to Orestes (1143-1148).³⁶ Elektra is protesting too much: she has never married or borne a child, and so could not have been Orestes' wet-nurse. Nor was she Orestes' primary care-giver, whatever she fondly imagines; some other woman – his real mother, or perhaps a family nurse – bore the major care of the baby. Thus, the years of investment in Orestes by the real parent are denied, and his sister imagines that her little brother lives only because of Elektra's hard work. Critics are often interested in how Klytaimestra violates family relationships, but here Elektra disrupts the natural biological roles in this family: filicides become family heroes, sisters become mothers and brothers become sons, while mothers become enemies and tyrants.³⁷ Familial relationships are further destabilized when the chorus also try to assume the role of Elektra's mother (233-235), while Elektra herself addresses her brother's tutor as father (*S. El.* 1361); the fervent dislocation of Klytaimestra as a mother is a necessary element in Sophokles' *Elektra*'s casual acceptance of matricide.

Critics cannot agree on whether Sophokles' obsessive Elektra is noble or amoral; a long-suffering hero or a psychologically disturbed sociopath.³⁸ While Orestes' vengeance is clearly motivated by dispassionate pragmatism, critics agree that Elektra is driven by excessive, self-destructive emotionalism, and some conclude that emotionality – not revenge – is the real theme of the play.³⁹ Some suggest that Elektra's excessive preoccupation with maternity springs from her thwarted sexuality, and many view her continued lack of a husband – and therefore children – as a very severe deprivation indeed.⁴⁰ Elektra has lost one parent through murder, and will

³⁶ Cf. the Nurse in Aiskhylos' *Khoephoroi*, who also bewails the nil return on her investment. On the uniquely special relationship of (paternal) sister and brother in ancient Greece, see Bremmer (1997).

³⁷ See Blundell (1989:152-153).

³⁸ On the intense critical debate about Elektra's *ethos* and mental condition, see Segal (1966:511-512); Woodard (1966:126); Walton (1980:23); Dihle (1994:112); Ewans (2000b:xxix-xxx, xxxiii-xxxiv); McDonald (2003:57); Wheeler (2003:377); Carson (2009:78). Some (e.g., Bowra (1944) 242, Lucas (1951) 7, and Musurillo (1967) 106-107) refuse to view Elektra as an unattractive character – despite all evidence. Denniston (1939:xxiv, xxviii), for example, maintains that the “beautiful figure” of Elektra is “heroic, but at the same time gentle, loving, and womanly”. On Elektra's stubborn attachment to certain ideas as an admirable force for positive moral change, see McDonald (2003:46); Roisman (2008:98); Lembke and Reckford (2010:14-15); Roisman and Luschnig (2011:31). Whitman (1951:161); Segal (1981:289); and Roisman and Luschnig (2011:248) perceive the ennoblement of Elektra through endurance of suffering, but Grene (1957:124); Jones (1962:147); Segal (1966:506); Kitto (1968:131-132); Gellie (1972:129-130, 218); Kells (1973:10); Lesky (1983b:161); Seaford (1985:315); and Hall (1994:xxiii) conclude that Elektra is corrupted through adversity.

³⁹ Ferguson (1972:538); Gellie (1972:112); Bowman (1997:131). On Elektra's ineffectiveness as typical of impotent and housebound fifth-century women, see Beye (1975:281).

⁴⁰ On the twisting of Elektra's sexuality, see Ferguson (1972:539); Carson (2009:77, 79). On the destruction of her life through lack of children and husband, see Bowra (1944:233); Gellie (1972:109, 120). Cf. Lefkowitz (2007:180), who contends that Elektra is acutely aware that her oppressors fear the birth of a grandson of Agamemnon.

lose the other through her own design; Elektra's desperate desire to be married (and thus produce children) makes sense, because to lose her most socially important parent while still materially dependent is a serious threat to survival and life-time success: with every day that passes, her mother and stepfather fail to arrange her marriage, and Elektra's life-time reproductive prospects diminish, whereas Klytimestra continues to produce children using the resources rightfully belonging to the offspring of Agamemnon.⁴¹ Atreid Elektra's future, after the play's close, would be far from assured.⁴²

Consequently, because vengeance is – in the Greek view – incompatible with femininity, Sophokles maintains sympathy for the maniacal Elektra's lust for revenge through the chorus' repeated exhortations to action, and through emphasis upon her brother the absent heir as the rightful avenger, and upon the unswerving loyalty of Agamemnon's daughter to the dead father.⁴³ Upon hearing of Orestes' death (S. *El.* 764-765), the chorus observes that the whole house is now utterly destroyed. Elektra and Khrysothemis still live and breathe, but any family without a son is ἄπαις, 'childless'. When confronted with the apparent death of Orestes, Elektra begins to view herself – a woman – as the last possible avenger still standing (951-957), but the audience knows that her brother is alive, and will relieve her of this improper, unfeminine obligation.⁴⁴ Elektra, like many women in tragedy, properly supports the male in all things, even though – in the Atreid *oikos* – behaving as a female compliant with the social status-quo is a life-threatening situation.

⁴¹ On the childless Elektra's inability to empathize with an actual mother, see also Kells (1973:10); McClure (2012:374-375). Cf. Finkelberg (2003:368ff, 373, 375-376), who argues that editors of the play generally amend τοκέων, 'parent' to τεκέων, 'youngsters', and that Elektra's much-vaunted regret over childlessness (S. *El.* 187) actually refers to her parentless condition; as Elektra's legal protectors, Klytimestra and Aigisthos have abused their position by failing to negotiate a marriage for her. On the deferral of a coresident daughter's reproductive activity when her mother is still producing children, see Chapter 1, p. 52n253. On the role played by parents in a daughter's marriage in traditional societies, see Chapter 1, pp. 29-30; 30n28; 44.

⁴² On the play's ending and an unsaved Elektra, see McLeish (2003:87); Wright (2005b:192). Cf. Storey and Allan (2005:122) argue that the play ends happily, and Whitman (1951:153), who points out that Sophokles' Elektra achieves all her goals, including the murder of her mother, seemingly without negative consequence. On the lack of consequences for Elektra as active co-perpetrator of the matricide, see Whitman (1951:156). Cf. Gellie (1972:129), who contends that there were no Furies for Elektra in the traditional narrative because she never provided an active hand in the matricide.

⁴³ Gellie (1972:110); Wiersma (1984:48); Burnett (1998:127). See S. *El.* 303, 317-323, 455-456, 604-605.

⁴⁴ See Hdt. 6.38, S. *Ich.* 4; *Eum.* 1034. On Elektra as the second-best option for avenger, see Bowra (1944:229-230).

While her mother's infidelity provokes straightforward outrage, Elektra's defence of the impious sacrifice of her sister by their father is convoluted and unconvincing (563-576); there is no acknowledgment at all in Sophokles' *Elektra*, of Agamemnon's adultery, even from Klytaimestra.⁴⁵ Elektra and Klytaimestra both work to undermine each other's moral position on the family filicide, adultery, and mariticide in their set-piece Great Agon debate.⁴⁶ Elektra's attack on Klytaimestra effectively deflects the attention of the audience away from the contribution to family dysfunction of the persistent Tantalid *ethos*; she maintains killing a husband is much worse than killing a child, and so Klytaimestra must actually have been motivated by adulterous lust (560-562). Elektra's defence of Agamemnon's sacrifice of Iphigeneia (563-576) depends – as she herself notes (566) – on the hearsay account of his accidental offence of Artemis (569-572), although it is unclear if she refers to his boasting or his killing of the stag within the sacred grove. Artemis prevents the fleet from either going on to Troy, or from returning home (573-574). Agamemnon's venial stupidity – all foregrounded in Aiskhylos' *Oresteia* – are absent in this tragedy; in Sophokles' retelling of events, Agamemnon actually wanted to resist the goddess' demand, and so Iphigeneia's death is all Artemis' responsibility (575-576). Lastly, in Elektra's view, even if Agamemnon had acted selfishly in order to advance his brother's cause, Klytaimestra had no good reason – and certainly no law on her side – to have avenged Iphigeneia's death (577-579). Elektra boasts that – if she had had the power to do so – she would have enlisted Orestes to punish her mother (603-605). Klytaimestra remarks to the chorus that Elektra insults her mother when she is old enough to know better, and Elektra agrees that this is all wrong behaviour, but insists that Klytaimestra's *δυσμένεια* 'enmity' is forcing her to such action (617-620); Klytaimestra's sins appear to be offences against Elektra's patrilineal claims to status and social position (586-590), through the diversion of resources into another man's children.⁴⁷ From an evolutionary perspective, Elektra's potential lifetime success as the stepdaughter (of her mother's new husband) is compromised, but, as the publically and steadfastly loyal heiress of her father she stands to benefit socially and materially.

⁴⁵ On Sophokles' *Elektra* as unique in extant classical literature in the concern shown over adultery – even to the point of approving matricide – see Scodel (1984:84); McClure (2012:374-375).

⁴⁶ On the dramatic importance of this *agōn*-scene, see Kirkwood (1958:140); Musurillo (1967:95); Swart (1984).

⁴⁷ On Elektra's complaint about the threat to her own inherited position and family reputation, see also Burnett (1998:137-138), who contends that the exchange of arguments between Elektra and Klytaimestra is incoherent. The exchange *is* coherent if one perceives the dialogue's subtext of reproductive politics, however.

For all that each participant in this *agōn* makes a logical case for their own interests, only one may win. Some argue that Elektra is fairly the victor, but because she cannot discredit Klytaimestra's claim that the murder of Iphigeneia was the main justification for the murder of Agamemnon, Elektra erases the emotional horror of Iphigeneia's murder by refocusing the *agōn* onto Klytaimestra's other offences.⁴⁸ The chorus is well aware of her selective blindness in this respect, responding to Elektra's complaints about the killing of her father (201-212), with a warning that she should keep silence, because she is ignoring the initiating events of her situation, and herself risks adding to the family misfortune (213-216). The audience at this point may be reminded not only of Iphigeneia's sacrifice, but also of the earlier sordid events in the family history – her grandfather Atreus' murder of Thyestes' children, Atreus' rivalry with Thyestes over throne and wife, and Thyestes' adultery with Atreus' wife? Or to great-grandparents Pelops' and Hippodameia's conspiracy to overthrow Hippodameia's father? Or to the first ancestor Tantalos' impious murder of his son, and outrageous taunting of the gods for curiosity's sake alone? That it might easily have been any or all of these woes suggests that Elektra should be very careful indeed about ascribing all of her woes to the actions of her mother, and to Thyestes' son Aigisthos (who had in his own right a duty of revenge against the Atreid line). Only the sacrilegious murder of Iphigeneia can justify Klytaimestra's act as righteous vengeance; the traditional plot demands Klytaimestra's death, under any and all circumstances, and this is why the impiety of the sacrifice as sufficient cause must be revoked.⁴⁹ The intuitively obvious sanctity of the mother-child bond in the context of blood-ties must not outweigh social and divine demands upon Agamemnon, and the emphatic denial of Klytaimestra's claim of loving, motherly attachment to her slain child in Sophokles' play stands in stark contrast to the approaches of Aiskhylos and Euripides to this character.⁵⁰ Yet there are persuasive suggestions in Sophokles' *Elektra* that Klytaimestra's maternal love for her daughter is natural and authentic.

⁴⁸ On Elektra's winning position, see Kitzinger (1991:306); Burnett (1998:137-138). Cf. Wiersma (1984:52), who argues that Klytaimestra's main point of defence – the death of Iphigeneia – (*S. El.* 528, 531-2, 537-541) is rational and in the right, and Segal (1966:536, 1981:251), who concludes that Elektra fails to give a plausible answer to the facts of Agamemnon's filicide. See also Blundell (1989:262).

⁴⁹ On the conventions and terms of the debate, see also De Wet (1977:33); Blundell (1989:267).

⁵⁰ Critics variously account for Sophokles' erasure of Iphigeneia in terms of sympathy for or against Klytaimestra; see Jones (1962:158); Segal (1966:536-537n84); Kitto (1968:137); Otis (1981:4); Lubeck (1993:21); Burnett (1998:137); Scodel (1999:113); Roisman (2008:105).

The proper, patriarchal structure of the *oikos* is one man and his various dependants. As a resident in the foreign *oikos* of her husband, Klytaimestra's original *philo*i are her own relations, her parents, siblings, cousins, and offspring; this natural affiliation constitutes an uneasy challenge to the Greek ideal of a wife's allegiance to a husband's extended patriline, including children unrelated to her personally. Klytaimestra's willingness to see her husband's brother's offspring die instead of her own child may appear hard-hearted, but it is an unconscious calculation based on degree of genetic relation, as when parents spontaneously risk their lives to save their child.⁵¹ Critics sometimes disapprove Klytaimestra's wish that Menelaos' child had died instead of Iphigeneia, but an algorithm of exponentially greater paternal uncertainty suggests that a husband's brother's children are less certainly the first cousins of Klytaimestra's own children; on the other hand, Hermione is also – through her mother Helen – Klytaimestra's matrilineal niece, and thus almost certainly related to her own children, including Elektra – whose allegiance is to the more uncertain patriline rather than to the matriline. Agamemnon – a father prepared to sacrifice his child's life in order to save his social position – is the hard-hearted parent in this family tragedy, but Elektra is so obsessively attached to the idea of paternal infallibility – and maternal shortcomings – that no amount of evidence of his wrongdoing will persuade her away from his cause, least of all the brutal slaughter of her sister. To protect Agamemnon's reputation – her ultimate aim – Elektra must also sacrifice the memory of Iphigeneia.⁵² Elektra becomes an accessory after the fact in the matter of Iphigeneia's death, and her support of her father's act through refusal to acknowledge her sister's suffering confirms once again that she is her father's *philos* first and foremost, and Klytaimestra's *ekthros*: in fact, Elektra actually conceals her father's crime by resorting to a version of the story which denies his wrongdoing.⁵³ Despite the frequent critical view of her as a loving sister, Sophokles' Elektra's love for family is slavish, unrequited devotion to a

⁵¹ On altruism and estimations of degree of relatedness, see Chapter 1, pp. 44-45; 44n198; 52n252; 53; 53n258; 77. In Blundell's (1989:162) opinion, Iphigeneia is more obviously Klytaimestra's *philos* than the unrelated Atreids Agamemnon or Menelaos, or Menelaos' Atreid children will ever be, explaining Klytaimestra's suggestion that one of Menelaos' children ought to have been sacrificed to enable the war.

⁵² On Elektra's conspicuous lack of regret for her sister's brutal death, see Blundell (1989:167); Hall (1994:xxiii); Roisman (2008:105); Sommerstein (2010b:237).

⁵³ One definition of 'criminal accessory' states that "The assistance to the criminal may be of any type, including emotional or financial assistance as well as physical assistance or concealment." <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accessory>, accessed Feb 5, 2016. Cf. Segal (1981:271), who describes Elektra as Agamemnon's staunchest supporter.

brother, and exclusively focussed upon male kin.⁵⁴ Those reading Elektra as sweet and noble would do well to consider her interactions with her only living full-blood sister, Khrysothemis, a model of self-restraint and careful forethought; Elektra abuses her gentle spirit, and is only civil to her when Khrysothemis – against her better judgement – takes up Elektra’s hopeless cause. Khrysothemis’ character is also commentary on Elektra’s dangerous lack of self-awareness and her self-destructive attachment to her father; Khrysothemis does not interact at all with Orestes, or with her mother Klytaimestra, but her mother’s reference to children who do not hate her likely refers to this mild-natured daughter. This self-controlled, tender-hearted Khrysothemis is unique to Sophokles’ version of the story, and she offers a dramatically significant contrast to Elektra in two major scenes, described below.⁵⁵ On every count, the calm, considered views of Khrysothemis – an utterly atypical Atreid – serve to show Elektra as a dangerous extremist.

While Elektra struggles to control her emotional outbursts – even when her brother and the Paidagogos order her to do so – Khrysothemis’ first speech points out that emotionally self-indulgent outbursts achieve nothing good, and raging against those in power results only in loss of freedom (330-340). In reply to Khrysothemis’ sensible warning, Elektra insists that defending her father’s honour is more important to her than her own life (398-399), and Elektra disparages Khrysothemis’ refusal to renounce her maternal descent in favour of patrilineal affiliation (364-368).⁵⁶ Despite Elektra’s cruel accusations, Khrysothemis reassures the chorus that she is accustomed to her sister’s verbal abuse; furthermore, she would not have bothered Elektra, but did so only to warn her of coming danger (372-375). Elektra’s berating of Khrysothemis positions the whole world as full of enemies, and if Khrysothemis is not with her (and thus with father Agamemnon), then she must be for the mother (341-344). Alongside her potentially self-destructive obsession with Agamemnon’s honour, Sophokles’ Elektra demonstrates a degree of paranoia, narcissism, perhaps even sociopathy; Elektra’s conversation with her sister also shows that she is a hypocrite; from her very first appearance Elektra has bewailed her lowered standard of living, yet, in response to Khrysothemis’ plea for more

⁵⁴ On the “gentle, loving, and womanly” Elektra, see Denniston (1939:xxviii). On Elektra’s sweet femininity, see Musurillo (1967:106-107). Lesky (1983b:195) argues that Sophokles’ Elektra rivals Antigone as an example of sisterly love.

⁵⁵ On Khrysothemis as the foil for the aggressive Elektra, see Gantz (1966:681).

⁵⁶ On Khrysothemis’ hesitation and the problem of maternal heredity, cf. McClure (2012:372).

moderate behaviour, Elektra boasts that she does not yearn for comfortable living (361-363).⁵⁷ Elektra is psychologically unstable long before the matricide occurs, but Khrysothemis is a consistently rational, compassionate young woman: even the chorus suggests that if only Elektra could learn some sense from Khrysothemis – and she from Elektra – they might both profit (369-371). Elektra’s interest in her sister is purely instrumental, however.

The cold condescension of this woman – admired by some as “gentle and loving” – toward the sweet-hearted Khrysothemis disappears only after her sister offers welcome news about Klytaimestra’s nightmare: Elektra suddenly addresses her as ‘dear one’ (431), in an attempt to persuade Khrysothemis to disobey her mother’s directions to offer libations at Agamemnon’s tomb. This affectionate endearment appears again as she tries to persuade Khrysothemis to Elektra’s scheme to murder Klytaimestra and Aigisthos (986) which would benefit (and save) them both; being nobly-born, they suffer through their father Agamemnon’s dishonour (987-989). Through moderate behaviour Khrysothemis has already saved herself, however; if this sensible Atreid daughter throws her lot in with the dangerously unstable Elektra (and with their dead father and apparently dead brother), she will doom herself to certain death, because the proposed plan will certainly fail (1026).

Elektra views Khrysothemis’ prudent forethought as cowardice (1027), as do some critics, who contrast the cowardly sister with the brave, but Khrysothemis is no coward: she stands up to her ungrateful sister quite without fear, warning her of the likely punishment for excessive mourning (379-384).⁵⁸ In fact, in Greek terms, Khrysothemis is the ideal wife and daughter-in-law, possessing a proper woman’s prudent morality as well as highest-status patrilineage.⁵⁹ The imprudent Elektra is not interested in saving her own life by behaving sensibly; rather, her reply to the impending punishment (387) is to the effect of ‘the sooner, the better’; Elektra’s imprisonment awaits only the arrival of Aigisthos, which she welcomes. Once she surrenders to Elektra’s persuasion, Khrysothemis also bravely withholds the queen’s offerings for the tomb

⁵⁷ On Elektra’s mental pathology, see Chapter 3, p. 232n154. On her hypocrisy, see Elektra’s statement on her sufficient living (354).

⁵⁸ On the morally inferior Khrysothemis, see Whitman (1951:156); Kirkwood (1958:137-139); Kitto (1958:10); Easterling (1977:124). On the kindly, sensible and straightforward Khrysothemis as the foil to Elektra’s reckless and stubborn foolishness, see Kirkwood (1958:229); Gellie (1972:189); Blundell (1989:161); Lloyd-Jones (1994:3-4); Ewans (2000a:41, 2000b:xxix); Wright (2005b:179-180); Roisman (2008:102-103). See also Plato, *Meno* (71e-73b).

⁵⁹ Cf. Conacher (1967:202), who describes the nubile Khrysothemis as all that a young girl should be.

(468-471), despite the risk of Klytaimestra's displeasure. By the end of the sisters' second conversation, however, there can be no further reconciliation: Khrysothemis refuses to help in the killing of her mother and stepfather, and Elektra cannot comprehend her sister's sensible advice (1032, 1039, 1048-1050, 1055-1057).⁶⁰ In keeping with the EP/narratology view,⁶¹ while Elektra is a fictional character, her apparent inflexibility reflects the typical process of 'escalating commitment' or 'sunk-costs' fallacy: having invested years in enraged lamentation, she cannot back out of the dangerous corner she now finds herself in. Once Elektra resolves to attempt the assassinations by herself, nothing and nobody can restrain her (1045-1049). In Elektra's opinion, Khrysothemis's reticence contributes to Elektra's dishonour (1035), even though Khrysothemis is acting out of care for her foolish sister (1036). True communication between the sisters is impossible because Elektra lacks objective insight into her own fanaticism, and into the moral harm of matricide (1038-1049), but Khrysothemis bears Elektra no malice, refusing to divulge her sister's plan to her mother (1033-1034), and thus saving her angry sister's life. Khrysothemis observes that what Elektra says is 'doing right' must result in self-harm (1042), but Elektra refuses to acknowledge her advice (1043). The Greeks aspired to harm their enemies, and to help their friends. Harming oneself would therefore only help one's enemy; Khrysothemis's attempts to save Elektra from herself are the actions of a friend.

Inconveniently for those who argue that Klytaimestra in this play is evil because she is a bad mother, Khrysothemis' liberty confirms that Klytaimestra and Aigisthos are willing to incorporate Agamemnon's children into present family life: Elektra's disruptive dissatisfaction toward her mother and stepfather is an optional position.⁶² In the wake of Khrysothemis's refusal to join in with Elektra's plan to assassinate their mother the chorus observes that the young of birds take care to sustain their own parents (1058-1065). Birds, of course, do not behave like this; only some few of the so-called higher mammals – elephants, cetaceans, primates etc – provide anything like care for parents, or grandparents. It is not Khrysothemis's reverence for a parent that is in question, but her choice of which parent, in this case, the mother over the father. The chorus' observations on the proper respect shown by avian offspring toward their begetters (1058-1062) suggests that Sophokles' play has something to say about idealized family relations, but Elektra's respect for her parents is necessarily divided; the Atreid

⁶⁰ On sunk-costs, see also Chapter 2, p. 119n120.

⁶¹ On literary realism and cognitive processing of character and plot, see discussion in Introduction, pp. 8-9.

⁶² On the very different experiences of Elektra and Khrysothemis within the same family, see Sewell (2007:154); Rabinowitz (2008:126).

siblings clearly inherit aspects of their *ethos* – or *phusis*, ‘nature’, from both of their parents, not just from the father.⁶³

Elektra shares many aspects of her personality with her mother, and the characterization of Khrysothemis also suggests that Klytaimestra’s *ethos* of patience and compassion was transmitted to at least one of her children, but Klytaimestra’s capacity to carry out a plan has been handed on to another of her children by Agamemnon: Orestes. Upon arriving at the Atreid palace, the Paidagogos advises Orestes that they must not hesitate, but should act at once (21-22). Orestes agrees that the time for action has come, and that the proper moment determines all action (75-76). Sophokles’ Orestes may be firm of purpose, but he is just as self-centred as Elektra, and is a poor example of a loving brother, revealing his true identity only after long delay, and an entirely gratuitous testing of the miserable Elektra’s loyalty (1223). Elektra, who quite fails to recognize this grown man, requires no better fulfilment of her desperate patrilineal ambitions than his evidence of identity – his father’s σφραγῖδα ‘seal or signet’ (1223) – and her self-surrender to the returned Atreid patriarch is fervent. All of their pointless exchange contributes nothing to the action, but the scene’s palaver does reveal the true natures of the matricidal Atreids. Orestes’ muted responses to her declarations of joy indicate that he has himself fully under control (assuming that he feels any happiness in need of suppression); rather than being the traditional helpmeet of myth, Elektra now becomes a potential hindrance to action.

Having described their mutual relationship as φίλτατον ‘dearest’ (1224, 1233), the rightful head of the house Orestes immediately begins to order her about (1236), explaining that he does not want anyone inside the house to overhear them (1238); in fact, it was he himself who dangerously prolonged their conversation, drawing out her ignorance of his true identity (1205-1222), and his own utterances have been as long and loud as hers were. Elektra declares that Orestes’ arrival has ‘set her lips free’ (1256), but her previous complaints (along with Khrysothemis’ testimony) demonstrate that her lips have already been rather too free; Orestes insists that the only way to guard the freedom to speak is by not speaking (1259), but Elektra simply cannot keep quiet (1254-1263), and Orestes tries again to calm her excessive joy (1271-

⁶³ According to some, Elektra exemplifies (albeit exclusively in respect of her father) the bird who nurtures its own parent; see Segal (1966:488); Gellie (1972:121); Harder (1995:26). Cf. Segal (1966:492), who suggests that literary references to birds in ancient Greece are rarely happy allusions. Segal (1966:499) also observes that Elektra is more like her female parent than she can perceive. On Sophokles’ interest in *phusis*, see Blundell (1988).

1272), and forestall her delaying speeches, but Elektra has so much more to share (1281-1287); finally, he commands her to exercise some self-control and curb her superfluous speech, because it is endless reiteration of the obvious which thwarts the moment for action (1288-1300). Orestes' request is, of course, completely ignored and, over the course of the next 21 lines, Elektra joyfully reiterates every obvious thing: Aigisthos is absent; Klytaimestra is in the house; and she herself is deliriously happy, but will conceal this joy from her hated mother (1301-1321). The rest is all emotive indulgence, which Orestes has on several occasions ordered her to constrain. All this she concludes with the invitation to Orestes to command her, because without him, she had only two choices, to die with honour, or save herself through revenge (1319-1321); yet she has upon meeting him ignored all of his commands. Orestes' brusque response (1322) – unsurprisingly – commands her to keep silent. At this point things are so bad that the Atreid retainer feels obliged to step in.⁶⁴

The Paidagogos admonishes both children, calling them the greatest of stupid fools, lacking inborn sense to save their own lives (1326-1328); his advice is simple (and by now formulaic) – delay brings danger, and now is the time for action (1337-1338). The Paidagogos' quick update on the state of the house within manages to get matters back on track, but Elektra immediately derails the action once again, failing to recognize the very man to whom she entrusted the life of her little brother (1344-1352). Although both Orestes and the Paidagogos have ordered Elektra to silence, upon hearing the servant's story she launches into what might be the most absurd speech in extant tragedy (1354-1363). The Paidagogos' embarrassed response is gives no evidence at all that he is even slightly pleased to be reunited with her (1364-1371); he curtly informs her that she has said quite enough (1364), then proceeds – once again – to recommend immediate action (1369). Neither of these men have any kind words for Elektra: to Orestes she is simply a distracting nuisance, and even the family servant is rude to this obstructive daughter of the house. Orestes, while still incognito, cruelly and quite gratuitously remarked upon her ruined body and miserable, unmarried state (1181-1183), unkind and unnecessary jibes which cut to the heart of Elektra's complaint about her life. Nor was there any actual need for Orestes to prolong her distress over the urn (1205-1222). If he had disclosed his true identity much more promptly, the revengers' plot might have proceeded

⁶⁴ Cf. Bowman (1997:148), who views the silencing of Elektra as necessary to accomplishing the true *telos* of the vengeance: Aigisthos' death. Ewans (2000b:xxxiv) likens the character of the old Paidagogos to contemporary political amoralists. Cf. March (2001:12), who argues that Orestes is the vengeance's central planner; on Elektra as the director and Orestes as instrument of matricide, see Musurillo (1967:108); Sommerstein (2010b:246-247).

with her immediate inside assistance. Elektra's complaint to the chorus (166-172) about her brother's messages confirms that Orestes had ample time to test her loyalties long before his arrival; he chose not to let her know he was coming.⁶⁵ What he has revealed is his inherited Atreid *ethos*: a pragmatic attitude toward female members of the family as useful tools, rather than as *philoï* deserving of gentle affection.

Klytaimestra's and Agamemnon's son possesses many of their least attractive characteristics, and some critics view this Orestes as decidedly full of ignoble motives.⁶⁶ Others agree that Sophokles' tragedy works hard to downplay Orestes' oracular compulsion to matricide, his subsequent madness, and his persecution by the Erinyes.⁶⁷ Sophokles' matricidal Orestes is also unique in his preferred sequence of revenge killings: in Aiskhylos and Euripides, Aigisthos is killed first, making the killing of the mother the narrative climax of the action, but Sophokles' Klytaimestra is killed first, and Aigisthos – the principal antagonist in this *Elektra* – is still living by the close of the play, marched away to be executed off-stage.⁶⁸ Many critics accept the official Atreid line that Aigisthos is a cruel tyrant, but Elektra's reference (203-206) to the unspeakable feast at which her father was killed by two hands – presumably Klytaimestra and Aigisthos – also evokes the other unspeakable feast in the family history, a crime committed by Agamemnon's father against the family of Aigisthos.⁶⁹ According to Elektra, Aigisthos insults Atreid honour because he sits on the throne and sleeps with Agamemnon's wife in Agamemnon's bed (266-274). There are problems with reflexive critical dislike of an evil Aigisthos who deserves his fate, however, not least because the murder of adulterers was just and permissible in ancient Athens only when an adulterer was caught in the act, which is not the case in this play. Furthermore, critical dislike of Aigisthos assumes that Klytaimestra's participation in infidelity for reasons of her own is irrelevant; and, more significantly, the focus

⁶⁵ On Orestes' prolonged delay in revealing his identity to Elektra, see Gellie (1972:123); Wright (2005b:188-189). On the dysfunctional relationship between the indifferent, emotionally cruel Orestes and Elektra, see Wright (2005b:186); cf. Burnett (1998:129) and Roisman (2008:109-110), who insist that Orestes demonstrates real affection and sympathy for his distressed sister.

⁶⁶ For highly negative views of Orestes, see Lesky (1983b:161); Hall (2010:312); Roisman and Luschnig (2011:247, 256). Cf. Roisman (2008:96), who argues that, although he is a deceitful opportunist, Orestes is also respectful, commanding, logical, and temperate, and McDonald (2003:57-58), who warns that an ancient audience would have approved Orestes' utilitarian tactics.

⁶⁷ Grene (1957:123); Stevens (1978:116); Winnington-Ingram (1980:229).

⁶⁸ On Sophokles' new sequence of the deaths of Klytaimestra and Aigisthos and audience perception of the matricide; see Burton (1980:220); Blundell (1989:181); Bowman (1997:143); Konstan (2008:78). On Aigisthos as the principal villain of the play, see Gellie (1972:128).

⁶⁹ Ferguson (1972:547); De Wet (1977:26, 31); Burnett (1998:135).

on adultery ignores the ways in which Sophokles erases Iphigeneia's sacrifice as cause of Klytaimestra's mariticide. Critical focus on this play's unusually powerful Aigisthos – in contrast to Aiskhylos' cowardly lion, and Euripides' pious host – also fails to explain the excessive violence of the children's murder of their mother Klytaimestra, while the still-living Aigisthos exits intact at the play's close.⁷⁰

The inevitably immoral behaviour of the Atreid matricides is something this *Elektra* cannot exonerate, however, despite the conspicuous omission of Orestes' madness as a consequence of mother-murder, and some critics also conclude that the vengeful Elektra bears at least equal moral responsibility for Klytaimestra's killing.⁷¹ In Sophokles' retelling the queen's impassioned appeal to pity is answered only by brutal taunts from the chorus and Elektra, and Elektra urges her brother to strike her mother twice as hard (1410-1415).⁷² When Elektra prays that the gods will punish the treacherous hands who dealt death (205-212), she refers to Klytaimestra and Aigisthos, but – as the audience familiar with earlier *Oresteia* works is aware – it is the treacherous hands of her matricidal brother which will attract punishing deities. This scion of the self-destroying Tantalid *oikos* cannot see that murdering her own mother will invite further suffering into the family, but instead insists that to leave her father's murder unavenged would signify 'the end of piety among mortals' (245-250). Elektra persistently complains that Agamemnon was murdered dishonourably and immorally through trickery (122-127, 193-200), yet Orestes freely accepts Apollo's directive that Orestes must accomplish a righteous revenge through cunning and alone (although the Paidagogos, Pylades, and Elektra are all essential accomplices) (32-37). Aigisthos' last speeches (1493-1494, 1497-1498) – words which Elektra warned he must not be allowed to utter (1493-1494) – remind the audience that his execution will take place dishonourably in darkness, and Orestes' reply does not contest this accusation (1495-1496). The children's protestations about upholding Atreid honour cannot be accepted at face-value, and there are other, more likely (although less noble) motivations behind their actions.

⁷⁰ Although Aigisthos' hand slew Agamemnon, Klytaimestra was the target of greater hatred because, as a wife with access to his person, she enabled an enemy to assassinate her husband; her unconcealed sexual infidelity (from Elektra, at least) increases her children's hatred of her. Sommerstein (2010b:239-240) points out that Orestes' secret messages to his sister appear to focus the revenge upon Klytaimestra alone.

⁷¹ Whitman (1951:168); Kirkwood (1958:35); Gellie (1972:127); De Wet (1977:35); Kitlinger (1991:326).

⁷² Klytaimestra's first horrified cry reveals that her honoured guests have betrayed the hospitality of her house (S. *El.* 1404-1405). She immediately calls for the protection of Aigisthos (1409), whereas the queen in Aiskhylos' *Khoephoroi* called for a man-killing axe as she was being attacked.

Some insist that Sophokles approves the matricides' revenge, but this play offers no reassurance that the matricide is morally righteous.⁷³ The ambiguity of the oracle's advice is demonstrated in the anxious exchange between the siblings after the murder of their mother – they worry that things are only well if Apollo has prophesied well (1424-1425), which suggests that Apollo has the capacity to prophesy badly.⁷⁴ Klytaimestra and Aigisthos are the enemies in this narrative, and Sophokles and Aiskhylos both appear to be enthusiastic militarists who supported the killing of political enemies; according to the Atreid children, their personal enemies are also usurpers and political tyrants to boot. There is therefore no moral ambiguity in Orestes' and Elektra's bloody assassination of their father's killers: it is only the blood-relationship between the children and their slain mother which complicates the otherwise righteous vengeance: this is why Klytaimestra's death is less focal than the play's culminating indictment of Aigisthos.⁷⁵ Still, some suggest that Sophokles ignores the problem of matricide in order to draw attention to issues of speech, action, truth, and lies;⁷⁶ others conclude that the message of this play is that bloody restoration of rulership is inherently polluting of those who enact it.⁷⁷

Vengeance in Sophokles' *Elektra* is clearly of considerable thematic importance, but the Atreid siblings' very pragmatic approach to family wealth and power is surprisingly under-discussed, and some struggle with the undeniable prominence of the Atreid children's financial motivation to matricide, perhaps viewing it as ignoble.⁷⁸ Elektra's motivations are just as materialistic as her brother's; in fact, there are many more references within the play to material inheritance

⁷³ Musurillo (1967:104); Sale (1973:1-2); Winington-Ingram (1983c:216); Blundell (1989:150). Cf. Burnett (1998:138), who contends that the success of Elektra's and Orestes' plot for revenge confounds critics who want to believe that the aim of tragedy is to condemn violence. The matricide is accomplished with little fuss in Sophokles' play, and with few qualms. For explanations of this, see Gellie (1972:127); Burnett (1998:140).

⁷⁴ This supports a view of this play as preceding Euripides' *Elektra*, in which the Disokuri observe that Apollo did indeed prophesy badly.

⁷⁵ In Lesky's (1983b:167) opinion, critics ignore the moral problem of matricide in favour of focus upon the suffering of a great soul. Cf. Goldhill (1992:94), who concludes that the play addresses Elektra's madness, not moral justice. See also Roisman (2008:106) and Hall (2010:313), who argue that the play does not condemn the matricide per se, but simply raises questions about the children's role in it. In Burton's (1980:224) opinion, just vengeance is the dramatic plot's moral focus. Cf. Kirkwood (1958:34), who argues that vengeance is not the central theme in Sophokles' *Elektra* as it is in Aiskhylos' *Oresteia*.

⁷⁶ Ferguson (1972:536); Kitzinger (1991:299).

⁷⁷ Segal (1966:523-524); Ewans (2000b:xx).

⁷⁸ On the pragmatic materialism of Orestes (and Elektra), see Bowra (1944:247); Lucas (1951:8); Segal (1966:513); De Wet (1977:28-29); Sorum (1982:210); Burnett (1998:139n62). On the Greek respect for the acquisition of material goods, see Perikles' Funeral Oration (*Thouk.* 2.35-46). See also Xenophon's description of the proper wife's important function: to guard the household's material goods (*Oik.* 7.25).

than to the children's inherited *ethos*, and everybody in the play is manifestly concerned with who will secure control over the enormous family fortune.⁷⁹ Just as Orestes wants to regain his material inheritance (resources), Elektra wants to win a high-value mate (i.e., with resources), points which are overlooked, despite their textual prominence, and probably also their pertinence in the minds of the original Greek audience. For example, even Klytaimestra's prayer to Apollo makes enjoyment of that Mycenaean wealth a key element in her hopes for freedom from troubles (648-654). Orestes' first speech implores the gods to let him regain control of his riches (72), the same great gold of Mycenae that the Paidagogos gloried over in the first few lines of the play (9). Orestes also resents the misappropriation of his wealth by father's cousin Aigisthos (1289-1291). Elektra expects to goad Khrysothemis into action with the fact that they are both dispossessed of the wealth which should be theirs (959-960); her attempt to persuade Khrysothemis to her cause (448-458) naturally assumes that the long-dead Agamemnon will want to assist them in order to ensure his status in Hades through future rich offerings for himself from his living descendants. Status is also undoubtedly a paramount motivation for Elektra, and her antipathy for the woman who has cast her aside and jeopardized her social standing is central to the play; Agamemnon's children cannot benefit after his death from his status because his social reputation has been undermined through being killed by a mere woman. Furthermore, some conclude that Elektra's hatred of her mother is also rooted in Klytaimestra's personal failures in motherhood and marriage, but Klytaimestra in this play is presently a good wife to Aigisthos and mother of their offspring – within her new family.⁸⁰ Reference to the children produced by Klytaimestra and Aigisthos – rivals for the household resources – casts new light on Elektra's urgent desire to be married (with the inevitable transfer of family wealth). Sophokles' attribution of existing children to the union of Klytaimestra and Aigisthos opens the possibility of future conflict and bloodshed; some suggest that lost tragedies – *Erigone*, for example – may address the vengeance of the children of Aigisthos and Klytaimestra against Agamemnon's offspring.⁸¹

The possession of wealth and status is a mixed blessing, however. The aristocratic house requires intense effort to maintain position and reputation, and the proper duty of the aristocratic

⁷⁹ On Elektra's desire to regain family wealth and attain fame, rather than any pursuit of justice, according to some; see Jones (1962:148-149); Blundell (1989:156); Rabinowitz (2000:128-129).

⁸⁰ Segal (1981:261). On Klytaimestra's authentic maternal feeling; see Norwood (1948:144); Kirkwood (1958:93); Woolf (1966:123); Lesky (1983b:163); Kells (1973:7); Segal (1981:260); Budelmann (2000:66, 71).

⁸¹ Hall (1994:xxiii; 2010:312-313); Sommerstein (2010b:249).

child is to uphold the honour of the *oikos*, and increase its *kleos*. As the Paidagogos observes, Orestes' patrimony is one equally prosperous in gold and disasters (11-14), and Orestes has been reared from childhood to the single purpose of eliminating his mother and her lover and restoring his house. The chorus' commentary on nurture, family, and social status also observes that those who are nobly born are compelled to seek out more glory, even if this means a life of misery (1082-1089). Elektra's attempt to persuade Khrysothemis to join her little conspiracy (968-985) depends heavily on the desirability of undying *kleos*, 'fame', which will accrue to them if they succeed, winning them both suitable marriages (971), along with honour at feasts, and social recognition by other courageous citizens. While *kleos* is often translated as 'fame', it also involves an evaluative element of reputation, and respect; aristocratic power is secured through public perceptions that the family is willing and able to enforce respect for their privileged position, and when position is lost – as Elektra's sad fate demonstrates – a family's wealth and power must be reinstated (1090-1092). The Atreid heirs must demonstrate that they have the will to avenge their father's honour and win back the right to rule.⁸² In fact, Orestes' and Elektra's campaign to regain their patrimony is entirely right and proper, as the absence of the Furies at the ending of Sophokles' *Elektra* suggests; the failure of Klytaimestra's avenging hounds to appear further implies that the children's vengeance is also righteous in the context of adultery.⁸³

Although Klytaimestra lives in the palace with Aigisthos for ten years after the death of Agamemnon, no Erinyes has ever attempted to bring Klytaimestra to account for either her murder of Agamemnon (275-276), or for her sexual relationship with her husband's cousin and usurper. Klytaimestra believes that the gods have saved her (280-281), because she is buying them off every month with sacrificial offerings but perhaps the Furies simply have no legitimate reason to persecute her.⁸⁴ The Erinyes' traditional, sacred duty is the pursuit of kin-killers, but Klytaimestra has killed no kin, only an unrelated individual who had murdered his (and her) own blood-kin. Yet Elektra insists that the gods must be on her side: calling upon the gods of

⁸² On the need for high-status ruling families to demonstrate their willingness to avenge insults and so retain their reputation for effectiveness, see Chapter 1, pp. 18-19; 35n134; 70n360.

⁸³ Critics disagree on why Sophokles omits the Furies from his version of the story; see Kirkwood (1958:66); Jones (1962:149); Bowman (1997:147); Wright (2005b:173); Sewell-Rutter (2007:103, 133-134). Some suggest that Elektra is the designated Fury in this play, as Klytaimestra was in the *Agamemnon*; see Bowra (1944:259); Winnington-Ingram (1980:233); Rosslyn (2000:36); Storey and Allan (2005:122). Cf. Klytaimestra's alarming description of Elektra as drinking her life-blood (784-786).

⁸⁴ In all probability, the ancient Greeks might also have agreed that gods – who often took sides – were backing the queen and her lover.

the underworld – Hades, Persephone, and Hermes – she ascribes to the Erinyes the duty of punishing those who commit secret adultery (110-114); she calls upon them to avenge the murder of her father, because this murder was ἀδίκως ‘unlawfully’ committed as part of the adultery (115-116). Elektra cannot invoke the Erinyes in their traditional role as avengers of blood-murder because the only traditionally polluting murder among the Pelopids in this generation was of Iphigeneia, by the very man she now wishes to avenge.⁸⁵ If the traditional Erinyes will not pursue Klytaimestra for husband-murder, then let there be a new sort of Fury, to avenge disrespect for the laws of marriage; the Atreid-loving chorus agrees that the Furies will come to avenge a ‘polluted’ bed (489-494). The choral ode to nurturance and family suggests that Elektra as a loyal daughter has the right (and perhaps obligation) to enlist the help of the ‘twin Erinyes’ to avenge the adulterous-murder (1078-1081); the identity of this pair is later confirmed in the chorus’s description of Orestes and Pylades as κύνες ‘hounds’, entering into the fabulously wealthy paternal *oikos* to prepare the slaughter of Klytaimestra (1388-1393). Agamemnon’s son and Agamemnon’s nephew are both prepared to uphold the honour of their house, and restore the family’s fortunes, but references to their shared ancestor Pelops and the curse upon the rich patrilineal house throughout the play are never coincidental, and evoke specific associations and meanings at strategic moments in the narrative.

The house’s forefathers – Tantalos, Pelops, and Atreus – all betray those who trusted in them, and patrilineal descendants Agamemnon and Orestes also deceive and exploit the trust of *philoï* in order to commit kin-murder.⁸⁶ As soon as Klytaimestra appears in *Elektra*, she refers to the latest Pelopid crime: Agamemnon’s sacrifice of Iphigeneia; the chorus’s preceding allusion to Pelops’ dire influence upon the land, through Myrtilos’ curse upon him and the house (502-515) shows that Agamemnon is also a criminal with the same family *ethos*.⁸⁷ The Paidagogos’ opening reference to the magnificent gold of Mycenae is followed in the next breath with his observation that the house of Pelops – which owns that gold – is πολύφθορόν ‘rife with ruin’ (8-10). According to the mythic corpus, Pelops had at least twelve legitimate sons, but his son

⁸⁵ The only murder in this generation if one excludes Agamemnon’s murder of his patrilineal cousin Tantalos, who was Klytaimestra’s first husband.

⁸⁶ For the many inter-generational crimes of the House of Tantalos, see accounts in Chapter 2, pp. 96-97; 120n125; Chapter 3, pp. 214-215; 254n213, and the Conclusion, pp. 296-297.

⁸⁷ The play’s reference to Μυρτίλος ἐκοιμάθη (S. *El.* 509) is generally translated as ‘Myrtilos fallen into sleep’, but this fails to acknowledge the passive ἐκοιμάθη, the 3rd sg. aor. ind. pass. of κοιμάω, ‘lull, put to sleep’; Myrtilos did not ‘fall’, but was pushed (by Pelops) into ‘sleep’ in the deeps of the sea. According to Burton (1980:201n22), Sophokles’ lost *Oinamaos* and Euripides’ extant *Orestes* both attribute the family’s woes to Pelops’ chariotteering.

Atreus manages only two, Agamemnon only one, and Menelaos no legitimate sons at all (only two bastards, by slaves): the house becomes *apais* ‘childless’ with every successive generation.⁸⁸ The preservation of the family in the *oikos* – exemplified here by Orestes – was an overwhelming Greek cultural imperative; the threatened destruction of the *oikos* is one of the chief themes in tragedy, and Sophokles’ *Elektra* no less so.⁸⁹ Orestes is well aware of the consequences of the ancestral curse, but still begs the gods’ assistance in regaining control of that house, along with all its riches (67-72).⁹⁰ Chronic family breakdown in this family, it seems, is a small price to pay for ongoing wealth and power. Orestes may say that he comes to as a just cleanser to the house (69-70), but his act of matricide exacerbates family breakdown. Aigisthos – just as much a beneficiary of the double-edged inheritance of Pelops’ *phusis* as Orestes himself is – enquires whether his execution should take place within a house already greatly burdened by the sorrows of the Pelopids (1497-1498), and Orestes can offer no justification to this pointed question, beyond that it will at least witness Aigisthos’ woe (1499).

The family woes will not end with Aigisthos’ death, however: Orestes’ troubles are only going to get worse. Orestes’ observation as Aigisthos is led away is thus doubly ironic: he declares that ‘bitter death’ is the only fitting punishment for those acting ‘outside of the law’, and the best deterrent for further crime (1506-1507). But – according to this play – the only law that Aigisthos has broken is that of the so-called sanctity of marriage; his murder of Agamemnon – the son of his father’s enemy – is completely legitimate under Greeks revenge-conventions, and his recovery of the throne his father once claimed is an essential element of his vengeance. The chorus’ joyful closing refrain – ‘O Seed of Atreus, after many sufferings, through freedom you have now come to your uttermost end!’ (1508-1510) – is therefore utterly misplaced. Orestes is not free; he will pay a bitter price for his crime of matricide and the sufferings afflicting the house will continue. The uttermost end of his act is yet to come: he will be pursued by the Furies, because, as the audience was well aware, these deities exist to avenge blood-murder, and not – as some in the play insist – adultery. Pelopid Orestes is willing to take the family curse along with the family power and gold, and so things will inevitably end badly for him; nothing turns out well for Elektra either: the *Elektra* ends as it begins, with Elektra alone,

⁸⁸ On the utterly dysfunctional and monstrous Pelopid lineage, see Wright (2005b:178, 193-194).

⁸⁹ Segal (1981:256) observes that almost all the play’s odes address the destruction of an *oikos*. In Patterson’s (2012:387) opinion, this play charts the destruction of both households and marriages.

⁹⁰ The play opens and closes with references to the house of Pelops (the father of Atreus), specifically to its wealth, and its curse; see Segal (1966:528-529).

outside the paternal *oikos*. According to the chorus, Orestes is the last of the Pelopid house (765). Yet the chorus also declares that Elektra shares her ancestry with sisters Khrysothemis and Iphianassa (154-163): only when it seems that her brother – the last real Pelopid – is no longer alive (and only then) Elektra herself – a woman – shoulders the inherited obligation to seek vengeance (951-957).⁹¹

Sophokles' *Elektra* is concerned with the dreadful threat to proper, patrilineal transmission of an *oikos*' wealth and influence from those who εὐνὰς ὑποκλεπτομένους/ ἔλθετ', 'secretly seize the beds', that is, engage in secret adultery (114-115). The chorus urge courage and patience (173-179), but Elektra's youthful blossom is long withered, and she still has no husband or children (185-188); according to the chorus (764-765), ignoring the existence of the full-blood Atreids Elektra and Khrysothemis (and perhaps also Iphianassa), the patriline will die out with the apparent death of Orestes. Khrysothemis is aware of her obligation to protect the patrilineage, urging Elektra to exercise self-control and to cease her inflammatory outbursts, lest they perish completely, and the family line be lost (1009-1011), which certainly implies that women can somehow transmit the patrilineage. Both sisters appear to think that daughters do possess the power to transmit something important (1009-1011). Neither sister is married; one of Elektra's principal complaints is that she is being prevented from producing an Atreid child because Aigisthos will not permit any potential avenger to be conceived (958-966). Elektra claims that Khrysothemis also laments her increasing age, lack of marriage and children, and the alienation of family wealth (959-966), but we never actually witness Khrysothemis complaining or even expressing the same regret that Elektra does about these things. The potential reproductive contribution of their sister Iphianassa – briefly mentioned by the chorus (158) – does not appear to count for much. News of Orestes' death is a terrible blow for the *epikleros* Elektra, a woman with her most fertile years behind her, and one who is already in crisis about the breakdown of the family patriline; in the absence of the male heir, she must now take full responsibility for preserving the Pelopid seed. Elektra is desperate to be the *philos* of the noble Agamemnon, and eager to exterminate her *ekthros* Klytaimestra; her unreasonably excessive hatred for her mother is the natural obverse of excessive or over-functioning devotion to her irrationally idealized father. The greatest moral problem raised by

⁹¹ On the transmission of the duty to vengeance to the deceased Orestes' sisters, see De Wet (1977:28-29).

the play is the devastation of endless blood-letting within the family; when one's *philois* becomes one's hated *ekthros*, an *oikos* becomes its own worst enemy.⁹²

This study of Sophokles' *Elektra* has illustrated – through the examples outlined above – the incompatibility between women's roles as wives within an androcentric culture and women's desire to raise children to maturity: Klytaimestra does not desire, despite considerable provocation, to kill those of her *philois* who are also *ekthrois* – Orestes and Elektra – but in real-life family reconstructions, it is not uncommon for women to support a new husband (and her offspring with him) over the demands and expectations of previous children; infanticide or filicide through neglect in these circumstances – even by biological mothers – is not unknown.⁹³ In patriarchal ancient Greece married, dependent women were required to transfer their loyalty from natal family to the *oikos* of current husband, even as they were presumed to retain dangerous allegiances to natal family. Given the ancient mortality rates for husbands and wives through warfare and childbirth respectively, conflicts of loyalty in remarriage must have been an everyday matter in Athens; fearful anticipation of potentially unfavourable outcomes for husbands could account for the ambivalence – if not outright misogyny – toward married women – and mothers – found in ancient literature. Elektra may be the daughter fathers hope for – a woman who rejects matrilineal affiliation in favour of patrilineal loyalties – but she is also a woman no man would seek out as wife, or as mother of his own patrilineal heirs, because of her extreme allegiance for her own father. Turning from Sophokles, we next explore how the character and life-history of Klytaimestra – a woman who chose daughter over husband – is plotted out in Euripides' Atreid tragedies, a plotting informed by gender conflict based in differences in reproductive biology.

Euripides: Elektra, Iphigeneia among the Taurians, Orestes, and Iphigeneia at Aulis

While Aiskhylos and Sophokles express an empathy for the plight of Orestes and his filial obligations, Euripides seems more interested in how the women in the Atreid *oikos* survive and

⁹² On the treatment in Sophokles' *Elektra* of family members, *philois*, as *ekthrois*, 'enemies', see Blundell (1989:149); Ewans (2000a). On the relationship between family disasters and ancestral crimes in Sophokles' *Elektra*, see Segal (1966:528-529). On Pelops as the original source of the tendency to family conflict between *philois*, see Jones (1962:142); Burton (1980:201). Cf. Rutherford (2012:233), who argues that the play ignores questions about the inherited curse of Pelops and family disasters.

⁹³ See discussion of selective maternal disinvestment in Chapter 1, pp. 46; 46n206; 46n208; 55-57; 55n268; 55n271; 55n272; 78.

adapt to the social dynamics of an unashamedly androcentric society. His plays also respond strongly to previous dramatizations of Klytaimestra's life-experiences, parodying Aiskhylos' and Sophokles' avenging brother, sister, and patrilineal cousin.⁹⁴ Across the plays discussed here – *Elektra*, *Iphigeneia among the Taurians*, *Orestes*, and *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, along with some material from *Troades*, *Helen* and *Andromakhe* – we also see how the women of the family show us the many faces of Klytaimestra: Elektra her unforgiving, blood-thirsty daughter, and her daughter Iphigeneia the blood-sacrifice who forgives father and mother both; Helen the loving sister, and her daughter, Hermione, Klytaimestra's niece and foster-daughter (and her cousin Orestes' only hope of marriage); and her unrelated reproductive rival Cassandra, who leaves Troy with the express intention of destroying both Agamemnon and his wife. Aiskhylos showed the sacrifice of Iphigeneia through the account of elderly men who had never even been to Aulis, but Euripides shows us first-hand the collision between Agamemnon desperate for the war to proceed at any cost, and Klytaimestra desperate to save her child, along with the consequences of her failure to do so. The original audience knew (from tragedies we no longer possess) that the Atreid *oikos* continues in discord long after Orestes returns home to rule.⁹⁵

Unlike Sophokles and Aiskhylos, Euripides is not renowned for military engagement or accomplishment; he is also remarkable in his comparative lack of success in competition.⁹⁶ While some scholars acclaim him as a posthumous genius, others contend that Euripides' frequent failure to win in competition is due to the undignified, political content of his plays.⁹⁷ Yet since these plays are much more popular in the modern world than those of Aiskhylos and

⁹⁴ Modern critics disagree about the exact dating of many of Euripides' plays; with one important exception (*Elektra*), the chronological scheme of Storey and Allan (2005:135-136) on the extant works will be followed in this thesis: *Alkestis* [438]; *Medeia* [431]; *Herakleidai* [430]; *Hippolytos* [428]; *Andromakhe* [427-425]; *Hekabe* [425]; *Hiketides* [423-420]; *Elektra* [in their scheme, 420/419]; *Herakles* [416]; *Troades* [415]; *Iphigeneia en Taurois* [414]; *Helen* [412]; *Ion* [412-410]; *Phoinissai* [409]; *Orestes* [408]; *Bakchai* [407]; *Iphigeneia en Aulidi* [407]; and *Kyklops* [unknown]. The nine *italic* dates, in Storey and Allan's (2005:134) view, are strongly backed by good evidence. On Euripides' *Elektra* as produced around a decade later, see discussion above, Chapter 3, p. 188; 188n2; 188n3; 188n4. On Euripides' relatively prodigious creative output, see Webster (1967:12). His last great victory – a first prize for *Iphigeneia at Aulis* – came after his death in 405.

⁹⁵ In Garner's (1990:165) view, Aiskhylos' *Agamemnon* is the primary source for Euripides' *Troades*, *Helen*, *Iphigeneia among the Taurians*, and *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, which all illustrate the unfolding of the Atreid curse.

⁹⁶ On Euripides' relative lack of tragic success, see Stevens (1956:91-94); Collard (1981:1); Gregory (1991:188); Rehm (1992:24); Kovacs (1994:14-16); Rutherford (1996:xviii); Doherty (2001:37); Mastronarde (2002:5); Sommerstein (2002:49); Storey and Allan (2005:132).

⁹⁷ Michelini (1987:70); Hall (1997a:xv-xvi). On the best of Euripidean plays – admired in ancient times, but now lost – see Collard et al (1995:5); Storey and Allan (2005:132).

Sophokles, it is the apparent inability of his contemporaries to value his drama which invites explanation.⁹⁸ In fact, Euripides' drama was enormously popular with ancient audiences, as well as scholars, but most often in the fourth century after his death (and after the Athenian empire had lost its drive and dominance); Aristotle (*Poet.* 1453a29-30) describes Euripides as *τραγικώτατος γε τῶν ποιητῶν*, 'definitely the most tragic of the poets'.⁹⁹ Some suggest that the distinctive emotionality and uncertainty in Euripides' work may account for the survival of his dramas through two thousand and more years.¹⁰⁰ The one consistent theme in his work is the centrality of *eris*, 'strife, quarrel, contention', especially *eris* among the Atreids.¹⁰¹

Critics admire the distinctively innovative and inventive stylistic quality of Euripidean drama, and agree that he excels at the depiction of complex psychology in individuals afflicted by unforeseen catastrophe, including betrayal by *philoï*.¹⁰² He seems interested in the failure of characters' communications, with others and with themselves, and in delineating secondary character, beyond the play's primary conflict.¹⁰³ Some critics argue that his drama leans more heavily on realistic character than on plot, and some insist that his presentation of female character is especially realistic; others maintain that Euripides' characters serve to illuminate human nature in general.¹⁰⁴ Euripides' sympathetic depiction of women's psychology – and

⁹⁸ On the reception of Euripides' tragedy in the ancient world, see Ferguson (1972:237); Knox (1985:5); Collard and Cropp (2008a:xi-xiv). According to Kovacs (1994:16), there is no Athenian testimony for a view of the poet as a social critic. On Euripides' unparalleled popularity in the late twentieth-century, see Storey and Allan (2005:136); Sommerstein (2002:4), while Mastronarde (2002:6) comments on the universal appeal of Euripides' dramas.

⁹⁹ On Aristotle's especial approval of Euripides, see Kovacs (1994:34); Gregory (2005:254). On Euripides as the most popular ancient poet – after Homer – see Collard (1981:1); Hall (1997a:x); Mastronarde (2010:6).

¹⁰⁰ On the survival and appeal of Euripides' plays, see Lesky (1983b:202); Knox (1985:5); Michelini (1987:120); Kovacs (1994:13, 37); Rutherford (1996:xix); Sommerstein (2002:49); Zeitlin (2008:331). On the remarkable intertextuality within Euripides' work, see Webster (1967:278); Dover (1980:53); Vellacott (1984b:vii); Sharrock and Ash (2002:69); Wright (2010:65).

¹⁰¹ For discussion, see Ferguson (1972:244) Wilson (1979:7); Lesky (1983b:202, 299).

¹⁰² On Euripides' innovation and creative excellence in dramatic style, see Lattimore (1953:3); Bowra (1966:148); Conacher (1967:3); Ferguson (1972:240-242); Adrados (1975:193); Eisner (1979:156); Walton (1980:210); Collard (1981:1); De Romilly (1985:84); Michelini (1987:74, 87, 122); Blondell et al (1999a:73); Sharrock and Ash (2002:69); Sommerstein (2002:49, 55, 58); Storey and Allan (2005:131, 151).

¹⁰³ Mastronarde (2010:245). On Euripides' gift for character psychology, see, Bowra (1967:50); Walton (1980:26); De Romilly (1985:79); McDonald (2003:96); and on his especial skill in his depiction of psychologically realistic humans and their suffering; see Greenwood (1953:19, 7); Lattimore (1955:vi); Bowra (1966:158); Bowra (1967:55); Conacher (1967:5, 14, 341); Webster (1967:13, 280); Ferguson (1972:239); Lesky (1983b:400); Hall (1997a:xvii). On Euripides' innovative approach to both noble and socially marginal characters, see Webster (1967:287); Walton (1980:29); Michelini (1987:63, 127); March (1990:38); Sommerstein (2002:56); Gregory (2005:261-262).

¹⁰⁴ Trypanis (1981:166); Gregory (2005:261). On Euripides' fascination with the extreme passion of women's psychology, see Trypanis (1981:165-166); Stanford (1983:38); Michelini (1987:113); McClure (1995:58). On the

men's misogyny – certainly appears to focus on gender conflict from the female point of view; his drama often addresses separation and reunion between women and their offspring, or with the problem for women of a husband's self-centred or extramarital reproductive behaviour.¹⁰⁵ Euripides was also perhaps uniquely interested in how female φιλότεκνος (*philoteknos*) 'fondness of children' could be undermined or corrupted.¹⁰⁶ Scholars have viewed Euripidean tragedy as a window into Euripides' pro- or proto-feminist orientation.¹⁰⁷ Others dispute the view that his plays are feminist tracts, or even very interested in female psychology.¹⁰⁸ Euripides may or not be a feminist sympathizer, but he correctly identifies the conflict between males and females as rooted in mutually exclusive reproductive strategy.

Euripides' male characters are equally realistic, but also starkly villainous.¹⁰⁹ His especially unlikable Atreids – the expedient Agamemnon, the unheroic Orestes, and even the capricious Menelaos – serve to support a view of Euripides as sympathetic toward women's social plight.¹¹⁰ According to some, Euripides' negative depiction of the Atreid males as unheroic

centrality of female characters and choruses in Euripides' plays, see Ferguson (1972:244-245); Segal (1993:230); McClure (1995:40); Sommerstein (2002:57); Sourvinou-Inwood (2003:280); Rutherford (2012:401).

¹⁰⁵ On Euripides' particular interest in females' negative experience of gender-conflict, see Bowra (1967:51); Vellacott (1975:126); Scafuro (1990:127); Segal (1993:73); Blondell et al (1999a:80-81); Sommerstein (2002:57); Cropp (2005:283, 285). In Vellacott's (1975:82) opinion, Euripides could see only too well that as long as there would be two sexes, there would be unresolvable tensions between them; this view suggests that the natural, evolved antagonism in two-sexed species was apparent to the ancient dramatist. On problems of marriage in Euripides' works, see Blaiklock (1952:1-2); Lesky (1983b:208); Vellacott (1984b:158-159). On marriage and concubinage in ancient Athens and in tragedy, see Sealey (1984); Michelini (1987:80); Seaford (1990:169); Segal (1994). On male behaviour as chief disrupter of women's *philoteknos* in Euripidean tragedy, reflecting the historical reality of men's inhumanity to women, see Vellacott (1975:95-96).

¹⁰⁶ In Zeitlin's (2005:219; 2008:319, 329-330; 2008:323) view, Euripides was particularly concerned with child-birth, infancy and the early nurture of children, but also the destruction of mother-child bonds. See also Ferguson (1972:239-240); Vellacott (1975:130); Lesky (1983b:329); Seaford (1990:169). The love of children is not only a female trait in Euripides, however: in *Herakles* (633-636), πᾶν δὲ φιλότεκνον γένος, 'the whole human race is child-loving'.

¹⁰⁷ Vellacott (1975:17-18) concludes that the world in Euripidean tragedy is completely controlled by men, and Euripides' life-goal was to prove the guilt of such men, Zeitlin (2005:200) that Euripides' *Elektra*, *Orestes*, and the *Iphigeneia in Tauris* are all responses to the suppression of maternal right in Aiskhylos' *Oresteia*.

¹⁰⁸ Webster (1967:13); Blondell et al (1999a:82).

¹⁰⁹ On the realism of Euripides' male characters, see Blaiklock (1952:xv); McClure (1995:57). Cf. Zelenak (1998:109), who argues that Euripidean males are usually pathological, debased, and dehumanized. On the character contrast between Euripides' males and females, see Rosslyn (2000:65); McDonald (2003:97).

¹¹⁰ On Euripides' negative depictions of Agamemnon, see Blaiklock (1952:172); Vellacott (1984b:16); McDonald (2003:35); Carson (2009:93). On Euripides' unpleasant Menelaos, see Blaiklock (1972:75); Mastronarde (2010:302). On Euripides' unlikable Orestes across a number of plays, see Blaiklock (1952:165); Storey and Allan (2005:142); Mitchell-Boyask (2008:110).

derives from contemporary social distaste for the war-makers in Athens.¹¹¹ Some conclude that Euripides' typically repellent male protagonists are evidence of the playwright's opposition to gendered inequity, others that the misogynistic speeches of his male characters are Euripides' ironic comment on contemporary male attitudes.¹¹² Whatever his personal beliefs were, his characterizations certainly evidence real-world male reproductive preoccupations: many of the misogynistic declarations uttered by men in Euripidean tragedy concern male desire to control reproduction, to counter troublesome female *philoteknos*, or to eliminate women from the reproductive process altogether, most famously Hippolytos' tirade (*Hipp.* 616-668).¹¹³ Still others argue that Euripides' (so-called) 'transgressive' female characters illustrate the poet's disapproval of many Athenian conventions, including inherited aristocratic power, social inequity, religious institutions, and militarism.¹¹⁴

Euripides' view of the wider universe has been seen as simply one of bleak, arbitrary, and inescapable suffering.¹¹⁵ There seems to be no divine justice in this universe, because the gods themselves create human suffering, and the only cure for suffering is the *philia* between family and friends.¹¹⁶ Within this universe, Euripides' tragic gods embody the most unattractive aspects of typical human social behaviour: status-seeking, jealousy, and self-interest.¹¹⁷ Unsurprisingly, women in Euripidean tragedy never succeed in overthrowing male hegemony, and even Euripides' sympathetic Klytimestra in *IA* is still destined to fall to her own son's

¹¹¹ For discussion of the influence of militarism and imperial expansionism on and in Euripidean tragedy, see Kitto (1968:367); Michelini (1987:63); Crane (1990:437); Gregory (1991:10, 187); Hall (1997a:xii); Davidson (1999-2000:117); Sommerstein (2002:59); McLeish (2003:106); Carson (2006:8).

¹¹² On the so-called 'misogyny' of Euripides, see Lattimore (1955:vi); Elliot (1969:121); March (1990:33, 63).

¹¹³ The *Hippolytos* (616-677) speech has earned a critical reputation as the most definitively misogynistic; Hippolytos' speech revisits Hesiod's picture of female indolence and consumption of men's wealth (*Hipp.* 625-626; 634-345); see Rogers (1966:33); Michelini (1987:294); Kovacs (1995:118-119); Mills (2002:69). See also Polymestor's anti-female speech in Euripides' *Hekabe* (1178-1183), and the generally misogynistic tone of his *Andromakhe*. Cf. also Euripides' fragmentary *Melanippe* (*Wise Melanippe* or *Captive Melanippe*) (fr. 497) Collard et al (1995:261): the speaker insists that failing to do away with bad women only encourages them. Euripides' *Andromakhe* has many statements highlighting the failings of women, but these are most often uttered by women themselves (*And.* 83-85, 91-95, 181-182, 269-273, 352-354, 930-938, 943-956), confirming the intrasexually competitive evolutionary strategy in women of derogation.

¹¹⁴ See Gregory (1991:187; 2002:149-150), for example.

¹¹⁵ Webster (1967:289); Vickers (1973:79); Sommerstein (2002:58-59).

¹¹⁶ On suffering in Euripides' plays, see Conacher (1967:4-5, 12); Vickers (1973:18-19); Collard (1981:5); Segal (1983:245-6); Rutherford (1996:xxi); Blondell et al (1999a:79); Sommerstein (2002:58). On Euripides' hostility toward malevolent gods – especially Apollo – see Greenwood (1953:15); Bowra (1967:50); Kitto (1968:228-330); Eisner (1979:159); McDonald (2003:96).

¹¹⁷ On the similarity of badly-behaved, anthropomorphic gods to real humans in Euripidean tragedy, see Vickers (1973:39); Foley (1985:22-23); Knox (1985:10); McLeish (2003:112); Storey and Allan (2005:145). On Euripides as a conventionally pious Athenian, see Stevens (1956:87-94); Lefkowitz (1989:70-82).

sword.¹¹⁸ The earliest extant play of Euripides to highlight marital conflict and the taming of women who are also devoted mothers is the *Alkestis* of 438 BCE, while Euripides' *Telephos*, produced in the same year and now extant only in fragments and in summary, is thought by some to depict Klytaimestra as a good mother.¹¹⁹ It seems that Klytaimestra in *Telephos* devised the abduction of baby Orestes in order to assist Telephos' request, and is a genuinely distressed (and thus good) mother in her attempt to protect the infant boy – from his own father – during the fracas.¹²⁰ In Euripides' plays set after the death of Agamemnon, Klytaimestra faces a life in which she was unable to protect her child – this time a daughter – from her husband Agamemnon. All of Euripides' extant Atreid plays – *Elektra*, *Iphigeneia among the Taurians*, *Orestes*, *Helen*, *Andromakhe*, *Iphigeneia at Aulis* – feature a more human Klytaimestra than previous characterizations of her in surviving plays of Aiskhylos and Sophokles; for the first time, Orestes' matricide of a despondent, grandmotherly queen is unambiguously presented as outrageous and undeserved.¹²¹

Euripides: Elektra

This *Elektra* repeats many previous plot and character aspects of the traditional Atreid narrative, along with much that is unique to Euripides; this discussion views Klytaimestra in Euripides' *Elektra* as a response to Aiskhylos' magnificent murderous queen, and also to Sophokles' mundane mother-figure.¹²² Audience impressions of Klytaimestra depend heavily – once again – upon her relationships with her offspring, and on their attitudes toward her; likewise, Euripides' unheroic Atreid children are made unlikeable in their sordid behaviour toward their

¹¹⁸ On the failure of Euripides' tragedy to truly empower its female characters, see Rabinowitz (1993:14); Zeitlin (2005:219).

¹¹⁹ Nelson (1990:35-37, 48, 50-51); Collard et al (1995:5); Storey and Allan (2005:258). For the fragments and papyri of *Telephos*, see Collard and Cropp (2008b); for discussion of the fragments, see Handley and Rea (1956); for a tentative summary of the play's plot, see Heath (1987a).

¹²⁰ Collard et al (1995:20). Hyginus' *Fab.* 101 states that Telephos went to Agamemnon, 'and by Clytemnestra's advice snatched the infant Orestes from his cradle, threatening to kill him if the Achaeans did not heal him.' Trans. M. Grant. <http://www.theoi.com/Text/HyginusFabulae3.html#101>, accessed June 24, 2014.

¹²¹ On the close relationship of Euripides' *Elektra* to Aiskhylos' *Khoephoroi*, see also Kovacs (1998:143); Storey and Allan (2005:140). Cf. Ferguson (1987:18, 382), who sees this play is a direct challenge to all previous *Elektra*-plays.

¹²² On Euripides' *Elektra* as a new sort of play, see Burnett (1998:245). On the play's innovative self-reference and awareness of genre, see also Winnington Ingram (1969:131-132); Arnott (1973:50-51); Goldhill (1986:252-253); de Jong (1991:119); and Perris (2011:1).

mother, especially in the play's unpleasant ending.¹²³ Euripides also reminds the audience that the unfortunate Klytaimestra is an inheritor – and so a victim – of the Tyndarid curse, implied in Elektra's reference to her as ἡ πανώλης Τυνδαρίς 'the all-destroying daughter of Tyndareos' (60).

Euripides' *Elektra* is explicitly concerned with the natural conflict between male and female reproductive interests.¹²⁴ Klytaimestra observes that she was not married to Agamemnon by her father in order for her offspring to be killed, yet that same husband has slaughtered her daughter (*El.* 1018-1023). Agamemnon's Trojan campaign had no real interest in protecting the institution of Greek marriage; military alliances and respect for his leadership – with the attendant (but largely unconsciously anticipated) reward of greater reproductive opportunity – are more important to him than the natural interests of his wife in their children born legitimately within marriage.¹²⁵ Agamemnon's heir Orestes also gives precedence to reproductive interests in his discreet enquiry about the nature of Aigisthos' sacrifice to the Nymphs: is this ritual, he asks, τροφεῖα παίδων ἢ πρὸ μέλλοντος τόκου; 'For the nurturance of his children, or for a child likely to come?' (626). This confirms that Klytaimestra has produced more than one child with Aigisthos, and has the power to produce more: Orestes' inquiry also suggests that it is likely that she may be pregnant at the time of the matricide. These offspring that are likely to come are a very real potential threat to Orestes' attempts to regain the throne, because any sons of Aigisthos who survive Orestes' vengeance will simply perpetuate the cycle of intrafamilial violence. Despite this, there is little critical acknowledgment of the contributing factor of rival siblings to the matricide.¹²⁶

Elektra's pursuit of vengeance is also strongly flavoured by reproductive concerns. According to the Farmer – Elektra's erstwhile husband – suitors in the past were beginning to pursue Elektra, whose blossoming fertility constituted a terrible threat to the new regime: Aigisthos

¹²³ Critical discussions of this *Elektra* tend to sympathize more with the murdered mother, and less with the matricidal children; see Gellie (1981:1, 6); Mossman (2001:377). Some view Elektra's extreme mother-hatred as clinically pathological; see Blaiklock (1952:166); Kitto (1968:335); Whitman (1974:133); McLeish (2003:134). On this *Elektra* as a sordid treatment of the story, see Lucas (1951:1, 8); Blaiklock (1952:165); McLeish (2003:135).

¹²⁴ Some highlight the play's preoccupation with gender hostility and distorted marriage; see Zeitlin (1970:665, 668-669); Vellacott (1984:158).

¹²⁵ On the greater reproductive rewards to those males with a reputation for military prowess, see Chapter 1, pp. 18; 18n22; 37-38; 37n151.

¹²⁶ On the competition between siblings for parental investment, see Chapter 1, pp. 45n202; 53; 53n258.

deliberately prohibited her marrying a noble for fear that an aristocrat-class grandson of Agamemnon might one day avenge his maternal grandfather (20-24). This passage seems to imply that when a daughter reaches her marital season, only deliberate intervention could prevent marriage from occurring.¹²⁷ Aigisthos marries the blossoming but troublesome Elektra to a peasant specifically in order to prevent the birth of noble children, because – as everyone knows – a peasant’s child would inherit a low nature, and therefore pose little danger (267-269). Aigisthos believes that he ensures his own security by neutralizing Elektra’s specifically aristocratic reproductive potential, but this danger has not been neutralized through sexual activity to her lowly husband, and so this ostensibly married pair have assiduously concealed from Aigisthos the fact that Elektra remains a virgin (270-271). This desire to suppress Elektra’s reproductive capacity certainly suggests that women have the capacity to transmit something of their own family’s nature, in contrast to Aiskhylos’ vision of women as only a vessel for the male seed. The whole episode seems to assume that, once the marriage is consummated, some part of Elektra’s reproductive capacity will be safely neutralized; bearing the Farmer even one child appears to compromise her capacity to bear any noble offspring in the future. Yet matters of inherited *ethos* in this play are not straightforward: the apparently humble Farmer’s descent from good Mycenaean stock is impeccable, and only the lack of material wealth excludes him from the noble class, and so prevents him seeking revenge for Agamemnon’s death (35-42). But this good Farmer is in fact the only truly noble character in the whole play, selflessly declining to impregnate his young wife, specifically in order to preserve her ability to produce a noble child. Elektra – gloating over Aigisthos’ corpse – declares that when men marry wives of a higher status, people only take notice of the wife (936-937); she means to impugn Klytaimestra, but she herself is in the same, difficult position as her mother, married to a man viewed as inferior in status and masculinity.¹²⁸ As a daughter of the highest (albeit deceased) king among the Greeks, Elektra will under all conditions have to marry downward (unless she was to marry a non-Greek, or a god); the indigenous Tyndarid princess Klytaimestra also outranked her previous husband Agamemnon, whose Pelopid prince-status mirrors Aigisthos, and who like Aigisthos, is king of Argos through his marriage to a Tyndarid princess. All of these matters derive from the political fact of Elektra’s reproductive powers,

¹²⁷ In Elektra’s case, however, men of the most illustrious families of Greece would hardly wish to marry a woman whose father was easily vanquished by a woman, and whose family wealth is being redirected to a competing branch of the Tantalid clan.

¹²⁸ On the naming of children for the father as a statement of paternal confidence, see Chapter 1, p. 52n247.

and her potential to be a mother will become pivotal in the children's later ensnarement of their mother.

Reproductive politics are also clearly at play in Elektra's attack upon the dead Aigisthos' masculinity: she despises her stepfather's delight in his own feminine good looks – which help him seduce women – declaring that she would rather have a man who looks like a real man, because real men are brave in battle, and pretty men are fit only for singing in a chorus (947-951).¹²⁹ Elektra further taunts Aigisthos' corpse by saying that a woman who has engaged in one adulterous affair will undoubtedly engage in others (918-920), and even Klytaimestra's vilification of Agamemnon includes an insult to her sister's Helen's 'lustfulness' (1027-1029); Elektra turns this attack back upon her mother, observing that Klytaimestra and her sister Helen have much in common: as soon as Agamemnon left the house, Klytaimestra made herself beautiful before a mirror, as a preparation to sexual mischief (1068-1075).

Her other insult to the dead man's masculinity is that sure indicator of a husband's domestic subjugation to a woman – the inheritance of names not from the father, but from the mother, something Elektra loathes (930-937); in her opinion, Aigisthos is no proper patriarch, and the children he sires will be known primarily as Klytaimestra's.¹³⁰ Elektra herself has serious social and reproductive reasons to be known as her father's child, so another part of her strategy for distancing herself from her mother is the traditional method of intrasexual derogation: she targets her attack upon Klytaimestra's illicit sexuality, but this Klytaimestra – in contrast with previous depictions – cares deeply about her public reputation (30, 642ff, 900-904, 1013ff, 1039ff).¹³¹ After Aigisthos' death Elektra demonstrates the same concern with gossip and public disapproval, claiming that her mother cheered for the Trojans because she did not want her husband to return (1076-1079). This is in contrast to Aiskhylos' Klytaimestra who was praying for her husband's return so that she could avenge Iphigeneia, and while Euripides' queen who, while remorseful about her vengeance, is likely to have prayed for Agamemnon's hasty return for similar reasons.

¹²⁹ Vickers (1973:556) correctly identifies Elektra's desire for a man with a masculine face as evidence for the importance of sociobiological thematic concerns. On male face-shape, and female preferences for masculine men as impregnators and effeminate men as co-parents, see Chapter 1, pp. 35-37; 77-78.

¹³⁰ On women's willingness to name a child for the putative father as an expression of paternity, see Chapter 1, p. 52n247.

¹³¹ Female concern to protect sexual reputation is a universal, evolved concern: see Chapter 1, pp. 42; 42n189; 69; 73.

Elektra's hatred for her mother is shared to some degree by many supporting characters in the play.¹³² But almost all of the *Elektra*'s characters are also unlikeable, and the Atreid siblings are frequently viewed as particularly unattractive.¹³³ Euripides' Klytaimestra – remorseful, compassionate – is very unlike her bitter, revenge-seeking daughter; if the mother-murdering Elektra is noble and courageous because (as some critics believe) she is steadfast in hope of revenge, then the patient, husband-murdering Klytaimestra – who waited ten years for revenge – ought to receive the same admiration. Other character types in this play turn out to be surprisingly atypical: the Messenger – who should give the audience real facts – is in fact an untrustworthy liar,¹³⁴ while the lowly peasant Farmer behaves with surprising nobility; his opening speech might have been the first time an Athenian audience ever heard a kind word about Klytaimestra.¹³⁵ The Farmer – who we have every reason to trust – observes that, even though Aigisthos is determined to kill Elektra, who was shut up in the house, it is Klytaimestra who continues to brave Aigisthos' displeasure, and who is saving Elektra's life (27-28). The Farmer's astonishing testimony on Klytaimestra's life-experience is also the first character-witness for her defence in extant tragedy: Klytaimestra, according to this likeable character, ἐξ μὲν γὰρ ἄνδρα σκῆψιν εἶχ' ὀλωλότα, 'had reason to destroy her husband' (29). In this *Elektra*, it is Aigisthos – not Klytaimestra – who threatened the infant Orestes' life, (14-18), while the Farmer credits the rescue of the baby Orestes not to Elektra – as in previous retellings – but to Klytaimestra's handing over of the infant to an elderly family servant; in Sophokles' *Elektra*, the unrelated, brutally focussed Paidagogos raises Orestes to be a soulless avenger, but Euripides' Orestes grows to maturity safely among his loyal extended family in Phokis – his patrilineal aunt Anaxibia, and cousin and dear friend Pylades.

This retelling of the matricide does not attempt to replace Klytaimestra as the natural mother of Orestes; rather, Euripides constantly draws attention to the inescapable physical truth of Klytaimestra's motherhood, and on her loss of a beloved child. Her very first utterance on

¹³² On the chorus' negative attitude toward Klytaimestra, see O'Brien (1964:15, 18); Roisman and Luschnig (2011:223).

¹³³ On the contrast between the unpleasant Atreid siblings and the sympathetic Klytaimestra (and Aigisthos), see Lucas (1951:6-7); Kirkwood (1958:36); Vellacott (1963:12); Whitman (1974:132); McDonald (2003:90); Storey and Allan's (2005:265).

¹³⁴ On the untrustworthy Messenger in this play, see Gellie (1981:4).

¹³⁵ According to Blaiklock (1952:175), the Farmer in the *Elektra* sets the standard for sanity (as does Tyndareos in the *Orestes*).

appearance refers to her lost child Iphigeneia (1002). Euripides also confirms that Klytaimestra had good reason for her murder of her daughter's killer; he makes Aigisthos the principal ongoing threat toward Elektra and Orestes; he highlights Klytaimestra's defiance of Aigisthos to save the lives of Agamemnon's children; and he attributes Agamemnon's death equally to Aigisthos. The true-hearted Farmer also reminds us that Aigisthos had his own axe to grind with Agamemnon (and Agamemnon's patriline) because he is the son of Thyestes (10). Agamemnon was the target of two separate vengeance-campaigns, both to avenge the impious slaughter of children.¹³⁶

Euripides also shows that the children's testimony concerning their mother's character is unreliable.¹³⁷ When the incognito Orestes enquires if Klytaimestra permitted Elektra's marriage to a peasant, Elektra replies γυναῖκες ἀνδρῶν, ᾧ ξέν', οὐ παίδων φίλαι, 'Well, stranger, women love their husbands, not their children' (264-265). But Klytaimestra loved her child Iphigeneia more than her husband Agamemnon, and she saves Elektra's life at the cost of disobeying her husband Aigisthos. Elektra, however, insists that her removal from the house by her mother is aimed to 'please' Aigisthos (61), which we know – from the Farmer's testimony – is simply not true; Klytaimestra is remorseful, and should be credited with saving Elektra's life.¹³⁸ Euripides' Klytaimestra – like many mothers entering a second marriage – is torn between her attachment to children from a previous union and to her new family, of husband and offspring.¹³⁹ Klytaimestra is also still actively fertile; Elektra bitterly resents her unwelcome maternal half-siblings, because she and her brother are now πάρεργα 'secondary' (62).¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Cf. Sophokles, who gives Elektra every opportunity to dismiss all possibility of mitigation for Klytaimestra, accusing her mother specifically of violent abuse, and depicting her as incapable of rescuing anybody.

¹³⁷ On the contradiction between Elektra's constant carping on her mother's faults and the mild-mannered queen's speech and behaviour; see O'Brien (1964:21); Arnott (1981:184-185); Wolfe (2009:706).

¹³⁸ On Klytaimestra's remorse and Elektra's rescue, see Denniston (1939:xxx); Lucas (1951:6); Walton (1980:26); Lembke and Reckford (2010:76).

¹³⁹ According to the Greeks themselves, women are naturally φιλότεκνος 'child-loving' (see discussions, Chapter 3, pp. 220-221; 220n105; 220n106; 284n287), so Elektra's claim that her mother hates her children is shocking, and clearly aims to accuse Klytaimestra of being an unnatural woman.

¹⁴⁰ In real life, post-pubescent daughters remaining in the parental home experience a compromise in lifetime fertility, especially if the mother is still reproductively active; see discussion in Chapter 1, p. 52n253. Cf. Ferguson (1972:384), who argues that Elektra hates her mother because she (jealously) desires children, yet is afraid to have sex. On Elektra's preoccupation with sexual issues, see McDonald (2003:115).

Klytaimestra has rarely been given the chance in tragedy to defend herself explicitly, but her direct testimony suggests that Euripides views her reputation for evil as unearned:

καίτοι δόξ' ὅταν λάβῃ κακὴ
γυναῖκα, γλώσση πικρότης ἔνεστί τις.
ὡς μὲν παρ' ἡμῖν, οὐ καλῶς: τὸ πρᾶγμα δὲ
μαθόντας, ἦν μὲν ἀξίως μισεῖν ἔχη,
στυγεῖν δίκαιον: εἰ δὲ μή, τί δεῖ στυγεῖν;

‘indeed, when expectation of evil seizes a woman, her reputation is a bitter one. In my opinion, this is unfair: in understanding the matter, and deciding to hate, then it is right to hate, but when not knowing the facts, why should one choose to hate?’ (1013-1017).

Klytaimestra’s defence against the charge that she unjustly killed Agamemnon also raises an issue ignored or denied by Sophokles and Aiskhylos: the double standard in male adultery, evidenced in the aggravating arrival of Kassandra (1030-1040), and the double standard in the male parent’s choice of sacrificial victim at Aulis (1041-1045). Euripides’ Klytaimestra only turned to a lover after Agamemnon had returned with Kassandra, and thus after her husband’s death (1030-1039), a radical departure from previous tradition; she also testifies that she was forced to turn to her husband’s enemy Aigisthos as accomplice only because no other man was willing to avenge the offences against her (1046-1048). Sophokles’ Elektra insisted that Klytaimestra acted primarily out of lust for an existing lover, and by rewriting this detail, Euripides refutes prior adultery as the primary motive for Agamemnon’s death, and thus for the children’s hatred of their mother.¹⁴¹

Klytaimestra’s self-defence includes a proposed scenario in which Menelaos is abducted (instead of Helen), and his brother’s son, Orestes, chosen to be sacrificed (instead of Iphigeneia), illustrating how the events of the Trojan expedition depend upon strict expectations of gender behaviour (1041-1045): no army would mobilize to assuage Helen’s outrage upon the theft of a husband, and it is more probable that some other suitor would simply take her as a wife (as happened in Troy after the death of her husband, Paris). Similarly, if Klytaimestra

¹⁴¹ On sexual jealousy as Klytaimestra’s motive for revenge in Euripides’ *Elektra*, see Zeitlin (1970:663n52); Storey and Allan (2005:142-3).

had sacrificed her own male child (Orestes) in order to enact war against the abductors of her sister's husband (Menelaos), no Greek would blame her own husband (Agamemnon) for executing the sacrificer of his son, even if that sacrificer was motivated by necessity. The chorus' response to Klytaimestra's arguments in self-defence merely highlights the inherent inequity in social expectations of gender behaviour: in their view, all φρενῆρης 'sensible' women ought to obey their husbands, and this is the only type of woman worth listening to (1052-1054). Euripides forces his audience to see how myth reinforces the idea that a mother's emotional attachment to a child must not compete with one man's recovery of a trophy wife, and another man's reputation and right to rule. Her gender-inverted fantasy shows how the dynamic of parental investment and mating opportunity – and the social arrangements facilitating these – operates differently for the sexes.

Yet, instead of evoking audience expectation of Klytaimestra's potential reproductive motivations in grief or lust, Euripides draws the audience's attention to the role in events of the inherited family curse. Klytaimestra shares the blame for Agamemnon's death equally with Aigisthos – Thyestes' son – as the Farmer's first speech witnesses (8-10).¹⁴² The play's early allusion to the Atreus-Thyestes backstory to the present vengeance is sometimes obscured by editors' substituting the name of Aigisthos directly in translation for 'the son of Thyestes' (613), but this mention of the patronymic is entirely the point, reminding the audience of the deep wounds within the family. Once Klytaimestra and Aigisthos lie dead upon the stage, the chorus also observe that οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεὶς οἶκος ἀθλιώτερος/ τῶν Τανταλείων οὐδ' ἔφυ ποτ' ἐγγόνων 'There is no house more wretched than that of Tantalos, nor has one ever come into being' (1175-1176). Agamemnon and Aigisthos' shared ancestor Tantalos is the original perpetrator of the most intergenerationally persistent family crime, the murder of children.¹⁴³ Kin-killing does not stop with Agamemnon's generation: according to later myth, Orestes the last (male) Tantalid is responsible for the death of his young half-brother, Aigisthos and Klytaimestra's son, Aletes.¹⁴⁴ This play makes the point several times that the Atreid children are actually

¹⁴² See also Elektra's promise to avenge to Agamemnon lying in the underworld, σᾶς ἀλόχου σφαγαῖς/ Αἰγίσθου τ', 'through the slaughter of your wife and of Aigisthos' (123-124).

¹⁴³ He killed his own son, Pelops, his grandson Atreus slaughtered his brother's sons (and along with Thyestes killed his half-brother Khrysippus), and Tantalos' great-grandson Agamemnon slaughtered his own daughter. Euripides' constant references to the family genealogy suggest that Agamemnon and Aigisthos are equally both Tantalids; Agamemnon may have surrendered the sceptre, but Aigisthos has just as much right to take it up (along with the consequences for his forebears' sins). For further discussion of the family crimes, see Chapter 2, pp. 96-97; 120n125; Chapter 3, pp. 214-215; 254n213; and the Conclusion, pp. 296-297.

¹⁴⁴ See Hyg. *Fab.* 122.

Tantalids: Orestes' prayer to Zeus (673) reminds the audience that Elektra and Orestes are Zeus's descendants – through Tantalos; the Farmer remarks that Agamemnon, upon dying, has 'left behind the ancient sceptre of Tantalos' (11). In seeking to regain their father's throne, Orestes and Elektra cannot escape the Tantalid family curse, as Kastor's divine judgment at the play's end reveals: μία δ' ἀμφοτέρους/ ἄτη πατέρων διέκναισεν, 'it was one patrilineal ruin which has destroyed you both together' (1306-1307). Orestes and Elektra may be beneficiaries of Tantalid power and wealth, but they must also inherit the terrible consequences of Tantalid sin.¹⁴⁵

Klytaimestra belongs to a different family, however, and Euripides takes trouble to restate this throughout the play; we learn that Aigisthos now rules in part because he is ἄλοχον ἐκείνου Τυνδαρίδα κόρην ἔχων 'holding the bridal bed of Tyndareos' daughter' (13). Klytaimestra is referred to formally by her husband as Tyndareos' daughter, as the Messenger's account of Aigisthos' sacrifice to the Nymphs observes (803-807). Her Tyndarid affiliations are also foregrounded in the appearance of Kastor and Polydeukes – of all people – in the *deus ex machina* at the end of the play (1238).¹⁴⁶ Their unexpected appearance is foreshadowed in the chorus' welcome to this Tyndarid in her first appearance, as they welcome her as

βασιλεία γύναι χθονὸς Ἀργείας,
 παῖ Τυνδάρεω,
 καὶ τοῖν ἀγαθοῖν ξύγγονε κούροιν
 Διός,

'queen of Argos, daughter of Tyndareos, and kinswoman of the noble sons of Zeus' (988-991).

Sophokles' Elektra denied her maternal lineage, but Euripides' Elektra is constantly confronted by her Tyndarid heritage (116-117). Two lines of descent (and allegiance) exist in every family, something Aiskhylos' Apollo specifically denies, but this is highlighted in Klytaimestra's

¹⁴⁵ Cf. O'Brien (1964:13-14, 31), who observes that if Klytaimestra is a villainous killer, then the mean and vindictive Elektra is surely of the same kind.

¹⁴⁶ Of all the gods who might have appeared to wrap this retelling up, Euripides produces Klytaimestra's brothers. On the naturalness of loyalty between sister and brother in ancient Greece, see Bremmer (1997).

amazingly compassionate reply to Elektra's lengthy insults (which culminate in bare-faced threat to kill her mother):

ὦ παῖ, πέφυκας πατέρα σὸν στέργειν ἀεὶ:
ἔστιν δὲ καὶ τόδ'· οἱ μὲν εἰσιν ἀρσένων,
οἱ δ' αὖ φιλοῦσι μητέρας μᾶλλον πατρός.
συγγνώσομαί σοι,

'O child, you always love the father who begot you, and so it is: some are of the male, on the other hand, some love the mother more than the father. I will excuse you' (1102-1105).

Despite the many efforts of the father-loving Elektra at character-assassination, it is Klytimestra's genuinely compassionate nature which hastens her death: this mother trusts her daughter's invitation, and so willingly enters the Farmer's hovel. Elektra takes Klytimestra's maternal nature for granted, and exploits it to the full. The chorus' earlier sly snipe at the queen – that they care nothing for women who do not accede to their husbands in all things (1052-1054) – is also undermined by Klytimestra's eagerness to fulfil her wifely duties: as she enters her daughter's home, she directs her servants to pasture the chariot-horses until she has completed the sacrifice for Elektra's birth-giving, after which she will join Aigisthos at his sacrifice in the meadow, for she has obligations to her husband also (1138). Klytimestra is not only a loving mother, but a conscientious, supportive wife. Most astonishingly, for possibly the first time in tragedy, Klytimestra is also depicted as a loving grandmother.¹⁴⁷

Critical views of Klytimestra are often based on the queen's arrival to welcome what she thinks will be her new grandson: almost all scholars focus upon the stark contrast between the richly attired queen in her chariot and her ruined, ragged daughter.¹⁴⁸ Some accuse Klytimestra of being both insensitive and grossly materialistic, lamenting for a dead daughter in front of an

¹⁴⁷ On the unheroic exploitation of Klytimestra's grand-motherliness, see Rabinowitz (2008:121); Wolfe (2009:709); Hall (2010:264). Elektra's expedient lie about a supposed grandson, delivered to Klytimestra by the Old Man, is certainly cold-blooded (E. *El.* 651-660). On Klytimestra's embrace of grand-motherhood – an important natural stage in a female's reproductive life-history – that ultimately betrays her to her death, see O'Brien (1964:28); Burnett (1998:239).

¹⁴⁸ On the similarly brilliant entrances of Klytimestra (in Euripides' *Elektra*) and Agamemnon (in Aiskhylos' *Agamemnon*) on chariots, see Zeitlin (1970:657).

impoverished, living Elektra, and boasting of her liaison with her husband's enemy.¹⁴⁹ Some critics contrast Klytaimestra's affection for a dead daughter with her rejection of a living one, but Elektra's conspicuously displayed poverty is of her own making, and she could be the happy child of a ruling queen in a famously rich realm. Furthermore, in ancient Greece there is no shame in insulting one's enemy, and Klytaimestra was the victor in the matter of Iphigeneia's impious death.¹⁵⁰ Euripides may play into audience expectations with his evocation of Aiskhylos' magnificent woman, in the chorus' description of her as ὀρεΐα τις ὡς λέαινα ὀργάδων/ δρύοχα νεμομένα 'the roaming mountain lioness in the meadow-woods' (1163-1164), but as she enters her daughter's home we see that this legendary lioness has been declawed.¹⁵¹ But a great distance lies between Aiskhylos' victorious, exultant queen and the reflective, regretful mother in Euripides' *Elektra*.¹⁵² Scholars are divided on Euripides' characterization of Klytaimestra and Elektra; estimations of Elektra's character as sympathetic or sociopathic are strongly influenced by critics' disposition to take the side of either daughter or mother.¹⁵³

The play's centrepiece *agōn* (998-1138) also offers ample evidence that Elektra's overwhelming hatred for her mother is callous and unwarranted, and characterizing Klytaimestra as a pleasant-natured, defenceless grandmother renders Elektra's hatred gratuitously brutal; according to some, Euripides has transformed Sophokles' long-suffering Elektra into a psychologically damaged beast.¹⁵⁴ Elektra is preoccupied with her social and material disinheritance but her much-bewailed deprivations are obviously self-imposed, rather

¹⁴⁹ On Klytaimestra's rejection of Elektra, Kubo (1967:26); Zeitlin (1970:663-664).

¹⁵⁰ On the approval of victory over enemies in ancient Greece, see discussion in Chapter 2, pp. 149; 149n239.

¹⁵¹ On Klytaimestra and other Greek heroines as lionesses in literature, see Konstantinou (2012).

¹⁵² On the stark contrast of Euripides' remorseful and reconciliatory queen with those of Aiskhylos and Sophokles, see O'Brien (1964:28).

¹⁵³ On Klytaimestra as vulnerable, domesticated, and sympathetic: see Denniston (1939:xxix); Norwood (1948:254); Lucas (1951:6); Vellacott (1963:14; 1975:130, 237); Murray (1965/1918:78); Thury (1985:18); Ferguson (1987:18); Cropp (1988:168); Lloyd (1992:68); Sewell (2007:167); Lembke and Reckford (2010:11); Roisman and Luschnig (2011:210-214); others caution against reading the character of Klytaimestra as overtly sympathetic (see, Kubo (1967) 17-18, 28; Whitehorn (1978) 8; Gellie (1981) 5; Lloyd (1992) 68; Komar (2003) 43. On Elektra as unsympathetic, see Norwood (1948:256); Lucas (1951:6); O'Brien (1964:35-36); Conacher (1967:201, 203, 205); Kubo (1967:15, 25); Kitto (1968:333); Baldock (1989:107-108); Storey and Allan (2005:265); Roisman and Luschnig (2011:31); as justified in her persecution of her mother, see Denniston (1939:xv); Kubo (1967:24-25); Whitehorn (1978:7-8); on the *agōn* as serving to alienate audience from the daughter, see Norwood (1948:255-256); Cropp (1988:172); Baldock (1989:109).

¹⁵⁴ On Elektra's psychological pathology, see Murray (1965/1918:77); Kitto (1968:334); Walton (1980:26-27); Ferguson (1972:382, 386-387; 1987:18); Davie (1998:133). Some critics contend that her degeneration is spiritual and moral as well as psychological; see Denniston (1939:xxviii); Lembke and Reckford (2010:4).

than being imposed by Klytaimestra.¹⁵⁵ Elektra may be living in a hovel with the Farmer, but there is clearly no need for her to descend to demeaning labour (54-59): her husband urges her to refrain from menial tasks (66-67), and Elektra herself calls a slave out of the house to receive the water-jar from her, once she has ostentatiously carried it from the water-source (140-142). In reply to the kindly chorus' invitation to the upcoming feast for Hera (171-174), Elektra demands that they behold her ruined appearance, so unfitting for the daughter of the king who subjugated Troy (175-189). Elektra never acknowledges their subsequent friendly offer of suitable clothes and jewellery (189-191), yet the apparent lack of such finery is one of the reasons she now shuns her kinsmen Kastor and Polydeukes, both of whom once sued for her hand in marriage (311-313). In later conversation with the incognito Orestes, she complains – incorrectly – that she is forced to fetch water from the river, and is deprived of dances and festivals because she has no clothes (309-311). Rejection of her mother in favour of the father – albeit deceased – requires Elektra to display willingness to endure deprivations, a form of costly signalling to attract social sympathy and approval of her patrilineal affiliation.¹⁵⁶ In this play, however, this freely-adopted cost is shown to be self-defeating and unworthy of admiration, whereas Klytaimestra's willingness to invest in her apparent grandchild is a natural, entirely commendable behaviour.

Euripides' more sympathetic presentation of Klytaimestra also utilizes the obvious contrast between one husband – Agamemnon the impious, treacherous kin-killer – and the other: Aigisthos the pious, generous host who is betrayed by his guests. In contrast to previous tragic versions of the story, Euripides returns to Homer's dangerous Aigisthos, the Atreids' ancestral enemy (*Od.* 1.35-40; 1.299-300; 2.235; 3.249-252; 3.303-303; 3.308); it was quite possible for ghosts to appear and give witness in tragedy, as Aiskhylos' depiction of Klytaimestra in *Eumenides* demonstrates but no extant tragedy permits Agamemnon to identify his principal murderer – Aigisthos – quite so definitively as Homer does in the *Odyssey*: 'Aigisthos wrought my death and doom; he killed me, with my accursed wife, having invited me to his home and entertaining me at dinner, just as someone slaughters an ox at manger. Thus I died a most

¹⁵⁵ On Elektra's corrupting preoccupation with loss of position and wealth, see Vellacott (1984a:156-157); McDonald (2003:115). On Elektra as an orphaned, social isolated, and abused Atreid princess, see Zeitlin (1970:649; 2003a:281). Cf. Kovacs (1998:147); Rabinowitz (2008:120). Vellacott (1984b:160) draws attention to an emotionally indifferent Elektra's astonishing claim her impoverished life is 'more cruel' than her (sacrificed) sister's (*E. El.* 1092-1093). Cf. Lloyd (1986:2, 4-6), who contends that Elektra and Orestes have every good reason to resent their disastrous material situation, because the death of their father throws the whole house into jeopardy.

¹⁵⁶ On costly-signalling, see Chapter 1, p. 20n38.

lamentable death' (*Od.* 11.409-412). Aiskhylos and Sophokles both depict Aigisthos as a cowardly brute, dependent on the greater wits of his wife, but Euripides returns us to the δόλιον 'crafty' Aigisthos (*El.* 166) found in Homer (*Od.* 3.303), the man equally or even primarily responsible for Agamemnon's death.¹⁵⁷ Euripides' – and Homer's – emphasis on the equal or greater culpability of Aigisthos for the death of Agamemnon strongly suggests that previous tragic vilification of Klytaimestra – and the valorization of her murder – should not be taken for granted. Euripides' Aigisthos replaces previous Klytaimestras as Agamemnon's chief murderer and despoiler: Sophokles' Klytaimestra stages sacrifices and dances to celebrate Agamemnon's death (*S. El.* 287-281), but in Euripides' *Elektra* it is Aigisthos who drunkenly abuses Agamemnon's grave (*E. El.* 327-331); Elektra's lament implies that although it was Klytaimestra's hand upon the killing weapon (160, 164), the murder itself was committed on Aigisthos' behalf (165). Elektra further confirms that her father was slain by his wife and by Aigisthos (123-124), as in the Farmer's opening speech (8-10); and she describes Aigisthos – without any reference to Klytaimestra – as the man who killed her father and holds his sceptre (318-322, 866-869). Orestes also implies that Aigisthos is the primary killer, and that – as in Homer's *Odyssey* – Klytaimestra was the victim of sexual seduction (599-600).

Once Orestes has dispatched Aigisthos, the Messenger rejoices that 'Agamemnon's slayer lies dead on the ground – Aigisthos' (763-764). Elektra's response to this welcome news is to enquire how exactly Orestes has killed Thyestes' son (772-773), reminding audiences that Agamemnon's slayer is yet another recipient of the Tantalid disposition to intrafamilial killing. Aigisthos slew Agamemnon because of his inherited obligation to avenge the insult done to Thyestes by Agamemnon's father Atreus. The Farmer's opening speech also frames Agamemnon's death – specifically at the hand of the son of Thyestes – as a part of the Atreid family feud (8-10), and the Old Man confirms it in his advice to Orestes that killing 'the son of Thyestes along with your mother' (613) is the way to recover his patrimony. Aigisthos himself alludes to the ancient family conflict in his conversation with the incognito Orestes (as reported by the Messenger to Elektra), declaring ἔστι δ' ἔχθιστος βροτῶν/ Ἀγαμέμνονος παῖς πολέμιός τ' ἐμοῖς δόμοις, 'The son of Agamemnon is the most hostile enemy of my blood and to my family' (832-833). The conflict between the lineages of Thyestes and Atreus is personal on two interconnected levels: the political and the biological, because Aigisthos is fully entitled –

¹⁵⁷ On Euripides' positive characterization of Aigisthos, see O'Brien (1964:27-28); Ferguson (1972:18, 382); Walton (1980:26); Baldock (1989:108); Davie (1998:133); Sourvinou-Inwood (2003:347). On the polluted Aigisthos in this play, see Lloyd (1986:16); Burnett (1998:233-234).

as a full-blooded (if incestuously conceived) Tantalid in his own right – to possess Tantalos’ sceptre (11). If Aigisthos’ children inherit the wealth of the house, then Orestes’ (and Elektra’s) outlook is dismal; if Orestes manages to assassinate Agamemnon’s usurping cousin, he will also have to pre-emptively eliminate Aigisthos’ growing offspring, or the whole pattern of kin-killing will be repeated.¹⁵⁸ But Euripides’ Orestes is neither Sophokles’ stone-cold and expeditious killer, nor Aiskhylos’ malleable, miserable instrument of Apollo: this Orestes is an affectionate brother and a reluctant and reflective avenger, desperately seeking proof that he should commit what is for him a godless act.¹⁵⁹ Hesitant Orestes contrasts with Elektra the overconfident action-hero, eager to slaughter her own mother (276-279).¹⁶⁰

Nevertheless, although Euripides’ Orestes may be a better brother, he is a poor respecter of social laws of *xenia*. Orestes hopes that if he is invited to feast with Aigisthos, the gods will help him to slay his host at dinner (637-638). While this is probably an allusion to the οἰκτίστῳ ‘most pitiable’ (*Od.* 11.413) manner in which Agamemnon his father was dispatched, it is hardly less shameful for Orestes to murder a host while a guest than it was for Aigisthos to have dealt a dishonourable death to his guest as reported in the *Odyssey* (11.409-412). Worse, Orestes’ cowardly murder of his host comes as Aigisthos bends down to inspect the entrails of a ritually sacrificed calf (*El.* 838-843). The children complain that Aigisthos showed impiety toward Agamemnon’s corpse (323-331), but Orestes shows just as much impious disrespect for Aigisthos’ hacked body, urging his initially hesitant sister to an almost ritualistic denigration of Aigisthos’ corpse (895-906).¹⁶¹ Elektra does not fear to offend the gods over this desecration: what she dreads is the ready criticism of her δυσάρεστος ‘fastidious’ city (904). Yet these children also demand respect for their own persons: Elektra fully expects her body to be καθυβρίσαι, ‘insulted’ – presumably a euphemism for rape – before she is dead (698), and so – if the vengeance-plan fails – she is prepared to kill herself by the sword simply to avoid this insult (686-698). Conventional piety matters little to these matricides: in direct parody of the debate between Orestes and Pylades in Aiskhylos’ *Khoephoroi* (899-903), the siblings’ debate

¹⁵⁸ This fact of reproductive politics also surfaces in Hyginus’ later retelling (*Fab.* 22) of the family saga.

¹⁵⁹ While still incognito, he tenderly responds to Elektra’s declaration of love for her absent brother, asking what could be dearer to Orestes than what she saying (244).

¹⁶⁰ According to some, the characterization of Orestes in Euripides is no less negative than that of his sister and fellow-matricide Elektra; see Norwood (1948:256); Vellacott (1963:14); O’Brien (1964:36); Walton (1980:26); Ferguson (1987:18); Goldhill (1992:95); Burnett (1998:230-231); Storey and Allan (2005:265); Roisman and Luschnig (2011:257). Cf. Lucas (1951:6) and Lloyd (1986:10, 19), who suggest that Orestes is less odious than scholarly discussion contends.

¹⁶¹ Sophokles’ Elektra also complains bitterly about the impiety shown toward their father’s tomb (*S. El.* 277-281).

on the rightness of mother-murder shows that this Orestes has little faith in Apollo's oracle (*El.* 966-973). Aiskhylos' Orestes submits himself with little difficulty to Apollo's oracle, but Euripides' Orestes is well aware that Apollo has commanded him to do something wrong (975). The most surprising statement of all is Orestes' suggestion – in response to Elektra's worry that something bad might happen if Agamemnon is not avenged – that the oracle ἄρ' αὐτ' ἀλάστωρ εἶπ' ἀπεικασθεὶς θεῶ, 'was spoken by an *alastōr* having taken the form of a god' (979).¹⁶² Elektra denies that any spirit in disguise could rightfully sit upon the holy tripod at Delphi (980), but Orestes remains unconvinced that an oracle to matricide could ever be good (981). Both children come to regret their actions under the influence of this demonic oracle, but the expected return on their wrongful action outweighs their fear about potential costs. The benefit of being a Tantalid king, however, is – and always has been – further catastrophe.

The chorus liken the returning Orestes to a sacrificial lamb (92, 513), and recall Pan's arrival in Argos bearing the gift of the golden lamb to signify the award of rightful kingship to Atreus (699-712). In Orestes this rightful kingship will be renewed, and the chorus may overtly support the return of the Atreids (699-712), but the song's following verses draw attention to other features of the family history: the tender lamb removed from its mother in the Argive mountains (699-700); a wife seduced away (718-723) and a throne claimed by the wife-stealer (723-725). The usurper's theft of the golden lamb results in catastrophic disaster in the natural world, evidence of Zeus's displeasure (727-736), and the song concludes with stern words for Klytaimestra (744), who killed her husband in neglect of due reverence for the gods.¹⁶³ Yet the chorus' awe-inspiring example of divine anger at this historic narrative – Thyestes' effrontery in taking both wife and throne away from Atreus – is suddenly undermined by the chorus' unanticipated remark that they simply don't believe such incredible tales (737-742)! Furthermore, they conclude that the purpose of such stories is merely to frighten mortals into remembering to worship the gods (743-745). This undermines their condemnation of Klytaimestra, who failed to revere those same gods. Some conclude that the song bears witness that the divine blessing of the lamb of kingship is a curse, bringing with it the burden of kin-murder, cannibalism, and impious slaughter.¹⁶⁴ If anyone has provoked the family's long

¹⁶² The last incarnation of the Tantalid *alastōr* seems to have been Klytaimestra in Aiskhylos' *Agamemnon*.

¹⁶³ Euripides' *Orestes* makes these same events just another episode in the misfortunes of the curse-ridden family (*Or.* 998-1006).

¹⁶⁴ On the curse of the golden lamb of kingship, see Ferguson (1972:389); Morwood (1981:365-366).

history of misfortune, it is not the avenging Klytaimestra's irreverence which is to blame, but the offences against natural piety of Tantalos, of Pelops, of Atreus, and his son Agamemnon.¹⁶⁵

Euripides' plot also addresses the supposed resolution of divine conflict in Aiskhylos' *Eumenides*; in this play the δεινὰ θεὰ 'dreadful goddesses' (1270) will not be reconciled to Orestes' acquittal, nor bribed to increase the prosperity of Athenians, but will sink down beneath the hill, stricken with grief, to become an oracle for truly pious humans (1268-1272).¹⁶⁶ Euripides does not use the term Erinyes for these goddesses, although they are clearly the κυνώπιδες 'dog-eyed' avengers of the slain Klytaimestra (1252). Respect for Apollo is lacking: Kastor permits Elektra to look upon him, since he who authorized the killing – Apollo – is the one truly culpable for the matricide (1292-1297), while his earlier statement pronounced that the killing of his sister Klytaimestra by her offspring – on Apollo's 'unwise' advice – was 'not just' (1245-1246). Kastor orders Orestes into exile because a matricide may not inhabit the place where he killed his mother, but Orestes will not suffer death (1265-1266) because Apollo will shoulder the burden of moral guilt for the matricide (1266-1267).¹⁶⁷ Euripides' gods are patently of a different nature to those of Aiskhylos or Sophokles. Orestes' attitude to the gods – even when the god is also his maternal uncle – is utilitarian rather than pious; the gods are just as pragmatic, are just as materialistic, and are little interested in the tragic life-experiences of humans far below them: they ignore Elektra's prayers, and also the offence done to Agamemnon so long ago (198-200).¹⁶⁸ Once Orestes has killed Aigisthos, he offers praise to the gods (890-894), but – as soon as their mother lies dead – he begins to doubt the justice of the god's command: now he understands that the matricide is a step too far into darkness, an unwise and hollow victory.¹⁶⁹ The chorus' lyrical image of a magnificently cruel Klytaimestra seizing the killing axe in her own hand and slaughtering the returning husband compares her to a prowling mountain-lioness in the rich lowland meadows (1156-1163), but this is immediately belied by the reality of the wretched, vulnerable Klytaimestra begging her son and daughter not

¹⁶⁵ Later authors recognized the abhorrence of Atreus' deeds; see Seneca's *Thyestes*.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Sewell (2007:168), who contends that the horrified Elektra and Orestes somehow become their own Furies following the matricide.

¹⁶⁷ In Gellie's (1981:8) view, the speech of Kastor overturns Apollo's authority, and shows that there is no real divine sanction for the matricide and that the children have acted solely out of spite and materialism. Cf. Thury (1985:6), who argues that the Dioskouri heal the horror felt by the matricidal brother and sister.

¹⁶⁸ Orestes has signalled his pragmatic attitude to religious matters early in the play, and the chorus warn Elektra – seeking to get the better of her enemies – that she should not bother the gods with laments, but with offerings (193-197).

¹⁶⁹ On the contrast between Sophokles' triumphant conclusion and the empty victory of Euripides' *Elektra*, see Bowra (1966:151); Ferguson (1972:393); Morwood (1981:369).

to kill their own mother (1165). Upon hearing the last cries of Klytaimestra, Sophokles' chorus exulted that the blood of killers was flowing in recompense by the will of those long dead (S. *El.* 1416-1421), but in Euripides' play the chorus pities the slain Klytaimestra, and emphasizes that she too suffered miserably (E. *El.* 1169-1171); they observe that her blood now stains the hands of her children (1172-1173), and conclude – as they have done throughout the play – that no house is more miserable than that of Tantalos (1175-1176). Orestes himself describes the mother-murder as *μυσάρᾳ* 'abominable' (1179), and Elektra agrees that despite the justice of the deed, the sufferings they inflicted on their own mother will become more memorable than the children's victory (1186-1189). Before the matricide, the children fantasized about reclaiming their wealth and control over the house of Agamemnon in Argos, but both children now see that the reward for matricide is social ostracism for Orestes, and lack of marriage for Elektra (1190-1200). According to Kastor, the Atreid siblings will be also forcibly separated for all time.¹⁷⁰ Pylades exhorted Orestes in Aiskhylos' *Khoephoroi* to hold all men as enemies, rather than the gods (*Khoe.* 906-907): Euripides shows the real consequence of doing exactly this. When mortals put fear of gods – and obedience to wrongful oracles – before the common human values of community and fellowship, the reality is exile and social ostracism. If they had simply stopped at the revenge-killing of Aigisthos – the equal if not predominant killer of Agamemnon in this play – then both children would have salvaged their own material and social benefit; mother-murder, however, propels them through mere success and past all possibility of happiness in life. The children are painfully aware of their wrongdoing, as their anguished confessions (and the chorus' confirmation of these) demonstrate (1182-1184, 1203-1205, 1207-1209, 1221-1223). Elektra declares that putting her hand to the sword – a Euripidean innovation – was a terrible suffering (she means for herself) (1226).¹⁷¹ Far from crowing over her bloody corpse, the children now become tender mourners, covering their mother's flesh with a robe, and closing her terrible wounds (1227-1232). Klytaimestra was a *philos* who had become an *ekthros*; now, Elektra declares that she places the garments upon one who is both dear and yet not dear, the last of woes (1230-1232). Dawning regret is far from the last of the children's woes, however, as the gods arrive to enforce the full consequences of trampled moral law. Upon receiving their fates from Kastor, Elektra concludes that their separation and exile is the result of her dying mother's curse (1323-1324); once they were separated and sent out of the house by their mother in order to protect their lives, but now it is avenging their father's honour

¹⁷⁰ On the collapse of the Atreid house because of the matricide, see Burnett (1998:230); Rabinowitz (2008:122).

¹⁷¹ Elektra's increasing participation in the act – from Aiskhylos to Sophokles to Euripides – makes good narrative sense in terms of dating the *Elektras* according to intensification of dramatic horror.

which will sever them permanently. The lesson of the play to the *demos* is this: humans, in the name of the gods, do what humans should not do, namely, to turn upon blood-kin; once the act is accomplished, there will be no victory-cry, because the children's hands are irrevocably stained with blood (1171).

Many critics conclude that Euripides is disgusted by the especially immoral act of mother-murder, but others argue that viewing matricide as abhorrent is inappropriately ahistorical; some contend that the play's moral question simply remains unresolved.¹⁷² Some suggest that the real, covert moral problem of the play is the incompatibility of aristocratic values and democratic ideals.¹⁷³ Euripides does draw attention to the discrepancy between notions of upper-class nobility and the sordid reality of aristocratic behaviour in the matricidal Orestes' astonishment at the honourable attitudes of the peasant Farmer, a mere commoner who is far nobler in nature than either of the aristocratic Atreid children. Disbelieving the Farmer's oath upon Aphrodite (43-46) and Elektra's protestations that the Farmer has honourably respected her virginity (253-255), Orestes scrabbles through a number of alternative reasons why the Farmer does not act on his matrimonial rights (256-261): the one thing he cannot accept is that a peasant might behave with honour. More importantly, Euripides challenges the view that excellence is an inherited quality. Orestes and Pylades may present as aristocratic young men, but – as the Old Man observes to Elektra – appearances can be deceptive, especially the appearances of apparently well-born young men, many of whom turn out to be entirely worthless (550-552). A second issue concerning the transmission of *ethos* in this play is the problematic relationship between the possession of wealth and a noble nature. According to Elektra, it is a universally accepted truth that nobody wants to be friends with or give assistance to the very poor (1131). Elektra's filthy appearance of poverty and social deprivation are voluntary, however, as is her service in the most menial of tasks – something the Farmer has specifically requested her not to do (64-66). Textual evidence indicates that the Farmer's *oikos* does have slaves, and that the Farmer himself is no slave; to describe their *oikos* as very poor

¹⁷² On Euripides' revulsion at the immoral matricide, see Norwood (1948:256-257); Vellacott (1963:11); O'Brien (1964:25, 30); Bowra (1967:52); Walton (1980:27); Arnott (1981:189); Trypanis (1981:181); Ferguson (1987:16); Davie (1998:133-134). See also Rosslyn (2000:57), who argues that the absence of Athene and the progress of civilization (as in *Eumenides*) proves that Euripides rejects the whole story as an appropriate foundational myth for Athens. Cf. Lembke and Reckford (2010:4), who suggest that so-called "moral outrage over matricide" may be a modern projection; in their view, Greek men would (generally) have approved Orestes' actions.

¹⁷³ On Euripides' anti-aristocratic *Elektra*, see Arnott (1981:179, 189); Rosslyn (2000:55). On the everyday anti-aristocratic ambience of the play, see Webster (1967:15); Arnott (1981:180); Sharrock and Ash (2002:66).

obscures the much worse terrible conditions of all those in the ancient world without any property at all, including legal ownership of their own persons. The wise Farmer, however, declares that it is possible to show a noble nature even if one is poor (362-363). Unlike most characters in tragedy, Orestes actually learns a valuable life-lesson from his encounter with a different kind of person: nobility cannot be predicted from appearance or possession of wealth; those who judge character from these cues are fools, and would better assess nobility from how people actually live, whatever their material resources (367-385, 394-396).¹⁷⁴ Orestes – and the *Elektra*'s audience – also learn that the lowest class – the unfree –also possess the natural capacity for true loyalty (that is, to the patriline of their rulers). The early conversation between the Old Man and Orestes on the likelihood of a slave uprising against Aigisthos' regime assumes that slaves will support whomever is presently most powerful, for that is their nature (631-636); after the assassination of Aigisthos, the palace slaves initially take arms against Orestes in support of the present regime – Klytaimestra is still technically their queen – but as soon as Atreid Orestes declares himself and is authenticated by an elderly slave, the slaves freely commit themselves to his rule, a gratifying display of loyalty to the house (844-855).

Euripides' *Elektra* dislodges the matricide of Klytaimestra from its traditional, purely aristocratic context: a peasant is the noblest character in the play; a woman renowned for evil turns out to be an unprepossessing grandmother who fears the disapproval of the *demos*; and the young Atreid pillars of patriarchy are stricken with regret upon fulfilling their obligation to revenge. Euripides' children – under orders from a suspect divine authority – are shown to be acting primarily in their own material interests; Orestes comes to kill his mother and Aigisthos in order to recover his patrimony, his city, and his crown (610-614). Modern criticism tends to dismiss *Elektra*'s horror at social demotion, viewing the good Farmer as a worthy marriage-mate, but *Elektra* is reasonably motivated by issues of inheritance: the children of Agamemnon are dispossessed, and the rule of Argos should belong to her full brother. These are concerns which all narrative – including serious ancient and modern drama – foregrounds: the same human preoccupation with who will rule, who they will mate with, and who are their true offspring and legitimate heirs.¹⁷⁵ When all the evidence has been presented, the dispossessed

¹⁷⁴ See also *Elektra*'s excursus over the corpse of Aigisthos, claiming that possession of wealth is brief, and only good character remains true (940-944); cf. the truly noble Farmer, who will be bought off with great wealth and packed off to Phokis – by the judgement of the gods – to witness his virgin wife properly married to her cousin Pylades, a genuine noble (1284-1287).

¹⁷⁵ See also Burnett (1998:237), who agrees that *Elektra*'s desire for vengeance is equally motivated by Aigisthos' restriction of her right to marry and transmit her inherited class-status. Cf. McLeish (2003:134), who believes that

aristocrats who have inarguably committed the most impious atrocities to regain their power and wealth are no longer to be viewed as heroic, while the vulnerable, slandered Klytaimestra – who eloquently observes that an evil reputation destroys a woman (1013-1029) – is given every opportunity in Euripides' *Elektra* to refute previous accusations and slurs. Another of Euripides' *Oresteia*-plays picks up on the ongoing consequences for these accursed, antiheroic Atreids: Euripides' *Iphigeneia among the Taurians* strands the matricidal Orestes upon a distant shore accompanied by his loyal companion Pylades, separated from Elektra but reunited with a sister he never thought to see again. The *IT* offers a reading of Klytaimestra through the eyes of the one Atreid child without reason to hate her: Iphigeneia.

Euripides: Iphigeneia among the Taurians

Iphigeneia among the Taurians (414 or 413 BCE) is an *Oresteia* sequel which tracks down the family's missing daughter, and gives her a voice long denied.¹⁷⁶ Rescued and deposited at the end of the known Greek world, Iphigeneia has had many years to contemplate her father's willingness to murder her, but no time at all to reflect on her mother's vengeance upon Agamemnon, for she has not yet heard of it, nor of Klytaimestra's murder at the hands of her son. Euripides places his surprisingly sympathetic characters in a traditional narrative pattern of maiden and hero in flight with stolen treasure.¹⁷⁷ Critics vigorously debate this otherwise unusual tragedy's quality and content and some – including Aristotle (*Poet.* 1452b) – view the *IT* as one of Euripides' best works.¹⁷⁸ Some contend that the *IT* is optimistic and happy, and that the matricide of Klytaimestra is depicted positively.¹⁷⁹ Rescue – not retaliation – is the

the question of who has the right to rule, and how that power should be transmitted, motivates the play's action in ways a modern audience cannot fully grasp.

¹⁷⁶ On the *IT* as the obvious sequel to Aiskhylos' *Oresteia*, see Caldwell (1974/75:34); Cropp (2000:36); Fletcher (2003:44); Sommerstein (2005:166); Storey and Allan (2005:268). On the dating of the *IT*, see Lattimore (1973:3): 413 BCE; and Blaiklock (1952:176): 414 BCE. Cropp (2000:60) argues that either of these two could be correct. Storey and Allan (2005:268) suggest 414-411 BCE.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Belfiore (1992a:362-363), who contends that the focus of character-centric modern scholars on the tragedy's intrigue neglects those aspects of the *IT*'s plot that most impressed Aristotle: the brother-sister near-killing, and the recognition as escape-from-peril.

¹⁷⁸ Arist. *Poet.* 1452b. On the greatness of the *IT*, see Norwood (1948:248); Hulton (1962:368); Belfiore (1992a:368-370); Kovacs (1999:146); Taplin (2007:149). On the *IT*'s remarkable plot innovations, see Ferguson (1972:400); O'Brien (1988a:98); McDonald (2003:123); Rutherford (2012:336).

¹⁷⁹ McLeish (2003:166-167) describes the *IT* as a busy, sunny drama with a happy ending, very like New Comedy. According to Hall (2010:273), Euripides became increasingly interested in the fate of Orestes after the matricide. Cf. Burnett (1971:60), who argues that the miasma of matricide in *IT* becomes a fortunate factor enabling the children's happy escape.

thematic focus of this play, however, and there are numerous character and thematic doublings, as well as inversions of roles – the sacrificed becomes a sacrificer, and Artemis’ avatar is saved by Iphigeneia, who was herself once saved by the goddess.¹⁸⁰ Beneath all of the narrative intrigue lies the fact of a young girl’s sacrifice by her father, and the impending slaughter of a vulnerable, troubled brother; the play is full of reference to intrafamilial murder. The Herdsman’s first address to Iphigeneia acknowledges her family connections (238-239), reminding the audience of the most important facts of her family life: she was slain by one parent and – in a rare Klytaimestra-centric admission in this genre – avenged by the other. Scholars generally read Iphigeneia as an agreeable and attractive tragic heroine, but there is less agreement on her attitude toward her parents: the father who slew her and the mother who avenged her.¹⁸¹

Agamemnon’s slaughter of Klytaimestra’s previous husband and child does not appear in this play; rather, Iphigeneia informs us that she was conceived after Klytaimestra loosed her maiden girdle, and that she therefore is the first-born of Λήδας ἁ τλάμων κόουρα, ‘the *tlamōn* daughter of Leda’ (*IT* 209-210). Many translate *tlamōn* as ‘wretched’ or ‘ill-fated’, but it can equally denote ‘patient’, ‘enduring’, ‘steadfast’, as well as ‘overbold’; Euripides places this word here because the mother of Iphigeneia is all of these things. Since Iphigeneia does not yet know of Agamemnon’s and Klytaimestra’s murders, she does not yet imagine that her mother has been both overbold and ill-fated. The story of Iphigeneia’s own family experiences in the *IT* follows the chorus’ narrative of the woes of Tantalos’ house, including the familiar catastrophes following the arrival of the golden lamb (179-202).¹⁸² In Iphigeneia’s opinion, her mother’s nurture of her daughter was disrespected by her father, who sacrificed his child as a beast in a joyless ritual (211-213); she further describes herself as a sacrificial animal, confirming that her own father was prime mover of the evil events (359-371). Iphigeneia thought she was to be married to Akhilleus, but now – utterly betrayed by the father she adored – she dwells on the shore of the Hostile Sea, ‘without husband, without children, without city, without friend’ (220).

¹⁸⁰ On doubling in character and plot, see Burnett (1971:48); Caldwell (1974/75:25); Sansone (1975:284-287); Garner (1990:171); Lubeck (1993:15); Belfiore (2000:25); Zeitlin (2005:201). On Euripides’ handling of the tradition of Iphigeneia’s rescue (and the innovation of her second rescue), see Lattimore (1964:40-41); Ferguson (1972:410); Cropp (2000:45-46); Hall (2013:xxvi).

¹⁸¹ On the characterization of an attractive Iphigeneia, see Lattimore (1973:5); Whitman (1974:17); Vellacott (1975:201); Hall (2013:298). Others point to Iphigeneia’s darker role as sacrificer of human captives for twenty years; see Bell (1991:264); Taplin (2007:150). On narrative incoherencies in Iphigeneia’s memories of her past, see Ferguson (1972:403, 407); Vellacott (1984:165); Bell (1991:264).

¹⁸² As in Euripides’ *Elektra*, the golden lamb signifies that kingship is inseparable from unbearable misfortune.

Despite her awareness of Agamemnon's impious sacrifice, Iphigeneia displaces the ultimate responsibility for her death onto her uncle Menelaos and her aunt Helen, for whose sake the war was waged (355-358). Iphigeneia hates Helen (525), and believes that Helen owes her a debt (523); the incognito Orestes also insists that Iphigeneia died for the sake of a wretched woman (566). The chorus of enslaved Greek women in the Taurian temple support Iphigeneia's prayer that Λήδας Ἐλένα φίλα/ παῖς 'Leda's beloved daughter Helen' might arrive, and have her throat cut by Iphigeneia's hand in payment for her crimes (439-446). Iphigeneia's and Orestes's later conversation about Helen and Menelaos also shows that there is no love lost between the twin branches of the Atreid family (531-535).

After Aunt Helen, Iphigeneia hates all of the Greeks most closely involved with putting her to death, including the prophet Kalkhas (531-533), and Odysseus (533-535), and she has in no way forgiven them. The Taurians, aware of her pitiable history, view her preparation of strangers for sacrifice as an opportunity to avenge herself upon Greece (337-350). Once she carried out her religious duties with compassion for her victims, but recent dreams of the killing at Aulis have made her savage; she is prepared to bestow yet another curse upon her own *oikos*, if her brother does not fetch her home to Argos (774-778). She declares that Artemis saved her by substituting a deer, and it was this that Agamemnon truly killed (783-786); every tragedy so far (and Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Aulis* is yet to come) makes the blood upon the altar that of Iphigeneia, however. Orestes seems to have no idea of any deer: his report to the unknown Argive insists that there is no question that Iphigeneia was slain (563-566). Iphigeneia endures in a liminal state – alive and dead, rescued and slain – as her letter to Orestes demonstrates (770-771); all of these in-between years she has spent in brooding upon the father who betrayed her.

Questioning her designated sacrificial victim – the incognito Orestes – Iphigeneia enquires about the son of Atreus, the so-called King Agamemnon (545). Upon hearing that the once prosperous man is dead, slaughtered by his own wife (552), her response is remarkable (553): without knowing why Klytaimestra acted, Iphigeneia simultaneously pities the 'lamentable' woman who killed her husband, and the father who also committed murder.¹⁸³ Having heard that her killer Agamemnon is now dead, her need for vengeance is easily set aside. On hearing more of the story, she approves the κακὸν δίκαιον 'righteous evil' (559) committed by the son

¹⁸³ On the *IT* as the only instance of any character's genuine love for Klytaimestra, see Vellacott (1984b:167).

against the husband-killer, but – as Orestes wryly observes – for all its righteousness, no god blesses this deed (560). Iphigeneia enquires about the ‘daughter of the house’ (561). At first, Orestes speaks of Elektra (562), but Iphigeneia turns the conversation to the sacrificed daughter (563). Orestes simply confirms that this daughter is dead (564); Iphigeneia replies that both daughter and father who killed her are *τάλαινα*, ‘wretched’ (565). As she later laments the false marriage that ensnared her, and the holy water used at her sacrifice, Orestes replies with what might possibly be the only recriminations he ever utters against his father’s treacherous murder of Iphigeneia: *ᾠμωξα κάγω τόλμαν ἦν ἔτλη πατήρ*, ‘And I also lament our father’s cruel deed’ (863).¹⁸⁴ Having finally learned Orestes’ true identity, Iphigeneia declares that self-restraint – not revenge – is the only path to the elimination of the family curse (991-995); she has every natural right to avenge herself upon the patriline of the father who slaughtered her at Aulis, but perceives that their house will be freed from the family curse only by forgoing the obligation and desire for revenge.

Iphigeneia has fostered a hatred of her father all these years, but she recalls her mother with true and tender regard.¹⁸⁵ Before Orestes has disclosed his real identity, Iphigeneia recalls her infant brother,

ὄν ἔλιπον ἐπιμαστίδιον,
 ἔτι βρέφος, ἔτι νέον, ἔτι θάλος
 ἐν χερσὶν ματρὸς πρὸς στέρνοις,

‘whom I left still at the breast, still a new-born babe, still brand-new, still a child in the hands and heart of his mother’ (231-234).

Her memory of the infant Orestes suckling at the same breast which Klytaimestra will desperately proffer in a futile attempt to save her life is a rare tragic description of Klytaimestra as an engaged and loving mother, in contrast to the hostile witness statements in previous works which denied she was Orestes’ real mother. As Orestes tries to persuade Iphigeneia of his true identity, he calls upon the happy memories of a maternal Klytaimestra he is sure she can recall: the bath she received from her own mother’s hands in preparation for her marriage to Akhilleus

¹⁸⁴ *Τόλμαν* denotes daring, boldness, and effrontery, but can also refer to a daring cruelty.

¹⁸⁵ On Iphigeneia’s positive imagery of Klytaimestra, see also Vellacott (1984b:165, 170).

(818), and the lock of hair she sent from Aulis to Klytaimestra upon learning she would be sacrificed (820).¹⁸⁶ Naturally, Iphigeneia is interested in finding out why her mother has killed her father (926), but Orestes refuses to answer any of her questions about the first cause of the matricide (925, 927). In Euripides' *Elektra*, both Orestes and Elektra regretted their terrible deed as soon as they accomplished it: now, Orestes cannot bear to remember that righteous evil, an act which the gods disapprove. Even the sympathetic Taurian king Thoas has heard of that abominable matricide, committed by ὄν Τυνδαρις τίκτει κόρη, 'he who Tyndareos' daughter brought into the world' (1319). We have heard of 'Orestes son of Agamemnon' so often that it is a shock to be reminded of his maternal lineage. The Messenger, on the other hand, describes Iphigeneia as Agamemnon's daughter three times in his report to king Thoas (1290, 1331, and 1398). Orestes might wish to obscure the dreadful reality of the corrupted child-parent relationship, but Euripides forces the audience to confront both horrors: a son has slain the mother who bore him, and a father has slain the daughter he begot.

Iphigeneia has been betrayed by the Greeks, kept from family, homeland, and any chance of marriage and children – although without the fierce resentment seen in her sister – and through Artemis' intervention forced for twenty years to sacrifice humans: it is difficult to view her substitution at Aulis as a rescue.¹⁸⁷ She has lost any chance at a normal life, but she has also lost her human innocence, just as Orestes' rescue from sacrifice here at Tauris may save his house from extinction, but – as a Tantalid and matricide – the Atreid heir can never fully regain his humanity. Like Iphigeneia Orestes may be born of Tyndareos' daughter (806), but on his father's side he is the true heir of Pelops (807); Orestes' initial joy at discovering his sister evokes the special bond shared by siblings of the same father (800-801). He is most persuasive in persuading Iphigeneia of his identity through his intimate knowledge of the terrible strife between Thyestes and Atreus, and the ambivalent blessing of the golden lamb (811-813); and of Pelops' murder of Oinomaos (811-826); his final argument is the presence in the house of the spear used by Pelops to kill the father of his would-be wife (822-826). Mention of this hidden spear is a convenient way to bring attention back to Pelops' treacherous behaviour.¹⁸⁸ This is the unavoidable truth of the family history, but having situated Orestes as the latest scion

¹⁸⁶ This detail alone should suggest that Euripides' later placement of Klytaimestra at Aulis at the time of sacrifice is a startling innovation, and one increasing sympathy for the horrified mother.

¹⁸⁷ Hall (2013:xxvi) contends that Iphigeneia is in her middle-thirties; a woman's fertility begins to rapidly degrade from her early thirties on.

¹⁸⁸ According to O'Brien (1988a:113), the hidden spear of Pelops is a Euripidean innovation. Other myth makes Pelops responsible for the sabotage of Oinomaos' chariot which causes the king's death.

of many evil-doers, Euripides must somehow make his Orestes a nice fellow.¹⁸⁹ Matricidal Orestes is recuperated as the selfless true friend of Pylades, once the loyal assistant in killing Klytaimestra, but now also a much nicer character in this play; Orestes offers his own life so that his friend Pylades might live (605-608), an astonishing – and unprecedented – self-sacrifice for any Pelopid.

As Iphigeneia's patient information-gathering reveals (912-921), Pylades may be Elektra's cousin (and thus Iphigeneia's cousin) but, more importantly, he is the accursed Orestes' only friend (919).¹⁹⁰ Pylades in Euripides' *Orestes* is also now his brother-in-law; if Orestes dies upon this mission, and if Pylades gets children on Elektra, then the house of Agamemnon will survive (698). However, Pylades is worried, as he well might be, that 'the many and the evil' will only see that he abandoned Orestes in Tauris, in order to get his hands upon the throne through marriage to Elektra, the ἔγκληρος 'heiress' (678-682). Refuting all of Apollo's argument on biological inheritance in Aiskhylos' *Eumenides*, Orestes confirms that Elektra's offspring by Pylades will then be Agamemnon's true descendants; Pylades' reassurance to Orestes about the survival of the Atreid patriline is centred on their homosocial friendship, however, not on attachment to his future wife Elektra (716-717). Orestes declares that Pylades is sprung of a pure, undiseased house, in comparison with the δυσσεβῆ καὶ δυστυχῆ 'godless and unfortunate' Atreids (693-694), but Pylades is also a grandson of Atreus, through Anaxibia the sister of Agamemnon.¹⁹¹ Aiskhylos' Orestes insisted that he had been purified; Euripides' Orestes wears his pollution for the killing of Klytaimestra as a badge of guilt, undeniable, and ineradicable.

¹⁸⁹ According to some, Euripides disapproved Orestes in the *IT*; see Ferguson (1972:401); Cropp (2000:36-37); Wright (2005a:283-284). For more positive views of Orestes' character and *ethos*, see also Lattimore (1973:5); Whitman (1974:19-20); Sansone (1975:286); Kovacs (1999:48); McDonald (2003:123). Cf. Blaiklock (1952:177), who contends that the *IT* is not at all interested in Orestes' character.

¹⁹⁰ The fourth-century *Erōtes*, long attributed to Lucian, is the first real reference to Pylades also having to stand trial for Klytaimestra's death, although there is no extant play which does not make him an active accessory to matricide. Euripides' *Orestes* actually casts Pylades as the principal villain of the attempt to assassinate Helen, kidnap and kill Hermione, and burn down the palace. Kallikratidas' defence of the love of boys utilizes the story of Pylades and Orestes as the perfect example of selfless male love: 'the two men lived together right from infancy, slew Klytaimestra and Aigisthos together, and stood trial for the matricide together... Pylades tended Orestes like a lover and like a father in his madness... and each man wanted to be the one to sacrifice himself to save the other' (*Er.* 47). See Lucian. 1925. *Lucian. Vol. IV*. With an English translation by A. M. Harmon. London: Heinemann.

¹⁹¹ In this play Atreus' grandson Pylades, whose hand assisted Orestes in killing Klytaimestra, completely escapes the terrible madness so conspicuously afflicting his cousin, perhaps because his patriline is not Tantalid, but of Strophios.

Arriving in Tauris, Orestes raves that he is being driven mad by the Erinyes that only he can see, in punishment for his unforgivable crime (77-81). The Herdsman – a witness to his madness – passes his reports on to Iphigeneia (284-290): the Erinyes are like hellish dragons, their hound-like faces fringed around with deadly snakes; they breathe fire and gore, and beat their wings (286-289). Worst of all, Orestes cannot escape the vision of his mother’s body carried in the Fury’s arms, about to be hurled at him (290).¹⁹² The crazed Orestes attacks cattle, and then falls to the ground, foaming at the mouth (307-308). These ‘mother’s hounds’ will never leave him alone (928-932), yet by the time he gets to Tauris, Orestes has been acquitted by the gods: some of the Erinyes – according to Aiskhylos, at least – accepted Athena’s bribe, but others continue to dog Orestes, even to the end of the known world (961-944). Orestes realizes now: he has been betrayed by the god who tricked him into committing matricide, and Apollo has sent him as far away from Hellas as possible, in shame (711-715). The awful things he has done to his mother – about which he will not speak – occurred because *κακὰ/ ἐς χεῖρας ἦλθε*, ‘evil came into my hands’ (940-941). That evil led to an act which was not righteous, despite the earlier attempts of Aiskhylos and Sophokles to paint it as such; Orestes’ hands are still stained with blood, and the Erinyes have every right to pursue him.

The Atreid siblings also play out conventional generic gender-stereotypes in this play. The clever Iphigeneia offers to employ deception on Orestes’ behalf (1031), for example, and Orestes agrees, knowing that *δεινὰ γὰρ αἱ γυναῖκες εὐρίσκουσιν τέχνας*, ‘women are dreadfully proficient in the art of contrivance’ (1032).¹⁹³ Iphigeneia takes advantage of the trust of the Taurians, exploiting her local reputation for piety and wisdom in order to deceive the king (1199-1202). Orestes also urges Iphigeneia to manipulate the chorus’ especially feminine susceptibility to empathy (1054), and so Iphigeneia appeals – atypically, for tragedy – to a notional commonality of interest between women, in order to enlist the chorus’ support (1060-1062).¹⁹⁴ Iphigeneia’s self-interested request for the chorus’ complicity is a dangerous matter: these Greek women are slaves, far from home, and completely at the mercy of their barbarian captors; Iphigeneia promises that if the chorus help her and her kin to escape, she will ensure that the Greek women are rescued (1067-1068). It is with some surprise that we learn from

¹⁹² For a powerful modern illustration of this moving scene in *IT*, see *The Remorse of Orestes* (1862), by William-Adolphe Bouguereau.

¹⁹³ Orestes himself, of course, resists his mother’s attempts to persuade him to forgiveness, an important aspect of every tragic version of the matricide.

¹⁹⁴ Women in tragedy often take trouble to differentiate themselves from the female *genos*, which they tend to denigrate.

Athena that these women are going to have a happy ending, escorted from Tauris as reward for the γνώμησ δικαίασ ‘righteousness of their resolve’ (1467-1468): the female-slave chorus in tragedy does not generally enjoy such good fortune.

The play explores how the endless clash between male and female social and reproductive interests shape a family’s history. Iphigeneia’s declaration that a house yearns for a lost man, but little notices the loss of a woman (1005-1006), explains her offer to sacrifice her own life in order to save Orestes, but draws pointed attention to an unfortunate family history: the loss of Iphigeneia – a mere female – actually created very notable consequences: the assassination of Agamemnon; the usurpation of the throne of Argos by Aigisthos; the impious matricide of Klytaimestra; and the madness and exile of Atreid heir Orestes to the end of the world, persecuted by the Erinyes. The loss of another woman of the house – Helen – had the most far-reaching effects of all: the fall of the Troy, and widespread death and disruption of Greek lives. Orestes’ response to Iphigeneia’s selfless offer shows that murdering his mother has taught him a lesson worth the learning: that the women of the house are important; Orestes will not rest now until the lost Iphigeneia is safely returned to the *oikos* (1007-1011). Orestes may be the first Atreid to respect the lives of others, even when at risk to his own. Similarly, Iphigeneia is perhaps the first Atreid woman (perhaps even the first tragic woman), to equate the love for a sister – Elektra – as highly as for her brother (1056-1059). Euripides’ attempts to make Orestes a better man do not extend to making the Greeks better world-citizens, however; Orestes and Iphigeneia’s exchange on the moral acceptability of murdering the barbarian king Thoas, their host, indicate that self-interest must prevail (1020-1023). Nor is there reason to suggest that Euripides wants the Athenians to reconsider their belief in themselves as superior; that Iphigeneia should lie to the king who respects and admires her is understandable (1157-1221): he is, after all, not a Greek. Nonetheless, it is significant that King Thoas, upon hearing about the matricide, insists that Greeks have transgressed boundaries that not even a barbarian would dare (1174).¹⁹⁵

Euripides constantly reminds the play’s audience that the Atreid family’s bleak history lurks behind all of the suffering, but he takes the analysis further: the causes of Iphigeneia’s death are ancestral but also contemporary; spiritual, but also social. The play’s very first word is

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Storey and Allan (2005:268), who contend that the *IT* “punctures” Greek belief in their own innate superiority.

‘Pelops’ (1), and Iphigeneia describes how this ancestor wins Hippodameia in marriage; Atreus is later born, and then his sons Agamemnon and Menelaos; Agamemnon is her begetter, but Iphigeneia identifies herself matrilineally as τῆς Τυνδαρείας θυγατρὸς Ἰφιγένεια παῖς, ‘Iphigenia, daughter of Tyndareos’ child’ (5). We then learn that she was sacrificed by her father ‘for Helen’s sake’ at Aulis (9-10), followed by a stark (and rare) evaluation of Agamemnon’s real reasons for assembling the fleet: he wanted a καλλίνικον στέφανον, a ‘gloriously triumphant crown of victory’ (12), and he was τοὺς θ’ ὕβρισθέντας γάμους/ Ἑλένης μετελθεῖν, Μενέλεω χάριν φέρων, ‘doing a favour for Menelaos, prosecuting the trespass upon his marriage to Helen’ (13-14). There is no suggestion here that he was aiming to defend Greek marriages; rather, Iphigeneia’s life counted for nothing against the demands of personal glory and the obligations to patrilineal *philoï*, and Agamemnon’s social and political standing required his daughter’s death.¹⁹⁶ Iphigeneia’s version of events also bestows a heavy degree of guilt upon Kalkhas, the spiritual mentor of the Akhaians’ military adventure; according to Kalkhas, the unfavourable winds at Aulis are the result of Agamemnon’s failure to fulfil his vow to Artemis of the year’s fairest product, and in the prophet’s view, this must refer to Klytimestra’s child Iphigeneia (17-24). We also learn from her that the false enticement of marriage to Akhilleus was actually the idea of her father’s ally Odysseus (22-25). Iphigeneia insists that she was an unwilling victim as the Akhaians held her over the altar, and put her to the sword (26-27); now she consecrates for sacrifice those Greeks – also unwilling victims – who venture as far as the land of the Taurians, and this is the price of her rescue from the altar by Artemis (28-41). The rescued Iphigeneia in the *IT* is still in debt with Artemis, however: she is not going to return home with Orestes, but is destined to live as key-keeper in the temple at Brauron, receiving the garments of women who have died in childbirth, bound to Artemis and forever apart from her family (1462-1467). Blood-loving Artemis is entitled to keep Agamemnon’s fairest product as of right, from before she was even born, despite the second apparent rescue of this Atreid princess by her brother. Iphigeneia further insists that, if the goddess does not save the Pelopids (Iphigeneia, Orestes, and Pylades), humans will no longer believe Apollo’s oracles, but we have already seen that Apollo’s oracles are not to be trusted (711-715). The gods have not been kind to the Atreids, and the Atreids are in general no less unkind to each other; all of their wealth, power, and glory has not brought this family lasting happiness. Iphigeneia can never forget that – and the chorus remind her – she is the daughter

¹⁹⁶ That Menelaos as political ally is also blood-kin only intensified the pressures upon Agamemnon at Aulis.

of a man who commanded a thousand ships and ten thousand men at the siege of Troy, the eldest of Atreus' glorious sons – and of a father who slew her like a beast (138-143).

The *IT* serves to highlight the incompatibility between males' pursuit of victory and status through many generations and females' reproductive life-time success.¹⁹⁷ The rot in this family is deeply embedded: as the chorus observes, δεινή τις ὀργή δαιμόνων ἐπέξεσε/ τὸ Ταντάλειον σπέρμα διὰ πόνων τ' ἄγει, 'The wrath of some dreadful demon boils over against the seed of Tantalos through the conveyance of suffering' (987-988). Orestes still believes that their illustrious lineage is a blessing, however, and it is simply the chances of life which have brought them evil (850), but Iphigeneia sees clearly that while she was ill-fated, so was the father who slaughtered her (851). Possession of political power in the house is the reason that woes continue: according to this play, the sorrows of the house began with the dispute between the Pelopid brothers – the latest spawn of Tantalos – over the golden lamb, the sacred signifier of kingship (186-202). With the weight of family ambition hanging over them at all times it is no surprise that Iphigeneia wonders whether any being – mortal, divine, or 'something between' – can deliver the Atreid children from evil (898-899). Some critics suggest that this play itself is the something between (898-899) which will deliver the children, and bring the sickening cycle of inter-family violence to a close.¹⁹⁸ Iphigeneia is certainly done with her ill-will toward Agamemnon, but on hearing that Klytaimestra was his killer, she does not bear her mother any malice, unlike other Atreid siblings; even Orestes takes no opportunity in this play to denigrate his father's killer. It is no coincidence that the ever-mourning Elektra is absent from this play: her active antipathy toward Klytaimestra is too fixed in myth for even Euripides to avert.

Klytaimestra in the *IT* is forgiven and reinscribed as a tender and loving mother. The characterization of Iphigeneia shows us the cherished, sensible daughter who is as much a victim of her culture as of the gods and of her own terrible lineage as of her own ambitious father. This is the daughter whose *ethos* mirrors that of her mother, as the play's many references to the matriline confirm. There may be some dispute as to the extent to which the Atreids are redeemed in this play, but there can hardly be doubt that Tyndarid Klytaimestra, at

¹⁹⁷ A number of other scholars point to the family *ethos* of betrayal and kin-killing over generations of Atreides; see Sansone (1975:290); Vellacott (1984b:164); Belfiore (2000:23-24); Zeitlin (2005:201).

¹⁹⁸ On the *IT* as signalling the end of Tantalid doom and the redemption of both Iphigeneia and Orestes from the barbarism of the Tantalid lineage, see Burnett (1971:47); Caldwell (1974/75:38); Sansone (1975:295); Belfiore (2000:22); Cropp (2000:31, 35). Continuation of the family history in myth reports that Orestes returns home to slay his brother Aletes, while Erigone will later prosecute the kin-killing Orestes in the Athenian courts.

least, is absolved in the *IT* of her famous reputation for unforgivable evil. The unforgivability of the crime done to Klytaimestra, however, is foregrounded in Euripides' next *Oresteia* work: the *Orestes* shows why redemption for Orestes' immoral and unjustified – and unjustifiable – matricide is impossible.

Euripides: Orestes

If Orestes of the *IT* is a better kind of Atreid, then surely the eponymous protagonist of Euripides' *Orestes* of 408 BCE is a much worse one.¹⁹⁹ Family dysfunction lies at the core of much popular modern fiction, just as much as it did in ancient literature, and nothing draws out quite so much bad behaviour as reunion between warring branches of a family: the unexpected appearance of Klytaimestra's remaining family – her father Tyndareos, her kindly sister and her sweet niece – turns this play into dark comedy family-reunion. According to some critics, only the peripheral (and in fact, non-Atreid) members of this dysfunctional family represent goodness, and relative sanity.²⁰⁰ This drama owes much to Aiskhylos' *Oresteia* and the *Elektras* of Sophokles and Euripides but Euripides takes particular trouble in *Orestes* to contrast irremediably destructive violence of the corrupt Atreids with Tyndarid compassion and innocence.²⁰¹ Euripides implies that Klytaimestra married into an unrepentantly immoral family, and the so-called 'resolution' of the *Orestes* confirms that there can never be a happy ending for these Pelopid-Atreids.²⁰² Klytaimestra's action against her husband appears in an anti-Atreid light: Agamemnon was a member of a god-accursed, inhumane *oikos*, and his wife did not deserve to be killed by youngsters as blighted as their infamous ancestors; Atreid Orestes' acquittal in Aiskhylos' Athens is lambasted here through his conviction and death-sentence in Euripides' Argos.²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ On the play's production date as 408 BCE, see Lesky (1966a:393); Vellacott (1984b:176); Storey and Allan (2005:272); Wright (2006:33); Carson (2009:178). On the overwhelming popularity of the *Orestes* in the ancient world, see Lesky (1966a:393); West (1987:28); Hall (2010:285). Scholars struggle to explain the popularity of a play with so many amoral, unlikable characters; see Fuqua (1978:2); Wolff (1983:341, 356); Vellacott (1984b:179); Euben (1986:223); Porter (1994:43); Ewans (2000b:xix-xx); McLeish (2003:176); Morford and Lenardon (2007:446); Carson (2009:178). On the excellence of the *Orestes*, see Zeitlin (2003b:309); Nisetich (2010:183).

²⁰⁰ Blaiklock (1952:175); Conacher (1967:218); Vellacott (1984b:182); Lloyd (1992:118).

²⁰¹ Fuqua (1978:7); Garner (1990:149); Sourvinou-Inwood (2003:401); Zeitlin (2003b:312). On the *Orestes* as an indictment of Greek inhumanity, see Vickers (1973:595); Vellacott (1984b:176, 181), Porter (1994:53), and Carson (2009:178) argue that the *Orestes*' heavy atmosphere of violence derives from Euripides' despair and disgust at political events of the period, especially the long war with Sparta.

²⁰² On the disharmonious ending of the *Orestes*, see Vickers (1973:595); Burnett (1998:266).

²⁰³ Vellacott (1975:55, 1984:176); West (1987:29); Sharrock and Ash (2002:69); McLeish (2003:175).

Like other tragedians, Euripides foregrounds gender politics in his drama, but in *Orestes* he is especially interested in the collision of the Atreids' inherited *ethos* with women's and men's individual life-histories. The only good Atreid in this tale – Menelaos – is at pains to distance himself from his patriline, a scathing contrast to the tragic Elektra's famous determination to cast off all association with her mother's wicked heritage. The behaviour of the young Atreids Orestes and Elektra and their Pelopid cousin Pylades verges upon demonic by the close of the play, while Orestes' remorse and redemption as intimated in the *IT* is rejected and ridiculed in the course of the narrative.²⁰⁴ Many critics identify the desperate situation of the play's three young protagonists with the roaming, anti-democratic groups of aristocratic *hetaireiai* – 'clubs of companions' – in 408 BCE, who created chaos in Athens through murders and arson, and would only tolerate democracy if they themselves could control the *demos*.²⁰⁵ That struggle to rule the city of Athens is used here to frame the contest between the three Pelopids who committed the worst crime possible – the murder of their own mother – and the normal, everyday citizens who abhorred such kin-killers; the murder of close kin betrays the natural, original laws of altruism, which follow the degree of genetic relationship.²⁰⁶ The general tone of *Orestes* is one of despair at the acquittal of the indefensible, with the democratic citizenry at the mercy of amoral demagoguery, and the health of the city threatened by the morally depraved and criminally insane.²⁰⁷ More significantly for this present study, this work also features thematic elements centred upon the reproductive politics of gender inequity, highlighting the social necessity of male control over female procreative power, and the idealization of generation-by-the-male; the misogynistic passages in the *Orestes* reflect male fear of the challenge of female sexuality to paternal certainty.²⁰⁸ Echoing Apollo in Aiskhylos'

²⁰⁴ On the unpleasantness of the Atreid children and their cousin in this work, see Zelenak (1998:127, 129); Storey and Allan (2005:272). Cf. Lesky (1983b:352), who argues that there is "fervent love" between Orestes and Elektra, while cousin Pylades' demonstrates "self-sacrificing friendship".

²⁰⁵ Ferguson (1972:559); Willink (1986:xxiii); Hall (1993b:265, 267, 2010:286); Zelenak (1998:128); Fletcher (2012:140). Some argue that the play's ending demonstrates Euripides' loss of all hope due to a corrupt humanity's expedient militarism, see Vickers (1973:587); Vellacott (1975:71); Burnett (1998:249).

²⁰⁶ On altruism and kin relationships, see Chapter 1, pp. 44-45; 44n198; 52n252; 53; 53n258; 77.

²⁰⁷ Norwood (1948:270); Blaiklock (1952:188); Kitto (1968:331) Ferguson (1972:562).

²⁰⁸ On cultural responses to males' fear of female sexual threat to paternal certainty, see Chapter 1, pp. 69-70; 70n359; 72-73; 73n377; 77; 81-84; 84n436. See also Nisetich (2010:176-177), who argues that the gender conflict of the *Orestes* reflects the basis for Greek (perhaps all) misogyny: fears of adultery which are grounded in paternity uncertainty.

Eumenides, Orestes insists that he was obliged to come to his father's rather than mother's defence because his father was the principal begetter (*Or.* 552ff).²⁰⁹

This play's Orestes defends his matricide as an act of love for his father; furthermore, in his view, anyone with a virtuous mother is a lucky exception, because wickedness is the normal condition in females (1605-1607). Threatening to kill the most agreeable character in the play – the virtuous Hermione – Orestes bitterly declares that a mother's blood is not enough for him, because he will never grow tired of killing wicked women (*Or.* 1590). Wicked women are those who act counter to a husband's paternity interests: Orestes concludes that when the marriages of mortals are established in good order, a lifetime of happiness results, but that when they do not fall out well, then everything within and outside of the marriage suffers misfortune (602-604). Good order apparently means according to male benefit: the chorus' comment on Orestes' declaration observes that αἰεὶ γυναῖκες ἐμποδῶν ταῖς συμφοραῖς/ ἔφυσαν ἀνδρῶν πρὸς τὸ δυστυχέστερον, 'Always women as a nuisance and misfortune hinder the doings of men' (605-606).²¹⁰ Orestes' extremist outburst must serve to alienate him from the audience, because it seems unlikely that Greek men – even those who might instinctively suspect their own wives – would wish their own status as legitimate citizens to be undermined by a general presumption that all women – including their mothers – were naturally wicked.²¹¹ Euripides' *Orestes* exploits predictable audience interest in dysfunctional gender-relations, and there are almost certainly political messages in the text, but this play at the narrative level seeks to verify Atreid Orestes' moral culpability for the matricide as an especially repugnant crime.

The Atreid children's response to what they perceive as the *demos*' unreasonable prosecution of the matricide is unconstrained rage, followed by the wreaking of destruction. The *Orestes* conspicuously positions the inevitability of human suffering as the consequence of historic family atrocity, beginning with Tantalos, the founder of the patriline (1-27).²¹² This play is one of the only extant tragedies that marks Atreid Menelaos – by both his luxury and looks – as

²⁰⁹ Other plays – *Khoephoroi*, *Eumenides*, and both *Elektras* – make similar declarations about the planting of male seed in female vessels.

²¹⁰ On the inevitable clash of female and male lifetime goals, see Chapter 1, pp. 74; 79n405; 79-82; 84.

²¹¹ Actual female rates of infidelity (and female production of illegitimate offspring) across known cultures suggest a remarkably low level of female 'wickedness', certainly in comparison to males' aggressive sexuality and engagement in adultery. See discussion in Chapter 1, pp. 50-51; 51n246; 76-78; 77n398; 78n401.

²¹² The chorus' musings on the fleetingness of fortune (340-344) immediately precedes their doubt as to the worthiness of the house of Tantalos (345-346).

another descendant of Tantalos (348-351), but this Menelaos is an admirable family man, returning to the palace after long travail, and hearing with dismay about the dreadful doings of the δισσοῖν λέοντων ‘twin lions’ – he refuses to call Orestes and Pylades ‘men’ (1554-1555).²¹³ By the play’s final scene, Menelaos is standing in front of the burning palace of Tantalos (1543-1544) thrown into bloody chaos by the curse upon Pelops (1548-1549). Elektra may for propriety’s sake elide her ancestors’ appalling crimes – although the murder of Agamemnon by the godless Klytimestra is laid out in detail, even as her mother’s motive of Iphigeneia’s unholy sacrifice is deliberately omitted – but the message of Elektra’s backstory-montage (28-45) is clear: Orestes is but the latest of the Tantalid line to commit an unholy act, and he is paying for it now. After hearing the Messenger’s report of her brother’s trial in Argos, Elektra reminds the audience that the criminal Tantalos now hangs suspended between heaven and earth, and that Myrtilos’ curse upon Pelops caused the coming of the golden lamb and all the troubles (982-1000); Orestes’ and Elektra’s sufferings are merely the last in the τ’ ἀμείβει... θανάτους θανά-/των, ‘deaths in exchange for deaths’ instigated by Eris in payment for the hideous feast of slaughtered children, and for Aerope’s adultery (1001-1012).

The tragic chorus also turns – as they always do in the wider *Oresteia* – to the terrible consequences of the intrafamilial conflict between Atreus and Thyestes: the great prosperity of the house of Atreus is overturned because of strife over the golden lamb, the slaughter of γενναίων τεκέων, ‘true-born children’ (815), and because of Atreus’ brutal and terrible Thyestean feast (816-817). After Orestes enters the palace to kill his aunt Helen and her daughter Hermione, the chorus observe that the house of Atreus is falling once more in disaster (1537-1538). A few lines later, the impending fall of the house of Tantalos becomes literal, as Orestes and Pylades light torches to raze the ancestral palace (1541-1544). Orestes’ and Menelaos’ furious exchange shows that Orestes is determined to murder Hermione and prevent his uncle from ruling in the palace even at the cost of his own life (1594-1596). The chorus is correct that the once stalwart Atreid bloodline is now divided: the house of Tantalos is still destroying itself.²¹⁴

²¹³ Agamemnon and Aigisthos in Aiskhylos’ plays were also lions, while the lion-cub parable in the *Agamemnon* has been read as referring to a variety of members of the Pelopid family; Orestes and Pylades, of course, are both members of the Tantalid clan.

²¹⁴ On the connection between Tantalos’ eternal punishment by hanging rock, Orestes’ sentence of death by stone, and his intention to kill Menelaos with a stone, see O’Brien (1988b:33-34).

The Tantalid family's dysfunctional dynamics allude directly to compromised mating effort or the ruin of parental investment.²¹⁵ Infidelity, competition for female mates, and destruction of children are repeated crimes in this family. The *Orestes* refers to the battle between brothers Atreus and Thyestes for the golden lamb of kingship and the possession of Aerope, but these events are minor compared to Atreus' outright slaughter of his brother's sons, and the deception of his brother at the subsequent feast of human flesh. Initially, the next generation of accursed Tantalids – the Atreid youngsters – are all traumatized by their immoral mother-murder, but a sudden and dramatic shift in character *ethos* around half-way through the play allows Orestes and Elektra (and their cousin Pylades in particular) to revert to their inherited kin-killing Tantalid natures.²¹⁶

The greatest villain in the *Oresteia* saga is no Tantalid, however; this play agrees with almost all extant tragedies that Delphian Apollo – 'ignorant of what is good and just' (416-417) – is ultimately accountable for the unjust (161-165), 'unnatural' (163, 192), and 'unholy' (374) murder of Klytaimnestra; furthermore, the god has abandoned both children (191-194, 281-287). Orestes wants to scapegoat Apollo as the one who ought to be judged as unholy, for persuading Orestes to kill his mother (595-596), but Apollo takes no account of anybody's wishes in this play; intervening from on high, he commands the rightfully aggrieved Menelaos to yield the throne of Argos to the matricide Orestes (1660), and to give up his recently regained wife as well (1638) – albeit keeping her dowry of Sparta (1662). Nor will the judgements of the *demoi* of two cities be respected: according to Apollo, Orestes is going to get off the matricide charge against him in Athens (1648-1652) and his troubles with Argos will all be sorted out (1664-1665). The matricides will suffer no compromise in reproductive lifetime success at all: Orestes will marry Hermione (1653-1654) and Elektra will marry Pylades, and give him a life of joy (1658-1659). These Atreids will all get away scot-free, because, as Apollo freely confesses, ὄς νιν φονεῦσαι μητέρ' ἐξηνάγκασα, 'it was I who forced him [i.e., Orestes] to be murderous toward his mother' (1665).²¹⁷ This admission of moral liability obscures the fact that Orestes

²¹⁵ On a direct parallel between the Tantalid *ethos* and the moral state of the real war-loving Athens, see Vellacott (1975:72-73).

²¹⁶ Critics agree that ancestral evil lies at the root of the children's current predicament in *Orestes*; see Beye (1975:277, 293); Fuqua (1978:7); Zeitlin (2003b:311); Mitchell-Boyask (2008:111); Wright (2008:21); Nisetich (2010:71).

²¹⁷ Apollo, on the other hand, has nothing to say about the part of Elektra (33) in the matricide, nor about the role of Agamemnon's nephew Pylades, who – according to Elektra – also had a hand in the act (34).

was not the only willing murderer of Klytaimestra: his cousin and sister were also involved, and not just as bystanders.

Orestes' admission that Elektra gave her permission for the matricide (284) illuminates his sister's character in the *Orestes*. There are two Elektras in this play: the traumatized, suicidal sister of the first half of the play, and the second half's demonic avenger.²¹⁸ The undignified portrayal of the despairing Elektra and her demented brother in the first half of this tragedy offers a discordant comment upon their fixed determination in Euripides' previous *Elektra*; both these Atreid matricides now seem to be suffering some form of post-trauma shock, a more natural, human psychological response to events. Six days have elapsed since the bloody matricide, and the children's last hope is that the arrival of paternal uncle Menelaos, in company with his wife Helen (52-56), will save their miserable lives (68-70),²¹⁹ but these children have deliberately severed their link to the matrilineal side of their family, but will also lose the support of their paternal uncle. Without any male kin to protect them (they also lose the support of their maternal grandfather, King Tyndareos) the three children become aware of the real hopelessness of their future; in strongly androcentric cultures, the lack of male kin pose a serious risk to individuals' lifetime prospects, and these three matricides now have only themselves for security. Matricide may carry a sense of spiritual catastrophe, but the real-world consequences for these Tantalids are just as disastrous.

The gloomy Elektra certainly sees no reason to live: her best years are over, and she remains unmarried and without children (201-207). Because of the matricide, it is as if she and Orestes are already dead (200-207), but – in her view – their mother Klytaimestra is the person truly responsible, and it is her actions which have destroyed husband and children born of her own blood as well (195-199). Elektra understands that if Orestes perishes as a result of the matricide, she will have no support – brother, father, or friend – in the world, and so she might as well die alongside him (307-310). There is no sense of victory or gain in her speech, and after hearing the verdict of execution handed down by the Argive demos, she pleads with Orestes to slay her himself with a sword. Orestes undertakes to do at once the noble thing – essentially a family

²¹⁸ On the “tender, human” Elektra of the *Orestes*' first half, see Blaiklock (1952:180); on the Elektra of the second half of the play as a “homicidal maniac”, see also Vellacott (1975:63). For negative views of Elektra in *Orestes*, see Norwood (1948:273); Garner (1990:153); Burnett (1998:256); Hall (2010:286).

²¹⁹ This is in stark contrast to the character utterances in previous Atreid tragedies that, once the matricide was achieved, then death could take them (i.e., *Khoe.* 438; *E. El.* 281, 663).

murder-suicide – directing Pylades to bury them both together (1018-1068). In a traditional tragedy, this might well be the proper end of matters, and one evoking empathy and compassion for these unfortunate children who have foolishly cast aside all kin-relationships, but in this tragedy of 408 BCE, something unthinkable will happen instead.

Over the course of almost a hundred lines, Orestes and Elektra are persuaded, little by little, to take a pre-emptive, spiteful vengeance upon the uncle who refused to help them, then to slay Helen in order to give hurt to Menelaos, and also to set the patrilineal house on fire; their ‘divorce’ from all kin will be complete. Pylades, traditionally a quiet, steadfast ally of the Atreides, is here transformed by Euripides into co-assassin and dangerous demagogue, leading his cousins to choose between death in the midst of glorious destruction, or success and life. Aroused by Pylades’ inflammatory speeches, the previously subdued chorus declares that all women should hate Tyndareos’ daughter, who has shamed her entire sex (1153-1155); this familiar sentiment usually pertains to Tyndarid Klytaimestra, but we find that they now refer to Tyndarid Helen.²²⁰ Orestes embraces Pylades’ cunning plan with its hope of self-preservation (1173-1176), but Elektra crowns the new conspiracy with the suggestion that they should capture and if necessary kill Hermione as well (1177-1199); the volte-face of the once-contrite Atreid pair is complete. Lest we forget they have good reason to be ashamed, we are suddenly reminded of their mother: Orestes is thrilled at Elektra’s bold suggestion, praising the woman who possesses not only a beautiful female form, but the heart of a man; he remarks that if things go badly, Pylades will be deprived of such a paragon of wifeliness, if not, then he will be blessed in her bed (1204-1209), while the vengeful Elektra, who in previous tragedies urged the killing-strokes of her brother and crowed over the corpses of her enemies, including her mother, is restored. Whether this man-hearted woman possesses the power to make Pylades the happiest of husbands remains to be seen, however; Agamemnon can testify to the blessings of marriage with a man-minded woman. Following the findings of EP about the traditional nature of marriage in males’ exchange of female reproductive potential, the union between Pylades and Elektra is at core in fact a contract between Orestes and Pylades; Orestes refers to – ‘your marriage tie with me’ – when speaking to Pylades in anticipation of death (*Or.* 1081), and Elektra is not consulted about the dissolution of a marriage she so far seems to know nothing about.²²¹

²²⁰ Only the preceding context of Pylades’ scheme to kill Helen indicates which daughter of Tyndareos they specifically refer to.

²²¹ On marriage as a contract between male-headed families, see Chapter 1, pp. 48; 60-63; 60n304; 62n313; 68.

Matricidal Orestes' remorse is replaced by a murderous thirst for blood, reawakened by Pylades' diabolic persuasions.²²² The repentant Orestes insisted that it is not only the Fury-inspired madness which is killing him, but the honest grief he feels in awareness of the enormity of his sin of mother-murder (*Or.* 396-400). But once he is held to account for monstrously spilling kin-blood by Menelaos the brother-in-law of Klytaimestra (413), and by Tyndareos his matrilineal grandfather, Orestes defensively loses much of his earlier contrition: now he insists that his persecution by Argos is politically motivated; that crimes committed by Agamemnon during the war are being held against him; and that 'friends of Aigisthos' are treating him 'outrageously' (431-436).

Orestes' interaction with Klytaimestra's close kin (459-629) draws attention to the irreconcilable conflict between Orestes' moral shame over his mother's death, and his desire to uphold respect for his father (546-547). One of these must triumph, and so he resorts to the claim that begetting of a child by the father supersedes the nourishing of the seed by the mother; thus, it is right to defend the honour of the father above all (552-556). He also justifies his decision to commit matricide by the fact that Klytaimestra went to the bed of her secret husband, Agamemnon's killer (557-561). But the attempt to reconcile the conflicting demands of filial allegiance is almost too much for any child to endure; psychological breakdown ensues. In the midst of an otherwise logical summation of facts surrounding the matricide, Orestes' earlier self-recrimination and horror at his deed are undercut by an irrational outburst concerning brazen women: now, his act of matricide was on behalf of all Greece, because if murderous women are treated with mercy, men will expose themselves to being killed by their wives (564-571). His argument seems to assume that – if given the opportunity – large numbers of women would inevitably wish to kill their husbands.²²³ This is followed by his contention that Klytaimestra betrayed her husband – who was leading an army on behalf of Greece – for reason of lust, and that she killed the returning Agamemnon in order to avoid the punishment she herself deserved (572-578). Predictably, he omits all mention of Iphigeneia's sacrifice, and of

²²² Norwood (1948:271, 273); Webster (1967:15); Burnett (1998:256); Hall (2010:286). On parallels between this Orestes and Aiskhylos' Orestes, see Zelenak (1998:128); Fletcher (2012:141).

²²³ These lines are marked as deleted in Kovacs' (2002b:473-475) edition, and probably rightly so: the lines are declaimed in a completely different voice; the misogyny is too obvious, and is not one of the themes of this particular play. Cf. Orestes' regrets before and after this obtruded speech.

his father's foolish introduction of a concubine into the family home, both of which were possible defences for Klytaimestra's actions.

Orestes' vindication of his father then displaces the blame for the wrong of the Trojan expedition entirely onto Helen, because the venture was to remedy her fault and wrongdoing (646-650); therefore, the argument runs, Helen's husband Menelaos now owes Orestes a favour, because of the favour done for Menelaos by Agamemnon (655-657). As for the favour of Iphigeneia's life – one of the few times the sacrifice is ever mentioned in the play – Orestes graciously releases Menelaos from having to kill his daughter in recompense (658-659). The transformation of Agamemnon's unholy child-murder into something Orestes can use to persuade Menelaos to help him not only brings the debate to a new low in expediency, but is also ironic, because Orestes himself will try to kill Menelaos' daughter Hermione. Euripides' Menelaos in the *Orestes* is an Atreid anomaly, prudent and compassionate, and sincerely attached to his wife and daughter; his most important attachment is no longer to his patrilineal brother and nephew, but to his wife and his wife's family.²²⁴ Menelaos enjoys a privileged status as the son-in-law of Zeus (*Od.* 4.569-570), and – unlike his brother Agamemnon – is destined for material prosperity at home with his own clever and beautiful wife, Tyndarid Helen, and his (bastard) son Megapenthes by his side (*Od.* 4.49-58; 15.75-79; 15.99-130).²²⁵ Upon his arrival in Argos, he declares that he had chanced to hear about the murder of Agamemnon at the hands of a wife (*Or.* 361), but – assuming that Orestes and his mother would now be prospering – is shocked to hear about 'the unholy murder of Tyndareos' daughter' (374). Menelaos views the impious matricide of his wife's sister – even though she killed his own brother – as a δεινὰ κακὰ 'dreadful evil' (376), an act in terrible juxtaposition with the image of Orestes as he last saw him, a baby safe in the arms of his mother Klytaimestra (377-379).

²²⁴ Typical epithets for Menelaos in Homeric epic emphasise his superior warrior abilities (*Il.* 7.94-101, 109-119), and his relationship with Agamemnon in Homeric epic is a very close one (*Il.* 6.55-62; 7.113-122; 10.240). Menelaos in tragedy is a very different man (*Tro.* 1030-1035, 1055-1059); cf. the conflicting Atreid brothers' ignoble bickering in the opening scenes of Euripides' *IA*. On the *Orestes*' Menelaos as prudent and decent man, despite difficult circumstances, see Vellacott (1975:55). Euripides' Menelaos in *Helen* of 412 BCE (an immediate narrative prequel to the *Orestes*) is also a model of warlike bravery, with a noble reputation worth defending (*Hel.* 842-854, 944-953), and is a good friend to his men (1606-1609). Euripides apparently does his best in *Orestes* to reinstate an admirable Menelaos, but in Lesky's (1983b:352) view, however, Menelaos is the *Orestes*' "most evil" character.

²²⁵ Homer takes Menelaos' rulership over Argos for granted, and Menelaos has the authority to empty an entire city within his domain, offering to install Odysseus in it as a king, along with his son Telemakhos and all his Ithakan subjects (*Od.* 4.174-177).

Menelaos' response to the news of the matricide lacks any comment on the death of his brother Agamemnon, however; instead, he exhibits positive sympathy for his brother's murderer Klytaimestra, and asks his nephew whether the matricide has done him any good at all (425), and Orestes ominously replies: not yet (426). This is Menelaos' first mention of his full-blood brother Agamemnon's murder in relation to the matricide, although he and Orestes have been discussing the murder of Klytaimestra and its consequences for some time, and both have been sympathetic toward the murdered woman. Menelaos is the one adult male (apart from Orestes) who in the patrilineal context should be most offended by Agamemnon's death, and so take the defence of his brother's honour the most seriously – but this new Atreid *kyrios* has no intention of supporting his paternal nephew against the moral claims of the Tyndarids; he may appalled by the inexcusable murder of a mother, but, pragmatically speaking, he also rules as king through marriage into that same woman's family. Menelaos' own fortunes will prosper if he upholds the honour of the Tyndarid clan, and ultimately, he is willing to sacrifice the honour of brother to do so; Menelaos is initially sympathetic (484, 486), but when faced with a loss of his own station in life, is not prepared to stand and fight along his nephew (688-692, 711-712). In Orestes' opinion, his uncle's refusal to support his kin stems from a desire to gain the rule of Argos as well as the kingship of Sparta vested in his wife (1058-1059). In fact, Menelaos has no apparent scheme to usurp the Argive throne, and does want to save Orestes, but he simply cannot do so by force of arms (709-712).

His long series of questions to Orestes establishes beyond doubt that every possible circumstance is against Orestes' surviving, because Orestes has reached the absolute limit of human misfortune (395-447). Having heard Orestes' pleas for help, Menelaos replies that the gods are against them (687); that he himself has arrived home bereft of friends and allies, and so they can never win a physical fight (688-692); and that only by clever words can the raging *demos* be placated (692-716). Menelaos indicates that he wants to save his nephew (709-711), but a refusal to engage in force of arms is clearly the only effective strategy to achieve this. Orestes' response is that of a child more used to getting what he wants (717-728): later, he will assuage his wounded feelings by trying to inflict as much suffering as possible upon his uncle.

The other male character whose support Orestes assumes – wrongly – is Tyndareos, Klytaimestra's father. Before Tyndareos even utters a word, a shamed Orestes has told us much about him: Orestes was loved and nurtured by his maternal grandfather and his grandmother (a rare positive reference in the *Oresteia* corpus to Klytaimestra's mother Leda); they loved their

only (legitimate) grandson as much as they loved their sons, and they do not deserve to suffer for what he has done (460-467). Maternal grandparents cross-culturally exhibit more helping behaviours for a daughter's offspring: there is no mention in the extant *Oresteia* corpus of Orestes' paternal grandmother, and no evidence that Atreus cared for him.²²⁶ Tyndareos is more than kindly grandfather; fresh from pouring libations upon the tomb of the daughter slain, he arrives seeking the husband of the daughter living (470-473). Initially, he is pleased to see Menelaos, his surviving son-in-law and their relation seems cordial enough, but on catching sight of Orestes – his only legitimate grandson – Tyndareos' mood swiftly changes; few characters in tragedy have ever so directly disapproved Orestes as an 'abominable, mother-killing serpent' (479-480). Menelaos declares that he must honour his brother's son, since Agamemnon was dear to him; Tyndareos responds that kin-allegiance must not take priority over the law (482-487), reminding his son-in-law that the ancient (and proper) punishment for unlawful killing was exile, in order to prevent further unholy bloodshed (508-518). In Tyndareos' opinion, Orestes ought to have prosecuted his father-killing mother in the law-courts; Klytaimestra might have been a wicked woman, but Orestes' wickedness is greater (496-506). No other man in tragedy has ever taken such a stance on the killing of Agamemnon, but while Tyndareos is predictably – according to evolutionary psychology – supportive of his female kin, he also recognizes the catastrophic, social effect of his female kin's behaviour.²²⁷

Yet, although Tyndareos admits that he has been unlucky in both of his husband-troubling daughters (541), he makes it clear that he cannot support the θηριῶδες... καὶ μαιφόνον 'bestly and bloodthirsty' behaviour of men such as Orestes, which 'always brings down ruin upon lands and cities' (518-525); in his opinion, Orestes' wandering madness proves that his grandson is now hated by the gods (530-532). Klytaimestra may have deserved to die, but for her son to commit the killing is beyond all bounds of decency (538-539). Earlier, Orestes acknowledged the wrongness of his deed, but now he launches into a stinging attack on his grandfather: now all of this trouble is really Tyndareos' fault, for begetting such a wicked woman in the first place (585-586)! Orestes' brazen, heart-breaking speech inspires the bereaved Tyndareos to pursue a judgment of death by stoning for Klytaimestra's death for both matricidal children (607-614), and Elektra is specifically held to account by Tyndareos, for 'setting fire' to the house with her discord (615-621).

²²⁶ On the greater assistance offered to children by maternal grandparents, see Chapter 1, p. 50.

²²⁷ On the benefit to females in patrilocal marriages of kin, see Chapter 1, pp. 53; 83n432; 84.

Tyndareos now turns to his surviving son-in-law, declaring that if Menelaos continues to support Orestes, he will step no more on Spartan soil (624-626). Faced with the threatened loss of his kingdom – apparently held from Tyndareos as a grace-and-favour principality – Menelaos chooses to back his obligations to his wife’s family – and estate – and Orestes loathes him for it. The support of close male kin is essential to the continuation of patrilineal power-networks, and Menelaos’ defection imperils the supremacy of his clan.²²⁸ In this moment of crisis, the persuader Pylades appears, and Orestes quickly becomes an angry thug, bitterly observing that Menelaos prefers his connections by marriage to Orestes’ own father (752). Previous *Oresteia* choruses elaborated on the evils of women, but as Orestes and his moral supporter Pylades exit, the chorus breaks into a damning ode on Tantalid evils and Atreid troubles: the sacrificing of children, the pitiable feasting, and this latest impiety of the heir ‘cutting a parent’s flesh with violence forged in fire’ (819-821); furthermore, Orestes had the effrontery to shamelessly display his sword ‘darkened’ with a mother’s blood to the sun (821-822), an action both godless and foolish; it is no wonder that he is now subject to the curses of his mother (823-833).²²⁹ The choruses of Aiskhylos’ *Khoephoroi*, Sophokles’ *Elektra*, and even Euripides’ own *Elektra* were all desperate for the husband-killer’s blood, and often assisted in her execution, but everyone is tired of bloodshed now, it seems, and resort to further violence is the business only of the utterly corrupt.

Yet not everyone rejects the continued pursuit of bloody violence, it seems. The Messenger now brings report of the Argive assembly’s debate over whether to stone the Atreid mother-killers to death; he, at least, strongly approves the matricide. According to his statement, one man among the crowd – a man whose personal reputation was exemplary – speaks out on Orestes’ behalf, arguing that he should receive a reward for his actions, since the woman who committed adultery and killed her husband casts into jeopardy the willingness of men to leave home on military ventures (923-929); those in the crowd disposed to ‘valiant war-making’ agreed with this man (930). Logically, those who are most likely to actively engage in military effort are Orestes’ most fervent supporters; since their wives are more likely to spend time unsupervised, these men are more likely to be at risk of cuckoldry. Orestes’ self-defence speech at the assembly – although sensible – was not persuasive, however; he appealed to what he

²²⁸ On male kin-alliances, see Chapter 1, p. 52n249.

²²⁹ The concept of the Sun as omniscient observer and judge of human behaviour is widespread and ancient in the Mediterranean world; see Utu, the Sumerian sun-god, for example.

believed was the crowd's natural distrust of women, arguing that his mother-murder was on behalf of all men, since if women are not punished in this way for killing a husband, then all men must either kill themselves to avoid being killed, or yield themselves into slavery to their wives (931-943). His argument that all wives secretly wish to kill their husbands is a basic tale of gender warfare writ overlarge – that uncontrolled women will destroy men's civilization – yet the greater part of the presumably all-male *demos* are not moved by this mother-murderer's demagoguery.

Once condemned by his own people, Orestes' better instincts immediately evaporate: his interactions with Elektra – his most devoted supporter – now recall those of Sophokles' terse Orestes, as he commands his sister to suppress her emotion (1020-1044). Orestes even refuses to help Elektra to die, although she fears to be killed by the Argives, which would be grave insult to Agamemnon's house (1037-1040). Only Elektra's declaration of deepest attachment and her loving embrace move him to realize – as death approaches – that their sibling-love is the only happiness they will enjoy, because marriage and parenthood will be denied to them (1045-1051).²³⁰ The escalating despair of the Atreid siblings, who at this stage still aspire to an honourable, self-inflicted death, renders them easy targets for Pylades' corrupting rhetoric; his persuasive speech is the cause of their descent from remorseful torment to manic destructiveness.

At the beginning of the story, the regretful Orestes was filthy and incoherent, yet holding great faith in the arrival of helpful kin (243-244, 300); but in response to Pylades' first appearance, Orestes concludes that like-minded comrades – even though they are unrelated – are preferable to blood-kin (804-806). In terms of genetic lineage, Pylades is not as close to Orestes as paternal uncle Menelaos is – Pylades is the son of Agamemnon's sister Anaxibia, and so in fact closer to Menelaos than he is to Orestes – but he declares he would not want to live if Orestes was dead, claiming that he was also one of Klytimestra's killers, he wants to share Orestes' inevitable death (1074); the *Orestes* downplays the blood-relation between them in favour of their shared experience, and their shared disposition. Persuaded by his declaration of solidarity in guilt, Orestes immediately succumbs to Pylades' casual suggestion that perhaps they might inflict a little suffering on Menelaos before they go to their honourable deaths (1085-1099). It

²³⁰ The inference that Elektra will somehow take the place of Orestes' wife has some precedent in Sophokles' *Elektra*, in which Elektra claims to have overseen Orestes' welfare, as a true parent.

is Pylades who introduces the new idea that the three matricides – if successful – might live (1151-1152), in contrast to the previous sentiments for an inevitable but honourable death expressed by Elektra (306-307, 1033), Orestes (756, 779, 1035, 1062-1063, 1110, 1116), and even Pylades himself (783, 1074, 1091, 1117, 1147-1148).

Once Pylades' plan is fully outlined – the deserved killing of Helen, the palace set alight, and the enticing possibility that they might live after all – Orestes is miraculously cured, once more the son of the godlike, mighty Agamemnon, with an inherited right to inflict punishment on those who have made him miserable, and the obligation to avoid a slavish death (1163-1170). At Pylades' urging, Orestes casts aside all idea of noble death: spiteful killing without consequence of being killed is now a much more attractive option (1172-1174). From this point on, the only thing that matters is survival at whatever cost. These three Pelopids together make up an unholy alliance founded on narrowly-targeted mutual benefit and disregard of all social or community value, although Elektra – as a woman – is no equal member of this conspiratorial alliance.

While Elektra shows as much enthusiasm and cunning in the conspiracy as either of the Pelopid males, the persuasive Pylades insists there is little confidence to be had in women (1103); he may ostensibly refer to the loitering chorus, but Elektra – his contracted wife – is standing right beside them on the stage. Earlier, Elektra bewailed the fact that she is still an unmarried maiden (26), and unmarried and childless (206), and that if Orestes dies she will be left alone without any friend (308-310); Pylades confirms that he had previously consented to marry her, and so now considers her to be his wife (1092-1093), but Elektra seems unaware that Orestes has already pledged her to Pylades; the marriage between Pylades and Elektra is a male-male alliance, however, as Orestes' comment about dissolving Pylades' marriage-tie with Orestes demonstrates (1078-1081). The core of this alliance is male and male, in accord with the findings of EP that men are more interested in alliance with other males: even as his wife, Elektra is a secondary member of their association.²³¹ Pylades – Orestes' truest friend – disrupts the close kinship affiliation between the Atreid siblings, persuading Orestes that excluding Elektra from their plans 'saves time' (786-789).

²³¹ On the greater propensity of males to engage in alliance-making, see Chapter 1, pp. 24; 35; 35n133; 41; 41n180; 49; 53; 84n436.

Cousin Pylades may be a Tantalid through a female ancestor, but he exhibits the malign, Tantalid thirst for illicit blood.²³² He has already been exiled from his own country by his own father Strophios – Agamemnon’s brother-in-law – for his role in the unholy matricide of Klytaimestra (765-767); Pylades (covertly replacing Apollo) claims that the entire plan behind the matricide was his own (1089-1090).²³³ The prayer of the three comrades in conspiracy also demonstrates just how essential Pylades’ moral support was to the matricide: Orestes delivered the killing stroke (*Or.* 1235); Elektra’s hand was upon the sword (1235); but it was Pylades – as in Aiskhylos’ *Khoephoroi* – who δέ γ’ ἐπεκέλευσα κἀπέλυσ’ ὄκνου ‘gave consent and released him from hesitation’ (1236).²³⁴ After their attempt on Helen’s life fails, Orestes wryly observes that he could not tell the difference between the voice of Apollo and the voice of an *alastōr*, or avenging spirit (1666-1669); Pylades embodies the spirit of vengeance in *Orestes*, just as Klytaimestra was an *alastōr* in Aiskhylos’ *Agamemnon*.²³⁵ Pylades’ plan for gratuitous vengeance against Helen and her child (737, 741-743) leads Orestes to proudly proclaim that he simply cannot stop at one mother-murder (1589-1590). Eliminating Helen will further enrage the maternal grandfather who now hates him, and devastate the uncle who rejected him; the *Orestes*’ depiction of Helen as a kind-hearted woman aware of the trouble she has caused belies all of Pylades’ and Orestes’ evil-saying.

Pylades’ plan is that he and Orestes will gain access to Helen under the guise of supplicants, then murder any slaves who protect her, and kill Helen herself (1119-1130), because he views Helen as ἡ πλείστους Ἀχαιῶν ὄλεσεν γυνὴ μία, ‘the one woman who made an end of the greatest number of the Akhaians’ (743); the Argives will be so grateful that they will forget all about Orestes’ evil (1140-1142). Earlier Pylades had insisted that it is not surprising that a bad woman also has a bad husband (737); an observation which slyly suggests that bad-woman

²³² See the Phrygian slave’s assessment of him and his cousin, as ‘Greek lions, with twin motions’ (1403-1404), of Pylades as ‘the evil Phokian’ (1446), ‘an evil-thinking man... and a murderous snake’ (1403-1407), and a ‘matricidal snake [who] netted the daughter of Tyndareos in a woven contrivance’ (1421-1424).

²³³ Just as Apollo has been doing in every play about the murder of Klytaimestra, Pylades insists on taking an equal share in the mother-murder; just as Apollo’s oracle was the motive for Orestes’ determination, so has Pylades’ plan always been the means to put that oracle into effect. Pylades, of course, as the advocate of the gods, was also the unexpected voice of consent in Aiskhylos’ *Khoephoroi* (900-902): the actor playing Apollo in that play was also the actor taking the role of Pylades.

²³⁴ The importance of loyalty and trust between patrilineal cousins in an androcentric society is obvious, although the enmity between Aigisthos and Agamemnon suggests that intrasexual competition within the patriline was sometimes as likely as potential support. On Pylades in the *Orestes* as a self-sacrificing, helpful blood-relation, in contrast with the false kinsman Menelaos, see Norwood (1948:273); Burnett (1971:186); Lesky (1983b:352).

²³⁵ Cf. the chorus’ observations on the enormous power of the *alastōr*, sent by God, as the house of Tantalos begins to burn (1545-1548).

Klytaimestra's husband – Orestes' father Agamemnon – might also have been bad himself. Helen's implied bad husband is Orestes' closest living male kin, and this is a play in which blood-kin are viewed as potential enemies, at least by the Tantalids. The bad Aunt Helen is a mother, but she is also a Tyndarid who honours and respects her slain sister Klytaimestra; critics agree that Helen's affection toward her family members – including Klytaimestra and her children – is entirely genuine.²³⁶ Just as Tyndareos reminded us that Orestes is a grandchild – and a treacherous one at that – so this innovatively depicted Helen reminds us that Klytaimestra – like all married women – was much more than just a wife, and in this story, a mother.

The *Orestes*' sympathetic delineation of Helen deepens our appreciation of the difference between the Tantalids and the Tyndarid clan. Euripides' *Helen* of 413 BCE works hard to undermine the four traditional arguments impugning her reputation: that many lives were lost beside the Scamander River; that men everywhere curse her; that she abandoned her husband; and that she brought the war upon Greece (*Hel.* 52-55). A number of characters depicted as sympathetic, reliable commentators insist that Helen is innocent and virtuous, that men need no external stimulus to seek out war-making opportunities, and that Zeus was the ultimate author of the Trojan War.²³⁷ Helen's value is generally assumed in modern discourse to derive solely from her physical appearance, but Homer's Helen is also a great queen, depicted in the *Odyssey* (4.121-137) with all of the accoutrements of a great ruler, and she is the daughter of Zeus (*Il.* 3.237-238; *Od.* 23.218); Euripides' *Helen* employs this epic convention (*Hel.* 17-22, 259, 1144-1150); the *Orestes* refers to her as Zeus's daughter (*Or.* 1493). According to the *Orestes*' Apollo, Helen's immortal beauty was merely the tool used by the gods to thin out human numbers (1635-1642). So, as he did in *Helen* of 413 BCE, Euripides reprises Homer's Helen, full of regret for her lost homeland (*Il.* 24.765-766) and beloved daughter (*Il.* 3.173-175). After her restoration to husband Menelaos, the *Odyssey*'s Helen is a most devoted and desirable wife.²³⁸ Euripides' *Orestes* reminds audiences that Helen's personal sufferings were a result of

²³⁶ On Helen's genuine mourning for Klytaimestra, see Lesky (1983b:343); Davidson (1999-2000:119); Zeitlin (2003b:320, 330). On the morally admirable and "perfectly sweet" Helen of the *Orestes*, see West (1987:35). In Vellacott's (1973:75, 77) view, Helen represents what is left of the beauty and goodness of Athens, while Orestes embodies the Hellenic war-fever.

²³⁷ See *Hel.* 36-41; 1151-1160; 1656-1600; 1684-1687. On similar conclusions about the causes of the Trojan War, see also *Or.* 1639-1642, and *E. El.* 1281-1282.

²³⁸ When Homer's Helen found and recognized a disguised Odysseus in the city of Troy, she emphasizes how happy she was at the thought she would soon be 'rescued' (*Od.* 4.259-264), and she blames Aphrodite for the madness which led her away from her marriage and family (*Od.* 4.259-264). Helen in *Orestes* evidences a similar sense of dismay about her absence from Greece (*Or.* 98, 102).

the curse upon the daughters of Tyndareos (*Or.* 249-250). Tyndareos' other daughter – Klytaimestra – also suffered marriage troubles, earning a reputation for evil; the chorus' observation in *Orestes* that *πάσαις γυναιξὶν ἄξια στυγεῖν ἔφθ' ἢ Τυνδαρις παῖς, ἣ κατήσχυνεν γένος*, 'Tyndareos' daughter is naturally deserving of all women's hatred', for having 'put her sex to shame', could obviously apply to either sister (1153-1154).

Euripides' *Orestes* foregrounds Helen specifically as Klytaimestra's officially mourning kin, weeping inside the palace for the slain sister who protected her beloved Hermione while Helen was in Troy (60-66). She laments her sister's death (77-80), and directs Hermione to promise to Klytaimestra all of the offerings which are fit for the underworld and appropriate for one sister to give another, in order to secure Klytaimestra's goodwill toward herself, her husband, and her daughter (119-123). Helen's very last mortal act on earth is spinning thread to adorn purple robes, to honour her sister Klytaimestra's tomb (1431-1436).²³⁹ She is also a compassionate aunt to her dear sister's offspring, expressing pity for Orestes, even though he is the one who has spilled Klytaimestra's blood (88-90); despite Elektra's rudeness to her in the opening scene of the play, Helen is also kind and forgiving toward her niece (71-73, 100). Helen sends an offering to her sister Klytaimestra's tomb, seeking her forgiveness toward the two children who committed the matricide, but as soon as her kindly aunt has left the stage, Elektra attacks Helen's beauty, and curses her for ruining all of Greece (130-131). Her willingness to engage with her sister's children (along with Klytaimestra's fostering of Hermione) supports the EP finding that alloparenting occurs most successfully between female kin.²⁴⁰ Klytaimestra's children do not respect their matrilineal aunt or return her affection, however; in Elektra's opinion, Helen is to blame for everybody's woes and the parents of the men who died at Troy would stone her if they caught sight of her (56-60). This is a view widely-held in tragedy's fictional world: upon hearing Helen cry out for help within the palace, the chorus loudly demands her death as betrayer and murderer of Greeks (1303-1310). In particular, Elektra (rightly) worries that Helen's beauty will blunt the edges of the swords poised to slay her (1288), even though, in Helen's opinion, beauty is no great gift.²⁴¹

²³⁹ Cf. Klytaimestra's defence of her sister against the chorus' bitter accusations, pointing out that to blame Helen alone for the war-losses is unfair (1465-1467).

²⁴⁰ On alloparenting and female kin, see Chapter 1, pp. 41n179; 47-48; 50; 65n333; 52-53; 71n362; 81; 83; 83n430; 83n432; 84; 84n436.

²⁴¹ See *Hel.* 254-263, 304-305). Cf. Sophokles' Deianeira in *Trakhiniai*, worrying that her beauty would bring her pain (*Trakh.* 24-25).

The *Orestes*' Helen is also a mother, an important female life-experience she shares with her sister, and something rarely explored in other works. After years apart, Helen and daughter Hermione still have affectionate feelings for each other, with Helen having care for her daughter's reputation (108), and Hermione obeying her mother's direction to place offerings at her aunt's tomb (1323); Helen's declaration in *Helen* (282-283) that Hermione is the glory of the *oikos* – and of Helen herself – also suggests there is still strong affection between mother and child. EP research shows that women in general prefer emotional connection to their daughters, finding these relationships more fulfilling.²⁴² Like her sister, Helen is reputed to have produced a number of children during the most fertile years of her life – during her ten year stay in Troy – but (unlike the sacrifice of Klytaimestra's child)) the murder of those children at the hands of the Greeks during the War is rarely addressed in critical discussion (or in tragedy).²⁴³ Euripides' emphasis on the cordial mother-daughter relationship between Tyndarid Helen and Hermione also suggests that Helen has good reason to empathize with a sister savagely betrayed by offspring. But his innovative depiction of an appealing Hermione also draws attention, especially in terms of her relationship with her aunt Klytaimestra.

If audiences were expecting a reappearance of Euripides' appalling Hermione seen in that earlier *Andromakhe* (428-425 BCE), then their expectations were certainly confounded in *Orestes*; Euripides strives in *Orestes* to depict an appealing, more sympathetic and seemingly younger Hermione.²⁴⁴ *Orestes*' Hermione is the uncorrupted young daughter of two Tyndarid mothers, each with a reputation for wickedness, but each redeemed in Euripides' retelling of this story. For years this girl has been raised by Klytaimestra, alongside her maternal aunt's natural but lethally antagonistic daughter (63-64); this foster-sister Elektra exploits the genuine affection between Klytaimestra and her fostered niece, agreeing that for Hermione to go to the tomb in her stead would demonstrate proper respect for all the care given by her aunt (109-110). When her mother Helen returns, in Elektra's opinion, Hermione now gives joy to an

²⁴² On women's preference for daughters, see Chapter 1, p. 57.

²⁴³ On Helen's offspring, see Stesikhoros fr. 191; Gantz (2004:289, 291).

²⁴⁴ Euripides' earlier *Andromakhe* (perhaps 427-425 BCE) actually supplies a narratively logical sequel to the later-produced play *Orestes*: Hermione is older, unhappily married (to Neoptolemos) and miserably infertile, hostile to her husband's fertile war-captive concubine and her illegitimate child (*And.* 901-905, 912); Euripides shows that antipathy between co-wives derives from reproductive competition. The *Andromakhe*'s Hermione, Menelaos, and Orestes all demonstrate the worst aspects of the Atreid *ethos*: Hermione is willing to leave her husband, the son of the greatest Greek hero, in order to marry a kin-killing monster, and her ignoble behaviour is contrasted with *Andromakhe*'s compliant concubinage throughout the play.

undeserving woman – the returning Helen (*Or.* 66).²⁴⁵ Elektra has no love for her young foster-sister, demonstrated in her inspired contribution to the matricides' plan for revenge (1177-1178): Hermione, she says, is returning from Klytaimestra's tomb – let's seize her and hold her hostage (1183-1189), and if Menelaos causes us any trouble, let's cut the girl's neck (1191-1199). Elektra may well have resented Klytaimestra for murdering her father and taking another man to be Elektra's step-father – as well she should, given the lifetime disadvantage for a step-child – but her easy animosity for another child within her home suggests a degree of sibling competition well-documented in EP models.

Thus it is that a daughter of Klytaimestra once again becomes a hostage to evil-thinking, child-killing Atreids. Orestes – praising the intelligence and beauty of his bloodthirsty full-blood sister – begins to dehumanize his foster-sister Hermione as σκύμνον ἀνοσίου πατρός, 'the whelp of an unholy father' (1213), even though unholy Menelaos is one of the few Atreids who has never indulged directly in unholy child-killing. Hermione, ignorant of her foster-siblings' hatred, arrives at Klytaimestra's tomb to beg her foster-mother's goodwill toward these same heartless conspirators (1321-1323). She loves her foster-siblings, and is horrified at the news that the *demos* has doomed her dear cousins to death (1328-1329). Exploiting Hermione's natural affection, Elektra invites the unsuspecting girl – because she is the foster-daughter of Klytaimestra – to pity her cousins and join in their supplication of Helen her mother (1337-1341); Euripides' earlier *Elektra* showed Elektra similarly exploiting her mother's natural affection for a presumed grandchild. But while the unsuspecting grandmother could not escape her bloody dispatch, Hermione is destined to survive; the play's resolution gives us Apollo announcing that Orestes – still holding a sword to this unfortunate girl-child's neck – is going to be her husband, when just moments previously, Menelaos was calling on the *demos* to attack the abominable matricide (1621-1624).²⁴⁶ Now, standing before the palace ready to launch his men upon Orestes, Menelaos' wry comment on this improbable turn of events is εὐγενῆς δ' ἀπ' εὐγενοῦς/ γήμας ὄναιο καὶ σὺ χά' διδοῦς ἐγώ, 'Well-born from the well-born, may you profit in

²⁴⁵ Cf. Klytaimestra's reference in Sophokles' *Elektra* to living with 'those children who do not hate me' (*S. El.* 650-654); Sophokles did not specifically identify Klytaimestra's foster-daughter, however. See also Ferguson (1972:563), who suggests that part of Elektra's enmity for Hermione derives from a kind of resentful sibling envy.

²⁴⁶ Some contend that the appearance of Apollo to resolve an unresolvable state of events is simply farcical (see Webster (1967) 291; Wolff (1968) 148; Vickers (1973) 585-586; Wolff (1983) 356; Vellacott (1984b) 178). Others contend that modern critics misapprehend the dramatic function of the god, which is simply to tie up loose ends at the close of the play; see Heath (1987:60); Sourvinou-Inwood (2003:1); Nisetich (2010:180).

marrying her I am giving you' (1676-1677). Any wish for Orestes' prosperity as a son-in-law is surely sarcastic.²⁴⁷

The natural children of Agamemnon cannot escape their appalling Tantalid heritage, whether inflicted through nature, nurture, or a number of curses, but Hermione – reframed as Helen's daughter and Klytaimestra's niece and foster-child – is compassionate and considerate: this last Tyndarid is truly humane, and is now in as much danger of sacrifice to Atreid evil as her cousin Iphigeneia was in Aulis.²⁴⁸ *Orestes*, the *Oresteia*'s sequel, depicts matricide as just one consequence of the corrupting cycle of vengeance, and the Tyndarids – Tyndareos, Helen and Hermione – remind us that Klytaimestra was a beloved child, sister, aunt, and a loving mother; that the slaughter of mothers is immoral and abhorrent; and that Tyndarid women cannot really be to blame for all of the ills of the accursed Tantalids. The *Oresteia*'s Euripidean prequel – *Iphigeneia at Aulis* – reopens the question of who and what really is to blame for the endless cycle of strife in this troubled family; the moral failings of the great men who wage war at all costs are the real, ultimate cause of Klytaimestra's later husband-murder.

Euripides: Iphigeneia at Aulis

Euripides' posthumously produced *Iphigeneia at Aulis* of 405 BCE is a cold-case exploration of the backstory to Klytaimestra's mariticide and matricide, depicting the sundering of mother and sacrificed daughter with – according to some – enormous sympathy.²⁴⁹ Critics agree that the *IA* is a prequel which responds to the *Oresteia* and even to the *Iliad*.²⁵⁰ The *IA* plays upon audience familiarity with previous versions of the myth, but is innovative in its redrawing of

²⁴⁷ According to the *Andromakhe*'s Orestes, Hermione was actually pledged to Orestes before Menelaos went to Troy (*And.* 968-969), and so remains his only hope of marriage, because no outside family would deign to join their house with that of a mother-murderer (*And.* 974-978). On the *Andromakhe*'s Orestes as so polluted by his matricide that he is unable to find any wife except from within the family who shares his taint, see Ferguson (1972:330).

²⁴⁸ On the innocence of the exploited Hermione, the matricides' only true friend, see Wolff (1968:133); Lesky (1983b:352); Burnett's (1998:260, 269); Nisetich (2010:173).

²⁴⁹ On the doubtfulness of the *IA*'s lines due to poor transmission and corruption of the original Euripidean text, see Kovacs (2003:77-78); Storey and Allan (2005:273). The literary quality of the tragedy is debated; see Blaiklock (1952:93); Kitto (1968:362); Ferguson (1972:161, 449); Storey and Allan (2005:273); Hall (2010:289).

²⁵⁰ Sorum (1992:529); Gamel (1999:319); Ley (2007:76-77). On intertextual constraints evident in *IA*, the effect of previous works showing future events, see Hall (2010:289); Eisner (1979:161). On the dating of this play, see Merwin and Dimock (1978:20); Storey and Allan (2005:135-136).

the traditional story.²⁵¹ Many interpret the collision between the genders in the play as evidence of Euripides' – and Athenians' – disillusioned weariness with thirty years of war-making.²⁵² Others conclude that the specific problem of marriage is central to the play, reflecting a late fifth-century attempt to mitigate gender disharmony through romanticizing marital love.²⁵³ But some classicists contend that the *IA* reflects the natural conflict between male *erōs* for military endeavour with female reproductive values; Euripides' *IA* juxtaposes male and female worlds of war and love, showing that in an androcentric, military culture, ἔρωϝ for 'plunder and glory' – the centre of all Greek values – will always prevail.²⁵⁴ This certainly accords with EP findings that males prioritize the increase and maintenance of their status and resources in order to improve their chances of reproductive activity.²⁵⁵

Euripides' characters in the *IA* are particularly realistic, reflecting typical Athenians, but almost every well-known character behaves against their mythological type: Akhilleus – the best of the Akhaians – is a hesitant anti-hero; the brothers Agamemnon and Menelaos – long-time supporters of the Atreid cause – vacillate and bicker; Klytaimestra – the ruin of female reputation – is the model of a good wife and mother; and the slain girl-child Iphigeneia is more noble and heroic than all of the greatest Greek soldiers. Euripides' unexpected character-assassination of the traditional male heroes is narratively remarkable,²⁵⁶ especially as the *IA* is rich in allusion to the *Iliad*'s excellent Akhilleus: the chorus marvel at his superhuman abilities

²⁵¹ On the *IA*'s innovations and omissions, see Bowra (1966:157); Ferguson (1972:451); Castellani (1985:3); Foley (1985:68); Garner (1990:172-173). On the play's engagement with contemporary social and political concerns, including the misalignment of individualism and the public, greater good, see Walsh (1979:301); Zeitlin (1995a:179-181); Blume (2011:187); Markantonatos (2011:193).

²⁵² Zelenak (1998:131); Storey and Allan (2005:273). On the *IA* as criticism of Greek *philotimia* and the Greeks' uncontrollable ἔρωϝ for warmongery, see Merwin and Dimock (1978:4, 13, 20); Wilson (1979:16); Knox (1985:9); Lawrence (1988:106); Sharrock and Ash (2002:70). See also Thoukydides' (6.24) comments on the real-world Greek army's lust for war. Scholars also highlight the play's use of deception to mirror expeditious propaganda of contemporary war-making; see Vellacott (1975:174); Castellani (1985:6); Rabinowitz (2008:115); Hall (2010:290); Markantonatos (2011:190, 195, 218). On the negative depiction of Akhilleus – often extolled as the greatest military man in Greek myth – confirming Euripides' disapproval of heroic *philotimia*, see Norwood (1948:288); Ferguson (1972:458); Vellacott (1975:43); Merwin and Dimock (1978:15-16).

²⁵³ Ferguson (1968:159-160); Foley (1982:75, 159-160, 163).

²⁵⁴ Cavander (1973:11); Vellacott (1975:201); Zeitlin (1995a:181); Knapp (1997:71).

²⁵⁵ On males' attention to their status and possession of wealth, see Chapter 1, pp. 17-19; 19n24; 22; 28-30; 29n91; 31-33; 34-36; 34n126; 34n130; 35n133; 35n134; 37; 39; 41-43; 49n230; 49n232; 56; 62-63; 64n323; 64n326; 66; 69; 70n360; 83-84; 84n436.

²⁵⁶ On the moral failings of the *IA*'s generals as an allusion to the *ethos* of late fifth-century Athenians, see Wasserman (1949:174); Vellacott (1972:83); Snell (1983:399); McLeish (2003:162); Storey and Allan (2005:27). On the characters in the *IA* as ordinary, typical Athenians, see Ferguson (1968:163; 1972:450, 464). On the character contrast between Iphigeneia and all the other characters, see D. Burgess (2004:37-38).

in winning a race against a chariot and four horses on foot (*IA* 206-215).²⁵⁷ But the appearance of Euripides' anti-Akhilleus immediately sabotages this glorious reputation: he reports that the Myrmidons are bothering him about the delay in departure, and have sent him to find out what's going on (801-818). In the process of searching for Agamemnon, he is instead greeted by Agamemnon's wife in a farcical exchange concerning Akhilleus' engagement to Iphigeneia (821-829); eventually, the astonished soldier denies any intention to marry Klytaimestra's daughter (841-843). The Old Man then reveals that Agamemnon actually plans to sacrifice Iphigeneia, and has called her to Aulis through the strategy of a false marriage; Klytaimestra therefore supplicates Akhilleus to assist her, because he has falsely been called Iphigeneia's husband, and it was only his divine descent which persuaded Klytaimestra to agree to the marriage in the first place (903-912).²⁵⁸

Akhilleus' most pressing reason for assisting Klytaimestra is not the rescue of her daughter – a child whose throat will be cut – but the insult being done to his honour by Agamemnon: he resents being used by the despised Atreids to further their plans; the untoward use of his name to bring a dishonoured Iphigeneia to Aulis will make his own person 'impure' (938-943), and he fears that his own lineage will become secondary to theirs (944-954). To stand back in the face of such insult would seriously jeopardize his personal reputation.²⁵⁹ In fact, if the general had only asked for permission to use his name to deceive the mother and daughter, then Akhilleus would not now be in this position of having to defend his own honour (959-969); the planned sacrifice of Iphigeneia would not be offensive, if only he had been in on the plan. Akhilleus coolly admonishes Klytaimestra: 'calm yourself – I have revealed myself to you as a very great god, although I am not: but nevertheless, I will become one' (973-975), comforting words indeed, to a woman about to lose her daughter to the sacrificial blade. Like the battle-shy Menelaos in *Orestes*, this unheroic Akhilleus' first resort is to reasoned persuasion rather than force of arms to achieve his ends (1011-1013); although Klytaimestra thinks this an unlikely strategy (1014), she has no choice but to place herself entirely in his hands (1024, 1033). Homer's Akhilleus feared the opinion of no man; Euripides' nervous Akhilleus would rather Klytaimestra get the credit for the persuasion, in case the army finds fault with him for

²⁵⁷ On Homer's Akhilleus as a warrior willing to commit brutal and ruthless atrocity, see *Il.* 23.175-177; 24.750-753; on his relationship with his captive sex-slaves, see *Il.* 1.345-348, 368-369, 390-392; 9.658-661, 663-668.

²⁵⁸ In Prag's (1985:74) view, Stesikhoros' work (*ca.* 560-540) was the source for Euripides' false marriage between Iphigeneia and Akhilleus. Cf. *Kypria* (43-50), however.

²⁵⁹ See discussion of males' willingness to defend their status, Chapter 1, pp. 17; 22; 28; 29n91; 31-32; 34-36; 34n126; 34n130; 35n133; 35n134; 37; 39; 41-43; 49n230; 49n232; 56; 69; 70n360; 83.

resorting to cleverness instead of manly might (1017-1021), an example of extreme gender distinction affecting perceptions of physicalized masculinity – cunning being a traditional female vice. Akhilleus – obsessed with his status in the Greek world generally and in the army specifically, cannot allow his masculine *ethos* to be in doubt.²⁶⁰ The *IA*'s accidental bridegroom is a very different man from the wrathful warrior in the opening chapter of the *Iliad* whose promised bed-mate is unexpectedly taken from him by Agamemnon.

Akhilleus' main motivation is a fretful concern about his reputation – supporting EP's view of men's concern with public perception of their ability to maintain renown for masculinity – and his last words to Iphigeneia are far from “romantic” (despite the previous debates of some critics): he applauds her noble self-sacrifice, and now wishes that he might have had the benefit of marrying her – Hellas is going to get that – and he suggests that, if she changes her mind, he will keep his weapons near the altar, in order to rescue her (1404-1432).²⁶¹ The Messenger's description of the actual sacrifice contains no mention of Akhilleus hovering nearby in the event of Iphigeneia's need of rescue, because he is now one of the Akhaians, completely complicit with the murder. His priority is his alliances with the army generals, and being seen as a reliable ally, an attitude in accord with EP findings on male disposition to intrasexual alliance-making and maintenance. He accepts with approval the death of the girl for the sake of the war, and so is happy the sacrifice will now occur with the victim's assent. Having promised Klytaimestra that he would prevent the sacrifice, his earlier promise may be forgotten; no intervention to forestall unholy murder is required, because Akhilleus is now satisfied that Iphigeneia's noble actions will not compromise his good name. The nature of the act itself is of lesser import; what counts is the sacrificial victim's assent, even if the doomed child's mother protests.

Euripides' bringing-low of the best of the Akhaians is nothing compared to his character-assassination of Atreid brothers Menelaos and Agamemnon, however. The subject of human sacrifice is a tragic matter, but the ludicrous squabble of these royal Atreids foreshadows fourth-century comedy. The chorus' ode praising the golden-haired Menelaos, and the nobly-born Agamemnon (175-177) is immediately undercut by their first actual appearance: Menelaos is

²⁶⁰ See Chapter 1. pp. 17-19; 19n28; 23-24; 25-26; 28; 29n91; 31; 33; 34n126; 35-36; 36n143; 37n145; 41; 49; 49n230; 58-59; 68-70; 73n377; 74-75; 74n380; 75n385; 77-78; 82, for a discussion of perceptions of masculinity and men's social status.

²⁶¹ Scholars diverge widely in their view of whether any “romantic” feelings exist between Iphigeneia and Akhilleus; see Cavander (1973:9); Walsh (1979:303); Castellani (1985:1, 4); Foley (1985:75); Sansone (1991:164); Michelini (2000:51).

in hot pursuit of an Old Man, bickering wildly with him over the letter which will save Iphigeneia's life (309-313). This Menelaos is the petty villain of melodrama, threatening to bloody the head of his pursuer with a blunt sceptre, and complaining that the Old Man talks rather too much for a slave (311-313). Enter Agamemnon, the high king of the army, wondering – like a ponderous bobby – ‘what’s going on here then’ (317).²⁶² Menelaos launches into a long and very serious attack upon his brother's integrity; he has intercepted Agamemnon's sealed tablet warning Iphigeneia and Klytaimestra away from Aulis, and he accuses his brother of behaving like a modern politician, ambitious and greedy, duplicitous and untrustworthy.²⁶³ According to Menelaos, although Agamemnon campaigned hard to get the position of high general over the army, his friendliness to all and sundry was insincere, for as soon as he had won the office, he refused to receive the common man (337-348). Agamemnon declares that he is leader only because the army chose him as a favour to Menelaos: he wishes he were not the supreme general, since that is why it is his daughter who must die (84-93). Because almost everybody lies in this play, Menelaos' account of his brother's shoddy behaviour is somewhat suspect; but Agamemnon never denies the accusations. Menelaos' second point of attack concerns his brother's unhappiness over the possibility that the whole venture might be called off; in his opinion, Agamemnon's dismay derives only from the loss of opportunity to expand his status, and increase his renown among the Greeks (354-357). Agamemnon's preoccupation echoes Akhilleus' concern with reputation, and both follow the EP finding that males are universally concerned with protecting their public persona. Menelaos points out that the Greek army is disbanding itself (352-353), and so what is the point of claiming to be supreme commander of thousands of men and ships, when the *demos* makes up its own mind?

Menelaos claims that his brother asked for Menelaos' advice about Iphigeneia's sacrifice in order to retain his command (356-357), another point of support for the EP view that alpha-males work hard to ensure their rule. Similarly, Agamemnon – upon hearing Kalkhas' prophecy – was relieved and glad to sacrifice a daughter, because it meant retaining his supreme generalship; the father's summons to Iphigeneia was therefore willingly dispatched, and so Menelaos is not to blame at all (358-364). Menelaos concludes that Agamemnon's present change of

²⁶² He follows up on this clanger with an amusing – but inappropriate – little pun on his own name (321). Traditional British seaside puppet-shows present a slow-witted ‘bobby’ (police-man) as a nincompoop, whose most famous line must always be ‘Wot’s going on ‘ere, then?’; despite all the Punch-and-Judy palaver, this play about child-murder is no comedy.

²⁶³ In Kovacs' (2002a:199n12) opinion, this passage also differs substantially from Euripides' original lines.

mind surrenders the whole of Hellas to the mocking of barbarians; what any army really needs is a man of good sense (370-375). The chorus' rather tepid comment on this speech wryly observes that it is terrible when brothers fight (376-377): from another point of view it is terrible that these brothers reconcile to plot the death of a child to retain personal and political power in order to wage bloody warfare. These irreconcilable aspects of events show the incompatibility of males' pursuit of power at all costs and the struggle of parents (often, and in this instance, mothers) to preserve the lives of their offspring. Agamemnon answers none of Menelaos' accusations: instead, he turns the attack back upon his brother, arguing that it is not ambition which brings the army to Aulis, but Menelaos' own failing to control his wicked wife, his lust to regain her, and the oath taken long ago by the suitors of Helen (381-395). He declares that it is hardly proper for Menelaos to enjoy happiness in regaining control over Helen if Agamemnon has to suffer the consequences of 'lawless, wicked' acts against his own children – and he is referring here to the lawless wicked sacrifice – why, he will weep day and night (396-399). There was no mention in Aiskhylos' *Oresteia* of long nights of fatherly suffering for Iphigeneia, however, despite Agamemnon's perfunctory hesitation and internal debate over the matter (*Aga.* 205-217): traditionally it was Klytimestra who lay awake, weeping until the sea of her tears was all drained dry (*Aga.* 887-894, 958), while child-killing Agamemnon returned home in triumph, without remorse or even acknowledgment of the price he paid for victory. That mothers feel the loss of children more keenly – due to their greater level of lifetime investment in offspring – is well-evidenced in EP research.²⁶⁴ While this scene often attracts interest due to the shifts and reversals of the quarrelling brothers' positions, both are intensely aware of how they will be perceived by the army they command, and ultimately, their decision rests upon preserving their power, and their reputation as powerful kings, as the following exchanges indicate.

Agamemnon yields to Menelaos' demand, seemingly because the saving letter has been delayed too long, however, and the intended victim is now present (*IA* 471-472). But this was clearly not his only option: even at this stage, the army does not yet know that Iphigeneia is to be sacrificed, as the Messenger's report of the army's speculations as to her arrival demonstrates (415-439). At this point Agamemnon still has the power to rescue her, and Menelaos has just agreed that he will find other ways to retrieve Helen (413-414), but Agamemnon now refuses

²⁶⁴ On mothers' greater investment and sense of loss when deprived of offspring, see Chapter 1, pp. 46-47; 46n207; 46n209; 46n210; 47n215; 55n272.

to allow the vacillating Menelaos to block the sacrifice. Agamemnon might also have sent the second letter of warning with a young, swift-footed messenger, instead, he sends it with an ancient man (139-140), suggesting that, in fact, he has never seriously entertained the notion of resisting the prophecy of Kalkhas; he was merely feeling sorry for himself, and worried about his command of the army, and so offered a token protest, just as he did in the chorus' account of his decision in the *Agamemnon*.

Menelaos now begs Agamemnon not to contemplate sacrificing any children for the sake of the war (473-484); ironically, he swears oaths by his grandfather Pelops – who was killed as a child by his own father and then restored by the gods – and by their father Atreus – who killed the children of his brother Thyestes.²⁶⁵ Now, he is filled with pity, for Agamemnon, and for Iphigeneia too, since both are his kin; threatening the very foundation of Greek myth, he even offers to forget evil Helen and make another marriage; he cannot bear to destroy Agamemnon, since brother should not destroy brother; the whole expedition should be disbanded at once; what has Agamemnon's daughter got to do with Helen – nothing; and (somewhat belatedly) to kill a child is a dreadful thing (485-495).

Menelaos presents entirely plausible, compassionate reasons for abandoning the war and preventing the undesirable sacrifice of Iphigeneia, a child. The chorus' response to Menelaos' recantation observes that γενναῖ' ἔλεξας Ταντάλω τε τῷ Διὸς/ πρέποντα: προγόνους οὐ καταισχύνεις σέθεν, 'True to your descent from Tantalos the child of Zeus, you speak good sense; you do not put your forbears to shame' (504-505), but what Menelaos has just done and said is exactly what his shameful forbears Tantalos and Atreus ought to have done and said: rejected the expeditious killing of a child. Every apparently sensible argument will be overthrown in the interests of Atreid honour and glory, however, and all blame for the apparently inevitable unholy act deflected scattershot onto others (513-537); a better example of the sacrifice of offspring upon the altar of male glory could hardly be found in tragedy, showing just how the drive to secure reputation with the ultimate aim of increasing reproductive opportunity outweighs even preserving the lives of existing children.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁵ This is the first mention in this play of Menelaos' children as potential victims.

²⁶⁶ On the evolutionary function of ultimate reproductive goals, see Chapter 1, pp. 21; 21n37. On male reproductive strategy of optimizing quantity of offspring at the expense of quality, see Chapter 1, pp. 81; 81n416; 81n417.

Agamemnon's response to Menelaos' compassionate arguments for opposing the proposed sacrifice of Iphigeneia is a tour-de-force of self-interest and obfuscation.²⁶⁷ He approves Menelaos' brotherly attempt to reconcile, claiming that estrangement of brothers occurs principally due to rivalry in love or inheritance (508-509).²⁶⁸ Agamemnon insists that he hates the kind of blood kinship that creates pain for everyone involved (509-510), yet he immediately adds that they now have no choice but to commit fully to the murder of his daughter (511-512). Agamemnon and Menelaos list those who – by insisting on the sacrifice, or making the prophecy known – ensure that Iphigeneia cannot be saved (513-537): the Greek army (514); Kalkhas, that ambitious 'bane' (518, 520); and the ambitious and disloyal Odysseus (527).²⁶⁹ No matter Menelaos' sensible arguments, Agamemnon has a ready reply to counter any hope of saving his child; he claims that if he fails to carry through on the sacrifice, the whole Greek army will descend upon Argos, and utterly destroy the palace at Mycenae, in order to kill both Atreid brothers (531-536). Why this should be the case, when the army exists only because of Agamemnon's and Menelaos' need to restore their reputation for effective, proprietary possession of a wife, is not made clear.²⁷⁰ Just as in Aiskhylos' *Agamemnon*, his pity is all for himself (537). There is no suggestion that Agamemnon could simply inform the army – many of whom are only at Aulis because of the obligation of a suitor's oath – that he could not bear to sacrifice his own child to simply retrieve his brother's wife, and there is no suggestion that the army might not approve his fatherly sentiment. Reputedly, only three other men beside himself even know of the prophecy at this point – Kalkhas, Menelaos, and Odysseus – and the latter, according to at least one version of the story, is already an unwilling participant in the war, and would likely grasp any hope of return to Ithaka.²⁷¹

Aiskhylos gave us only a second-hand – perhaps even third-hand – eyewitness account of Agamemnon's choosing to kill his daughter; Euripides gives us a first-hand view of an

²⁶⁷ It is not at all certain that either Atreid ever truly wishes to extract themselves from the impending act of child-murder. According to Ryzman (1989:114-115), Menelaos' change of heart is only feigned, in order to achieve his ultimate goal, while Agamemnon's initial resistance to the oracle's demand is equally deceptive, aimed at the retention of power and the acquisition of glory.

²⁶⁸ The enmity between his own kin over Aerope and the Tantalid sceptre, Atreus and Thyestes, is certainly a defining example of this.

²⁶⁹ Respect for Apollo's prophet does not appear to figure in their debate on whether they should kill Kalkhas or not (518-521).

²⁷⁰ On men's need to enforce proprietary ownership of female mates in order to maintain the reputation among male peers, see Chapter 1, p. 70n360.

²⁷¹ For the tale of Odysseus' feigned insanity as an excuse to stay away from the war, see Hyginus *Fab.* 95, 'Ulysses'.

ambitious man upon the brink of filicide for political purposes.²⁷² Homer's Agamemnon is a man driven by the ambition to rule without a rival, to increase his own wealth, to retain his social status, and to get unconstrained access to desirable women; so far, he figures as a typical alpha male of any time and place. But, as the Greeks well knew, he is also the villain of the *Iliad* – he, not Hektor, is Akhilleus' main antagonist and matters only proceed once their conflict is resolved – and he lies, and is unwisely arrogant toward his allies; men die for the sake of his ego.²⁷³ Homer depicts Agamemnon as a poor king and leader from his first appearance; he acts as he thinks best for himself, lacking the wisdom to choose the best course for the army (*Il.* 1.22-25, 29-31), and is also clearly a fool when it comes to running his own household (*Il.* 1.111-115).

Euripides' Agamemnon in *IA* is perhaps a little less obnoxious than Homer's arrogant high-king, but not so very much. The *IA*'s Atreid king is equally driven by ambition, by the desire for addition wealth, by the need to maintain his social rank, and – not coincidentally – to increase his access to fertile-age women through victory in war. His opening speech attributes blame for the war onto the oath sworn by the suitors of Helen, an oath that was Tyndareos' idea (49-65).²⁷⁴ Agamemnon continues throughout the play to blame others for the war: anyone but himself.²⁷⁵ That he sees the need to over-defend the decision to kill his child suggests that he is not comfortable with the expeditious sacrifice of his child after all; this suggests that there are limits to the drive to increase and maintain a reputation for ability to rule, a drive in tension with the universal urge – even in males – to preserve the life of one's own offspring.²⁷⁶ According to his self-defence, it was Menelaos who invoked the oaths of Tyndareos throughout

²⁷² Considering Euripides' heavy allusions in this play to the *Iliad*'s Agamemnon – in particular the conflict between Akhilleus and Agamemnon and the proposed marriage of Akhilleus to a daughter – it appears that this Agamemnon is the same man featured throughout the many versions of the *Oresteia*. McDonald (1990:74, 2003:135) draws attention to the Greek view – as in Aristotle *Nic. Eth.* 1161b; *Eud. Eth.* 1238b – that the (male) parent has the right to dispose of offspring however he wishes. Infant filicides and exposures in tragic myth typically tend to be male, however, as in Euripides' *Medeia* and *Ion*.

²⁷³ Even before their quarrel over the reassignment of Briseis, Agamemnon and Akhilleus are contending to be the best of the Akhaians (*Il.* 1.90-91), and Agamemnon is manifestly motivated primarily by the desire to counter any threat to his dominance, and maintain his reputation and thus his power at all costs. Homer is also at pains to demonstrate that Agamemnon has a record of lying to his own people (*Il.* 2.13-15, 2.30-33, 2.136-137, 2.67-70), and his whole army agrees Agamemnon has acted with extreme hubris (*Il.* 13.111-114).

²⁷⁴ Kovacs (2002a:166-167n1) agrees that these lines represent Euripides' original text.

²⁷⁵ Agamemnon often argues that the sacrifice is absolutely going to be – must be – somebody else's fault; when Iphigeneia arrives at Aulis, for example, Agamemnon declares that the destruction of his child is Paris's fault (467-468).

²⁷⁶ On the utility of husbands in preserving offspring lives – from the opportunistic infanticidal attempts of other males, see Chapter 1, pp. 49; 61n309.

Greece, insisting that all the suitors come to his aid (77-79), and while Agamemnon's own response on hearing Kalkhas' prophecy is to order the disbanding of the army – because he could never bear to harm his own daughter – he claims that it was Menelaos who thought of sending a letter home to ensnare Iphigeneia (94-105). Agamemnon also observes that Tyndareos has three daughters: Phoibe, his wife Klytaimestra, and Helen, and he is eager to apportion at least some of the blame for this situation onto his sister-in-law Helen, who – under the influence of Aphrodite – chose her own husband, much to Agamemnon's regret (66-71).²⁷⁷ The chorus agree with Agamemnon's scapegoating of Helen as the cause of woe for the Atreids and their children – the retrieval of Helen the bad wife comes at too great a price – (1253-1254), but Agamemnon unfairly blames his sister-in-law for his own, terrible woes, which are entirely self-imposed. There is no possible explanation for the depiction of Agamemnon flailing to deflect responsibility for his decision to sacrifice his child other than his own deeply suppressed consciousness that he does terrible wrong – against his daughter, her mother, and the wider community of families; despite this cognitive dissonance, his drive to enforce the honour of his clan will triumph.

The incompatibility of individual ambition and community well-being looms large in the play, but almost of the characters – including Iphigeneia – act to increase their individual glory, despite personal and social costs. Agamemnon may say he envies those who pass through life without risk of danger, unknown to their mortal peers (16-18), but – as the Old Man points out – danger, power, honour are what is admired (in men and male-male relations at least, according to both EP study and Greek custom), and if pain is the price for these things, it is a price worth the risk; Atreus would expect no less, and the gods certainly see no reason to alter this unfortunate reality of mortal life (20-34).²⁷⁸ As the princess Iphigeneia arrives in expectation of happy marriage to a very famous man, Agamemnon observes that noble birth results only in misery, because the weight of rank enslaves a man; what a fine thing low birth must be (442-453)! The overt message seems to be that pitiable king Agamemnon is being pushed against his true nature into something entirely unwelcome.²⁷⁹ Homer and Aiskhylos gave us the

²⁷⁷ Other sources insist that Agamemnon successfully wooed Helen on his brother's behalf: her flight from that marriage casts his achievement into disrepute. Traditionally, the three daughters of Tyndareos are all destined to have failed marriages, however.

²⁷⁸ On men's disposition to risk-taking in order to increase their reputation for bravery, physical strength, and possession of resources, see Chapter 1, pp. 28-29; 37.

²⁷⁹ Scholars are divided on Agamemnon's moral character in Euripides' *IA*, however, and sometimes contentiously so; see Stawell (1929:17); Wasserman (1949:174, 184); Blaiklock (1952:115-116); Jones (1962:247); Kitto

irresistibly ambitious, arrogant king, expert in self-promotion and pitiless in war-making. In contrast with the traditional Agamemnon, however, Euripides' Agamemnon in *IA* cannot pretend that his actions are for the good of everyone; he commands Menelaos and the chorus to conceal the truth of their plan from Klytaimestra (538-542). Agamemnon's horror upon the arrival of Iphigeneia in company of her mother demonstrates his understanding that he is doing wrong; Klytaimestra's desire to accompany her daughter is predictable and prosocial; Agamemnon's duplicitous inhumanity is for nobody's good but his own (454-459). Agamemnon can well imagine the long-term consequences of his atrocious scheme, as evidenced by his anger and fear upon finding his wife has come to Aulis. But his fear cannot prevent the plan going forward. Ominously, he imagines that Iphigeneia, once she discovers that her dear father is going to kill her, will curse him with a marriage just like this – expecting love, but finding death (462-464). Although Iphigeneia utters no such curse, a clearer intertextual reference to Klytaimestra's future actions could hardly be found. Every aspect of Klytaimestra's characterization in the *IA* is a commentary on the inevitability of a mother's revenge upon the husband who betrays his wife, and who sacrifices a beloved daughter to worldly ambition.

Klytaimestra is the unwitting target of her husband's lies from her very first appearance in the *IA*. Having delivered a number of ambiguous endearments to Iphigeneia – which to an audience in the know only serve to make her joyful innocence more pitiable – Agamemnon claims that the length of his grief-filled speech is entirely due to his sadness in handing their daughter over to 'another house' (685-690). Klytaimestra at this stage still trusts and loves her husband: her reply offers compassion for his grief, indicates her own sadness at marrying-out a beloved daughter, and suggests that they will both become accustomed to the loss over time (691-694). Agamemnon is desperate to get his sympathetic wife away from the proceedings: although she has just arrived after a very long journey, he commands her to return to Argos immediately, completely excluding her – the mother – from all marriage festivities (725-736), but Klytaimestra has every right – of attachment, custom, and religious duty – to officiate at her daughter's wedding. In frustration, Agamemnon is reduced to a single word: *πιθοῦ!* 'Obey!'

(1969:364); Ferguson (1972:453); Vellacott (1972:88); Merwin and Dimock (1978:14); Collard (1981:7-8); Siegel (1981:257-258); Lesky (1983b:362); Snell (1983:397-398); McDonald (1990:76); Rabinowitz (1993:40); Wolfe (2009:712-713); Markantonatos (2011:203). Some suggest that Euripides' Agamemnon is simply a typical fifth-century man, subject to the political and cultural demands of an androcentric society, and sympathetically perceived by ancient audiences; see Stawell (1929:18); Norwood (1948:287-288); Wassermann (1949:176-179).

(739). Anyone familiar with Aiskhylos' *Agamemnon* would recognize the sly allusion to Klytaimestra's famous cry of $\pi\theta\omicron\upsilon$ (*Aga.* 943).

Klytaimestra is accustomed to wifely obedience (726), but this time her husband goes too far: evoking the authority of Hera, goddess of marriage – who rules Argos – she reminds Agamemnon that she will fulfil the role of the mother within the house, and he should take care of matters outside (739-741).²⁸⁰ Agamemnon observes that the wise man should keep a good, true wife in his house (749-750), and the chorus immediately tease the omniscient audience with a preview of how the Greek army will reach Ilium, where dwells the god-possessed prophetess Cassandra (751-761). Agamemnon's previously good and true wife in the house will in future days receive this very Trojan princess – in the company of her now-hated husband – and dispatch them both. Agamemnon may be Klytaimestra's *philos*, but he is no good-and-true husband, admitting he will betray her himself (459). The only loyal friend in Klytaimestra's world is the Old Man, originally part of her dowry from Tyndareos (868-871), and the only other character in the *IA* to utterly reject the child-sacrifice; Klytaimestra discovers from her loyal family retainer that the proposed marriage is a dreadful lie, told by Agamemnon to bring Iphigeneia to Aulis (882-887). Upon hearing the terrible plans set for her daughter, Klytaimestra concludes that Agamemnon must be mad, possessed by an *alastōr*, and the Old Man agrees (873-878).²⁸¹ He further informs her that the letter sent by Agamemnon in a fleeting moment of good conscience to forbid the marriage was intercepted by Menelaos; it is therefore he who now bears responsibility for the situation (891-895). Agamemnon and Menelaos have both, alternately, retracted their approval for the sacrifice, however, and so now neither one can be held to account for Iphigeneia's death!

When Klytaimestra confronts Agamemnon about his 'unholy doings against his own children' (1104-1105), he has no idea that she and Iphigeneia have found out the truth of the imminent sacrifice. There proceeds an interrogation (1124-1143), undeniably evoking that in Aiskhylos' *Agamemnon* (*Aga.* 931-943); once again on stage (and in terms of narrative time, previously) Klytaimestra is cross-examining Agamemnon on whether he is willing to sacrifice his own child. Agamemnon – unable to deny the charge – wants to know how such an act is an offence

²⁸⁰ Once again, we think of Aiskhylos' trilogy, in which Hera's marriage was invoked to excuse Klytaimestra's murderer.

²⁸¹ See also Akhilleus' description of himself as $\acute{\omega}\varsigma\ \omicron\upsilon\chi\iota\ \Pi\eta\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\omega\varsigma$, $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\prime\ \acute{\alpha}\lambda\acute{\alpha}\sigma\tau\omicron\rho\omicron\varsigma\ \gamma\epsilon\gamma\acute{\omega}\varsigma$, 'not the son of Peleus, but of a new-born spirit of revenge' (*IA* 946).

against her, the mother of the child in question (*IA* 1138). Audiences might reasonably expect that she would cite her years of care for her daughter, or perhaps just her love for the child, but Klytaimestra's reply has confounded critics: no other extant tragedy outlines so directly the sordid background to their married life together, and this historical account is in no way contradicted by Agamemnon himself. Klytaimestra, it appears, was previously married to a man called Tantalos (very likely a descendant of the original Tantalos, and perhaps a brother to Aigisthos); Agamemnon slew her first husband, and brutally murdered the infant son nursing at her breast; he then escaped the vengeance of Klytaimestra's brothers by supplicating her father, who honoured his request; this killer then received the widowed Klytaimestra in marriage (1148-1156).²⁸² This brutal account of one male's elimination of a rival and rival's child, followed by his requisition of that male's female mate for reproductive purposes, could be lifted from any account of take-over infanticide in the animal world. Klytaimestra's submission to the rule of her previous family's murderer is also logical in terms of a female's best reproductive strategy, given the limited lifetime opportunities faced by females across species. What is anomalous in their history, from a biological point of view, is the male's murder of his own pubescent female child, which constitutes an enormous waste of resources; for the alpha-male, however, there is no better strategy than increasing his own relative ranking and control of resources.

Although some view the *IA*'s revelation about the origin of their marriage as unimportant, irrelevant gossip,²⁸³ the passage is patently much more than gossip: it is evidence that, up to the unexpected murder of Iphigeneia, Klytaimestra was an exemplary, compliant wife to her second husband Agamemnon. Despite an appalling beginning, Klytaimestra reconciled herself to this new union, behaved blamelessly as wife, faithful bed-mate, and prudent keeper of Agamemnon's house, increasing his wealth, and bearing him a fine son, along with three daughters (1157-1165). She – who has been a good and true wife – is going to be deprived of

²⁸² On the narrative importance of Klytaimestra's unexpected disclosure of Agamemnon's rarely-mentioned prior action in the *IA*, see also Wassermann (1949:183-184); Lawrence (1988:99); Michelini (1999-2000:49-50); Gibert (2005:228, 230); Rabinowitz (2008:111); Hall (2010:288). According to D. Burgess (2004:42n13), Klytaimestra's marriage to Thyestes' son Tantalos may be found in Apollodorus (*Epit.* 2. 16), but nowhere else before the *IA* of 405 BCE. See also Foley (1982:163; 1985:74-75). Gibert (2005:234) is probably right to suggest that Agamemnon's murder of Klytaimestra's husband is motivated by the fact that Tantalos (the husband) is the son of Atreus' ancestral enemy Thyestes. On the consequences of this event in Klytaimestra's later story, see Foley (1985:74-75); Sorum (1992:538); D. Burgess (2004:42n13); Lauriola (2012:36). In Vellacott's (1975:130) opinion, Klytaimestra's later actions are exonerated by the evidence in this earlier *IA* of her miserable marriage to a lying child-killer. See also Eur. *IA* 1150 ff; Ap., *Bib.* 2.15-16.

²⁸³ Kitto (1968:367); Kovacs (2003:96).

a child as the price merely to regain someone else's bad wife (1157-1170). There is no reason to believe that she personally disapproved his plan to make war against the Trojans; in the event of his victory, she would have shared in his increase in fortune and status, supporting the EP finding that women in general approve their men's tendency to engage in offensive war-making.²⁸⁴

Klytaimestra also warns Agamemnon quite clearly about the consequences for him personally – from her – if he goes through with this action: his obedient, good wife will become κακὴν, a wicked one (1184), and his reception upon returning from the war will be that appropriate to an equally πονηρόν 'wicked' husband and father (1187); she begs him not to allow this to happen (1183-1184, 1187). Every aspect of their family life will be overturned, and so all of her parental effort undermined in service to her husband's political ambition. What gods will look favourably upon a kin-slayer's homecoming, if he proceeds with the sacrifice (1185-1190)? What surviving child would bear to embrace him (1191-1193)? Has he given thought to these consequences, or is he thinking only of his sceptre and command (1194-1195)? Why should Iphigeneia, the child of a faithful wife, be singled out to die, instead of someone else's child – Hermione, for example – and why should the daughter of a bad wife enjoy happy reunion with an adulterous mother (1196-1205)?²⁸⁵ Klytaimestra's apparent readiness to sacrifice to sacrifice her sister's daughter is difficult to appreciate, but explicable in terms of Hamilton's rule of altruism and relatedness: her own offspring must always be more precious to her than a less related child, even a niece.²⁸⁶ The chorus weigh in after the close of her speech, urging Agamemnon to obey, observing that saving the lives of children is honourable – one of the few times we ever hear of such a concept in an *Oresteia* tragedy – and insisting that no one could deny this (1209-1210).

Klytaimestra is contesting the combined power and will of the most powerful males in her world, and so she uses the best, most persuasive arguments she can muster; that she fails is no indication that her attachment to Iphigeneia is not genuine, only that Agamemnon's desire to

²⁸⁴ On women's approval of males' warmongery, see Chapter 1, pp. 37-38. On the universality of patriotic female support for war, see also Goldstein (2001).

²⁸⁵ On desperate mothers in tragedy suggesting that someone else stand in as sacrificial victim, see also Hekabe in Euripides' *Hekabe*, who – trying to save the life of her daughter Polyxena – argues that if it is essential to sacrifice the most beautiful of women to death, then surely the daughter of Tyndareos – Helen – should be chosen, since she possess the greatest beauty in the world (*Hek.* 267-270).

²⁸⁶ On Hamilton's Rule and altruism, see Chapter 1, pp. 44-45; 44n198; 52n252; 53; 53n258; 77.

lead an army to Troy is much greater than a mother's love, and that women's reproductive success is dependent on male whim. Klytaimestra's role in the *IA* is to demonstrate that neither reminders of love nor threat of death were enough to dissuade this general and his closest allies from committing unholy sacrifice in the name of war. Klytaimestra – an utterly exemplary wife – endured without complaint her marriage to the husband who killed her first child, the son of her first husband Tantalos. The best wife is the woman who prioritizes her husband's mating effort, but Agamemnon is also a serial child-killer, and even an exemplary wife has her limits: if she forgives the murder of yet another child, there might be no end to his slaying of her children.²⁸⁷ According to Greek cultural norms, her proper role in marriage is to protect his household, and produce children: it is not to enable him to trample the true wealth of the *oikos* – her offspring. The chorus earlier pointed out that to bear (and rear) children is a marvellous power, conveying great love, and that everyone labours universally on behalf of offspring (*IA* 917-918); their undiluted approval of parental investment in the *IA* stands in stark contrast to other plays which weigh up the pros and cons of having children.²⁸⁸ Klytaimestra has done what every wife should, and borne Agamemnon a legitimate son and heir (along with an uncertain number of daughters).²⁸⁹ It is clear from her first appearance that she is a good mother, and happy to invest in her and Agamemnon's offspring, in line with both the chorus' earlier view of parental investment, and the EP research on maternal investment.

Klytaimestra and her daughter arrive in Aulis in great excitement, and this motherly Klytaimestra delivers a gracious speech, full of enthusiasm for the imminent marriage, and mindful of her children's comfort (590-630). Iphigeneia's first words evidence the loving and

²⁸⁷ Andromakhe demonstrates her goodness by assisting Hektor in his affairs when Aphrodite pleased to 'trip him up'; accepting and suckling her husband's illegitimate sons, she argues, is the way to win a husband's love (*And.* 222-227), and Homer's Hektor describes this wife as φίλην "beloved" (*Il.* 6.366). Theano the wife of Antenor also suckles her husband's bastard son as often as she does her own children, for the sole purpose of pleasing her husband (*Il.* 5.69-71). Andromakhe legendarily invests in the children her husband has sired on other women, jeopardizing her own reproductive success, but she is completely without kin support, and thus catastrophically – even by the cultural standards of ancient Greece – dependent on her husband and his family; her compliance with her husband's reproductive activity outside of marriage may have been purely pragmatic. Andromakhe is no troublesome, *philoteknos* 'child-loving' wife, however, as her laments for Hektor – which omit all mention of Astyanax – demonstrate (*And.* 103-116, 453-457).

²⁸⁸ See for example, the chorus' consideration of the topic in Euripides' *Medeia* (1081-1115).

²⁸⁹ On the fluctuating number of daughters in Agamemnon's *oikos*, see Bremmer (2002:24); Agamemnon's daughters are four in the *Kypria*, three in the *Iliad* and Sophokles' *Elektra*, but only two in Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women*, and Euripides' *Elektra* and *IT*; the sacrificed daughter was variously known as Iphianassa in Sophokles' *Elektra* and in the *Iliad*, Iphimede in the *Catalogue*, Iphigeneia in the *Kypria*, and in Euripides' plays. The *Kypria* has both an Iphianassa and an Iphigeneia. On Euripides' use in the *IA* of narrative details from the *Kypria*, see Lubeck (1993:6, 24, 28). On the ancient origins of Iphigeneia, see West (1995).

obedient daughter, full of affection for her father, but mindful of her mother's authority (631-632).²⁹⁰ Klytaimestra remarks that Iphigeneia has always loved Agamemnon the most (638-639), a casual comment which serves only to heighten the pathos of a father's impending treachery.²⁹¹ Seeing that her beloved father suffers some distress at the thought of her impending marriage, Iphigeneia undertakes to cheer him up: she implores him to stay at home, near his children; he replies that it pains him that he cannot, so she delivers a curse upon war-spears and her uncle Menelaos' woes (656-658). This Iphigeneia is a sweet, spontaneous child, with no interest in – or understanding of – matters beyond her natural sphere, and certainly no desire to win glory for herself in supporting the war-effort.

Once the terrible plan is revealed, this innocent child grasps her father's knees, and declares herself a suppliant (1216-1219). Now it is clear why Klytaimestra told the story of Agamemnon's murder of her first husband and child, and his successful supplication of her father Tyndareos (1148-1156): Agamemnon himself once owed his life to the mercy of a stranger who had every reason to kill him. Yet he would refuse the same mercy to his own child, who has much better reason than Tantalos' killer to expect protection. Iphigeneia accuses the one man who should not seek to slay her of appalling evil:

ὁ δὲ τεκὼν με τὰν τάλαιναν,
ὦ μᾶτερ ὦ μᾶτερ,
οἴχεται προδοῦς ἔρημον.
δυστάλαιν' ἐγὼ, πικρὰν
πικρὰν ἰδοῦσα δυσσελέναν,
φονεύομαι διόλλυμαι
σφαγαῖσιν ἀνοσίοισιν ἀνοσίου πατρός,

'The one who engendered me, oh mother, oh mother, abandons me, consigning me to desolation! I am utterly miserable, knowing hateful, hateful, accursed Helen; I am destroyed, by the unholy act of my unholy father!' (1312-1318).

²⁹⁰ While Kovacs (2002a:225n14) deletes this passage as a spurious addition, it is possible, given the *IA*'s allusions to other works in the *Oresteia*, that this scene parallels the arrival of Aiskhylos' Agamemnon in his magnificent chariot, with Cassandra beside him.

²⁹¹ Is this an allusion to Klytaimestra's statement in Euripides' *Elektra* that Elektra always loved her father more (E. *El.* 1102-1104)?

Iphigeneia draws attention to the importance of blood relationship, pointing out that if she is gone, she cannot repay her aged father for his parental investment in her (1229-1230). She also begs for Agamemnon's mercy in the names of Pelops, Atreus, and the mother who brought her forth in travail (1233-1235), reminding him that the marriage of Helen and Paris is not her business, yet it is going to destroy her (1236-1237). She offers to kiss him now, so as to have something sweet to remember him by in the underworld (1238-1240), a sly allusion to Aiskhylos' image in the *Agamemnon* of Iphigeneia in the underworld running to give the dead Agamemnon a kiss (*Aga.* 1555-1559).²⁹²

And what is Agamemnon's response to Iphigeneia's moving pleas, and to those of her mother before her? He agrees that what he does is terrible, but suggests that to not do it would be worse; he claims that the army are mad with the desire to go on campaign, and so will kill him – and all his daughters – if he refuses the oracle; now the ultimate responsibility lies not with Menelaos or Helen – and certainly not with himself – but with Hellas, who must put an end to the forcible abduction of wives (*IA* 1255-1275).²⁹³ All of these justifications are the least evidenced within this play, as well as in the wider *Oresteia* narrative, as Euripides' audience were no doubt aware: the Greek army, as the *Iliad* demonstrates, are very willing to disband (*Il.* 2.142), and Helen was never forcibly abducted, because Aphrodite was to blame (*Od.* 4.259-262). No other Greek wives are presently at risk of abduction, and the Trojans, with the exception of Paris, fervently desire to return the one Greek wife they possess (*Il.* 7.350, 393).

Akhilleus now appears offering the information that the army have – at last – discovered the oracle, and are demanding Iphigeneia's death (*IA* 1345-1348), and attacking him for speaking against the idea (1348-1353). Klytaimestra and Akhilleus agree that he must fight the army to try to save Iphigeneia's life, because Iphigeneia is his promised wife (1353-1368), but Iphigeneia now famously changes her mind. Suddenly – and incongruously – she takes up the

²⁹² The latter part of the speech (*IA* 1241-1252) is bracketed by Kovacs, simply because Iphigeneia mentions Orestes. Once Kovacs (2002a:160) committed himself to the inauthenticity of baby Orestes onstage in the Euripidean original, all lines involving him must be viewed as doubtful. This approach results, however, in the omission of several rather typical Euripidean devices, including a teasing allusion (*IA* 1251-1252) to Akhilleus' amazing statement in the *Odyssey* (11.488-491) about preferring to live as a commoner, rather than exist as a king in the underworld. Later, lines 1447-1452 are omitted in Kovacs' edition because of the reference to Orestes, yet a farewell from Iphigeneia to her sisters and brother at this point would have been narratively consistent.

²⁹³ Perhaps the responsibility even lies with Iphigeneia, whose compliance with events – as her father implies – may save the lives of her sisters.

traditionally male heroic desire for honour and fame; nothing could be less natural, both in Greek cultural contexts, and within EP models of typical gendered behaviour. According to her, Akhilleus might die for no gain, but Iphigeneia could gain personal glory; she herself could ensure that Greek wives will be safe; furthermore, her life belongs to the state – not to her mother – and many others are willing to die for that nation; female life is worth less than male life, and Akhilleus’ life is worth ten thousand women!; her death is willed by Artemis; and – most importantly of all – Greeks must rule over all others, because all others are naturally slaves (1368-1401). All of these assertions are more likely to be uttered by an Akhilleian or Heraklean type of hero; unsurprisingly, her erstwhile fiancée is greatly impressed by a woman believing her intended husband to be ten thousand times greater than herself and envies her ‘gift’ of herself to Greece (1404-1411). The scene closes with an exchange of lines between Iphigeneia and her mother, in which Iphigeneia forbids any mourning for her death, begs her mother not to hate Agamemnon, asks her mother not to attend the sacrifice, and sings a song with the chorus in celebration of her victorious death (1433-1509).

Some believe, quite reasonably, that the *IA* originally ended at this point.²⁹⁴ If so, then Klytaimestra’s final words in the *IA* are a heart-breaking cri-de-coeur, begging Iphigeneia not to leave her (1466), while Iphigeneia’s final words to her mother (1487-1489) address her using the same term as the chorus do a few moments later to the Goddess Artemis: ὦ πότνια πότνια μᾶτερ, οὐ δάκρυά γέ σοι/ δώσομεν ἀμέτερα: ‘O lady, lady mother, we have not the power to offer you our tears’ (1524).²⁹⁵ She has bid Klytaimestra not to weep (1466), and she herself is now beyond all tears; she exits and the chorus sing of how her blood will pour upon the altar, in order to bring Hellas – and Agamemnon – victory and fame. If this were any other tragedy, it would indeed be a fitting and perhaps typical ending to the play, but this drama is also a prequel to a much greater story, an explanation of causation, and dreadful consequences.

²⁹⁴ Kovacs (2002a:333n26) suggests that the addition aims to align the *IA* with the earlier *IT*. Some contend that the triumphant ending of the *IA*, in which Iphigeneia is rescued from death, must be a posthumous addition to Euripides’ work. See Kovacs (2003); McDonald (2003:134); Blume (2011:187). Cf. Merwin and Dimock (1978:3), who argue against reading the extant ending as interpolation.

²⁹⁵ Kovacs (2003:99) contends that Iphigeneia’s invocation of her mother as ὦ πότνια πότνια μᾶτερ, (1487), and ὦ πότνια, πότνια, (1524), poses some critical difficulty, and is likely spurious. πότνια, ‘a poetic title of honour, used chiefly in addressing females, whether goddesses or women’ (LSJ online) is an unusual epithet for human women in tragedy; in using language better suited to a deity, Iphigeneia may be alluding to (or perhaps even evoking in her mother) the powerful *alastōr* who – as the audience is aware – would one day avenge her.

Aristotle famously disapproved Iphigeneia's volte-face as inconsistent characterization (*Poet.* 1454a33-34), and modern critics debate whether Euripides and his contemporary audiences saw this inconsistency as a problem, or as an advance in dramatic style.²⁹⁶ Almost all characters in the *IA* change their minds, however, and switch their position on the sacrifice.²⁹⁷ But this work confirms that there is one person who never changes her mind on whether Iphigeneia should have been killed: her mother.²⁹⁸ Euripides' *Iphigeneia at Aulis* suggests a strong connection between the consequences of man's expedient use of woman, and the consequences of men's expedient war-making to human civilization: the death of one girl may be unpleasant and unwelcome, but it is not really too great a price to pay compared to the anticipated war-spoils for thousands of men. In the opinion of some, Iphigeneia's noble, reasonable, and unselfish self-sacrifice and stirring rhetoric about the freedom of Greece are a false veneer over the terrible consequences of mob passion, and the loss of all civilized values.²⁹⁹ A more sympathetically-depicted Klytaimestra represents what would be lost in the process: positive human values of cooperation and compassion.

Critics agree that Klytaimestra is given – for the first time – a strongly sympathetic opportunity to present her own version of events at Aulis.³⁰⁰ Many construe a natural relationship between Euripides' 'before' and Aiskhylos' 'after' characters – despite their separation by almost fifty years.³⁰¹ Some read her character as humanly realistic, socially conventional, and even

²⁹⁶ On Aristotle, see D. Burgess (2004:37). On the Greek preference for consistency in characterization, and the *IA* as exceptional in this regard, see Lesky (1966a:397-398).

²⁹⁷ On Iphigeneia's double-think change of heart, see also Kitto (1968:366); Siegel (1980: 311, 314-315, 319); Trypanis (1981:185); Foley (1982:174); Lawrence (1988:100); Griffin (1990:143, 145, 148-149); McDonald (1990:77); Schenker (1999:645). In Lawrence's (1988:91, 101) opinion, Iphigeneia's volte-face is not exceptional in this play, since a number of others also vacillate in their attitudes, especially Agamemnon, Menelaos, and Akhilleus.

²⁹⁸ On Klytaimestra's consistent position throughout the play, see Svendsen (1990:59-60); D. Burgess (2004:54).

²⁹⁹ On the narrative juxtaposition of Iphigeneia's choice and the collapse of civil society, see Lawrence (1988:100); MacEwen (1990b:34); Kovacs (2003:77); Mastrorarde (2010:240). See also Wasserman (1949:176-177), on the power of the unruly Athenian mob, mirrored in the attitude of the *IA*'s army.

³⁰⁰ On the innovative, sympathetic Klytaimestra of Euripides' *IA*, see Svendsen (1990:52); Storey and Allan (2005:273); Wolfe (2009:710-711, 713). See also Stawell (1929:16), who observes that contemporary female audiences are especially likely to sympathize with Euripides' unfortunate mother and daughter, and to disapprove Agamemnon, and Wassermann (1949:183-184), who contends that Euripides humanizes a "tormented" Klytaimestra and awards her "final rest and peace". McDonald's (1990:81) review of critical responses to the *IA*'s characters concludes that Euripides denigrates Agamemnon, Menelaos, and Akhilleus, and exonerates Klytaimestra.

³⁰¹ Some critics assume a natural continuity and coherence of character between the Klytaimestras of 458 and 405 BCE; see Stawell (1929:17-18); Ferguson (1972:457).

bourgeois.³⁰² Given that Klytaimestra is a fictional Bronze-Age slave-owning queen, a princess born of a woman who has mated with a god, and a woman who has witnessed her present husband murder her previous husband and her first-born child, hum-drum conventionality is not what first comes to mind when thinking of her.³⁰³ Many suggest that the sacrifice of Iphigeneia is the defining event which turns a down-to-earth Klytaimestra to the dark side.³⁰⁴ Some conclude that Klytaimestra's life-experience of marital abuse follows the typical pattern of domestic violence in modern societies.³⁰⁵ The play's revelation of the murders of Klytaimestra's first husband and child also has real relevance for those interpreting her characterization.

Many scholars read the *IA* as a natural narrative step in Klytaimestra's journey to mariticide; the play is full of specific intertextual allusions to Klytaimestra's future self.³⁰⁶ Euripides' audience sees that Klytaimestra has good right to pursue vengeance against her husband and that her daughter's willing embrace of death is a meaningless travesty; Iphigeneia's impassioned plea for her life (1211-1252) contrasts too improbably with her bleak, later resignation, and the contrast is not accidental.³⁰⁷ The surprising elevation of Klytaimestra in *IA* as a paragon of Greek wifedom exists in marked contrast to the existing mythical tradition. This Klytaimestra excels as a mother, and her impassioned plea for her daughter's life is genuinely moving.³⁰⁸

Euripides' last tragedy is an effective cold-case review of Klytaimestra's and Iphigeneia's experience, and reveals the true villain(s) of the *Oresteia* cycle of vengeance. Whether the

³⁰² Norwood (1948:287); Foley (1982:174; 1985:96-98); Svendsen (1990:59); Gamel (1999:316); Michelini (2000:48); Mastrorarde (2010:250).

³⁰³ The *IA*'s Klytaimestra is still clearly some distance from the magnificent, superhuman Klytaimestra of the *Agamemnon*, however.

³⁰⁴ Gamel (1999:317) points to the similarities between Medea and Klytaimestra, both of whom happily support the androcentric *status quo* – until betrayed.

³⁰⁵ Michelini (2000:48); Gibert (2005:231). On the long years of marital discord in Klytaimestra's and Agamemnon's wretched marriage, see also Vellacott (1975:48, 219).

³⁰⁶ Murray (1965/1918:90); Ferguson (1972:461); Sharrock and Ash (2002:70); Storey and Allan (2005:144). Some contend that the victimized Klytaimestra is in fact the focal character of this Iphigeneia-play; see Svendsen (1990:52); Wolfe (2009:712). On the association between the grieving Klytaimestra and the angry, mourning Demeter, see Cavander (1973:8); Svendsen (1990:59); Zeitlin (1996:9-10).

³⁰⁷ Gibert (2005:228).

³⁰⁸ On ancient views of Klytaimestra as a "murdering adulteress" and "paradigm of bad wives", see Griffin (1990:146). Some view Klytaimestra's pleas to Akhilleus and Agamemnon as impressively positive characterization, in contrast to the negative portrayal of Akhilleus and Agamemnon; see Blaiklock (1952:119); Vellacott (1972:94; 1975:48); Svendsen (1990:57-58).

playwright's motive was to force the Athenians to reconsider their sunk-costs commitment to the endless Peloponnesian war – which was undermining their once-glorious empire – is a matter of debate, but he clearly draws a sympathetic portrait of the woman who has been subjected to the murder of not one but two of her children, and who is beginning to see that the killing of children will never truly end.³⁰⁹ Euripides' *IA* offers forensic evidence for the causes of three impious murders: for Agamemnon's expedient killing of his daughter Iphigeneia; for Klytaimestra's long-deferred retaliatory assassination of her husband Agamemnon; and for Orestes' remorseless execution of his mother Klytaimestra.³¹⁰ Despite intertextual variation in some plot details, the sacrifice of Iphigeneia by her father is the consistent initiating event in the greater *Oresteia* Atreid saga. Euripides' *IA* investigates the origins of Klytaimestra's anger and eventual revenge, convicting Agamemnon of Iphigeneia's unholy death, and ultimately – because he had ample warning of the consequences of his act – of his own death as well. Euripides' final say on the matter exonerates Klytaimestra, a species-typical biological mother who was driven to her actions by the evil of her city-sacking husband and his political allies, and absolves her of the charge that she possessed an innate disposition to wickedness. Like almost every other tragedy involving the troubled house of Atreus, the real blame for their woes rests upon the dispositional *ethos* of the child-killing male Tantalids themselves.

Aiskhylos' *Oresteia* made the father the true parent of the child, and Sophokles made the children the true offspring of the father; Euripides restores the authenticity of the female parent, and points out that exclusive paternal right and filial allegiance to the male parent alone lead only to the corruption and then destruction of the soul. Individuals in extant tragedy who demonstrate genuine sympathy for the queen are all members of Klytaimestra's matriline, created by Euripides: her sister Helen (*Orestes*), her niece Hermione (*Orestes*), her daughter Iphigeneia (*IA*), and her personal servant loyal to the Tyndarid family (*IA*). His Klytaimestra is no monster, no murderess for murder's sake. He shows us the reason for her killing of a man who can only be described as a habitual filicide, in a family where the killing of children was an intergenerational hobby. Euripides' Agamemnon is a liar and a danger to his own patriline: if the gods had told him to slay every last one of his children, he undoubtedly would have raised the sword, weeping, but looking forward to everything turning out well, at least for himself. Euripides' Klytaimestra is a Tyndarid destined to ruin her husband's marriage, but the loss of

³⁰⁹ Sunk-costs commitment refers to the belief that, having already invested heavily in an action or ideology, one is bound to continue. On sunk-costs, see also Chapter 2, p. 119; 119n120.

³¹⁰ Four murders, if one includes the killing of Klytaimestra's first husband and child.

children was never part of Aphrodite's curse upon Tyndareos. Klytimestra's first-born son and her first-born daughter were both dispatched by a greedy, politically ambitious king who bore his own family curse – of child-killing – and who made no attempt to resist that curse. The house of Tantalos, Pelops, and Atreus was legendarily rich in both gold and catastrophe; Euripides' *Oresteia*-plays confirm that reproductive politics – the subversion of female parental autonomy and investment to the elevation of male sociobiological advantage – is a primary cause of disaster and suffering in these tragedies (if not in most tragedies).

CONCLUSION: BIOLOGY, BEHAVIOUR, AND THE ACCURSED FAMILIES OF THE *ORESTEIA*

Evolutionary principles can illuminate literary analysis of the construction of narrative conflict and the audience reception of fictional character, and this thesis contends that the character of Klytaimestra in fifth-century BCE Athenian tragedy is an outstanding exemplar of the fearful and pitiable consequences of gender-conflict grounded in antagonistic coevolution; her fictional experience as daughter, sister, wife, mother, and grandmother mirrors real-world life-history of human women, especially as manifested in an unapologetically gender-restrictive androcentric Greek culture. Klytaimestra's actions in tragedy illuminate the challenges experienced all too often by the human female as she struggles to rear her offspring to maturity in a social environment specifically tailored to male lifetime goals. Archaic poets and the extant Greek tragedians give different emphases to the life-history of the fictional but realistic Klytaimestra in the context of real-world struggle between genders for optimum reproductive endeavour.

Chapter 1 of this work concludes that evolutionary psychology studies convincingly demonstrate that some aspects of gender are innate and universal, and that these are selectively evoked according to environmental opportunities and constraints. Gender-behaviour norms in a culture tend to follow whatever contributes to social success and – historically – virtually all human societies advantage elite, aristocratic males, along with those ruling-class females supporting systemic male-rule; typically, an androcentric human social system excludes and often actively represses female strategies for optimizing reproductive success. Strategies geared to female advantage (but to male disadvantage) include cooperative parenting with (usually closely-related) female alloparents – which is not necessarily historic polygyny – and partible paternity, when a small number of putative ‘fathers’ contribute to offspring wellbeing and maternal lineage fitness through paternal diversity.

Several evolutionary scientists reviewed in that first chapter propose that males and females of all sexed species are in an “arms-race” of antagonistic coevolution over reproductive goals and strategies, and individuals and groups are generally aware to some degree of this dynamic; coevolved gender antagonism is the substrate of all social life between males and females (and also of competitive and cooperative interactions between members of the same sex). Evolutionists and humanists agree that patriarchy subordinates females, and reinforces hierarchical inequality across males, but evolutionary psychologists insist that patriarchy is no

social veneer upon a gender-neutral foundation. A fully informed understanding of the ultimate causes of patriarchy – gender conflict in mating and parental strategies arising from sexually antagonistic coevolution – makes it more likely that a comprehensively effective ‘workaround’ strategy to inequality of all types might one day be achieved.¹ Literature across genres realistically depicts the resolutions – and consequences – of humans’ most typical life-history crises: inter-sexual struggles to achieve (proximate) social and (ultimate) reproductive goals often involve countering those same goals in one’s reproductive partner, struggles as ubiquitous in story as they are in real life.² The enduring appeal of the wider *Oresteia* arises out of the largely unconscious awareness in audiences of all historical periods of the irreconcilability of the life-goals and strategies of the two reproducing sexes, but the particularly attention-grabbing appeal over millennia of Klytaimestra’s tragic life-history is that – against all reasonable expectation – the female strategy prevails, albeit temporarily.

Chapter 2 concludes that, in archaic-period literature, Klytaimestra was originally a supporting character to the continuing story of conflict between the two warring branches of the Tantalid family; Thyestid Aigisthos successfully murders the son of his father’s greatest enemy, but from Homer and Hesiod, through the lyric poets, Atreid Agamemnon’s death at the hands of his Tyndarid wife becomes a crime of sexual infidelity and wifely treachery. By the time of Aiskhylos’ *Oresteia*, a cowardly Aigisthos relies upon his (not-so-) secret lover’s bloody dispatch of her noble *kyrios*, while Klytaimestra’s avowed motivation in the sacrifice of Iphigeneia is undermined and overthrown completely. In the *Agamemnon*, she claims to be defending her murdered offspring’s honour; in the *Khoephoroi*, her surviving children align themselves with their long-dead father, rejecting their mother and her new husband; in *Eumenides*, the gods debate Klytaimestra’s motherhood, and find that children are ‘of the

¹ On awareness of evolved disposition and biases as a tool to minimize or eradicate social inequity of all types, see Boyd (1998), Beckstrom (1993); Barkow (2006); Ingo et al (2007); Archer (2009a). On the creation of “workaround” strategies to circumvent evolved biases in behaviour and attitudes, see Barkow (2006:13, 38).

² Liberal humanists’ trepidation about an evolutionary perspective occurs mainly because of humanities’ persistent misconceptions concerning genetic determinism, reductionism, and the Cartesian notion that mind and body – in the exceptional human species – are somehow separate. For discussion of these misconceptions, see Dissanayake (1995:16, 20); Boyd (1998:1-2; 2005:3; 2009b:26); Hernadi (2002:22-23); Carroll (2008:129); Gottschall (2008a:10, 72, 74, 82); Slingerland (2008:266-269; 2010:220-221); Wilson (2009:327); Tanaka (2010a:32-33, 45-46). On the value of an evolutionary perspective to the analysis of literature – and the wrongness of mainstream poststructuralist denial that humans are biological beings – see also Boyd (1998:3, 13-14; 2009a:214; 2009b:23; 2012a:64); Carroll (1995:32; 1996:203, 215, 467; 1999a:171; 2004:215; 2005a:103; 2008:118; 2015:21); Barash and Barash (2002:np); Easterlin (2005:621, 625); Salmon (2005a:244, 256).

father', in every way.³ Agamemnon's children are sympathetically portrayed as righteous avengers of their mother's insult to their patriline – and thus to the concept of essential paternity itself – and the gods officially invalidate human female reproductive powers, mirrored in Athena's subversion of Klytaimnestra's moral defenders, the ancient Erinyes. The trilogy confirms that human civilization is handed down from men to their heirs, and that when out-of-control mothers attempt to contest men's rights of life and death over children, the only solution is mother-murder.

Chapter 3 addressed the later fifth-century tragedies of Sophokles and Euripides. Sophokles' *Elektra* foregrounds the hostility between a remarried mother and her disenfranchised children from a previous union; Atreid Elektra is unable to reconcile herself to her new family situation, despite her mother's willingness to protect her (and her more compliant sister Khrysothemis) against Aigisthos as unwelcoming stepfather. As a remarried mother, Klytaimnestra struggles to juggle the unreasonable, extreme behaviour of her Atreid daughter with the new reality of her Thyestid husband and children. Orestes' return to avenge his father's murder seems almost incidental to the emotional discord between the women of the house; ultimately, Klytaimnestra's transference of loyalty to Aigisthos results in her death at the hands of her children, and in this play, the matricidal children receive little if any opprobrium from anyone for their act.

If Aiskhylos extolled the father as the only real parent of the child, and Sophokles venerated filial piety toward the father alone, Euripides questions the assumptions behind their productions of the *Oresteia*-story. Klytaimnestra in his *Elektra* and *Iphigeneia at Aulis* is a rehumanized, affectionate mother; in the *Iphigeneia among the Taurians* and *Orestes* her children are stricken by their mother-murder, and we hear at last from those women who have reason to love her: daughter, sister, and niece. Aiskhylos' patient plotter was in turns magnificent, diminished, and vanquished, and Sophokles' mother is beaten down by her family conflict; Euripides' queen is a real human being, strongly attached to her husband, doing her best to comfort and protect her children, mindful of her place in the complex social world around her. Her so-called 'victim' is shown to be a man capable of heartless, impious murder, and his children – perhaps because they are for (and of) the father alone – are equally capable of atrocity. Euripides reminds the audience that Klytaimnestra is a child of a family stricken by a curse of infidelity upon a single generation; Agamemnon was the heir of a family blighted

³ See Athena's declaration in *Eumenides* (735) that she is for the male in every way.

root and branch in all its generations, a man willing to take up the family *ethos* to filicide in the cause of ambition. Euripides' *Oresteia*-tragedies make males' destructive dominance in reproductive politics the real cause of women's and children's suffering, and he restores to Klytaimestra the integrity of a motherhood of both body and soul.

Taken together, all of these fictional accounts flesh out the narratively coherent life of a realistic person within her family and in relation to other fictional people, a sexually active woman whose experiences and actions in narrative evoke the same emotional responses from readers and audiences as would a real human.⁴ Klytaimestra negotiates her various socio-reproductive roles within the overlapping networks of her biological and marital families, and her close family members act in turn out of their own life-time reproductive goals which are sometimes in conflict with those of this female character; in different tragedies authorial sympathy lies sometimes with her, sometimes against her. Most importantly, in all the *Oresteia* tragedies discussed, the sexually active Klytaimestra is a married woman, whose life-time reproductive goals necessarily collide with those of her husband. This study has focussed on Klytaimestra's interactions with family members and their reactions to the woman who kills her husband, concluding that offspring hostility toward the mother in these plays is the consequence of strongly biased kin-loyalty in patrilineal Greek culture. The colliding histories of two famously accursed families, as depicted in the various *Oresteia*-tragedies and poems, make inevitable Klytaimestra's immortalization as an ancient icon of dangerous female evil. The various works of the wider *Oresteia* examined in this study illustrate the increased irreconcilability of individual reproductive goals within the extremely patriarchal family; the collision between the accursed Tantalids and Tyndarids in the *Oresteia* narrative centres on the perennially interesting gender conflict within the one *oikos* over strategic control of reproductive resources, including female sexuality and fertility.

A Brief History of the Oresteia's Accursed Families, According to the Poets: Teknophonous Tantalids, Philoteknous Tyndarids

Aristotle (*Poet.* 1454a10-13) observes that the same families predominate in tragedy; the reason for this is that they suffer from particularly attention-capturing family troubles; the curse-

⁴ Reception of the character of Klytaimestra is the product of every instantiation of her character: all preconscious character-prototypes are distilled from the total exposure to as many narrative instances of that fictional person as are available, including all of the apparent 'sequels and prequels' within the wider *Oresteia* corpus.

inviting crimes of the famous Tantalid and Tyndarid families are not equivalent in degree of offence or consequence, however. Tantalid crimes are typically grounded in competition between males for power and status, and for access to fertile-age women; the collateral damage in these conflicts is most often children within the family. In comparison, the Tyndarid crime is infidelity: neither Klytaimestra nor Helen murder any child, nor eat another human (or force a rival to commit this atrocity), nor offer direct insult to the gods, inviting divine retaliation.

The descendants of Tantalos seem to be the most popular family in tragedy, and each of the three tragedians explore their misfortunes. Euripides' chorus in *Elektra* (1174-1175) declares that no family is or ever has been unhappier than the descendants of Tantalos; Aiskhylos' Cassandra in *Agamemnon* (1090-1092) describes the house of Atreus as 'hated by God, dripping with the blood of butchered kin'.⁵ In the ancient social context, the real sin of the Tantalids is not the expedient murder of children nor the sexual use of other men's wives (which were appropriate actions in circumstances of formal warfare) but that these crimes are committed by males against their own close kin. Modern critical focus on Orestes' response to Aigisthos' and Klytaimestra's infidelity overlooks the centrality to the *Oresteia* of the inherited feud originating between Pelops' sons, the brothers Thyestes and Atreus, and the Greek audience's awareness of this terrible history. Atreus retains possession of the golden lamb of kingship he promised to a goddess; Thyestes seduces Atreus' wife and secretly receives this lamb and thus through subterfuge wins the throne; Atreus invites his brother and his nephews to a feast and deceives his guest Thyestes into eating his own sons. While the dreadful feast is an indirect attack aimed at Thyestes, it also conveniently eliminates potential rivals to Atreus' own descendants.

Following the advice of an oracle, Thyestes rapes his own daughter Pelopeia (an impious act within this family often neglected in critical discussion), to engender Aigisthos – an intentionally-formed weapon aimed at the Atreid patriline – but the ashamed mother exposes the infant, who is rescued by a shepherd and then raised by Atreus; Thyestes later reveals the truth to the maturing boy, who returns the throne to Thyestes (and later also kills Atreus' son and heir). In some ways, the incestuously-conceived Tantalid Aigisthos is a much more tragic

⁵ On the Pelopid ancestral curse, see also Soph. *El.* (504-515); Eur. *IT* (196ff, 809ff, 987-988); *Orestes* (987ff and 1547-1548). On the various crimes (and curses) in these two families, see Fagles and Stanford (1977:14, 17); Carne-Ross (1981:41); Goldhill (1984a:16); O'Brien (1988:105); Powell (2002:169-173); Lefkowitz (2003:115); Hansen (2004:79-80); Fletcher (2007); Walton (2010c:43).

figure than the blustering and bullying Agamemnon. Ancient narrative acknowledges his right to vengeance, and only later is he demoted to become an assistant in retaliation; his infidelity with Klytaimestra is neither incidental nor unprecedented, but a secondary (if useful) adjunct to his blood-feud obligations; Aigisthos' murder of Agamemnon is just another iteration of the conflict-between-kin theme within the family saga, an appropriate retaliation for the rare crime of cannibalism, an impiety typically viewed as being far worse than everyday adultery.⁶

Atreus' sons Agamemnon and Menelaos are exiled after Atreus' death (which, according to some, occurred at the hand of Aigisthos) to the Spartan court of Tyndareos, who later helps them regain the throne at Mycenae, and to marry his daughters, Klytaimestra and Helen.⁷ These Atreid kings possess a mixed reputation in the ancient sources, and the offspring of the brothers are sometimes also negatively characterized in fifth-century tragedy, confirming the unfortunate woes of the inherited Tantalid *ethos*. Daughter Elektra is a typical descendant of Tantalos, the victim of some traumatic early-life relationships, the child of an embittered mother who turns to adultery; with a stepfather who yearns to eliminate her persistent potential for threat; with an absent yet absurdly idealized father; and with a beloved brother who often spurns her hopeless passion for him. There is no evidence in the extant tragedies that Elektra feels any real love for Iphigeneia, or any genuine sorrow for her older sister's death at Agamemnon's hands. Orestes across the tragedies is a more psychologically complex character, ranging (sometimes within the same play) from murderous automaton to reflective, remorseful avenger. Hermione, daughter of Atreid Menelaos, is similarly depicted in different tragedies by the same playwright – Euripides – as both innocent victim and vicious oppressor. The least typical Tantalid is Iphigeneia, deceived and sacrificed by her father, successfully avenged by her mother, yet to a significant degree forgiving of both parents.⁸

Once Agamemnon has been killed, Aigisthos and Klytaimestra produce further Tantalid offspring: Aletes and Erigone (and another Helen, who dies as a baby); tragedies now lost are

⁶ Aigisthos had two justifiable reasons for retaliation against the Atreids: Atreus forcing Thyestes to eat his sons, and Agamemnon's murder of Tantalos (a later brother of Aigisthos), the first husband of Klytaimestra.

⁷ All of these Tantalid descendants – including Aigisthos – win the highest-value females available – Klytaimestra and Helen – who bring with them the rule of Peloponnesian kingdoms. On the transmission of Bronze Age kingship through the female line, see Finkelberg (2005).

⁸ On Agamemnon's lie to Iphigeneia and Klytaimestra about a marriage, see *Paus.* 3.22.

thought to depict their particular misadventures.⁹ All three of Klytaimestra's husbands, and thus all of her offspring, are direct descendants of the child-killing Tantalos and of the accursed Pelops as well, and none of Klytaimestra's children by any of these husbands end happily.¹⁰ Both of Tyndareos' daughters succeed in producing children from more than one male, but few if any of their offspring survive to happy maturity. Aletes and Erigone become in turn the established rulers of Mycenae, whereupon Orestes murders Aletes, retakes the throne, and forcibly sires a son Penthilos on his half-sister Erigone.¹¹ The orphaned Erigone is the first and only Tantalid (in allegiance with her maternal grandfather Tyndareos) to actively seek revenge on behalf of Klytaimestra, prosecuting her half-brother Orestes in court for his murder of their mother.¹² Tantalid Menelaos' daughter Hermione marries her doubly-descended Tantalid cousin Orestes – sometimes willingly, sometimes not – and gives birth to Tisamenos, the last Tantalid king of Sparta, Mycenae, and Argos. Orestes' son Penthilos by his half-sister Erigone escapes the Peloponnesus – and thus perhaps the influence of the family curse – and establishes a new ruling house in Asia; this is the point at which the entangled families of the Tyndarids and the Tantalids disappear from Greek myth.

In contrast to the Tantalids, the accursed female Tyndarids give life, not death, to many children: across a variety of ancient sources Klytaimestra and Helen are remarkable in their reproductive success, each bearing a close-to-maximally optimum number of children, and to a genetically diverse variety of males. Klytaimestra bears one son to her first husband Tantalos; three, four or five children to her second husband Agamemnon, and at least three to her last husband, Aigisthos; Helen's offspring are said to include Hermione, Aethiolas, Maraphius, Pleisthenes, Nikostratos, Bunomus, Aganos, Idaeus, and (another) Helen.¹³ Their mother Leda was visited by Zeus in the form of a swan: Klytaimestra's sister Helen and brother Polydeukes are his offspring, while Kastor and Klytaimestra are the co-conceived natural children of Leda's human husband Tyndareos.¹⁴ The three Tyndarids are not cursed in retaliation for impious or

⁹ A number of lost tragedies are named *Erigone*, by Sophokles, Philokles, Kleophon, and Phrynichos II, but it is not known for sure whether they address the story of the Tantalid Erigone.

¹⁰ On Klytaimestra and Aigisthos' unfortunate offspring, see Hyginus (*Fab.* 122).

¹¹ Hyginus (*Fab.* 122) argues that Aletes – another genuine descendant of Tantalos and Pelops – is falsely informed of Orestes' sacrifice in Tauris, and so assumes the throne. See also Hesych. *aletis*; Hyg. (*Fab.* 122); *Paus.* 2, 18, 6-7; *FgrH* 239 A 25.

¹² On Erigone's day in court, see Apollodoros, (*Epitome* 6.25); Hyginus, (*Fab.* 85-88).

¹³ On sources for Helen's offspring, see Gantz (1966:322); Bell (1991:225, 227-228).

¹⁴ Hesiod's *Catalogue* gives Tyndareos and Leda three daughters: Timandra, Klytaimestra, and Phylonoe (fr. 19.10-12) (Phylonoe is made immortal by Artemis and does not appear to have been affected by the Tyndarid curse); Euripides' *IA* gives Leda three daughters – Klytaimestra, Helen, and Phoibe; Apollodoros' *Bibliothēkē*

socially unacceptable crimes, yet Klytaimestra and Helen are the most despised female characters in the whole of Greek mythology, explaining ancient (and modern) views of them as bad, bad women; Atreid Agamemnon is a serial murderer of thousands – the *demos*' sons, and foreigners who also worship Olympians – as well as of close kin, yet Klytaimestra becomes the mythic epitome of evil for the murder of just one man. It was Tyndareos' impiety – he forgot to sacrifice to Aphrodite – which invited the goddess's anger, and her curse upon his daughters brings ruin upon their sexual reputations; Hesiod (*Cat.* 19.31-35, 247) states that – because of the curse – Tyndarid Timandra leaves her husband Echemos for Phyleus, whereas Hesiod's Klytaimestra and Helen commit adultery 'for the same reason'.¹⁵

Of the four partibly-sired children of Leda, we hear much about the admirable and closely-bonded Kastor and Polydeukes, but famous sisters Helen and Klytaimestra were, after all, also twins. Klytaimestra in any tragedy shows little love or loyalty in public for her sister – Euripides' *Orestes* evidences more positive sisterly feeling on Helen's part – but their relationship to each other has rarely attracted critical interest.¹⁶ Klytaimestra's sister Helen in myth is often little more than a single-focus figure, unchanged by her husband-harming actions, and predominantly a narrative symbol of male victory over other men; the publically acknowledged possession of Helen is the prize men compete for, not the person of Helen herself. The unfortunate Helen was the object of pursuit and abduction (and probably, sexual assault) for most of her fictional life, perhaps even before her official marriage.¹⁷ While Helen apparently engages in infidelity by Aphrodite's angry curse (as well as by Aphrodite's victory in beauty over Hera and Athena), the rebellious Klytaimestra's path to infidelity and mariticide is motivated quite independently of Aphrodite's curse, by Agamemnon's killing of Iphigeneia

(3.10.6) makes their daughters Timandra, Klytaimestra, and Phylonoe, along with Helen born to Leda and Zeus;. Homer's Helen is never reluctant to refer to her privileged heritage as the daughter of Zeus. See *Il.* 3.199, 236-38, 418, 426; *Od.* 4.184, 219; 23.218.

¹⁵ Hesiod implies that only an accursed woman would (or could) leave her husband. According to the Hesiodic fragment (247, Scholium on Euripides' *Orestes*), Stesikhoros (i.e., PMG 223) also gives this reason for the three women's adulterous behaviour.

¹⁶ Cf. the critical engagement with the dysfunctional Klytaimestra-Elektra relationship, and the Hermione-Andromakhe conflict.

¹⁷ On Helen's abduction by Theseus, see Hesiod (*Cat.* fr. 243); on the purchase of the high desirable prize of Helen with the highest offer, see Hesiod (*Cat.* fr. 155).

and by his murder of her first husband and child; Aigisthos – Agamemnon’s mortal enemy – is also motivated by Agamemnon’s murder of Klytaimestra’s first husband, Thyestid Tantalos.¹⁸

The three daughters of Tyndareos ultimately suffer from their family curse in different ways, a perennially popular theme in Greek literature. While we hear relatively little in (extant) story about the consequences of Timandra’s sexual infidelity, Helen is reclaimed and forgiven, returning home to lifetime rule as queen of Sparta (as in the *Odyssey*), or on to immortal life (as in *Orestes*). Although Klytaimestra experienced much more provocation than both of her sisters, her reputation becomes so badly ruined that it tarnishes the name of all human women thereafter – even the good ones – to the point where the traditionally equal (or greater) role of Aigisthos in the death of Agamemnon is almost completely suppressed in the popular mythic consciousness. Men kill other men in mythic story as a matter of course – and occasionally kill women as well – but it is the killing or threatened killing of men by women that excites the greatest disapproval, within the mythology, and in ancient or modern commentary on this; Aphrodite’s curse of infidelity upon the Tyndarides is simply coincidental to Klytaimestra’s fate, and her unforgivable crime is not adultery, but the impiety of husband-killing, unthinkable in the ancient world of extreme patriarchy.

Male Citizens and Female Wives; Coevolution, Cooperation, Compromise

As these reproductive histories of the two *Oresteia* families reveal, Greek literature of the archaic and classical periods idealizes hypermasculinity and homosociality among men, despite the obvious tensions between these cultural paradigms; ancient patriarchal Greek society cultivated zero-sum competition between men, but escalation of lethal revenge between internally loyal, patrilineal families was the obligatory resolution to matters of dishonourable loss in men’s intrasexual competition. Despite this, (extant) Greek tragedy avoids a thematic focus upon direct violence between males, in favour of the dangers to men of women’s cunning treachery within the aristocratic house. The ancient Greeks viewed the moral *ethos* of women as very much inferior to that of men, and the husband-killing Klytaimestra embodies the very worst male fears of treacherous ‘female evil’. Her characterization as the utterly immoral woman demonstrates how Athenian culture of the classical period expresses the social conflict

¹⁸ Euripides (*IA* 1149-1152) gives to Klytaimestra in Aulis the story of Agamemnon’s murder of her husband Tantalos (son of Thyestes) and infant son, and Agamemnon’s then forcing Klytaimestra into marriage. Pausanias (2.18.2/2.22.3) also identifies Klytaimestra’s first husband as Tantalos (a son of Thyestes or Tantalid Broteas).

between male and female mating strategies, in fact a struggle more typically won by men in the real, human world as individuals, in families, and in organized social groupings. In common with known androcentric human societies, ancient Greek society optimized male life-history aims – to ensure paternity and inheritance in a status-conscious culture which privileges very wealthy and successful male citizens – to the disadvantage of female sexuality and fertility.

Greek mythology, including the mythic narratives of tragedy, is manifestly anxious about female sexuality and reproductive powers. While male-female reproductive conflict features predominantly in the extant tragedy, the marital relationship remains the most problematic issue, perhaps reflecting fifth-century realities. Greek literature divides women into two essential types: good women who are chaste, and industrious, and bad women, who are defiant and rebellious, and disposed to a sexualized evil. Well-known Greek literary works sometimes juxtaposes dangerous women with properly domesticated women who uphold the ideals of the androcentric Greek society, for example, Klytimestra and Penelope in the *Odyssey*; Hermione and Andromakhe in Euripides' *Andromakhe*; and Elektra and Khrysothemis in Sophokles' *Elektra*. According to ancient sources, the best method of taming women was marriage.¹⁹ Well-domesticated wives guard and increase their husband's resources, and produce legitimately patrilineal offspring: bad wives' behaviour, conversely, is self-interested. These bad women in Greek myth defend their right to autonomy and self-interest, as evidenced in descriptions of defiantly jealous women who hinder and vex their husbands, most notably the classical-period epitome of the difficult wife, Hera. Male characters in works authored several male poets insist that even good women cannot be entirely trusted.²⁰ A good deal of antagonism toward women in the Greek literary corpus centres upon out-of-control wives, and the ancient Greek wife could never truly be trusted to ally with her husband's household, not in the same way as the loyalty of a patrilineal daughter of the blood was assumed.²¹ Thus, misogynistic attitudes in tragedy frequently centre on a wish that men could propagate without need for troublesome women.²² Insecurely attached, unrelated wives in the patrilineal *oikos* also lived in a state of perpetual domestic antagonism with the concubines who threatened wifely

¹⁹ Cf. Greek δαμάζω 'to overpower, to break in, tame, subdue, to marry'; δάμαρ, 'wife, spouse (generally female)'. On marriage in ancient Greece (and Athens), see Cox (1998; 2011).

²⁰ See Agamemnon in the *Odyssey* (11.440-442, 446; 24.191-202), (*Semonides* 7).

²¹ Hestia is the divine avatar of the human daughter whose loyalty remains with the patriline at all times, and in return for her duties as the protector of the divine hearth, Hestia requested, and was granted, perpetual virginity; see the Greater *Hymn to Aphrodite* (22-32); and the Greater *Hymn to Hestia* (3-4).

²² See the famous wish of Hippolytos (*Hipp.* 618-624), and Jason's speech in the *Medeia* (573-575).

dominance in the household, and with the stepsons or illegitimate sons who might one day threaten their own reproductive interests. Yet in tragedy it is often the failure of males to prioritize the wellbeing of their family – through bringing male politics into the female world of the family – that forces women to become unfeminine disruptors. Extant Greek tragedy focusses so heavily on reproductive conflict between the sexes because in a highly androcentric culture gender conflict is intensified to inevitably lethal levels; tragedies offer a cautionary recognition that not all women are willing to compromise their own reproductive goals simply to facilitate a husband's success.

Gendered antagonism is typically identified as misogyny in mythic tales, but is simply the male fear and expectation – sometimes unconscious – that females will prioritize their own reproductive strategies if they perceive an opening. This theme is a consistent one in Greek literature, beginning with our extant archaic sources; runaway Helen exercised some autonomy in mating choice; son-killing Medea disinvested in the offspring of a man who left her to raise those children on her own; husband-killer Klytimestra defended the honour of her daughter over her husband's political manoeuvring.²³ The enduring popular appeal of the archaic works of Homer, Hesiod, and Semonides suggests that negative attitudes to female sexuality were not confined to literature, although these attitudes may have been more specific to certain social groups. While Homer was clearly interested in the social and reproductive opportunities of male-female relations in the aristocratic context, the works of Hesiod and Semonides of Argos seem to express a new, sometimes intensely misogynistic ambivalence toward women's reproductive function as a potential economic drain.²⁴ Like most traditional mythic systems, Greek myth attempted to account for human sexual and psychological differences; if it followed biology, creation myth would logically explain the existence of males and females as complementary, but Hesiod's foundational works position the invention of male human [sic] society before the creation of woman, a more crucial moment in the development of literary misogyny. His Pandora is an artificial construct, showing that human woman's reproductive

²³ See also Foley (1988:1311), who also believes that reproductive conflict, centred on male fear of cuckoldry, lies at the core of Athenian misogyny, that and writers from the archaic onward expect the wife to behave as if her husband's interests are her own.

²⁴ Semonides' seventh-century Fragment 7 (*Women, or Types of Women*), echoes Hesiod in twice defining women as the 'greatest evil' (96, 115), made by Zeus for men; an analysis of Semonides' female types, however, reveals a recurring, negative preoccupation with women's consumption of men's resources, and the difficulty – to men – of female sexuality.

power is not a part of the natural world.²⁵ Greek – or Athenian – myth offers the strange dream of an original, entirely male world without the bane of human women.

In particular, the relationship of dysfunctional gender relationships in Aiskhylos' *Oresteia* to the dynamics of misogyny in real-world ancient Greece has attracted critical interest.²⁶ Furthermore, some conclude that fifth-century tragedies in general are contemporary expressions of misogyny inherited from archaic literature, and that the misogynistic view of women's troublesome reproductive potential increased between the early archaic and the classical periods.²⁷ Some suggest that the apparent preoccupation of tragedy with gender conflict likely reflects an intensification of social tensions resulting from Solon's new laws, and the fifth-century shift to democracy.²⁸ Others argue that fifth-century tragedy is more positively sympathetic to women's challenge to the constraints of androcentric culture, in a protofeminist manner.²⁹ Tragedy not only reinforces gender norms, however, but seems to delight in doing so, and the focus of tragedy on well-drawn female victims need not be sympathetic to women's plight at all. So an argument that Greek men allowed a theatrical experience to change their conception of gender relations is wishful thinking. After one hundred years of exposure to debate-provoking tragedy, the autonomy or dignity of women as whole humans was not significantly increased: males still exchanged females for breeding purposes, and bought-and-sold female slaves helped fuel the economy. Far from hoping to question masculinity or challenge the androcentricism of Athenian fifth-century life, tragedy offers an education in how to identify and then contain female threats to patriarchal society. Klytaimestra's murder was normalized in the telling of cautionary tales to young children at festivals, suggesting that

²⁵ Pandora is not the mother of the human race, but of the separate *genos* of women alone; furthermore, after the gods have destroyed the first troublesome human generation born of Pandora, the single male and female pair that remains replicate not through intercourse and gestation, but by casting stones which become only their own gender-type. On the artificial, dehumanized Pandora, see Loraux (1993:19, 74-76; 2000:3, 6, 8). On Hesiod's alienation of the race of women from male 'civilization', see Arthur (1984:25; 1994:214); Goldhill (1986:68); Zeitlin (1995b:59); Whitmarsh (2004:187); Griffith (2005:341); Foxhall (2009:488).

²⁶ On Aiskhylos' distinctive interest in marriage and reproductive politics, see Burian (1974:9); Spatz (1982:73); Winnington-Ingram (1983b:60-61, 70); Saxonhouse (1984:11, 20); Vellacott (1984b:60-61); Herington (1986:98); Foley (1988:1315); Ewans (1996:1); Sommerstein (1996:432, 434); Mitchell-Boyask (2008:114).

²⁷ Easterling (1988:16); Murnaghan (2005:243); Gregory (2005:265).

²⁸ Foley (1988); Raaflaub (1998); Saïd (1998); Rhodes (2003); Jameson (2004); Katz (2004); Stahl and Walter (2009).

²⁹ On Euripidean works and empathy for women, see March (1990:33); Rutherford (1996:45); Wohl (1998:xiv, 178).

Athenians did think matricide acceptable under certain circumstances.³⁰ According to some, Klytaimestra's story in tragedy was a warning, demonstrating to the *demos* the proper fate of married women – and adult women were almost always married women – who dared to challenge patriarchal authority, and male control over female reproductive behaviour.³¹ The tragedies of the wider *Oresteia*-corpus all conclude with the inevitable consequences of female transgression within patriarchy: righteous victory for the male who acts to uphold patriarchal principles, and punishment and death for the troublesome, child-loving female who resorts to husband-killing in order to avenge and protect her offspring. The characterization of Klytaimestra in Greek tragedy, and in other literary works of the archaic period, reflects the struggle for life-goal achievement in the universal context of gender conflict between the male and female of the species. Her personification as an icon of female evil is a predictable outcome in the context of a society which overtly and unashamedly privileges male mating strategies and suppresses autonomous female reproductive aspirations.

³⁰ Buxton (1994:22). On legal citation of the Klytaimestra narrative in actual Greek case-law as supporting precedent, see Vickers (1973:155); Hall (2010:196); Rutherford (2012:65).

³¹ Rose (1992:222, 226); Thompson (2004:98); Livingstone (2011:125). On tragedy as a form of education in desirable political and social mores, see Lord (1982, 1990); Salkever (1986); Taylor (1995); Curren (2000); Croally (2005); Halliwell (2005); Hesk (2007); Zajko (2011); Livingstone (2011).

APPENDIX: GREEK PASSAGES AND TRANSLATIONS

All excerpts are listed as they appear by page, in the text and in footnotes: Oxford editions of the plays were consulted, as was Perseus Tufts editions, but all translations are by this author.

Chapter 2: *The Archaic Klytimestra*

αἴλινον αἴλινον εἶπέ, τὸ δ' εὖ νικάτω, “cry woe, woe, but let the good prevail” (*Aga.* 121).

δρόσοισι λεπτοῖς “vulnerable young” of μαλερῶν λεόντων, “fiery lions” (*Aga.* 141).

δεξιὰ μὲν, κατάμομοφα δὲ “fortunate, but inauspicious” (*Aga.* 145).

φοβερὰ παλινόρτος
οἰκονόμος δολία μνάμων μῆνις τεκνόποιος, “a frightening, recurring and treacherous household-keeper and avenger of children, never forgetting wrath” (*Aga.* 154-155).

ἀνάγκη, “necessity” (*Aga.* 218).

πάθει μάθος “learning through suffering” (*Aga.* 160-183, 250-253).

τὸν φρονεῖν βροτοὺς ὀδώ-
σαντα, τὸν πάθει μάθος
θέντα κυρίως ἔχειν.
στάζει δ' ἔν γ' ὕπνω πρὸ καρδίας
μνησιπήμων πόνος: καὶ παρ' ἄ-
κοντας ἦλθε σωφρονεῖν.
δαιμόνων δὲ που χάρις βίαιος
σέλμα σεμνὸν ἡμένων,
“he who put mortals on the right path to understanding, he who, holding power, set up the state of suffering as law, and so the memory of pain trickles into consciousness and into the heart, and good sense comes to the unwilling, a favour which comes with force from the gods seated on the august seats of power” (*Aga.* 176-184).

νυμφόκλαυτος Ἐρινύς, “a Fury, a bride bringing woe” (*Aga.* 749).

δαῖτ' ἀκέλευστος “unbidden feast” (*Aga.* 731).

ὑπερθορῶν δὲ πύργον ὠμηστῆς λέων
ἄδην ἔλειξεν αἵματος τυραννικοῦ, “a lion eating raw flesh, leaping over the tower, licking up its fill of royal blood” (*Aga.* 827-828).

βασιλεῦ, Τροίας πτολίπορθ'
Ἄτρειος γένεθλον, “king, sacker of Troy, offspring of Atreus” (*Aga.* 782-783).

δαμέντος
φύλακος εὐμενεστάτου
πολλὰ τλάντος γυναικὸς διαί:
πρὸς γυναικὸς δ' ἀπέφθισεν βίον,
“our most gracious guardian, who, overpowered, suffered greatly because of a woman, his life utterly destroyed at the hand of a woman” (*Aga.* 1451-1454).

κηδεστὴν σέθεν “your own kin by marriage” (*Hek.* 834).

οἰκουρὸς πικρά, “bitter mistress of his house” (*Hek.* 1277).

καὶ γὰρ πνοᾶς
πρὸς οἶκον ἤδη τάσδε πομπίμους ὀρῶ.
εὖ δ' ἐς πάτραν πλεύσαιμεν, εὖ δὲ τὰν δόμοις
ἔχοντ' ἴδοιμεν τῶνδ' ἀφειμένοι πόνων,
“And now I see this breeze which sets toward home. May the sailing to our homeland be good, and may we see all is well at home, setting aside all these labours” (*Hek.* 1289-1292).

εἶδωλον σκιᾶς “a shadowy phantom” (*Aga.* 839).

πῶς λιπόνους γένωμαι
ξυμμαχίας ἀμαρτῶν, “how can he become a deserter of the fleet, in failing his allies?” (*Aga.* 212-213).

παυσανέμου γὰρ θυσίας
παρθενίου θ' αἵματος ὀρ-
γᾶ περιόργω σφ' ἐπιθυ-
μεῖν θέμις,
“to madly desire the sacrifice of a maiden’s blood to still the winds is customary and right” (*Aga.* 214-217).

ἐράσιμον πόλει, “desired by the city” (*Aga.* 605).

θράσος ἐκ θυσιῶν “voluntarily reckless” (*Aga.* 803).

ἐπιθυμεῖν “set their hearts upon” (*Aga.* 216).

ἀνάγκας ‘necessity’ (*Aga.* 218).

ξυμμαχίας ἀμαρτῶν ‘losing his allies’ (*Aga.* 212).

ἐπεὶ δ' ἀνάγκας ἔδου λέπαδνον
φρενὸς πνέων δυσσεβῆ τροπαίαν

ἄναγνον ἀνίερον, τόθεν

τὸ παντότολμον φρονεῖν μετέγνω.

βροτοὺς θρασύνει γὰρ αἰσχρόμητις

τάλαινα παρακοπὰ πρωτοπήμων,

“when he put upon his heart the yokestrap of necessity, his vacillating spirit was defiled, and thus, utterly shameless, he turned his mind completely. For mortal men become overbold, stooping to shameful behaviour and infatuation is the first cause of misery.” (*Aga.* 218-224).

δυσσεβῆ...

ἄναγνον ἀνίερον, ‘ungodly, unclean, and unholy’ (*Aga.* 219-220).

ἔτλα δ’ οὖν θυτῆρ γενέ-

σθαι θυγατρὸς, “Thus he brought himself to become the sacrificer of his daughter” (*Aga.* 224-225).

ὧδε γὰρ κρατεῖ

γυναικὸς ἀνδρόβουλον ἐλπίζον κέαρ; “for thus commands a woman’s heart, in anticipation, like a man’s” (*Aga.* 10-11).

Ἀγαμέμνονος γυναικί, “Agamemnon’s wife” (*Aga.* 26).

Τυνδάρεω

θύγατερ, “Tyndareos’ daughter” (*Aga.* 83-84).

βασίλεια Κλυταιμῆστρα, “queen Klytimestra” (*Aga.* 84).

ἦκω σεβίζων σόν, Κλυταιμῆστρα, κράτος:

δίκη γὰρ ἐστὶ φωτὸς ἀρχηγοῦ τίειν

γυναῖκ’ ἐρημωθέντος ἄρσενος θρόνου,

“I come, in reverence towards your power, Klytimestra, for it is right to respect the wife of the first male when the male throne is empty.” (*Aga.* 258-260).

παιδὸς νέας ὧς κάρτ’ ἐμωμήσω φρένας, “You belittle me as if I had the wits of a young child” (*Aga.* 277).

γύναι, κατ’ ἀνδρα σώφρον’ εὐφρόνως λέγεις, “Lady, you speak graciously, like a sensible man” (*Aga.* 351).

πιστά... τεκμήρια “trustworthy evidence” (*Aga.* 352).

γυναικὸς αἰχμᾶ πρέπει

πρὸ τοῦ φανέντος χάριν ξυναινέσαι.

πιθανὸς ἄγαν ὁ θῆλυς ὄρος ἐπινέμεται

ταχύπορος: ἀλλὰ ταχύμορον

γυναικογήρυτον ὄλλυται κλέος,

“it is so like a woman’s nature to declare thanksgivings. A female is too credulous and quick in the measure of plausibility; but women’s report rapidly comes to nothing, however” (*Aga.* 483-487).

πειρᾶσθέ μου γυναικὸς ὡς ἀφράσμονος,

ἐγὼ δ’ ἀτρέστῳ καρδίᾳ πρὸς εἰδότας

λέγω: σὺ δ’ αἰνεῖν εἴτε με ψέγειν θέλεις

ὅμοιον,

“You make trial of me as of a woman; but I reply to your inquisition with fearless heart, whether you are willing to condemn me or praise me (*Aga.* 1401-1404).

φονολιβεῖ... φρῆν ἐπιμαίνεται “flowing blood... driven her mad” (*Aga.* 1428)

ἔστιν θάλασσα, τίς δέ νιν κατασβέσει;

τρέφουσα πολλῆς πορφύρας ἰσάργυρον

κηκίδα παγκαίνιστον, εἰμάτων βαφάς.

οἶκος δ’ ὑπάρχει τῶνδε σὺν θεοῖς, ἄναξ,

ἔχειν: πένεσθαι δ’ οὐκ ἐπίσταται δόμος.

πολλῶν πατησμὸν δ’ εἰμάτων ἂν ηῤῥάμην,

δόμοισι προυνεχθέντος ἐν χρηστηρίοις,

ψυχῆς κόμιστρα τῆσδε μηχανωμένη.

ρίζης γὰρ οὔσης φυλλὰς ἴκετ’ ἐς δόμους,

σκιὰν ὑπερτείνασα σειρίου κυνός.

καὶ σοῦ μολόντος δωματῖτιν ἐστίαν,

θάλπος μὲν ἐν χειμῶνι σημαίνεις μολόν:

ὅταν δὲ τεύχη Ζεὺς ἀπ’ ὄμφακος πικρᾶς

οἶνον, τότε ἤδη ψῦχος ἐν δόμοις πέλει,

ἄνδρὸς τελείου δῶμ’ ἐπιστρωφωμένου,

“There is a sea – who will ever staunch it? – which nourishes an enormous, endlessly-renewed flood of purple dye, worth its weight in silver, for the drenching of fabric. Of this, through the support of the gods, the household already holds plenty, lord; yet the house does not know painful labours. Many trappings upon the household’s garments would I have vowed, if it had been so commanded by an oracle, as the price for the governance of this life. For while there is a root, foliage comes into the house, stretching to cast shade to the hound of Sirius [i.e. the hottest time of the year]. And you have come to the very hearth of our home, as the signal of warmth in winter; whenever Zeus makes wine from bitter, unripe grapes, then already the winter-chill enters into the house, when the all-ruling man frequents the home” (*Aga.* 958-972).

νῦν μὲν δικάζεις ἐκ πόλεως φυγὴν ἐμοὶ

καὶ μῖσος ἀστῶν δημόθρους τ’ ἔχειν ἀράς,

οὐδὲν τότε ἀνδρὶ τῷδ’ ἐναντίον φέρων:

ὃς οὐ προτιμῶν, ὥσπερ εἰ βοτοῦ μόνον,

μήλων φλεόντων εὐπόκοις νομεύμασιν,

ἔθυσεν αὐτοῦ παῖδα, φιλτάτην ἐμοὶ
ὠδὶν', ἐπωδὸν Θρηκίων ἀημάτων.
οὐ τοῦτον ἐκ γῆς τῆσδε χρῆν σ' ἀνδρηλατεῖν,
μιασμάτων ἄποιν'; ἐπήκοος δ' ἐμῶν
ἔργων δικαστῆς τραχὺς εἶ,

“Now you decree me an exile from the city, declared the object of hate of the citizenry, and of curses; contrary to your opinion to that man at that time, he who did not honour me, as if her fate was that of a beast, from an abundant flock of fleecy sheep, he sacrificed his own child, my own pang-borne darling, as a charm against the winds of Thrace. Should you not have declared this man banished from house and home, sent out from this land in penalty for his defilements? But you are savage in judgement when hearing of my deeds of justice” (*Aga.* 1412-1421).

Ἄτην Ἐρινύν θ', Atē and the Erinys (*Aga.* 1433).

κοίταν τάνδ' ἀνελεύθερον, “lying in a shameful death-bed” (*Aga.* 1518),

οὔτ' ἀνελεύθερον οἶμαι θάνατον
τῷδε γενέσθαι.
οὐδὲ γὰρ οὔτος δολίαν ἄτην
οἴκοισιν ἔθηκ';
ἀλλ' ἐμὸν ἐκ τοῦδ' ἔρνος ἀερθέν.
τὴν πολυκλαύτην Ἴφιγενείαν,
ἄξια δράσας ἄξια πάσχων
μηδὲν ἐν Ἄιδου μεγαλαυχεῖτω,
ξίφοδηλήτω,
θανάτῳ τείσας ἄπερ ἦρξεν,

“I do not consider this man to have experienced a shameless death, for, did he not enact a treacherous sin against the house? But this young scion was sprung from me, the much-lamented Iphigeneia, and the punishment is balance for the deed; let him boast of nothing in Hades, slain by the sword, paying a price in death for his sacrifice” (*Aga.* 1521-1529).

μηδαμῶς, ὃ φίλτατ' ἀνδρῶν, ἄλλα δράσωμεν κακά, “By no means, dearest of men, should we accomplish other evils”, (*Aga.* 1654).

εἷ φρονῶν “well-intentioned” (*Aga.* 1436).

αἶθρη πῦρ ἐφ' ἐστίας ἐμῆς “kindles my hearth” (*Aga.* 1435).

ἐγὼ

καὶ σὺ θήσομεν κρατοῦντε τῶνδε δωμάτων καλῶς, “I, and you, prevailing, we will set the affairs of the house in order” (*Aga.* 1672-1673).

οὐδ' οἶδα τέρψιν οὐδ' ἐπίψογον φάτιν

ἄλλου πρὸς ἀνδρὸς μᾶλλον ἢ χαλκοῦ βαφᾶς “I have not known pleasure nor blameworthy conversation with another man, any more than the tempering of bronze” (*Aga.* 611-612).

εἰμάτων βαφᾶς, “the dyeing of fabric” (*Aga.* 960)

ἐκ τῶν δὲ τοῦδε χρημάτων πειράσομαι
ἄρχειν πολιτῶν, “Out of the property of this man I will endeavour to rule the citizens” (*Aga.* 1638-1639).

νῦν δ’ ὄρθωσας στόματος γνώμην,
τὸν τριπάχυντον
δαίμονα γέννης τῆσδε κικλήσκων.
ἐκ τοῦ γὰρ ἔρωσ αἱματολοιχὸς
νεῖρα τρέφεται,
“Now you set aright the account of evidence, identifying the thrice-fattened demon of this family, for from it is nourished the instinctive desire for blood-licking” (*Aga.* 1475-1479).

ἧ μέγαν οἴκοις τοῖσδε
δαίμονα καὶ βαρύμηνιν αἰνεῖς... ἀτη-
ρᾶς τύχας ἀκορέστου... διαὶ Διὸς
παναιτίου πανεργέτα:
τί γὰρ βροτοῖς ἄνευ Διὸς τελεῖται;
“This is a great demon of the house, which you speak of, heavy in wrath;... utterly insatiable in action... through Zeus, the all-causing, all-powerful, for what is accomplished unto mortals, without Zeus?” (*Aga.* 1481-1486).

τοῦδ’ ὁ παλαιὸς δριμυὲς ἀλάστωρ
Ἄτρεως χαλεποῦ θοινατῆρος
τόνδ’ ἀπέτεισεν,
τέλεον νεαροῖς ἐπιθύσας,
“this is ancient bitter *alastōr* taking payment for Atreus, the appalling feast-giver, in fervent fulfilment for the young” (*Aga.* 1497-1504).

ἀλληλοφόνους, “mutual slaughter” (*Aga.* 1576).

μανίας “frenzy” (*Aga.* 1575).

ἐγὼ δ’ ὕποπτος ἐχθρὸς ἧ παλαιγενῆς, “I was likely to be suspected, being an enemy born long ago” (*Aga.* 1637).

μὰ τὴν τέλειον τῆς ἐμῆς παιδὸς Δίκην,
Ἄτην Ἐρινύν θ’, αἴσι τόνδ’ ἔσφαξ’ ἐγώ, “by this slaughter, accomplished on behalf of my child, by Justice, by Ruin (Atē), by the Fury, and by me” (*Aga.* 1432-1433).

εὐάγγελος μὲν...

ἔως γένοιτο μητρὸς εὐφρόνης πάρα, “good news... born from a mother in the kindly time of night” (*Aga.* 264-265).

πολλὰς...

κληδόνας παλιγκότους “many... awful reports”, (*Aga.* 861-876).

ἐμοὶ δ’ ἀγὼν ὄδ’ οὐκ ἀφρόντιστος πάλαι

νείκης παλαιᾶς ἦλθε, σὺν χρόνῳ γε μὴν:

ἔστηκα δ’ ἐνθ’ ἔπαισ’ ἐπ’ ἐξειργασμένοις,

“to me, this battle is not unforeseen, concerning an ancient defeat from long ago; with time, truly it has come. Here I stand, having struck, above my work accomplished” (*Aga.* 1378-1379).

ἐμὸς

πόσις, νεκρὸς δέ, “my husband, a corpse” (*Aga.* 1404-1405).

ἐν ποικίλοις δὲ θνητὸν ὄντα κάλλεσιν

βαίνειν ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐδαμῶς ἄνευ φόβου, “for a mortal to step upon beautiful embroideries seems to me cannot be without fear” (*Aga.* 923-924).

καὶ τοῖσδέ μ’ ἐμβαίνονθ’ ἀλουργέσιν θεῶν

μή τις πρόσωθεν ὄμματος βάλοι φθόνος.

πολλὴ γὰρ αἰδῶς δωματοφθορεῖν ποσὶν

φθείροντα πλοῦτον ἀργυρωνήτους θ’ ὑφάς,

“as I trample upon these, seeing they are sea-purple, may no observant malice strike me down from afar; for it is a great shame to ruin the expensive, woven wealth of the house with a foot” (*Aga.* 946-949).

πορφυρόστρωτος ‘purple’ (*Aga.* 910).

ἠὔξω θεοῖς δείσας ἂν ᾧδ’ ἔρδειν τάδε, “would you, being in fear, have vowed to the gods, to do such a thing?” (*Aga.* 933).

εἶπερ τις, εἰδὼς γ’ εὔ τὸδ’ ἐξεῖπον τέλος, “if someone, knowing well such matters, had ordained it as an end” (*Aga.* 934).

δόμων ἄγαλμα ‘a treasure of the house’ (*Aga.* 208).

λέοντος εὐγενοῦς, “the noble lion” (*Aga.* 1259).

δίπους λέαινα, “a two-footed lioness” (*Aga.* 1258).

συγκοιμωμένη

λύκῳ, “sleeping with a wolf” (*Aga.* 1258-1259).

μισόθεον μὲν οὖν, πολλὰ συνίστορα

αὐτόφωνα κακὰ καρτάναι,

ἀνδροσφαγεῖον καὶ πέδον ῥαντήριον,

“an utterly god-hating one, privy to many evil kin-murders and decapitation, a house of butchery, and a place of defilement” (*Aga.* 1090-1092).

στάσις δ’ ἀκόρετος γένει

κατολολυξάτω θύματος λευσίμου, “let the insatiate tribe shriek over the accursed victim doomed to death!” (*Aga.* 1117-1118).

φόνον... πνέουσιν αἱματοσταγῆ, “breathe blood-dripping murder!” (*Aga.* 1309).

νεόγονος ἂν αἶψον μάθοι, “a new-born, listening, could understand” (*Aga.* 1162-1163).

νεῶν δ’ ἄπαρχος Ἰλίου τ’ ἀναστάτης

οὐκ οἶδεν οἷα γλῶσσα μισητῆς κυνὸς

λέξασα κάκτεινασα φαιδρόνους, δίκην

ἄτης λαθραίου, τεύξεται κακῆ τύχη,

“the commander of the navy, and the destroyer of Troy, being unaware of the hateful nature of the bitch’s tongue... the furtive justice of ruin, and about to suffer an evil fate” (*Aga.* 1226-1230).

Ἄγαμέμνωνός σέ φημ’ ἐπόψεσθαι μόρον, “I tell you, you are about to behold the doom of Agamemnon!” (*Aga.* 1246).

εὐφημον, ὧ τάλαινα, κοίμησον στόμα, “Speak auspiciously, you wretched girl; shut your mouth.” (*Aga.* 1247).

ξυναινέσασα Λοξίαν ἐνευσάμην, “having consented, I cheated Apollo by lying” (*Aga.* 1208).

γαμεῖ βιαίως σκότιον...

λέχοι, “forcibly marry in secret... as a breeding-woman” (*Tro.* 41-44).

φασγάνῳ “by the sword” (*Od.* 11.424).

παίω δέ νιν δίς: κὰν δυοῖν οἰμωγμάτοιν

μεθῆκεν αὐτοῦ κῶλα: καὶ πεπτωκότι

τρίτην ἐπενδίδωμι, τοῦ κατὰ χθονὸς

Διὸς νεκρῶν σωτήρος εὐκταίαν χάριν,

“I struck him then, two times, and although he gave two cries, his limbs collapsed, and, his having fallen, I delivered a third blow! This was a gift of Zeus of the Underworld, saviour of the dead, to whom I prayed.” (*Aga.* 1382-1387).

οὕτω τὸν αὐτοῦ θυμὸν ὀρμαίνει πεσών:
 κάκφυσιῶν ὀξειᾶν αἵματος σφαγὴν
 βάλλει μ' ἑρεμνῆ ψακάδι φοινίας δρόσου,
 χαίρουσαν οὐδὲν ἦσσαν ἢ διοςδότῳ
 γάνει σπορητὸς κάλυκος ἐν λοχεύμασιν.
 ὡς ᾧδ' ἐχόντων, πρέσβος Ἀργείων τόδε,
 χαίροιτ' ἄν, εἰ χαίροιτ', ἐγὼ δ' ἐπεύχομαι.
 εἰ δ' ἦν πρεπόντων ὥστ' ἐπισπένδειν νεκρῷ,
 τῷδ' ἄν δικαίως ἦν, ὑπερδίκως μὲν οὖν.
 τοσῶνδε κρατῆρ' ἐν δόμοις κακῶν ὄδε
 πλήσας ἀραίων αὐτὸς ἐκπίνει μολών,
 “In this way, having fallen, he choked out his own soul, and snorted up a blast of sacrificial
 blood; he hit me with a dark drop of bloody dew – I rejoiced no less than when the refreshment
 sent by heaven, covers the germinating sown wheat-seed. This is how it is, elders of Argos,
 rejoice if you will, but I myself glory in it! If it were fitting to make a libation to the dead, *this*
 would be just; nay, more than just. So many are the accursed evils of the house; this man has
 filled a mixing bowl which he himself has come to drink up” (*Aga.* 1389-1394).

ξένοι, λέγοιτ' ἄν εἴ τι δεῖ: πάρεστι γὰρ
 ὅποιά περ δόμοισι τοῖσδ' ἐπεικότα,
 καὶ θερμὰ λουτρὰ καὶ πόνων θελκτηρία
 στρωμνὴ, δικαίων τ' ὀμμάτων παρουσία.
 εἰ δ' ἄλλο πρᾶξι δεῖ τι βουλιώτερον,
 ἀνδρῶν τόδ' ἐστὶν ἔργον, οἷς κοινώσομεν,
 “Guests, speak if you need anything; for here are all such things as befit the house. There are
 warm baths, and bedding to soothe away pains, and everything seen to be set aright. If
 something else needs to be done with better skill, it would be a task for men, and we will consult
 with them.” (*Khoeph.* 668-673).

οἱ ἄγω. τέθνηκας, φίλτατ' Αἰγίσθου βία, “Woe is me! You pass away, strength of my beloved
 Aigisthos” (*Khoeph.* 893).

δ' ὑπερκόπως
 ἐν τοῖσι σοῖς πόνοισι χλίουσιν μέγα, “are arrogantly luxuriating in that vast (wealth) for which
 you worked” (*Khoeph.* 136-137).

ἰὼ ἰὼ δαῖα
 πάντολμε μάτερ, “dreadful, all-daring mother” (*Khoeph.* 429-430).

ἢ τάπερ
 πάθομεν ἄχαεα πρὸς γε τῶν τεκομένων “the pains which we have suffered, and, indeed, from
 our own parent” (*Khoeph.* 418-419).

πρὸς αὐτὸν τόνδε σὲ σφάζαι θέλω,
καὶ ζῶντα γάρ νιν κρείσσον' ἠγήσω πατρός:
τούτῳ θανοῦσα ξυγκάθευδ', ἐπεὶ φιλεῖς
τὸν ἄνδρα τοῦτον, ὃν δ' ἐχρῆν φιλεῖν στυγεῖς,
“I want to slaughter you beside that man, for while living, you held him superior to my father. Sleeping with this man is your death, since you love this man, while hating he whom you ought to love!” (*Khoeph.* 904-907).

δουῖν γυναικοῖν “a pair of women” (*Khoeph.* 304).

θυτῆρος... μέγα “the great sacrificer” (*Khoeph.* 255).

ἐγκότους κύνας, ‘wrathful hounds’ (*Khoeph.* 924).

τάς τοῦ πατρὸς δὲ πῶς φύγω παρὲς τάδε; “But how can I escape those of my father, letting this go?” (*Khoeph.* 925).

δύσθεος γυνά, “that godless woman” (*Khoeph.* 46).

ἔρωσ ἀπέρωτος, “love without love” (*Khoeph.* 600).

δυσφιλὲς γαμήλευμα, ἀπεύχεται δόμοις
γυναικοβούλους τε μήτιδας φρενῶν
ἐπ' ἀνδρὶ τευχεςφόρῳ,
ἐπ' ἀνδρὶ δηίοις ἐπικότῳ σέβας.
τίω δ' ἀθήρμαντον ἐστίαν δόμων
γυναικείαν τ' ἄτολμον αἰχμάν,
“[a] hateful marriage, abominable to the household, female schemes of a cunning mind, against an armoured man, destroying with ill-will all reverence for a man; I value the hearth in a home left unscorched, and a woman not emboldened by a warlike temperament” (*Khoeph.* 625-630).

ἐμή γὰρ μήτηρ, οὐδαμῶς ἐπώνυμον
φρόνημα παισὶ δύσθεον πεπαμένη, “as for my mother, in no way to her children does she, with ungodly spirit, bear the name” (*Khoeph.* 190-191).

πανδίκως “with all justification” (*Khoeph.* 241).

ὡς τρις ἂν παρ' ἀσπίδα
στῆναι θέλοιμ' ἂν μᾶλλον ἢ τεκεῖν ἅπαξ, “I would be willing to stand three times with a shield, rather than give birth only once” (*Med.* 250-251).

συμφορᾶς “a misfortune” (*Khoeph.* 718).

τῆς τυθείσης νηλεῶς “pitiless sacrifice” (*Khoeph.* 242).

οὐδαμῶς ἐφίμερον, “by no means delightful” (*Khoeph.* 840).

ἂν φέρειν δόμοις
γένοιτ’ ἂν ἄχθος αἵματοσταγὲς φόνω “another blood-reeking burden of slaughter for the house
to bear” (*Khoeph.* 841-842).

μάντις ἀψευδῆς τὸ πρίν, “a prophet who has never lied before” (*Khoeph.* 559).

ἔχει γὰρ αἰσχυντήρος, ὡς νόμος, δίκην, “he received justice as an adulterer, according to law”
(*Khoeph.* 990).

ἴδεσθε χώρας τὴν διπλὴν τυραννίδα
πατροκτόνους τε δωμάτων πορθήτορας, “Behold here twofold tyranny; my father’s murderers;
and the ravagers of my house!” (*Khoeph.* 973-974).

μένος ἄτης, ‘the power of Ruin’ (*Khoeph.* 1076).

κλυτὰ
βυσσόφρων Ἐρινύς. “the famous, deep-thinking Fury” (*Khoeph.* 650-651).

ἐγὼ δ’ ὑφ’ ὑμῶν ᾧδ’ ἀπητιμασμένη
ἄλλοισιν ἐν νεκροῖσιν...
οὐδεὶς ὑπέρ μου δαιμόνων μνηΐεται,
κατασφαγείσης πρὸς χερῶν μητροκτόνων,
“I am dishonoured by others below because of you... none of the spirits are wrathful on my
behalf, slaughtered by matricidal hands” (*Eum.* 95-102).

δ’ ἐπ’ ὀμφαλῷ μὲν ἄνδρα θεομυσῆ
ἔδραν ἔχοντα προστρόπαιον, αἷματι
στάζοντα χεῖρας,
“a man, abominable to the gods, perched upon the omphalos, seeking purification for pollution,
his hands dripping with blood” (*Eum.* 40-42).

μητροκτόνον μίασμα δ’ ἔκπλυτον πέλει:
ποταίνιον γὰρ ὄν πρὸς ἐστία θεοῦ
Φοίβου καθαρμοῖς ἠλάθη χοιροκτόνοις,
“the pollution of matricide was cleansed beside the hearth of Apollo, forced out by the sacrifice
of a pig” (*Eum.* 281-283).

φοβερῶν, ‘fear-inspiring’ (*Eum.* 990).

κακῶν δ’ ἕκατι κἀγένοντ’, ἐπεὶ κακὸν
σκότον νέμονται Τάρταρόν θ’ ὑπὸ χθονός,

μισήματ' ἀνδρῶν καὶ θεῶν Ὀλυμπίων,

“they were born of evil, since they dwell in evil darkness, in Tartaros beneath the earth, the objects of hatred of men and Olympian gods” (*Eum.* 71-73).

ὧ παντομισῆ κνώδαλα, στύγη θεῶν, “O utterly loathsome beasts, hated by the gods!” (*Eum.* 644).

μάντις ὦν δ' οὐ ψεύσομαι.

οὐπόποτ' εἶπον μαντικοῖσιν ἐν θρόνοις,

οὐκ ἀνδρός, οὐ γυναικός, οὐ πόλεως πέρι,

ὃ μὴ κελεύσαι Ζεὺς Ὀλυμπίων πατήρ,

“being a seer, I will tell no lie. Nothing spoken upon the oracular throne, neither concerning man, nor of woman, nor about a city, was not authorized by Zeus, father of the Olympians” (*Eum.* 615-618).

πῶς γάρ σ' ἔθρεψεν ἐντός, ὧ μαιφόνε,

ζώνης; ἀπεύχη μητρὸς αἷμα φίλτατον;

“How else did she nurture you within her girdle, you blood-guilty man? Do you reject your mother's blood, closest of all?” (*Eum.* 607-608).

οὐκ ἔστι μήτηρ ἢ κεκλημένου τέκνου

τοκεύς, τροφὸς δὲ κύματος νεοσπόρου.

τίκτει δ' ὁ θρώσκων, ἢ δ' ἄπερ ξένῳ ξένη

ἔσωσεν ἔρνος, οἷσι μὴ βλάβη θεός.

τεκμήριον δὲ τοῦδέ σοι δεῖξω λόγου.

πατήρ μὲν ἂν γένοιτ' ἄνευ μητρὸς: πέλας

μάρτυς πάρεστι παῖς Ὀλυμπίου Διός,

οὐδ' ἐν σκότοισι νηδύος τεθραμμένη,

ἀλλ' οἷον ἔρνος οὔτις ἂν τέκοι θεός,

“She who gives birth is not the mother of the child; she is only the nurse of the freshly-sown embryo. He who mounts is the parent; she preserves the foreign fruit, which the god then leaves unhindered. I give to you a sure sign of this testimony. A father may create without a mother: close by is a witness, the child of Olympian Zeus, who was not produced in the darkness of the body, but is the sort of offspring otherwise not borne by a god” (*Eum.* 658-666).

μήτηρ γὰρ οὔτις ἐστὶν ἢ μ' ἐγείνατο,

τὸ δ' ἄρσεν αἰνῶ πάντα, πλήν γάμου τυχεῖν,

ἅπαντι θυμῷ, κάρτα δ' εἰμι τοῦ πατρός.

οὔτω γυναικὸς οὐ προτιμήσω μόρον

ἄνδρα κτανούσης δωμάτων ἐπίσκοπον,

“there is no mother who gave birth to me, and, with all my heart, I approve the male sex in every way, except in the matter of marriage. I am utterly of the Father. Thus, I will not value the fate of a woman who killed her husband, the guardian of the house” (*Eum.* 736-740).

ἐν ᾧ τις ἔσται δεινὸς εὐκλείας ἔρωσ, “in the one who experiences terrible lust for glory” (*Eum.* 865).

ἔξεστι γάρ σοι τῆσδε γαμόρω χθονὸς
εἶναι δικαίως ἐς τὸ πᾶν τιμωμένη, “it is possible for you to become rightful landowners in this
country, and honoured in all matters” (*Eum.* 890-891).

Chapter 3: *The Classical Klytimestra*

δοκῶ μὲν, οὐδὲν ῥῆμα σὺν κέρδει κακόν, “In my opinion, nothing which is said for gain is evil”
(*S. El.* 61).

ὦ παῖ, παῖ δυστανοτάτας
Ἥλέκτρα ματρός, τίν’ αἰεὶ
τάκεις ᾧδ’ ἀκόρεστον οἰμωγὰν
τὸν πάλαι ἐκ δολερᾶς ἀθεώτατα
ματρὸς ἀλόντ’ ἀπάταις Ἀγαμέμνονα
κακῶ τε χειρὶ πρόδοτον; ὡς ὁ τάδε πορῶν
ᾔλοιτ’, εἴ μοι θέμις τάδ’ αὐδᾶν,
“O child, daughter of a most unfortunate mother, who always pines away, in this way, in
insatiable lamentation, for he who long ago was conquered by the ungodly treachery of your
mother through deception – Agamemnon – betrayed by her evil hand. May she perish, as it is
surely rightful for me to say.” (*S. El.* 121-127).

ἔχθιστα “most bitter enmity” (*S. El.* 261-262).

γελῶσι δ’ ἐχθροί: μαίνεται δ’ ὑφ’ ἡδονῆς
μήτηρ ἀμήτωρ, “Our enemies are laughing; and our mother who is no mother is mad with joy”
(*S. El.* 1153-1154).

δεινὸν τὸ τίκτειν ἐστίν: οὐδὲ γὰρ κακῶς
πάσχοντι μῖσος ὧν τέκη προσγίγνεται, “To give birth is a marvellous strange thing; for, having
experienced evil from them, a person does not hate one’s offspring” (*S. El.* 770-771).

κακοῖς, ‘by means of misfortune’ (*S. El.* 768).

ὦ τοῦ στρατηγήσαντος ἐν Τροίᾳ ποτὲ
Ἀγαμέμνονος παῖ, “O son of the general, once of Troy, child of Agamemnon” (*S. El.* 1-2).

παῖ δυστανοτάτας
Ἥλέκτρα ματρός, “Elektra, daughter of a most unfortunate mother” (*S. El.* 121-122).

εὐγενῆς γυνή “the nobly-born woman” (*S. El.* 257).

αἴσχιστα πάντων ἔργα δρῶσα τυγχάνεις,
ἦτις ξυνεύδεις τῷ παλαμναίῳ, μεθ' οὗ
πατέρα τὸν ἄμὸν πρόσθεν ἐξαπόλεσας,
καὶ παιδοποιεῖς, τοὺς δὲ πρόσθεν εὐσεβεῖς
κάξ εὐσεβῶν βλαστόντας ἐκβαλοῦσ' ἔχεις,
“you are doing the most shameful act of all: sleeping with a defiled murderer, with whom you
previously destroyed our father, and begetting his children, after casting out those children you
properly conceived in a proper arrangement” (S. *El.* 586-590).

φίλη, “dear one” (S. *El.* 431).

σφραγίδα ‘seal or signet’ (S. *El.* 1223).

φίλτατον ‘dearest’ (S. *El.* 1224, 1233).

τὰ μὲν περισσεύοντα τῶν λόγων “superfluous speech”, (S. *El.* 1288).

ἐνδίκους “righteous” (S. *El.* 37).

ἀδίκως “unlawfully” (S. *El.* 113).

κύνες “hounds”, (S. *El.* 1388).

ἀρχαίόπλουτα πατρὸς εἰς ἐδώλια, “abode of the father, with its ancient wealth” (S. *El.* 1394).

πολύφθορόν “rife with ruin” (S. *El.* 10).

δίκη καθαρτῆς “as cleanser with justice” (S. *El.* 70).

ὦ σπέρμ' Ἀτρέως, ὡς πολλὰ παθὸν
δι' ἐλευθερίας μόλις ἐξῆλθες
τῇ νῦν ὀρμῇ τελεωθέν,
“O Seed of Atreus, after many sufferings, through freedom you have now come to your
uttermost end!” (S. *El.* 1508-1510).

τραγι-

κότατός γε τῶν ποιητῶν, “definitely the most tragic of the poets” (Ar. *Poet.* 1453a29-30).

πᾶν δὲ φιλότεκνον γένος, “the whole human race is child-loving” (*Her.* 636).

τροφεῖα παίδων ἢ πρὸ μέλλοντος τόκου; “For the nurturance of his children, or for a child likely
to come?” (E. *El.* 626).

ὠμόφρων ὅμως “despite being savage-minded”, (E. *El.* 27).

ἐς μὲν γὰρ ἄνδρα σκῆψιν εἶχ' ὀλωλότα,
παίδων δ' ἔδεισε μὴ φθονηθεῖη φόνῳ, “for she had reason to destroy her husband, but she feared
resentment for the murder of her children” (E. *El.* 29-30).

γυναῖκες ἀνδρῶν, ὧ̃ ξέν', οὐ παίδων φίλαι, “Well, stranger, women love their husbands, not
their children” (E. *El.* 265).

ἡ πανώλης Τυνδαρίς “the all-destroying daughter of Tyndareos” (E. *El.* 60).

πάρεργα “secondary” (E. *El.* 62).

καίτοι δόξ' ὅταν λάβῃ κακὴ
γυναῖκα, γλώσση πικρότης ἔνεστί τις.
ὡς μὲν παρ' ἡμῖν, οὐ καλῶς: τὸ πρᾶγμα δὲ
μαθόντας, ἦν μὲν ἀξίως μισεῖν ἔχη,
στυγεῖν δίκαιον: εἰ δὲ μή, τί δεῖ στυγεῖν;
“indeed, when expectation of evil seizes a woman, her reputation is a bitter one. In my opinion,
this is unfair: in understanding the matter, and deciding to hate, then it is right to hate, but when
not knowing the facts, why ought one choose to hate?” (E. *El.* 1013-1017).

φρενήρης “sensible” (E. *El.* 1053).

οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεὶς οἶκος ἀθλιώτερος
τῶν Τανταλείων οὐδ' ἔφῃ ποτ' ἐκγόνων “There is no house more wretched than that of
Tantalos, nor has one ever come into being” (E. *El.* 1175-1176).

σᾶς ἀλόχου σφαγαῖς
Αἰγίσθου τ', “through the slaughter of your wife and of Aigisthos” (E. *El.* 123-124).

παλαιὰ σκῆπτρα Ταντάλου λιπὼν “left behind the ancient sceptre of Tantalos” (E. *El.* 11).

μία δ' ἀμφοτέρους
ἄτη πατέρων διέκναισεν, “it was one patrilineal ruin which has destroyed you both together”
(E. *El.* 1306-1307).

ἄλοχον ἐκείνου Τυνδαρίδα κόρην ἔχων “holding the bridal bed of Tyndareos' daughter” (E. *El.*
13).

βασίλεια γύναι χθονὸς Ἀργείας,
παῖ Τυνδάρεω,
καὶ τοῖν ἀγαθοῖν ζύγγοι κούροι
Διός,

“queen of Argos, daughter of Tyndareos, and kinswoman of the noble sons of Zeus” (E. *El.* 988-991).

ὦ παῖ, πέφυκας πατέρα σὸν στέργειν ἀεὶ:
ἔστιν δὲ καὶ τόδ’· οἳ μὲν εἰσιν ἀρσένων,
οἳ δ’ αὖ φιλοῦσι μητέρας μᾶλλον πατρός.
συγγνώσομαί σοι,

“O child, you always love the father who begot you, and so it is: some are of the male, on the other hand, some love the mother more than the father. I will excuse you” (E. *El.* 1102-1105).

ὄρεῖα τις ὡς λέαινα ὀργάδων
δρύοχα νεμομένα “the roaming mountain lioness in the meadow-woods” (E. *El.* 1163-1164).

ἀλλά μοι Αἴγισθος τεύξας θάνατόν τε μόρον τε
ἔκτα σὺν οὐλομένη ἀλόχῳ, οἴκόνδε καλέσσας,
δειπνίσσας, ὥς τίς τε κατέκτανε βοῦν ἐπὶ φάτῃ.
ὧς θάνον οἰκτίστῳ θανάτῳ,

“Aigisthos wrought my death and doom; he killed me, with my accursed wife, having invited me to his home and entertaining me at dinner, just as someone slaughters an ox at manger. Thus I died a most lamentable death” (*Od.* 11.409-412).

δόλιον ‘crafty’ (E. *El.* 166; *Od.* 3.303).

Ἀγαμέμνονος δὲ φονέα κείμενον πέδῳ
Αἴγισθον, “Aigisthos, the slayer of Agamemnon, lies dead on the ground!” (E. *El.* 763-764).

πελέκεως ‘double-headed axe’ (E. *El.* 160).

ξίφεσι δ’ ἀμφιτόμοις ‘two-edged sword’ (E. *El.* 164).

Θυέστου παῖδα σὴν τε μητέρα, “the son of Thyestes along with your mother” (E. *El.* 613).

ἔστι δ’ ἔχθιστος βροτῶν
Ἀγαμέμνονος παῖς πολέμιός τ’ ἐμοῖς δόμοις, “The son of Agamemnon is the most hostile enemy of my blood and to my family” (E. *El.* 832-833).

μ’ ἔχρησας μητέρ’, ἦν οὐ χρῆν, κτανεῖν “commanded me to kill my mother, as I should not” (E. *El.* 975).

ἄρ’ αὐτ’ ἀλάστῳ εἶπ’ ἀπεικασθεὶς θεῷ; “was spoken by an *alastōr* having taken the form of a god” (E. *El.* 979).

δειναὶ... θεαὶ “dreadful goddesses” (E. *El.* 1270).

οικτίστῳ “most pitiable” (*Od.* 11.412).

δυσάρεστος “fastidious” (*E. El.* 904).

καθυβρίσαι, “insulted” (*E. El.* 698).

μυσαρά “abominable” (*E. El.* 1179).

Λήδας ἄ τλάμων κούρα, “the *tlamōn* daughter of Leda” (*IT* 210). Many translators give ‘wretched’ or ‘ill-fated’ for *tlamōn*, but it can mean include ‘patient’, ‘enduring’, ‘steadfast’, and ‘overbold’.

ἄγαμος ἄτεκνος ἄπολις ἄφιλος, “without husband, without children, without city, without friend” (*IT* 220).

Λήδας Ἐλένα φίλα
παῖς “Leda’s beloved daughter Helen” (*IT* 439-440).

ὦ πανδάκρυτος ἢ κτανοῦσα... χῶ κτανών, “O most lamentable, she the slayer and he who slew!” (*IT* 553).

κακὸν δίκαιον “righteous evil” (*IT* 559).

τάλαιν’ ἐκείνη χῶ κτανών αὐτήν πατήρ, “That wretched girl – and the father who killed her!” (*IT* 565).

ὦμωξα κἀγὼ τόλμαν ἦν ἔτλη πατήρ, “And I also lament our father’s cruel deed” (*IT* 863).

ὄν ἔλιπον ἐπιμαστίδιον,
ἔτι βρέφος, ἔτι νέον, ἔτι θάλος
ἐν χερσὶν ματρὸς πρὸς στέρνοις,
“whom I left still at the breast, still a new-born babe, still brand-new, still a child in the hands and heart of his mother” (*IT* 231-233).

ὄν Τυνδαρις τίκτει κόρη, “he who Tyndareos’ daughter brought into the world” (*IT* 1319).

δυσσεβῆ καὶ δυστυχῆ “godless and unfortunate” (*IT* 694).

ἔγκληρος “heiress” (*IT* 682).

κακὰ
ἐς χεῖρας ἦλθε, “evil came into my hands” (*IT* 940-941).

οὐ γὰρ ἄλλ’ ἀνήρ μὲν ἐκ δόμων

θανὼν ποθεινός, τὰ δὲ γυναικὸς ἀσθενῆ, “when a male from the house dies, there is yearning; the loss of a woman is of little importance” (*IT* 1005-1006).

δειναὶ γὰρ αἱ γυναῖκες εὐρίσκουσιν τέχνας, “women are dreadfully proficient in the art of contrivance” (*IT* 1032).

τῆς Τυνδαρείας θυγατρὸς Ἰφιγένεια παῖς, “Iphigenia, daughter of Tyndareos’ child” (*IT* 5).

καλλίνικον στέφανον, a “gloriously triumphant crown of victory” (*IT* 12).

τούς θ’ ὕβρισθέντας γάμους
Ἑλένης μετελθεῖν, Μενέλεω χάριν φέρων, “doing a favour for Menelaos, prosecuting the trespass upon his marriage to Helen” (*IT* 13-14).

γνώμης δικαίας “righteousness of their resolve” (*IT* 1469).

δεινὴ τις ὄργη δαιμόνων ἐπέζεσε
τὸ Ταντάλειον σπέρμα διὰ πόνων τ’ ἄγει, “The wrath of some dreadful demon boils over against the seed of Tantalos through the conveyance of suffering” (*IT* 987-988).

δισσοῖν λεόντων “twin lions” (*Or.* 1555).

αἰεὶ γυναῖκες ἐμποδῶν ταῖς συμφοραῖς
ἔφουσαν ἀνδρῶν πρὸς τὸ δυστυχέστερον, “Always women as a nuisance and misfortune hinder the doings of men” (*Or.* 605-606).

δυσμενῆς
φοινία ψῆφος ἐν πολίταις, “hostile and bloody voting-pebbles of the citizens” (*Or.* 974-975).

γαῖα Δαναῶν, “the land of the Danaans”, (*Or.* 1621).

γενναίων τεκέων, “true-born children” (*Or.* 815).

φόνῳ φόνος ἐξαμεί-
βων δι’ αἵματος οὐ προλεί-
πει δισσοῖσιν Ἀτρεΐδαις,
“slaughter in exchange for slaughter through the divided bloodline of the Atreids never ceases” (*Or.* 816-818).

τ’ ἀμείβει... θανάτους θανά-
των, “deaths in exchange for deaths” (*Or.* 1001-1012).

ἀπόφονον “unnatural murder” (*Or.* 163, 192).

τούτῳ πιθόμενος τὴν τεκοῦσαν ἔκτανον.

ἐκεῖνον ἠγεῖσθ' ἀνόσιον καὶ κτείνετε:

ἐκεῖνος ἤμαρτ', οὐκ ἐγώ,

“It was by this persuasion [i.e., the oracle] that I killed my mother. Judge *him* unholy, and execute him! It was he who did wrong, not I” (*Or.* 594-596).

ὅς νιν φονεῦσαι μητέρ' ἐξηνάγκασα, “it was I who forced him [i.e., Orestes] to be murderous toward his mother” (*Or.* 1665).

Ὅρ: Φοῖβος, κελεύσας μητρὸς ἐκπρᾶξι φόνον.

Μεν: ἀμαθέστερός γ' ὢν τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ τῆς δίκης.

Ὅρ: δουλεύομεν θεοῖς, ὅτι ποτ' εἰσὶν οἱ θεοί.

“Or: [my defence is] Phoibos, who commanded me to make an end of my mother. Men: Yes, he is ignorant of what is good and just. Or: We are subject to the gods, whatever the gods are” (*Or.* 416-418).

οἷα δὴ γυνή, “such as a woman may have” (*Or.* 33).

οὐ δεινὰ πάσχειν δεινὰ τοὺς εἰργασμένους, “It is not monstrous that those who do monstrous things should suffer” (*Or.* 413).

τῆς Τυνδαρείας παιδὸς ἀνόσιον φόνον, “the unholy murder of Tyndareos' daughter” (*Or.* 374).

δεῖνα κακά “dreadful evil” (*Or.* 376).

ὁ μητροφόντης ὄδε πρὸ δωμάτων δράκων

στίλβει νοσώδεις ἀστραπάς, στύγημ' ἐμόν, “Here is the mother-killing serpent before the house, with sickness in his glittering gaze; he is an abomination to me” (*Or.* 479-480).

θηριῶδες... καὶ μαιφόνον “bestly and bloodthirsty” (*Or.* 524)

ὃ καὶ γῆν καὶ πόλεις ὄλλυσ' ἀεὶ, “which brings lands and cities to a state of ruin always” (*Or.* 525).

τοκέων

πυριγενεῖ τεμεῖν παλάμα

χρόα “cutting a parent's flesh with violence forged in fire” (*Or.* 819-821).

καὶ τοῖς γε χρηστοῖς εὖ λέγειν ἐφαίνετο, “those valiant in war-making definitely thought he made the matter perfectly clear” (*Or.* 930).

Ζεῦ πρόγονε “Zeus progenitor”...

εἷς ἀγών, δίκη μία “facing a single battle, and one judgment” (*Or.* 1242-1244).

λέοντες Ἴλληνας
δύο διδύμῳ <ῥυθμῶϊ>, “Greek lions, with twin motions” (*Or.* 1401-1402).

ὁ δὲ παῖς Στροφίου, κακόμητις ἀνήρ,
οἷος Ὀδυσσεύς, σιγᾷ δόλιος,
πιστὸς δὲ φίλοις, θρασὺς εἰς ἀλκάν,
ξυνετὸς πολέμου, φόνιός τε δράκων.
ἔρροι τᾶς ἠσύχου
προνοίας κακοῦργος ὄν,
“the other one was the son of Strophios, an evil-thinking man, such as Odysseus, secretive and treacherous, but faithful to friends, arrogant in courage, cunning in combat, and a murderous snake: perish the secret schemes of the villain!” (*Or.* 1403-1408).

ἔς ἀρκυστάταν
μηχανὰν ἐμπλέκειν
παῖδα τὴν Τυνδαρίδ’ ὁ
μητροφόντας δράκων,
“the matricidal snake netted the daughter of Tyndareos in a woven contrivance” (*Or.* 1421-1424).

ἰὼν κακὸς Φωκεύς, “the evil Phokian” (*Or.* 1446).

δέ γ’ ἐπεκέλευσα καπέλυσ’ ὄκνου “gave consent and released him from hesitation” (*Or.* 1236).

πάσαις γυναιξὶν ἀξία στυγεῖν ἔφου
ἡ Τυνδαρίς παῖς, ἡ κατήσχυνεν γένος, “Tyndareos’ daughter is naturally deserving of all women’s hatred (for having) put her sex to shame” (*Or.* 1153-1154).

ἡ πλείστους Ἀχαιῶν ὄλεσεν γυνὴ μία, “the one woman who made an end of the greatest number of the Akhaians” (*Or.* 743).

σκύμνον ἀνοσίου πατρός, “the whelp of an unholy father” (*Or.* 1213).

εὐγενῆς δ’ ἀπ’ εὐγενοῦς
γῆμας ὄναιο καὶ σὺ χά’ διδοῦς ἐγώ, “Well-born from the well-born, may you profit in marrying her I am giving you” (*Or.* 1676-1677).

ἀλλ’ ἠσύχαζε: θεὸς ἐγὼ πέφηνά σοι
μέγιστος, οὐκ ὄν: ἀλλ’ ὅμως γενήσομαι, “But calm yourself – I have revealed myself to you as a very great god, although I am not: but nevertheless, I will become one” (*IA* 973-974).

γενναῖ’ ἔλεξας Ταντάλω τε τῷ Διὸς
πρέποντα: προγόνους οὐ καταισχύνεις σέθεν, “True to your descent from Tanatalos the child of Zeus, you speak good sense; you do not put your forbears to shame” (*IA* 504-505).

ὦ τάλας ἐγώ,
ὡς ἠπόρημαι πρὸς θεῶν τὰ νῦν τάδε, ‘Oh, I am wretched! How stricken I am by these matters sent by the gods! (IA 536-537).

κατὰ Κύπριν
κρυπτάν, “the hidden business of Aphrodite”, for men, goodness is in contributing to the good order of the prosperous city (IA 569-570).

παρθενίους τ’ ὀάρους μειδήματά τ’ ἐξαπάτας τε
τέρψιν τε γλυκερὴν φιλότητά τε μειλιχίην τε, “maidenly conversation and smiles and deceits and delights and sweet affection and softness” (Hes. *Theog.* 205-206).

κυνώπιδος “bitch-eyed” (Hom. *Od.* 8.319).

οὐκ ἐχέθυμος “out of control” (Hom. *Od.* 8.320).

ἐπὶ τοῖς αὐτοῦ τέκνοις
ἀνόσια πράσσων “unholy doings against his own children” (IA 1104-1105).

ὡς οὐχὶ Πηλέως, ἀλλ’ ἀλάστορος γεγώς, “not the son of Peleus, but of a newborn spirit of revenge” (IA 946).

ὁ δὲ τεκὼν με τὰν τάλαιναν,
ὦ μᾶτερ ὦ μᾶτερ,
οἴχεται προδοῦς ἔρημον.
δυστάλαιν’ ἐγώ, πικρὰν
πικρὰν ἰδοῦσα δυσελέναν,
φονεύομαι διόλλυμαι
σφαγαῖσιν ἀνοσίοισιν ἀνοσίου πατρός,
“The one who engendered me, o mother, O mother, abandons me, consigning me to desolation! I am utterly miserable, bitter it is, I am destroyed, by the unholy act of my unholy father!” (IA 1312-1318).

ὦ πότνια πότνια μᾶτερ, οὐ δάκρυά γέ σοι
δώσομεν ἀμέτερα: “O lady, lady mother, we have not the power to offer you our tears” (IA 1487-1488).

καὶ γένοιτό σοι καλῶς, “May everything go happily for you!” (IA 1625).

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