

Introduction

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A now common critique of the Western philosophical tradition is that it harbors an inherent sexism wherein “universal reason” is far from neutral but is, rather, positively masculine, setting itself against the feminine domain of irrationality, madness, magic, and mystery. Theorists like Genevieve Lloyd or feminists like Luce Irigaray have argued that Greek modes of thought, particularly Pythagorean, Platonic, and Aristotelian, insofar as they appear to privilege identity over difference, *logos* over *pathos*, the intelligible over the bodily, form over matter, and so on, all harbor a gendered hierarchy that reinforces sexist and racist oppression not only in antiquity but also in the present age. As our title suggests, this volume hopes, to think otherwise than this binary and to examine whether the Greek worldview neatly falls within this exclusionary form of thinking. Overall, we will ask if there are ways of thinking antiquity differently, namely, as possibly expounding and even celebrating philosophies of difference, and we will see if we may discover rare moments when authors of antiquity valorize and uphold the necessity of all that has been coded as feminine, foreign, and/or irrational. This volume does not aim to address every figure or period of antiquity; rather, it proceeds thematically through selected texts that invite interpretation that is otherwise than the binary. As contemporary thinkers are turning toward new ways of reading antiquity, we hope that these selected studies will inspire other readings of ancient texts through this critical lens. When examining the philosophers and notable figures of antiquity alongside

their overt patriarchal and masculinist agendas, we will attempt to rethink our current methodologies while also questioning how we receive and read these texts.

Is it possible to interrogate particular authors, texts, and social practices of antiquity for ideas, theories, and/or images that are complementary to feminist and intersectional concerns? While not a work of apologetics that dismisses or neglects exclusionary practices and beliefs of classical authors so as to safeguard the value of the “perennial tradition,” the following does hope to respond to the question in the affirmative, analyzing the works of problematic thinkers and texts anew, seeing if we can engage their philosophy and practices in ways that might expose their own deep-seated tensions and contradictions. In other words, insofar as feminists wish to argue that patriarchal logic is inherently problematic, we will expose how there are moments, strains of thinking, in which masculinist authors fail to be fully consistent in their misogyny—fail, despite their agendas, to support their own attempts to delegitimize the feminine/Other—showing how the systems and ideas of antiquity may contain internal struggles and possible whispers of revolution that dismantle and subvert patriarchal thinking.

Of course, this anthology of essays in which we reinterpret select authors from antiquity through a feminist perspective would not be possible without the important works of the scholars before us. One of the most influential works to turn a feminist critical lens on Ancient Greek culture and thought is Nicole Loraux’s groundbreaking *Children of Athena: Athenian Ideas about Citizenship and the Division between the Sexes* (1984). In this text, Loraux examines the Athenian idea of autochthony (nativeness) in the Ancient Greek imagination and analyzes the figure of Pandora as the “first woman” created by Hephaestus at Zeus’s command. Loraux approaches these myths as fantasies, arguing that myth—often disregarded in much of the classical tradition of scholarship that preceded her—plays a significant political role in the context of the *polis*.¹ Loraux is working in a genre of scholarship influenced by the ideas of Lévi-Strauss, and often refers to the texts of Jean-Pierre Vernant and Marcel Detienne, thinkers working in the tradition of structuralist anthropology that attempted to understand Ancient Greek mythical narratives within their cultural, civic, and religious contexts. *Children of Athena* is a rich and complex work, and cannot be exhaustively summarized here, so we will focus on crucial aspects of Loraux’s treatment of autochthony and the myth of Pandora as emblematic analyses that demonstrate her

method and critical feminist orientation toward the texts, especially as she reads them in ways that would support our “otherwise than the binary” reorientation toward classical antiquity.

Loraux argues that the Athenian tradition of autochthony “dispossesses the women of Athens of their reproductive function. This dispossession, of course, belongs to the realm of the imaginary, and it looks like the expression of a dream or a denial of reality rather than a definite program or an Athenian theory of reproduction.”² Athenians adopted this origin myth, where they are born directly from the soil, out of the earth, and they do not originate in the womb of a woman. This denial of the female reproductive body is further evident in the myth of Erichthonios, who is born from the earth after Hephaestus’ failed attempt to rape Athena; Hephaestus’ seed falls to the earth and from her Erichthonios is born. It is significant that Athena remains a virgin goddess, echoing the erasure of the sexually autonomous female reproductive body that the myth of autochthony properly accomplishes. Loraux reads these Ancient Greek myths and their effects in the civic life of the Athenian people, while remarking on the myth of Erichthonios as an expression of male desire.

The doctrine of autochthony is something like the satisfaction of a desire, rather than a misunderstanding of the laws of reproduction. The desire of a society of men to deny the reality of reproduction is vested in the story of Erichthonios, since masculine experience dictates that what really counts takes place among men.³

Athenian autochthony has, of course, been discussed in traditional scholarship, but as Loraux points out, only insofar as it is historically significant. Loraux emphasizes the meaning of this doctrine with regard to sexual difference and the social and cultural markers of gender as they appear in the everyday lives of ancient Athenian people.⁴

One of the most enduring legacies of Loraux’s work is her innovative reading of the myth of Pandora. Just as the myth of autochthony inevitably implicates Athena (as a kind of “virgin mother” of Erichthonios), the story of Pandora also crucially involves Athena, who presides over the creation of the alleged first woman.⁵ Pandora is the mother of all women, indeed, mother of the “race of women,” but she, herself, is not born but created by father Zeus and the craftsman Hephaestus. In

other words, she is not human in two respects. First, insofar as she is not man but woman, she is separated from *anthropoi*, marked by an ominous otherness; and, further, she is created rather than born. Loraux asks how this separation of women from *anthropoi*, from human beings, is even possible, and compares it to the political structure of the Athenian *polis* where women are excluded.

The reference to Hesiod allows us to raise a perennial question in the Greek ideology of citizenship: that is, the exclusion of women, the paradoxical “half” of the Greek *polis*, an exclusion that is necessary and impossible at the same time. The consistency of this discourse about women deserves to be emphasized.⁶

The creation of Pandora essentially gives Zeus credit for all human birth, since the race of women is descended from this alleged first woman. Pandora is not born; she is built by the craftsman god Hephaestus, the forger of weapons—and Pandora herself is just such an arsenal, a Trojan horse, a deceptive trap (*dolon*). In both the *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, this “beautiful evil” or *kalon kakon*, is explicitly a deception and a trap.⁷ Female sexuality and beauty are constructed as dangerous illusions wherein the female body itself is threatening—and this is Loraux’s brilliant insight—because Pandora cannot even be said to have a “real” body. Again, like the Trojan horse, she is hollow, empty, simply a deceptive outside. She is all surface with a shining and appealing facade but concealing *nothing*.

In describing her finery and accoutrements, Athena gives Pandora a shimmering veil; Hephaestus gives her a glittery diadem; but where is Pandora herself?

It is a trap of finery, a trap of an exterior that is too beautiful. Is woman, then, a trap of simple appearances? I suspect that such a reading of the text might lead us to miss an important question: indeed, what makes the woman into a wholly exterior being in the first place? Certainly the notion of disguise is an essential part of the veil, and likewise a part of the word *kalyptre* (the word for veil, from the verb “to conceal”). Yet . . . the creature in the *Theogony* is no hidden

form beneath a deceitful disguise. Her veil does not conceal anything other than a woman: not a god, a demon, or a man. It hides nothing, because the woman has no interior to conceal. In short, in the *Theogony*, the first woman is her adornments—she has no body.⁸

So, in short, what is woman? For Loraux, she is multiple things, and none of them easy to pin down. Is she a mother or is she a virgin? Indeed, she *looks* like a virgin: “*parthenos aidoiē ikelon*,” “the likeness of a chaste virgin,”⁹ and it is through this emphasis on *likeness* that she is revealed to be a resemblance, an illusion, a specter of the real. In other words, she exists not as original, despite being the first, but as eternal image, an *ikelon*; “she is a copy that does not have an original.”¹⁰ Moreover, insofar as Pandora is not a human being but a specter of deceit, an empty cosmetic womb, one may ask how she can give birth or be the mother of anything, let alone the future generations of men? In other words, Loraux’s work highlights how the question of sexual difference and the origin of women clearly leave us with an ambiguous persona wherein the feminine is both a problematic snare while still being an instrumental part of human reproduction and society.

This theme has been taken up by Froma Zeitlin (1996) and more recently by Elissa Marder, who argues “Pandora’s function is to suppress, rather than express, the link between women and reproduction.”¹¹ Marder emphasizes Loraux’s suggestion that Pandora’s function as a mother is not natural, and argues that she is an artifice, a replicant, a product of *technē*.¹² With regard to Pandora’s famously dangerous box, or jar (*pithos*), Marder cites Loraux and Zeitlin for their recognition of the decidedly unnatural character of Pandora and rejects the assumption that the jar/box is merely linked with birth, death and fertility (as suggested by Vernant).¹³ Marder suggests that Pandora’s *pithos* is not a representation of her but a *mechanical reproduction* of the womb.

A fabricated replica of Pandora’s fabricated duplicitously empty body. As a prosthetic, externalized replication of Pandora’s womb (within which lurks the figure of “Anxiety,” here bearing the name Elpis), the jar opens up the disturbing possibility that the maternal function is not a natural operation and that it cannot be so easily contained.¹⁴

Indeed, this image of unruly but instrumental container/receptacle (as in Plato's *Timaeus* or Aristotle's *Generation of Animals*) often appears whenever female sexuality and reproduction is at issue in antiquity. Here one need only refer to the work of Page Dubois, whose *Sowing the Body: Psychoanalysis and Ancient Representations of Women* (1988) helped uncover how the female body was consistently compared to fertile soil, the wandering womb of the monstrous mother earth. Meanwhile masculinity and its *techne* became the desired plow, the steady hand that would heroically domesticate the feminine, reduce her to a container/receptacle—the land or the earth laid bare, waiting the inscription that would allow her finally to bear legitimate fruit.

The question of sexual difference in ancient Greek philosophy is also a major theme in the work of Luce Irigaray, whose influence on the study of sexual difference in the Western philosophical canon has been prodigious. Irigaray argues that sexual difference underlies the massive dualistic structures of Western metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics—all the way back to ancient Greek thinkers like Plato and Aristotle. In *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Irigaray suggests, “Any theory of the subject has always been appropriated by the ‘masculine.’”¹⁵ The so-called universal subject, or transcendental ego, is imagined to be both no one and anyone, while in reality it is an image of the dominant masculine subject, masquerading itself as the universal. What we know as rationality is a guise, a specific determination dreamed up and codified so as to set the masculine up as that which can “legitimately” excise, exclude, regulate, and order all that is categorized as other, the feminine, the slave, the body, the emotional, and so forth.

Adopting Lacanian terminology (in order to subvert it), Irigaray points out that the category of woman is coded and perceived as “lack.” “Subjectivity is denied to women,” writes Irigaray: Women are nothing but a mirror in which the masculine subject can narcissistically regard his own reflection from a perverse upside-down angle. The woman is lacking the organ of agency (because only male penetration counts as agency), of speech (in Lacan's system, where the phallus is the master signifier), and she is a monster, as Aristotle has it, or a mutilated creature, according to Freud.¹⁶ In approaching this binary coding of the masculine with the transcendent soul and the feminine with immanent body, Irigaray argues that sexual difference is the key element of this organization—and sexual reproduction is deeply implicated. Just as Loraux discovers the myth of

autochthony as a masculine fantasy, Irigaray describes the masculine subject in similar terms.

The “subject” plays at multiplying himself, even deforming himself, in this process. He is father, mother, and child(ren). And the relationships between them. He is masculine and feminine and the relationships between them. What mockery of generation, parody of copulation and genealogy, drawing its *strength* from the same model, from the model of the same: the subject.¹⁷

The mythological imagination of the ancient Greek world repeatedly demonstrates this masculine tendency to appropriate female generativity, giving birth to all that reinforces its superiority. Consider again the myth of autochthony and the birth of Erichthonios, Zeus’s ingestion of his first wife Metis and the resultant “birth” of Athena, and Zeus’s creation of Pandora as the “first woman.” Here, we see the intents of crafting narratives that reinforce the allegedly motherless status of goddesses such as Athena and Aphrodite, the domestic taming of Gaia, the slaughter (or, perhaps, “castration”) of Medusa and other monsters by male gods and heroes, and so forth.¹⁸ Suffice to say that these narratives tend to privilege the heroic masculine subject, and often present female figures as treacherous, chaotic, and monstrous.¹⁹ The rare “good woman” is praised, while the “bad woman” is often portrayed as a kind of cautionary tale, conditioning women to accept masculine proscription of their behavior. For example, Penelope and Alcestis are cast as the faithful wives, while figures like Medea, Helen, and Clytemnestra are models of the “bad woman”—and their failure is directly caused by their refusal to fulfill their roles as wives and mothers.²⁰ As Cristiana Franco’s *Shameless: The Canine and the Feminine in Ancient Greece* demonstrates, women in antiquity are thought to lack *aidos*, self-restraint, and require male masters—much like dogs.²¹

So, it seems then that female sexuality, in the ancient Greek imagination, is excessive and chaotic and in need of dominance. Nevertheless, the symbolic constellation of female/matter/body/earth/nature signifies to many contemporary feminist authors not masculine power or positivity but, rather, masculine fear and anxiety, his need for an “other” to make him mean something. Overturning the trope of “penis envy”

some scholars of antiquity, following Irigaray and Loraux, observe in masculinity a kind of psychotic insecurity, suggesting in such diagnosis that the binary, and all its exclusionary practices, was born of *birth envy* and the fear of impotence and powerlessness.²² In this reception of feminist scholarship on antiquity, the binary between the subject and the other, the masculine and the feminine, is now being read anew, exposing not mere sexism in the system but, rather, more paradoxically, the frightened boy. As feminist author Hélène Cixous invited readers to reimagine the relationship between Medusa and Perseus in her illustrious *The Laugh of Medusa* (1976), we ask: “Is it possible that masculinity trembles while she smiles? Is it possible that women/the other have been the site of power all along?” Medusa knows what she is—a site of authentic generative power, and Perseus only appropriates it for himself because he sees in her reflection his own lack. In decapitating the monster, castrating and appropriating her power, he only *seems* to complete the job because, much like the hydra, woman and all she bears within herself will constantly regrow, fighting against the true terror of masculinity and its power born of impotence and fear.

Assuredly, much recent scholarship has begun this task of attempting to reread the classical binary, either subverting from within or showing how the reception of antiquity has unfortunately covered over or neglected to analyze both the ambiguity of the binary in the Greek imagination or the explicit transgression of it in particular authors and cultural practices. In this we would like to emphasize the work of E. Bianchi who in her book, *The Feminine Symptom: Aleatory Matter in the Aristotelian Cosmos* (2014), stresses the crucial importance of Aristotle’s *Generation of Animals* for understanding his overall system, and finds that there is a “glitch”—a symptomatic constellation—created within Aristotle’s system by the aleatory motion of (feminine-coded) matter; in other words, an unpredictable agency that is not subject to male mastery, that doesn’t follow the fabricated masculinist order. This reading offers feminist thinkers an exciting revolutionary model: *aleatory feminism*, which Bianchi compares to the spiraling tendency that Goethe found in his work on plants and their growth patterns.

A manifestation of the aleatory feminine may be found also in Goethe’s botanical writings of the early nineteenth century, in which he writes of the “spiral tendency” of plants as contrasted with their tendency for vertical growth. The

spiral system which causes plant growth to turn in on itself governs development, nourishment, and reproduction, but it is prone to excess and as such is also the source of “the extremely diverse misgrowths that appear as deviations from the law of definite forms.” The spiral tendency is thus also symptomatic in the sense I have developed here, in that it both “fosters completion” but also occurs erratically, prematurely, and destructively.²³

The spiral system that “governs development, nourishment, and reproduction” is a system that can rightly be dubbed *kata phusin*, according to nature, and it is a system of generation *and* destruction on which the masculine is dependent.²⁴ Alongside Bianchi’s aleatory feminism, there is also the work of Jill Gordon who, instead of rehearsing the standard arguments regarding the Demiurgic Father or the masculinist insistence on reason, demonstrates the necessity of eros for Plato’s system, showing how eros is not merely an expedient in the *Symposium*, but the thickest cable drawing humans back toward their divine source.²⁵ In the insistence on the erotic aspect of Plato’s entire system, Gordon breaks down the myth of a transcendent separation between what has often been coded in feminine and masculine terms, that is, the sensible and the intelligible, the particular and the universal. Rather, the bridge of longing that drives human activity and transcendence takes center stage in Plato’s metaphysics. In this same vein, Coleen P. Zoller’s *Plato and the Body: Reconsidering Socratic Asceticism*, has attempted to analyze the so-called disparagement of the body, what she calls an austere dualism, in works like the *Phaedo*, *Gorgias*, and the *Republic*. While recognizing the political and feminist implications of her thesis, Zoller calls for utilizing Plato less as an obstacle to feminism and more as a resource.

Misreading Plato as a philosopher who ignores or demeans the physical results in failing to see Plato as a resource for those working on a wide variety of women’s issues. Let’s consider several dimensions. Women have borne the brunt of the austere dualist interpretation’s influence in part because the austere dualist account of asceticism became pervasive throughout Western culture as the epitome of purity and goodness. The prevalence of this interpretation in effect established a standard sexual morality. . . . Maybe we would not live in

a culture of rape, violence, and female disempowerment if austere dualism had not appeared to condone the degradation of anything associated with the physical. Now that we can push aside that misguided view, scholars and others working on contemporary problems surrounding sexual morality would benefit from utilizing Plato as a resource.²⁶

Similar to Zoller's worry that the austere dualist approach to authors like Plato reinforce contemporary oppression, Donna Zuckerberg's *Not All Dead White Men*²⁷ turns to the rise of Stoic philosophy in the hands of white nationalists and sexist groups like the "Manosphere" or the "Red Pill" community.²⁸ Indeed, Stoic philosophy cannot pretend that it is not susceptible to such appropriation when many authors from within the tradition explicitly decry all things feminine, particularly the emotions and the body, while also, in turn, consigning women's natural duty to the role of being domestic shadows of men.²⁹ Yet, despite this, Zuckerberg leans on the research of scholars like Scott Aikin and Emily McGill-Rutherford,³⁰ as well as Lisa Hill³¹ to emphasize that Stoicism cannot be so easily relegated to the trash bin. Rather, one can legitimately read the Stoics in a way that is more consistent with feminist theory. Aikin and McGill-Rutherford maintain the following:

[W]e have argued that despite the fact that the individual Stoics themselves failed the liberal requirement, Stoicism as a philosophical program is not inherently anti-liberal (and thereby anti-feminist) . . . The liberal Stoicism we've proposed respects autonomy, but it recognizes the fact that the world is not ideal, and so there must be the familiar Stoic virtues of endurance. And these virtues of endurance needn't be inherently socially conservative or misogynist.³²

As Zuckerberg emphasizes, this way of reading Stoic philosophy additionally brings Stoicism into greater consistency with itself and, as a consequence, she reassesses the interpretation of Stoicism as inherently antifeminist insofar as overly narrow readings lend themselves to the dangerous appropriation of classical authors for harmful ends in our own contemporary social spheres and cultural conversations. But what happens when we begin to reimagine the power differentials in particular classical authors so as to make such narrow appropriations, like those

of the “Red Pill” community, into obvious failings to creatively and impactfully resuscitate a philosophical worldview. Is it possible we can reread such traditions in a way that can change the course of oppression today rather than reinforcing it?

The reimagining of the power differentials and the invitation to read classical authors of antiquity as open-ended, ambiguous, and not necessarily regulative of sex discrimination, ultimately suggests that we can engage the texts of antiquity with cautionary awareness of how these texts have been used and, perhaps, abused by patriarchal and imperial logic. Is it now possible to think and imagine systems in which the subject does not need to be in a hostile or combative relationship with its “other”—systems that do not relegate the other to the category of mere reflection, lack, or the monstrous, bestial thing that either needs to be destroyed or tamed? Overall, we can see in this new strain of contemporary readings of antiquity that scholars are beginning to emphasize less the reality of the binary in its neat separation, reinforcing the obvious fact of sexism and exclusion, and instead are moving more to theorize the contingency and liminality of borders as well as question the methods for reading the texts/authors as participating in or reinforcing patriarchal political orders—themes that resonate throughout this volume.

The task, then, in the present volume is to further this work of reading antiquity and its relation to gender as otherwise than the binary that reinforces patriarchal and sexist practices—practices that demarcate a divide between terms like form and matter, the intelligible and sensible, and the logical and the mythical. Rather, following the path set out by scholars like Loraux, Zeitlin, Bianchi, Gordon, and Zoller, we will look to see the tensions in antiquity that invite readers to see the complexity embedded in select Greek thinkers and texts regarding that which was coded feminine. Again, this project is not an apologetics. Rather, the goal is to discover ways out of the binary, new *methodologies* that allows us to explore ways in which the marginalized may discover tools in which they can move from the domain of the excluded and demonized. In this way we can shift the perspective to the world of value and empowerment, a move both possible to uncover in antiquity as well as in our own present age. To do this, we have organized the essays into four historical sections.

The mythical and religious conceptions of binary thinking explored in the first section of this volume emphasize the liminality of borders between mortals and the divine and attempt to read these mythical

and religious symbols and practices within their cultural context, rather than frame them within modern metaphysical models that obscure the ambiguity inherent in these archaic binary distinctions.³³ The second section of this volume takes up the logic of opposition as it appears in Presocratic thinking and highlights the manner in which Presocratic thinkers were engaged in nuanced understandings of opposites as permeable and in motion, rather than logically distinct and separate from one another. In particular, the essays in this section approach Presocratic conceptions of “mixture”—especially visible in the texts of Empedocles and Anaxagoras—and emphasize the subtle and precise manner in which opposites are understood in relation rather than as “essence.” This distinction is significant because Aristotelian thinking of “prime matter” and “substance” tends to obscure the complexity of these early physical accounts of the *kosmos*. The philosophical conception of “mixture” is taken up in the third section in the context of Plato’s texts, particularly with regard to cosmology and the relation between the soul and the body. The final section of the volume focuses on this question of binaries and mixture in the context of gender and sexual difference in later antiquity, emphasizing both the value of the feminine and eroticism in late Platonic texts, both pagan and Christian.

In part 1, “Myth, Divination, and the Pre-Platonic,” each essay deals with a perennial figure or theme related to Greek prose, religion, and culture. Andrew Gregory’s essay “Was Homer’s Circe a Witch?” problematizes the characterization of the infamous Homeric figure, showing how only in modernity is Circe characterized as a witch while in antiquity she retained the status of a divine figure. Sasha Biro’s “The Oracle as Intermediary” engages in the age-old debate about mythological speech and its association with irrationality and the feminine, arguing that in opposition to scholars who wish to exclude myth and divination from philosophical *logos*, the Greeks intimately accepted and valorized the speech of the Sibyl as a place to think through the reality of ambiguity, paradox, and difference. Jessica Elbert Decker’s “The Roots of Life and Death in the Homeric Hymns and Presocratic Philosophy,” wherein she investigates how sexual difference plays out in early cosmological narratives argues that, while these narratives operate within binary structure, they can also show a sensitivity to the liminality of borders and the permeability of apparent oppositions. Holly Moore’s “The Intelligibility of Difference: Anaxagoras’ and Lugones’ Ontologies of Separation” brings together the theories of Anaxagoras and feminist Latina philosopher María

Lugones, showing how both are resistant to philosophies that presuppose the values of purity and homogeneity and seek to rehabilitate a notion of relationality versus masculine sovereignty.

In part 2, “Platonic Transformations,” we have three essays that analyze key Platonic dialogues via diverse feminist perspectives, for example, the *Phaedo*, the *Symposium*, the *Timaeus*, and the *Republic*. In Hilary Yancey and Anne-Marie Schultz’s “As Much Mixture as Will Suffice: Socrates’ Embodied Intermediacy in Plato’s *Phaedo* and *Symposium*,” readers are invited to rethink Socratic asceticism via the erotic and embodied components of philosophical life. Along these lines, Monica Vilhauer’s “Overturning Soul-Body Dualism in Plato’s *Timaeus*” attempts to show the value of the receptacle and nurse of becoming, underscoring the importance of this feminine paradigm in the life of the individual animal. Mary Townsend’s “The Argument of Socrates’ Action in *Republic V*” revisits a timeless feminist concern and argues that Socrates’ response to the “woman question” in his ideal city is much richer and more aporetic than is generally imagined. Overall, by focusing on the dramatic action, Townsend reevaluates the status of Socrates’ claims about women’s relative weakness.

Finally, part 3, “Late Antique Destabilizations,” spans over 400 years of thinking and addresses the work of the Neoplatonists and early Christianizing Greek philosophers. Danielle A. Layne’s “Divine Mothers: Plotinus’ Erotic Productive Causes” explicitly calls out Plotinus’ sexist views regarding matter as the impotent mother of the *kosmos*. Nevertheless, the main thrust of the essay focuses on two other feminine principles in his system, mythologically framed as Aphrodite and Penia (Poverty from Plato’s *Symposium*). Layne argues that these principles ultimately trouble a univocal understanding of the Neoplatonist’s degradation of the feminine. Next, Jana Schultz’s essay, “Beyond Maleness and Femaleness? The Case of the Virgin Goddesses in Proclus’ Metaphysics,” examines the subversive role that feminine deities and metaphysical principles—for example, otherness, difference, and life—have in Proclus’ theological metaphysics. William Koch’s “Hekate and the Liminality of Souls” focuses on the depiction of the goddess Hekate, arguing that throughout antiquity but, most especially in its reception in late antique texts like the *Chaldean Oracles*, she occupies a liminal place in the pantheon of the Greeks, retaining the importance of the magical and the mysterious—a place of movement that ultimately constitutes the human soul. Finally, Ilaria L. E. Ramelli’s essay, “Christian Platonists in Support of Gender

Equality: Bardaisan, Clement, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Eriugena” focuses on these thinkers so as to surprisingly confirm that these Christian Platonists insisted on the genderless nature of divinity, which, in its transcendence (theorized within a solid Platonic framework) lies beyond any gender distinction.

Overall, all these essays complement one another and will guide readers into seeing that binary/gendered thinking in antiquity was much more complex than scholars have previously argued, allowing for the opportunity to engage a variety of texts in ways that might be subversive for our own contemporary discussion of sex, gender, and sexuality. For our contemporary world, looking back at these texts is crucial. It allows us to recognize ourselves in reflections and pastiche, in echoes from earlier mothers and sisters, and to see that while there is sameness, there is always difference. The binary divisions that have modeled and molded our culture for so long are in transition; their borders becoming more transparently permeable and open to becoming otherwise.

Notes

1. Nicole Loraux, *Children of Athena: Athenian Ideas about Citizenship and the Division Between the Sexes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), see especially 5–8 and 37–71 on autochthony as a “civic myth.”

2. Loraux, *Children of Athena*, 9.

3. Loraux, 17.

4. Loraux, 4–10, 37–71.

5. Loraux discusses Athena’s role in Pandora’s creation at 10–11, 18–21, and 114–17; see also 123–43 for her analysis of Athena’s birth.

6. Loraux, 75.

7. See Hesiod, *Theogony* 585, where Pandora is called a *dolon*, or trap; she is also described as *amechanon* at 589, a word used by Sappho to describe “unmanageable” *eros* (Fragment 130), as well as used by Parmenides to express the helpless, paralyzed state of mortal beings (in the “third way” section of the poem, DK 6.5–9). The description of Pandora as *dolon aipun amechanon* appears in both tales, in *Theogony* 589 and *Works and Days* 83. Beauty as a trap has a long history, and is associated with Aphrodite, Helen of Troy, and Pandora. See Loraux, 80n45. See also Elbert Decker’s discussion of *thauma edesthai* in this volume.

8. Loraux, 81.

9. Loraux, 81–83; in Hesiod, *Theogony* 572.

10. Loraux, 82. For this body as a copy with no original, see also the work of Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 2006) and *Bodies That Matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

11. See Elissa Marder, *The Mother in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 15, where she cites Froma Zeitlin for this argument.

12. Marder, *The Mother*, 9.

13. Marder, 13–16 for discussion of the *pithos* and its possible interpretations.

14. Marder, 16.

15. Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1995), 133.

16. Aristotle refers to female offspring as monsters in *Generation of Animals*, see Emanuela Bianchi, *The Feminine Symptom: Aleatory Matter in the Aristotelian Cosmos* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014). Consider also Freud wherein all libido is masculine, while women are associated instead with masochism and the death instinct.

17. Irigaray, *Speculum*, 136. Italics in original. See Paul Miller, *Diotima at the Barricades: French Feminist Read Plato* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) for an in-depth account of Irigaray's engagement with Platonism, specifically her interpretation of the Allegory of the Cave.

18. For the various appropriations of birth, particularly the ingestion of Metis, birth of Athena, doctrine of autochthony, and creation of Pandora, see Jessica Elbert Decker, "Manufacturing the Mother: Technical Appropriations of Birth in Ancient Greek Thought," in *Bearing the Weight of the World*, ed. Alys Einion and Jen Rinaldi (Bradford: Demeter Press, 2018).

19. For female figures as monstrous in the *Odyssey*, see Beth Cohen, *The Distaff Side: Representing the Female in Homer's Odyssey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

20. For female figures in tragedy, see Helene P. Foley, *Female Acts in Greek Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), and Ruby Blondell, *Women on the Edge: Four Plays by Euripides* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

21. Cristiana Franco, *Shameless: The Canine and the Feminine in Ancient Greece* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014).

22. See Jessica Elbert Decker (as Jessica Elbert Mayock) "The Medusa Complex: Matricide and the Fantasy of Castration," *PhiloSOPHIA* Vol. 3.2 (New York: SUNY Press, 2013) for analysis of Freud's castration theory as male fantasy.

23. Bianchi, *The Feminine Symptom* 233.

24. In DK 1, Heraclitus says he will speak *kata phusin*, according to nature.

25. Jill Gordon, *Plato's Erotic World: From Cosmic Origins to Human Death* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

26. Coleen Zoller, *Plato and the Body: Reconsidering Socratic Ascetism* (New York: SUNY Press, 2018), 10.

27. Donna Zuckerberg, *Not All Dead White Men: Classics and Misogyny in the Digital Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018).

28. Zuckerberg, *Not All Dead*, 1–2 defines these groups succinctly stating: “These online communities go by many names—the Alt-Right, the manosphere, Men Going Their Own Way, pickup artists—and exist under the larger umbrella of what is known as the Red Pill, a group of men connected by common resentments against women, immigrants, people of color, and the liberal elite. The name adopted from the film *The Matrix*, encapsulates the idea that society is unfair to men—heterosexual white men in particular—and is designed to favor women.”

29. Some peak examples of Stoic sexism or disparagement of women include Musonius *Lectures* 12.4, Epictetus *Discourses* 3.24.53, 3.7.20 and *Enchiridion* 40, Cicero *Tusculan Disputations* 3.17.36 and *De Officiis* I, 55, and Seneca *Ad Helviam* 14 2.

30. Scott Aikin and Emily McGill-Rutherford, “Stoicism Feminism and Autonomy,” in *Symposium* 1 (1):9–22, 2014. For other discussions of Stoicism and gender/sex issues see C. E. Manning, “Seneca and the Stoics on the Equality of the Sexes.” *Mnemosyne* 26: 170–77, 1973; Martha Nussbaum, “The Incomplete Feminism of Musonius Rufus,” in *The Sleep of Reason*, ed. M. C. Nussbaum and J. S. Hivola, 283–325 (University of Chicago Press, 2002); Sarah Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975).

31. Lisa Hill, “The First Wave of Feminism: Were the Stoics Feminists?” *History of Political Thought* 22: 13–40, 2001.

32. Aikin and Emily McGill-Rutherford, “Stoicism Feminism and Autonomy,” 26.

33. To some extent this section follows the goals of Vanda Zajko and Miriam Leonard’s *Laughing with Medusa: Classical Myth and Feminist Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), an excellent collection of essays devoted to feminist readings of myth—covering everything from psychoanalytic interpretations and reinterpretations of the Olympians to new readings of *Antigone* as well as interesting attempts to integrate cyberfeminism into a reading of Homer’s *Iliad*.

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