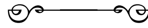

Introduction

DENISE EILEEN MCCOSKEY AND EMILY ZAKIN

> *The scope of tragedy is such that it carries within itself a kind of knowledge or theory concerning the illogical logic that governs the order of human activities.*
>
> —Jean-Pierre Vernant

In characterizing the work of Greek tragedy, Jean-Pierre Vernant acutely captures a contradiction that sustains tragedy at its core: its representation of an irreconcilable impasse between the order of human institutions and the disorder such institutions simultaneously disavow and generate. In apprehending the illogical logic of those political structures that preside over human affairs, tragedy remains inextricably bound by and to the idea of the city-state (the *polis*), the primary site of meaning and value through which the subject assumed its place for the Athenian dramatists. Greek tragedy thereby serves as a potent site for the exploration of anxieties associated with the relation between the body politic and its embodied, especially sexed, subjects. In its dramatic renderings, one finds representations, both metaphorical and phantasmatic, of not only the *polis* at work and in turmoil but also its putative origins and organizing principles. In this volume, we are thus concerned with the Athenian city-state and its mutually formative relation with the citizens and noncitizens who are fashioned within and bound by it.

Situating tragedy within the historical context of its production, many scholars have argued that it displays specifically the transitions in political imagination that accompany the ostensible replacement of an aristocratic form of government with a democratic one, highlighting the passage from aristocracy to democracy as a moment of crisis in Athenian self-conception.[1] While this volume supports and elaborates that view, it also pursues a concomitant scrutiny of the ways in which

© 2009 State University of New York Press, Albany

representations of sexual difference are integral to both this crisis and the political concepts that emerge from it. The authors in this volume treat these emerging political concepts as fundamental to the constitution of sexual difference and vice versa.[2] Sensitive to the crossroads of political and sexual representations in tragic drama, and the dilemmas of citizenship, subjectivity, and justice thereby articulated and revealed, this volume elucidates the ways in which the crises, disquiet, and flawed resolutions portrayed in Greek tragedy continue to inform the metaphors and imagery that structure sexual difference and give shape to political life.[3] The value given to masculine self-mastery as a necessary virtue for the responsibilities of democratic citizenship, and the complementary and enduring ethos that renders feminine citizenship oxymoronic, divulges the thorny manner in which the democratic *polis* simultaneously demands, instantiates, and elides sexual difference, both binding the feminine to it and repressing that bond.

Greek tragedy provides a critical discursive focus of our deliberations for two reasons: first, because of its centrality in ancient Athenian civic life, where it was performed at public religious festivals in front of an audience of citizens; and second, because of its continuing reverberations in later Western philosophy and political practice, both of which almost ritualistically invoke and reinvoke its central tropes. In this volume, our contributors thus pursue contrasting approaches that nonetheless contribute equally to our broader undertaking and arrive at noticeably congruent insights—some authors offer ways of contextualizing the preoccupations of Greek tragedy within the changing tensions and power relations of an Athenian city falling into greater disarray, while others seek to demonstrate the persistent role of Greek tragedy in unveiling and giving voice to the dynamics and deadlocks that still shape the modern city-state and its structures with regard to masculine and feminine subjects and citizens.

In this way, our volume's approach is deliberately interdisciplinary, engaging historical, literary, and philosophical forms of textual analysis in order to draw out the conceptual and political intersections of sexual difference and social order. Seeking to demonstrate the range of ways in which sexual difference and political structure engage with one another throughout Greek tragedy, our chapters cumulatively amplify rather than undermine one another through their different methodologies and interpretations. So, too, given that Greek tragedy has been broadly disseminated in many fields across the academy, one of the challenges and aims of this collection is to foster a rich dialogue between the disciplines of classics and philosophy, to open the canonical field of continental

© 2009 State University of New York Press, Albany

philosophy to a different cultural horizon, that of antiquity, and a different form of knowledge, that of tragic discourse, and to open classical studies, in turn, to the range of intellectual projects that Greek tragedy continues to inspire and illuminate in later historical periods.

In accordance with the concerns that drive this volume, as editors we chose not to examine the genre of Greek tragedy *writ* large, but rather to focus our inquiry on tragedy's engagement with two specific myths or households: the house of Atreus and the house of Laius, both royal households whose dangerous and often violent intimacies seem, at times, to sustain the city and its institutions and, at other times, to undermine or shake their very foundations. The threats posed by and to these households are equally internal and external, implicating in their very lineage the city's fragility and confounding the boundaries between *oikos* and *polis*. The house of Atreus is bound by the city through its murders—father of daughter, wife of husband, children of mother; the house of Laius through its incestuous relations and self-destructive impulses.[4]

Even as we have limited our investigation to only two central myths and the themes they illuminate in tragedy, our volume nonetheless pointedly seeks to consider the divergent ways the three major Greek tragedians (Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides) probe the engagement of sexual difference with civic ordering in each myth. We thus believe the meanings of each tragedy emerge in part via their difference from, and indeed their interplay with, other tragic renditions of the same myth. Whereas in the Aeschylean version, for example, the violent fate of the house of Atreus is resolved only by Athena and the intervention of Athenian law, in the Euripidean, a different god, Apollo, circumvents the demands of the citizen Assembly and establishes harmony only by reinscribing kinship and the demands of aristocratic marriage practice. We have in our volume many Antigones and many Electras, as well as a Jocasta whose use of imagery reveals her repression of her husband's paternity and another Jocasta whose suicide responds not to the revelation of Oedipus' identity, but rather to the mutual destruction of her sons. Finally, many of our contributors view the problems of the *genos* and *polis* pointedly from the position of the other: the unnamed slave who saves Oedipus as a baby and later becomes the primary witness of the patricide at the crossroads; the slave Cassandra whose truthful cry stands outside the reason of the city, marking its exclusions and denials; and the Furies who police the ravages of the *genos* and yet whose domestication by Athena is necessary for the city's order.

Our hypothesis in revisiting these two myths is that sexual difference both supports the foundation of political structures generally, and

© 2009 State University of New York Press, Albany

perhaps democracy specifically, and is also the site of their foundering. Our hope when we solicited contributions was that this volume would interrogate this relation from two sides: the formation of sexual difference with relation to the *polis* and the formation of the *polis* with relation to sexual difference. By inviting a series of interdisciplinary readings, we expected to focus attention on a number of different themes: the uncanny aspects of kinship and the *polis*; the conflicting pressures of blood and law; the paternal, patricidal, and fratricidal lineages of citizenship and democracy (and the murderous confusions of origin this entails); the role of marriage and women in the transmission of property; and the establishment or denial of self-mastery and subjectivity via citizenship. The chapters that are included here both fulfill our aims and complicate our hypothesis: cumulatively, they shed light on the myriad ways in which the representations, conceptual and textual structures, and imagery of sexual difference in Greek tragedy have become integral to the fabrication and failings of political institutions.

The first chapter in the volume contrasts two dramatic versions of the fraternal rivalry that brings about the simultaneous deaths of Oedipus' two sons, Eteocles and Polyneices, at one another's hands. In "City Farewell!: *Genos*, *Polis*, and Gender in Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* and Euripides' *Phoenician Women*," Peter Burian insists that Euripides' later (and more obscure, at least for modern audiences) play *Phoenician Women* must be read as a response to Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*. Burian argues that, unlike Aeschylus' play, which probes the violent and unsettling intersections of kinship and city inherent in the house of Laius, the royal house of Thebes and its embattled city "are forcibly kept apart" in Euripides in order to highlight the tragic dangers of personal ambition and lust for power engendering political crisis in the Athens of his day. In this version of Thebes, both Jocasta's suicide and Antigone's exile with her blind father follow rather than precede the bloodshed of brothers, suggesting that the source of each woman's primary (albeit troubled) identification with the *genos* and subsequent removal from the domain of the *polis* is dependent as much on fratricide as incest. In contrast to these women's roles, Euripides establishes the mutual slaughter of Oedipus' sons as "an entirely gratuitous act" for the *polis* by inventing a son for Creon, Menoeceus, a child pointedly outside the direct line of Oedipus, whose self-sacrifice alone determines the city's fate. Burian's interest in charting the complex and changing representations of a single myth across two plays and two Greek historical contexts provides an important foundation for the chapters that

© 2009 State University of New York Press, Albany

follow, exemplifying the intricate relay between sexual difference and the *polis* that our volume seeks to document.

Charles Shepherdson's chapter, "*Antigone*: The Work of Literature and the History of Subjectivity," raises fundamental questions regarding the philosophical approach to tragedy. Casting a dim light on the way that philosophical concepts are sometimes imposed on textual schemas, Shepherdson insists on distinguishing the aesthetic features that characterize the literary genre of tragedy and its theatrical form of subjectivity from that posed or proposed by religious, legal, or philosophical discourse. Whatever truths may obtain within tragedy, Shepherdson argues, they cannot simply be translated into the language of the philosophers, nor does the tragic text offer an uncomplicated mirror of the historical, philosophical, or anthropological life of the city. If the world of the theater is distinct and independent from the world of the city, carrying its own language and discourse not readily commensurate even with its own historical context, then any attempt to leap from the "mythic memory" of the former to the rules and parameters of the latter will miss the mark. In Shepherdson's reading of Sophocles' exemplary text, Antigone inhabits and deploys the "I" in a distinctive way; she alone is able to say what she means, and so she embodies a tragic subjectivity that might help us trace shifts in the history of subjectivity and its various configurations.

In "The Laius Complex," Mark Buchan returns to the "primal scene" enacted at the crossroads in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* and elaborates not the murderous dynamic between father and son, but rather the position of the unnamed slave who is inserted between the two, refracting the desires of both. While demonstrating the crucial ways in which the slave mirrors Oedipus' own conflicted impulses in the play, not least that of flight, Buchan ultimately uses the slave to provide an interpretation of the play's puzzling insistence on testifying to multiple assailants of Laius at the crossroads. Although Oedipus alone physically strikes Laius down at their meeting, Buchan argues that Oedipus nonetheless remains detached from any pleasure in the act, while the desire for the king's death implicates everyone else: Laius himself, Jocasta, the king's slave, and the entire citizen body of Thebes. As Buchan demonstrates in his conclusion, the surplus of murderous desires inside and outside the *genos* presents a critical backdrop against which the deadly drive of Oedipus' daughter Antigone takes center stage.

Just as Buchan's chapter unravels the myriad meanings attached to the slave's status as eyewitness to the events at the crossroads, the following chapter likewise explores the convoluted processes of sight and

© 2009 State University of New York Press, Albany

desire in Sophocles' play, but in this case focuses specifically on Jocasta's resistance to understanding her own. Developing and distilling Sigmund Freud's notion of the uncanny, David Schur's chapter, "Jocasta's Eye and Freud's Uncanny," highlights the persistent employment of imagery related to blindness and light in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*. Schur's reading emanates from a curious line in the play in which Jocasta calls the funeral rites of Oedipus' presumed father, Polybus, "a great eye" (987). By refusing her own knowledge that Polybus is not Oedipus' real father, Schur suggests that Jocasta's use of the image of the (blind) eye signals here not insight, but the distancing of the familiar and familial, a repression that is bound to return. Schur's insights into Jocasta's desire and the force of her repression expose the workings of sexual difference in the ambiguity of maternal birth and the concomitant confusion over death that are at the heart of this drama.

Moving from the repressions of the mother to the claims of the daughter, from Sophocles' *Oedipus* to Sophocles' *Antigone*, the next chapter rethinks the possibilities and meanings of justice. In "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority,'" Jacques Derrida argues that justice rests on a certain irreducibility of justice to law, and thus an ineradicable violence within the law. Victoria Wohl's chapter on "Sexual Difference and the Aporia of Justice in Sophocles' *Antigone*" demonstrates how such an aporia is at the center of the *agôn* between Antigone and Creon in Sophocles' *Antigone*. Wohl's initial claim is that Creon and Antigone's appeals to different sorts of (self-authorizing) law reflect a conflict that is fundamentally aporetic in structure, an irresolvable crisis that cannot be, as Hegel argues, synthesized at a higher level.[5] But precisely in that *crisis* (the word in Greek also means judgment or court case) lies the possibility of justice, for as Derrida intimates, justice exists only in its difference from law.[6] This chapter thus argues that *Antigone* stages the emergence of the *polis* out of sexual and legal aporia, not as the resolution or transcendence of difference but as the site of its institutionalization in the form of ongoing democratic (legal and political) contest. Such aporetic justice indicates that the democratic city is specifically and structurally tragic.

While continuing to elaborate the theme of tragic contestation, the chapter that follows shifts its theoretical focus from Derrida to Hegel and the latter's readings of the houses of both Laius and Atreus. As with Wohl's chapter, Elaine Miller's chapter, "Tragedy, Natural Law, and Sexual Difference in Hegel," demonstrates that in tragedy sexual difference becomes a structural constituent not just of particular roles within the state but also of the most fundamental ways in which power

© 2009 State University of New York Press, Albany

is articulated. Through a reading of Hegel's often overlooked text, *Natural Law*, the chapter revisits the *Oresteia* as a site of contestation of the very meaning of law, statehood, and ethical life. The chapter goes beyond Hegel, however, in reading these sites of meaning with reference to the salient role played by sexual difference in the trilogy, a role that Hegel ignores. The chapter focuses, in particular, on a comparison between Hegel's treatment of the *Antigone*, on the one hand, and the *Oresteia* trilogy, on the other (and between the characters of Antigone and Electra in his readings), in order to develop the notion that the family and power are imbricated within the state.

Emily Zakin's chapter returns to Freud's notion of the uncanny, in this case to follow its extended political trajectory through Julia Kristeva's reconceptualization in *Strangers to Ourselves*. Kristeva argues that the threat the foreigner poses to political cohesion is fundamentally a threat not of the outsider but the insider: it is the uncanny strangeness within ourselves that renders the *polis* always precarious.[7] In "Marrying the City: Intimate Strangers and the Fury of Democracy," Zakin examines the dynamic of pacification staged in the final scenes of the *Oresteia* and the democratic fantasy of harmony with which she argues it is commensurate, seeing in both something akin to a marital bond that stifles discord. Athena calls the Erinyes strangers; but they also manifest the family curse of the house of Atreus, what is both most strange and most familiar to its members, the element interior to their ancestry that drives their actions and binds them violently together. While Athena would have us believe that the law of the city can absorb aggressions against and within it, fully resolving their collision in unity, this chapter argues that the Eumenides remain as a testament to the fundamental fury of democracy and the political impasse of the uncanny to which it is bound.

Pascale-Anne Brault's chapter resonates with themes introduced earlier in the volume, taking up in concert the language of insight and unconcealment and that of the foreigner. In "Playing the Cassandra: Prophecies of the Feminine in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*," Brault focuses on the figure of Cassandra who represents prophetic truth as knowledge about the future of the *polis*, even while she is constantly identified as "other," outside the *polis*, both woman and foreigner. Cassandra seems to have access to the future, but unlike her male counterparts, her voice is inarticulate and unheard by those around her, beyond words and reasons, at the limit of the human. At the level of the narrative, however, the marginalized Cassandra becomes central to the development of tragic irony, as her unheeded words provide background for the reinterpretation of past events and the perception and representation of

© 2009 State University of New York Press, Albany

present and future ones. Cassandra embodies both the transformation of the human and the civilized into the inhuman, the barbarian, and the animalistic, and the tension stemming from a "truth" that is at once revealed and concealed. This chapter thus risks the formula that tragedy and the *polis* it represents are essentially related to the feminine, to a certain feminine element that tragedy must suppress or deny but can never totally ignore.

While Cassandra calls attention to the destructive impulses of the city from the outside, Sophocles' *Electra* poignantly dramatizes the violence enacted on Agamemnon's daughter Electra when she moves from a position outside the city into its very center, choosing at a critical moment to embrace the city's destructive logic and demands. In "The Loss of Abandonment in Sophocles' *Electra*," Denise Eileen McCoskey begins by demonstrating the ways in which Electra's isolation and presumed abandonment by her male kin at the play's opening seem to yield an important space not only for impassioned speech and mourning but also for the young woman's fantasies of exercising her own political agency via the assassination of her father's murderers. Yet Sophocles brutally forecloses both openings when Orestes, returning from exile, reunites with his sister and gradually assumes both the central role in the revenge plot and subsequent mastery of his sister and the city. Central to this changing dynamic is the language used to name Electra's passions in the play, for Electra's violent and unrestrained passion at the beginning of the play, encapsulated in the anger or *orgê* that emerges from the death of her father, is strikingly transformed by Electra herself into a very different emotion, pleasure (*hedonê*), when she recognizes her brother. And whereas Electra's *orgê* was once a source of disruption and tragic standing in the play, her sudden embrace of pleasure, in contrast, ominously generates the grounds for Orestes' control over her and her own self-annihilation, since it is precisely on the repression of pleasure and not the necessity of revenge or matricide that Orestes establishes his own ultimate rise to power.

Just as Sophocles epitomizes Electra's diminishment through a shifting vocabulary of emotions, a reading of Euripides' treatment of the intersections between sexual difference and the city in his *Electra*, Kirk Ormand argues, can productively be rooted in the thorny question of how women's relationship to the city was conveyed in ancient Greek. In his play, Euripides' characters rely on two distinct terms for the "city": *polis*, used in reference to men and their affiliations, and *astu*, a term that connotes the city in terms of geographic territory rather than political institutions and is applied in reference to women and their civic bond. Given that such a linguistic gap reinforces men's and women's distinct conceptual

© 2009 State University of New York Press, Albany

and legal status (a distinction complicated by Pericles' citizenship laws in 451/450 BCE), Ormand suggests in "Electra in Exile" that Euripides' use of language continually references that difference in order to call attention to women's peripheral relationship to the city (in which they stand already as a kind of exile), as well as intensify Electra's "double-exclusion," as she lives physically outside the city and awaits her exiled brother's return. Moreover, even after Orestes has returned from his own exile and killed his father's murderers, the two siblings are once again separated via the gendered exigencies of exile: Orestes, deprived of the city of his father, is nonetheless directed to Athens and, eventually, the foundation of his own *polis*, while Electra's farewell to the city (in which she addresses its women with the unusual term *politides*) marks her recognition of a putative female citizenship precisely at its moment of loss.

Although the two *Electras* focus primary attention on what is left for the two siblings after the violence of matricide and political revenge, Euripides in another play broadens his scope to consider the myth's resolution in terms of the children's larger networks of kinship. Euripides' *Orestes* has often been criticized by modern readers for its endless plot twists and its somewhat implausible "happy" resolution in parallel marriages for Orestes and his sister, yet Mark Griffith argues in "Orestes and the In-Laws" that Euripides' play, every bit as much as Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, reveals the interworkings of kinship and its role in structuring Athenian political life. Central to Euripides' approach, for Griffith, is an extension of the notion of kinship to encompass the more extended familial units and the systems of property ownership and transmission that helped structure Greek aristocratic marriage practices. In this way, Euripides presents Orestes' claims to his father's house as predicated not so much on matricide and its consequences (the murder of Clytemnestra notably takes place before the play begins), but rather on the young man's entry into the appropriate political systems and social alliances necessary for the maintenance of aristocratic power. In the final scene, the resolution of the Argive assembly demanding that Orestes and Electra commit suicide is met head-on by the siblings' bizarre and brutal escape plan involving murder of Helen and the kidnap of their cousin, only to have all tension suddenly dissipated by the appearance of Apollo and his proscription of harmony through marriage. In contrast to Aeschylus, then, Euripides powerfully (albeit perhaps ambiguously) situates marriage and not law as the ultimate principle used to establish order in the city and for its citizens.

In all, the disparate trajectories of the readings assembled in this volume attest to the impact of Greek tragedy, its "knowledge or theory,"

© 2009 State University of New York Press, Albany

as Vernant calls it, not least its apprehension and representation of the uneasy relationship of sexual difference to political order (as well as disorder, crisis, emptiness, and silence), a relationship whose contours and intersections continue to exert symbolic force today. The chapters contained here focus on different myths, characters, and political processes, and they employ diverse reading and theoretical strategies. Some are more concerned with positions articulated in relation to the *polis* (citizen, other, man, woman, foreigner, slave) and especially with the exclusions written into the tragic dramas themselves as testimony of the exclusions that recur equally in political life; others are more concerned with the political and structural processes by which democracies instantiate and authorize themselves. But all share a conception of the violence and disequilibrium at the heart of the democratic city and the limits of political order. This common thematic perspective exposes the darkness one would expect from tragic discourse: a diagnosis of the city that undoes itself, of a democracy rooted in fraternal and fratricidal origins that cannot be erased or finally excluded and will thus always be haunted by the return of that which, though necessary to its constitution, it represses. This self-annihilating void, generated (produced and reproduced) at the core of the city-state, exposes the inner bond between the impasse of democratic citizenship and the confounding of sexual difference, and the impossibility of harmonious reconciliation between the two: the tragic fate of a city unbound by its own illogical logic.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Jean-Pierre Vernant, "The Historical Moment of Tragedy in Greece: Some of the Social and Psychological Conditions," in *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, ed. Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, trans. Janet Lloyd (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 23–28. Peter W. Rose demonstrates the ways in which these two political modes continue to compete with one another in tragic discourse in "Historicizing Sophocles' *Ajax*," in *History, Tragedy, Theory: Dialogues on Athenian Drama*, ed. Barbara Goff (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 59–90. The attempt to apprehend the civic function of tragedy within its broader Athenian context has flourished in recent years; see Paul Cartledge, "'Deep Plays': Theatre as Process in Greek Civic Life," in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*, ed. P. E. Easterling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 3–35; Christopher Pelling, ed.,

© 2009 State University of New York Press, Albany

Greek Tragedy and the Historian (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); M. S. Silk, ed., *Tragedy and the Tragic: Greek Theatre and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Barbara Goff, ed., *History, Tragedy, Theory* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995); Ruth Scodel, ed., *Theater and Society in the Classical World* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993); John J. Winkler and Froma I. Zeitlin, eds., *Nothing to Do With Dionysus? Athenian Drama in Its Social Context* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990); and J. Peter Euben, ed., *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). Such work coincides with interest in investigating the production of ancient Athenian identity via a range of social and cultural performances. See Simon Goldhill and Robin Osborne, eds., *Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Paul Cartledge, Paul Millett, and Sitta von Reden, eds., *Kosmos: Essays in Order, Conflict, and Community in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Alan L. Boegehold and Adele C. Scafuro, eds., *Athenian Identity and Civic Ideology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

2. Many feminist philosophers have developed this connection, especially with regard to the *Antigone*. These readings have often been worked out on the basis of (though also quite often against or in tension with) the influential interpretations put forward in G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); Jacques Derrida, *Glas*, trans. John P. Leavey Jr. and Richard Rand (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986); and Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Dennis Potter (New York: Norton, 1992). See especially Luce Irigaray, "The Eternal Irony of the Community," in *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 214–26; Tina Chanter, "Looking at Hegel's Antigone Through Irigaray's Speculum," in *Ethics of Eros* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 80–126; Kelly Oliver, "Antigone's Ghost: Undoing Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*," *Hypatia* 12, no. 1 (1996): 67–90; Lisa Walsh, "Her Mother Her Self: The Ethics of the Antigone Family Romance," *Hypatia* 14, no. 3 (1999): 96–125; Judith Butler, *Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death* (New York: Columbia, 2000); Mary Beth Mader, "Antigone's Line," *Bulletin de la Société Américaine de Philosophie de Langue Français* 14, no. 2 (2004): 1–31. See also Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *Newly Born Woman*, trans.

© 2009 State University of New York Press, Albany

Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) for a reading of the *Oresteia*. While the present volume invites another look at the *Antigone*, we also seek to situate readings and interrogations of that play within the broader terrain of Greek tragedy—that is, to suggest that the questions feminist scholars have brought to the *Antigone* can also be productively brought to other tragedies. The convoluted intersections of sexual difference and political formation in the *Antigone* are, in fact, not exclusive to that drama but elaborated throughout tragedy.

3. Although we seek in this volume to document the emergence and operations of sexual difference and the *polis* specifically in relation to one another, many scholars have analyzed other critical aspects of gender, sexual difference, and the position of women in Greek tragedy. See Helene P. Foley, *Female Acts in Greek Tragedy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Laura McClure, *Spoken Like a Woman: Speech and Gender in Athenian Drama* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); Karen Bassi, *Acting Like Men: Gender, Drama, and Nostalgia in Ancient Greece* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); Victoria Wohl, *Intimate Commerce: Exchange, Gender, and Subjectivity in Greek Tragedy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998); Michael X. Zelenak, *Gender and Politics in Greek Tragedy* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998); Froma I. Zeitlin, *Playing the Other: Gender and Society in Classical Greek Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), which collects key essays by Zeitlin from the 1970s to 1990s; and Nicole Loraux, *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman*, trans. Anthony Forster (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987). There have also been important treatments of individual works and individual authors; see, for example, Simon Goldhill, *Language, Sexuality, Narrative, the Oresteia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) on Aeschylus; and Kirk Ormand, *Exchange and the Maiden: Marriage in Sophoclean Tragedy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999) on Sophocles. Euripides' representations of gender and sexual difference have attracted particular scrutiny; see Daniel Mendelsohn, *Gender and the City in Euripides' Political Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); C. A. E. Luschnig, *The Gorgon's Severed Head: Studies in Alcestis, Electra, and Phoenissae* (Leiden: Brill Academic, 1995); Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz, *Anxiety Veiled: Euripides and the Traffic in Women* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); Charles Segal, *Euripides and the Poetics of Sorrow: Art, Gender, and Commemoration in*

© 2009 State University of New York Press, Albany

Alcestis, Hippolytus, and Hecuba (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993); and Anton Powell, ed., *Euripides, Women, and Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1990). Charles Segal's interest in the particular conjunction of women and sorrow in Greek tragedy was taken up again by a recent collection of essays published in his honor: Victoria Pedrick and Steven M. Oberhelman, eds., *The Soul of Tragedy: Essays on Athenian Drama* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). See also Nicole Loraux, *The Mourning Voice: An Essay on Greek Tragedy*, trans. Elizabeth Trapnell Rawlings (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002). Finally, Linda Kintz utilizes a comparative approach when examining the representation of women in both Greek tragedy and modern drama in *The Subject's Tragedy: Political Poetics, Feminist Theory, and Drama* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992).

4. The house of Atreus in Greek tragedy most prominently features the murders that result from the homecoming of Agamemnon. Gone for the lengthy duration of the Trojan War, Agamemnon's return to Argos involves resuming his place as head of state and head of household, both of which have been ruled by his wife, Clytemnestra, in his absence. Clytemnestra, unbeknownst to Agamemnon, has long been plotting his murder in revenge for his sacrifice of their daughter Iphigenia. Subsequent to her accomplishment of this act, Clytemnestra herself faces the murderous vengeance of her children, Orestes and Electra. The house of Laius traces the reverberations of familial acts and origins stemming from Oedipus' incestuous relationship with his mother, Jocasta, and murderous replacement of his father, Laius, the former king of Thebes. Following his exile, Oedipus' sons, Polyneices and Eteocles, kill one another in conflict for sovereignty, leading to the ascension of Creon, Jocasta's brother, to the throne. Distraught at Creon's refusal to bury Polyneices, Oedipus' daughter Antigone defies her uncle's edict, an act that will ultimately lead to her death. Our choice of these mythological houses relies specifically on their rich treatment and meaning in Greek tragedy; beyond the demands of tragedy, however, myth has other varied features and functions in Greek cultural and intellectual life. Two important works have considered the role of gender and feminist theory in interpreting classical myth more broadly: Lillian E. Doherty, *Gender and the Interpretation of Classical Myth* (London: Duckworth Publishers, 2001) and Vanda Zajko and Miriam Leonard, eds., *Laughing with Medusa: Classical Myth and Feminist Thought* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

© 2009 State University of New York Press, Albany

5. G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1807] 1977).
6. Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'" in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, eds. D. Cornell, M. Rosenfeld, and D.G. Carlson (London: Routledge, 1992).
7. Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

© 2009 State University of New York Press, Albany