MOTHERING & MOTHERHOOD
IN ANCIENT GREECE AND ROME

EDITED BY Lauren Hackworth Petersen and Patricia Salzman-Mitchell
Mothering and Motherhood in Ancient Greece and Rome
EDITED BY LAUREN HACKWORTH PETERSEN
AND PATRICIA SALZMAN-MITCHELL

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To mothers, past, present, and future
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Introduction
THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FACES
OF MOTHERING AND MOTHERHOOD
IN CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY
Lauren Hackworth Petersen and Patricia Salzman-Mitchell

Friend, I have not much to say; stop and read it.
This tomb, which is not fair, is for a fair woman.
Her parents gave her the name Claudia.
She loved her husband in her heart.
She bore two sons, one of whom
she left on the earth, the other beneath it.
She was pleasant to talk with, and she walked with grace.
She kept the house and worked in wool. That is all. You may go.

EPITAPH, ROME, CORPUS INSCRIPTIONUM LATINARUM 12.1211
(= CIL 6.15346); LEFKOWITZ AND FANT (2005), NO. 39

I would very much rather stand three times
in the front of battle than bear one child.

EURIPIDES, MEDEA 250–251; TRANS. WARNER (1944)

Many women at the nation’s most elite colleges say they have already
decided that they will put aside their careers in favor of raising
children... [And they] say they will happily play a traditional
female role, with motherhood their main commitment.

STORY (2005)

Women and motherhood. Given their very definitions, these
two nouns are inextricably intertwined, as a woman’s pri-
mary role has traditionally been defined vis-à-vis her ability
to reproduce and/or care for offspring. (Try “men” and “fatherhood”—the
impact of the pairing of the words is simply not as vivid.) While images of ancient women, in either literary or visual testimony, have received ample scholarly attention, the diverse, if sometimes conflicting, roles of women as mothers in ancient sources—for both Greece and Rome—have received relatively little focused and sustained treatment. This is not to suggest that discussions of ancient mothers have been neglected in scholarship. It is widely known, for example, that the mothers of classical antiquity could wield enormous influence, as the reproductive bodies of society and, in many cases, of culture. Impressive and inspiring, recent studies have delved into the constructions of ancient Greek and Roman mothers,1 who are typically placed within discourses of archetypal female behavior for the respective societies—as paragons of female virtue and, by extension, as good mothers (e.g., Claudia from the epitaph above), or as the polar opposite (e.g., Medea, who murders her own children). Furthermore, scholarly interest in ancient families has, by necessity, brought to the fore the roles of mothers in shaping civic and personal identities.2

But not all mothers and acts of mothering can be easily categorized. There is still much ground to cover in revealing the complexities of ancient mothering. To this end, this volume brings together scholars whose expertise in a diverse range of areas permits us to explore notions of motherhood from new perspectives, with many tackling topics that have yet to be discussed with respect to motherhood and others challenging existing scholarship. In examining different kinds of representations of mothers from Greece and Rome, the authors explore the multilayered dimensions of motherhood. This collection also seeks to demonstrate that the notion of motherhood was not uncontested territory, but rather could be fraught with tension and contradictions. Even today, pointed discussions on the competing roles placed on mothers in modern society persist and reveal just how challenging—and precarious—motherhood can be. It is our hope, then, that the essays in this book not only contribute to our knowledge of motherhood in the ancient world, but can also be inserted into larger, current debates on motherhood, such as the conflict mothers may feel in choosing between work and family life and the controversies surrounding appropriate forms of rearing and feeding children (e.g., breast or bottle). This book thus intimates links between the lives of ancient mothers and the various roles of women in modern Western society and ideology.

Although the themes approached by the essays ahead are wide-ranging, they together explore how mothering and motherhood—while traditionally located in the private, domestic sphere of Greek and Roman life—were
topics that found plenty of exposure in the public domain and were even deployed to political (dis)advantage. To this end, this study reveals how ancient motherhood—in both reality and rhetoric—was negotiated along a continuum of private and public. This public–private dynamic is but one theme that is touched upon throughout this collection. In this regard, some essays focus on motherhood as largely private, that is, as an emotional, intimate experience, but also as physical work, as work of the body on public display. These contributions include Mireille Lee’s on pregnancy and Greek dress, Angela Taraskiewicz’s on Greek rituals of incorporation, Yurie Hong’s on embryology in Greek discourse, Anise Strong’s on Greek and Roman prostitute mothers, and Patricia Salzman-Mitchell’s on images of breast-feeding in Greek and Latin literature. In contrast, the pieces by Angeliki Tzanetou on citizenship and motherhood in Greek drama, Prudence Jones on the public uses of Cleopatra’s own motherhood, and Margaret Woodhull on imperial mothers and their Roman monuments explore the ramifications of public, if not politicized, displays of motherhood; the private experiences of these mothers are subsumed in the name of ideology. Genevieve Liveley’s piece straddles these two facets of mothering, unveiling the contradictions of a character like Venus, an intimate and sexual mother, and yet a deity recognized as having tremendous political importance for the Augustan regime. In a similar vein, Antony Augoustakis’ discussion of motherhood in Flavian epic reveals how the constructions of motherhood could address ideals of Romanness and otherness not only in Roman Italy, but also in peripheral societies beyond the peninsula as the empire underwent expansion (see too Jones on this topic).

These private/public faces of motherhood resonate as well in issues concerning modern motherhood, and are especially crystallized in the dilemmas mothers with careers face: should a recent mother disclose in a job interview that she has young children, for example? Should she ask for a place to pump or breast-feed in her workplace? Does the public display of motherhood help or harm a mother in a position of power, such as a political candidate today (for example, Sarah Palin’s 2008 bid for the U.S. vice presidency as the mother of an infant)? While talking about or showing that one has young children may be useful in certain situations (such as getting through a line for children or people with strollers in an airport), it might be detrimental for a woman who aspires to be CEO of a company. Also, the question of whether to conceal or reveal publicly the motherly body (in pregnancy or lactation) is of pointed concern for modern mothers. Generally speaking, the essays here confront these types of issues, al-
beit in an ancient context, and in so doing, reveal the common ground some modern mothers share with their ancient counterparts. Mothering, it would seem, was to be intensely private, and its place on the public stage oftentimes met with contestations and frustrations.

IDEALS AND REALITIES OF MOTHERHOOD

A related thematic thread running through these essays is the potential misfit between the realities of mothers on a day-to-day basis and the ideals of motherhood as presented in ancient visual and verbal testimony. For example, it is widely recognized that motherhood could bestow honor on Greek and Roman women. Both literary and archaeological sources indicate that to have borne children and raised them well was considered a virtue, if not a necessity. Of the many Greek written sources, two examples will suffice in suggesting how pervasive prescriptions were for women to aspire to motherhood. In Xenophon’s famous and oft-cited dialogue, from the fourth century BCE, Ischomachus describes to Socrates his method for training his wife, a method that he presents as “natural” and ordained by the gods:

“It is important then, when the provisions are brought into the home, for someone to keep them safe and to do the work of the household. A home is required for the rearing of infant children, and a home is required for making food out of harvest. Similarly a home is required for the making of clothing from wool. Since both indoor and outdoor matters require work and supervision,” I said, “I believe that the god arranged that the work and supervision indoors are a woman’s task, and the outdoors are the man’s. . . . With this in mind the god made the nursing of young children instinctive for woman and gave her this task, and he allotted more affection for infants to her than to a man.” (Xenophon, Oeconomica 7.21–7.24)

This passage firmly places women and mothers in the private sphere, more specifically, inside the home. To be a proper Greek woman, according to Xenophon, is to be a mother working industriously inside the house.

Also from the fourth century BCE, Hippocrates provides advice for treating virgins afflicted with hysteria, that is, his advice is for young females who fell decidedly outside the ideals of Greek womanhood (on ac-
count of being virgins and afflicted with a disease). Nonetheless, his recommendation is straightforward enough—become pregnant, and, by extension, enter motherhood:

My prescription is that when virgins experience this trouble, they should cohabit with a man as quickly as possible. If they become pregnant, they will be cured. If they don’t do this, either they will succumb at the onset of puberty or a little later, unless they catch another disease. (Hippocrates, On Virgins = 8.466–470)4

Hippocrates thus suggests that a sick woman can be healed by becoming a mother, a notion that conforms suspiciously well with Greek thought about the proper roles of women in society, despite the very real physical and emotional demands of motherhood that must have taken some toll on an already fragile woman.

Greek vases adorned with scenes of domestic life, including images of mothers tending to their children, celebrate motherhood and seem to affirm the literary tradition. A red-figure, fifth-century BCE Greek vase depicts a private scene of domestic harmony (fig. 1.1), for example, in which a mother, seated on a high-backed chair (klismos), hands her child to her nurse-servant, who will tend to the child. To the left stands a loom, a symbol of female domestic activity and virtue. Behind the mother stands a man, perhaps the husband or an older child.5 It is tempting to read this picture as a slice of everyday Greek life, precisely because it offers a glimpse of a mother and mothering (the nurse-servant). But it is also important to bear in mind that this pot comes from a funerary context and was likely a tomb gift intended to honor the deceased female with the trappings of motherhood and domesticity, and thereby virtue.

In a somewhat similar vein, a red-figure, fifth-century BCE chous (squat jug) depicts a playful scene in which a mother (or caregiver) gently lifts a child so that he can grab a bunch of grapes (fig. 1.2). Although a vessel like this is typically used in an Athenian festival (the Anthesteria), it may have also been offered as a funerary gift for a child, as many such objects were found in tomb settings.6 The image, if of a mother and child, would thus depict the very centrality of mothers in both rituals and the daily lives of children; and if from a funerary context, the mother has been, in a sense, buried with her child.

Much of our knowledge of the lives of mothers in Rome comes from the realm of commemoration. From a relatively modest context, a husband
records the virtues of his wife in a second- or third-century sarcophagus inscription:

Of Graxia Alexandria, distinguished for her virtue and fidelity. She nursed her children with her own breasts. Her husband Pudens the emperor’s freedman [dedicated this monument] as a reward to her. She lived 24 years, 3 months, 16 days.
FIGURE 1.2. Woman (mother or caregiver) and child, Attic red-figure chous, ca. 420 BCE. Erlangen, Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg I:21. Photo: van Hoorn (1951), fig. 251.
Pudens praises his young wife as having borne and lovingly raised their children; the image he projects of his wife is of the genuine, intimate, and selfless bond a mother nurtures with her own offspring. Here we observe the private experience of nursing made public by a male. The evocation of the female body in the act of breast-feeding is poignant as a sign of female virtue and, by extension, the family’s good name.

The theme of female virtue as directly connected to motherhood is also apparent, for example, in Roman writings of the Augustan period. In Propertius (4.11) the honorable Roman matron Cornelia speaks “from her grave,” as a woman proud to have had three children:

et tamen emerui generosos vestis honores,  
nec mea de sterili facta rapina domo.  
et bene habet: numquam mater lugubria sumpsi;  
venit in exsequias tota caterva meas.  
tu, Lepide, et tu, Paulle, meum post fata levamen,  
condita sunt vestro lumina nostra sinu.  
filia, tu specimen censurae nata paternae,  
fac teneas unum nos imitata virum.  
(63–68)

Yet I lived long enough to earn the matron’s robe of honor, nor was I snatched away from a childless house. So all is well: never as a mother did I put on mourning garments; all my children came to my funeral. You, Lepidus, and you, Paulus, my consolations after death, in your embrace were my eyelids closed. Daughter, born to be the model of your father’s censorship, do you, like me hold fast to a single husband.8

This passage, and indeed the entire poem, is particularly striking not only because it provides direct testimony of the expectations Roman society had of mothers, but also because it clearly reflects the then-current Augustan ideology concerning morality and the family.9 The Augustan sets of laws regarding marriage—which we know as the Lex Julia et Papia Poppaea and to an extent also the Lex Julia de adulteriis—are outstanding and unusual in the ancient world, as they interfere with and legislate directly on matters of motherhood and mothering. An experience that is generally performed in the privacy of the family is here brought out into the public and even political domain. Indeed, a whole system of rewards and penalties was involved in these laws. For example, families that did not conform to the Augustan ideology suffered in matters of inheritance.10 Likewise, women
who complied with it were liberated from the oppressive *tutela muliebris*. If a freeborn woman had three children or a *libertina* four, she was free from the guardianship of a male. Further, as in the case of Cornelia, they were granted the honor of wearing the *stola*. The inheritance situation of mothers who bore many children was also greatly improved by the Augustan legislation.

Often, however, the realities of motherhood were far removed from the ideals depicted on pots, written in stone, or presented in literary, medical, and legal discourses, suggesting that motherhood was not as unproblematic as some of these ideologically charged testimonies imply. For example, maternal death in childbirth was a much more common occurrence than today. Grave *stelai* of Greek women who died in childbirth offer vivid reminders of the physical and emotional hardships that many mothers and their families endured. On a fourth-century BCE *stele*, a woman in distress leans back on a *kline* (small bed or couch) (fig. 1.3). A female supports the dying woman from behind, while an older man holds her right hand as he bids her farewell. The pose, loosened garments, and accentuated belly all work together to inform viewers that the seated woman who is commemorated here has tragically died in childbirth. The suffering and hardship of motherhood are depicted in stone for public display in the cemetery to memorialize a woman as mother, commemorating what would otherwise remain an intensely private, domestic scene.

As maternal death in childbirth was of significant concern, so too was the high child mortality rate in the Greek world (with survival rates at roughly one in three). As John Oakley has argued, the emotional toll of losing a child is given greater visual expression for mothers, however, than for fathers, which is not to imply that Greek fathers did not mourn the loss of their own children but that conventions dictated that they did so less freely than mothers. Illustrating Oakley’s point is a late fifth-century BCE white-ground *lekythos* (slender oil or perfume vessel), upon which a young boy is depicted in Charon’s boat (fig. 1.4). Before the youth departs the world of the living and crosses the river Styx, he reaches out to his mother, who stands grieving at the shore. She, too, attempts to touch her child one last time, but that effort is only in vain. Although the father is seen standing in the background, the story told here is of the grief of the mother at the premature loss of her son.

All of these images of mothers come from and/or represent the private world of the fairly well-to-do, that is, of established, traditional families. In fact, many essays within this volume confront evidence that reveals the various dimensions of mothering and motherhood, but usually within pre-
scribed (normative) maternal patterns of ancient Greece and Rome. Much more difficult to locate are the lives of mothers who lived humbly and thus left little record of their existence. Paradoxically, these mothers, whose presence was commonplace in the ancient world, are rarely the subject in ancient writings and art. For example, the private life of the prostitute-mother

is elusive, although Strong's essay in this volume provides us with methodologies for thinking about these mothers in ancient Greece and Rome. Much is still to be gained by thinking about the lives of slave-mothers in the Roman world, whose own children (vernae)—or those of others—they could rear, should the master not break the already fragile mother-child bond by selling the slave-mother or -child to another household. Slave-mothers are notoriously silenced in the archaeological record and literary texts, but the exploitation of slave-mothers' productive and reproductive capacities has received recent, much-needed attention. Telling, too, is the evidence from an ergastulum (slave prison) at Chalk, Kent; within the floor were cut three pits that held the remains of three infants. These remains have a story to tell about motherhood, a story that we can at best only imagine. Vivid and haunting, too, are the bodies left in the wake of Pompeii’s destruction. One pair is typically read as a mother clutching her child.

FIGURE 1.4. Parents (father at far left and mother, gesturing to her son, to the left of the boat) bid farewell to deceased son, who stands in Charon’s boat and reaches back (see image at right). Attic white-ground lekythos, ca. 430 BCE. National Archaeological Museum, Athens, inv. no. 16463. © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Tourism/Archaeological Receipts Fund.
one last time—a gesture made permanent through plaster casting (fig. 1.5). This mother’s remains provide only a limited view into the lived lives of mothers, even if that view rests largely in our own desires to see real mothers in the material record.\(^{20}\) It is our hope that the authors here offer ways to advance even further discussions of the lesser-known testimonies of ancient motherhood.

Although women themselves left little trace of their own existence, the study of ancient mothers, mothering, and motherhood can be accomplished through the lens of (elite) men—that is, through male-authored words, rituals, and artifacts. This lack of direct evidence from a female perspective is not prohibitive. Indeed, the contributors to this volume attempt to get behind the rhetoric to explore, on one hand, everyday realities of motherhood and, on the other hand, the constructions of motherhood used to fulfill social and political agendas. This is not to suggest two mutually exclusive categories. Rather, this volume examines different aspects of motherhood and reveals that despite the very real marginalization of women in nearly all aspects of ancient life, mothering and motherhood were sites for both private/self- and public/civic definition in ancient Greece and Rome. From mother

**FIGURE 1.5.** Plaster casts of mother and child, 79 CE. Pompeii. Photo: Lauren Hackworth Petersen (with the permission of Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali—Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei).
as healer, lover, devoted parent, and family member, to mother as murderer and enemy of the state, mothers could also be viewed as cooperative and/or antagonistic within their respective societies. The authors thus seek to expose the complexities that the idea of mothering could engender and how the private world of women and children in the household negotiated with public and political displays of motherhood on civic monuments, within cemeteries, and in the thought-worlds of the ancients.

ON ANCIENT MOTHERHOOD

Different work on aspects of motherhood in either Greece or Rome has added much to our current state of knowledge, although no one study attempts the chronological and geographical breadth and the diversity of approaches that this collection of essays offers. Nonetheless, the individual authors of this volume are deeply indebted to earlier groundbreaking work on motherhood in ancient societies, even as each contributor strives to advance conversations on ancient mothers in new and exciting directions. What follows is a brief outline of some of the more salient and influential works on the subject.

Critical for any study of Greek and Roman mothers are the outstanding studies by Nancy Demand and Suzanne Dixon. Demand's *Birth, Death, and Motherhood in Classical Greece* (1994) carefully illuminates many issues surrounding pregnancy, as well as the female role in reproduction in the Greek world. Demand's review of the medical texts, specifically *Epidemics*, and the attention she gives to childbirth are particularly insightful and have informed essays within this volume. In addition, focusing on women as child-bearers for the *polis* and the family, Demand explores their roles in the state and male control of women's reproductive lives, an important theme that many of the authors in this edited volume bring to the fore.

Most notable in studies of Roman motherhood are two books by Dixon, *The Roman Mother* (1988) and *The Roman Family* (1992). In *The Roman Mother*, Dixon explores crucial issues regarding the place of motherhood within the Roman family: its legal implications; the official encouragement of motherhood; and the more specific relations of the Roman mother with her sons, daughters, and infant children; it also provides some insight on substitute or surrogate maternity. *The Roman Family*, though focusing on the family more generally, provides some key insights on the roles of mothers and their children in ancient Rome. Each volume offers excellent overviews of motherhood in Roman society, and they are both innova-
tive regarding Roman attitudes toward young children, which are unavoidably interlinked with the question of maternity and a topic that had been somewhat understudied. Dixon’s approach is developed primarily from a historical and legal perspective.

More recently, the theme of Roman mothers was the focus of an issue of Helios (Sept. 2006). The five articles, by leading scholars of ancient women, present mothers from a largely literary perspective, thereby complementing Dixon’s work as well as the contributions on Roman mothers presented here. Another timely and enlightening volume on the subject is Madres y maternidades: Construcciones culturales en la civilización clásica, edited by Rosa María Cid López (2009). This collection of essays explores motherhood as a stereotype created by men to assert their own power and legitimize their superiority over women. While there are some points of contact between this volume and our current work, the texts and material approached in each collection are fundamentally different. Finally, a significant study in the area of Latin literature is Augoustakis’ book on mothers in Flavian epic, Motherhood and the Other: Fashioning Female Power in Flavian Epic (2010), a topic that will be newly addressed in this volume by the author.

A number of books focus on specific aspects of mothering. For example, Patricia Watson’s Ancient Stepmothers: Myth, Misogyny, and Reality (1995) concentrates on the figure of the stepmother in myth and the historical reality of fifth-century Athens and Republican and early Imperial Rome. Because Watson’s book addresses aspects of mothering and its surrogacy, its methodologies are useful for thinking about acts associated with mothering. Likewise, a thought-provoking, recent addition to this growing body of work on ancient mothering is Sabine Hübner and David Ratzan’s Growing Up Fatherless in Antiquity (2009). Given that about one-third of children in the ancient world grew up fatherless and thus were raised by single mothers, stepmothers, or other relatives, this study sheds light on the everyday lives and responsibilities of motherhood in Greece and Rome (while also participating in debates on modern families). Meanwhile, Aline Rousselle’s Porneia: On Desire and the Body in Antiquity (1988) also deserves mention here. Although her book is not focused on motherhood per se, in her discussions of the female body Rousselle makes sharp observations about the bodies of mothers, their lives, and the expectations laid on them.

It is our desire that this collection of essays will also complement recent scholarship on childhood in antiquity, namely Jenifer Neils and John Oakley, eds., Coming of Age in Ancient Greece: Images of Childhood from the Classical Past (2003), Beryl Rawson, Children and Childhood in Roman Italy
(2003), Jeannine Uzzi, *Children in the Visual Arts of Ancient Rome* (2005), and Ada Cohen and Jeremy B. Rutter, eds., *Constructions of Childhood in Ancient Greece and Italy* (2007). These texts, among others, are fundamental in shedding some light on the rather understudied topic of the relationship of mothers with their young children.

**ORGANIZATION OF THE VOLUME**

*Mothering and Motherhood in Ancient Greece and Rome* builds on these pioneering studies, among others, by focusing on topics and problems related to mothering in antiquity that have been left largely untouched, such as relations between prostitutes and their daughters, dress in pregnancy and motherhood, and specific religious rituals involving mothers. The collection of essays deals in its first half with considerations of motherhood in ancient Greece; the second half of the volume is dedicated to evidence derived from Rome. While the essays are organized loosely by chronology, the contributors variously navigate the perceived dichotomy between the private world of motherhood as physical and social work inside the house and the public displays of motherhood as political asset.

The first two essays, by Lee and by Taraskiewicz, explore the important transition from maiden to mother in the Greek world, that is, the rituals of pregnancy and childbirth. Here we see the overlapping interaction between transformations in the female body and the female’s transformations in the social sphere. Novel in her approach, each author makes judicious use of visual and material evidence, in addition to making cross-cultural comparisons. Their essays also reveal some of the Greek anxieties surrounding pregnancy and childbirth, alongside the rituals designed to reintegrate mothers into their households and, by extension, society.

Despite rituals meant to recognize the transformed body of females and mothers, not all mothers and acts of mothering were perceived as ideal. Hong examines three Hippocratic treatises and explores how the physiological process of birth is actually coded as a violent struggle between mother and child. The author identifies the maternal body as the physical point of origin for potential familial conflict and highlights cultural ambivalence regarding the nature of a mother’s relationship both to her child and to her household.

That the private lives of mothers could be made part of public discourse is also evident in the pieces by Tzanetou, Strong, and Salzman-Mitchell. Tzanetou explores representations of motherhood in Greek trag-
edy from the vantage point of female citizenship in classical Athens. This essay focuses on the woman on stage and her social and political relationships as a mother; it emphasizes the civic implications of maternal agency in tragic poetry through the oftentimes highly charged characters of Praxithe, Aithra, Creusa, Clytemnestra, and Medea. But what might we know of actual mother–child relationships? Strong's essay begins with the premise that one of the only means of understanding ancient familial relationships is to examine atypical familial structures. In an innovative study on the private lives of marginal mothers, Strong analyzes the figure of the mother-prostitute. Her essay explores the dynamics of both the economic and the emotional relationships between prostitute-mothers and their children and offers a fascinating alternative to the conventional narrative of the ancient family. Salzman-Mitchell offers a study on women's use of their bodies in the work of motherhood and the ideologically loaded images of breast-feeding in Greek and Latin literature. She offers interpretations for what seem to be conflicting views of breast-feeding in the ancient world, as an act that is both nurturing and virtuous, and also potentially destructive.

Turning to Rome, the last four essays explore the extent to which ideals of Roman motherhood were deployed for exclusively political gain. The essays by Jones and Liveley focus on the precarious moment when Octavian/Augustus asserted his imperium, with motherhood as a central component of his political campaign. Specifically, Jones investigates the similarities in the political uses to which both Cleopatra and the Romans put motherhood as a way to explain the advantage Octavian gained by suppressing this important aspect of Cleopatra's self-presentation (in Egypt) to Roman audiences. Meanwhile, Liveley examines both textual and visual exempla to extrapolate models of good and bad mothering in Augustan Rome. In particular, she focuses on the tensions and paradoxes between mother and lover, and maternal and erotic love.

The concluding essays focus on mothers on the periphery and mothers in the center of the empire, while building on themes presented by Jones and Liveley. Augoustakis addresses the role of non-Roman mothers in Flavian epic poetry and explores the dynamics of a renegotiated Romanness through the representation of otherness. Back in Rome, the concluding essay by Woodhull carefully examines how ideals of motherhood were inscribed on the cityscape of Rome, beginning with the radical transformation of the urban space begun under Augustus and moving through the second century. We see here emphatic public displays and uses of motherhood created for political advantage.
Whereas most studies of women tend to engage either literary or visual source material—one to the exclusion of the other—we hope that readers find that one of the merits of this book, which focuses solely on mothering and motherhood in classical antiquity (rather than on women more broadly), lies in its interdisciplinarity. The essays also span a broad chronological range, covering an expansive period from the Homeric age in Greece to late imperial Rome. In addition, the authors consider different kinds of mothers—from the mythical to the real, from empress to prostitute, and from citizen to foreigner—to expose both the mundane and ideologically charged lives of mothers and the attendant discourses of motherhood in ancient Greece and Rome. Rituals, dress, legal and medical texts, literary testimony, art, and architecture are all brought together in various ways to reveal the centrality of motherhood in ancient Greece and Rome, despite the virtual absence of overt female participation in the public and political spheres of ancient life.

So, where do we go from here? There is, to be sure, much work still to be done. For example, we hope to encourage further research on highly visible female figures such as Cleopatra and Julia Domna, who are often studied in their political/public roles but not commonly seen as mothers who mothered. Regarding the latter, Julia Domna was the biological mother of co-emperors Geta and Caracalla and the recipient of numerous titles, all naming her as an imperial mother figurehead in no uncertain terms: *Mater castrorum*/Mother of the Military Camps; *Mater senatus*/Mother of the Senate; *Mater Augustorum*/Mother of the Emperors; *Mater patriae*/Mother of the Native Land; and *Mater populi Romanii*/Mother of the Roman People. On the reverse of one coin, minted in ca. 200 CE, Julia Domna's biological motherhood is presented for political gain (fig. 1.6). She appears at the center of the coin with her two sons, each shown in profile facing her. The legend—*felicitas saeculi*, a slogan of sorts for the Severan dynasty—ended up being utterly false, as Caracalla murdered his own brother so as to claim the throne for himself. As Natalie Kampen has shown, the attempts to publicize and politicize Julia's motherhood as a harbinger of happy times concealed the very instability of family and dynasty at this point in history. Moreover, this visual campaign was a public one; we have yet to ask what actual motherhood might have meant in daily life for this particular mother.

While previous discussions of ancient motherhood have focused on the mother's role in society and the family, more recently studies of the female body have been in the ascendance. These studies, however, tend to focus on
ideals of femininity and womanhood rather than on the woman as mother. With this book we hope to stimulate research that focuses on the centrality of the female body in the task of mothering. In addition, there is a relative paucity of work on the lives of mothers from an archaeological perspective, a need that some of the essays will begin to fulfill. It is our goal that this book will also identify opportunities to delve into relatively humbler expressions of the lived lives of mothers, such as epitaphs, which can perhaps help us to identify working mothers and maybe even slave-mothers.

As readers move through the essays, it will be important to bear in mind that the rhetorical and visual constructs of motherhood were surely contested, with ideals often masking the realities and complexities of motherhood in the classical world. In spite of the relative silence of ancient mothers themselves, the contributors to this volume, by undertaking new and often un- or understudied topics, seek to expose some of the many facets of ancient motherhood, both lived and imagined. In so doing, they invite us to think further about how motherhood made the woman—a statement that has at least some resonance even today.

NOTES

1. For example, Dixon (1988); Rousselle (1988); Demand (1994); Hallett, Gold, Lateiner, and Newlands (2006); Burns (2007); Cid López (2009); Augoustakis (2010).
2. Lacey (1968); Rawson (1986) and (1996); Dixon (1992); Saller (1994); Pomeroy (1997); Rawson and Weaver (1997); George (2005); and now Kampen (2009).
3. As translated in Lefkowitz and Fant (2005), no. 267.
4. As translated in Lefkowitz and Fant (2005), no. 349.
5. On this vase, see, for example, Neils and Oakley (2003), 230; Lewis (2002), 16–17; Masser (1995); Williams (1993), 93–94.
9. For an excellent overview of the official encouragement of motherhood, in the Augustan period in particular, and of the figure of the mother within imperial families, see Dixon (1988), chap. 4, and now Milnor (2005), esp. chap. 3.
10. The literature on this topic is vast. See, for example, Csillag (1976), 148; Mette-Dittmann (1991); Severy (2003); and Milnor (2005).
11. For a discussion of the *tutela* and inheritance, see esp. Gardner (1986).
15. On this *stele*, see, for example, Oakley (2003), 186–187; Stewart and Gray (2000); Demand (1994), 124.
20. Of course the interpretation of these casts as mother and child cannot be proven unless DNA evidence were to establish a blood relationship. The reading of affecting gestures as indicating familial relationships has been a preoccupation for observers since the nineteenth century (Eugene Dwyer, personal communication). See now Lazer (2009), 249–258, esp. 252.
23. Kampen (2009), 82–103.

**Works Cited**


As well articulated by Robbie Davis-Floyd, pregnancy is a rite of passage. Being “both a state and a becoming,” pregnancy represents a liminal period in a woman’s life. Although certainly a physiological phenomenon, women’s experiences of pregnancy are very much culturally determined. Davis-Floyd notes that in the United States prior to World War II, pregnancy was rarely discussed and pregnant women were generally secluded in their homes. Today, American women remain engaged in most aspects of their personal and professional lives throughout their pregnancies; as a result, their personal experiences of pregnancy are squarely in the public sphere. But although pregnancy has “come out of the closet,” in the words of Davis-Floyd, it is still laden with taboo as society attempts to reconcile its contradictions: “the pregnant woman, neither childless nor mother, public proof of a sexuality properly kept private, walking representative of nature in a culture that seeks to deny nature’s power . . . still crosses too many categories for comfort.”

American women navigate the liminal period of pregnancy by means of various “rituals”: visits to the doctor or midwife; medical tests such as ultrasound and amniocentesis; reading books about pregnancy and birth; childbirth education classes; the baby shower.

Women also negotiate the liminality of pregnancy by wearing special-purpose maternity garments. Such garments are necessary on a functional level; since modern “international-style” garments are typically cut and sewn to fit the body, maternity garments are designed to accommodate the changing shape of the pregnant woman. But maternity dress has important psychological and ideological functions as well. According to Jennifer Musial: “Once a woman chooses to wear said attire, she publicly announces her pregnancy, and, in effect, her embodied experience becomes public dis-
course.” In this way, pregnancy may be seen as a kind of performance, and maternity dress a sort of costume. A basic tenet of dress theory is that the dressed body both reflects and constructs individual identity. But when identity is in flux, as during pregnancy, the relationship between dress and the body becomes problematic. In her study of the iconography of maternity dress in popular culture, Musial argues:

As a liminal body, pregnant corporeality is threatening because it refuses categorization. This potentially transgressive embodiment is diffused through maternity wear, either through infantilizing or matronizing the wearer.

In other words, the pregnant woman, no longer a child but not yet a mother (for first pregnancies, at least), is made to fit acceptable social categories by means of her dress.

Certainly women’s experiences of pregnancy were different in antiquity from what they are today; likewise, maternity dress was conceived differently. This essay considers the visual, literary, and epigraphic evidence for maternity dress in ancient Greece, from the Archaic to the Hellenistic periods, in order to reconstruct its social functions. It will be seen that in antiquity, as today, maternity dress was an essential element in the construction of new motherhood, both for the individual woman and for her community.

Images of Pregnant Women in Ancient Greek Art

Visual representations of pregnant women are relatively rare in ancient Greek art. Because of the draped arrangement of Greek garments, the identification of a female figure as pregnant is not always secure. In general, the images can be classified into three broad categories: votive plaques of the Archaic and Classical periods; Classical and Hellenistic terracotta figurines; and late Classical funerary reliefs depicting women in childbirth.

Votive Plaques

The best preserved of the polychrome wooden plaques discovered in a cave near the village of Pitsà in the northern Peloponnese depicts four women who are approaching an altar and are accompanied by three
younger males, the smallest of whom leads a sheep to sacrifice (fig. 2.1). All the figures are depicted wearing vivid blue and red garments. The first three women wear the garments typical of adult women in this period: belted peploi with himatia draped over their shoulders and arms. The figure at the far left is completely enveloped in a blue himation, her extended hands discernible beneath the cloth. Unfortunately, the plaque is broken at this point, and it is unclear whether the garment covered her head as well. Matthew Dillon has identified this scene as a pregnant woman sacrificing to the nymphs. Nymphs, named by inscription on the plaque, were often worshiped by women seeking their protection during childbirth. Whether the draped woman is indeed pregnant is debatable; certainly no distinct “baby bulge” is discernible, though it may be masked by her draped garment.

A late Archaic marble votive relief from the Athenian Acropolis depicts what appears to be a family sacrificing a sow to Athena, perhaps in celebration of the Apaturia, a three-day festival during which children were enrolled in their father’s phratry (fig. 2.2). Two young boys (perhaps twins?) bring the sacrificial victim; a young girl follows, standing between a himation-clad man and a woman wearing chiton and himation (both adult figures are cut off at the top). The woman’s chiton protrudes away from her body below the belt in an unusual manner, and some scholars have interpreted this figure as pregnant. The effect is not realistic, and one wonders whether the sculptor intended instead to show the woman postpartum, as might befit a festival establishing a young child’s legitimacy.

A fragmentary marble votive relief from the sanctuary of Artemis-Eileithyia on the island of Delos depicts a standing female accompanied by a male figure leading a sacrificial animal (fig. 2.3). The woman performs a gesture of adoration toward the goddess (partially preserved in a joining fragment). Her unbelted garment billows away from her body, leading the excavator to interpret the scene as a pregnant woman praying to the goddess for “une heureuse deliverance.” A second votive relief from the same sanctuary depicts a woman, also wearing an unbelted garment, holding an offering for the goddess. The excavator suggests that the object in her hand may be a necklace of the type pregnant women dedicated to the goddess Eileithyia.
A successful birth is commemorated in a marble votive relief in the Metropolitan Museum of Art dating to the late fifth century BCE (fig. 2.4). In the center of the plaque, the exhausted mother is shown slumped on a stool. Her garments are in disarray, reflecting her recent ordeal, and her right breast is visible. The midwife stands behind her, supporting the mother with one hand and holding the swaddled infant in the other. The left side of the relief is broken, but a standing female divinity is preserved, along with the hand of a male divinity; perhaps they are Hygieia and Asklepios, whom the woman thanks for their protection.

The votive plaques show women in the presence (actual or implied) of a female divinity from whom each seeks protection, either for herself or for her child. Whether the women can be identified as pregnant (or recently pregnant) is not secure on the basis of physiognomy alone. Likewise, the types of garments they wear, *chitones* and *himatia*, are indistinguishable from those worn by other adult women. On the other hand, the draping and girding of their garments may indicate “maternity” dress. The woman

![Image of a marble votive relief](image)

**Figure 2.3.** Marble votive relief from the sanctuary of Artemis-Eileithyia, Classical period. Delos Museum, inv. A 3154. © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Tourism/Delos Museum.
on the painted plaque from Pitsà is completely enveloped by her *himation*, while her female companions wear their *himatia* draped in the conventional way. The woman on the relief from Delos is not so well preserved, but it is clear that her garment is unbelted so that it billows away from her body in an unusual manner. The dress of the adult woman on the relief from the Athenian Acropolis is identical to that of other adult women (belted *chiton* surmounted by *himation* draped over shoulders and arms), perhaps an
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indication that she is, in fact, no longer pregnant, but has recently given birth.

Teracotta Figurines

Terracotta figurines representing pregnant women date primarily to the Classical and Hellenistic periods. It is possible to identify at least three different types: votive figurines; so-called Tanagra figurines; and figurines representing comic characters from ancient Greek drama.

The votive figurines comprise the most cohesive group in terms of their iconography and function. Most are represented without garments, and are hence easily identifiable as pregnant. Because they were excavated from sanctuary contexts, it is likely that these figurines were dedicated in an effort to manage the risks and discomforts of pregnancy. Although no garments are indicated among this group, they are not entirely “naked” either. Figure 2.5, for example, wears a cord above the abdomen and below the breasts, in the center of which is a small indentation representing an amulet, either for the protection of the pregnant dedicator or to help bring about a beyond-term birth.

The “Tanagra” figurines (e.g., fig. 2.6) include both dressed and undressed examples. Unfortunately, the archaeological context is unknown for many of the figurines, which were popular among collectors during the nineteenth century. Although the authenticity of many Tanagra figurines is suspect, properly excavated examples are typically funerary offerings; perhaps the pregnant examples were buried with women who had died during pregnancy or childbirth. In most cases, the woman can be clearly identified as pregnant on account of her protruding abdomen; some figures also gesticulate toward or touch the belly. Figure 2.6 has been identified by some as wearing a special abdominal binder. On closer inspection, however, it is clear that she has lifted her garment to reveal her legs, creating a mass of fabric over the abdomen.

A series of terracotta figurines depicting actors from Middle Comedy may be identifiable as “pregnant” on account of their padded bellies (e.g., fig. 2.7). Since these figurines represent male actors dressed as fictional characters from Greek drama, they are not the best source for actual maternity garments worn by real women. The identification of “pregnancy” among these examples is likewise debatable; caricatures or grotesques of obese, naked women have been identified as aging hetaire (courtesans), and it may be that the dressed figurines should likewise be interpreted as old women. In either case, their dress is not distinctive in any way.


FIGURE 2.7. (Bottom right) Terracotta figurine, third century BCE. Corinth Archaeological Museum, inv. MF-12046. © American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Corinth Excavations, I. Ioannidou and L. Bartzioti; and Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Tourism/Archaeological Receipts Fund.
Funerary Reliefs

Another potential source for information about maternity garments is a series of funerary monuments of the fourth century BCE depicting scenes of childbirth (e.g., fig. 1.3 in this volume). Whether intended to commemorate a woman who had died in labor, or the attending midwife, the conventional composition includes the woman reclining on a *kline* (small bed or couch) surrounded by standing female figures who support her under the arms; sometimes an older male figure (her husband? father?) clasps her hand or bows his head in mourning. The reclining woman is not represented with a protruding abdomen to indicate pregnancy, but with the slightly rounded belly of an ideal *gunē*, that is, a woman who has given birth. Her garments are indistinguishable from those worn by other adult women (primarily the *chiton* and *himation*), though they are unbelted at the waist and often slip off the shoulder, sometimes revealing one or both breasts. While it cannot be established whether these garments were worn during the pregnancy, or represent special garments worn during labor (or, indeed, are idealized images that reflect neither), like the garments depicted in the votive plaques and figurines, they are represented as unbelted. Throughout Greek literature, laboring women are described as having loosened garments and unbound hair.

Although representations of pregnant women are rare in Greek art, they are consistent in all media from the Archaic to the Hellenistic periods. The garments worn by pregnant women do not appear to be different in structure from those worn by other adult women; they are simply worn unbelted to accommodate the woman's growing abdomen. Traditional Bedouin dress, which is draped and pinned exactly like the ancient Greek garment conventionally known as the *peplos*, offers a good ethnographic parallel. Not only is this garment adaptable to a woman's body throughout her pregnancy, but the shoulder-fasteners facilitate breastfeeding.

The absence of special maternity garments would have allowed women to conceal their pregnancies, at least in the early months. Likewise, protective amulets worn next to the body, underneath garments, would not have been visible to the community. But if pregnant women were not always immediately identifiable by their dress, the liminal period of pregnancy was nevertheless strictly regulated by the community by means of ritual.
Pregnancy, Maternity Dress, and Ritual

As in many cultures, including our own, pregnancy in ancient Greece was constructed as a dangerous, liminal period, both for the mother and for the community. While in modern America, pregnant women negotiate their pregnancies by means of various secular “rituals,” in ancient Greece they sought divine protection, as reflected in the votive plaques and figurines discussed in the previous section, as well as the use of magical amulets. But the participation of pregnant women in ritual was highly regulated, on account of fear of pollution. “Maternity garments” play an important role in ritual, symbolizing the protection of the mother and her unborn child, as well as the community as a whole.

While the visual and archaeological evidence demonstrates that pregnant women visited Greek sanctuaries dedicated to female divinities associated with childbirth, the textual sources are ambivalent about their presence in other religious contexts. Aristotle suggests that pregnant women be required to visit the sanctuaries of divinities associated with childbirth (Politics 1335b12-16), but some sanctuaries prohibited pregnant women. Expectant and nursing mothers were banned from the mysteries of Despoina at Lykosura, for example, and pregnant women (and animals about to give birth) were not allowed to visit the hill in Arcadia that was believed to be the birthplace of Zeus. In these cases, the prohibition seems to stem from a conflict of categories: those expecting a child should not participate in rites of fertility or visit a mythical birthplace.

According to Robert Parker, “the pregnant woman was not herself polluting, but it is interesting that she was particularly exposed to pollution by others.” The notion that pregnant women were not considered a source of pollution is surprising given that they exist between social categories, as discussed above. From a structuralist perspective, perhaps pregnant women were not polluting because they do not menstruate. On the other hand, it seems likely that pregnant women, if not actually polluting, were a potential source of pollution, given the very real dangers associated with pregnancy and childbirth. Hence, the concern that pregnant women were “particularly exposed to pollution by others” may in fact mask a concern for the protection of the community from potential pollution.

Whether pregnant women were viewed as a source of, or in need of protection from, pollution, their votive dedications indicate a certain vulnerability during this period of tremendous physical and psychic transition. The women’s garments may be a further reflection of this vulnerability; their garments completely envelop them, creating a visual, if not a
physical, barrier between the pregnant body and the community. On one hand, the fabric conceals the swelling abdomen of the pregnant woman; on the other hand, it comprises a layer of protection from external dangers. Given the important ritual function of garments in the cult of Artemis in particular (see below), this enveloping garment may symbolize the protection of the goddess, both to the community and to the wearer herself. From a phenomenological perspective, the pregnant woman would have sensed the protection of the goddess in the fabric touching her skin.

Importantly, such an enveloping garment would have actually concealed the liminal status of the pregnant woman from the community (unlike modern maternity garments, which often seem to “broadcast” a woman’s pregnancy). As the pregnant woman is in between social categories, her social role is erased, in part by means of the concealing garment. The transitional period of pregnancy would have been especially fraught for first-time pregnancies, when the woman was no longer a parthenos but not yet a gune. Given the particular dangers associated with the transition from maidenhood to motherhood, pregnant women supplicated the goddess with one thing over which they did hold control: their dress.

MATERNITY DRESS AND THE CULT OF ARTEMIS

Within the Greek pantheon, Artemis was the special protector of women and girls, especially at critical transitional periods such as menarche and childbirth. Although several divinities received garments as dedications, the cult of Artemis was unique in the very personal nature of such offerings. According to the Hippocratic Periparthenion (“On the Diseases of Virgins”), the traditional remedy for delayed menarche was for the girl to dedicate her most splendid garments to Artemis.

Various literary and epigraphic sources confirm the practice of dedicating garments to Artemis following childbirth. Several epigrams in the Palatine Anthology (e.g., 6.146, 6.201–202, 6.270–274) describe offerings made by new mothers grateful for a successful delivery. Euripides' Iphigenia among the Taurians concludes with an aition for the dedication of garments at the sanctuary to Artemis at Brauron, in rural Attica:

And you, Iphigenia, in the holy meadows of Brauron must serve this goddess as her temple warder. When you die, you will lie buried here, and they will dedicate for your delight the finely woven garments which women who die in childbirth leave behind in their houses. (1462–1467)
Although the garments themselves have not survived, inscribed stelai recording the inventories of the sanctuary illustrate the significance of such dedications.49 The garments are listed according to type, including variations of chitones and himatia, but also several that are otherwise unknown to modern scholars. Descriptive categories include fabric, color, decoration, and form of garments, as well as their condition.50 The names of the dedicators were also listed when known.51

On the dedications at Brauron, one scholar remarked: “It must all have looked something like a large women’s clothes store at an end-of-season clearance sale.”52 But the care with which the garment-dedications were recorded suggests their careful organization, the monetary value of the garments, and the social and ritual significance of the women’s dedications. The high status of the dedicators themselves has been established by means of prosopography.53 Yet despite their wealth (or rather, the wealth of their husbands, by whom they are identified in the inscriptions), women deliberately chose to dedicate ephemeral garments as opposed to more lasting monuments such as sculptures. Lin Foxhall and Karen Stears suggest that women dedicated garments because they were their particular property, passed down from mother to daughter via pherne (“trousseau”).54 Certainly women in ancient Greece were ideologically associated with all kinds of textiles, whether or not they wove them themselves.55 But offerings of garments that had been worn by the dedicators themselves would have carried special significance, particularly if they had been worn during pregnancy and birth, as suggested by some of the literary and visual sources.56

THE ECHINOS RELIEF

Remarkable pictorial evidence for the dedication of garments to Artemis following childbirth has come to light in the form of a late fourth-century votive relief from her sanctuary at Echinos, at Lamia in northern Greece (fig. 2.8).57 The goddess, in larger scale than her devotees, stands on the right side of the frame, behind an altar. She is identifiable by her torch, and also the quiver of arrows once visible behind her left shoulder. She wears an over-girded peplos; a second garment draped over her shoulder partially obscures a stele against which she leans. Approaching the altar from the left is a young boy leading the sacrificial victim, a horned cow or young steer. He is followed by a female figure wearing an over-girded peplos with her hair pulled back into a bun. She holds an infant, presumably a girl on account of the drapery and hairstyle, who extends her arms toward the goddess. Be-
hind this figure is a female attendant holding a small jug and bearing a basket on her head containing fruits and cakes as dedications. At the far left of the scene, a standing female figure wears a garment (chiton?) so voluminous it drapes on the ground, with a mantle drawn over her head so that her face is obscured. (Sadly, the relief is broken at exactly this point, so that it is unclear to what degree her facial features were originally visible.) The woman extends one hand from beneath the garment in a gesture of adoration toward the goddess; in the other hand she holds a pyxis, perhaps containing incense. At the top of the frame, in very low relief, articles of clothing are rendered as if hanging from a clothesline. From right to left it is possible to identify: a sleeveless chiton or chemise; a sash or belt with fringed ends; two fringed textiles, one wider than the other, perhaps worn as draped himatia or even peploi; a tunic with short sleeves; and a pair of low boots or shoes.

Although scholars agree that the relief depicts a sacrificial scene in honor of Artemis, and that the garments on display represent dedications in her sanctuary, the specific identities of the dedicants, and the motivation for the sacrifice, have been variously interpreted. The original publication identified the central figure holding the infant as the young mother, and the larger, draped, figure behind as her mother or mother-in-law. Alternatively, Yvette Morizot interprets the standing draped figure as the mother (and therefore the dedicator of the plaque); she is represented in larger scale than the others, wears luxurious garments that completely envelop her body as a reflection of her aids (modesty), and is accompanied by servants, including a wet-nurse who carries the infant. Although most have identified the scene as the presentation of the infant to the goddess, in order to se-
cure her continued protection, Morizot suggests that the mother is the central figure in the ritual; the sacrifice marks the end of her lying-in, and her ritual purification (implied by the *pyxis* containing incense) prior to her re-incorporation into society as an adult *gune*. In this light, the garments in the background are not generic decorative elements identifying the sanctuary as that of Artemis; they refer specifically to the successful pregnancy and childbirth of the dedicant, brought about by the goddess, to whom she gives thanks.

The dedication of maternity garments to Artemis symbolizes the successful management of miasma in the transition from *parthenos* to *gune*. The mother-to-be was removed from society during the liminal period of her lying-in, during which time she was both polluted and polluting of all who entered the household. Following the birth, purity was restored by means of ritual, and the new mother was reincorporated into society (a topic presented fully in the following essay). The anxieties surrounding this significant social and psychic transition from maidenhood to motherhood are nonetheless managed by means of dress. Garments worn during the period of pregnancy and childbirth symbolized the protection of the goddess. Following her successful birth, the new mother dedicated these garments as a gesture of thanks, but also to reflect her new social role, which required new garments.

**NOTES**

Thank you to the editors for the invitation to participate in this project, and to Glynnis Fawkes for her excellent drawing. I am grateful to Vanderbilt University for financial support to reproduce the images. This essay is dedicated to Chloe, who teaches me about motherhood every day.

1. Davis-Floyd (1992), 22–43.
2. Davis-Floyd (1992), 23.
5. Maternity dress is surprisingly understudied and undertheorized, despite the recent surge of scholarly interest in motherhood and in dress across cultures. For recent approaches to motherhood, see the first essay in this volume. For good introductions to the interdisciplinary field of dress studies, see Eicher et al. (2008) and Roach-Higgins et al. (1995). The *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion*, edited by Eicher (2010), is now the essential reference.

7. For the dynamic relationship between the body and dress, see Entwistle (2001).


9. It will be seen that in ancient Greece dress was also employed to “sanitize” (Musial 2004, 130) the pregnant body, though in a different way.

10. Dierichs (2002), esp. 71-102; Gourevitch and Grmek (1998); Gourevitch (1988). See also Speert (2004), 49–50, 60–61, and 64, although several of his identifications are suspect (see below). Interestingly, images of mothers nursing infants are likewise nearly absent from Greek art; see Bonfante (1997), and now Patricia Salzman-Mitchell in this volume.

11. As noted by Gourevitch and Grmek (1998), “Parfois, il est difficile de choisir entre grossesse et obésité, voire hydropisie” (314).

12. The term peplos is highly problematic, but is retained here for ease of discussion. A pinned, woolen garment appears in early Greek sculpture and vase painting, disappears during the Archaic period, and then reappears in the early Classical period. Literary sources are unclear as to the name of this garment. It was identified as a peplos by scholars in the nineteenth century. See Lee (2005).

13. Dillon (2002), 228. The figure is not identified as pregnant in Jennifer Larson’s comprehensive study of Greek nymphae; see Larson (2001), 232–233, and fig. 5.1.


16. Lehmann-Hartleben (1926), 20; recently revived by Neils (2003), 145 and fig. 5.

17. Demangel (1922), 78. The excavator dates the relief to the Classical period on the basis of style.

18. Demangel (1922), 85–86, fig. 18.

19. Demand (1994), 89, and pl. 1; Van Straten (1981), 100, and fig. 43.

20. In sculpture of the Classical period, women’s breasts are sometimes exposed accidentally as a result of the action of the wearer. See Cohen (1997), 70–72.

21. Interestingly, the iconography of the new mother is identical to that of women who died in childbirth, as depicted on funerary monuments of the same period (see fig. 1.3 of this volume, and below). In contrast to the funerary images, the success of the birth here in fig. 2.4 is confirmed by the depiction of the swaddled infant.

22. Schematic terracotta groups from Cyprus representing birthing scenes date as early as the seventh century BCE; Gourevitch (1988), 47.

23. Van Straten considers figurines representing pregnant women a subset of the anatomical votives dedicated to Asklepios and other divinities as a request (or thanks) for healing; see esp. Van Straten (1981), 98–100.

24. Though at least one scholar has suggested a diagnosis of dropsy; see Van Straten (1981), 99, n. 172.

25. Gourevitch (1988), 44 and 46, discusses such amulets, which were used by both the Greeks and the Romans, but does not identify an amulet cord on this figu-
rine. For birthing amulets specifically, see Hanson (2004); for ancient uterine magic generally, see Aubert (1989).


27. An excellent example of the undressed type is Paris, Musée du Louvre, D 198, illustrated in Gourevitch and Grmek (1998), 313, fig. 2.46, and Gourevitch (1988), 43.

28. For example, Speert (2004), 61, fig. 2-33.

29. Indeed, many of the Tanagra figurines wear garments that seem to emphasize the abdomen, even if they are not identifiably pregnant.


31. This is very likely the case for Speert (2004), fig. 2-13, a figurine of a woman holding a child from the Staattliche Museen, Berlin. Her sagging breasts and protruding belly, together with her wrinkled face and bent posture, identify her as an old nurse, not a pregnant woman.


34. A few later examples are belted under the breasts, as was the fashion in the late Classical and Hellenistic periods.

35. Aubert (1989), esp. 444 and n. 48; 449 and n. 59. A unique late Classical limestone group in the Metropolitan Museum of Art has the same iconography as the funerary reliefs, and may also have had a funerary function. See Dierichs (2002), fig. 44; Vedder (1988), pl. 25.2.

36. Soranus of Epheso (second century CE) describes the use of abdominal and breast-binders by pregnant women, but these are adaptations of everyday dress in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, not special: Gynecology 1.55; 2.6 [70b]; 2.8 [77]; 2.24 [93] (Temkin [1991]). Speert (2004) discusses maternity garments. See Soranus on the binders, though Speert's identification of such garments in the visual sources is erroneous: see 60–61, and figs. 2-33, 2-38.

It is possible that garments worn during pregnancy were differentiated from regular garments by means of color or decoration, which has not been preserved in the visual sources. On the other hand, the blue himation of the woman in the Pitsà plaque does not distinguish her from the other worshipers.

37. For the peplos, see Lee (2005), esp. 61, fig. 5.6 for the traditional Bedouin garment.

38. Specialized nursing garments seem to be absent also from ancient Greek dress, though see the unique Archaic limestone kourotrophos from the cemetery at Megara Hyblaea in Sicily, whose garment features strategically placed openings through which she suckles twins. Boardman (1995), 162–163 and fig. 174. For breast-feeding in Greek and Roman literature, see Salzman-Mitchell in this volume.

39. Above, n. 25, and below, n. 41.

40. Parker (1983), 49.

41. Parker (1983), 49. The perceived vulnerability of pregnant women is suggested also by their use of magical amulets to protect against complications during pregnancy, including miscarriage. See Aubert (1989), 426.
DRESS AND THE TRANSITION FROM PARTHENOS TO GUNÉ [39]

42. For Greek attitudes toward menstruating women see Cole (2004), 108–111.
44. A similar argument has been made recently in reference to women’s veiling practices: Llewellyn-Jones (2003), 189–214.
45. For dedications of garments to Artemis, see most recently Morizot (2004); Foxhall and Stears (2000); also Dillon (2002), 19–23; Cole (1998), 36–39; and Demand (1994), 87–91. For a general overview of dedications of garments in Greek sanctuaries see Lee (1999), 218–269.
46. Delayed menarche was thought to cause suicidal tendencies, in particular a desire for strangulation. The author of the Periparthenion denounced the practice of dedicating garments to Artemis, in favor of quick marriage and defloration. See esp. King (1998), 75–88, with earlier references.
47. On the extra-mural character of Artemis sanctuaries, see Cole (1998).
49. The so-called Brauronion inscriptions recovered from the Athenian Acropolis are generally acknowledged to be copies of those discovered at Brauron, which remain unpublished. The primary publication of the Athenian inscriptions is Linders (1972), now supplemented by Cleland (2005). Though the inscriptions date to the middle of the fourth century BCE, they presumably reflect a long-standing practice.
50. A few garments are identified as “new,” presumably meaning unworn. Articles described as rhakos are not, as previously suggested, menstrual “rags” dedicated by girls at menarche, but rather older dedications that had become tattered over time. For discussion, see Linders (1972), 58–59.
51. Some garments were inscribed by means of weaving; others were stored inside a case tagged with the name of the dedicator.
52. Van Straten (1981), 99. As a rejoinder, Dillon (2002) suggests: “it is more probably a Parisian boutique which should be imagined . . . clothes draped over statues, some in boxes, some hanging in racks, all meticulously recorded from year to year in the inventories published at Athens” (21).
55. The literature on the association between women and textile production is extensive. For an overview, see Papadopoulou-Belmehdi (1994).
56. The Brauronion inscriptions list garments that are unlikely to have been used as maternity dress, including men’s and children’s garments and several identified as “half-woven.” Although the specific occasions for the dedication of these garments are not recorded, it is clear that women were the primary producers and dedicators of all types of garments.
57. The primary publication of the relief, now in the Lamia museum (inv. no. AE 1041), is Dakoronia and Gounaropolou (1992). For further discussion, see esp. Morizot (2004); also Dillon (2002), 231–233; Cole (1998), 34–35.
58. Morizot (2004), 162.

60. Morizot (2004), 162–163. Dillon (2002) likewise identifies this figure as the mother on the basis of her larger scale, and also the shape of her body, noting “it is not long since she had her baby” (232). As discussed above in the context of the votive reliefs, the voluminous garments obscure the shape of the woman’s body, so that it is difficult to tell if a woman is represented as (recently) pregnant.


63. For the restoration of purity following childbirth, see Parker (1983), 50–52.

WORKS CITED


It is widely recognized that the female developmental trajectory in ancient Greece was incremental and involved a battery of ritual events that guided female children through a series of role statuses from parthenos (maiden), to nymphē (bride), to gune (mature female). Ritual evidence for passage through the first two statuses is abundant. At koirotrophic sanctuaries (sites concerned with the nursing and rearing of children) parthenoi were introduced to the prospects of their marriageability. In the ritual events surrounding marriage nymphai were separated from their natal families and transferred to new homes, new families, and husbands. However, attainment of mature female status was not complete until they gave birth to a surviving child. Medical, juridical, and folkloric testimony all bear witness to the provisional nature of the transfer evinced in the engue, the formal betrothal of the bride, where her father handed her over to the groom "for the plowing of legitimate children." Just as the engue anticipated the eventual offspring of the union, the rituals following childbirth secured that union by integrating the lechō (postpartum mother) into her home following the birth of her child.

This essay examines the ritual process by which the betrothed bride ascended to her adult female status and attained permanent attachment to her conjugal home. I begin by reviewing evidence for the intermediate nature of the bride's status. Next, I examine the ritual mechanisms that served to resolve her ambiguous state. Votive inventories from kourotrophic sanctuaries throughout Greece preserve dedications that indicate a well-established history of childbirth rituals. These votives, viewed with a mind to the dangers associated with pregnancy and parturition, are divisible into three distinct types. The first set concerns protection of the woman and child throughout pregnancy, birth, and the postpartum period. The second
set marks the termination of the ambiguous status of *lecho*, and the third
serves to incorporate both mother and child into her conjugal home and
community following birth. By reading childbirth dedications as indicative
not only of the infant at the beginning of its social career, but of the bride
at the culmination of hers, this essay reconstructs an incorporation ritual
for the *nymphē* that marked her “social return from childbirth,”7 effected
her permanent integration into her conjugal family, and conferred on her
the *teleia* appropriate to Greek femininity.8

**BRIDAL INSTABILITY**

The suggestion that the *teleia*, or fulfillment, attributed to the Greek
*gunē* was merely hailed, not accomplished, by the wedding ceremony comes
from legal, medical, and religious sources. In her study of Athenian law-
suits, Virginia Hunter has demonstrated that only the birth of children
could solidify a bride’s status within her new household, and failure thereof
often led to her return to her natal family for remarriage.9 Likewise, in her
study of Greek gynecological texts, Helen King has shown that the biolog-
cal transformation of the female was thought to begin at *menarchē* and to
conclude at first *lochia*, the discharge after the birth of the first child. “Ide-
ally,” King explains, “the temporal gap between *parthenos* and *gunē* would
be short; the Greek process of becoming married, extended from the be-
trothal to the birth of the first child, would cover it, and the term *nymphē*
would be applied to those in the ‘latent period’ stretching from marriage-
able to married.”10 Finally, as Sarah Iles Johnston has demonstrated, Greek
beliefs surrounding *aorai*, or women who have died prematurely, empha-
size their failure to have given birth to surviving children: “The *aitia* [ex-
planatory myths] deliver the same message that a Greek woman heard from
other sources: her goal in life was to become a mother.”11

The ambiguity of the bride’s status seems to have resulted in a cor-
responding low position in her conjugal household prior to the birth of
her first child. This low position arises from a number of factors. First, the
bride’s intense attachment to her natal hearth causes a corresponding grief
when she is transferred to her conjugal hearth. Such melancholy is captured
in a fragment from Sophocles’ *Tēreus*, where Proce declares:

In childhood, in our father’s house we live the happiest life, I think, of all
mankind; for folly always rears children in happiness. But when we have
understanding and have come to youthful vigour, we are pushed out and
sold, away from our paternal gods and from our parents, some to foreign husbands, some to barbarians, some to joyless homes and some to homes that are opprobrious. And this, once a single night has yoked us, we must approve and consider happiness.¹²

Secondly, the bride seems to have been viewed as a foreigner in her new household. Medea claims that a woman feels like a ξένος, or foreigner, arriving at a strange hearth:

A woman, arriving among new customs and laws [ηθη και νόμους], must be clairvoyant, for she didn't learn at home [οἶκοθεν] how best to interpret [χρήσεται] her bedmate.¹³

The birth of a child was thought to help mitigate this rift. As the dissimulating Clytemnestra states, a child acts as "the keeper of the pledges, both mine and yours."¹⁴

This same sentiment is echoed by Eratosthenes in Lysias 1, On the Murder of Eratosthenes:

When I decided to marry and had brought a wife home, at first my attitude toward her was this: I did not wish to annoy her, but neither was she to have too much of her own way. I watched her as well as I could, and I kept an eye on what was proper. But later, after my child was born, I came to trust her and handed all my possessions over to her, believing this was the greatest possible proof of affection.¹⁵

The juridical context of Eratosthenes' speech suggests that such views were widely held. Lysias hopes to exonerate his client by manipulating the jury's expectations in this way. The sentiment, voiced by both male and female speakers, is that brides were thought to constitute a threat to the integrity of the household, were regarded with suspicion prior to bearing children, but thereafter were held to be more invested, and hence more trustworthy.

Comparative ethnography confirms these ancient testimonies. John Campbell describes the subordinate status of a new bride among the Sara-katsani in terms that suggest an openly hostile environment for the nymphi up to the birth of her first child.¹⁶ Loring Danforth, whose fieldwork was conducted in Greek Macedonia, emphasizes that "a daughter-in-law is an outsider, a xeni, in her family of marriage," and that hostility from her mother-in-law could wreak havoc on the fragile psyche of the new bride.¹⁷ Sydel Silverman, studying the life-cycle of women in rural Umbria, ob-
serves that the period extending from a woman's engagement to the birth of her first child is the most stressful of all the role transitions she faces. Finally, Roger and Patricia Jeffrey report that in rural north India there is a specific term (like nymphē or nymphi) for the prepartum bride: bahū. The bahū's place in her conjugal home is described as one of abject submission, hard labor, beatings, and verbal abuse if she does not comply with the demands of her husband and mother-in-law. However, following the birth of her first child she is accorded a new status, that of jachā, a term used to describe the parturient mother in the forty-day postpartum period. In all of these cases, the birth of the couple's first child serves to end the period of the bride's socio-psycho liminality.

FERTILE DANGERS

As Nancy Demand has demonstrated, ensuring conception, delivery, and the survival of a child presented formidable odds to women. Because of their young age at marriage many brides were simply not mature enough to conceive. If they did conceive, the risks associated with childbirth were very high. Finally, even if they did not themselves die in childbirth, the odds that their child would survive were still low. Demand estimates that "at least half of all newborns failed to reach maturity," and that a "30–40 percent mortality rate [might be expected] in the first year of life." As such statistics imply, we find considerable evidence for anxiety throughout the childbirth process, a topic explored in detail in the following essay, by Yurie Hong. Literary and epigraphic sources attest that oracles were often consulted regarding failure to conceive, and prayers to cure sterility at the sanctuary of Asklepios at Epidauros were only exceeded by prayers associated with vision. Due to the high risks and anxiety associated with pregnancy, Edith Hall has argued that "dramatic enactment of the effect of births on the oikos, whether with tragic or comic consequences, constituted a form of collective social couvade." In order to protect themselves against the considerable dangers associated with fertility, pregnancy, and childbirth, women employed a variety of apotropaic charms and amulets. Figurines representing the Egyptian childbirth deity Bes have been found in large numbers in sanctuaries associated with childbirth (figs. 3.1 and 3.2). The Bes figurines have been interpreted as images that have the power both to repel evil, with their exposed genitalia and ugly grimaces, and to nurture the infant, as figured in their exaggerated bellies. The amulets are fabricated from a range of natural stones and
manufactured objects, including jasper, aetites, Samian stone, pierced sealstones, scarabs, and coral. As Susan Wise points out, many such charms would have been unremarkable, consisting of nothing more than a pierced stone, and it is likely that many of them went unnoticed, or have remained unpublished, by excavators who were focused on recovering more valuable objects. The first-century CE medical writer Dioskourides reports that a jasper amulet was worn on the thigh during childbirth. Items so intimately associated with the lechô may have been deposited as terminal offerings comparable to the dedication of toys in age-grading rituals. Their close proximity to the pollution of the birth may also have required their disposal afterward, as a votive type of katharmata, ritual off-scourings.

In addition to charms that were worn to divert childbirth demons, there are other votives present in the temple inventories and sanctuary deposits that appear to have been associated with easing labor. Such items include keys (figs. 3.3 and 3.4), zonai (belts), and dress-pins. The presence and significance of keys at childbirth sanctuaries has only recently been recognized. This is because many of these keys, known as “spike keys” or “pressure keys” (e.g., figs. 3.4 and 3.7), have been mistaken for hooks or iron
spits. A fifth-century Attic hydria (fig. 3.5) depicts how such keys were used, however. The status of keys as childbirth dedications is attested by the second-century Roman grammarian Festus, who writes: "It was the custom for women to dedicate a key to signify an easy delivery." That this was also the case in Greece is suggested by the fact that Iphigeneia was called *kleidouchos*, "the one who holds the keys" at Brauron, and by a fourth-
century BCE coin from Argos depicting Hera on the obverse, and a spike key on the reverse (figs. 3.6 and 3.7).\(^{34}\)

As another metaphor for the opening of the womb, garment fasteners of all kinds were popular as thank-offerings following a successful childbirth.\(^{35}\) The importance of the act of loosening \textit{zonai}, or belts, in childbirth is suggested by the fact that \textit{lyzizonos}, belt-loosener, is a common cult epithet for Artemis and Eileithyia.\(^{36}\) In Pindar’s \textit{Olympian 6}, Evadne is said to “have laid down her purple- and saffron-colored girdle” prior to giving birth to Iamus.\(^{37}\) Soranus recommends those assisting in childbirth “loosen . . . girdles, as well as free the chest of any binder, though not on account of the vulgar conception, according to which womenfolk are unwilling to suffer any fetter, but also to loosen their hair.”\(^{38}\) Images of women in labor on funerary \textit{stelai} and \textit{lekythoi} confirm this practice (see figs. 1.3 and 2.4 in this volume).\(^{39}\) F. T. van Straten suggests that a dedication of a \textit{zoné} to Artemis in thanks for a successful childbirth may be depicted on a fifth-century Attic \textit{lekythos} (fig. 3.8).\(^{40}\)

Jens Baumbach argues that the wide distribution of metal garment fasteners at childbirth sanctuaries is reflective of this same practice (figs. 3.9 and 3.10).\(^{41}\) Between seven and eight hundred dress-pins were found at
FIGURE 3.8. Belt-loosening, Gela lekythos, fifth century BCE. Syracuse 21186. Photo: Museo Archeologico Regionale Paolo Orsi—Siracusa (with the permission of the Assessorato dei Beni Culturali e dell'Identità Siciliana).
FIGURE 3.9. Belt clasp, seventh century BCE. Photo: Payne, Perachora I, pl. 44.
Argos, along with more than one hundred bronze fibulae. Although dress-pins occur in other contexts (such as graves and sanctuaries of male deities), Yngve Flognfeldt estimates that 84 percent of known examples were dedicated in the sanctuaries of female deities. In addition to dress-pins, belt clasps have been found at both Perachora and Samos.

Worldwide, childbirth rituals focus on concepts of opening and loosening the womb. Claude Lévi-Strauss, in his analysis of a Cuna incantation to facilitate childbirth, argues that such images evoke, through symbolic imagery, a corresponding physiological response:

The shaman provides the sick woman with a language, by means of which unexpressed, and otherwise unexpressible, psychic states can be immediately expressed. And it is the transition to verbal expression—at the same time making it possible to undergo in an ordered and intelligible form a real experience that would otherwise be chaotic and unexpressible—which induces the release of the physiological process, that is the reorganization, in a favorable direction.

For Lévi-Strauss, a woman's belief in her mythic tradition combines with the sympathetic ideas of release to provide an effective therapy. Literary and iconographic sources provide evidence that similar birthing practices were employed in antiquity. One recalls the images of constriction and release associated with Alcmena’s difficult labor with Heracles, where Lucina sits outside the house with crossed legs and clasped hands until she is tricked into letting go her grip.
TOWARD TELEIA

It would be surprising if an event like this, invested with so much social importance and subject to so much anxiety, would stand without any ritual intervention. Explicit references to ritual practices surrounding pregnancy and childbirth are quite fragmentary, however. Robert Parker assembles the epigraphic testimony in his classic discussion of miasma, the Greek beliefs surrounding pollution and purification.\(^4\) We know that the Greeks considered childbirth polluting. Women were forbidden, for instance, to give birth inside of sanctuaries.\(^4\)\(^8\) Fragments from the Cyrene cathartic law suggest that anyone who entered a house where a birth had taken place would retain that pollution for three days. However, the duration the mother herself remained polluted is not clear. Parker suggests that while her capacity to pass on contagion was likely lifted in time for the *amphidromia* on the fifth/seventh day, her complete purification and reintegration process probably extended longer.\(^4\)\(^9\) Medical texts suggest a period of 30-40 days, during which the *katharsis* associated with lochial bleeding could run its course.\(^5\)\(^0\) It has been suggested that statues of dog figurines found at Perachora support literary testimony that dog sacrifice was part of the purification process of women emerging from childbirth.\(^5\)\(^1\)

That parturient women brought an end to their confinements with a visit to a sanctuary and a sacrifice, which included some sort of cake dedication, is suggested by a number of inscriptions. A late fifth/early fourth-century BCE inscription from Delphi which catalogues the festival calendar of the Labyad phratry makes a reference to “one who should accompany a *lecho,*” the woman emerging from childbirth.\(^5\)\(^2\) The phrase “to accompany a *lecho*” requires some interpretation. In my translation I follow Parker, who describes this inscription as referring to “sacrifice by a *λεχῶ*.”\(^5\)\(^3\) Since side A of the same inscription includes references to special cake sacrifices called *daratai,* “on the occasion of marriages or for children,” it is conceivable that one accompanied a *lechô* who made sacrifices of *daratai* when she emerged from her confinement.

Further contemporary evidence for such a ritual is provided by a fragment of Antimachus of Colophon’s *Artemis.*\(^5\)\(^4\) The hexameter fragment reads: δὲ φρ’ ὑπὸ μ[έν] Λαθρίαι θύσῃ λόχια τριβ[άλεια]\(^5\)\(^5\) (that I may sacrifice *lochia* on behalf of thrice-blooming Lathria). V. J. Matthews points out in his discussion of this passage that these *lochia* are likely bread sacrifices, a reading supported by Hesychius, who reports, s.v. *λόχια,* that they are “ἀόρτος τῇ Ἀρτέμιδι γενόμενοι καὶ τα ἀδροῦς ἁστάχους ἐχούσαι,” or “bread for Artemis made of ripe corn.” Matthews further sup-
ports the reading that the *lochia* here refer to bread by citing Hesychius, s.v. 
ἀγροστίς, "which is a plant and a type of bread called *lochia.*" He adds that 
"trithalia" is an epithet for Artemis which is indicative of her kourotrophic identity "as the goddess responsible for the thriving growth of children."56

A first-century CE inscription from Miletus that describes the auction 
of the priesthood of Asklepios includes a list of public officials and private 
individuals who are required to perform sacrifices in the sanctuary.57 Parker 
and Dirk Obbink label these requirements as "θοντιω rules," and suggest 
that their purpose was "to increase the priest’s income by forcing particu-
lar classes of person to sacrifice in the shrine."58 Most often they require 
public officials of various types to perform regular sacrifices, but they also 
stipulate that certain classes of private individuals sacrifice on certain oc-
casions: "Piety becomes obligatory, and even (in principle) legally enforce-
able."59 Such regulations would increase the value of the priesthood on auc-
tion by in effect taxing the commonest rituals of civic life. Thus, among the 
host of Milesian civil servants we find an unlikely group, women described 
as “walking out the *lochia*,” presumably representing its termination, and 
tying their *zonai*, or girdles.60 The inclusion of “women walking out the *lo-
chia*” in this list suggests that the ceremony, at least in first-century Mile-
tus, was prominent, frequent, and socially significant, since it contributed 
substantial revenues to the priesthood of Asklepios. This balanced phrase 
referring to the women is instructive. As we have seen, the loosening of 
the girdle was equated with the onset of labor; the ritual tying of it would 
neatly signify that the transition to motherhood had been accomplished.

As we have already seen, a number of inscriptions associate bread sac-
crifice with childbirth. In addition to those already mentioned, Delian 
inscriptions mention that a baker, ἀρτοκόπος, was employed during the 
festival for Eileithyia.61 Obviously, such perishable dedications have not 
survived, but a number of sanctuaries associated with childbirth preserve 
terracotta replicas of cakes as well as bread-baking figurines (figs. 3.11 and 
3.12; see also fig. 3.2).62

An elaborate terracotta from the Argolid of unknown provenance de-
picts a bakery scene (fig. 3.13). Moving around the circle from the top of 
the image clockwise, we see various women depicted in bread-baking. The 
one to the right of the oven appears to be stoking the fire with her right 
hand while cradling an infant in her left; the next figure appears to have 
a large amount of dough ready to be made into cakes; the next seems to 
carry a platter of formed cakes, while the next two are engaged in form-
ing the loaves. Finally, the sixth figure (fig. 3.14), who is the tallest, and dis-
tinguished by a high and elaborate *polos*, may be a goddess, and perhaps is
Hera.\textsuperscript{63} This figure has suffered some damage, but the position of her right arm suggests she is nursing another infant that she holds at her breast.\textsuperscript{64} At her feet lies an animal that may be a dog. Although the provenance of this terracotta is unknown, its state of preservation suggests that it was part of a funerary deposit. Kourotrophic statues are commonly found in childbirth sanctuaries and graves.\textsuperscript{65} Whatever the original dedicatory context, this particular group is significant because it correlates bread-making with kourotrophy and links the iconography of these two common types of terracotta votive.

As presented in the previous essay, a fifth-century dedicatory plaque to Artemis from Echinos, which depicts a \textit{lecho} performing the type of sacrifice described by the inscriptions, provides the most detailed image of what the dedications of a postpartum mother would have looked like (see fig. 2.8 of this volume).\textsuperscript{66} In this group, Artemis stands at the far right side of the relief, taller than the other figures in stature, holding a torch, and wearing her quiver. She stands near a column, which indicates the scene is inside a temple. Just to her left, and standing before her, a small male figure, a boy or servant, leads an ox to slaughter at an altar. Behind him stands a
female figure with a bare head who holds a child in her arms and extends it toward the goddess. This figure may be the child’s mother. If so, the fact that her head is not covered, and that the infant is unswaddled, may indicate they have both passed out of the dangerous postpartum period.\(^6\) The child reaches out energetically toward the goddess.

Behind the mother, a female servant, also small in stature, carries an offering tray on her head and she balances it with her left hand. On the offering tray, conical shaped honey-cakes appear with pomegranates, apples,
grapes, and myrtle. In the servant's right hand she carries a vessel, perhaps an askos, which she will use to pour a libation. To the far left of the plaque and bringing up the rear of the procession is a veiled woman, taller in stature than the other participants, but slightly smaller than the goddess. She holds her right hand up in adoration, and in her left hand she holds a small pyxis. The figure does not show any attributes to identify her as a priestess, and because of her stature, Fanouria Dakoronia and Lukretia Gounaropoulou suggest that she is the donor of the plaque and is likely to be either the mother-in-law or mother of the new gune. Behind the group, a clothesline displays a range of garments that have evidently been dedicated to the goddess. Hanging from left to right we see a pair of shoes, a short chiton with short sleeves, two bedsheets, a zonē, and a peplos trimmed with fringe.

So how did the nymphai who were fortunate enough to become lechoi and to survive childbirth ascend to the status of gunaikeis? I reconstruct the rituals surrounding childbirth as follows. From the moment of her presentation to her conjugal hearth in the katachysmata, where she was showered with fruits, nuts, and coins, the Greek bride and her potential fertility were guarded with great anxiety. Throughout pregnancy, labor, and the postpartum period she made use of apotropaia to ward off divine envy. During labor she loosened her clothing and hair, and as a result she often dedicated relevant garment fasteners to childbirth sanctuaries following a successful birth. Both amulets and fasteners served as appropriate terminal offerings suggesting that the status of lecho had been left behind, and that the new status of gune had been attained.

Successful childbirth, however, did not ensure the survival of the infant. The period of confinement following birth served to protect mother and child in their most vulnerable period. Epigraphical sources suggest a gradual lessening of pollution that coincided with a gradually increasing sphere of movement for mother and child. Early rituals occurred within the home and inscribed a widening circle of movement from childbed to the hearth in the amphidromia on the fifth or seventh day, to the naming ceremony of the dekatē on the tenth.

These essentially private rituals seem to have culminated in a journey to a childbirth sanctuary after a period of around forty days. At that time, final purification rituals may have been performed publicly, such as the dog sacrifice common to Hekate, or fumigation through the burning of incense, either of which could have served to end the period of pollution experienced by the mother following the birth. The preponderance of pyxides found in childbirth sanctuaries may have served as containers for such
Following such purification rites, the child was presented to the kourotrophos for protection, and both mother and child may then have been formally entered into the husband's phratry. Dedications to the childbirth deity would have been made at this time.

Disentangling the rhetoric of dedications is complex since it is often difficult to distinguish attitudes of dread at divine hostility from expressions of pious gratitude. However, three distinct types of dedication seem to emerge from the array common to most childbirth sanctuaries. First, there are the terminal offerings: dedications like amulets, apotropaic figurines, and garment fasteners, which seem emblematic of the surpassed role status. Secondly, there are agalmata, dedications of fine clothing and jewelry. Such offerings are usually considered thank-offerings, but they seem more intended to appease potential hostility than to express thanks. In keeping with Johnston's arguments regarding the vulnerability of women throughout pregnancy and childbirth, such pars pro toto offerings, like Polycrates' ring, seem to have been dedicated to prevent envious goddesses and spirits from harassing the parturient mother and her newborn. Third, there are first-fruits dedications, particularly hearth cakes, but also fruits, flowers, and animal sacrifice. As part of a celebratory feast which coincided with the public presentation of the child at the childbirth sanctuary, this last category of dedications seems to have served to reintegrate mother and child into the community following their confinements.

Since the dedication of cakes was not limited to childbirth sanctuaries, the importance of their inclusion here requires some comment. According to Artemidorus in his Interpretation of Dreams, the Greeks associated children with bread, and mothers with ovens: "The hearth signifies life and the wife of the dreamer"; "To light a fire which burns brightly in the hearth or in the oven signifies the begetting of children, for the hearth and the oven are like a woman... and the fire in them foretells that the woman will become pregnant." The use of bread as a symbol for future progeny also figures in the Athenian wedding ritual described in Zenobius 3.98:

It was the custom of the Athenians at their weddings that a child with both parents living be crowned with thistles mixed with the fruit of live oak, and carrying a winnowing basket [liknon] full of bread he would say: "I escaped that bad, I found the better." They indicated how they rejected the wild and ancient diet, and discovered domestic nourishment.

The dedication of hearth cakes at the time of the presentation of the child would recall the wedding ritual, as well as mimic the ritual of the amphi-
dromia, this time extending the circuit of the cake from hearth, to family, to the kourotrophic goddess herself.

All of this ritual work—deflecting danger, releasing the womb, putting aside the ambiguous self of betrothal and pregnancy—culminates in the woman's procession to the kourotrophic sanctuary. The movement from the intimate space of the bed to domestic hearth in the amphiloudromia integrates mother and child into their household; the movement from their threshold to the public kourotrophic sanctuary and back introduces them both to the community. Likewise, the sharing of hearth cakes with intimates, peers, and finally the local kourotrophic goddess mirrors their spatial progress, establishing commensality with a gradually widening sphere of associations. Upon her return home the mother is transformed into a new social being, a gune.

But how should we understand the implications of that new status? Seen in ritual terms, attainment of motherhood is the prerequisite to attaining adult female status, but it is not its equivalent. Above all, the surviving child serves to anchor the woman in her new home. As Clytemnestra explains, the child is "the keeper of pledges." Deborah Lyons has argued that the security of this position was critical to a gune because "once she is established in her marital household, a woman may lay claim to a new economic (and affective) power as wife and mother, no longer allowing herself to be exchanged as a passive object." Furthermore, motherhood and marriage grant her parity with other adult women in her community. This parity opens new possibilities for sociality and qualifies her for those religious festivals open only to gynaikês, such as the Thesmophoria.

I suggest that it is this moment of integration into home and community that has been the aim of the long chain of rituals that began with a woman's betrothal. At the end of her journey, recrossing the threshold of her home, babe in arms, a cautiously optimistic gune must be imagined, one who has triumphed in the most challenging contest open to her: teleia, at last.

NOTES

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1. Cole (2004) and (1984); Redfield (2003); Dowden (1989); Perlman (1989); Sourvinou-Inwood (1988); King (1983); Calame (1997) and (1999); Kondis (1967).


5. The formula occurs several times in Menander with slight variations: εγγυω παιδων επι ἁρότω γενεών την θυγατέρι ἡδη μειρακών σοι προικα τε δίδωμι ἐπι' αὐτή τρία τάλαντα (Dyscolus 842) Cf. Misumenus 444; Fragmentum dubium 5; Fragmenta 151, line 444. Redfield (2003), 43.


8. Although teleia, or fulfillment, is often associated with marriage, the intermediate status of the bride seems to contradict this interpretation. The prenuptial ritual (variously attested as a libation, a bath, or a collecting of sacred water) was called the proteleia, and was frequently associated with the nymphs, Artemis, Hera, Zeus, and others. Cf. Larson (2001), 111. However, the term proteleia seems to indicate that the attainment of fulfillment is pending. Similarly, teleia frequently occurs as a cult epithet of Hera: in Athens (Aristophanes, Thesmophoriazusae 973-976; Aeschylus, Eumenides 213-214), and in Plataia (Pausanias 9.2.5-4.30). Yet as we shall see, Hera is just as frequently associated with childbirth in cult as with marriage, suggesting the two events are linked, contra Clark (1998). Cf. Caldwell (2007), who argues that a similarly drawn-out process served to integrate the Roman sponsa into her conjugal home: "While Roman girls could be propelled into marriage at a very early age, it is equally important to remember that familial anxiety about girls' movement into marriage, combined with the state's emphasis on marriage as a venue for the production of legitimate children, created a lengthy period of transition for females rather than a moment in time. In law, the female achievement of 'adult' status, in terms of agency, might in fact be considered the acquisition of the ius trium liberorum, which freed a woman from the requirement of guardianship (tutela mulierum)" (220).


15. Lysias 1.6-7; trans. Freeman (1946).


17. Danforth (1991), 103-105, emphasizes that both the alienation of the bride from her natal support system and the failure of her husband to defend her can aggravate her instability.
25. For a summary of Bes’ kourotrophic identity in Egypt, see Andrews (1989), 39–40. Sinn (1983), 88–89, demonstrates that Bes retains his kourotrophic function in Greek sanctuaries, although the iconography of the god becomes somewhat Hellenized.
26. Baumbach (2004), 29–30; Sinn (1983), 89–90. Sanctuaries in which Bes figurines have been found include Perachora, the Argive Heraion, the Samian Heraion, the Aphaia sanctuary on Aegina, the Athena sanctuaries at Kamirus and Lindos, the Artemision at Ephesus, and the sanctuaries of Demeter and Kore in Catania, Gela, Selinus, and Tocra.
27. Baumbach (2004), 26–27, n. 179, lists the following sanctuaries as yielding amulets: Perachora, Athena Lindia, Aphrodite at Miletus, Artemis at Ephesus and Sparta, Aphaia on Aegina, and Eileithyia at Inatos on Crete.
29. Dioskourides, De materia medica 5.142.
30. Parker (1996), 18, quoting Plato: "Of the kind of division that retains what is better but expels the worse, I do know the name ... every division of that kind is universally known as purification" (Sophist 226d).
32. Festus, De verborum significatione III, s.v. clavim.
34. Imhoof-Blumer (1871), pl. II, no. 64.
35. Zonai dedicated to Artemis and Aphrodite in the Palatine Anthology are identified as being dedicated for a safe delivery: Wise (2007), 221, n. 415: Palatine Anthology 6.59, 201, 202, 272, 6.210; Brauron: IG II 1514.7–18. Belt clasps have been found at both Perachora (Perachora I, 138ff., pls. 44–45) and Samos: Baumbach (2004), 160; Jantzen (1972), 48–53.
36. See Wise (2007), 46, who lists Hesychius, s.v. Ἀὐτῷ λέγεις; schol. Apollonius Rhodius, Argonautica 1.288; Orphic Hymn 2.7 and 36.5; Theocritus 17.60.


40. Van Straten (1981), 91, pl. 30. Syracuse 21186: Beazley, *ARV*² 993.80. Van Straten notes that it is not clear whether this vase depicts a premarriage ritual or a childbirth ritual. Although it is normally interpreted as the former (cf. Oakley and Sinos [2002], 14; Parker [2007], 242, n. 106), there is nothing on the vase itself which so identifies the scene (cf. Van Straten [1981], 91, n. 127; Wise [2007], 221, n. 414).


43. Flognfeldt (2009), 79.


45. Lévi-Strauss (1963), 198.


47. Parker (1996), 48–73.

48. *IG II²* 1035.10; Pausanias 2.27.1,6; *LSA* 83; Antoninus Liberalis, *Metamorphoses* 19.3.


51. Such sacrifices are common to Hekate, who was associated with both brides and childbirth. Cf. Hadzisteliou Price (1978), 123, 159, 192; Pingiatoglou (1981), 93. Nine dog figurines were excavated at Perachora (*Perachora* 1.228, n. 162). Baumbach (2004), 27–28, notes several other attestations of dog sacrifice in a childbirth context: Aphrodite Genetyllis at Colias in Attica; Eilioneia at Argos (to secure an uncomplicated birth). See also Wise (2007), 93–94; and Johnston (1997), 211, n. 32.

52. *LSCG* 77, 12–22. Also published in Homolle (1893); Schweizer (1923), no. 323; and Rhodes and Osborne (2003), no. 1. As printed in *LSCG*, no. 77D: καὶ θυή ἱμαρήνων καὶ λεκχοῖ παρὰ [κ]αι καὶ ξένους Φοῖ παρέωντοι ἱμαρήμα δύνατον δραματουργοί καὶ τοὺς πανταύλλοι θυομένοιν, τοῖς τε δεμοργοῖς καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις πάντες Λαμβάδαι πρασσόντων δὲ τοῖς πεντακαίδεκα.


54. Matthews (1996), 15, following Apollodoros, dates Antimachus's *floruit* to the period following the Peloponnesian War.


57. *LSA* 52B. Sokolowski (1955) claims that the inscription pertains to the auction of the priesthood, and as such describes payment due for sacrifices.


60. LSA 52B 10–11: καὶ αἱ τὰ λοξία ἐκπορευόμεναι καὶ ἱοννύμεναι.


63. Bell (1981) 81–82, and Hadzisteliou Price (1978) 180, both suggest that the po-los indicates the divine status of a kourotrophic figure.

64. Kourouniotis' drawing, (1896), pl. 11, no. 1, suggests such an interpretation.


68. Dakoronia and Gounaropoulos (1992), 221, n. 24.

69. Dakoronia and Gounaropoulos (1992), 221, n. 26, identify the vessel as an askos, noting that pottery vessels such as *oinochoai* and *prochoi* are more typical for pouring libations, while the askos was used for liquids poured drop by drop.

70. Dakoronia and Gounaropoulos (1992), 222–223.

71. Cf. the description and interpretation of this scene in Mireille Lee's essay in this volume.


74. Such a journey following a long period of confinement has numerous parallels in the childbirth rituals of traditional societies. Ancient Israel: Leviticus 12; Bulgaria: van Gennep (1960), 45–46; China: Walsche (1908), 646; Turkey: Delaney (1991), 68–71.


76. Incense is said to be presented to Eileithyia in Olympia (Pausanias 2.20.1–6), and also in Hermione (Pausanias 2.35.11). Dakoronia and Gounaropoulos (1992) suggest the pyxis on the Echinos relief may have served to contain incense, although *comparanda* normally depict an incense-burner (222, n. 30).

77. Pace Burkert's remarks on offerings in general: "Ubiquitous, as far as I can see, is the association of religion with anxiety; even if the aspect of dread seems to recede somewhat into the background in certain forms of Greek religion, it is always present . . . the loss involved is worth so much less than that which is preserved. The 'offering' turns into a bait to manipulate and to fool a powerful pursuer" ([1987], 14–15).

78. Jewelry of all types, especially finger rings, is common at childbirth sanctuaries and attested to in the inscriptions. Wise (2007), 217, reports that bracelets, earrings, necklaces, and rings are listed in the Delian inventory as stored in the Eileithyaion.

79. Versnel (1977), 30–31, identifies hair, statues, clothing, and jewelry as likely pars pro toto offerings and describes Polycrates' actions in Herodotus 3.40 as a kind of substitution sacrifice (32–37).

80. Goddesses are notoriously envious of mortals in childbirth. In the Homeric Hymn to Delian Apollo, Eileithyia is given a necklace by Iris to help Leto in her delivery (104). That ghosts may be appeased by such offerings is suggested in the story Herodotus tells about Periander and the ghost of his dead wife, Melissa. In this case, Melissa is not harassing anyone, but she is refusing to help Periander find a lost treasure. Periander's solution was to take all the women of Corinth out to the sanctuary of Hera, probably Perachora, and dedicate their clothing to her (5.92).

81. Artemidorus 1.74, 2.10.
82. Redfield (1982), 193.
83. Lyons (2003), 95.
84. Burton (1998) argues that women's commensality, particularly at all-female religious ceremonies, contributed substantially to their sociality outside the household. Likewise Cohen (1990), 225, explains that exclusion from public rituals was the penalty faced by a woman taken in adultery who is "excluded from that sphere of life which is the equivalent of politics for men."

WORKS CITED

Abbreviations

AH II = Ch. Waldstein, The Argive Heraeum II (1905).
Olympia IV = A. Furtwängler, Die Bronzen und die übrigen kleineren Funde von Olympia (Berlin, 1890).

*Tiryns I* = A. Frickenhaus, *Die Hera von Tiryns* (1912).


RITUALS OF INCORPORATION AT THE KOUROTROPHIC SHRINE


Ström, Ingrid. (1995). "The Early Sanctuary of the Argive Heraion and Its External Re-


Collaboration and Conflict
DISCOURSES OF MATERNITY IN
HIPPOCRATIC GYNECOLOGY AND EMBRYOLOGY
Yurie Hong

The uterus . . . is termed mētra, because it is the mother of all the embryos borne of it or because it makes mothers of those who possess it.

SORANUS, GYNECOLOGY I.6; TRANS. TEMKIN (1956), 8

Within any culture, motherhood is defined in biological and social terms. To varying degrees, a mother may be identified as a woman who has given birth to a child and/or one who bears the primary responsibility for its upbringing. On the whole, ancient Greek sources tend to express intense ambivalence about women's birthing and rearing of children. While positive representations of mothers do exist,¹ the majority of our sources reflect great anxiety about the nature of a mother's relationship to her husband and child² and the overall risks and benefits of reproduction for men and women alike.³ Ancient medical writing echoes this ambivalence and gives voice to a similarly complex range of responses to the female body and the physiological phenomena of pregnancy and childbirth. While ancient gynecological and embryological texts focus on the biological processes by which women become mothers, cultural discourses on the social institution of motherhood reveal how those processes are articulated and understood. This essay looks at how Greek medical writing constructs the maternal body and the maternal–fetal relationship in narratives of conception, gestation, and childbirth.

MATERNAL MEDICINE

Composed primarily during the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, the sixty or so treatises contained in the Hippocratic corpus comprise the ear-
liest set of Greek medical writing that survives. About ten of these treatises are devoted specifically to “women’s diseases” and detail the impact of menstruation, conception, pregnancy, and birth on the female body. This narrow focus indicates that a woman’s ability to bear children was a primary medical and social concern and that motherhood was viewed as an integral part of a woman’s social identity and physical well-being.

As previous scholars have shown, theories about female physiology and anatomy were heavily influenced by the notion that women’s bodies were fundamentally different from and inferior to men’s. That difference was thought to stem from women’s reproductive capacity, which was viewed as governing women’s physical and mental disposition. Hippocratic doctors believed that the womb could become oriented in different directions, causing menstrual blood to be expelled inside the woman’s body, where it would putrefy and lead to infections or tumors. They also believed that if the womb became dehydrated, it could move throughout the body in search of moisture, pushing up against the woman’s organs, suffocating her, and driving her mad.

As scholars have observed, these theories often were used to justify women’s exclusion from the public arena. They also provided medical support for upholding traditional gender roles by promoting the salutary effects of pregnancy and childbirth: Women who have had sex with men, conceived, and given birth are said to be healthier and less prone to suffer from menstrual problems. Frequently, sexual intercourse is itself prescribed as part of the treatment or as a test to determine whether the patient has been cured. The recommendation for the woman to “have intercourse with her man” and the refrain “if she becomes pregnant she will be healthy” demonstrate the degree to which a woman’s good health was thus perceived to be contingent on the fulfillment of her social role as a sexual partner and reproducer of the household.

However, while the Hippocratic writers operated within a cultural framework that took these roles for granted, their main concern was to identify and treat the bodily conditions to which women were subject, that is, to follow the theory and practice of medical expertise. But not all medical writers weighted these goals equally or in the same way. Some were more dedicated to theory and others to therapy, and the approach a medical writer adopted could play a significant role in the resulting image of the maternal body. This effect can be seen in narratives of pregnancy and birth contained in the two types of “women treatises” in the corpus: 1) gynecology, which focuses on treating disorders related to menstruation, pregnancy, and birth, and 2) embryology, which seeks to elucidate the internal
processes of conception and fetal development. While both sets of treatises subscribe to the same physiological principles, each develops its own goals and adopts a rhetoric of reproduction that casts the maternal body in different, often conflicting, lights.

Diseases of Women (DW) is the most comprehensive gynecological and obstetrical treatise in the corpus. The text takes a primarily therapeutic approach and catalogues and suggests treatment for such conditions as uterine displacement and problems with menstruation (1–9), inability to conceive (10–20, 22–24), gestational complications (21, 25–32), difficult births (33–34, 68–70), abnormal lochial flow, or afterbirth (35–41), and uterine complications after birth or miscarriage (42–67, 71–73). It concludes with a list of additional recipes and therapies (74–109).

As this outline of its contents makes clear, the treatise has two overlapping goals: to treat women's conditions and to achieve positive reproductive outcomes. The repeated references to a woman's potential to conceive, even when conception is not the issue at hand, highlight the extent to which preservation of women's fertility constitutes the treatise's overarching concern. It is important to emphasize, however, that its primary goal is to remedy women's physical ailments, and childbirth figures as just one aspect of this overall aim. When the fetus is mentioned, it is often treated as a secondary figure whose impact on the maternal body is described in terms of mechanical processes.

This focus on female disorders can be viewed negatively, as constructing women's bodies as flawed and in need of constant medical intervention. However, it can also be seen as validating women's bodily experience by acknowledging the pain of menstrual cramping, the discomfort of pregnancy, and the very real dangers involved in childbirth. The litany of potential complications demonstrates, quite dramatically, the fact that birth was a serious business for both mother and child and underscores the potential costs involved in becoming a mother.

By contrast, the embryological treatises, On Generation and On the Nature of the Child, take a much more theoretical approach. Accordingly, the characterization of the maternal–fetal relationship shifts. Originally transmitted as a single text, On Generation and On the Nature of the Child were also most likely composed by the same author as Diseases of Women 1. Unlike that treatise, On Generation and On the Nature of the Child limit their discussion of reproduction to conception, gestation, and birth, and focus almost exclusively on the fetal, rather than the maternal, body. In contrast with the more woman-centered perspective of Diseases of Women 1, this approach envisions mother and child as two separate entities. The treatises'
methodological interest in one over the other leads to the emergence of a model of conflict and dominance that amplifies over the course of the narrative.

In this essay I argue that medical accounts of conception, gestation, and birth contain a shadow narrative about motherhood that is inflected with anxieties about maternal or fetal harm, the potential instability of maternal allegiances, and possible fluctuations in the power dynamics of the household. Given their shared authorship, these three treatises provide valuable insight not only into the ways in which medical writing engages with cultural constructions of motherhood, but also into the ways in which different modes of intellectual thought and argumentation shape the images of motherhood and mother–child relations. I will begin by examining the rhetoric of the embryologies' narrative of pregnancy and birth before turning to corresponding passages in the gynecologies.26

CONCEPTION: DUELING MODELS
AND THE BATTLE OF THE SEXES

On Generation contains the fullest account of the production of male and female seed and the mechanical processes of conception.27 As early as the sixth century BCE, medical and scientific thinkers posited the following theories on the nature of the seed:28

1. Pangenesis (seed was composed of elements derived from the entire body)
2. Seed was the foam of agitated blood
3. Encephalo-myogenesis (seed was derived from the head or brain via the spinal marrow)

Rather than introducing a new theory of conception, the author of On Generation synthesizes several preexisting hypotheses into one coherent narrative.29 He asserts that for men, seed is derived from the “most potent” (τὸ ἐξωμορότατον) part of each humor in the body. Derived from the foam of blood agitated during sexual intercourse, the seed collects in the head and is “diffused from the brain . . . into the spinal marrow,” passing “via the testicles into the penis” and stimulating the growth of facial and body hair as it goes (Gen. 1.1–3). In addition to debates on the nature of seed, the respective contributions of mother and father to the developing fetus was a favorite topic of discussion. The author's statement that “a sim-
ilar process" of seed production occurs in women constitutes an additional attempt to reconcile two mutually exclusive arguments about the process of reproduction.  

While women's centrality in reproduction is taken for granted in mythical examples of goddesses, such as Gaia and Hera, who manage to reproduce parthenogenetically, scientific debates about whether and to what degree women played a role in the physical generation of the fetus tend to assume the primacy of the father. Some thinkers believed in what is called the one-seed theory (in which fetal material derived only from the father), while others subscribed to the two-seed theory (which attributed fetal material to both parents). The most notorious example of the one-seed theory occurs in Aeschylus's *Eumenides*, where Apollo famously denies that mothers are truly parents of the children they bear:

The woman who is called the "mother" of the child is not the parent, but rather a nurse of the newly sown embryo. He who impregnates generates [the child], while she, as a stranger for a stranger, preserves the shoot if the god does not harm it in some way. (*Eumenides* 658–661)

According to this model, the father is the real parent of the child, whereas the mother is characterized as a "stranger" (ξένη) to the household. While a woman may house, nourish, and give birth to the child, she is biologically unconnected to its physical being. This construction of the maternal–fetal relationship provides a vivid example of the notion that women were perpetual outsiders whose loyalty to their husbands and children was always in question. This embryological theory, especially as represented here, undercuts assumptions of women's centrality to birth and reflects an ideological privileging of the father in reproduction as well as in society.

The one-seed theory was not, however, the one most commonly held by the Hippocratic writers. The author of *On Generation* asserts emphatically that both male and female emit seed and contribute to the child's physical makeup (*Gen.* 4.1, 6.1). The two-seed theory likely arose, or at least became more widely accepted, from the simple fact that children sometimes resemble their mothers or maternal family members, in addition to the fact that only women give birth. While the two-seed theory also reflects a desire to affirm paternal importance, in contrast to the one-seed theory it does not do so at the expense of the mother. Reproductive contribution is not viewed necessarily as a zero-sum game. What is innovative about this au-
Author's approach is that while he subscribes to the two-seed theory, he nonetheless incorporates aspects of the one-seed theory in his discussion of how fetal sex is determined. The dominance of the father in the one-seed theory is replaced by a seemingly more collaborative model of conception. The attempt to synthesize multiple strands of scientific discourse, however, results in an increasingly vivid rhetoric of conflict and dominance that unfolds in the narrative of gestation and birth to follow.

With the assertion that women, too, emit seed, the author moves on to discuss the determination of fetal sex, taking a similarly eclectic approach to preexisting intellectual debates. His central argument is that women and men both emit seed “derived from the whole body” and that both parents may emit two types of seed at any given time: a “stronger,” male-determining, seed or a “weaker,” female-determining, one. He further remarks that “strong” seed will result in a boy “because the male is stronger than the female” (Gen. 6.1). The conflation of fetal sex with seminal potency is consistent with common cultural assumptions about the relative strength and weakness of men and women outside of the womb. Preexisting assumptions about gender and social relationships are thus mapped onto the qualities of biological matter and its various interactions. At the same time, the fact that women may produce “strong,” male-determining seed while men may produce “weaker,” female-determining seed allows for the possibility that the child’s sex may have been designated by either parent.

The idea that “stronger” or “weaker” seed determined fetal sex was the one-seed theory’s explanation of how a fetus made up of purely paternal material may become male or female. The application of this idea, in conjunction with the theory of pangenesis, to the two-seed model explains the problem of maternal resemblance that the one-seed theory failed to address. The author then states that because seed is drawn from all parts of the body, both mother and father will contribute to each of the child’s attributes:

And so it is sometimes the case that a daughter will bear a closer resemblance to her father than to her mother in the majority of her characteristics, while at other times a boy will resemble his mother more closely than his father. (Gen. 8.2)

Compared to the one-seed theory of parentage, the two-seed model reflects a relatively egalitarian view of gender roles in reproduction because it at least recognizes the mother’s potential contribution to each aspect of the child. This particular synthesis of the one-seed and two-seed models contains the potential for a rhetoric of parental complementarity and coopera-
The author says that if both parents emit “strong” seed, the combined mixture will result in a boy, while “weak” seed emitted by both will result in a girl. Thus, parental material may be collaborative in determining fetal sex if they contribute the same type of seed. The stage seems to be set for a fifty-fifty chance of parental consensus as to the child’s sex. This potential, however, is never fully realized, and the interaction between maternal and paternal seed is quickly characterized in terms of conflict.

If the weak seed is much greater in quantity than the stronger seed, the strong seed is overpowered and, having been mixed with the weak, results in a female. But if the strong seed is greater in quantity than the weak, and the weak is overpowered, [the mixing] results in a male. (emphasis mine)

The language of strength, weakness, and overpowering is fairly emphatic. This is in part due to the author’s incorporation of the final, and most crucial, Hippocratic theory, the principle of prevalence (ἐπικράτεια)—the idea that all opposing elements (for example, heat/cold, wet/dry) will compete with the other for dominance. The principle of prevalence establishes conflict as the primary mode of interaction between the parents’ seed, identifying male and female as polar opposites fighting for dominance. Furthermore, the author then states that the negotiation of maternal and paternal material applies to all of the child’s physical characteristics. Thus, even if both partners contribute “strong” seed that results in a boy, characteristics drawn from each parent’s body will struggle with one another to determine whether the boy inherits, for example, the father’s nose and the mother’s ears.

The narrative of conflict thus develops along a number of axes:

1. Gender (male-determining vs. female-determining seed)
2. Potency (strong vs. weak seed)
3. Parentage (mother’s seed vs. father’s seed)

Not only does the principle of prevalence establish conflict as the main interactional mode, but its incorporation into the two-seed theory suggests
the unsettling possibility of the maternal seed (weak or strong) prevailing over the paternal. Thus, not only does the blending of these theories reflect cultural assumptions about gender difference, but it also provides fertile ground for the expression of broader anxieties about the implications of an oppositional relationship in the context of the family.

Combining the theory of seminal bi-potency and the principle of prevalence marks a crucial transition in *On Generation*. The polarities that describe biological material shift to denote the interactions of that material. When both parents emit seed of the same strength or weakness, "potency" refers to the quality of the biological material. When maternal and paternal seed do not correspond, however, "potency" refers to the ability of one to overpower the other. This is an important shift. "Strength" and "weakness" as descriptors of physical qualities—that is, levels of concentration—become descriptors of physical interactions. This shift—from seed concentration to seed interaction—sets the following discussion of gestation and birth along a narrative trajectory of opposition and relational conflict. The resulting conceptual framework further shapes the characterization of the mother's relationship not only to her partner but also to the fetus developing within her.⁴¹

**GESTATION AND FETAL "GENDER": LIKE FATHER, LIKE (FETAL) SON**

As *On Generation* moves on to fetal gestation, it emphasizes the motif of polarity and conflict. This oppositional framework provides the intellectual and rhetorical foundation for the author's explication of fetal development and has a profound impact on the way that the maternal-fetal relationship is characterized.

Discussing the possible reasons for the birth of small or sickly children, the author asserts that "the womb is to blame because it is narrower than it should be," offering the analogy that "if someone were to put a growing cucumber . . . into a narrow vessel, it would equal the hollow of the vessel [in size]" (*Gen. 9.3*). The assumption that the woman's body or behavior is to blame for negative reproductive outcomes is a common one.⁴² *Diseases of Women* ¹ says that a woman will have difficulty conceiving or carrying a child to term if she "lifts a heavy weight," "receives a blow," "jumps about," "faints," "eats too much or too little," "becomes fearful and alarmed," or if her womb is "flatulent . . . flabby, too large, or too small" (*DW 1.25*).
In both gynecological and embryological accounts, the woman is figured as a potential cause of harm. Mother and child are thus set against one another. *Diseases of Women* I, however, adopts a somewhat sympathetic attitude, adding that “some women abort unintentionally: for it requires much vigilance and skill to nourish an embryo in the womb and bring it to full term, and to survive [the bringing of] it [into this world] in childbirth” (*DW* I.25). It further states that if a woman is “sickly and bilious,” her child will also be “weak and . . . bilious” (*DW* I.26), and acknowledges that, while a mother may have a negative impact on her unborn child, the fates of both are usually linked: “When the woman is cared for, the embryo gets stronger, and the woman herself is healthy. But if she is not cared for, the embryo is aborted and she herself is in danger of acquiring a long-term disease” (*DW* I.25).44

By contrast, *On Generation*’s cucumber analogy contains no such concessions and instead amplifies the opposition by saying that if the vessel is large, the cucumber will grow larger—not because the vessel’s capaciousness will accommodate the cucumber’s natural size, but because the cucumber “competes [ἐπιθέσθη] with the hollow of the vessel” (*Gen*. 9.3). Thus, even a vessel large enough to accommodate the cucumber (that is, the fetus), is characterized as an obstacle with which it must contend.

The undercurrent of rivalry that animates the vessel-womb/cucumber-fetus relationship recalls the contest of parental seed—not only with regard to the concept of relative, competitive strength but because it builds on the dual assumption that male and female are opposites and that opposites will compete for prevalence. The womb is configured as a gendered space in which the battle of the sexes will determine the medical fates of mother and child. Although the fetus itself is not explicitly gendered, the cucumber has specifically male connotations. Not only does it have a phallic shape, but it was used in treatments meant to remedy barrenness—a use no doubt influenced by its association with the penis, to which it is sometimes compared. As mentioned above, sex and pregnancy were thought to remedy uterine displacement because the penis would straighten the mouth of the womb, semen would irrigate it, and the fetus would weigh it down.

The penis and the fetus thus serve similar functions in correcting women’s perceived wayward anatomy. Furthermore, as Ann Hanson has observed, the medical writers regularly assume that a normal or healthy fetus is a boy and identify it as a girl only if there are problems arising from the fetus’s presumed weakness. A fetus that could successfully “contend” with the womb would, therefore, by default be male while a female
fetus would be more likely to be miscarried. Given the Greek tendency to view scientific phenomena in terms of similarity and difference, it becomes clear that in *On Generation*, what should be a gender-neutral discussion of where deformed or sickly babies come from is increasingly inflected with notions of generational and gendered conflict. In other words, the narrative of conflict implied in the competition of maternal and paternal seed shifts and broadens to then describe the relationship between not only mother and child, but implicitly mother and unborn son. The inseminating penis ("father") and the product of the insemination, that is, the fetus ("son"), are aligned against the maternal body.

By contrast, in *Diseases of Women*, the fetus behaves not so much like a penis or as a separate entity, but rather more like the uterus itself. In two nearly identical passages describing the cause of suffocation in women, the author describes how the womb and the fetus head toward the liver, occupy the breathing space around the belly, encounter phlegm flowing down from the head, and then "gurgle" as they settle back into place (*DW* 1.7, 32). The implicit analogy between fetus and womb elides the fetal body with the womb and hence the mother's body (cf. the assertion above that a bilious woman will give birth to a bilious child) and is representative of the treatise's general approach to viewing the fetus within the context of the maternal body.

*On Generation*, however, privileges the fetal body at the expense of the mother's. It is striking that despite his reliance on observation and analogy in explicating fetal development, the author makes relatively little use of the external signs of fetal growth provided by the maternal body. For example, while he postulates that fetal differentiation is complete by thirty-five days for boys and forty-two days for girls, he does not address the possible corresponding differences in the date when a woman pregnant with either sex will begin to "show." Nor does he mention observable phenomena such as the swelling of belly and breasts as possible indicators of fetal development. By contrast, in *Diseases of Women* he says that when "the fullness of the breasts and the belly collapse . . . and the breasts shrivel up and no milk appears, it is apparent that the child is either dead or is alive but weak" (*DW* 1.27). He also notes that pregnant women become pale and crave "strange foods" because blood is diverted to the belly (*DW* 1.34).

While both the gynecologies and embryologies subscribe to the same physiological principles, their differing priorities and methodologies view the fetus as aligned with or against the mother. Because gynecology is primarily therapeutic in its goals, the female body takes center stage in the
texts while the fetus is a supporting player. By contrast, in embryologies such as *On the Nature of the Child*, the maternal body disappears almost entirely. The fetus becomes the protagonist of the story of childbirth while the mother is cast as a figure of secondary importance, one alienated from and potentially at odds with the child growing within her.

**Birth and the "War in the Womb"**

This shift in focus from mother to fetus has great implications for the birth narrative to follow, where the implicit ideas of gender and conflict in the narratives of conception and gestation become much more vivid. According to *On the Nature of the Child*, birth begins when nutriment for growth provided by the mother’s body is no longer sufficient for the child (ἡ τροφή καὶ ἡ αὔξησις ἢ ἀπὸ τῆς μητρὸς κατούσα οὐκ ἐτι ἀρκέουσα τῷ παιδίῳ ἐστὶν) (Nat. Ch. 30.1). In response, the child’s physical reaction to this failure of nutriment initiates the birth and causes labor pangs for the mother:

> συμβαίνει τότε τῷ παιδίῳ κινεομένῳ καὶ ἀσκαρίζοντι χερσί τε καὶ πολλὶ μῆκα ἐναὶ τῶν ύμένων τῶν ἐνδον ῥαγέντος δ’ ἐνός, ἡδι οἱ ἄλλοι ἀκινδυνότερν ἐνώμων ἐχουσί... Ὁκόταν δὲ ῥαγέωσιν οἱ ύμένες, τότε λύεται τοῦ δεσμοῦ τὸ ἐμβρυον, καὶ χωρεῖ ἐξω κλονθημένον οὐ γὰρ ἐτὶ ἔχει σθένος τῶν ύμένων προδότον καὶ τούτων ἀπενεχθέντων οὐδ᾿ αἱ μήτραι δύνανται ἐτι το παιδίον ἴσχελιν (Nat. Ch. 30.1)

[...]

> Ὁκόταν δὲ χωρῇ τῷ παιδίῳ, βιήται καὶ εὑρόνει τὰς μήτρας ἐν διεξόδῳ... ἐν δὲ τής μήτρησιν ἐδυν ἐγκρατεῖς μᾶλλον γίνεται ἐς τῶν ύμένων τὴν κατάρρησιν ἀμα δεκάτω μην... (Nat. Ch. 30.2)

[...]

> ἦτεν οὖν πλεῖω τροφὴν τῆς παρευσίας τὸ ἐμβρυον ἀσκαρίζον ῥήγγυστι τοὺς ύμένας, καὶ λυθὲν τοῦ δεσμοῦ χωρεῖ ὡμοῦ ἐξω. (Nat. Ch. 30.9)

[Birth] comes about when the child tears some of the internal membranes with its hands and feet by moving and thrashing about. And when one of these membranes is torn, the power of the remaining ones is weakened. And when the membranes are torn, the fetus is freed from its bond,
and goes out in a rush; for no longer is there any strength [to hold it] once the membranes fail and have been carried away, nor does the womb have the power to restrain the child.

When the child emerges, it forces its way through the womb and widens it at the birth canal . . . [The fetus] becomes strong enough in the womb to tear up the membranes in the ninth month [of its gestation].

in search of more nutriment than is being provided, the infant tosses about until it ruptures the membranes and, released from its bond, it emerges all at once. (emphasis mine)

The maternal body is portrayed as restricting the fetus’s growth, depriving it of food, and keeping it chained up (θεσμοῦ) until it develops enough physical force (βίτης, δύναμις) to fight back and free itself by rupturing the uterine membranes with its hands and feet.53 Mother and child are pitted against one another as the womb is unable (οὐδὲς . . . δύναται) to control or manage the potency (δύναμις) of her empowered (ἐγκρατὲς) child, who causes the mother physical pain in labor and alters her internal landscape as it goes. The birth narrative thus describes a warlike scenario in which mother and child are cast as engaging in intrauterine violence.54

This coded struggle is further clarified by the author’s subsequent comparison of human childbirth to the hatching of a chick from its egg:

"'Οκόταν ἐπιλείπτη ἡ τροφή τῶν νεωσσῶ ἐκ τοῦ ὅου, οὐκ ἔχου ἄρκεοσαν . . . κινεῖται ἰσχυρῶς ἐν τῷ ὅου, ἔτεον τροφὴν πλείονα, καὶ οἱ ὑμένες περιμένουνται, καὶ ὁκόταν ἡ μήτηρ αὐθηταὐ τὸν νεωσσὸν κινηθέντα ἰσχυρῶς, κολάμασα ἐξέλειε. (Nat. Ch. 30.8)

When nourishment from the egg lessens [and] becomes insufficient for the chick . . . seeking more, [the chick] moves vigorously in the egg and the membranes are broken. And when the mother notices the chick’s vigorous agitation, pecking at the shell, she hatches it.55 (emphasis mine)

While the description of the birth of the human child is filled with violent words and active verbs, descriptions of the same natal phenomenon is more benign in the chicken world. The chick does not break chainlike membranes with its claws and beak. Rather, “the membranes are broken.” Instead of reacting violently (βέντα), it simply “moves vigorously” (κινεῖται ἰσχυρῶς), and whereas the repetition of the word δύναμις in the human birth envisions the fetus overpowering the maternal body, this less aggres-
sive phrase indicates that the chick's struggles are not directed against its mother, who, upon noticing the chick in distress, helpfully pecks the eggshell and assists her offspring. The hatching of the chick is represented as a collaborative process, whereas the description of the human birth emerges even more clearly as an antagonistic struggle between mother and child.

While the analogy's primary function is to illustrate the notion that the failure of nutriment causes the child to move about and initiate its own birth, the hatching egg analogy sets the cultural paradigm of the nurturing, helpful mother (in the form of the hen) against that of the overbearing (human) mother who must be defeated if the child is to achieve independence. Given that chickens do not, in fact, engage in this behavior, the inclusion of such a detail only heightens the difference in the characterization of the two mothers. One protects and nurtures her offspring, and one is at odds with it by the very nature of her own biology.

In light of the emerging pattern of a rhetoric of gendered conflict in the earlier competition between maternal and paternal seed and the fetus's competition with the womb, the battle between mother and child in birth emerges more specifically as one between mother and son. Given that female infants were thought to be weaker at birth than boys, it is difficult to envision this birth narrative, with its emphasis on strength and vigor, as describing the birth of a girl. By contrast, due to their therapeutic orientation, the gynecologies only discuss difficult births, which leads to the implication that these births involved girls (or perhaps weak males).

The narrative of reproduction in the embryologies thus operates within a network of multiple axes of generational and gendered opposition: the conflict between mother and father, mother and child, and, implicitly, mother and son. As in the assumption that fetal harm was caused by the womb, such a construction of the mother–child relationship reflects the anxiety that the interests of mother and child might eventually be at odds with one another, however beneficial the relationship might have been at first. Despite the two-seed theory's acknowledgment of the mother's contribution, the overarching themes of competition and prevalence yield a family dynamic and mother–child relationship not unlike Apollo's definition of mothers in the Eumenides as biologically alienated from their children.

The narrative of reproduction contained in On Generation and On the Nature of the Child is at war with itself, in its attempts to reconcile competing medical theories into a comprehensive one. Just as the author's account of conception integrates multiple, conflicting discourses and perspectives from the one- and two-seed theories, the birth narrative combines elements of the caring and the dangerous mother paradigms via the helpful chicken.
analogy and the imagery of birth as war. In other words, the author’s expli-
cation of the two-seed theory argues for a stronger mother–child connec-
tion than does the one-seed theory, but it also expresses a corresponding
ambivalence about the enhanced potential for conflict that this biological
intimacy entails.

It is not difficult to see how human childbirth could be understood
primarily in terms of contentious violence while the hatching of a chick
might not be. The hen and its egg are not physically attached to one an-
other and pose no threat to each other’s bodily integrity. The observation of
blood and pain during birth as well as the very real risk of death for both
mother and child would understandably have given rise to the analogy of
birth as the domestic equivalent of a heroic struggle.61

Direct interpersonal conflict is not, however, the only way of envi-
sioning birth. The treatise Seven-Months’ Child states that “when the mem-
branes are stretched out and the umbilical cord is extended, it causes pain
for the mother. And then the fetus, released from its old bonds, becomes
heavier” (3). Although this passage deploys vocabulary and physiological
concepts similar to those found in On the Nature of the Child, it is not fe-
tal violence but rather “the strained membranes and the extended umbilical
cord” that cause pain. In contrast to On the Nature of the Child’s configura-
tion of birth as the fetus’s reaction to maternal restriction, the fetus’s vigor-
ous movements in Eight-Months’ Child are said to be a demonstration of the
fetus’s renewed health and vigor following a period of sickness—one which
is presented as a dangerous period for both mother and child.62 In both in-
stances, fetal movement and its effect on the maternal body are not articu-
lated in terms that evoke interpersonal relations.

Similarly, in Diseases of Women 1, a woman’s discomfort in labor is due
to fetal “convulsions” in addition to the fact that a constricted belly causes
heartburn (DW 1.34). While this depiction of birth also subscribes to an
active-fetus/passive-womb model, the author says that difficult births are
the result of breech presentation and notes that “many times the women
themselves, their babies, or both have died” (DW 1.33).63 “Thus, birth is char-
acterized as a set of mechanical processes that can affect both mother and
child in both positive and negative ways.64 The physical intimacy of mother
and child is viewed not as the precondition for parturitional violence, but as
a mutual bond, with birth as an intense, yet shared, experience.65 Acknowl-
edging that maternal and fetal fates are often linked, Diseases of Women 1
gives the impression that for the most part bodily mechanics, rather than
the mother and child themselves, are to blame when complications arise,
and it expresses much concern over the life and health of the mother.
Indeed, grave stelai dedicated to women who died in childbirth provide ample evidence for the fact that giving birth was a dangerous business for both mother and child (e.g., fig. 1.3 of this volume). In an interesting twist, a funerary inscription for a woman named Socratea from Paros that dates to the second century CE reads, "The unstoppable Fury of the newborn infant took me, bitter, from my happy life with a fatal hemorrhage. I did not bring the child into the light by my labor pains, but it lies hidden in its mother's womb among the dead." The tombstone, though inscribed from the perspective of the dead woman, would have been erected by the head of the household and therefore expresses publicly his own view of the death. In this case, the inscription engages in a discourse of fetal agency that results in harm to its mother. Contrary to the more widespread trope of the harmful mother, here the fetus is viewed as the greater threat to the household because it is characterized as having caused the death of one of its central members. This inscription gives voice to the complexity of emotions surrounding childbirth, acknowledging that a child can be both an object of desire and a source of great anxiety. Because marriage was contracted for the production of legitimate children, motherhood was a way for women to gain status inside and outside of the household. Yet the pain of labor and the risk of death could not have been too far from anyone's mind.

There are two factors at work in the construction of maternal identity and relationships in the medical texts: preexisting cultural anxieties about women, birth, and family dynamics and the methodological focus and corresponding rhetorical strategy of any given treatise. Although written by the same author, Diseases of Women I, On Generation, and On the Nature of the Child adopt divergent rhetorics of reproduction by capitalizing on different facets of broader cultural discourses on maternity. By inscribing the dynamics of gender onto reproductive processes, they express a range of anxieties about women and the institution of motherhood at the same time as they argue for a biologically cohesive family unit.

Building on the assumption of male–female difference and the notion that the interaction of opposites is a zero-sum game, the embryologies' emphasis on conflict affirms and validates a system whereby men must protect their own interests and those of their unborn children from the very bodies of the women who bear them. In the gynecologies, female biology and the mechanics of birth endanger the household by putting mother and child's lives at risk, thereby necessitating medical intervention. Both types of treatises simultaneously stoke and allay anxieties about reproduction by characterizing medical expertise and supervision as necessary to ensure individ-
ual and collective survival. In so doing, they not only capture the complex emotions and ambivalent attitudes surrounding childbirth and motherhood, but they also offer tantalizing glimpses into the experience of pregnancy and childbirth—the biological processes that, in turn, produce and reinforce a woman’s social identity as a mother.

NOTES

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All translations are my own unless otherwise specified. Hippocratic texts are those of Littré (1839–1861), with the exception of On Generation and On the Nature of the Child, which have been edited by Joly (1970).

1. For ideological constructions of mothers as nurturing and self-sacrificing, see Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics 1159a28–33, 1161b26–27, and Xenophon, Memorabilia 2.2.3. For vase paintings illustrating maternal–child bonding, see Keuls (1985), 110–113. See Loraux (1995), 23–43, on dying in childbirth as the female equivalent of dying in battle.

2. See Semonides, On Women and Hesiod, Works and Days 695–705 for the view of wives as an unavoidable curse. In Hesiod’s Theogony, mothers repeatedly bear offspring who are a threat to their fathers (164–172, 468–472, 888–898); Medea kills her children in order to destroy Jason’s household (Medea 816–817); and Clytemnestra murders Agamemnon as revenge for the sacrifice of their daughter (Agamemnon 1417–1418). See Murnaghan (1992) for additional examples of mothers as the source of both life and death.

3. Hesiod laments that wives and children are a drain on resources but are necessary for perpetuating the household (Theogony 590–612). Few data are available on maternal mortality rates, but these would likely have increased with the number of births. Morris (1987), 63, estimates that the ancient world had a population replacement rate of about five to six births per woman and that during prehistoric times 10–20 percent of women died giving birth. For tombstones that bear witness to the precariousness of childbirth, see Demand (1994), 155–166.

4. The specific number of treatises is difficult to pinpoint. On Generation and On
the Nature of the Child, for example, were originally composed as one continuous text but were treated separately in the manuscript tradition. Some later texts, such as On the Nature of Women, appear to be composites of earlier treatises. See Dean-Jones (1994), 10–33, for a helpful overview of the women treatises.

5. Most treatises assume a male patient. Some, such as Epidemics and Aphorisms, contain subsections on women or note responses to diseases that are perceived to be specific to women. For additional examples, see King (1998), 35.

6. Women are given to their husbands in marriage “for the plowing of legitimate children” (cf. Kock [1880–1888], Menander, fr. 720). Problems in conceiving seem to be a common reason for seeking treatment. The vast majority of texts assume that difficulty in conceiving is due to the woman. See Lloyd (1983a), 84 n. 101, however, for sources recommending adjustments to men’s regimen.

7. See King (1998), 11–12, for ancient views of female anatomical difference and women’s health as a distinct branch of medicine. See Dean-Jones (1991), 119, on the perceived relationship between female physical weakness and menstruation. Lloyd (1983a), 58–86, discusses the ways in which assumptions of male superiority influence the development of medical practice and theory. See Hanson (1992), esp. 32–33, on the way that embryological theories about the fetal origins of female weakness supported an interventionist approach to gynecology.

8. Diseases of Women (DW) 1.2. On the Diseases of Virgins says that girls beginning to menstruate are seized by desires to throw themselves down wells.

9. Women’s flesh was thought to be spongier and moister than men’s, a condition that would render women less capable of strenuous labor and more prone to illness (DW i.1). As Dean-Jones (1991), 114–116, argues, such perceptions were taken as biological evidence that women’s bodies were inferior to men’s. Furthermore, the hazards of uterine displacement identified women as weak and in need of constant monitoring (King [1998], 36–39) and reinforced cultural notions of women as unstable and lacking in self-control (Dean-Jones [1992], 86–87). With regard to the theory of the wandering womb, in the later stages of pregnancy the uterus does indeed press up against the bladder and digestive organs and can cause great discomfort and irritability. Perhaps this suggested that the uterus had a similar effect on women even if they were not pregnant. See Dean-Jones (1991), 121–123, for a summary of scholarship on the wandering womb theory as possibly originating from observations of uterine prolapse, the lack of uterine space in the male body, women’s own interpretation of bodily pain, the quasi-magical notion of the womb as an entity with a mind of its own, or mechanical principles whereby the dry would naturally be attracted to the wet.

10. Hanson (1990), 316–320. See also Hanson (1992), esp. 33, 48, and 59, on the way that Hippocratic medicine serves the broader interests of the oikos and the polis. This is not to imply that the goal of these treatises was simply to indoctrinate and oppress women. As Lloyd (1983a) notes, the treatises are genuinely concerned with treating women’s conditions (85). Reproduction would certainly have been a central concern for women as well.

11. On Generation 4.3; DW i.1.

13. *DW* 1.59; *DW* 2.135; *BW* 213, 220.

14. Occasionally the treatises recommend that a woman avoid sex because it will exacerbate preexisting medical conditions or interfere with the treatment: *DW* 1.76; *DW* 2.143, 149; *BW* 230. As Lloyd (1983a), 84–85, observes, such prescriptions are relatively rare, but they do indicate that enhancing fertility was not the only concern in these texts. Later, some medical writers, such as Soranus, viewed virginity as more healthful for both men and women. See Hanson (1992), 57.

15. This is also the case for men’s diseases. For the ways in which men’s bodies were also constructed as objects of medical inquiry and intervention, see King (1998), 9. While Hippocratic theories did generally relegate women to the category of “the other,” as Hanson (1998) points out, “Hippocratics tried to cure diseases of women in accordance with the same mechanical principles applied to . . . men, for the mechanical paradigms enhanced their ability to intervene” (94).

16. Hanson (1992), 31–32, has shown the ways in which a medical writer’s expectations and his treatise’s own themes influence the characterization of gender difference.

17. Obstetrics is a specialization within the field of gynecology that deals specifically with pregnancy and childbirth. Like gynecology, it is primarily therapeutic and outcome oriented.

18. As Hanson (1995), 293–294, has observed, while gynecological and embryological treatises share the same assumptions about the nature and processes of the female body, the former focus more on therapy and practical application, while the latter emphasize theory. She thus argues that sexual asymmetry is less pronounced in the gynecologies than in embryologies because each had different goals in mind (293, 304–305): “The Hippocratic gynecologies [sought to bring] women’s concerns in *paidopoiia* within the compass of the written medical tradition, [while] the sophisticated embryologies . . . had the more grandiose aim of encompassing human life in all its stages within medical explanatory models” (294). My argument about the representation of maternal–fetal relations follows similar lines.

19. The physiological principles and therapeutic approaches in *DW* 1 are generally compatible with those of other gynecological treatises in the corpus. While the majority of my discussion will center on this treatise, the main arguments are meant to apply to the gynecologies more broadly.

20. A full translation of this treatise has not yet been published. Hanson (1975) and Lefkowitz and Fant (2005) provide selections.

21. Hanson (1990), 316.

22. For discussions of the way that the Hippocratic writers justified medical intervention into the female body, see Dean-Jones (1991); King (1998), 10–12, 36–39, 40–53; Hanson (1998), 93–94 and (1992), 31, 36, 56.

23. For the sake of clarity I will refer to them separately, as *Gen.* and *Nat. Ch.* Full translations are available in Lonie (1981) and Lloyd (1983b). On these treatises’ canonical status, see Jouanna (2008) and Hanson (2008), 101, esp. n. 21, and 103–104.
24. The treatises date to the late fifth century or the early fourth century BCE and refer to one another explicitly at crucial points. See Lonie (1981), 43–54. Hanson (1991), 77, summarizes and refines earlier attempts to identify different layers of composition, or “viewpoints,” that link these embryologies with specific gynecological treatises.

25. As Hanson (1993), 293, notes, unlike the embryological treatises, which view the fetus “as [a] prototype for mankind in his origins,” the gynecological treatises instead view the fetus as a “potential cause of health or disease in women.”

26. Despite all of its remedies aiding in conception, *DW* contains only one short passage on the processes of conception itself, the significance of which I will address below.

27. The Hippocratic treatises overwhelmingly favor the term γόνυ, though γόνος is sometimes used with no discernible difference in meaning. The author’s central point here is that women emit biological matter. I will use the more gender-neutral term “seed” for both male and female emissions, which should be thought of not as individual, quantifiable seeds but as maternal and paternal substances containing each prospective parent’s “genetic code.”

28. The list is adapted from Lonie (1981), 99–103.


30. The author is rather vague on this point and does not address the fact that women typically do not have testicles or facial hair. Here he is concerned primarily with the notion that women also emit seed generated from agitated blood.

31. Even Zeus, who gives birth to Athena and Dionysus, must first impregnate Metis and Semele, respectively.

32. Anaxagoras, Hippon, Diogenes of Apollonia, and some Pythagoreans subscribed to the one-seed theory. The two-seed theory is expounded by Alcmaeon, Parmenides, Empedocles, and Democritus, and in the Hippocratic treatises *On Regimen* 1 and *DW*. Lonie (1981), 119.


34. Nor was it, by any means, the dominant view among pre-Socratics. See Lonie (1981), 119–120. Even in the *Eumenides*, the fact that the jury is split evenly and Athena’s vote is necessary to break the tie is evidence of other cultural views on the matter.

35. The author foregrounds the woman in his discussion of bi-potential seed because this is the nonconventional part of his argument. Lonie (1981), 127–128.

36. As David Leitao (personal communication) has pointed out, the one-seed theory need not deny maternal contribution entirely. While one-seed theorists argued that the fetus derived from one (paternal) seed, menstrual blood may also be seen as contributing to the child’s physical makeup later in the process. Subsequently, we see the way that scientific theory is again influenced by ideology in Aristotle (*De generatione animalium* 1.2.716a4–7, 2.4), who argues that women simply provide biological matter while the paternal seed is the real formative force.

37. The perceived differential in male and female bodily strength is used to substantiate theories about fetal development overall. Male fetuses were thought to be
fully developed by thirty days, while female fetuses required forty-two days (Nat. Ch. 18.1-7). See Lonie (1981), 190–194, and Hanson (2008), 97–99, for additional theories on the differential development of male and female embryos.

38. Lonie (1981), 127. Location of the embryo or fetus on the right or left side of the womb was another possible explanation.

39. The author asserts emphatically that a complete replica of one parent or the other cannot occur, thus foreclosing the possibility of a de facto one-seed model whereby the father’s seed, for example, could completely overpower the mother’s (Nat. Ch. 8.1). This argument imposes a theory of collaboration and conflict onto the process of conception. Even though the seeds emitted by the man and the woman are engaged in conflict, with one prevailing over the other, the prevailing parts together, regardless of their provenance, make up the whole. See Hanson (1992), 44–45.

40. See Lonie (1981), 129, for the concept of prevalence in the Hippocratic corpus. The use of social and political analogy to comprehend health and physiology goes back to Alcmaeon’s theory that illness was the result of one or more opposing factors gaining sovereignty (μοναρχία) over others and upsetting the body’s delicate equilibrium (τοινομβολία). Lonie (1981), 129–130.

41. For an illuminating example of a different rhetorical outcome, see Jouanna’s (2008) discussion of the late treatise On the Generation of Man, which draws heavily on the Hippocratic treatises On Generation and On the Nature of the Seed. While On the Generation of Man uses the same argument about “stronger” and “weaker” seed, similarity is emphasized more heavily than competition of maternal and paternal elements: καὶ ἢν μὲν ἀπ’ ἀμφοτέρων τὸ σπέρμα ἱσχυρότερον ἐλθῃ, ἄρρεν γίνεται τὸ παιδίον ἢν δὲ ἄσθενεστέρον, θῆλυ. 6.2 καὶ ἢν μὲν τοῦ ἀνδρὸς πλέον ἐπέλθῃ ἡ γόνος, ὅμοιον ἐσκέ τῷ πατρί τὸ παιδίον ἢν δὲ τῆς γυναικος πλέον, ὅμοιον ἐσκέ τῇ μητρὶ· ἢν δὲ ἵνα ἐπέλθῃ ἐς ἀμφοτέρων, ἀμφοτέρως ὅμοιον ἐσκέαν (“And if both contribute stronger seed, the child will be a boy, but if both contribute the weaker, then it will be a girl. Furthermore, if the seed from the man is more plentiful, the child will resemble its father; but if the seed from the woman is more plentiful, the child will resemble its mother; and if the seed comes from both in equal measure, the child will resemble both [parents]”; 6.1–2). The later text, On the Generation of Man, then, while importing many of the same Hippocratic theories about conception and gestation, does not adopt its characterizations of maternal–paternal and maternal–fetal relationships.

42. This remains true today. See Wood (2004) on the pervasiveness of hostile or judgmental terminology used to denote women’s reproductive complications as well as countless studies that investigate the influence of maternal (but not paternal) behavior on negative reproductive outcomes; and see Daniels (1999) on the importance of paternal behavior.

43. This sentiment may reflect women’s own expressions of self-blame when things go wrong.

44. Daniels (1999) analyzes contemporary medical and cultural discourses that pit maternal and fetal health against one another. She argues that the two are inter-
twined and that policies meant to promote fetal health must begin with concern for maternal well-being.

45. For additional ways in which the embryological treatises interpret the womb as a gendered space see Hanson (1992), 32–33, 44–45 and (2008), 98–99.

46. Barren Women 222 prescribes constructing a syringe-like apparatus with a cucumber “like a man’s penis [in width]” (owski ναυτος αὐτοὺς ἐστιν). In DW 2.144, a remedy for a prolapsed uterus includes hanging the woman upside down and leaving a large cucumber in her vagina. See also BW 222 for the use of a dry cucumber as a makeshift fumigation tube or syringe. See Hanson (2008), 98, on the way that medical writers “manipulate[d] gestation in such a way as to assert the primacy of the male.”

47. Nat. Ch. 4.3 and DW 1.1. See also Hanson (1990), 319. See DW 2.133 and BW 221 for the use of tubes and probes generally for fumigation and for straightening the mouth of the uterus.


49. See Lloyd (1966), 15–26, on pre-Socratic theories of opposites; and 345–360 on the medical writers’ reliance on analogy.

50. In DW 1 descriptions of internal processes correspond to visible, external symptoms and describe the woman’s experience of those symptoms. A displaced uterus, for example, will cause a woman to experience suffocation, while menstrual blood expelled inside the body will manifest as a tumor on the skin’s surface.

51. The most frequently mentioned effects of pregnancy—nausea, fatigue, cravings, mood swings, back pain, the shape and location of the belly, etc.—are nowhere to be found. The author does describe the swelling of breasts during pregnancy but only to explain the internal, physiological process of lactation rather than the changes experienced by the pregnant woman herself (Nat. Ch. 21.2). For the tendency to erase the woman when focusing on the fetus, see Casper (1999), who notes that currently, “fetal treatment teams have emphasized pediatric surgery often at the expense of obstetrical perspective . . . the fetus has become the center of this new specialty . . . the health and well-being of the pregnant woman has [sic] often assumed a secondary role” (107).

52. In myth, maternal nurture is linked to the idea that nutriment provided may also be withheld. Cf. the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, in which Demeter (that is, goddess of the harvest), grieving at the loss of her daughter, withholds nutriment from her symbolic children, the mortals, who die without it.

53. See Lonie (1981), 216–218, for a discussion of the author’s conception of δύναμις as an abstract power as well as a substantive force contained within the seed. See Lloyd (1966), 210–232, on the prominence of social and political metaphor in pre-Socratic cosmology, esp. 230 on δύναμις and 219–220 on κρατεῖν and its cognates. Lloyd (1966), 219, notes that “power (both physical force and political authority) and intelligence are often ascribed to cosmological factors.” Lloyd (1966), 252–253, and pannis, has also demonstrated that pre-Socratic theories, metaphors, and methodologies are closely interrelated with medical ones (for example, analogies of the human body and the cosmos).

54. Although these responses are clearly not meant to be seen as intentional on
the part of the mother and child, agency may exist without intention. Even a woman who wants her child may be seen as having a body that fights against it.

55. It is well established that chickens, like many other birds, frequently consume the eggshells of their hatched young, most likely as a way of replenishing calcium stores depleted during the laying process (Welty and Baptista [1988], 150). Hens, however, frequently eat unhatched eggs, for a number of possible reasons—nutritional deficiencies, stress, or simply taste—a common problem for those who raise chickens. See Jacob et al. (1997) and Luttmann and Luttmann (1976), 10.

Regardless of whether the ancient analogy is based on observed egg-pecking/-eating behavior, the important point is that hens, in reality, do not peck at eggs to assist in the hatching process but to consume the egg itself—an action that results in the death and/or cannibalization of the potential chick. Therefore, contrary to the image of the helpful hen depicted in this analogy, the actual relationship of an egg-pecking hen with its chick is in fact far more troubling than the human mother's birthing relationship with her newborn (my thanks to Joel Carlin and Jon Grinnell of the Gustavus Adolphus College biology department for their assistance with this topic). On the pre-Socratics and medical writers' tendency to rely on flawed analogies and hypothetical experiments to make apparent that which would otherwise be difficult to prove, see Lloyd (1996), 357–360 and Lonie (1981), 77–86.

56. It is unclear whether the author knew of contractions, which could have been mentioned to strengthen his analogy. The womb might then have been viewed, like the hen, as helping the child emerge. See Hanson (2008), 103 and (1999), esp. 252–253, for a detailed discussion. Contra Lonie (1981), 244–245, Dean-Jones (1994), 212. Hanson argues that the Hippocratics viewed the uterus, like other bodily organs, as a passive receptacle and that the verbs περιστελλεσθαι ("contract") and συνέλκεσθαι ("draw together") in DW I,34 more accurately describe the uterus "collapsing around" the fetus rather than "contracting" to expel it.

57. The mother hen pecking at the egg and helping the chick hatch recalls the male-assisted birth of Athena from Zeus's head, which was broken open by Hephaestus's axe. My thanks to Ruby Blondell for this point.

58. This has been confirmed by an informal survey of biologists and chicken farmers. Given how fundamentally ingrained birthing practices are in nature, it is unlikely that chickens engaged in this behavior during the author's time and abandoned it during later periods (Joel Carlin, personal communication). See Lonie (1981), 77–86, on the use of analogy vs. experiment in medical argumentation as an instrument of persuasion.

59. Female fetuses were seen as weaker because the seed from which they were formed was wetter; Hanson (2008), 98. Hanson rightly observes that "[the Hippocratic] imagined the womb as a gendered space that replicated the experience of adults" (98).

60. For an additional example of this conflict-ridden family paradigm, see Herodotus's description of the Arabian vipers (3.109). The female viper is said to bite through the neck of the male viper during copulation, thereby killing him as he ejac-
ulates. Herodotus says that the female “pays recompense” (τίσον ... ἀποτίνει) for the deed because the offspring “avenge their father while still in the womb” (τῷ γονέι τιμωρέοντα εἴπεν τῇ γαστρὶ) and eat through their mother by consuming her uterus (διεσθείη τὴν μητέρα, διαφαγώντα δὲ τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτῆς). Sandwiched between two words for “womb,” μητέρα suggests a pun on a third word for womb: μητέρα. The emergence of these viper offspring from the μητέρα after consuming her μητέρα most vividly depicts birth as a zero-sum game. Birth is rendered as both an act of revenge and an act of survival, both of which depend on the annihilation of the mother in support of the father.

61. For the association of childbirth with battle, see Euripides, Medea 250–251, where Medea says she would rather die in battle than in childbirth, and Iliad 11.267ff., in which Agamemnon’s pain at being stabbed in the thigh is compared to that of a woman in labor. For the equivalence of battle and childbirth see Loraux (1995), esp. 23–37. On the continuing characterization of mothers as either “heroic” or ignorant and selfish, a potential threat to the success of the fetal surgical endeavor, see Casper (1998), 168–203.

Warlike imagery continues to characterize pregnancy as a conflict of interests. A recent study, summarized by the New York Times, suggests that preeclampsia and other complications may arise due to maternal–fetal competition for nutrients on a genetic level: “A fetus does not sit passively in its mother’s womb and wait to be fed. Its placenta aggressively sprouts blood vessels that invade its mother’s tissues to extract nutrients. Meanwhile, . . . natural selection should favor mothers who could restrain these incursions, and manage to have several surviving offspring carrying on their genes. [Dr. Haig] envisioned pregnancy as a tug of war. Each side pulls hard, and yet a flag tied to the middle of the rope barely moves” (Zimmer [2006]; emphasis mine).


63. See also Seven-Months’ Child 3 on the shared risk of premature births.

64. As outlined above, reproductive function is often represented as conferring health benefits on women by opening up their passageways and allowing for the proper drainage of fluids. Childbirth, however, is also acknowledged to be potentially disruptive to women’s health. The author says that complications arising from excessive lochia can occur due to the rupturing of passageways from “the violence of the embryo’s departure” and that the violence of birth can cause lesions (DW 1.39–40).

65. The treatise Eight-Months’ Child posits that, during the eighth month of pregnancy, women suffer fevers due to the strain that the growing fetus puts on the uterine membranes and the pressure it exerts on her internal organs. Both mother and child could die from these fevers. That the fevers are precipitated by the fetus itself results in a narrative less inflected by a rhetoric of conflict and blame, emphasizing instead the symbiotic nature of maternal–fetal existence. See Hanson (1987), 595. For the social usefulness of the notion that certain infants were doomed, see Hanson (1987), esp. 600–602.
Mothering and Motherhood in Ancient Greece and Rome

The inscription goes on to recount that she left behind a husband and two sons, a vivid reminder of both what could be gained through childbearing and what could be lost. Note the use of “Fury” (Ἑρώδεια). In myth the Furies, or the Erinyes, were avenging goddesses who punished those guilty of killing blood relatives. The appearance of the term here is particularly evocative given the Furies’ pursuit of Orestes for the murder of his mother, Clytemnessa. See the discussion of Aeschylus’s Eumenides above.

67. For an interesting comparandum, see McDonagh (1996), who discusses pregnancy and abortion in accordance with legal concepts of consent and agency.

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Mothering and Motherhood in Ancient Greece and Rome


In one of the few books devoted to the important topic of motherhood in ancient Greece, Nancy Demand offers a pessimistic account of the role accorded women as mothers in Athenian society. Demand's assessment of women's roles as mothers is predicated on the vicissitudes that women faced in childbirth as well as the demands that the care and nurture of their offspring placed upon them. But Demand casts her net more broadly by approaching the realities of motherhood against the backdrop of Athenian laws and customs concerning sexual conduct, reproduction, and property. She finds that the regulation of these areas, which served the interests of the family and the city in concert with the male ideology of the polis, is closely allied with the negative valuation of women's contributions as mothers, not least by precluding their participation in the public realm. From this, a dismal portrait of motherhood emerges, one which places women's oppression within the familiar norms of subordination and segregation. Accordingly, reality and representation coalesce in attributing mothers a low stake in the affairs of the Greek city-state.

Recent scholarship on women, gender, and the family has begun to rethink aspects of women's marginality by conceptualizing the scope and types of agency ascribed to women under a more varied paradigm that acknowledges their membership in the community. In line with the aim of this volume of presenting new assessments of motherhood and mothering in Greek and Roman society, I offer a view of motherhood derived from Attic tragedy, by sketching its civic potentialities, real and imagined, as they are represented in the extant plays. My goal here is twofold: first, to outline the evidence on motherhood derived from tragedy; and second, to delineate an argument concerning the civic import of motherhood, focusing on select examples of maternal agency.
The extant plays constitute the largest body of material on motherhood in Greek literature and thus prove an important resource for an overall evaluation of motherhood in the fifth century BCE. Tragedy provides fertile ground for examining the scope and limits of maternal authority by allowing us to look specifically at the interaction between the dramatic situations in which female characters are placed and the evolving realities of Athenian civic life that affected the lives of men and women in the polis. Seen in this light, the dramatic identity of mothers in tragedy proves distinct as compared to portraits of motherhood found in earlier poetry. For although mothers—such as Hecuba, who leads a group of Trojan women to Athena's temple to pray for her support in *Iliad* 6, or Jocasta, who mediates the conflict between Polynices and Eteocles in Stesichorus's *Thebaid*—stand out as representative examples of the type of agency that women undertake especially during times of crisis, in tragedy such agency is both more pervasive and more consistently problematized. Thus, while women and, mothers in particular, are wont to play a role especially in times of war in saving the city, tragedy presents mothers as “good” or “evil” as judged against accepted social standards of womanhood in Greek society. Because of its predilection for deviations from the norm, tragedy cultivates the creation of terrifying portraits of motherhood in the guise of Medea, Agave, Clytemnestra, and Procne, to name only a few obvious examples. But even characters such as Aethra, Praxithea, or even Jocasta—who do not act in vengeful or destructive ways—do not conform with the norms of motherhood in Athenian society; this is because the portrayal of maternal agency does not readily conform with women's access to speech and power in Athenian society.

In this article, I evaluate one set of concerns that emerges from these diverse representations of motherhood in the plays by examining manifestations of female authority as civic expressions of motherhood in Athenian tragedy.

**FROM PERIPHERY TO THE CENTER**

The important recent body of work on women and gender in drama has called attention to the striking disjunction between reality and representation by highlighting women's marginality in Athenian society in contrast to the power female characters wield onstage. Since such power more often than not portends harm and destruction for the family and the city, the plays are seen as articulating expressions of gender ideology in line with
patriarchal norms. Women's exclusion from citizenship places them at the periphery of civic action, which is undertaken by men alone at the heart of the city.

Perceptions of women's marginality and abjection carry over to the interpretation of their dramatic roles, since women's foray onstage invariably wreaks havoc and undermines political norms, deemed vital for the preservation of the civic body. As Nancy Rabinowitz argues, the plays mirror the prevailing norm of women's exclusion:

In this cultural artefact (i.e., tragedy) through which Athens represented itself to itself, then, real women were abjected, alienated, excluded, as they were excluded from the ideological construction of the democratic city, even though they inhabited the physical city.

Demand in particular takes the view that Pericles' citizenship law of 451/0 BCE further curtailed women's public standing by denying them access to civic power:

The increasingly restrictive definition of citizenship status that went with the development of the [Athenian] polis thus brought with it suspicions that haunted male lives and fed men's obsession with the control of their womenfolk.

Demand's interpretation highlights the ramifications of the law from the standpoint of feminist thinking, where the intersection between gender and citizenship becomes pivotal for assessing the type of agency ascribed to women in ancient societies. The claim, however, that as a result of this law women faced further scrutiny and oppression in part distorts the historical picture and invites reconsideration of the methodological premise upon which the analysis relies. For example, Cynthia Patterson has argued that there is no conclusive evidence to suggest that sexual control of women increased as a result of the law. In line with this argument, it is worth examining further the implications of Demand's reading; her views on women's marginality come close to representing women as a subaltern group—a group that effectively stands outside the social and political power structures—thereby precluding the type of agency against which she reads their isolation from the civic body.

More recent work on this topic has begun to address the methodological limits of an approach to citizenship based on the legal formulation of citizenship alone and has suggested alternatives to analyzing civic member-
ship, for men and women, under broader and more flexible criteria. To begin with, the law delimited citizenship to a restricted group, seeking above all to preserve the purity of the civic body through both lines of descent, male and female. Women's citizenship, though nominal in the eyes of the law, deserves to be addressed in this vein as a first step toward exploring the civic import of mothers in tragedy. This is not to say that the imaginary world of Greek tragedy affirms women's political stakes by giving them a civic voice. Rather, what this notion indicates is that positive and negative expressions of motherhood refract in a variety of ways the norms of conduct that defined and bounded women's position not only in the family but also in the city.

"Passive" or "latent" are terms frequently used to refer to women's citizenship. Thus, as Raphael Sealey explains, "latent citizenship" describes women's civic membership in the sense that Athenian women could transmit citizenship, even though they were barred from performing duties equal to those of their male counterparts. Patterson, by contrast, advocates an alternative to the prevailing understanding of citizenship as a legal status. In her book on Pericles' citizenship law, Patterson has argued that the Athenians' understanding of citizenship is conceptually more capacious than the legal definition, and argues to this effect that Athenian citizenship is conceived actively in terms that denote participation. As she has shown, phrases such as μέτεωμι or μετέχω τῆς πόλεως, which denote participation, are regularly employed to describe the Athenians' "shares" in their polis.

More specifically, in addition to political "shares," which were strictly limited to men, men's and women's participation in the religious sphere constituted an additional facet of their civic membership, since many cults made citizenship a criterion for participation. In addition, Patterson argues that the same terms that apply to citizenship are used to denote family membership. Thus, consideration of the nonlegal aspects of citizenship offers an important counterpoint to the prevailing paradigm and furnishes the scope for defining female agency as a corollary of women's civic membership, not least by bridging the divide between the private and public spheres of activity. Seen in this light, women's inclusion in the civic body, for example, allows them access to property and inheritance. For however limited and secondary their claims to property may have been, compared to those of men, "only Athenians, male and female, could own a 'piece of Attica' and inherit Athenian land," as Patterson puts it.

This more inclusive definition of citizenship is crucial for approaching the roles that mothers play in tragedy. It places women in civic space, cre-
ating the potential for exploring and imagining their agency as oscillating between their exclusion from and their inclusion in the public sphere. Second, the conceptual link between family membership and citizenship is especially germane for evaluating different varieties of civic action in tragedy, where the family always takes center stage. As a rule, family and kinship ties determine access to political power; the dynastic family rules over the city and its members subsume the functions allotted citizens under the democracy. Thus, tragedy conflates familial with civic identity and in the process mirrors or distorts the very norms and practices that inform the audience's experience. For example, concerns over succession and inheritance are treated as part of exchanges that take place within the realm of the oikos, where women are ever-present, even when they do not participate directly in political decision-making. The plays implicate female characters in situations where they are seen as mediating conflicts (e.g., Jocasta in Euripides' Phoenician Women), partaking in deliberations (e.g., Aethra in Euripides' Suppliant Women), and even wielding power in the absence of a king (e.g., Atossa in Aeschylus's Persians; Clytemnestra in Aeschylus's Agamemnon [and also jointly with Aegisthus in Aeschylus's Libation Bearers, Sophocles' Electra, and Euripides' Electra]).

More importantly, women's civic participation can be more readily traced to their family membership than it can for men, whose political affiliations are drawn in more complex ways within the plays. In light of this argument, we can evaluate the types of authority which female characters wield as mothers onstage.

**CONFIGURING MATERNAL AUTHORITY**

Nicole Loraux's monograph on women and mourning has focused on the ways in which the figure of the vengeful mother in tragedy undermines maternal authority by endorsing cautionary attitudes toward female speech and lament, which are also inscribed into the ban on women's public mourning within the official venue of the state funeral. As in her pioneering study on female citizenship, *Children of Athena*, Loraux's *Mothers in Mourning* concentrates on the tropes of women's exclusion by discussing negative instantiations of maternal agency in tragedy. The present discussion seeks to amplify the scope of the civic discourse on motherhood by examining the ways in which the broad construal of women's citizenship contributes to an understanding of the roles that female characters discharged as mothers in tragedy.
A critical question that arises in connection with the civic attributes of motherhood concerns women's portrayal as figures of authority in the plays. While such roles typically lie in the purview of fathers and kings, as Mark Griffith has shown, we are justified in asking whether women who had fulfilled their civic duty by giving the state citizens are represented as authority figures in front of the audiences of the dramatic performances and whether civic discourse in drama takes stock of or underplays women's merits and contributions. At first sight, this approach seems to run counter to the realities that permeated both real-life Athenian families and their portrayals on stage, wherein the economic, legal, and political authority resided with the head of the family (kyrios). But in the Theater of Dionysus women are given prominence and speak authoritatively by stepping in to critique, confront, or correct male characters within the public sphere.

It is in this vein that I first discuss two examples, although these are from comedy. Aristophanes portrays female characters claiming for themselves the authority normally reserved for men. Aristophanic women occupy male spheres of action such as the Assembly, mount schemes to save the city from partisan politics, and intervene to end men's ineffective handling of war. The reversal of spheres of action is central to the comic fiction of women in power. While the essential "topsy-turviness" of Aristophanes' plays relies upon the reversal of the gendered division of space—women in the oikos versus men in the polis—and therefore precludes a serious engagement with women's claims, some female characters assert their civic prerogatives in light of their contributions as mothers. While such claims do not suggest that Aristophanes intended to validate female citizenship in its own right, the implied homology between male and female claims to citizenship sharpens comic effect by aiming at realism.

Two brief examples from Aristophanes' Women at the Thesmophoria (Thesmophoriazusae) and Women in the Assembly (Ecclesiazusae) exemplify the ways in which comic fiction affirms women's "shares" in the city by highlighting their contributions. In the parabasis of Women at the Thesmophoria, the women protest their exclusion from civic honors in the following way:

Χρήν γὰρ, ἡμῶν εἰ τέκοι τις ἄνδρα χρηστῶν τῇ πόλει,
ταξιάρχον ἡ στρατηγόν, λαμβάνειν τιμήν τινα,
προεδριάν τ’ αὐτῇ δίδοσθαι Στηνίους καὶ Σκίρους
ἐν τε ταῖς ἀλλαῖς ἑορταῖς αὕστην ἡμέως ἤγομεν.

(832–835)
If a woman bears a son who’s useful to the polis—a taxiarch or a commander—she ought to be honored in some way and to be given front-row seating at the Stenia and the Skira and any other festivals we women might celebrate. Such honors are due, they argue, to those who have given birth to the city’s most distinguished civic officers and should be awarded to mothers at the (female) festivals such as the Stenia and the Skirophoria. The inversion here lies in women’s wish to appropriate the honors which men held in the theater—specifically, the right of proedria (front-row seats) reserved for civic officials and generals in the Theater of Dionysus, from which women, except for priestesses, stood excluded. More specifically, the women complain that even in their own festivals seats of honor were given according to the rank of their male kin.

The inversion of roles is rooted in the realities of men’s and women’s prerogatives, since the women claim such honors for themselves in the context of female religious festivals from which men were excluded. Women’s claims to such honors were based on their standing as citizen-mothers—a precondition for their participation in the Thesmophoria.

In Women at the Assembly, Praxagora singles out among women’s other merits their role as mothers:

ταύταισιν οὖν ὄνδρεσ παραδόντες τὴν πόλιν
μὴ περιλαλώμενε, μηδὲ πυθανώμεθα
τί ποτ’ ἄρα δρᾶν μέλλουσιν, ἀλλ’ ἀπλὸν τρόπῳ
ἐἶμεν ἄρχειν, σκεψάμενοι ταυτί μόνα,
ὡς τούς στρατιώτας πρῶτον ὦσσαν μητέρες
σώζειν ἐπιθυμήσουσιν· εἶτα συτία
τὸς τῆς τεκόυσης θάττον ἐπιπέμψειεν ἂν;
(229–235)

And so gentlemen, let us hand over governance of the polis to the women, and let’s not beat around the bush or ask what they want to accomplish. You need to consider only two points; first, as mothers they’ll want to protect the soldiers; and second, who could be quicker at sending rations to soldiers than the mothers who bore them.

Performed in 392 BCE, this next to last of Aristophanes’ extant plays presents a far more subversive version of women in power than he gives us in Lysistrata, as the female characters in this play take over the Assembly, and
Praxagora puts forward a radical proposal for the organization of the state along the lines of a communist utopia.\textsuperscript{29} Even so, women's claims to power are primarily constituted along the lines of the familiar topos of their primacy in managing the household (oikos).\textsuperscript{30} Unlike the parabasis of the earlier play, the comic fiction here goes further, to imagine women's rule over the city.\textsuperscript{31} The inversion of the spheres of action that men and women occupied in real life underscores precisely the opposite, namely, that women could never be regarded as civic actors. Even so, in this particular excerpt the civic attributes of motherhood—their giving sons to the state and their role as nurturers—also come to the fore by way of bolstering the legitimacy of women's claims to power and their critique of men's flawed handling of the war.

In staging female power, Aristophanic comedy takes stock of women's contributions not only to the familial but also to the civic life of the polis. Women's public voices are not the outcome of the reversal of their domestic arrangements alone, but further stem from their roles as citizens within the polis. As Jeffrey Henderson has argued, unlike tragedy, comedy insists on the realism of its mimesis, and hence women's claims to power must be regarded to some degree as "real" if the comic fiction is to be effective.\textsuperscript{32}

**Mothers of the State**

While comedy presents women in power in line with the fiction of the inversion of male power, tragedy instead highlights an enduring ambivalence toward female power. Such ambivalence is typified by a dichotomy in the case of motherhood through examples of "good" versus "evil" mothers. As we have already seen, the law's specific formulation of Athenian citizenship for women created the potential for exploring and imagining their agency as oscillating between their exclusion from and inclusion in the public sphere. This dialectic is enacted in the plays that feature mothers as discharging duties in the public sphere that highlight their interventions—negative and positive—in critical areas such as war, succession, and governance.

Female characters, then, are not simply interlopers or neutral bystanders to the main action, but can provide critical input analogous to that of men. As such, these women characters' political contributions, even when positively construed, reflect their subordinate and secondary position, serving as they do in the role of advisor and intermediary. Thus, Aethra in Euripides' *Suppliant Women*, Praxithea in Euripides' *Erechtheus*, and Jocasta
in Euripides' *Phoenician Women* reflect quite precisely the scope and limits of maternal agency. Unfavorable examples of motherhood—embodied by Clytemnestra in Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* and Medea in Euripides' *Medea*—typify the negative instantiations of motherhood, as their agency openly resists the male political order by seeking to supersedes or destroy it.\(^3\)

There are good reasons for examining the civic contours of motherhood in drama under a paradigm that sanctions women's membership. As noted, drama brings together the familial and civic spheres of activity and also highlights the performance of rituals as integral for the preservation of the community (i.e., marriage, sacrifice, cult), an area where women could legitimately claim participation.\(^3\) But other factors contributed to the prominent roles that female characters discharge as mothers onstage. More specifically, the consolidation of Athens’ democratic constitution at the height of Athenian imperialism elevated Athenian citizenship to a privileged status, setting those who could lay claims upon it apart from other groups—resident aliens and slaves as well as Athens’ imperial allies.\(^5\) By acknowledging women’s “shares” in the city, Pericles’ law, as we have seen, also set Athenian women apart from those barred from access to citizenship and property in Athens.\(^6\)

This background enables a fuller understanding of the ways in which tragedy begins to capitalize on the symbolic potential of women as participants in the city and on their authority to pronounce on moral and civic matters. In this regard, we find that plays that involve Athenian myths and characters, many of which date to the latter half of the fifth century, increasingly portray mothers as acting in concert with, or against, Athenian civic norms and practices. Among them, mothers like Praxithea in *Erechtheus* and Aethra in *Suppliant Women* use the authority vested in them as mothers to speak or act on behalf of the state. Praxithea, who assents to her daughter’s sacrifice to save Athens in the battle against Eumolpus of Eleusis, offers an extreme instantiation of the mother of the state type:

\[\text{er} \delta' \text{ } \eta' \text{ } \epsilonν \text{ } \epsilonικοις \text{ } \alpha\nuτι \text{ } \thetaηλειων \text{ } \sigmaταχυς \]
\[\text{αρσην, } \piλ\nuν \text{ } \deltaε \text{ } \pi\lambdaεμια \text{ } \kappaατειχε \text{ } \phiλοξ', \]
\[\text{oυκ } \alphaν \text{ } \nuν \text{ } \epsilonξεπερμπον } \epsilonις \text{ } \mu\acute{a}χην \text{ } \deltaορσ', \]
\[\text{θανατον } \piροταρβοιου', \text{ } \alphaλλ' } \epsilonμον' \text{ } \epsilonιτ' } \tau\epsilonκνα \]
\[<\alpha> \text{ } \kappaα} \text{ } \mu\acute{a}χοτο και } \muετ' } \alphaν\deltaρασν } \piρ\epsilonποι, \]
\[\text{μη } \sigmaχηματ' } \alphaλλως } \epsilonν } \pi\lambdaει } \pi\epsilonφυκοτα. \]
\[\tauα } \muητερων } \deltaε } \deltaακρυ' } \text{ } \oταν } \piεμπτη } \tau\epsilonκνα, \]
\[\pi\lambdaλως } \epsilonθηλυν' } \epsilonις } \mu\acute{a}χην } \οριωμε\acute{e}νους, \]
\[\muισω } \gammaυνα\acute{a}κας } \αιτινες } \text{ } \piρ\delta } } \text{ } \kαλου \]

\(^{25}\)
If our family included a crop of male children instead of females, and the flame of war was gripping our city, would I be refusing to send them out to battle for fear of their deaths? No, give me sons who would not only fight but stand out amongst the men and not be mere figures raised in the city to no use. When mothers’ tears send children on their way, they soften many men as they leave for battle. I detest women who choose life rather than virtue for their sons, or exhort them to cowardice. And sons, if they die in battle, earn a common tomb and equal glory shared with many others; my daughter, though, will be awarded one crown for herself alone when she dies for this city, and will save her mother, and you, and her two sisters: which of these things is not a fine reward?

By conceptualizing her civic duty as a mother as one of extreme sacrifice, Praxithea pledges allegiance to Athenian patriotic ideals, as she proclaims in a militant tone her readiness to sacrifice her daughter, in the absence of male children (22–25). The speech provides a striking reversal of the stock rhetorical topos of the parent’s refusing to accede to a sacrifice, as Praxithea attempts to persuade King Erechtheus to yield to Poseidon’s demand to ensure Athens’ victory against Eumolpus of Eleusis. The effect is jarring, as Praxithea proclaims that as a mother her duty toward the city takes precedence over family and progeny alike.

Beginning with the praise of Athenian autochthony, Praxithea further asserts her civic voice by juxtaposing the superior contributions that citizens made to the city against those of foreigners (fr. 360, 8–13). Praxithea comes close to earning the honors due women as mothers of the state, though unlike her comic counterparts, she articulates her obligations as a citizen in the idiom of Athenian male patriotic ideology. In this case, the civic idiom of motherhood therefore aligns the female perspective with male concerns about the preservation of the state. The effect is also ironic, though not in the manner that Philip Vellacott suggests when he claims that “this woman has so adopted what she conceived to be the masculine attitude that she has
become a monster.” Rather, Praxithea’s endorsement of the sacrifice in this fragmentary play could be set against the broader context of the critique of civic salvation in Euripides’ plays of voluntary self-sacrifice. Praxithea thereby embodies an extreme example of civic motherhood, which stands out as anomalous, as she attempts to normalize the aberrant act of human sacrifice by bringing it in line with the standards of conduct that the city enjoined upon its female citizens.

Aethra in Euripides’ Suppliant Women, on the other hand, best exemplifies mothers’ roles as civic intermediaries by interceding on behalf of the Argive mothers before Theseus, king of Athens. As the mother of the Athenian king, her agency articulates the civic implications of maternal authority within the Athenian paradigm. When she steps forward to advise Theseus, Aethra is careful to frame her civic agency in terms apposite to her gender. She calls attention to the discrepancy between Athenian gender norms that excluded women from public speech and her own decision in coming forth to speak:

AETHRA: Shall I say something, my son, that brings honor to you and the city?  
THESEUS: Yes, for much wise advice can be heard even from women.  
AETHRA: But the suggestion I have in my heart causes me to hesitate.  
THESEUS: For shame—keeping good words from your near and dear!  
AETHRA: I shall not hold my peace and then at some later time reproach myself for my present silence, nor, since it is a useless thing for women to be eloquent, shall I, out of fear, let go of the noble task that is mine.

Her renunciation of political quietism echoes one of the central tenets of democratic civic ideology. Thus Aethra lays claims upon male tropes of speech, even as she seeks Theseus’s permission, in order to establish her authority.
She next outlines a rationale in favor of Athens’ intervention: It is Athens’ duty, she argues, in sum, to ensure the right of burial for the Argive dead by leading a campaign against Thebes; military intervention is desirable and advantageous to protect the city’s honor and hegemony (306–332). While her voice, like Praxithea’s, lends support to Athens’ imperial ideals, her intercession on behalf of the Argive mothers frames the civic implications of maternal agency in two additional ways. First, the action of the play underscores the authority vested in her as the mother of the Athenian king, when she frames the suffering of the Argive mothers in terms that are consequential for Athens. Second, the play highlights women’s civic membership in its own right. As recipient of the supplication of the Argive mothers, who stand barred from administering the final rites over their closest of kin, Aethra is charged with representing their rightful claims in a civic capacity. Thus, Aethra brings the religious and moral imperatives of burying the dead to bear upon Theseus’s decision by focusing on its consequences for Athens. Her intervention, moreover, does not run counter to the norms of women’s civic duties, which lay in the care of the dead, as women were charged with and performed many of the rituals associated with funerary and burial. Jocasta in Euripides’ Phoenician Women (528–585) plays a similar role in mediating her sons’ conflict, aligning her role as a mother with the political advice she dispenses, as she unsuccessfully attempts to thwart the impending death of her sons and the destruction of the city.

Euripides’ Ion highlights the intersections between female citizenship and Athenian civic identity in the context of imperial ideology. In the wake of the Athenian defeat at Syracuse, Athenian imperial ideology began embracing claims of descent by way of strengthening the ties between Athens and the Ionian cities in the eastern part of her empire. The shift toward Ionianism also informs the ideological register of the play, which enacts the Athenian foundational myth of the birth of Ion, son of Creusa and Apollo, as legitimate successor of Erechtheus, Athens’ autochthonous king, and as founder of the four tribes of Attica. The play places female citizenship at the center, granting Creusa a pivotal role in resolving the problem of succession, as she alone is able to bestow Athenian citizenship upon Ion. Ion’s vexed standing as both an illegitimate son of Apollo and founder of the Ionian tribes frames the unstable relationship between mother and son, as Creusa—in ignorance of her son’s identity—comes close to killing him before the recognition scene, which sets the action on a different course, thereby allowing her own identity as a mother to be drawn positively through recourse to her Athenian heritage. The legacy of her rape
CITIZEN-MOTHERS ON THE TRAGIC STAGE [109]

by Apollo is redefined through the awareness of the civic inheritance that she will bestow upon Ion—a recognition of women's ability to confer citizenship in the most absolute terms (reinforced in Creusa's case by her legal standing within her own oikos as epikleros [heiress]). The significance of her civic standing is further enhanced in relation to that of Xuthus, her non-Athenian husband, who is altogether sidestepped and who accepts Ion as the rightful successor of the royal oikos of Athens. All these strands come together in Athena's speech at the end of the play:

λαβοῦσα τὸν δὲ παῖδα Κεκροπίαν χθόνα χώρα, Κρέουσα, κας θρόνους τυραννικοὺς ἱδρυσον. ἐκ γὰρ τῶν Ἐρεχθέως γεγόν θίκαλος ἄρχειν τῆς ἐμῆς ὀδε χθόνος, ἐστι δὲ ἀν 'Ελλάδ' εὐκλεῆς. παῖδες γενόμενοι τέσσαρες ῥίζης μᾶς ἑπώνυμοι γῆς καταφυλᾶν χθόνος λαῶν ἑσονταί, σκόπελον οἱ ναίουο ' ἐμὸν. (EURIPIDES, ION 1571–1578)

Creusa, you are to take this child with you to Cecrops' land and establish him on the royal throne. As a descendant of Erechtheus, he has a right to rule over my land, and his fame will spread throughout Greece. For his sons—four from the one root—will give their names to the land and to the native tribes of the land, the inhabitants of my cliff.

Creusa's identity as daughter of the autochthonous king of Athens bestows upon her perhaps an even larger role than those ascribed to Praxithea and Aethra as citizen-mothers. Creusa's civic standing functions in two ways: first, it is critical for articulating Athens' right to rule. As David Rosenbloom puts it, "The mother–son bond between Kreousa and Ion is replicated in the political relation between Athenians and Ionians as metropolis and colony." In this light, Creusa's anguish over the loss of her son further highlights the role that women served in securing the continuity of the family—a duty which the play articulates poignantly by interlacing the personal with the civic consequences of Creusa's responsibilities.

As a counterpoint to the official representation of Creusa's charge as mother in Athenian political mythology, I mention briefly the portrait of Alcestis as wife and mother. In Euripides' play, Alcestis' last exchange with Admetus allows her, as Victoria Wohl has shown, to establish not only
her authority, but also her subjectivity by making arrangements for the future of her children and her household, demanding that they not have a stepmother after she dies (Euripides, *Alcestis* 280–325). Admetus’s accession to her final demands affirms not only her domestic and maternal authority, but also her political authority, as in her final moments she briefly gains control of the *oikos* over her husband.

**BREAKING THE RULES**

Mothers who do not appear to act in concert with the aims of Athenian civic ideology are represented in negative terms, as vengeful, nonnurturing, and harmful toward their offspring. Clytemnestra’s and Medea’s transgressions of their maternal roles engender acts of vengeance which have political consequences and destroy proper succession within the *oikos*. Negative and misogynistic representations of motherhood are indeed rooted, as Froma Zeitlin has shown, in myths of women’s rule. It is possible, however, that the absence of any positive valuation of women’s contributions as mothers may also be partially the result of the fact that Pericles’ citizenship law set clear criteria for configuring Athenian civic identity. Thus, the impact of the law arguably sharpened awareness of the civic relevance of motherhood. Accordingly, we find in tragedy that the scenarios that implicate women begin to address more directly their contributions, positive and negative, as citizens.

The *Oresteia*, performed in 458 BCE, depicts motherhood in adverse terms and offers an important counterpoint to the civic configurations of motherhood in later plays. The negative depiction of Clytemnestra’s agency throughout the trilogy stems from her appropriation of male authority and in turn significantly undermines her portrait as a mother. Clytemnestra vindicates Agamemnon’s murder by presenting her vengeance as an act of justice undertaken to punish Agamemnon for sacrificing her daughter. But her maternal vengeance has clear political motives, since she continues to wield political power in Argos openly by sharing the throne with Aegisthus (Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1431–1436). Her political aspirations distort the relationship with her surviving children, whose position in the *oikos* she undermines by excluding them from their inheritance. Orestes and Electra emphasize their bond and loyalty to their father; both view their mother as a political opponent and a tyrannical usurper and pray to Zeus to restore their status by returning their patrimony (Aeschylus, *Libation Bearers* 246–254). They express their estrangement from their mother in political terms:
Their alienation is a form of exile—different for each on account of their gender—Orestes is banished to Phocis to live with his father's guest-friend, Strophios, while Electra lends voice to her civic marginality by describing her diminished status as an internal exile that takes the form of confinement within the inner recess of the house (ἕω δ' ἀπεστάτουν ἡμεῖς, οὐδὲν ἄξια, μυχῶν δ' ἀφερκτός πολυσυνοὺς κυνὸς δίκαιον: "But all the while I was kept sequestered, despised, accounted a worthless thing. Kneeled in my room as if I were a vicious dog" [Libation Bearers 445-446]).

Motherhood, I would argue, is negated in the strongest terms possible in the Oresteia, because of the anxieties surrounding the disruption of the proper succession of the oikos. The Oresteia is the best example of the intersection of familial with civic concerns and the need to subordinate the former to the latter to protect civic stability from the danger of tyranny. Orestes is able to reclaim his civic rights in Argos only after Athena and the court pronounce a verdict that exonerates the matricide. The overarching concern with reinstating Orestes in his patrimony undermines the contributions of mothers to procreation and by extension to the prosperity of the state.

Motherhood is never fully rehabilitated here. The only concession in that regard is the Furies' function as guarantors of fertility (Aeschylus, Eumenides 829–836, 907–909). But the Furies, who are perpetual virgins like Athena, are only charged with overseeing the proper function of the oikos. As such, they offer instead a partial acknowledgment of the place of the female principle within the polis. Eumenides, as many have argued, ends with an affirmation of patriarchal norms. The trilogy's negative assessment of Clytemnestra's maternal agency, however, is also filtered through the democratic norms of citizenship, introduced by Cleisthenes and supported under the radical democracy.

A concluding example of the negation of motherhood is Medea, whose extreme civic marginality as both a foreigner and an exile further distorts normative connections between motherhood and civic belonging. The play both intimates and eschews an easy identification of Medea's actions with
those befitting a political actor. For, unlike Clytemnestra, Medea is not after political power—although she fully understands its significance for Jason, who wishes to possess it at all costs. Viewed in this light, this domestic tragedy takes on the character of political intrigue, as Medea's vengeance harms the royal household in addition to her own.

The Athenian perspective, provided by the scene with King Aegeus, serves a key role in this regard. Not only does it expose her plan for revenge, but it also, I would argue, clarifies the civic implications of Medea's transgression of her maternal identity. Aegeus introduces Athenian views on the significance of children politically and ideologically when he shares with Medea his concerns for the survival of his own oikos. Medea's anticipated contribution as a foreigner in Athens is envisioned in light of Athenian norms that align motherhood with civic membership; Medea promises Aegeus that she will return the king's favor by helping him acquire an heir, if he grants her asylum. As a result, this episode further engages the audience's knowledge of Medea's actions later in Athens—her attempted regicide against Theseus—and brings into sharper focus another facet of Medea's maternal identity, her role as destroyer of the polis. For by killing the princess and her children, Medea destroys any hope for familial and civic safety alike.

Yet Medea's maternal portrait does not provide a straightforward affirmation of Athenian norms either. For one, her foreignness allows her role as a mother to be drawn as the very antithesis not only of Athenian, but also of Greek norms in general. Jason condemns her on these grounds, claiming that no Greek woman would have dared to undertake such acts (1339–1341). Nonetheless, Medea continues to lay claims on her rights as a mother. Proclaiming just before the murder that the children she gave birth to are dear to her (1249–1250), she offers a far more chilling portrait of motherhood than she does in her earlier monologue. And, in her semi-divine authority, she continues to discharge her maternal duties in a civic capacity, taking charge of the burial of her children and founding rites at the sanctuary of Hera Akraia to memorialize their death and offering compensation for it.
Certainly not. I shall bury them with my own hand, taking them to the sanctuary of Hera Akraia, so that none of my enemies may outrage them by tearing up their graves. And I shall enjoin on this land of Sisyphus a solemn festival and holy rites for all time to come in payment for this unholy murder. As for myself, I shall go to the land of Erechtheus to live with Aegeus, son of Pandion.  

The transcendence of the norms that secure the continuity of familial and civic life by a figure who is as foreign, exotic, and supernatural as Medea perhaps provided Euripides with the freedom to explore the most extreme negation and affirmation of motherhood, one which profoundly challenged not only Athenian civic norms, but also the very perception of motherhood for audiences of the play, both ancient and modern.

This overview of select examples of motherhood in plays that mostly concern Athens has sought to establish an argument regarding the import of female citizenship for outlining the range of representations of mothers in tragedy. This is a first step toward establishing the parameters that define maternal authority in drama at large. As such, its validity must be further tested and analyzed within the context of plays that portray maternal agency within a wider range of settings, including the household and religion, as well as war and politics.

NOTES

1. Demand (1994).
4. Some representative examples include Foley (2001), on women as moral actors in tragedy; Patterson (1986), 49–67, (1998), and (2009), on female citizenship and the family; and Goff (2004), on women’s religious and ritual agency.
6. Much of the recent work focuses specifically on violence and revenge: Loraux (1998); McHardy (2005) and (2008). For a psychoanalytic perspective on aspects of motherhood and misogyny, see Zeitlin (1978) and Slater (1968).

7. Kearns (1990), 323–344, argues that women at such times become “unlikely saviors” and calls attention to the reversal of the prevailing hierarchies of periphery (women, foreigners, slaves) vs. center (citizen males).

8. For a brief survey on maternal figures, see Zeitlin (2008); on childbirth scenes in tragedy, see Hall (2006), 60–98.


10. Rabinowitz (1993) and Zeitlin (1996) suggest that the ends of the plays re-assert the structures of paternal authority and place women in their proper roles after they have acted in ways that distort prevailing male views.


14. On the nature and development of Athenians’ views of themselves as citizens, see Lape (2010).

15. Sealey (1990), 14.

16. Patterson (1981), 164–165: “An Athenian, however, did not need to use either astos, politēs or Athēnaios to express his belonging to the city, his citizenship. He could simply say, ‘I have a share in the city’ (metechō tēs poleōs or metesti moi tēs poleōs). . . . In addition to material, judicial and political ‘shares,’ an Athenian would have considered his participation in his city’s cults—and in the benefits which resulted from proper relationships with gods—as an essential part of his citizenship or his ‘sharing in’ Athens. Conversely, loss of citizenship, atimia, meant exclusion from all civic cults as well as from the assembly.”

17. The implications of Patterson’s reading for interpreting women’s roles in religion and ritual are further discussed in Goff (2004), 160–226.


20. On the definition of family and civic identity in tragedy, see further Maitland (1992).

21. Loraux (1998). Though undeniably a strong strand of Athenian civic ideology highlighted the threat that women’s mourning posed for the city, tragedy covers a broader spectrum of attitudes that highlights the intrinsic power of female lament to produce statements at once subversive and authoritative. See further Foley (2001), 19–56, and Due (2006).


23. For a discussion and reevaluation of the available theoretical approaches regarding women’s civic exclusion, see Katz (1999).

24. The lucid typology offered by Griffith (2005) includes the following four categories: 1) the public, sociopolitical sphere; 2) the domestic sphere; 3) the religious sphere; and 4) the epistemological and cultural/literary field. I focus here mostly on
women’s authority in the sociopolitical sphere, but the topic of maternal authority in tragedy is part of a larger project on motherhood in Greek literature.

25. In Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata* 651, for example, women emphasize the giving of their sons to the state. Patterson (1994), 201–203, notes that women’s civic shares are not simply rooted in comic fantasy, but stem from civic privileges distinct from those which foreigners and slaves possessed in Athens.


27. See Maas (1972), 85; Connelly (2007), 205–213.

28. The Stenia and the Skirophoria, which also honored Demeter, were probably run by a female magistrate as well. See further Brumfield (1981), 156–181.


30. On the continuity between *oikos* and *polis*, see Foley (1982).


33. Medea’s revenge follows the pattern of tragic filicide identified by Loraux (1998) and discussed by McHardy (2003).

34. The contributions by Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1990) and Seaford (1994) offer representative (though opposing) views on the social, political, and ritual contexts of drama.

35. On the social and political aspects of Athenian civic identity, see the contributions in Boegehold and Scafuro (1994), esp. Patterson’s essay (1994) on the uses to which female citizenship is put in Apollodorus’s *Against Neaira*.

36. Osborne (1997) makes the case that the citizenship law of 451/0 BCE increased the importance of civic identity for women.


38. In this light, Praxithea’s adoption of patriotic topos from the Athenian funeral oration (e.g., praise of self-sacrifice [22–27], rejection of *philophychia* [30–31], placing collective over individual salvation [32–37]) stands as the type opposite to that of Loraux’s mourning mother, silencing as she does the female point of view.


40. Praxithea’s speech was cited by the orator Lycurgus in *Against Leocrates* 98–101. See further Collard et al. (1999), 148–155.

41. Vellacott (1975), 196.

42. Foley (1985); Mendelsohn (2002).

43. Her supreme civic loyalty is rewarded at the end of the play by Athena, who makes Praxithea her first priestess. See further Connelly (1996), 53–80.

44. Text is from Diggle (1981) and translation is from Kovacs (1998).

45. For a fuller discussion of Aethra’s rhetorical manipulation of gender and political norms, see Mendelsohn (2002), 164–170.

46. Though we ought to note that Aethra is not an Athenian by birth, but by marriage. The play attempts to normalize the foreign origin of Theseus’s mother by making her the wife of Aegeus. Despite this anomaly, Theseus speaks from an Athe-
nian perspective on citizenship, having earlier censured Adrastus for marrying a foreign bride (219–224).

47. Goff (2004), 318–322, reads Aethra’s agency in positive terms, as viewed against the ritual background of the festival of the Proerosia. Goff notes that while the festival’s main focus was agricultural fertility, its location at Eleusis also vividly evokes Demeter’s and Persephone’s separation and subsequent reunion. As Goff indicates, “Aithra’s speech is facilitated by her ritual performance, in that she can be seen to espouse the cause of parent–child reunion invested both with the authority of Demeter and with the sign of fertility provided by the Proerosia” (322). Her discussion offers a counterpoint to Foley (2001), 21–55, who argues that the force of women’s mourning is undercut by male politics.


50. See further Saxonhouse (1986); Loraux (1993).

51. The precise rendering of epikleros is “with property,” and it was used in reference to a daughter whose father had no male heirs; see further Just (1989), 95–98.

52. Translation from Waterfield (2001).

53. Rosenbloom (2011), 371. Though, as Dougherty has shown (1996), Creusa’s rape by Apollo under his guise as Patroos, co-ancestor of Athenians and Ionians, refashions the myth of autochthony and Creusa’s Athenian identity in accordance with the aims of the colonial narrative of the play. On Creusa’s role as citizen-mother and on maternal inheritance in Ion, see Lape (2010), 95–96.


59. Text is from Diggle (1984) and translation is from Kovacs (1994).

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Mothering and Motherhood in Ancient Greece and Rome


Working Girls
MOTHER-DAUGHTER BONDS
AMONG ANCIENT PROSTITUTES
Anise K. Strong

Perhaps the most difficult familial relationship to study in the ancient world is that of mothers and their daughters. For most respectable Greek and Roman families, this private bond is invisible to us, although it was presumably important both emotionally and educationally to the women involved. We have entire books about father-daughter, mother-son, and father-son relationships in the fields of both classical history and classical literature, but lack almost any source material or scholarship on the ubiquitous female-female parent-child relationship.¹

This lacuna is not a problem unique to the ancient world. From antiquity to the present day, Western literature and historical texts, which tend to be male-authored, reveal little information concerning mother-daughter ties. While sexism may in part explain this lacuna, it is also important to bear in mind that men simply lacked knowledge about female-female relationships and their particular dynamics. The mother-daughter relationship, especially in somewhat gender-segregated societies such as those of ancient Rome and Greece, was fundamentally alien to male outsiders. As such, male-authored literary sources tend to depict dialogues between mothers and daughters as both hostile to males and focused on the female manipulation of male relatives and lovers.²

A rare exception of a positively depicted mother-daughter relationship in classical literature is that of Clytemnestra and Iphigenia in Iphigenia at Aulis; yet this play ends tragically, with Clytemnestra losing her daughter to her husband’s sacrificial knife.³ Even in this case, most of Iphigenia and Clytemnestra’s conversations with each other concern either Agamemnon or Iphigenia’s supposed marriage to Achilles. In the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, the relationship between Demeter and her daughter Persephone
is close and intimate, but again, the story told is one of bereavement and tragedy.\footnote{In contrast, the limited historical evidence we have from antiquity, which comes primarily from legal cases and letters, suggests more positive and female-centered relationships between mothers and daughters. Their interactions tend to focus on issues of either economic or emotional support of each other, rather than on plots against their male kin.\footnote{These two distinct representations of mother–daughter bonds suggest a disparity between ancient male views of women and the actual lived experiences of those women.}}

While the public historical texts must be viewed through the potentially distorted lenses of male jurists and advocates, they still offer a door into the private “female sphere” of Greek and Roman women’s interactions with each other. The characterizations of the women themselves are biased and untrustworthy as historical data, since the jurists and statesmen are attempting to win their cases, often by representing the mother or daughter in question as villainous and greedy. However, the technical details of law cases which detail interactions between women and their daughters are likely to be true or at least representative of actual social patterns. While such testimony must be carefully filtered, it offers a more accurate impression of women’s daily lives than the purely literary imaginings of elite male authors.

Previous historical studies of ancient mothers, most notably the work of Suzanne Dixon, have focused primarily on the evidence of elites concerning respectable Roman matrons, which frequently disregards or minimizes female–female bonds. For instance, we have a significant amount of firsthand data about the families of the first-century BCE Roman statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero and the first-century CE Roman civil servant Pliny the Younger. However, Cicero’s and Pliny’s letters focus on the men’s own relationships to their female kin rather than the interrelationships among their wives, mothers, and daughters.\footnote{We can only infer what Tullia thought about her mother, Terentia, or vice versa.} One of the only means of glimpsing such a mother–daughter relationship is therefore to examine atypical familial structures that lacked a central male figure as the focus of authorial attention. Perhaps the most common type of such a family was the household of a madam and her prostitute-daughter. We are constrained, as usual in the study of ancient women, by a reliance on male-authored sources, but we can still gain glimpses of how elite men perceived particular relationships. Specifically, this essay compares representations of madam–prostitute mother–daughter relation-
ships in plays and comic dialogues to those chronicled in legal cases. By examining this evidence, we can both study the male representation of female bonds and gain some sense of women’s own view of prostitution and mother–daughter ties, as evidenced by the issues they valued deeply enough to fight for in court. While the literary mothers glamorize prostitution and advocate it as a lifestyle for their daughters, the historical mothers tend to seek respectable marriage for their daughters, and prostitution is represented as a desperate and bleak alternative for the economically desperate.

Given the paucity of source material overall about such relationships, my data set ranges from classical Greece to late Roman Egypt and across the Mediterranean. I focus on stories about the elite escorts or courtesans, known in the Greek world as *hetairai*, mainly because there are fewer records about the lives of poor streetwalkers, known as *pornai* to the Greeks and *scorta* to the Romans. While most ancient prostitutes did not live in elegant houses or brothels with their mothers, tales of wealthy freelance courtesans were popular sources of entertainment. Meanwhile, male jurists frequently levied accusations of prostitution at female defendants or witnesses in ancient lawsuits. Despite the variety of source materials, the stereotypes of madam-mothers presented in the literary sources in particular are remarkably consistent across time and culture, largely because they draw on earlier literary models rather than reflecting contemporary local practices of prostitution.

**WHY PROSTITUTE YOUR DAUGHTER?**

Upon first consideration, motherhood itself seems like a severe disadvantage to a prostitute’s lifestyle. Prostitutes, to an even greater degree than other female workers, are unable to work for some time due to pregnancy and childbirth. Childbirth was also a serious health risk in antiquity, and parenthood would have been a significant economic burden for women on the margins of society. Since prostitutes are frequently associated in ancient texts with contraceptives, abortifacients, and infant exposure, we might wonder why there are any stories about prostitutes and their daughters at all. Since plentiful if unreliable information about abortion and contraception was readily available to prostitutes, and infant exposure was also socially tolerated, why would ancient prostitutes ever have taken the economic and physical risks of becoming mothers?

The answer lies in two distinct sources of concern for the freelance prostitute. In Greek and Roman societies, children were valued for their
ability to provide not only emotional gratification but also potential economic security. Children were expected to support and protect their elders when they were no longer able to fend for themselves. Prostitutes, particularly given their lack of a larger family structure, must have desired protection and support in their old age as much as anyone else in antiquity.

This anxiety about the need for geriatric care would have been particularly urgent for prostitutes given their short career spans. Several texts tell us of the rapidly declining pay scales for middle-aged and elderly prostitutes in the ancient world. Older prostitutes are generally characterized as ugly, cheap streetwalkers who were forced by necessity to perform more degrading sexual acts for less money. (There are exceptional women like Philinna or Charito, who supposedly still invoked fierce desire from her lovers at the age of sixty.) Epicrates describes the reversal of fortune over time of the famous hetaira Lais:

When she was a chick and young, and made wild by the big bucks, you would have seen Pharnabazos sooner than her. But now since she has run the long course in years, and the structure of her body is relaxing, it's easier to see her than spit. She goes flying around, dashing everywhere: she takes a stater or three obols. (Epicrates, Anti-Lais fr. 3.11–21)

Since marriage was rarely an option, and other women's work—like weaving—relatively unprofitable, the main retirement option for older prostitutes was to become a madam and live off a share of the earnings of younger, more attractive women. The easiest way to find such apprentices was to bear and raise them, although we also see examples from both literary and historical sources of madams buying young female children or adopting exposed infants. As a consequence, the ancient discourse concerning mother–daughter relationships among prostitutes is complicated by issues of economic necessity. While the mothers may wish success and happiness for their daughters, they also seek to ensure their own financial security and comfort.

FICTIONAL REPRESENTATIONS

In plays, poetry, and comic dialogue, prostitute-mothers are generally portrayed as antagonists to the young male hero or lover figure; they view their daughters largely as sources of potential profit. I shall primarily focus here on several examples from the second-century CE Greco-Roman au-
thor Lucian's *Dialogues of the Courtesans*, as these are both representative of the genre and feature extended conversations between madam-mothers and prostitute-daughters. The mothers echo the hostile, witch-like *lenae* (madams) and pseudo-maternal figures that we see elsewhere in Greek and Roman poetry, while the daughters are typically represented as the naive victims of their mothers' greed and nagging.\(^{12}\)

A representative example of maternal encouragement toward prostitution is Lucian's dialogue between the mother Crobyle and her daughter Corinna, who has just come back from her first night of work as a prostitute. Crobyle explains in detail the dire economic necessity that led to the prostitution of her daughter:

*Crobyle:* We've no other way of earning a living, you know, daughter. Do you realize how badly we've lived these last two years since your blessed father died? When he was alive, we had everything, with no problem. He worked metal and had a great name in Piraeus. . . . When he died, first of all I sold his fire-tongs and his anvil and his hammer for two *mina* and we managed to live off of that for seven months. Then I earned our daily bread with difficulty, sometimes by weaving, sometimes by spinning the two kinds of thread, for woof and warp. I was feeding you, daughter, waiting for you to fulfill my expectations. . . . I reckoned that when you were the age you are now, you'd be able to look after me, and easily get yourself clothed well, grow rich, and have purple robes and maids.

*Corinna:* What do you mean, mother, how?

*Crobyle:* By spending your time with young men, drinking with them, and sleeping with them for money.

(*Lucian, *Dialogues of the Courtesans* 6.1; Trans. Adapted From Sidwell [2005]*)

Crobyle is not a lazy or naturally immoral woman; she attempted to make a living through spinning and weaving, the more virtuous if less profitable types of work readily available to women.\(^{13}\) However, Crobyle is also a widow who apparently lacks any natal family to assist her or her daughter. Corinna is her one profitable resource. Crobyle was not a prostitute herself, but she seems to find little immoral about the profession, presumably partially due to the genre of the comic dialogue itself. Corinna, meanwhile, is just postpubescent and quite naïve; much of the dialogue focuses on Crobyle's instructions to her on the proper behavior of an elite *hetaira*.

Despite the unorthodox nature of this family unit, Lucian emphasizes
the commonplace and humorous dynamic in their relationship. Crobyle holds up the example of her friend’s daughter in an attempt to further encourage Corinna, noting, “Daphnis used to wear rags before her girl became old enough” (6.2). Crobyle is particularly focused not just on the necessities of life, like food, but on the potential to buy luxury items and feminine accessories with her daughter’s earnings. This desire forms part of a long tradition of male condemnation of female greed and shallowness, but it also suggests a consciousness of class in this case. For ancient women, social and economic status was at least partially denoted by dress (as well as number of slaves); Crobyle wishes to leave rags behind for “purple robes and maids.” Crobyle’s final attempt to persuade her daughter into a life of prostitution assumes that her daughter feels a filial obligation to support her economically:

Don’t you want everyone pointing you out with their fingers very shortly and saying, “Do you see how very rich Crobyle’s daughter Corinna is and how completely blissful she’s made her mother?” What do you say? Will you do it? I know you will. (Lucian, *Dialogues of the Courtesans* 6.4; trans. adapted from Sidwell [2005])

There are two useful questions to be asked about this particular scenario of Lucian’s. First, we may question its realism. Would Lucian’s audience have considered plausible the possibility of a respectable smith’s widow and daughter falling into prostitution? Ann Hanson’s research on papyri from Hellenistic and Roman Egypt suggests that even wealthy widows and mothers of sons in antiquity were highly concerned with financial security after the death of their husbands. Economic hardship for a mother of daughters without male kin to support her must have been both relatively common and dire. While prostitution was not the inevitable fate of young women in such a situation, it seems a reasonable possibility.

Why, then, would Lucian’s audience have found this dialogue especially humorous, if it realistically depicted the stark economic choices available to nonelite widows and their daughters? The humor here lies not primarily in a Bakhtinian reversal of expectations but in the more conventional stereotyping and mockery of inferiors, as suggested by Aristotle. Lucian’s audience is presumably neither elite courtesans nor impoverished widows, but rather elite males of the leisure class. Such listeners must have laughed at the idea of an older woman nagging her daughter to prostitute herself in contrast with the more conventional scenario of mothers urging...
their daughters to marry well. Both women conform to narrow misogynistic gender stereotypes in this dialogue; Lucian makes no attempt to evoke complex personalities or deep characterizations in his representation of either Crobyle or Corinna.

Kate Gilhuly also notes that this particular dialogue focuses on the gratification of male sexual desires as much as on female economic needs. Crobyle attempts to mold the Galataen Corinna into the perfect object for the male gaze, counseling her on how to eat, drink, and smile appropriately in order to attract lovers. At the same time, the mother herself interacts primarily with other women, their neighbors and friends, in similar straits.\textsuperscript{16} The male–female relationship here is usually temporary and transactional, despite Corinna’s wish to see her lover Eucritos again. In contrast, the female–female relationships are depicted as long-lasting and require both emotional and financial ties between mother and daughter.

Another typical scenario, featured in Lucian’s dialogue between Musarion and her mother (7), involves the mother-madam criticizing her prostitute-daughter for taking a poor but handsome client. Musarion’s lover Chaereas has been taking money from her rather than providing her with funds. When Musarion protests to her mother that her lover has promised to marry her as soon as his father dies, the mother responds:

So if we need shoes, Musarion, and the shoemaker asks for the two drachmas, we’re going to say to him, “We don’t have the cash, but you can have a few of our hopes.” And we’ll say the same to the bread-man too. And if someone comes for the rent, we’ll say, “Can you wait until Laches dies? I’ll pay you straight after the wedding.” (Lucian, \textit{Dialogues of the Courtesans} 7.4; trans. Sidwell [2005])

In both Greek and Roman fiction, the madam-mother is generally an acerbic realist, willing to face the harsh facts and coach her daughter to abandon idealistic love for ready cash. She does perhaps love her daughter, but she also wants prototypically feminine comforts like clothes and jewelry, again feeding into male stereotypes of female interests and desires. These mothers may have real financial difficulties and worries about bread and rent money, but they are also fundamentally shallow in their longing for fashionable accessories. This dialogue also illustrates the madam-mother’s concern with the ephemeral nature of a courtesan’s career: “Do you think you’re always going to be eighteen?” asks Musarion’s mother. The daughter’s career as a prostitute is only a temporary solution to the economic is-
sues faced by a household of women. In the best scenario, the daughter either finds a long-term relationship to support her or repeats the process with the next generation.

Sometimes, we are given the perspective of a young prostitute-mother. In one scene in the *Dialogues*, the hetaira Myrtion discusses her pregnancy with her lover Pamphilus, whom she fears is about to desert her for a legitimate bride:

>This is the only profit I've had of your passion, that you've made my stomach this size and I'll have to look after a child soon—a very difficult thing for a courtesan. I say “look after” because I'm not going to expose it, especially if it's male. I'm going to call him Pamphilus, and have him as a consolation for our love. And one day he'll throw it in your face that you were unfaithful to his poor mother. (Lucian, *Dialogues of the Courtesans* 2.1; trans. Sidwell [2005])

Myrtion places a high value on having a child, especially a son, who can offer the protection and eventual permanent support which girls like Corinna and Musarion cannot. She also views parenthood as an active choice, although the conception was presumably accidental and her plan involves significant career sacrifices.

Lacking a husband, Myrtion was able to choose her own fate as a mother. In conventional ancient families it was the father who had this power, not the mother. Greek and Roman fathers had the legal right to either raise or expose any child they wished. Mothers in conventional families normally lacked such power, although some might have the choice to expose a child in the case of divorce, if the father was uninterested in raising it. Given the ready availability of exposure, all the children raised by a prostitute can be perceived as wanted children. While this dialogue, in contrast to the others, is one between a man and a woman, Myrtion does not appear to consider the father's power over this child at all. She remains outside the boundaries of the normal cross-gender familial relationships; as a courtesan, this control over children gives her both more power and more vulnerability.

Lucian's literary stereotypes of madam-mothers and prostitute-daughters appear to draw from common archetypes, as such characters are also found in Greek and Roman plays and poetry. In the Roman playwright Terence's comedy *The Fair Andrian*, based on a play by the Greek playwright Menander, Chrysis, the Andrian prostitute in question, turns from weaving to prostitution in order to support her young sister.
nuchus, the courtesan Thais is also the daughter of a madam and the foster sister of a virtuous maiden wrongly sold as a prostitute; Thais mentions that her mother “taught [the girl] everything, and brought her up, just as though she had been her own daughter.”

The older sisters of the comedies seem to be compassionate and protective of their virtuous maiden “sisters,” and the original Greek plots revolve around the transition of the younger girl from the status of prostitute to that of respectable wife.

This plot type stands in contrast to Lucian’s dialogues and the depictions in poetry, however, where the prostitute-daughters remain courtesans, supporting their mothers in a female-run household. One possible reason for this disparity is that the older sister is still fully capable of earning a living through her own sex work, unlike the older mothers of the dialogues. She plays the role of the attractive, crafty courtesan who uses her wiles to ensure the best future for both herself and her female kin, generally by tricking the hapless males of the comedy. The primacy of the female-female relationship is maintained in these plays, but the strongly misogynistic aspect seen in Lucian’s later mother-daughter dialogues is absent.

In contrast, later Roman and Greek elegiac poetry focused on trying to drive a wedge between prostitute-daughters and their greedy, selfish mothers. As Sara Myers notes, the maternal figures generally serve as antagonists to the male poet-narrators or characters. The Roman satirist Juvenal complained that mothers taught their daughters how to be adulteresses or even prostitutes: “For her own profit [utile] the shameful old woman brings up her dear daughter for shame.”

The Greek first-century CE poet Nicarchus warns his lover Philumena “not to listen to your mother” but to “try and behave with propriety” and raise any child born while he is away. The Hellenistic poet Marcus Argentarius describes a scenario in which his intended seduction of the young woman Alcippe turned into a ménage a trois with her mother, a different sort of remuneration for the older woman involved. In these cases, the mothers are unconcerned either for their daughters’ virtue or for their daughters’ successful relationships with their lovers; they want only profit or personal pleasure.

In other genres, the idea that a courtesan’s household might frequently consist of herself and her mother or other female kin seems to have been readily accepted. In Xenophon’s fourth-century BCE Memorabilia, for instance, the philosopher Socrates visits the hetaira Theodote, later the mistress of Alcibiades, and gives her advice on how to attract lovers. While the dialogue is principally interesting in its comparison of Socrates himself to a courtesan, it includes the minor detail that Theodote supports her mother with her work: “At this point Socrates noticed that she was sump-
tuously dressed, and that her mother at her side was wearing fine clothes and jewelry.” Whether or not this conversation is purely imaginary, Xenophon seems to expect his audience to find the presence of a mother who is economically supported by her courtesan daughter to be unremarkable. At the same time, the mother here does not have any obvious authority over Theodote; Theodote herself conducts the conversation with Socrates and is clearly the mistress of her own household.

**SON OF A PROSTITUTE**

Whereas the mothers of prostitute-daughters use their daughters only as temporary sources of dishonorable income, the prostitute-mothers of sons were sometimes able to achieve permanent comfort and upward social mobility through their offspring. On the literary side, there is the already discussed case of Musarion. A hypothetical law case imagined by the Roman first-century CE rhetorician Seneca the Elder debates the issue of whether a man can name as his heir his grandson by a disinherited son and a prostitute. The prostitute-mother is depicted in the speech for the defense as a virtuous and loving woman, nursing her dying lover with “sad face and eyes cast down.” Here the woman’s wifely devotion redeems her unorthodox status and offers an opportunity for her son. The opposing side criticizes the prostitute for her fertility, which is said to be inappropriate and uncharacteristic for prostitutes, who were supposedly experts with regard to contraceptives and abortifacients. In this case, then, prostitute-like behavior—licentiousness and childlessness—is seen as incompatible with virtuous motherhood. However, this prostitute’s ironic reward for her virtue is the loss of her child, as he is adopted into the aristocratic family and taken away from her; she achieves a better life for her child but not for herself.

Fourth-century BCE Athenian orators frequently cast aspersions on the sexual histories of their political rivals’ mothers as a means of denigrating the men’s social status. Demosthenes claims that his enemy Aeschines’ mother Glaucotha was originally a common whore named Empusa. Isaeus accuses the madam and prostitute Alce of scheming to establish her son as a legitimate Athenian citizen and the heir of her elite lover. Most such slanders probably had little basis in fact, although they betray how little even the male neighbors of these men necessarily knew about the names and social background of the women in a household. Women could of-
ten be accused of prostitution simply because there was no public record to prove otherwise.

Athenaeus offers an entire list of famous Greeks who were supposedly the sons of prostitutes, defending these lowly social origins on the grounds that "when such women change to a life of sobriety they are better than the women who pride themselves on their respectability." In some versions of Roman legend, Romulus and Remus's foster mother was not a female wolf but a part-time prostitute named Acca Larentia or Lupa. For men, these stories demonstrate that having a prostitute as a mother was shameful but did not necessarily doom the man himself to a lowly or dishonorable social status. Prostitute-mothers who were appropriately virtuous and self-sacrificing could produce elite sons, although they themselves do not seem to have benefited directly from their offspring's success.

LEGAL EXAMPLES OF MADAM-MOTHERS

Historical sources such as legal cases offer glimpses at more complex and mutually supportive relationships between prostitutes or former prostitutes and their "working girl" daughters. Nevertheless, these texts themselves are also highly charged and tend to present negative and somewhat stereotypical views of such ties. As the authors and advocates were generally trying either to belittle or to whitewash the reliability and virtue of a female witness or defendant, they had little incentive to tell purely objective accounts. These trial cases are not designed solely for entertainment, unlike the comic dialogues, but they do still present, at best, a male-authored representation of historical female testimony and experience.

By focusing specifically on references to mother-daughter relationships rather than on the questions of the defendants' moral and social status, however, even these vituperative, misogynistic speeches provide useful insight into relationships among women. In the following examples I shall be focusing not on the guilt or innocence of the figures in each lawsuit but on what these cases can tell us about maternal attitudes toward the prostitution of their daughters.

The most famous and detailed relationship, as well as one of our only cases of a three-generation sequence, is that of the fourth-century BCE courtesan Neaira, her madam and maternal figure, Nicarete, and Neaira's daughter Phano. Our main source for the lives of these women is the prosecution speech of Apollodorus against Neaira; his agenda was to prove
both that Neaira was herself a notorious prostitute and that Phano was her daughter and not the legitimate citizen-daughter of Neaira’s consort Stephanus by an Athenian citizen-wife. As such, the facts of the case are arguable; Debra Hamel suggests that Phano may not have been Neaira’s biological daughter at all. In this case, however, I focus on the particular dynamics of the relationships between these mother–daughter pairs, rather than the underlying legal issues, and thus find Apollodorus’s claims useful for that purpose.

Nicarete, a well-known madam and married freedwoman from Elis, apparently had a practice of adopting exposed attractive girl babies from the dung heap and “rearing and training them skillfully” to be courtesans. She used to address them as daughters, so that she might exact the largest fee from those who wished to have dealings with them, on the ground that they were freeborn girls; but after she had reaped her profit from the youth of each of them, one by one, she then sold the whole lot of them together, seven in all. (Apollodorus, Against Neaira 19)

While there was no biological tie between Nicarete and her prostitutes, she and possibly her husband Hippias functioned in loco parentis to these girls. Notably, the girls are publicly treated as daughters, but Apollodorus implies that, in private, Nicarete considered them to be slaves. He also alleges that Nicarete prostituted Neaira before she reached puberty and then, after making a large profit upon her, sold her as an exclusive concubine for two clients. Such a scenario denotes the harshest possible representation of a relationship between a madam-mother figure and a prostitute-daughter. The madam uses the girl for prostitution at the earliest possible age and then sells her off, ending any pretense of a familial relationship.

Apollodorus claims that in the course of her own later career as a hetaira, Neaira herself had three children, the boys Proxenus and Ariston and a daughter, Phano, all of unknown parentage. Phano’s parentage and citizenship status are at the crux of the trial, as she was later presented as the Athenian citizen-child of Neaira’s lover and possible husband, Stephanus. Regardless of the veracity of the prosecution’s argument about Phano’s lack of citizenship, Neaira’s interest in protecting and benefiting the girl is clear from the speech. Neaira and Stephanus first marry Phano off to an Athenian citizen, Phrastor, with a substantial dowry of thirty minae, the same as Neaira’s own original purchase price.

Apollodorus accuses Phano of having been brought up “in dissolute
ways, longing for her mother's way of life"; her marriage ultimately ended in divorce. However, when Phano's ex-husband Phrastor fell ill, both Phano and her mother, Neaira, went to nurse him. As a result of their good care, the mother and daughter persuaded him to acknowledge Phano's own son as his legitimate heir. This act of cooperative nursing suggests a continued relationship of familial support between Neaira and Phano, even after Phano had reached adulthood and marriage. Phano also seems to be living in the household of Neaira and Stephanus after her divorce. Since Apollodorus has no reason to portray Neaira or Phano sympathetically, the story of their care of Phrastor is likely to be accurate. Stephanus and Neaira subsequently remarried Phano to another Athenian, the king-archon for that year, again trying to improve her status and buy a good marriage by means of a substantial dowry and other monetary assistance for her husband.

While Phano may have had some premarital sexual experience, Neaira worked hard to promote a respectable lifestyle for her daughter. She twice provided a dowry and arranged or tricked naïve Athenian men into marriage. Although the text of the speech is clearly hostile, it nevertheless gives substantial insights into the bonds of both responsibility and presumed affection between this alleged courtesan-mother and her daughter. We do not know the emotional nature of the relationship between Nicarete and Neaira, although Nicarete's regular sales of her "daughters" suggest that the tie was more economic than affectionate. However, rather than trying to profit from her own child, Neaira spent substantial sums to try to ensure a life free from prostitution for Phano.

When we read in between the lines of Apollodorus's exaggerated denunciation, we are given a brief glimpse of a devoted, hardworking prostitute trying to achieve prosperity and social respectability for her child. This glimpse also casts doubt on the romantic notion that Greek courtseans' lives were somehow superior to those of the sheltered, segregated Athenian wives. Neaira is very willing to sacrifice her daughter's independence and enjoyment of public life in return for the ordinary existence and long-term security of marriage.

In another example, the orator Isaeus's third speech concerns a lawsuit in which the husband of an Athenian woman named Phyle claims that she is her deceased father's heiress (epikleros) and thus has claim to his property. Isaeus's speech counters this claim by arguing that Phyle is merely the illegitimate daughter of her father, Phyrrus, and a hetaira. As in the case of Against Neaira, much of the argument revolves around the question of the
mother's social status and behavior. Isaeus claims that the mother was serenaded by strangers and attended banquets with her "husband" in the company of men, but he can offer much less proof of her courtesan status than Apollodorus does for Neaira.\(^4\) In any case, this supposed courtesan appears to have maintained a close relationship with her daughter, since the mother-prostitute is identified as a source of knowledge for her son-in-law during the lawsuit twenty years after her partner's death.\(^4\)

Regardless of her mother's status, the daughter Phyle appears to be legitimately married to a respectable Athenian citizen, Xenocles, again suggesting that her mother or kin viewed marriage as highly preferable to a life of prostitution for her daughter. Isaeus alleges that Xenocles knowingly "took as his wife the daughter of a mistress," which, if true, establishes that the social distinctions between wife and *hetaira* in fourth-century Athens were more nebulous than cases like *Against Neaira* might suggest. While the respectability of mothers like Neaira and the unnamed courtesan here may have remained in question, these women were still able to marry off their daughters and thereby establish more conventional means of economic support for them. Their sons-in-law might also have been able to take care of the retired courtesans in their old age, providing a personal level of security as well as protection for their children and grandchildren.

In contrast, a late antique papyrus from Hermoupolis in Egypt paints a much grimmer picture of the typical historical mother-daughter relationship involving prostitution. According to the details of the fourth-/fifth-century CE case, an impoverished woman named Theodora sold her anonymous daughter to a pimp as a public prostitute, so that she might have economic support from the daughter's income.\(^5\) The girl was subsequently killed in the line of work by one of her clients, the senator Diodemus. Theodora then sued Diodemus for financial support because of the resultant loss of her daughter's earnings, "a small consolation for her daughter's life," and was awarded 10 percent of the senator's property by the prefect.

The prefect describes the daughter as "a poor creature, who when she was alive was laid out for those who wanted her, like a dead body. The poverty of her lot was so insistent that she sold her body and brought dishonor upon her name and reputation and took on a prostitute's life with its many hardships." This is almost certainly a more common scenario for prostitute families than the extravagant lifestyle of Neaira and her family. The unnamed daughter was sold to gain basic sustenance for her mother and died as a result of the genuine dangers of her profession. Theodora presumably did not bear her child for the purpose of prostitution, but she was ready to make use of her for the economic benefit of the family. Indeed, given that
the prefect considered 10 percent of an elite senator's property to be fair recompense, it appears that Theodora may have profited quite substantially from the sale of her daughter.

When compared and examined as a whole, these different glimpses of life in mother-daughter prostitute households offer a startling alternative to the conventional father-dominated narratives of the ancient family. We cannot discount the misogyny and stereotypes present in these tales; even the law cases draw on general elite male assumptions about the greed of the female prostitute. Yet these stories also describe lifelong and mutually supportive relationships between mother and daughter. Just as the evidence about elite Roman matrons suggests that they maintained important relationships with their mothers well into adulthood, these lower class women also had their daughters as a primary tie.6 For most prostitutes, daughters, if they existed, formed their only permanent familial bond, as relationships with lovers (and sons) were almost inevitably transient.

We can also see a striking contrast in attitudes toward the career of prostitution between historical and purely literary figures. The historical Athenian courtesan Neaira strove to prevent her daughter from following in her profession by repeatedly arranging respectable marriages for her. The purely fictional Crobyle, on the other hand, once a respectable smith's wife, goaded her daughter Corinna into prostitution without any apparent moral qualms. Lucian's dialogues and Greek New Comedy glamorized prostitution as a luxurious lifestyle, perhaps in order to reduce any unease among their male audience either about the fate of widows and female orphans or about wealthy men's treatment of ordinary prostitutes. The actions of Greek and Egyptian women in the legal cases, however, suggest that most women, even if economically desperate, did not view prostitution as a good option for their daughters. The fate of the daughter of Theodora—and mention should be made of Apollodorus's description of Neaira's gang rape (33)—offers a far harsher perspective on the reality of ancient sex work than any of the pretty dresses described by Lucian's Crobyle.

Both literary and legal texts describe women moving either from conventional family life to prostitution or vice versa; the plays and dialogues suggest more of a downward movement, whereas the legal texts chronicle the attempt of supposed prostitute-mothers to find respectable husbands for their daughters. These transitions between different social layers also suggest that there may have been more fluidity between the states of matron, madam, and prostitute than legal codes or prescriptive texts would imply, despite Apollodorus's famous doctrinaire statement:
We have courtesans [hetairai] for pleasure, and concubines [pallakai] for the daily service of our bodies, [and] wives [gunaikes] for the production of legitimate offspring and to have a reliable guardian of our household property. (Apollodorus, Against Neaira 122)41

Courtesans in this schematic are explicitly not mothers, or at least not mothers of legitimate offspring, and yet this trial is an attempt to prove that Neaira herself is indeed the mother of Phano. For Apollodorus, the legal status of the mother–child relationship is key, rather than the emotional bond between the pair; what matters is not how Neaira and Phano feel about each other but whether Phano has the legal status of a citizen-daughter—the daughter of an Athenian father. Mothers are once again elided from the picture, even while putatively forming the object and focus of the trial.

It would be dangerous to read too much into this limited collection of legal cases and comic dialogues, especially in light of differences in genre and date. Nevertheless, given the paucity of other sources on ancient mother–daughter relationships, the discourse about such bonds in these texts suggests both the importance of the mother–daughter tie and the suspicion and denigration with which male authors treated it. The relationships between women depicted in these texts, whether literary or historical, are ones of mentorship and love as well as economic dependence.48 The fictional stereotypical mothers of comedy and dialogue use their daughters for their own gain, but they also betray a genuine, plausible anxiety about the economic options available to women without male kin. In contrast, the successful historical courtesans seek to avoid their own fate by arranging traditional marriages for their daughters. While a modern audience may be startled by the idea of encouraging a daughter to become a prostitute, the goal of enabling a better life for one's children remains a constant in the history of motherhood.

NOTES


2. See, for instance, Lucian, Dialogues of the Courtesans 2, 3, 6, 7; Juvenal 6.239–240; Plautus, Cistellaria 1–120, Asinaria 504–544, Miles Gloriosus 690f.; Terence, Heauton Timorumenos 233–234.

MOTHER–DAUGHTER BONDS AMONG ANCIENT PROSTITUTES

7. The question of whether terminology for prostitutes in legal texts accurately described social and economic divisions between different types of sex workers is highly debated. Miner (2003) and Davidson (1997) discuss this issue extensively with regard to the Greek world. There has been no detailed analysis so far regarding the applicability of different Roman terms; the best current sources are Adams (1983) and Flemming (1999).
10. E.g., Aristophanes, Ecclesiazusae 1105–1110; Anacreon 346; Greek Anthology 5.204, 5.271, 5.273; 6.18–20, 6.48, 6.283.
12. For Lucian specifically see Gilhuly (2007), 78; for representations of lenae in Roman poetry see Myers (1996), 2–3.
13. Two epigrams from the Palatine Anthology suggest that the transition from weaving to prostitution was not uncommon: Palatine Anthology 6.48, 6.285 (“Away, starving work of wretched women, that has the power to waste away the bloom of youth”). On the other hand, loomweights have been found in the alleged brothel of the Athenian Agora, and several classical Greek vases depict hetairai weaving, suggesting that prostitutes may also have multitasked as weavers during quiet times of the day: Davidson (1997), 86–87.
17. In the surviving law code of the ancient Cretan city of Gortyn (the language is Peloponnesian Doric), a divorced mother whose husband rejected her child in the presence of three adult witnesses was given the right to either expose or raise the baby: Demand (1994), 11, 187; Brunt (1971), 133.
18. Fantham (1975), 45.
20. Terence, Eunuchus 145f.
25. Xenophon, Memorabilia 3.11.
27. Seneca, Controversiae 2.4.
28. Seneca, Controversiae 2.45.
33. Livy 1.4. See also Prudence Jones’s and Patricia Salzman-Mitchell’s essays in this volume.
35. Apollodorus, Against Neaira 17; Hamel (2005), 80.
36. Hamel (2005), 88; Allison Glazebrook argues that all details should be considered with extreme skepticism, given the slanderous nature of Athenian oratory: Glazebrook (2005), 62. See also Patterson (1998), 205.
37. Apollodorus, Against Neaira 22.
38. Apollodorus, Against Neaira 50.
39. Apollodorus, Against Neaira 50.
40. Apollodorus, Against Neaira 55.
41. Apollodorus, Against Neaira 72.
43. Isaeus 3.13.
44. Isaeus 3.31.
47. For commentary on the specific use of these terms, see Davidson (1997), 73; Miner (2003), 19–35.

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Tenderness or Taboo
IMAGES OF BREAST-FEEDING MOTHERS
IN GREEK AND LATIN LITERATURE
Patricia Salzman-Mitchell

Two taboos are involved in the representation of the nursing image: nudity and milk; two images of women: sexual and maternal.

BONFANTE (1997), 188

The topic of nursing in Greek and Roman culture has received some well-deserved attention from scholars in recent years. In particular, medical texts provide us with guidance and opinions surrounding the benefits and vicissitudes of nursing infants. But while medical and philosophical writers tend to view breast-feeding of children by their own mothers in a positive light, literary testimonies provide a more complex outlook. This essay will look at some examples in Greek and Roman literature of mortal mothers breast-feeding their own children and will draw connections and give general interpretations of them. The scope of this paper includes the works of Homer through the Augustan period. Wet-nursing will not be a central part of the argument, as it has already been amply discussed. I will instead concentrate on literary depictions of mortal mothers, though maternal goddesses will be mentioned at times as a point of contrast.

Larissa Bonfante has observed that images of nursing mothers in art and literature tend to be followed by tragedy, and thus what should be a tender moment, which expresses women’s vulnerability, acts as a dramatic contrast that stresses the misfortune that ensues. I will go even further in this line of thought and propose that while usually emphasizing the unique bond forged between mother and nursling, at the same time these images are surrounded by the male fear of otherness; male authors express discom-
fort regarding a practice that seems unknown, even taboo, with a hue of incest, close to the animal side of nature rather than to the civilized world, and present women as mysterious, polluting, dangerous, and different. The calamities that follow the examples we will discuss might thus be interpreted as punishment for an act that is sometimes viewed as forbidden or taboo. These literary images are thus complex, falling as they do between the purely motherly and the sexual.

The feeding of infants with their mother's breast milk is deemed by many—past and present—as a natural practice; humans are mammals, and therefore it is in their makeup to feed their young in this manner. Yet social perception complicates this simple tenet, and both anthropologists and psychoanalysts have remarked on the problems and taboos involved in it. It is also an act from which men are explicitly excluded, which gives rise to suspicion on their part. The most obvious taboo, as the above quote from Bonfante states, is nudity. Breast-feeding, whether performed in public or not, involves some exposure of the breasts and thus of an intimate part of the female body. But beyond this basic concept is the idea that there is something sexual in lactation and that the boundaries between the motherly and the erotic might be blurred. Cindy Stears observes that the breast-feeding experience is complicated by the conflict between the sexualized breast—the primary interpretation of breasts, at least in modern American society—and the nurturing side of the breast. In *Boundaries of Touch*, Jean Halley mentions that some modern theorists of child-rearing oppose nursing beyond twelve months due to unease about unnecessary touch between mother and child. The author states that "anxiety about incest is at the core of this concern." Arlene Eisenberg and others, for example, worry that "breastfeeding will cross the line from good maternal to sexual behavior." Some psychologists and anthropologists even see breast-feeding as the first form of human intercourse, as a penetration (that even includes the exchange of fluids) between one body and another. Though they see it as a kind of erotic experience, they avoid straightforward condemnation and consider it as a natural part of the human experience.

While proponents of lactation as the "most natural" form of infant feeding have tried to free breast-feeding of these taboo nuances and define it as purely motherly, traces of these sexual overtones are still latent in cultural products and literary representations.
SOME MEDICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Before moving to the literary evidence, let us cast a general look at the material and medical evidence on breast-feeding in order to gain a broader understanding of views of lactation in the ancient world.

In the material culture of Greece, as Bonfante has shown, the motif of the nursing mother is rather absent and does not really appear until the Hellenistic period, in contrast to Italy, where it is relatively abundant. This observation is particularly striking in light of the fact that intimate scenes of family life are numerous on Greek vases and stelai. Although in classical Greece breast-feeding seems to have been recommended, it is evident that bottle feeding was also practiced. In contrast to ancient Greece, images of breast-feeding are pervasive in Italian art, particularly in Etruria, Southern Italy, and Sicily. This evidence shows not only a widespread practice, but also a celebration of it in material objects. Yet in Rome itself scenes of actual nursing are scarce and, as expected, images of mothers focus on the presentation of the family group.

The earliest mentions of lactation in the medical writers appear in the Hippocratic corpus, which provides aphorisms “On Dentition” and offers observations on the intake of milk. It also comments on sucklings. Aristotle referred to methods of infant feeding, and in the Historia animalium he addresses the properties of different types of milk, indicating also that breast-feeding took place on the first day of life. Plato comments on the rearing of children in the ideal city and proposes that children should be kept all together and mothers be brought to nurse them when their breasts are full, though no mother would know her own child (Republic 5.460c). Soranus in his treatise on Gynecology (1.19.24–25) gives extensive recommendations on how to choose a wet nurse and on nutrition for nursing women. Interestingly, he thought that mother’s milk was not good for forty days after delivery and that the infant ought to be fed by a wet nurse. He believed that the most suitable woman should nurse the infant, not necessarily the mother, unlike what the Roman philosophers thought, as we will see. Galen also wrote a chapter on infant feeding, and his De sanitate tuenda gives advice to nursing women on how to preserve the quality of their milk, thus implying a positive encouragement of the practice. He, unlike Soranus, did not believe that mother’s milk was bad immediately after childbirth.
In contrast to the lack of archaeological evidence on nursing mothers in classical Greece, literature does furnish some remarkable examples. In this section I will discuss some of the most famous passages in Greek literature that deal with breast-feeding and explore how behind the tender images presented, sexual overtones are also at play.

The earliest mentions of the act of breast-feeding in Greek poetry appear in Homer. In the *Hymn to Hermes* the infant god stresses his innocence by explaining that he is still a tender baby who only wants to sleep and nurse: "I care for sleep and my mother's milk" (267). Nursing is thus set in the context of the innocence and sweetness of infancy, which, of course, in the case of the trickster god, sounds rather fake. And in fact Margo Kitts argues that gods do not drink mother's milk and that Hermes is indeed lying here. Yet this text presents a goddess nursing her child, and thus it is a different case than what we will see in literary sources showing human mothers and their children. As we will observe in Roman examples as well, goddesses convey an idealized view of nursing unlike what we see among humans, and it is my contention that this is the case because deities are free of taboo (they marry their siblings, as Zeus and Hera do, for example), but mortals are not.

In the *Odyssey* there is a passing reference to Penelope as a young bride with an infant at her breast (Od. 11.447-449). We do know that Euryclea was Odysseus's nurse, who also breast-fed him, as the hero mentions: "Why do you wish to destroy me? You did suckle me yourself at your breast" (Od. 19.482-483). A more outstanding example is, however, found in the *Iliad*, where Hecuba makes a last desperate plea to Hector begging him to withdraw from battle. She exposes her breast to him:

\[
\text{μήτηρ δ' αὖθ' έτέρωθεν οδύρετο δάκρυ χέουσα κόλπον ἀνεμένη, έτέρητι δὲ μαζ' ἀνέσει:}
\text{καὶ μιν δάκρυ χέουσ' ἐπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα:}
\text{"Εκτορ τέκνον ἐμὸν τάδε τ' αἴδεο καὶ μ' ἐλέησον αὐτήν, εἰ ποτέ τοι λαθυκηδέα μαζ' ἐπέσοχον:}
\text{τῶν µυήσας φίλε τέκνον}
\text{(IL. 22.79–84)}
\]

And his mother wailed now, standing beside Priam, weeping freely, loosing her robes with one hand and holding out her bare breast with the other,
her words pouring forth in a flight of grief and tears:
"Hector, my child! Look—have some respect for this!
Pity your mother too, if I ever gave you the breast
to soothe your troubles, remember it now, dear boy."²⁰

This arresting gesture that reveals an intimate part of the female body is surprising in such a male-oriented war poem as the Iliad. Hecuba believes that the sight of her bare breast will have some power over Hector, as she intends it as a symbol of the special bond between mother and infant. Hecuba in particular mentions the calming effect of her breast on her son, the sense of comfort and protection it once gave him. And for her plea to appear credible, this gesture would have to be more powerful and persuasive than simple words.²¹

Yet there is more than the recollection of tenderness between mother and son here. During the lactation phase nursing mothers begin to perceive their breasts as a means of nurturing, as food, as a unique bond between them and their nurslings. Before and after this stage, in both the ancient and the modern worlds, the breasts tend to be sexualized, as elements of female beauty and femininity rather than motherhood.²² One may wonder, however, whether these sexual connotations of the breast and the physical contact between a mortal mother and her son (interestingly, all the examples that I was able to find present mothers and sons, not daughters) are entirely erased in the act of nursing, and if still present even in a veiled way, there might be an odd allusion to incest in these scenes. It is perhaps this awkwardness, among other reasons, that made the use of wet nurses acceptable.

It is thus striking in the Iliad episode that after so many years, during which Hecuba's breasts have acquired a different significance, she brings that meaning of the breast as nourishing out again—presumably her son has not seen his mother's breasts since he was a baby. Even more poignant is that Hecuba begs him to look and thus encourages his scopophilic interest. This episode brings up the many contradictions and complexities involved in the act of nursing. Do we see tenderness or taboo here? The recollection of the intimate moment tries to appeal to the mother–infant early love, yet exposing one's breasts to a grown son, long after the lactation period has finished, conveys ambiguous, and possibly sexual, overtones. Even more disturbing is that Hecuba is usually seen as an aged woman, wife of "old Priam"; generally nudity in old women was an object of ridicule and contempt in Greek culture. The unusualness of the scene thus stems from the contradicting readings of Hecuba's breasts. She exposes them as a nur-
ing mother, which she is not anymore, but Hector may be reading them in a different way; more importantly here, a modern reader views the scene with a sense of unease, the result of our own hang-ups about the sexual connotations of breast-feeding. We do not know where to look or what to do with the scene. Since, as Douglas Gerber has shown, naked breasts are loaded with eroticism in the Greek world, it is possible that ancient audiences also saw the scene as touching on the incest fantasy existing between son and mother.\(^{23}\) We do not have a direct response to his parents’ pleas from Hector, but the *Iliad* tells us that they are unsuccessful: “They could not shake the fixed resolve of Hector” (*Il*. 22.91).\(^{24}\)

The image reveals some interesting aspects of the conceptualization of nursing in this early period of Greek literature, the first being that queens such as Hecuba would be expected to nurse their children themselves and not necessarily give them to a wet nurse. Second, we see that Hecuba is proud of having breast-fed her child and understands that it forged a strong emotional bond between her and Hector. Thus we learn that in the Homeric world, at least in the literary representation, upper-class women were honored for nursing their infant children, that breast-feeding was believed to nurture the child both physically and emotionally, and that it allowed a particularly meaningful connection between mother and nursling. This, of course, may simply be Hecuba’s female perspective, but the male "author(s)" of the *Iliad* and the male world of this poem are certainly behind it. Yet at the same time, we notice the contradictions represented in the dual significance of the naked breast. As Nicole Loraux argues, one cannot make a strict distinction between a motherly way of exposing one’s breast and a sexual way, which is especially valid in the context of the Trojan cycle, where we encounter Helen baring her breast to Menelaus in a seductive way as an appeal for mercy. For Loraux a separation of “la mère de la femme désirable” is artificial and not convincing. Thus both images are always superposed.\(^{25}\)

For all its positive connotations, the outcome of the scene is a sorrowful one. Hector does not heed his mother’s pleas, perhaps showing that the power of the breast and the recollection of the shared experience between mother and child are not as significant to him as to Hecuba, or, perhaps, they have the opposite effect. Hecuba’s gesture attempts to bring about a very close physical union between mother and grown son. This action might actually generate fear and rejection on Hector’s part, and he reacts by distancing himself from her even more. Hector moves on to fight Achilles and eventually dies at his hands. Hecuba’s baring of her breast and her reminiscence of her having breast-fed her son are not only powerless and
fail in their purpose, but they are even made more dramatic due to the anticipation of the tragedy to come, the loss of her son at war and the final destruction of Troy. Henceforth, as we will see in other allusions to breast-feeding in Greek literature, the act of lactation, while implying a special affection between mother and child, at the same time conveys ominous connotations or a sorrowful fate. And perhaps these negative outcomes can be read almost as a punishment for a strong, physical closeness that verges toward the taboo, at least from the male perspective of the Homeric world.

A somewhat twisted recollection of this scene from the *Iliad* is presented in Aeschylus's *Libation Bearers* 896–898, where Clytemnestra tries to prevent the attack of her own son Orestes by, possibly, revealing her breast:

επίσχες, ὦ παῖ, τόν ὄντα δ' αἴδεσαι, τέκνων, 
μαστόν, πρὸς ὦ σὺ πολλᾶ δὴ βρίζων ἁμα 
οὖλουσιν ἐξημελξας εὐτραφές γάλα.

Stop[,] my son, honor this, child, the breast at which often while dozing you quaffed the nourishing milk with your gums.²⁷

In this scene Orestes is about to avenge the death of his father Agamemnon at the hands of his mother by killing her. Just as in Homer, Clytemnestra shows that literary queens nursed their own children and that they viewed this experience as a positive and significant part of motherhood, or at least this is how Clytemnestra wants to use it to her own benefit.²⁸ In this episode she mentions not only the nourishment Orestes received through her, but also the soothing effect of nursing that would comfort and put the baby to sleep.²⁹ Both Hecuba and Clytemnestra try to force their sons to obey by reminding them of their nursing experience and, not surprisingly (as grown sons are unlikely to remember as mothers do), they both fail.

Likewise, in the same tragedy Clytemnestra dreams that she gives birth to a snake and gives the snake the breast. We already see here a much more perverted version of the Homeric scene. Orestes as nursing child is thus viewed as a poisonous serpent who will eventually attack his mother. In this we perceive a connection with Hera, who also gave her breast to Heraclès, according to some accounts (*Il.* 5.392–394).³⁰ It is said that the hero bit her while nursing, and thus the Milky Way was formed. In the *Eumenides*, when the ghosts show the sleeping Furies the wounds on her heart (*Eum.* 103), it is implied that Orestes actually stabbed his mother in the breast.

Clytemnestra wants to recall the special bond involved in the act of
nursing: the tender image of an infant dozing off at the breast while drinking his mother's milk in her arms—to which one may add the loving gaze of the nursing mother upon the sweet baby. Yet this intimate image is perverted by the outcome of the scene and the matricide to be committed. Just as in Hecuba's case, this recollection has little power to alter the grown son's intentions. But this exposure of the female breast must also be seen as a theatrical dramatization. Stears observes that in the act of lactation "the body is in some ways a public good and thus open for public comment. . . . To the extent that breastfeeding occurs in the presence of others and/or symbolizes good mothering, it is also a visual performance of mothering with the maternal body at center stage."

The image of baby Orestes sucking his mother's breast seems to have at least some effect on her adult son since Orestes hesitates about what to do next. The scene is disquieting: when it is presented as occurring between two adults, the bared breast and the recollection intimate sexual overtones, especially considering that illicit and inappropriate sexuality are traits of Clytemnestra, and the physical closeness between mother and son implied here may convey a hint of incest to the hero exposed to his mother's naked body. After Clytemnestra's baring of her breast and her allusion to the breast-feeding experience, Orestes is uncertain about whether to proceed ("Pylades, what shall I do? Shall I spare my mother's life out of respect?" Libation Bearers 900); he is finally persuaded to move forward by his friend and kills his mother after a long diatribe with her.

Orestes' reaction is the opposite of his mother's wishes: he kills her not necessarily because he has not been moved by this intimate image, but because he has experienced, and perhaps he needs to suppress, the incestuous fantasies that the breast may provoke. The revenge for his father's death is also merged with the rejection and need to repress the image (and possible desire) of his mother's semi-naked body. Loraux observes that Libation Bearers 827–832 assimilates Orestes to Perseus: "Keep up Perseus's spirit in your heart." Here, therefore, Clytemnestra is analogous to Medusa, who, as Sigmund Freud has proposed, is the image of dangerous, devouring, and destructive female sexuality that at the same time can provoke desire. As Loraux mentions, in all these examples of sons exposed to a mother's breast, there is a refusal to look on the part of the males. Hector only has eyes for his rival Achilles, the children of Oedipus, as we shall see, disregard their mother's pleas and focus on fighting each other, and Orestes is like Perseus, averting his gaze from his mother/Medusa.

The Homeric passage and Aeschylus's scene share a curious pattern of adult sons being exposed to their mother's breasts. While the notion of
mother and infant is a common and acceptable one, the picture presented here is odd and dramatic, intending to have a profound impact on the situation at hand. Both women make reference to the earlier intimacy only in the direst of circumstances, as a last recourse, when they feel their children or their own lives are in peril. Kitts states that “in Homer, infants who drink milk cling to their mothers and not yet to the hearth where socialized humans eat bread,” and thus the image calls forth a “precultural stigma of childhood.” One can thus understand that this allusion to a more primal and less civilized stage in their lives may provoke rejection in two grown-up warriors who presume to have control of themselves and their countries and would not appreciate being drawn into a more primal, natural, and precivilized image. Just as in the Homeric scene, Clytemnestra's exposed breast—that which nourishes life—actually foreshadows murder, death, and a tragic outcome. It is an uncanny moment that shows female intimacy anticipating horror. And this negative outcome may be the product of an image that is transgressive and taboo.

One final example worthy of mention is found in Euripides' *Phoenician Women* 1570, when Antigone narrates the death of her mother Jocasta after she tried to persuade her sons Eteocles and Polynices to stop fighting: "All saw her weep and heard her moan, as she rushed forth to carry to her sons her last appeal, a mother's breast." While breast-feeding is not explicitly mentioned in this passage, Jocasta's gesture clearly resonates with Hecuba's and Clytemnestra's before. Yet these verses are particularly meaningful coming from a figure that itself embodies incest. The breast that Jocasta is now exposing to Eteocles and Polynices is the same one she presumably offered her son and husband Oedipus in a sexual act and possibly to him as a newborn in lactation, thus confusing and juxtaposing the sexual and the motherly even more clearly than the previous examples. Here as well, the outcome of a mother's exposed breast in allusion to previous breast-feeding ends up in tragedy, the deaths of two brothers at each other's hands.

A somewhat different allusion to breast-feeding is found in Lysias' first speech, *On the Murder of Eratosthenes*. While the previous texts presume to give an account of breast-feeding from a female perspective, this speech is crafted with a male focalization. Here the defendant, Euphiletus, describes the situation in his household before he murdered his wife's lover, Eratosthenes. In his defense he tries to present himself as an overall good husband and good man, and thus he paints a very harmonious picture of his family life. He describes his relationship with his wife, whom he considered "the most excellent of wives; . . . a clever, frugal housekeeper [who] kept everything in the nicest order" (Lysias 1.7), as follows:
In Euphiletus’s recollection, his (unnamed) wife not only gives the boy the breast, but she also bathes him and even sleeps next to him, two circumstances of close physical contact and touch, while Euphiletus is distant, in a separate part of the house. Later he mentions that when the baby was fussing, he told his wife to “go and give the child her breast, to stop its howling” (Lysias 1.12). Here Euphiletus is defending himself against the accusation of murder and tries to give to the court a peaceful view of the situation in his household. He strives to appear as a tolerant, involved, and understanding husband. Within this image of familial harmony, he explains how his wife nursed their son. This speech thus provides testimony that upper-class women breast-fed their children in Athens and that possibly they were expected to. Even if other families used wet nurses, breast-feeding is here presented as a virtue—it is what a good wife and mother would do—and thus it is so shocking for the defendant to later learn that his wife was not as pure as she seemed, that she was corrupted by another man. Perhaps if they had used a wet nurse, we would have a more detached mother here, and Euphiletus could have suspected her future deceit, but she seems so virtuous and dedicated that her husband—he wants us to believe—could have never foreseen her treason. Yet again, as in previous examples, we see a pattern of ominous connotations behind the tender and intimate domestic scene presented. In all these cases, the death to come casts the nurturing scene in a negative light. Even more clearly in this case, nursing is said to belong to the world of women—mysterious, unsettling, and unknown to men.

In the speech the cries of the child were at some point even used to hide the affair with Eratosthenes. Euphiletus feels alien to the child-rearing
experience, and he is even physically separated from it, living in the male quarters while his wife "sleeps" with the child. But again, one wonders if that closeness of the mother to the baby through the physical contact of breast-feeding may bring up incestuous thoughts in both Euphiletus and the audience, and thus the image brought to mind may actually provoke fear and revulsion in the jury. This observation is made even more compelling by the juxtaposition of the breast used in nursing and the breast, as a symbol of female sexuality, used in illicit sex, which seem to happen in parallel in this household. Euphiletus's wife is at the same time a motherly figure and a sexual object. The purity of the nursing scene is thus tainted by the view of her naked body in her sexual affair with Eratosthenes, as Euphiletus finds him naked "in the act."

**NURSING IN ROMAN LITERATURE**

In the philosophical and moral texts of Rome, breast-feeding of children by their own mothers is recommended and is generally seen in a positive light, as it is said to forge strong bonds between mother and child and strengthen the character of the infant. Plutarch, Tacitus, and Aulus Gellius point in this direction. Plutarch recalls that Cato's wife, Licinia, breast-fed her own son (*Life of Cato the Elder* 20.3). In several parts of the *Moralia* he states that the nursing of infants by their mothers was preferable to the use of wet nurses, and Tacitus also refers to breast-feeding as a good virtue of the past and criticizes the excessive use of wet nurses (*Dialogus de oratoribus* 28.4 and 29.1). Yet, as Keith Bradley observes, the example of Licinia and others suggests that breast-feeding may have been unusual rather than the norm.

Aulus Gellius appears to share Plutarch's views in 12.1, where he refers to ideas of the sophist Favorinus. Plutarch objected to wet-nursing because he thought it prevented emotional bonding between mother and child. Favorinus even added that wet-nursing had a corrupting influence on children because the nurse's milk transmitted moral character. But again the theory does not necessarily imply a widespread practice of maternal breast-feeding, and Soranus's extensive recommendations on how to select a wet nurse clearly show that wet-nursing was common in Rome, at least in the upper classes. Yet there is a general sense that breast-feeding implies a stronger bond between mother and nursling and a more important emotional commitment.

Looking at the vocabulary used for the act of breast-feeding in Latin
can be quite revealing of Roman conceptions regarding nursing. The words *mamma* and *uber* (breast), for example, appear abundantly in Pliny. They are found frequently in scientific texts like his *Natural History* and refer to issues of the breast in medical uses, in regards to animals and humans, and on its affections. Lucretius, in another didactic, quasi-scientific poem, also mentions breast-feeding. In *De rerum natura* (5.883–885), he gives testimony that even at three years of age, boys are often still nursing from their mother’s breasts: *principio circum tribus actis impiger annis / floret equus, puer haut quaquam; nam saepe etiam nunc / ubera mammarum in somnis lactantia quaeret* (“At first a horse flourishes lively at around three years of age, unlike the boy, who even then often still seeks the milky nipples of the breast in his sleep”). Later he compares the earth to a mother’s breasts filling with milk after childbirth (*De rerum natura* 5.812–815).45

In the first quote Lucretius, in the context of describing centaurs, is pointing at the difference between a horse’s fast development and the fact that a boy is still almost a baby in the same amount of time. This passage gives evidence that the period of nursing in Rome could be a rather prolonged one. Just as we saw in Greek texts, the boy seeks the comfort of the breast to help him sleep, an interesting remark in reference to a three-year-old. Yet again, the image of nursing conveys a sense of comfort, physical closeness, and peacefulness. The second quote fits into a general use of milk in pastoral and natural contexts in Roman literature that point to a sense of abundance and richness of earth and its gifts. In general then, the idea of the nursing mother can bring forth a positive impression, as seen in the previous authors.

Specific mentions of lactation in Latin literature are, however, quite rare, and certainly less visible than in Greek literature. We do see a few allusions in comedy, though there are no direct scenes that present nursing or mothers recalling their nursing experience as we saw in Greek literature. It is indeed intriguing that direct references to mothers nursing their own children are not found in a genre that presents the everyday life of the Romans in the Republic.

In the mythological and poetic texts of the Augustan period the act of breast-feeding among humans is even less frequent. Yet, for all the positive references to nursing in moral and philosophical texts, a more ominous view of nursing moments can be detected in literary texts. The beginnings of Roman civilization themselves are marked by an unusual act of nursing. In *Ab urbe condita* 1.4.6, Livy tells the story of how the twins Romulus and Remus were nursed by the *lupa*:
breast-feeding mothers in greek & latin literature [153]

tenet fama cum fluitantem alveum, quo expositi erant pueri, tenuis in sicco aqua destituisset, lupam sitientem ex montibus qui circa sunt ad puerilem vagitum flexisse; eam submissas infantibus adeo mitem praebuisse mammas ut lingua lambentem pueros magister regii pecoris invenerit—Faustulo fuisse nomen ferunt—ab eo ad stabula Larentiae uxor educandos datos.

The story goes that when the floating cradle, where the boys were exposed, had been placed on dry land after the water retreated, a thirsty she-wolf from the neighboring hills, turned her steps towards the crying babies, offered them her teats to suck and was so gentle to them that the king’s flock-master found her licking the boys with her tongue. They say that his name was Faustulus. He took the infants to his hut and gave them to his wife, Larentia, to rear.

The scene of the she-wolf nursing the twins is even today a powerful symbol of Roman identity. There is a sense of tenderness in the image of the animal offering her teats to the babies and lovingly caressing them with her tongue. But it is ironic that there is no real mother figure in the story of the founding of Rome, a culture where the centrality of the matrona was paramount. Instead, in this myth the mother figure is split in three, since the boys are separated from their birth mother Rea Silvia, nursed by the she-wolf, and then found by Faustulus and given by him to his wife, Larentia, to raise as her own. Let us remember as well, that, as Livy 1.4.7 tells us, the image may be simply a deformation of Acca Larentia herself, who was a “lupa,” what the early Latins called a prostitute, who actually nursed Romulus and Remus: sunt qui Larentiam vulgato corpore lupam inter pastores vocatam putent; inde locum fabulae ac miraculo datum (“Some think that Larentia, due to the unchaste use of her body, was called ‘She-wolf’ amongst the shepherds, and that this was the origin of the story and the miracle”). We thus recognize a sexualization of the nursing scene, through the introduction of Acca Larentia as a woman who sells her sexual favors.

In any case, this central image of the she-wolf in Roman culture may well convey what the Romans thought about breast-feeding. We will see that in Latin texts nursing seems to belong to the animal world, to evoke nature rather than culture. When it is placed in the context of nature it does connote abundance, peace, and harmony; and images of milk are often involved in pastoral scenes. The image of the lupa and the twins, however, is somewhat uncanny. First we perceive an awkward mingling be-
between the animal and the human worlds, and the reader and viewer of so many representations of this scene feels that something is out of place. The scene produces neither the sense of harmony found in nursing scenes between animals, nor the tenderness and intimacy of human allusions to breast-feeding as we have discussed. In the famous statue in the Capitoline museum, for example, the sitting babies raise their heads to the hanging teats while the she-wolf looks in a different direction (fig. 7.1). There is no real physical contact beyond sucking between nurse and nursling and no exchange of loving gazes.

Other representations of the scene do, however, appear to show the she-wolf in a more involved stance. Some images show her turning her head backward and looking at the babies, and one interesting piece even represents her licking the twins (figs. 7.2 and 7.3). Yet, through the displaced sexually loaded body of Acca Larentia, the scene acquires erotic overtones; and if we follow Dale Glabach's language (see note 8), if she was actually the substitute mother nursing the twins, the act may be seen as a first erotic intercourse. Second, the outcome of the twins' lives also involves the mur-
der and fratricide located right at the center of Rome’s foundation, with the
dearth of Remus at his brother’s hands, an image that even foreshadows the
future civil wars of Roman history.

Quite remarkably, we find no descriptions of mothers breast-feeding
their children in Vergil, though he does refer to animals as a source of milk

![Figure 7.2. She-wolf nursing Romulus and Remus, Romano-Campanian
didrachma (or stater), Republican. Museo Civico Archeologico, Bologna. Photo: A.
De Gregorio, © DeA Picture Library/Art Resource, NY, ART403983.]

![Figure 7.3. She-wolf nursing Romulus and Remus, limestone relief, second century BCE.
Musée Romain, Avenches, Switzerland. Photo: A. De Gregorio, © DeA Picture Library/
Art Resource, NY, ART402812.]
and nourishment. The only reference—and it is odd—is to Metabus nursing his daughter with mare's milk (Aeneid 11.557). However, the idea of animal's milk is abundant in the Georgics and Bucolics, and it appears in a context of the peacefulness of nature and the countryside. For example, in Georgics 3.308, he refers to the milk of goats: hinc largi copia lactis; / quam magis exhausto spumaverit ubere mulctra, / laeta magis pressis manabunt fluma mina mammis (“From them comes a large supply of milk, the more the milking-pail has foamed from the drained udder, the more richly will the stream flow as the teats are pressed”). This passage alludes to the plentiful gifts of nature and is set within the tranquil context of farming, away from the corruption of civilization. The same idea can be appreciated in Georgics 2.519: ubera vaccae / lactea dimittunt (“the cows drop breasts full of milk”); and in Eclogue 7.3, when Vergil refers to Coridon's sheep (disten tas lacte capellas). This harmonious symbolism of nature providing nourishment is conveyed in the figure of Tellus with full breasts on the Ara Pacis (illustrated in fig. 9.1 of this volume); though not explicitly doing so in this image, she is presumed to breast-feed the baby boys she holds. Yet, as we know, this idealized and poetic symbol of Earth and nature is a component of the Augustan political propaganda program and hints at the abundance, peace, and prosperity offered by the emperor.

In Metamorphoses 6, Ovid provides another example of a deity nursing her children, when Latona tries to quench her thirst in a pool, and the Lysian peasants prevent her from doing so. She carries her nursing children, Diana and Apollo: Inque suo portasse sinu, duo numina, natos (338). . . . Uberaque ebiberant avidi lactantia nati (342) (“In her arms she carried two babes. . . . They had drunk avidly from her full breasts”). Latona, as we know, is seen as a mother goddess who gives birth, provides, and nourishes; in this context, the act of nursing seems acceptable and appropriate. The tragedy that follows (the transformation of the peasants into frogs) falls upon the arrogant mortals and not on the nursing deity.

We can contrast this example with a most remarkable episode in book 9. When we are dealing with an actual mortal mother breast-feeding her child, the picture is very different:

Venerat huc Dryope fatorum nescia, quoque
indignere magis, nymphis latura coronas;
inque sinu puereum, qui nondum impleverat annum,
dulce ferebat onus tepidique ope lactis alebat.
(MET. 9.336–339)
Dryope had come here unknowing her fate, and what would make you more indignant, she was going to bring garlands for the nymphs; she was carrying her son at her breast, who was not yet one year old, a sweet burden, and he was sucking her warm milk.

The scene is quite unique in Roman poetry in portraying the nursing moment. Dryope is here presented not only as a good mother, but also as a devotee of the nymphs who thus observes and respects her religious duties. In a very Ovidian way, the scene shows the sweetness and intimacy between mother and child. Words like *dulce* and *tepidi* emphasize the tenderness of the scene and the idea of the mother as kind nourisher. Yet, as is common in *Metamorphoses*, pleasant scenes are used to draw contrasts to tragic events to come. Soon Ovid describes how Dryope accidentally picked a flower which used to be a nymph. The flower began to bleed and then Dryope gradually began to harden into a tree, including her full breasts:

> At puer Amphissos (namque hoc avus Eurytus illi addiderat nomen) materna rigescere sentit ubera, nec sequitur ducentem lacteus umor.  
> *(MET. 9.356–358)*

But the child Amphissos (for his grandfather Eurytus had given him this name) feels his mother's breasts harden, and the flow of milk stops as he sucks.

Dryope is being turned into a tree as punishment for killing the nymph Loticus, who had fled from Priapus. This woman is being dehumanized and becomes part of the natural world. She hardens and loses the tenderness and softness emphasized in the passage before. The focus on the transformation of the breast is thought-provoking. We as readers here experience a reification of the female body. She has lost autonomy and independence, like other virgins turned into trees in the poem, such as Daphne. Yet the motherly breast with flowing milk now becomes part of the landscape, which, in Ovid, often recalls rape and violence against women for the reader and viewer. In this transformation she loses the fluid and the softness of her breasts, and the contrast makes the metamorphosis even more dramatic. We find again in this episode that nursing, while presented as a tender moment, is involved in a scene that will end up in tragedy and a sort of death, or at least the death of Dryope's humanity and motherly qualities.

Just as in Homer and Greek tragedy then, we observe that allusions to
breast-feeding in mythological and narrative texts are presented in a dark context; they seem to foreshadow and contrast with the horrors to come. Interesting as well, is the fact that the nursling here is a son (*puerum*), as in the passages of Greek literature we have discussed. Perhaps the explicitness and vividness of the scene also conveys an uncomfortable feeling in the (male) reader, and the physical closeness between mother and son may be somewhat disturbing, to the point that it is inevitably followed by tragedy and separation of mother and child.51

From the examples we have discussed we notice that there is a generally positive view of breast-feeding one's own children in medical, philosophical, and moral texts. Likewise, when we deal with examples of nursing deities, the act also seems appropriate and acceptable. In Latin literature, nursing and milk in the animal world fit into the pastoral idea of the abundance and peacefulness of nature in contrast with the corrupt civilized world. Yet this favorable view of mother's milk as nourishment—both of the body and the soul—is cast in a darker light in literary texts that deal with specific examples of breast-feeding mothers. In both Greek literature and the few examples found in Latin texts, we see that the tenderness of the breast-feeding experience tends to foreshadow tragedy and carries with it a sense of doom. This misfortune can be seen as a result of the taboo aspect of the practice, given the extremely close physical connection between mothers and sons. Male authors and ancient readers must have comprehended nursing with a sense of discomfort, otherness, and shame that hints at incest—a reading far removed from the depicted female experience.

NOTES

I would like to thank Prudence Jones, Jean Alvares, and Lauren Petersen for suggestions helpful to this essay.

1. Newbold (2000) provides an excellent survey of milk and breasts in Nonnus's *Dionysiaca* (fifth century CE), a text that I will not address in this essay.

2. For good studies of wet-nursing at Rome see Bradley (1986); Dixon (1988), 120–129; Joshel (1986); and also Fildes (1986), 17–36.

3. According to Kitts (1994), the evidence shows that no god “drink[s] milk in infancy,” but the gods are nursed with ambrosia, which gives them immortality; thus to have taken their mother's breasts is a sign of mortality (142–143).


5. See Stears (1999), 308ff., for a very insightful discussion. As Gerber (1978) and others have shown, breasts were also a locus of eroticism in ancient Greece.


8. Glabach (2001); and see Freud’s recognition of breast-feeding as an early sexual experience, and his belief that the mother was the baby’s “first seducer” (Freud [1995], 188).

9. There are some striking examples of adults being breast-fed, in particular the famous Pompeian fresco of Pero suckling her father to save him from starvation (House of Lucretius Fronto, V.4.a). See also Galen’s recommendations on the use of breast milk, preferably directly from the breast, to aid elderly people (7,701). On breast milk as nurture for adults see Corbeill (2004), 100ff., who also connects breast-feeding with funerary practices.


11. Feeding bottles have been found in children’s graves. See esp. Bartsocas (1978); Wickes (1953), 155; and images in Fildes (1986), 18, 24, and 36.

12. See Bonfante (1997). “Etruscan art, in fact, is characterized by the appearance of breasts in unexpected contexts” (179).


14. Bonfante (1997), 183. For specific examples in Roman art, see Bonfante (1997), 184. Bonfante also remarks on a general aversion to large breasts in Greek literature. See also the evidence in Lucretius, De rerum natura 4.1168 and Terence, Eunuchus 2.3. According to Bonfante (1997), 185: “It was also a sign of civilization for a lady to be freed from this embarrassingly physical necessity, all too reminiscent of our lowly animal nature”; and “In Greek and Roman formal art only Barbarians and wild creatures, such as female centaurs, nurse their young.”

15. For a full discussion of lactation in ancient writers, see Wickes (1953); and Fildes (1986), 17–36.


17. Soranus, as other earlier texts, recommends withholding colostrum and not breast-feeding for the few days postpartum (Gynecology 11.17).

18. But see how Galen himself acknowledges that not everyone agrees with this view—Damastes, for example (Gynecology 11.18).


21. O’Neill (1998), 229, gives a good intertextual account of this passage in relation to the Aeschylean moment we will analyze later.

22. This is seen, for example, in the fact that many nursing mothers feel free to bare their breasts in public to breast-feed, while they would be ashamed to do so if they were not tending to their infants. Stears (1999) provides an interesting survey of women’s perceptions of their bodies and their appropriate use while nursing in public and comments, “In doing breastfeeding in front of others, women negotiate the definitions of their nursing behaviors as sexual or nurturing” (310). On the eroticism of breasts in Greek literature see Gerber (1978), and Newbold (2000), 17, on the erotic appeal of breasts in Nonnus’s Dionysiaca.
23. Let us recall here, for example, Oedipus gazing upon his mother's naked body.

24. This is not the first instance where Hector is involved in the act of nursing. In *Iliad* 24.58, the bard tells us that "Hector is mortal. He sucked a woman's breast," which according to Kitts is "just one expression of a primal dimension of mortal being that categorically separates Hector, other humans and other mammals from the lofty gods" (143).


26. Not all authors believe that she actually revealed a breast, since actors were male. See discussion in DeForest (1993), 129. For other instances of actors exposing breasts, see possibly Aristophanes, *Wasps* 1374, *Lysistrata* 83, and *Thesmophoriazousae* 638ff. DeForest does, however, believe that since "the Athenians had the technology to permit a male actor to reveal an artificial breast, we may presume that Aeschylus composed the scene with the intention that Clytemnestra's breast be revealed on the stage. Otherwise, he would have composed the scene differently" (129).

27. Translation taken from DeForest (1993), 129.


29. Rousseau (1963) thinks that Orestes was never nursed by his mother. For a discussion of whether Clytemnestra actually breast-fed Orestes, see Whallon (1958), 84.

30. As DeForest (1993), 130, notes, the image of Clytemnestra also conveys connections with Mother Earth, Demeter, and Hera: "In her splendid robes, pointing to her bared breast, Clytemnestra would have looked like the images of the Earth goddess, who, in statues throughout the Aegean, points to her naked breast—indeed, this is a universal image for her as the great κυρωτρόφος." On representations of kouroktrophic deities, see Price (1978).


34. Kitts (1994), 144. Interestingly, Kitts ([1994], 145) also remarks that other milk-drinking and cheese-eating creatures like shepherds or maenads are seen as "childlike, barbaric or exotic" and thus pre-cultural and pre-agricultural. This notion is evident in the confrontation of the civilized Odysseus and the savage Cyclops.

35. The ominous connotation given to the image of the nursing mother in Greece is also reflected in art. As Bonfante mentions, another remarkable example is the image of Eriphyle nursing her child after she had sent her husband, Amphiaraoös, to Thebes, bribed by the necklace of Harmonia. This image also evokes the matricide that will later take place. One can compare it to the figure of Andromache nursing Astyanax in Polygnontus's mural painting of the *Iliopersis*, referred to by Pausanias in 10.25.5 (Bonfante [1997], 175). In the *Iliad*, it is the nurse who appears to be breast-feeding Hector's
BREAST-FEEDING MOTHERS IN GREEK & LATIN LITERATURE

son (Iliad 6.470ff.). Here, as Bonfante (1997), 175, states, “the horror to come is underscored by the private, moving scene of the mother nursing the child, an image of vulnerability not normally shown, and therefore special.”

37. On this scene see Loraux (1986), 101.
38. Translations of Lysias I are taken from Lamb (1930).
40. See also Dixon (1988), 3.
41. Bradley (1986), 201. Note how in a generalizing phrase Cicero mentions a nurse rather than a mother: “We almost seem to have drunk in deception with our nurse’s milk” (Cicero, Tusculanae Disputationes 3.2). Tacitus’s comments on nursing by mothers among Germanic tribes implies that this practice was not the norm among the Romans of his time (Tacitus, Germania 20.1). On this notion, see Dixon (1988), 120.
42. Aulus Gellius 12.1.17–32; Soranus, Gynecology 2.19; Macrobius, Saturnalia 5.11.15–18.
43. Epigraphic evidence shows that possible reasons for wet-nursing were that the mother was dead or unable to nurse, or when infants exposed at birth were then reclaimed as slaves. Slave owners may have had one nutrix in their family in charge of nursing all the slave infants so that the mothers could go back to work, or breed more slaves (the contraceptive effects of lactation were known to the Romans: Plutarch, De liberis educandis 5). See Bradley (1986), 207 and 212. Bradley suggests that the use of wet nurses had to do with the avoidance of emotional commitment on the part of the parents in regard to a child that may not survive, as infant death was very common in Rome (218ff.).
44. A search of the words mamma, uber, and lacto (“to breast-feed”) reveals that the overwhelming majority of loci are found in Pliny the Elder.
45. On further medical uses of breast milk see Laskaris (2008).
46. In the prologue of Plautus’s Menaecmi, for example, it is said that the twins were so identical that not even their “breast-mother” (i.e., their wet nurse) or their birth mother could distinguish them (18–21), stressing that the “breast-mother” has a profound knowledge of her nursling. Further, in Truculentus, Phronesium pretends to have just had a child and orders the slaves to nurse a baby she has procured to make the miles believe it is hers (puero isti date mammam, Truc. 4.49). The use of a wet nurse is implied in this scene. Terence also presents a case of wet-nursing when in Adelphoi 975, Syrus mentions that his wife Phrygia was the first to suckle Deamea’s grandson that day (Et quidem tuo nepoti, huius filio, hodie primam mammam dedit haec).
47. A similar combination of human and beast in the act of nursing is seen in a puzzling image of Pasiphae nursing the Minotaur. In addition, there is the case of Telephus suckled by a deer as an important ancestor of the Romans. See Corbeill (2004), 105.
48. Acca Larentia was also a goddess of earth and fertility of Etruscan origin connected with the worship of the Lares. A later sculpture by Jacopo Della Quercia (1371–1438) portrays her with nude breasts and holding an infant in her arms, thus pointing
to her nursing capabilities and nature. Corbeill (2004) states that breast milk has life-giving powers, and in connection with funerary rites, monuments, and myths it serves to nurture the deceased into a new life (104–105).

49. See Kitts (1994) here as well.

50. It is worth recalling that in this statue the babes are from the Renaissance, and a new theory holds that the wolf herself is of medieval manufacture; see Mazzoni (2010), esp. chap 1.

51. Although the scope of this essay does not go beyond the time of Augustus, there is the remarkable testimony of the Christian martyr Perpetua, one of our only first-person accounts of a breast-feeding mother, in Acts of the Christian Martyrs (Roman Carthage, 203 CE). As in previous examples, the nursing moment is also followed by a tragic outcome: "A few days later, we were lodged in prison. . . . I was tortured with worry for my baby there. . . . I nursed my baby, who was faint from hunger. . . . Then I got permission for my baby to stay with me in prison. At once I recovered my health. My prison had suddenly become a palace. . . . One day while we were eating breakfast we were suddenly hurried off for a hearing. . . . 'Are you a Christian,' said Hilarianus. And I said 'Yes, I am.' Then Hilarianus passed sentence on all of us: we were condemned to the beasts, and we returned to prison in high spirits. But my baby had got used to being nursed at the breast and to staying with me in prison. So I sent the deacon Pomponius straightaway to my father to ask for my baby back. But father refused to give him over. But as God willed; and, the baby had no further desire for the breast, nor did I suffer any inflammation; and so I was relieved of any anxiety for my child and of any discomfort in my breasts." Translation taken from Lefkowitz and Fant (2005), no. 445.

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Mater Patriae

CLEOPATRA AND ROMAN IDEAS OF MOTHERHOOD

Prudence Jones

Cleopatra VII was the mother of four children. Caesarion (Ptolemy XV Philopator Philometor Caesar, 47–30 BCE) was, Cleopatra claimed, the son of Julius Caesar. Mark Antony fathered her three youngest children, twins Alexander Helios (40–ca. 29–25 BCE) and Cleopatra Selene II (40 BCE–6 CE), and son Ptolemy Philadelphos (36–29 BCE). For Cleopatra, the role of mother also constituted an integral part of her political program in Egypt. In sources from the Roman world, however, we find a surprising lack of attention paid to Cleopatra the mother. This essay will examine some possible reasons for this apparent neglect of an important aspect of Cleopatra’s identity. On one hand, Cleopatra’s status as a female head of state must have seemed incongruous and even dangerous to the Romans (recall Dido, the failed queen of Carthage). On the other hand, the ways in which she communicates her status as a mother would have been all too familiar to a Roman audience and, thus, would have had the potential to create a public relations disaster if seen against Octavian’s attempts to demonize the woman upon whom he had to focus his attacks, lest his conflict with Mark Antony be perceived as civil war.

Before proceeding, we must first consider public portrayals of motherhood in pre-Ptolemaic and Ptolemaic Egypt and look at the ways in which Cleopatra used these images of motherhood to present herself to her Egyptian subjects. This topic, along with motherhood as it appears in the public sphere during the Roman monarchy and Republic, will form the backdrop for looking at the ways in which Octavian erases motherhood from the identity of the Cleopatra he presents to the Romans.

In Egypt, motherhood was essential to the mythology of the female pharaoh. As the earthly incarnation of Isis, the female pharaoh represents
the mother of Horus, the divine counterpart of the male pharaoh. As tends
to be the case in hereditary monarchies, women, and specifically mothers,
play a far greater role in politics than do their counterparts in forms of gov-
ernment not based on familial succession.¹

Motherhood also had a prominent place in both the religious tradi-
tions of Egypt and the government established by the Ptolemies, and so
it was natural—and probably inevitable—that Cleopatra should include
motherhood as a part of her public image. Two goddesses who were im-
portant in Egyptian religion, particularly where the pharaohs were con-
cerned, were Hathor and Isis, both of whom were seen as mother figures.
Hathor was associated with the female pharaoh and Horus, as mentioned,
with the male pharaoh. Hathor’s name, which means “house of Horus,”
associates her specifically with the lineage of the pharaoh.² Her iconogra-
phy includes a headdress that consists of horns (she could be represented
as a cow) surrounding a sun-disc, a symbol that becomes part of the repre-
sentation of Isis, and which Cleopatra adopts as well (figs. 8.1, 8.2, and 8.3).
This iconography not only connects Cleopatra with Isis and Hathor, but
specifically links her to the motherly aspect of these goddesses. Through-
out the Mediterranean world and even further east, the cow was a powerful

FIGURE 8.1. Wall relief of Khonsu, Hathor, and Sobek (left to right). Kom Ombo
Temple, Egypt. Photo: Rémih.
FIGURE 8.2. *Isis and Horus*, bronze. © Trustees of the British Museum.
symbol of motherhood. As Catherine Clément and Julia Kristeva note, “Like the goddess Hathor in Egypt, the sacred cow in India is the envelope of the universe, since it is within the sewn skin of a cow that the first man was born. . . . The cow is thus maternal and enveloping.”3 In this way, the crown of horns surrounding the sun-disc connects Cleopatra with the generative force in the universe.

Isis, as she appears in the Ptolemaic period, combines attributes of several other goddesses, including Hathor, but without the ferocity sometimes associated with mother goddesses: rather, Isis was a tender and compassionate deity,4 whereas Hathor was at times paired with Sekhmet, a “lioness goddess who personified brute power.”5 Like Hathor, however, Isis included motherhood as one of her primary associations, and she had a significant role in guaranteeing the perpetuation of the royal family, as the mother of Horus. In statuettes that show Isis nursing Horus, the goddess may have Hathor’s headdress of horns and sun-disc (see fig. 8.2), or she may have a crown in the shape of the hieroglyphic symbol for “throne.”6

We also see prominent women in the Macedonian and Ptolemaic monarchies, which were, along with the pharaohs, models for the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt.7 In Macedonia, Olympias, the mother of Alexander the Great, had a significant role in public life. Indeed, during Alexander’s reign, Macedonian royal women enjoyed greater prominence and
influence than they ever had previously. Two factors played a role in this increased public visibility for the women of Alexander’s family. Alexander did not marry until near the end of his life, and so, for much of his reign, his mother, Olympias, along with his sister Cleopatra, were his official family. In addition, with Alexander away from Macedonia expanding his empire from 334 BCE on, the only members of the royal family in the capital at Pella were women. Ptolemy I, who ruled Egypt after the death of Alexander the Great, imposed his own family as the new dynasty, but also assimilated them to the Egyptian pharaohs. By the second generation of the Ptolemies, we see that dynasty adopting the custom of brother–sister marriage.

Ptolemy I married his half-sister Berenike I. Their children, Arsinoë II and Ptolemy II, married and were worshiped in their lifetime as theoi adelphoi, “sibling gods,” and each took the epithet Philadelphos, “sibling-lover” (fig. 8.4).

Cleopatra inherits this tradition and uses images of motherhood successfully to consolidate her power. Her role as a mother, and specifically as the mother of Julius Caesar’s son Caesarion, was essential in legitimizing her rule. After engineering the deaths of her brothers and successive co-rulers, Cleopatra had to rely on her son Caesarion to be the Horus to her Isis, as women of the Ptolemies did not generally rule without a male partner. Upon his birth, Cleopatra issued coins showing her as Isis nursing an infant (fig. 8.5). The reliefs on the Temple of Hathor at Dendera also as-

**Figure 8.4.** Gold octodrachm of Ptolemy II and Arsinoë II. © Trustees of the British Museum.

**Figure 8.5.** Bronze coin: Cleopatra VII with infant Caesarion. © Trustees of the British Museum.
sociate Cleopatra and Caesarion with the Egyptian gods, as the pair appears making offerings to the gods and is shown with pharaonic iconography (see fig. 8.3). By identifying Caesarion with Horus, Cleopatra claims divinity for him and presents him as the boy who could bring new prosperity to Egypt as heir to the Egyptian empire (and perhaps to the Roman empire as well). 11

Near the end of her reign, in her relationship with Mark Antony, Cleopatra again identifies herself with Isis. Cassius Dio tells us that Cleopatra and Antony posed for portraits as Isis and Osiris (Roman History 50.5). In their famous meeting at Tarsus in 41 BCE, Cleopatra may have evoked Isis, although Plutarch refers to her as representing Aphrodite. The goddesses have a number of similar qualities, however, and the two were consciously identified with each other in the Hellenistic period, particularly in the East. 12 In Plutarch’s description of Cleopatra’s arrival at Tarsus, we can see aspects of Isis, even though Plutarch mentions only Aphrodite:

Πολλὰ δὲ καὶ πάρ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ παρὰ τῶν φίλων δεχομένη γράμματα καλοῦντον, οὕτως κατεφρόνησε καὶ κατεγέλασε τοῦ ἀνδρός, ὡστε πλεῖν ἀνὰ τὸν Κόδνου ποταμόν ἐν πορθμεῖσφ χρυσοπάμνισφ, τῶν μὲν ἱερῶν ἠλουργῶν ἐκπεπετασμένων, τῆς δ’ εἰρεσίας ἀργυρωὶς κώτας ἀναφερομένης πρὸς αὐλὸν ἀμα σύργει καὶ κιθάρας συνημισμένων, αὐτή δὲ κατέκειτο μὲν ὑπὸ οἰκία χρυσοπάμνισφ, κεκοσμημένη γραφικῶς ὄσπερ Ἀφροδίτη, παίδες δὲ τοὺς γραφικοὺς Ἰέρωσιν εἰκασμένοι παρ’ ἑκάτερον ἑστώτης ἐρρίπτιζον. (Plutarch, Life of Antony 26.1–3)

She had received many letters from Antony and his friends summoning her, but she disdained and mocked the man by sailing up the River Cydnus in a ship with a golden stern, with purple sails fluttering, with rowers pulling with silver oars as flutes played accompanied by pipes and lyres. Cleopatra reclined beneath a canopy embroidered with gold, decked out to resemble a painting of Aphrodite, and boys, made to look like the Erotes we see in art, stood on either side and fanned her. 13

An arrival by water is certainly fitting for Aphrodite, given her birth from sea foam, but it is appropriate for Isis as well. Isis was a patron goddess of seafarers; the festival known as the Navigium Isidis involved a procession leading to the seashore, and one of its messages was the spread of Isis’s cult beyond Egypt. In the East, especially in Tarsus, Isis was worshiped under the cult name Isis Pelagia, or Isis of the Sea. 14 Apuleius describes the festival:
Ibi deum simulacris rite dispositis navem faberrime factam picturis miris Aegyptiorum... Huius felicis alvei nitens carbasus litteras [votum] <auro> intextas progerebat: eae litterae votum instaurabant de novi com-
meatus prospera navigatione. Iam malus insurgit pinus rutunda, splen-
dore sublimis, insigni carchesio conspicua, et puppis intorta chenisco,
bracteis aureis vestita fulgебat omnisque prorsus carina citro limpido per-
polita florebat. ... donec muneribus largis et devotionibus faustis com-
pleta navis, absoluta strophiis ancoralibus, peculiari serenoque flatu
pelago redderetur. (Apuleius, Metamorphoses 11.16)

There the gods' statues were duly set in place, and the chief priest named
and consecrated to the goddess a ship which had been built with splendid
craftsmanship, and which was adorned on all its timbers with wonderful
Egyptian pictures. ... The bright sail of this blessed craft carried upon it
woven letters in gold, bearing those same petitions for trouble-free sail-
ing on its first journeys. The mast was of rounded pine, gloriously tall and
easily recognized with its striking masthead. The stern was curved in the
shape of a goose, and gleamed with its covering of gold leaf. ... Eventu-
ally the ship, filled with generous gifts and propitious offerings, was
loosed from its anchor-ropes and launched on the sea before a friendly,
specially appointed breeze.15

Note in particular the detail of the gold-covered stern in both descriptions.
Although Plutarch emphasizes the Hellenizing aspects of Cleopatra's spec-
tacle, the associations with Isis would not have been lost on Plutarch, him-
self the author of On Isis and Osiris, or on his audience of Greek speakers
living in the Roman empire.

Cleopatra's children also emphasize her connection with Isis. The
names of the twins she had with Antony, Alexander Helios (the sun) and
Cleopatra Selene (the moon), evoke the earliest identity of Horus, the son
of Isis; the earliest Egyptian concept of Horus was as a sky god whose two
eyes represented the sun and the moon. The Donations of Alexandria, an
explicitly dynastic ceremony, also featured Cleopatra identifying herself
with Isis. Plutarch reports, "On this occasion she wore the sacred garment
of Isis and bore the title the New Isis" (Life of Antony 54.9). In a possible
echo of their meeting at Tarsus, Antony dressed as Dionysus. The cere-
mony—in which Cleopatra's children (Caesarion as well as her children
with Antony) received titles and lands to rule (some of which were yet to
be conquered)—illustrates the close identification of family and politics in
Ptolemaic Egypt.
Cleopatra's identification with Isis, a goddess known for her connection to motherhood and nurturing, thus sets the stage for the central role her children play in political life in Alexandria. While this mixing of motherhood and politics might seem specific to Egypt, it probably was not a concept foreign to the Romans. They saw in their own history a number of mothers who were pivotal figures in Rome's development.

In Rome, as in Egypt, motherhood occupied a prominent, if sometimes problematic, place in the society's understanding of its own origins. Rome's foundation story and early legends are full of tales that hinge on motherhood. In Rome's foundation story, motherhood is a dangerous and, therefore, powerful force. Romulus and Remus were born to a woman whom others attempted to prevent from being a mother and who was an unwilling mother herself after being raped by the god Mars. The first of the twins' substitute mothers, a she-wolf, was another unlikely nurturer, as wolves were seen as antithetical to civilization.

The twins' second foster mother was a shepherd's wife. In the ancient world, the occupation of shepherd likewise carried with it connotations of wildness. It is possible, in fact, that the wolf and the shepherd's wife were one and the same. Livy tells us (Ab urbe condita 1.4) that some considered "wolf" a euphemism for "prostitute" (yet another un-ideal mother figure).

There are two other tales in which motherhood plays a central role in establishing Rome: the Sabine women and the rape of Lucretia. The Sabine women, another group of unwilling mothers, overcame their circumstances and, through the bonds forged by motherhood, brought the Romans and the Sabines together. Just as the Sabine women participated in the birth of the Roman state, another violated woman accomplished the transition from monarchy to Republic. Lucretia, raped by the king's son, commits suicide and, in doing so, motivates the birth of the Roman Republic. In this way, motherhood becomes an important symbol in the Roman conception of the culture's origins.

Thus, in stories of origins from both Egyptian and Roman traditions, motherhood marks transitions: it is the irrepressible force that produces Horus, even under seemingly impossible conditions (the preceding death of his father, Osiris); it produces and ensures the survival of Romulus and Remus, despite the best efforts of those in power; it secures Rome's viability as a state; and it is perhaps even a metaphor for the origin of the Republic.

During the Republic, there was a direct connection between Egypt and Roman ideas about motherhood. The cult of Isis was present in Rome from the early first century BCE, so Romans would have gained a familiarity with the Egyptian iconography associated with motherhood (i.e., that of
It is important to note this point of contact because Roman familiarity with Isis indicates that the significance of Cleopatra associating herself with this goddess would not have been lost on a Roman audience.

Roman mothers had an important, if indirect, role in public life. The ideal of the Roman matrona called for a woman who was strong, virtuous, self-sacrificing, and devoted to the education and political advancement of her family. Children conferred posterity on their parents, and mothers were responsible for the earliest education of children in the household. Thus the Romans recognized mothers as shaping great leaders. The best example is Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi. Plutarch gives Cornelia a great deal of credit for the deeds of her sons (*Life of Tiberius*). He writes of them: “These she brought up with such care, that though they were without dispute in natural endowments and dispositions the first among the Romans of their time, yet they seemed to owe their virtues even more to their education than to their birth.” Cornelia became, for the Romans of the late Republic, the epitome of what a Roman mother should be, and her story reinforced the idea that mothers were essential to Rome’s greatness.

Octavian, always a canny manipulator of symbolism, inherited these images of Roman motherhood and had to be careful of evoking them in his portrayal of Cleopatra, whom he had declared an enemy of Rome. The first step he took in removing from Cleopatra associations of motherhood was a reversal of gender roles: Cleopatra was masculinized and Antony feminized. In creating this propaganda, Octavian drew on certain preexisting prejudices; Antony’s affinity for the Greek East, and specifically the wild and intemperate god Dionysus, was well known and proved to be a handy contrast to Octavian’s ideal of rustic Italian simplicity. The East was, for the Romans, associated not only with excessive wealth and luxury, but also with a lack of mental and physical toughness. Eastern peoples were regarded as effeminate as compared to Romans. Antony also was feminized based on his relationship with Cleopatra. She was seen as the dominant partner, and Antony as helpless under her spell and captivated by the enervating luxuries of the East. Furthermore, Antony was fond of boasting his descent from Hercules; Octavian countered that if Antony was Hercules, he was Hercules enslaved to Queen Omphale.

Cleopatra, for her part, was portrayed as having designs on ruling at Rome. Depicting her as the dominant partner in her relationship with Antony not only was useful in emphasizing the reversal of gender roles, but it also made it clear that Cleopatra was the primary aggressor against Rome. Plutarch reflects this characterization (as well as the feminization of Antony) when he notes qualities Cleopatra had in common with Fulvia, An-
tony's former wife and the mother of two of his children, Marcus Antonius Antyllus (47–30 BCE) and Iullus Antonius (45–2 BCE):

Plutarch, Life of Antony 10.5–6)

His bride was Fulvia, the former wife of Clodius the demagogue. She had no use for women's work like spinning or housekeeping and was not interested in presiding over a husband who was not in the public eye: rather, she wanted to rule a ruler and command a general. As a result, Cleopatra should have paid Fulvia tuition for schooling Antony to obey a woman, so docile and trained to obey a woman's commands was he when she took him on.

The areas in which Fulvia (and by implication Cleopatra) shows deficiency—spinning and housekeeping—are the emblematic tasks of the proper Roman matron (Lucretia's spinning won her the contest of womanly virtue). The language of ruling and commanding that characterizes Fulvia's preferred activities is from the masculine sphere. We sense no maternal leanings here; she is the antithesis of Roman motherhood, despite her two children, who are conveniently omitted from this description.

It is not just Octavian's manipulation of Cleopatra's image that veils her status as a mother. His actions effectively erase her children from public memory. In particular, his treatment of Cleopatra's children minimize the maternal aspect of her public persona. He had Caesarion put to death, but not publicly. He also dealt with Cleopatra's other children, who were shown clemency, in relative privacy, partly, no doubt, to avoid the risk of arousing public sympathy:

Plutarch, Life of Antony 81.5–82.2)
As Octavian was considering what to do with Caesarion, Areius is said to have paraphrased:

It is not good to have too many Caesars.  

Octavian had Caesarion killed later, after Cleopatra's death.

"τοὺς δὲ λοιποὺς Ὀκταούια παραλαβόντα μετὰ τῶν ἐξ ἐαυτῆς ἔθεψε. καὶ Κλεοπάτραν μὲν τὴν ἐκ Κλεοπάτρας Ἰόβα τῷ χαριστάτῳ βασιλέων συνύκισεν. (Plutarch, Life of Antony 87.2)

The remaining children Octavia took in and raised with her own children. And she arranged that Cleopatra, daughter of Cleopatra, be married to Juba, the most accomplished of kings.

Plutarch treats the fate of her children as incidental information: he presents the details in a matter-of-fact style, and the information is not part of Cleopatra's dramatic death scene. It is mentioned in two different places in the narrative, the first before and the second after Cleopatra's death, which is clearly the centerpiece. By dealing with her children privately, Octavian avoids, as much as possible, the sympathy the orphaned children might evoke for their mother.

Octavian also avoided connotations of motherhood in his shaping of the way Cleopatra was remembered. He seems to have had Caesarion's image removed from the statue of Cleopatra that resided in the Temple of Venus Genetrix, a temple that calls attention to Venus's role as progenitor of the Julian family. Complete removal of a rival certainly provided one motive for Octavian, but eliminating the child from a mother-and-child sculpture in a temple devoted to the motherly aspect of Venus effectively abrogates Cleopatra's role as a mother and transforms Cleopatra from a woman central to the perpetuation of one of Rome's leading families to that of a captive. In its new significance, Cleopatra's statue becomes spoils of war and perhaps resembles personifications of conquered provinces, the iconography of which does not feature children. When non-Roman children are represented in Roman art, they tend to appear in military contexts, either in battleground scenes or scenes of triumph. According to Jeannine Uzzi, these types of images "underscore the dominance of Rome by equating conquered non-Romans with children. The inclusion of children also increases the pathos of such scenes." Such an image in this instance, however, would run the risk of reminding viewers that the enemy was a woman and a mother. In addition, by removing Caesarion, Octavian effectively ed-
its his family tree. If Caesarion was, as Cleopatra claimed, the son of Caesar, the boy not only could be seen as a potential rival for Octavian, but also created a familial bond between Octavian and Cleopatra, perhaps a circumstance Octavian did not want memorialized in the temple dedicated to his family origins.

We can see some of Octavian's agenda reflected in Augustan poetry. In his famous “Cleopatra Ode” (1.37), Horace first shows the queen beset by ill-fated megalomania and drunk on wine and delusions of grandeur:

... quidlibet inpotens
sperare fortunaque dulci
ebria. sed minuit fuorem

vix una sospes navis ab ignibus
mentemque lymphatam Mareoticō
redegit in veros timores
Caesar ...
(HORACE, ODES 1.37.10–16)

She was mad
\[ ... \text{ to hope for anything at all and} \]
\[ ... \text{drunk on good fortune. But scarcely one ship} \]

safe from the fires cooled her fury,
and Caesar snatched her mind,
crazed with Mareotic wine, back to
ture fears . . .

Her lack of control and rationality stand in stark contrast to the reality check Octavian delivers by means of military force. Here, Cleopatra’s qualities are clearly Eastern and feminine, while Octavian’s are Roman and masculine.

In the next stanza, however, Cleopatra's gender begins to shift:

... quae generiosius
perire quaerens nec muliebrīter
expavīt ensem nec latentīs
classe cīta reparavit oras,
(HORACE, ODES 1.37.21–24)
The queen,
seeking to die more nobly, did not, womanish,
shrink from the sword, nor did she retreat
in her swift fleet to hidden shores.

Now Cleopatra's actions are explicitly not those expected of a woman, and she displays bravery in battle. In the ode's final stanza, she turns defeat into her own triumph, as she gains the control she so emphatically lacked earlier in the poem:

deliberata morte ferocior:
saevis Liburnis scilicet invidens
privata deduci superbo
non humilis mulier triumpho.
(HORACE, ODES 1.37.29–32)

More defiant in a deliberate death,
begrudging the cruel Liburnian ships
to be led, a queen no longer,
but never humbled, in a showy triumph.

Written in the immediate aftermath of the Battle of Actium, Horace's poem elevates Cleopatra to the status of an enemy worthy of Octavian.

Propertius and Vergil also describe Cleopatra's death, but in terms that make her the female victim:

fugisti tamen in timidi vaga flumina Nili:
    accepere tuae Romula vincla manus.
brachia spectasti sacris admorsa colubris,
    et trahere occultum membra soporis iter.
    "Non hoc, Roma, fui tanto tibi cive verenda!"
    dixit et assiduo lingua sepulta mero.
(PROPERTIUS, ELEGIES 3.11.51–56)

And yet you fled to the meandering streams of the cowardly Nile,
your hands accepted Romulus's chains.
I saw your arms bitten by sacred snakes,
and the hidden course of sleep overtake your limbs.
"You need not have feared me, Rome, when you had such a citizen protecting you!" She spoke, though strong wine had overwhelmed her tongue.
The lord of fire had fashioned her, pale with approaching death, amid the slaughter, impelled by the waves and the Northwest wind. Opposite, the mourning Nile with open arms receives the conquered into his folds, into his blue embrace and sheltering streams.

Despite the increased pathos in these two descriptions, neither poet portrays Cleopatra as a mother. Indeed, elsewhere in 3.11, Propertius refers to her as the “whore-queen” (3.11.39). The sympathy Vergil evokes comes not from Cleopatra’s status as a mother, but from her link to Dido, another victim of Rome’s march toward world power. Not only do biographical details unite Cleopatra and Dido (both were Eastern, female rulers in northern Africa), but Vergil underscores the link through intratextual reference. The phrase pallentem morte futura (8.709) recalls pallida morte futura (4.644), Vergil’s description of Dido on her funeral pyre. In addition to having words, sounds, and sense in common, the phrases occupy the same metrical position, thus creating a link between Cleopatra’s death and Dido’s.

As we have seen above, in Egypt Cleopatra was able to present herself as a head of state in such a way that the concepts of power and motherhood (and womanhood in general) reinforce one another. In the Roman conception of Cleopatra, which was shaped by Octavian’s negative propaganda, however, feminine qualities were not a source of strength; rather, they appeared to add to the unease a Roman audience would feel about an Eastern ruler or to arouse sympathy for a fallen enemy. This sympathy seems to have been dispensed in measured doses, and depicting her orphaned children might have made her too tragic a figure.

Octavian does seem to have taken a lesson from Cleopatra, however, as Diana Kleiner points out in her recent book, Cleopatra and Rome. After the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra, Octavian’s own dynastic aspirations become clear. His family becomes the “first family” of Rome and his repeated attempts to secure a successor leave little doubt as to his goal. His wife, Livia, took a more prominent role in public life than had been customary for Roman women, who in the Republic tended to support their husbands’ political ambitions from behind the scenes. Livia’s image, how-
ever, began to appear on coins, reliefs, and statues. Despite Augustus’s sometimes controversial family life (in particular the scandal involving his daughter Julia), he creates for public consumption an idealized first family, of which Livia is the materfamilias.

As Augustus dealt with the issue of succession, Livia took on a key role as the mother of his successor. She continued to have a prominent position during the reign of Tiberius as the mother of the emperor. Several ancient sources record the Roman Senate’s desire to commemorate that role with the title Mater Patriae (“Mother of the Fatherland”), but report that Tiberius vetoed the honor (Tacitus, Annals 11.14.1; Suetonius, Tiberius 50.2–3; Cassius Dio, Roman History 57.12.4). This notion of Livia as the mother of her country clearly evokes the role Cleopatra emphasized through her association with Isis. Kleiner even sees a visual detail borrowed from Cleopatra’s portraiture: Livia’s nodus hairstyle approximates the triple uraeus that often adorns Cleopatra’s forehead (figs. 8.6 and 8.7). On the Ara Pacis,
Livia's portrait resembles that of Tellus, a resemblance that also casts Livia as a mother figure. The contrasts between the way Cleopatra presents her image to her subjects in Egypt and the way Octavian portrays her to the Romans point to a conscious effort on Octavian's part to decrease Cleopatra's impact as a mother when she is presented to audiences in the Roman empire. The political significance of motherhood in both Egypt and Rome makes it a powerful symbol through which the origins and continuity of a community can be understood. Thus, those who hold political power, whether they are male or female, must be mindful of the messages images of motherhood send. Because motherhood in its political context evokes images of creation and nurturing common to both Roman and Egyptian traditions, Octavian risked humanizing and assimilating his enemy Cleopatra if he portrayed her as a mother. Already aware that his conflict with Antony might be viewed as civil war (he was careful to declare war only on Cleopatra), in his characterization of Cleopatra Octavian stresses the foreign and threatening aspects of her persona, while directing attention to his own family as a model for the Roman citizenry.

NOTES

1. Pomeroy (1990), 8.
5. Lesko (1999), 117.
7. Alexander the Great was the last king of the Macedonian monarchy. Alexander extended his empire into Egypt and India. After his death in 323 BCE, several of his generals ruled portions of his empire. Ptolemy I continued the tradition of hereditary monarchy in Egypt, on the model of the Macedonian monarchy as well as the Egyptian pharaohs.
9. According to Pomeroy (1990), 16, Ptolemaic brother-sister marriage may have been based on a misunderstanding of pharaonic tradition.
12. Dunand (2007), 258. Both Isis and Aphrodite were goddesses associated with fertility and reproduction. Both also were associated with the sea (see below).
13. Except where noted, translations are from Jones (2006).
15. Translated by Walsh (1999), 228–229.
16. *Sic omnem illum populum luporum animos inexplebiles sanguinis atque imperii divitiarumque avidos ac ieiunos habere* ("so the whole people has the souls of wolves, who cannot be sated with blood and are always hungry and greedy for power and wealth." Pompeius Trogus, *Historiae Philippicae* book 38, fr. 152, line 98 [ed. Seel (1956)]). The wolf as symbol of the warrior has Indo-European roots (Speidel [2002], 256).
17. Although see Anise Strong’s essay in this volume. For the *lupa* and its connections with prostitution see Patricia Salzman-Mitchell in this volume as well.
18. The Sabine women, kidnapped to provide the fledgling community of Rome with women, become devoted wives after giving birth to their captors’ children (Livy 1.9).
21. διαγενομένους οὕτως φιλοτίμως ἐξέθρεψεν, ὡστε πάντων εὐφυεστάτους ‘Ῥωμαίων ὀμολογουμένως γεγονότας, πεπαιδευθαί δοκεῖν βέλτιον ἡ πεφυκέναι πρὸς ἄρετην.
23. Williams (1999), 177.
24. Plutarch likens Antony to Hercules enslaved to Omphale in his *Comparison of Demetrius and Antony* 3.3. A visual representation of the myth that dates to ca. 30 BCE may be an attempt to ridicule Antony. See Zanker (1990), 59.
25. The line Areius paraphrases is Homer, *Iliad* 2.204.
28. Uzzi (2005), 120.
29. Uzzi (2005), 121. Also see Zanker (2000), 168.

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In 2005 Ayelet Waldman's controversial New York Times essay on motherhood in the twenty-first century provoked fierce debate among women on both sides of the Atlantic—fueling arguments in and out of the media about hot moms, MILFs ("mothers I'd like to fuck"), the yummy mummy (the British incarnation of the MILF), and the character of (post)modern motherhood. In her article "Modern Love: Truly, Madly, Guiltily" and in subsequent interviews, Waldman openly confessed to being a "bad" mother for loving her husband more than her four children, for loving but not "being in love" with her new baby. The essay begins like this:

I have been in many mothers' groups—Mommy and Me, Gymboree, Second-Time Moms—and each time, within three minutes, the conversation invariably comes around to the topic of how often mommy feels compelled to put out. Everyone wants to be reassured that no one else is having sex either. These are women who, for the most part, are comfortable with their bodies, consider themselves sexual beings. These are women who love their husbands or partners. Still, almost none of them are having any sex.¹

The reason for this lack of sex, Waldman argues, is that

the wife's passion has been refocused. Instead of concentrating her ardor on her husband, she concentrates it on her babies. Where once her husband was the center of her passionate universe, there is now a new sun in whose orbit she revolves. Libido, as she once knew it, is gone, and in its place is all-consuming maternal desire.²
From this paradigm of twenty-first-century motherhood a binary opposition between the good and bad mother emerges. Indeed, Waldman herself confesses:

If a good mother is one who loves her child more than anyone else in the world, I am not a good mother. I am in fact a bad mother. I love my husband more than I love my children.³

Waldman maps the model of modern motherhood as a quasi-romantic relationship in which maternal love for a child comes to eclipse erotic desire for a partner, and in which the role of mother subsumes and replaces that of lover. Yet this model of "modern love," of motherhood good and bad, is not the modern phenomenon that Waldman and her critics suppose. In particular, we can extrapolate similar models of good and bad mothering from the literature and art of Augustan Rome, which shows motherhood in the first century BCE as an early site of contestation between an idealized and sentimental model of maternity and the eroticized paradigm that has become central to twenty-first-century debates on mothering and motherhood.

Throughout antiquity, the relationship between mother and child was regarded as taking precedence over that between husband and wife. Aristotle (in the *Nicomachean Ethics* 8.12) saw the relationship between husband and wife as secondary in both status and emotional intensity to that between parent and child. Most Stoic philosophers similarly privileged parental over marital relationships; according to Beryl Rawson:

Mothers' love for their children is one of the qualities which Musonius Rufus (frag. 3) argued was developed by philosophy. . . . A woman trained in philosophy is best situated to protect the interests of husband and children; she loves . . . her children more than life itself. These were ideals continually set in front of wives and daughters.⁴

We can map a similar attitude toward motherhood across the extant literature and art of classical Greece and Rome.⁵ Yet in Augustan representations of motherhood (particularly those with a political and ideological brief to promote larger families among the social elite), we may trace particular tensions and paradoxes between mother and lover, maternal and erotic love, which specifically parallel those highlighted by Waldman. Here we see clear evidence of mothers behaving as lovers, as in Ovid's *Ars amatoria*, where he reassures mothers—Augustan MILFs, perhaps—that they can still be both sexually active and attractive (*Ars amatoria* 3.81-88), reminding
them that Venus herself enjoyed sex with the youthful Adonis after she had given birth to her son Aeneas: *ut Veneri, quem luget adhuc, donetur Adonis:/ unde habet Aenean Harmoniamque suos?* (Ars amatoria 3.85f). In this light, he also advises women who have already borne children, and who bear the stretch marks to prove it, about the best positions to take up during sex: *tu quoque, cui rugis uterum Lucina notavit, ut celer aversis utere Parthus equs* (Ars amatoria 3.785f). Clearly, motherhood and sex are not mutually exclusive in this text or context, and sex for mothers can apparently be enjoyed for the purposes of recreation no less than for procreation.

However, alongside "sexy mothers" in Augustan representations of motherhood we also see representations of "bad" mothers, who fall short of the maternal ideal through the improper privileging of erotic or sexual relationships over their maternal responsibilities: Ovid's Corinna, who aborts her unborn child (*Amores* 2.13, 2.14); Ovid's Helen, who abandons her young daughter Hermione when she sails to Troy with Paris (*Heroides* 8); and Dido—who is emphatically not Ascanius's mother, nor Aeneas's wife, and so seems prevented from assuming the role of good mother in Vergil's Augustan narrative *a priori.* We also encounter artistic representations of "good" mothers, who seem to exemplify but at the same time to complicate the maternal ideal: images of Venus Genetrix highlight Venus's status as nurturing mother, protective parent, and founder-mother of the Julian line; a panel of the Ara Pacis shows the Terra Mater, the "mother goddess of Augustan art" holding two infants and advertising the privileged status of Augustan motherhood (fig. 9.1). Yet even in these ostensibly propagandist portraits, mothers and lovers are confused: the Terra Mater, whose garment is shown slipping seductively from one shoulder, is also identifiable as Venus, whose status and reputation as goddess of erotic love—as "*mater Amoris,*" mother of Love (Ovid, *Amores* 3.15.1), and "*tenerorum mater Amorum,*" mother of tender Love (Ovid, *Ars amatoria* 1.30)—destabilizes attempts to configure both the Terra Mater and Venus Genetrix as respectable images of "good" Augustan motherhood.

This essay will use both textual and visual *exempla* to extrapolate on such models of good and bad mothering in Augustan Rome, and so to examine motherhood as a site of contestation between the tensions and paradoxes of mother and lover, maternal and erotic love. It will show that the idealized and sentimental model of motherhood in the art and literature of Augustan Rome offers an eroticized paradigm that continues to influence twenty-first-century debates on good parenting.

Mothers mattered to Augustus—for many reasons. The grandson of Caesar's sister, he was adopted as Caesar's heir and given his name as a
Figure 9.1. Tellus panel, Ara Pacis, 13–9 BCE. Rome. Photo: Richard Huxtable (by kind permission of the Sovraintendenza Comunale Beni Culturali di Roma).
direct consequence of this maternal connection; his own sister Octavia (who also raised Antony's children by Fulvia and Cleopatra), mother of Marcellus, gave Augustus his first adopted heir; and after Marcellus's early death, his only child, Julia, as mother of Gaius and Lucius, gave him two adopted sons. His wife, Livia, although subsequently unable to provide Augustus with children of their own, was mother of two sons by her former marriage, Tiberius and Drusus, and it was she who ultimately provided Augustus with an adopted heir and imperial successor. His daughter, Julia, was the most "successful" mother of the first family, bearing five children—including those two all-important boys, for which she was honored by Augustus in having her portrait as the "first mother of Rome" (alongside that of her two sons) depicted on Rome's official coinage. However, Julia was less of a success as a wife, and she was banished by Augustus in 2 BCE for her adulterous erotic activities.

This complicated image of motherhood and some of these mothers themselves can be seen reflected and represented in the art and literature of the Augustan age, in which a complex and contradictory model of the good and bad Augustan mother emerges.

As we saw in the previous essay, such representations and reflections of mothers and motherhood appear problematized ab initio in Augustan Rome by the maternal legacy of Cleopatra, queen of Egypt, living goddess, mistress of both Julius Caesar and Mark Antony, and mother of Caesarion—Caesar's son, "biological heir," and therefore potential rival to the adopted heir Octavian. In this light, Cleopatra was a dangerously "hot mom." And, as Diana Kleiner observes, the associations of Cleopatra with Venus Genetrix, magna mater of the Julian clan, would have been particularly threatening to Augustus.

Caesarion was not just some foreign pharaoh but a real presence in Rome. He had stayed in Caesar's villa with his mother and was proudly featured by his father in a gilded statue of Cleopatra with Caesarion on her shoulder. Even more worrisome was that the statuary group was audaciously paired with that of the Julian family's patron deity Venus in her temple in Caesar's forum in Rome.

The image of a mother carrying her son upon her shoulders is certainly potent and, in this context, also highly suggestive, echoing as it does the iconic image of Aeneas leaving Troy to found Rome carrying his father upon his shoulders and leading his young son, Iulus (eponymous ancestor of the Julian clan), by the hand—the statue group with which Augustus would later particularly associate himself, both in coinage and in his own forum.
However, re-imagined and re-presented in literary form in the guise of Dido in Vergil’s *Aeneid*, Cleopatra’s role as mother—and above all, as frustrated would-be founder-mother of Rome’s greatest dynasty—is subtly defused. For Dido, queen of Carthage, favorite of Juno, mistress of Aeneas, is represented unequivocally as a “bad” mother, who confuses her unspeakable passion (*infandum . . . amorem*) for Aeneas with her maternal affection for his motherless son, Ascanius. Indeed, early in book 4 of the *Aeneid*, the love-struck Dido infamously holds Ascanius upon her lap as a sort of child-substitute for his father (*gremio Ascanium genitoris imagine capta / detinet, infandum si fallere posît amorem* [4.84–85], “captivated by the image of his father, she holds Ascanius on her lap as if she might cheat her unspeakable love”). The childless Dido’s unspeakable (erotic) love, her *infandum amorem*, for Aeneas here fuses both figuratively and linguistically with her motherly love for the *infant* Ascanius. But Dido is emphatically *not* Ascanius’s mother or stepmother, and neither is she Aeneas’s wife. For, as Susan Treggiari has pointed out, “*Matrimonium* means an institution for making mothers (*matres*)” and a “good” mother in this Augustan context means precisely a *married* mother.¹⁶

This neat, albeit somewhat reductive, model of “good” motherhood, ostensibly reconciling and smoothing over tensions between the roles of wife and mother, would have been as ideologically charged in Augustan Rome as it is in—and out—of mothers’ groups today. Yet in the context of Augustan concerns—and legislation—regarding morality and sexual behavior, Dido’s relationship with both the child and his father (described by Ovid in *Tristia* 2.536 as “*non legitimo foedere iunctus amor*”) is deemed illegitimate and thus dangerous. Indeed, by the end of book 4, Dido’s maternal instincts and motherly love for the child will have become corrupted and confused by her passion for the father. She imagines herself as Agave, as Medea, as Procne, tearing apart Aeneas’s body, serving up Ascanius on toast to his father:

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non potui abreptum divellere corpus et undis
spargere? non socios, non ipsum absumere ferro
Ascanium patriisque epulandum ponere mensis?
(AENEID 4.600–602)
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Could I not have grabbed his body, torn it apart and scattered it on the waves? Couldn’t I have put his friends to the sword and Ascanius, and set him on his father’s table to be eaten?

Significantly, in each of these fantasies of revenge against her lover, Dido identifies herself as a “murderous” mother. Indeed, she identifies with the
most notoriously "bad" mothers from the classical mythological and literary tradition—each of whom kills her own child (and in Medea's case, children) as a result of improperly privileging another relationship over her maternal responsibilities. Agave privileges her cultic (and perhaps quasi-erotic) devotion to Bacchus over her maternal affection for Pentheus; Medea privileges her erotic passion for Jason over her maternal love for her (and his) children; and it is Procris's love for her sister Philomela no less than her passionate hatred for her husband, Tereus, that drives her to butcher her infant son, Itys.

In Ovid's *Heroides*, Dido similarly confuses the roles of mother and lover, and again identifies herself as a murderous "bad" mother. Initially, positioning herself as a "good" mother, she seems to show appropriately maternal concern for the well-being and safety of young Ascanius as he is about to set sail on stormy seas. But it immediately becomes clear that she is couching her desire for her lover to stay with her a little longer in this maternalistic expression of love and concern for his child:

> Da breve saevitiae spatium pelagique tuaeque;  
> grande morae pretium tuta futura via est.  
> nec mihi tu curae; puer o parcatur Iulo.  
> te satis est titulum mortis habere meae.  
> quid puer Ascanius, quid di meruere Penates?  
> *(HEROIDES 7.73–77)*

Allow a little time for the savagery of the sea, and your own;  
a safe voyage will be a rich reward for your delay.  
And though you care little for me, spare the boy Iulus.  
It will be enough for you to take the credit for my death.  
What has the boy Ascanius, what have your Penates done to deserve this?

However, we soon see Dido engaging in a Medean fantasy of revenge against Aeneas, threatening the death of his unborn child if he leaves her:

> Forsitan et gravidam Didon, scelerate, relinquas  
> parsque tui lateat corpore clausa meo.  
> accedet fatis matris miserabilis infans  
> et nondum nato funeris auctor eris.  
> cumque parente sua frater morietur Iuli.  
> *(HEROIDES 7.133–137)*
And perhaps it is a pregnant Dido, wicked one, whom you abandon, 
and a part of you lies concealed within my body. 
The poor baby will share the fate of its mother, 
*you* will be the murderer of your unborn child, 
and with his mother the brother of Iulus will die.

As in Vergil, Dido’s maternal instincts regarding the protection of her child 
have here become corrupted and confused by her passion for the father. The 
fantasy of pregnancy as a surrogate for union with the child’s father has be-
come a fantasy of revenge against him. Her dark threats to kill her unborn 
child, moreover, hold echoes of abortion, particularly as evinced in Ovid’s 
writing on this theme in the *Amores* (2.13 and 2.14). Having castigated 
Corinna for almost killing herself along with her unborn child, Ovid con-
troversially speculates on what might have happened if Venus had dared to 
abort her unborn son, Aeneas, thereby robbing the world of its future Ca-
esars (*si Venus Aenean gravida temerasset in alvo, / Caesaribus tellus orba fu-
tura fuit* [Amores 2.14.17–18]). Aligned with an elegiac *puella* in this way— 
the literary antithesis of a maternal *matrona*—Dido, then, is certainly not 
a “good” mother, not least of all because she lacks a legitimate husband to 
validate her status as *mater*.

Indeed, Ovid’s provocative “what if” speculation concerning Venus as 
magna *mater* of the Julian clan and her putative abortion of Aeneas is also 
suggestive here. For the “first lady” among the pantheon of Augustan bad 
mothers is surely Vergil’s Venus, whose son Aeneas complains of her cru-
elty and neglect, and who (when she does offer him some form of maternal 
support) reminds us of both her son’s “illegitimacy” and her own adultery 
in seducing her husband, Vulcan, into forging Aeneas’s (somewhat unnec-
essary) new armor. In the first book of the *Aeneid*, this *mater* (1.314) is de-
scribed as possessing the look of a virgin (*virginis os habitumque gerens et 
virginis arma* [1.315]); she impatiently and somewhat unsympathetically in-
terrupts her son’s account of his woes (*nec plura querentem / passa Venus me-
dio sic interfita dolore est* [1.385f.]), telling him in so many words to “get on 
with it” (*perge modo et, qua te ducit via, derige gressum* [1.401f]). And it is 
only when she turns to leave him, that she reveals her true identity as Ae-
neas’s mother:

*dixit, et avertens rosea cervice refulsit, 
ambrosiaeque comae divinum vertice odorem 
spiravere, pedes vestis defluxit ad imos, 
et vera incessu patuit dea. ille ubi matrem*
agnovit, tali fugientem est voce secutus:
"quid natum totiens, crudelis tu quoque, falsis
ludis imaginibus? cur dextrae iungere dextram
non datur, ac veras audire et reddere voces?"
talis incusat, gressumque ad moenia tendit.
(Aeneid 1.402–410)

She spoke, and as she turned away, her rosy neck gleamed, while from
her head her heavenly hair breathed a divine fragrance; her robes slipped
down to her feet and in her step she was revealed as a true goddess. Then
he recognized her as his mother [matrem], and as she fled he followed
her with these words: “Why are you too cruel, why do you play [ludis]
with your son [natum] with false appearances? Why am I not allowed to
take your hand in mine or to hear and to speak honest words?” So he re-
proaches her and turns his feet towards the citadel.

In this epic encounter between mother and son, there is an odd blend
of the maternal and the erotic: this mother looks and behaves just like a vir-
gin—the epitome of the yummy mummy;18 she half-listens to her child’s
complaints but is principally concerned not with his prattle but with the
larger affairs of grown-ups (that is, of the gods); she reveals her true iden-
tity to her son—in one possible translation of pedes vestis defluxit ad imos—
by taking off her clothes to reveal (what must surely be) her naked body;
she “plays” with her child (ludis)—but cruelly, without affection; and she
refuses him the maternal intimacy of contact or conversation. This sexy
mother is clearly both neglectful of and unavailable to her child. In this de-
scription, she is physically detached from her child, refusing even to take
his hand in hers (in Vergil’s ambiguously erotic terms, refusing to “give”
datur or to “join” iungere anything of herself to her son).

The antithesis of the mother for whom all-consuming maternal desire
replaces sex, Venus appears to reserve her body entirely for erotic pursuits
and to deny her child any physical expression of maternal love. We might
hesitate to label Venus a “bad” mother, but on the basis of this encounter
with her son, she could hardly be identified as a “good” mother. What is
more, as Ellen Oliensis has observed, Aeneas’s complaint that his mother is
“cruel too” or “cruel like others” (crudelis tu quoque [1.407]) carries threat-
ening undertones of motherhood turned bad:19

The phrase derives from Eclogue 8 (47–48): “savage Love taught the
mother to stain her hands with her children’s blood; you too are cruel,
mother" (crudelis tu quoque, mater). The cruel mother of the eclogue may be Medea, the child-killing mother, or Venus, the mother of "savage Love." But the very fact that the referent is unclear draws the two mothers together.\(^2\)

Vergil's Venus, mother of Aeneas, mother of "savage Love," and founder-mother of the Julian line, presents a complicated image of motherhood. And in particular, her status as a divinity of erotic love seems to destabilize and undermine her status as a loving mother in Vergil's epic.

Turning from Augustan epic to elegy, we find that this tension between eroticism and motherhood is similarly exploited (as we might expect) in Ovid's writing, where Venus appears once again as the embodiment of the mother of Love, or mater Amoris. In the Fasti (4.1–6), Ovid addresses her as "nurturing mother of the twin Loves," and in his love poetry Ovid plays heavily upon his own quasi-filial relationship with Venus, emphasizing both the goddess's associations with love and sex, and her assumed role as patron/matron of love poets. In both the Amores and Ars amatoria, Venus features prominently, addressed in the Amores as "tenerorum mater Amorum," or "mother of tender Love" (3.15.1). Controversially, he even prays to her for inspiration for his poem on the arts of love, addressing her again as the "mater Amoris," or "mother of Love" (1.30), playfully combining her two familiar Augustan roles as divine mother and heavenly lover.

Other Augustan representations of Venus at this time, however, accentuated her maternal role above all others, highlighting Venus's status as nurturing mother and protective parent in the divine form of Venus Genetrix, and downplaying her more traditional role as the goddess of Love. In the development of his public image, Augustus played heavily upon his associations with Venus, emphasizing his family connection through Venus's identification as Genetrix, or founder-mother, of the Roman people in general and of the Julian line in particular. Moreover, Augustus's active and official encouragement of motherhood was initiated by his restoration of the statue to Cornelia, "mater Gracchorum," and by the official promotion of Venus Genetrix as never before.

Indeed, Venus had not traditionally been associated with motherhood or maternity; Varro (Res rustica 1.1.6) and Macrobius (Saturnalia 1.12.12) describe her as a rustic goddess of horticulture and gardens. Her worship and association with motherhood in Augustan Rome emerges directly from her "adoption" by the imperial family. Suzanne Dixon (discussing Suetonius, Julius 6) reminds us further of the prominent role played by Venus as magna mater of the Julian clan in both Julian and Augustan ideology:
In his funeral oration on his paternal aunt Julia, Julius Caesar praised her ancestry as deriving from kings on the maternal side and the goddess Venus in the paternal line [ . . . ] On the eve of Pharsalus, Caesar vowed a temple to Venus Victrix (Appian BC 2.68). Yet the temple actually erected in the Forum Iulium was to Venus Genetrix, the founder of the Julian house. [ . . . ] Augustus' temple to Mars Ultor in the Forum Augustum dedicated in 2 BC . . . included a statue of Venus (Ovid, Tristia 2.295f). [ . . . ] The Aeneid reinforced the image of Venus as Genetrix, the "Ancestress," the forceful mother pushing her son to his divine destiny and inextricably associating the fortunes of Rome and the Julian house. 

The relative "novelty" of Augustus's familial relationship with Venus perhaps goes some way toward explaining its repeated emphasis in the poetry of the period: Vergil draws an explicit line of descent from Venus, through Aeneas, to Julius and Augustus Caesar (Aeneid 6.756–807); Horace (Odes 4.15.31f.) similarly refers to the genealogical relationship between Venus, Aeneas, and Augustus, and in his Carmen Saeculare (50) he associates Venus with Augustus; Propertius (3.4.19f. and 4.1.46f.) repeats this association, which is further echoed in Ovid.

Indeed, Ovid's representation of Augustus as the direct descendant of Venus is a particular area of provocation and play in numerous poems. In his Fasti Ovid draws attention to this intimate connection between Augustus and Venus, explicitly inviting the emperor to see the fourth month and the fourth book of the Fasti, dedicated to Venus, as the most personally significant part of the calendar and the poem (4.19f.). However, Venus is addressed in the opening line of book 4 not as the alma mater, or "nurturing mother," of Augustus or even the Roman people, but as the "mother of the twin Loves" (alma . . . geminorum mater Amorum), as Ovid signals that he has in mind not only Venus Genetrix, but also the erotic Venus, "tenerorum mater Amorum" and goddess of love and sex. He claims that April, the fourth month, belongs to her (4.15f.), but traditionally the fourth month did not belong to Venus. According to the Roman calendars used by Ovid to form the foundation of his Fasti, April was neither named after nor especially associated with Venus, so he is required to offer a detailed aetiological and etymological explanation for this assertion; he suggests that April did indeed take its name from Venus—although not from the Latin but rather from the Greek form of her name, Aphrodite, a word which is itself etymologically derived from the Greek word for "sea spray" (4.61f.). He then makes a further tenuous connection between Venus and the month of
April, incorporating the more traditional Roman etymological derivation of *Aprilis* from the Latin *aperire* (to spring open) in his claim that

\[
\text{nec Veneri tempus, quam ver, erat aptius ullum}
\]
\[
\text{(vere nitent terrae, vere remissus ager;}
\]
\[
\text{nunc herbae rupta tellure cacumina tollunt,}
\]
\[
\text{nunc tumido gemmas cortice palmes agit).}
\]
\[(4.125-128)\]

No time was more fitting to Venus than spring:
In spring the earth gleams, in spring the soil is loose;
Now the plants lift pointed shoots pushed up through the soil,
Now the blossom drives the bud through the swelling bark.

In a related celebration of the goddess’s associations with reproduction, he also offers an elaborate—and overstated—description of Venus as sovereign of the world:

\[
\text{illa quidem totum dignissima temperat orbem,}
\]
\[
\text{illa tenet nullo regna minora deo,}
\]
\[
\text{iuraque dat caelo, terrae, natalibus undis,}
\]
\[
\text{perque suos initus continet omne genus.}
\]
\[(4.91-94)\]

Indeed, she deservedly rules the whole world;
She owns a kingdom greater than any god,
She gives laws to heaven and earth and her birthplace, the sea,
And through her every species keeps going.

This exaggerated account of Venus’s power might seem to offer an enthusiastic tribute to the goddess and to her descendent Augustus (who might more legitimately be said to rule the whole world, own a kingdom greater than any god, and give laws to all). But the implicit source of Venus’s universal power and authority in this eulogy is sex.\(^2\) Thus, Ovid reminds his audience that the mother of Aeneas and Augustus is not only Venus Genetrix but also Mater Amoris.\(^3\)

Similarly complicating the maternal ideal of Venus Genetrix as nurturing mother, protective parent, and founder-mother of the Julian line is a relief on the east panel of the Ara Pacis that shows a female figure (presumably) nursing two infants and advertising the privileged status of motherhood in Augustan Rome (see fig. 9.1).
A matronly deity in classicizing drapery sits in dignified posture on her rocky seat. She holds in her arms two babies who reach for her breast, while her lap is filled with fruit and her hair adorned with a wreath of grain and poppies... The woman’s physical presence, her posture and garments are evidently intended to invoke many different associations in the viewer. But whether we wish to call this mother goddess Venus, because of the motif of the garment slipping off the shoulder, Ceres, on account of the veil and stalks of grain, or the earth goddess Tellus, because of the landscape and rocky seat, it is immediately obvious that she is a divinity whose domain is growth and fertility.25

The wide domain of this goddess is, like that of Ovid’s Venus, fertility, reproduction, and motherhood, and although Paul Zanker designates this figure variously as Tellus, Italia, Ceres, and Pax Augusta as well as Venus, he ultimately decides that she is the “mother goddess of Augustan art, whatever we call her.”26 The identification of this maternal deity has challenged generations of archaeologists, art historians, and classicists, but Karl Galinsky has argued persuasively that although the polysemy of this iconographic relief draws variously upon Mother Earth, Ceres, and Pax, it is Venus—as Venus Genetrix, Victrix, and Caesaris—who is unequivocally depicted here.27 Indeed, even those who argue for an alternate identification of this “mother goddess” allow that the evocation of Venus in the representation is significant. So, Barbette Spaeth argues for a reading of the “mother goddess” panel that strongly points to the identification of the goddess as Ceres, but she allows that, given the unambiguous iconographic connections of this deity with Venus, there is strong evidence to suggest a dual reference here, concluding that “the Ara Pacis figure may be meant to combine features of both Demeter/Ceres and Aphrodite/Venus.”28

But if the mother goddess whose garment is shown slipping seductively from one shoulder is identified as Venus, her status and reputation as goddess of erotic love—as “mater Amoris” (Amores 3.15.1) and “teneororum mater Amorum” (Ars amatoria 1.30)—destabilize her configuration here as an unambiguously respectable image of Augustan motherhood. Indeed, if we look closely at the relief (reminiscent of Ovid’s description of Venus as “nurturing mother of the twin Loves”),29 we can see that one of the two infants on her lap seems to be reaching for her breast and is tugging at her dress, pulling her gown down from her shoulder in the process. A breast exposed by and for a hungry babe is unequivocally positive, a nurturing gesture of maternity. Indeed, this innocent gesture—of a child tugging at the garment of a parent, a motif not seen in Roman art before the Ara Pacis—
is mirrored in the scenes of the imperial family depicted on the south frieze of the Ara Pacis and is later transferred as a motif to Augustan funerary reliefs depicting parents and children.\textsuperscript{30}

When this figure is viewed as Venus—even as Venus Genetrix—the erotic implications of “one of the twin Loves” reaching up to expose the goddess of Love’s breast are unavoidable. And if we follow Elaine Fantham’s suggestion that Ovid’s reference in the \textit{Fasti} to Venus as “nurturing mother of the twin Loves” specifically alludes to \textit{Amor} (Affection) and \textit{Cupido} (Desire), then the duality of Venus’s representation here can also be read as explicitly figuring a relationship between (maternal) affection and (erotic) desire.\textsuperscript{31} From this perspective, we can see the Ara Pacis Venus as yummy mummy, as MILF—confusing the distinctions between maternal and erotic love, fusing the roles of mother and lover.\textsuperscript{32}

This tantalizing possibility is further complicated by the suggestion that the “mother goddess” figure on the Ara Pacis looks a lot like Livia, the wife of Augustus and mother of his adopted sons and imperial heirs, the yummy mummy whose marriage to the \textit{princeps} was effected with remarkable haste just three days after she gave birth to her second son, Drusus.\textsuperscript{33} The veiled Ara Pacis “Venus” certainly shares not only facial features but also dress, attitude, and expression with the veiled figure (designated S-31) depicted in the procession on the south frieze, and identified through portrait comparison as Livia.\textsuperscript{34} What is more, the altar was dedicated on January 30, 9 BCE, Livia’s forty-ninth birthday, suggesting that the Ara Pacis was intended to confer some particular honor to her—whether or not we identify the maternal figure here explicitly as Livia herself. Indeed, such identification fits neatly within the design schema and narrative of the Ara Pacis. According to Kleiner, “Nothing was more important to Augustus in the last two decades of the first century BCE than the creation of a dynasty and Livia was at the core of that particular enterprise.”\textsuperscript{35} Thus, she argues, the preponderance of women—and more particularly, \textit{mothers}—on the Ara Pacis helps to configure a narrative thread that leads us as we walk in procession alongside these mothers and their children toward the future of Rome:

The narrative that was spun established a lineage for these women and for the sons whom they provided their husbands, male heirs who ensured the continuity of dynasty and Rome. As the procession moves from east to west and along the north and south sides of the altar, it passes from the maternal world to the paternity of men.\textsuperscript{36}
It would, of course, be Livia who ultimately provided Augustus with his adopted heir and imperial successor. However, at the time of the commissioning and dedication of the Ara Pacis, the mother whose face would, perhaps, have better fitted the Venus figure in the monument’s east panel—and indeed the narrative schema of the altar as a whole—was not Livia but Julia. By 9 BCE, Julia had provided Augustus with two male biological heirs, celebrating (albeit at one remove) his own paternity and thus, it must then have seemed, ensuring the continuity of his dynasty. If the already polysemantic character of the Ara Pacis’s *magna mater* includes partial identification with Livia, then it seems not only possible but probable that we are also invited to see Julia represented here, the two babies recalling her own sons, Gaius and Lucius Caesar—in the same grouping of mother and two sons celebrated by Augustus on contemporary coinage. Given the comprehensive destruction of Julia’s sculptural portraits later ordered by Augustus in the aftermath of her very public disgrace, it is difficult to make a case that the Venus figure on the Ara Pacis looks particularly like Julia. However, if we take as a model the portraits of the imperial family depicted in the processional frieze that runs along the Ara Pacis, it is clear that the east panel’s *magna mater* looks a lot like both Livia and Julia. Indeed, Kleiner suggests that here, as in all visual representations of Augustus and his extended family, “all members were depicted as interchangeable. Although not related by blood, Livia, Octavia, and Julia were clones of one another.” It would seem that the polysemous identity of the maternal figure on the Ara Pacis calls upon plural, overlapping portraits of mortal no less than immortal mothers, and that Julia is almost certainly one of these.

The back-shadow cast upon Julia’s reputation by subsequent public scandal and charges of serial adultery (including punishment under her father’s own laws on marriage and morality) has obscured the qualification of this notorious “hot mom” to be taken seriously as a mother; because Julia turned out to be a “bad” wife her status as a “good” mother has been undermined. But the Ara Pacis, with its celebration of mothering, reminds us that Augustan motherhood was ever a site of contestation revealing the tensions and paradoxes inherent in being a mother and a lover.

Augustus’s Julian and Papian-Poppaean laws on marriage and adultery introduced measures on one hand to promote legitimate childbearing and motherhood and on the other to criminalize adultery, treating the two together through restrictive legislation and taxation. Ironically, however, one of the effects of this approach toward the legislation of private behaviors
seems to have been the explicit association in Augustan literature and art of illicit sexual *mores* with *matres*—albeit through determined official efforts to draw a clear line between legitimate and illegitimate sexual relations and the reproduction of children and heirs, between recreational and procreational sex.\(^4\) Thus, we see in the literature and art of this period both the idealization and the eroticization of motherhood. We see the fusion and occasional confusion of mother and lover in the many figures of the Augustan *mater amoris*—*magna mater* and founder-mother of the modern MILF and yummy mummy.

**NOTES**

Thanks to all the sexy mothers I know, and especial thanks to those who have helped to parent this paper: Lisa Hau, Sarah Kennedy, Lauren Petersen, and Pat Salzman-Mitchell.

2. Waldman (2005). For an alternate view of modern, or "millennial," motherhood, see Warner (2005), who argues that having a baby refocuses rather than replaces libido and that mothering can be an erotic experience (127–128).
4. Rawson (2003).\(^3\)
5. As examined in Dixon (1988), (1991); Foucault (1984); Rawson (2003), (1991); Rouselle (1988); Wiedemann (1989) (although Wiedemann, significantly, has no entry for "mother" or "motherhood" in his index). On the representation of parental vs. marital relationships, Dixon (1988) notices "the tendency . . . in literature from the late Republic on to idealise and sentimentalise conjugal and parental relations" (73; emphasis mine).
6. Although a goddess may be allowed the sort of sexual license that would certainly not be permitted a mortal woman.
7. She is also, of course, assimilated to Cleopatra, whose own self-representation as mother and mistress resonates here. See Prudence Jones's essay in this volume.
9. In her study of "Women in the Time of Augustus" (2005), Treggiari draws attention to "the prominent position given in [Horace, *Odes* 3.14] to Augustus' closest women associates, and the selection of mothers and the young to represent the population of Rome on this occasion. . . . The imperial family itself is represented by two senior women, both mothers" (131).
10. See Treggiari (2005), 140.
5; Dio Cassius 55.10.12–16; Seneca, De beneficiis 6.32.1–2. See also Fantham (2006), 138–146.

13. See Kleiner (2005), 199.

14. See Kleiner (2005), 199.

15. See Zanker (1988), 193–215. See also Prudence Jones’s discussion of this statue in this volume.

16. Treggiari (2005), 133.

17. Provocatively, Ovid’s Dido also refers to herself as Venus’s daughter-in-law (Heroides 7.31) and describes Venus, Aeneas’s mother, as mother of Loves (quia mater Amorum / nuda Cytheriacis edita fertur aquis [Heroides 7.59ff.]).

18. According to Oliensis (1997), 305: “Like Creusa [Ascanius’s mother], Dido blends the features of mother and bride.”


20. saevus Amor docuit natorum sanguine matrem / commaculare manus; crudelis tu quoque, mater (Eclogue 8.47ff.).

21. Dixon (1988), 74. Indeed, it was during the ludi Veneris Genetricis, hosted by Augustus, that the soul of Julius was believed to have achieved his divine destiny in his apotheosis (Pliny, Natural History 2.93–94); see Johnson (1996), 130.

22. According to Pliny (Natural History 35.91), the Temple of Divus Julius dedicated by Augustus in 29 BCE housed a painting of the birth of Venus, where she is emerging from the sea as in Hesiod’s account of the birth of Aphrodite, reinforcing this association between the Julian/Augustan Venus and her erotic Greek counterpart. Ovid may or may not have been aware of the false etymology here.

23. Compare Ars amatoria 2.480.

24. For a detailed discussion of Ovid’s controversial and provocative representation of Venus Amatoris, see Johnson (1996), 131–133.


27. See Galinsky (1996), 148–149: “Venus relates best to the dynastic dimension illustrated also by Augustus and his family, and by the presence of Aeneas, Venus’s son and the Julian ancestor, on the east side.” For the identification of the two side figures that flank the central deity in this panel as representing the celestial and marine aspects of Venus, see Booth (1966); Galinsky (1966), (1969), (1992); Thornton (1983); Spaeth (1994).


29. Fasti 4.1–6. Fantham (1998) suggests that “the two Loves are probably a reference to Amor (Affection) and Cupido (Desire), not the Platonic Eros and Anteros. Given the representation of Venus with two cupids on a coin of one of Julius Caesar’s kinsmen in 94 or 90 BC, and O.’s preoccupation with the Julian Venus . . ., we should not exclude reference to a contemporary cult image familiar to O.’s readers but now lost.” Fan-
tham bases her view on the work of Antonie Wlosok (1975) and argues persuasively that Ovid’s insistence upon the “duality” of the twin loves here “is specific, distinct from the usual collective of Erotes as in Catullus 3.1 (luge te, o Veneres Cupidines quo)” (89–90).

32. This image also reminds the viewer of the physicality of both mothering and sex, and the ways in which both a baby and a lover demand physical intimacy with a woman’s body. See also Patricia Salzman-Mitchell’s essay in this volume.
33. On the identification of the babies in the east panel see Pollini (1987), 21–28; Rose (1990), 467. See also Zanker (1988). Kleiner (1992) and de Grummond (1990) suggest that the children may be identified as Livia’s own children Tiberius and Drusus. Spaeth objects to this identification on the grounds that Livia’s “children” were already adults at the time the Ara Pacis was erected (89, n. 207).
34. On the identification of Venus as Livia see Bonnano (1976), 28; Pollini (1987), 100; Kleiner (1992), 98; (2005), 223; and Spaeth (1994), 88.
37. I am grateful to the anonymous reader for the University of Texas Press for making this point to me.
40. On the links between the Ara Pacis and Augustan social policy, see Kleiner (1978), 772–776.

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MOTHERS AND LOVERS IN AUGUSTAN ROME


In the three epic poems of the Flavian period (Valerius Flaccus’s Ar‐
gonautica, Statius’s Thebaid, and Silius Italicus’s Punica),1 the di‐
chotomy between such concepts as Roman and non-Roman (bar‐
barian), Greek and non-Greek, same and other is negotiated from the
perspective of an idealized cosmopolitanism, a transformation concomi‐
tant with the expansion of the borders of the empire. Whereas in Ver‐
gil and Ovid the epic narrative is steered toward the foundation of a cen‐
ter in Rome, in the heart of Italy, the Flavian poets are rather preoccupied
with the confrontation of other, marginal sites outside the Italian peninsula
(Colchis, Thebes, Carthage, and Saguntum, respectively).

In this study, I shall address the role of some “other,” non-Roman
mothers in Flavian epic poetry and explore the transformed manifestations
of motherhood through the representation of otherness. As we shall see,
mothers are given a prominent role in these narratives, either as destruc‐
tive powers, possessed by bacchic frenzy, who undermine the predominant
male ideological code, or as a constructive apparatus, who affirm and abet
the achievements of the male protagonists toward the manufacture of an
imperial ideology. The manipulation of women’s actions in these poems
highlights the fluctuating mobility of both gender and cultural hierarchies
and speaks to the construction of Romanness from an often idealized and
utopian perspective.

SILIUS ITALICUS’S PUNICA

Let us first look at the city of Saguntum in the Punica, with whose
siege Silius opens his monumental historical epic on the Second Punic War,
from the beginning of the hostilities to the victorious battle at Zama and Hannibal's annihilating defeat (218–202 BCE). In the poem, Saguntum is the first city attacked by the Carthaginian general. This Spanish city is a Greco-Roman colony that, as the poet explains from the very beginning, should not—and indeed could not—be exclusively called Roman. Its inhabitants descend from Greek colonists, from Zacynthus (an island in the Ionian Sea) and Hercules' homonymous friend, who dies onsite in Spain, as the poet informs us (Pun. 1.274–290); the Zacynthians then subsequently merged with immigrants from the Italian city of Ardea (Pun. 1.291–295). It is through this amalgamation, then, that the Saguntines came into existence.

What makes this poem especially intriguing in this discussion of motherhood and identity in Flavian epic is the spin that Silius gives to one particular episode, otherwise well documented in the historical record: through her instrument—the Fury Tisiphone—Juno inspires a frenzy in the Saguntine mothers and pushes them to commit mass suicide after killing many of their male kinsmen (Pun. 2.526–680). In this way Juno—the fervent supporter of her protégé, Hannibal, throughout the poem—puts an end to the prolonged siege of Saguntum and facilitates the victorious outcome for Carthage.

Before this massacre of epic proportions, the reader is presented with a remarkable scene, where the Saguntines—confronted with death—burn the heirlooms that once accompanied their ancestors from faraway Zacynthus in Greece and Ardea in Italy, and thus destroy any evidence of their present, past, and future:

certatim structus surrectae molis ad astra
in media stetit urbe rogus; portantque trahuntque
longae pacis opes quaesitaque praemia dextris,
Callaico vestes distinctas matribus auro
armaque Dulichia proavis portata Zacyntho
et prisca adventos Rutulorum ex urbe penates.
huc, quicquid superest captis, clipeosque simulque
infaustos iaciunt enses et condita bello
effodiunt penitus terrae gaudentque superbii
victoris praedam flammis donare suprema.
(PUN. 2.599–608)

A pyre, zealously built, stood in the middle of the city, whose height rose to the stars; they drag and carry the wealth of a long peace and the prizes
won by valor, that is the clothes embroidered by the mothers with Gallician gold, the Dulichian weapons brought by their ancestors from Zacynthus, and the household gods carried across the sea from the ancient city of the Rutulians. Here the conquered people throw whatever is left to them, and their shields too and their cursed swords. And from the bowels of the earth, they dig up what they had hidden during the war and they rejoice in giving to the last fire the booty of the arrogant victor.3

Silius particularly focuses on the act of burning, that is, on the destruction of both works of peace, such as the clothing produced by women, and of weapons, carried by men in war. In addition, the poet underscores the conflagration of Saguntine identity, namely the burning of the images of the homeland gods, tokens that once defined the arrival of the newcomers and the establishment of the new city in Spain. The burning at the instigation of the Erinyes constitutes the annulment of the Saguntines' recognition of their identity as either “Ardeans” or “Zacynthians.”4 They become a hybrid nation now, just before death. The Dionysiac frenzy will result in a Stoic, Roman, death which nevertheless wipes out the Saguntines' ties with their Roman and subsequently Greek patriae.

In their stirring of the earth's bowels, the Saguntine mothers reverse the act of founding a city, as we know it from the story of the foundation of Carthage, for instance: in Punic 2.410–411, Silius informs us that Dido and her companions dig up the earth and discover the head of a horse, a symbol of the city's future invincibility in war (ostentant caput effossa tellure repertum / bellatoris equi atque omen clamore salutant, “having dug up the earth, they display the found head of a fighting horse and they greet the omen with a shout”). At the same time, however, the mothers' act constitutes a jarring, public reversal of the ritual of burial; this is a funeral pyre without subsequent burial, without hope for the future rest of souls that is normally ensured by the return of the dead to Mother Earth. This pyre then can itself be read as the Saguntines' tomb, since there will be no actual burial after their suicide and the burning of the city. This is a “tomb,” however, in which Roman identity is incinerated. In hybrid Saguntum, this becomes not a story of founding, but rather one of utter destruction. The eradication of anything that reminds the citizens of their origins is only one step away from what occurs next. This obliteration of their entire material inheritance progresses to the utter devastation of family ties. The public and the private merge into one and the same.

For instance, the death of a pair of twin brothers, Eurymedon and Ly-
Mothering and Motherhood in Ancient Greece and Rome

cormas, adds to the confusion created by the bacchic madness and contributes further to the annihilation of memory and identity:

vos etiam primo gemini cecidistis in aevo,
Eurymedon fratem et fratrem mentite Lycorma,
cuncta pares, dulcisque labor sua nomina natis
reddere et in vultu generici stare suorum.
iam fixus iugulo culpa te solverat ensis,
Eurymedon, inter miserae lamenta senectae,
dumque malis turbata parens deceptaque visis
"quo ruis? huc ferrum" clamat "converte, Lycorma,"
ecce simul iugulum perfoderat ense Lycormas.

sed magno "quinam, Eurymedon, furor iste?" sonabat
cum planctu geminaeque notis decepta figurae
funera mutato revocabat nomine mater,
donec transacto tremebunda per ubera ferro
tunc etiam ambiguos cecidit super inscia natos.

(PUN. 2.636-649)

Also you, twin brothers, fell in your prime, Eurymedon and Lycormas, each an exact likeness of the other, alike in every point. It was a sweet toil for your mother to recognize her sons by name and to decide who is who, by looking at each son's face. Now the sword that had pierced your neck, had already freed you from the blame, Eurymedon, amidst the lament of your poor old mother; and while the parent, disturbed by the sorrow and deceived by whom she thought she had seen, exclaims: "Where do you rush? Turn your blade here, Lycormas,"—behold! Lycormas had already stabbed his throat with the sword. But she cried with a big groan: "What kind of fury is this, Eurymedon?" and deceived by the likeness of the twins, the mother kept calling back the dead by their wrong names, until, with a sword driven through her quivering breasts, she fell over her sons, whom even then she could not distinguish.

The mother is unable to identify her sons properly and thus annuls the ancestral Roman custom of *conclamatio*, the calling of the dead person's name three times, for it is futile in this case. Although the poet addresses such deeds of apparent bravery as *infelix gloria* ("pitiable glory," 2.613) and *laudanda monstra* ("praiseworthy monstrosities," 2.650), the result of the mass suicide remains dubious: the outcome is "scorned by the unfair gods" (*iniustis neglecta deis, 2.657*). As Alison Keith rightly points out, "Silius both
praises the Saguntines for their fidelity . . . and abhors the carnage with its overtones of civil discord."

What we witness here is the Saguntines' effort to delete their identity by burning, and killing, reminders of their city's former self. Destructive motherhood operates on the level of the relationship between colony and metropolis; Saguntum expunges her association with the Roman state, since Rome herself, the mother polis for Saguntum and a staunch ally before the siege, is conspicuously absent from Saguntum's ordeal. As a result of internal conflict and disagreement among the chief Roman officers at the time, Saguntum is effectively abandoned by Rome. A reflection of this civil conflict can be seen in the instances of destructive motherhood examined above, mothers killing their offspring in a bacchic frenzy.

Here in the second book of the seventeen-book poem, the cosmos of the Punica is threatened by the same chaotic powers that pervade the nefarious world of Statius's epic landscape, as we shall see next. The women's centralized, public, and yet marginal status acutely interrogates what true Romanness betokens. While it is found lacking in the center, old-fashioned Romanness may be situated in the margins. Rome cannot rise to the circumstance by protecting Saguntum and by dealing with Hannibal effectively; therefore, as a consequence of the lack of Roman virtus in the center of the empire, Saguntum emerges as the city that teaches Rome a lesson in pietas and virtus through the mass suicide.

And yet at the end of the Saguntine episode the poet undercuts any such easy conclusion. Is the Spanish city really setting an example of a city in the periphery that is conspicuous for its Romanness? The chief Saguntine mother-heroine in this scene, Tiburna, and her Saguntine companions are in truth silent; their voice is not their own but instead on loan from the fury, Tisiphone. Therefore, just as Saguntum itself becomes a monument of fides for future generations, so too does the act of her people to obliterate any traces of what is tantamount to their former identity: they are no longer Greeks or Romans, they have become Saguntines, and such an act sharply emphasizes the ineffective control that Rome exercises on its subjects at the time. What the poet stresses at the end of the second book is the fact that the Romans ought to search for the signification of Romanitas and abandon their inertia; the need for a new spin in the Roman center conspicuously emerges as an important issue in the first ten books of the poem, culminating in the disastrous battle at Cannae, where the Roman army is annihilated. There is need for a new, effective general to undertake the long war. Only after Scipio is sanctioned as the sole capable conqueror of Hannibal does Rome rise to the height of her glory.
Saguntum’s silenced existence will speak volumes in the remainder of the *Punica* as the city becomes exemplary for her hybridity and unique nature as an *urbs* in the periphery that strives for her own identity, away from the big centers of either Rome or Carthage. Emphasis on the bacchant (m)others—murderers reflects on what we could call Silius’s “poetics of defeat.” It is from this chaotic and civil war-like narrative that Rome is going to emerge as an idealized entity, destined to lead the world’s future. The “foreign” mothers of Saguntum, a city from the periphery, are now teaching true Romanness to the Romans in the center of the empire.6

**STATIUS'S THEBAID**

Although Rome emerges victorious from her struggle with Hannibal at the end of the *Punica*, Statius—an epicist contemporary to Silius—opts for a different route, by means of a mythological epic on the Theban *oikos* of Oedipus’s offspring. In the *Thebaid*, Statius recounts the civil war between the two sons of Oedipus for the throne of Thebes: Eteocles, the incumbent king, who refuses to alternate with his brother, and Polynices, the exile, who finds refuge and alliance in the court of the Argive king, Adrastus. The struggle for power comes to a horrendous conclusion, as the two siblings kill each other on the battlefield.

It is intriguing, however, that Statius delays the battle between the two brothers until the eleventh book, paying attention in the meantime to the periphery rather than the center of the action. A long digression occupies the central books of the poem (from the end of book 4 through the end of book 6), during which Hypsipyle, former queen of Lemnos, narrates—for the Argive army’s “entertainment”—another epic story, namely, the murder of the Lemnian husbands by their wives and the subsequent stop of the Argonauts at the nefarious island.7

In Hypsipyle’s narrative, the poet exploits the Lemnian woman’s otherness as a foreigner. For instance, the adjective *Lemnias* is extensively used to point to Hypsipyle’s odd status as a nurse in the Nemean palace, an exile from her former *patricia*, Lemnos (*Theb. 4.775, 5.29, 5.500, 5.588*). First and foremost, then, the Lemnian queen is presented to the reader as a dislodged mother with misplaced affections: after the Lemnian massacre, when as a result of a punishment from Venus, the Lemnian women kill the entire male population on the island, Hypsipyle is proclaimed the queen of the disturbed matriarchal society, even though she helped her father, Thoas, escape unscathed; when the truth about this rescue is uncovered, she is sep-
rated from her children and by extension her country, though she is still identified as *Lemnias* and *mater* throughout the narrative. Hypsipyle's task in Nemea is to tend to Opheltes, the baby son of King Lycurgus, and to lull him into sleep, to nurse him as a mother does, and to protect him against the dangers hidden in the Nemean landscape. Her forgetfulness, however, turns Hypsipyle into a "lost" (m)other, who chooses an unreliable proxy, *tellus*, for the completion of a task that should have been her own, and thus perpetuates the horror of death and destruction that haunts her past:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{at puer in gremio verna telluris et alto} \\
\text{gramine nunc faciles sternit procursibus herbas} \\
in vultum nitens, caram modo lactis egeno \\
nutricem plangore ciens iterumque renidens \\
et teneris meditans verba inluctantia labris. \\
\end{align*}
\]

(*THEB. 4.786–790*)

But the boy in the bosom of the vernal earth, the lush herbage, now butts and levels the soft grasses with his forward plunges, now calling for his dear nurse, crying thirsty of milk; and again he smiles and endeavors for words that struggle with his tender lips.

Because Hypsipyle leaves Opheltes alone and untended, a huge serpent is subsequently able to kill him. The heroine fails in her role as a nurse because when she meets the army of Argives, she hastens to quench their thirst by leading them to a stream nearby, abandoning the baby in the process.

Hypsipyle's ambivalent status of foreigner and exile gives her the freedom to recount her toils and weave a story that lulls the Argives into a metaphorical sleep, during which they forget the purpose of their expedition. Hypsipyle's narrative, however, is transformed into a story of civil conflict, foreshadowing the upcoming war against Thebes: the Lemnian women kill their husbands and Hypsipyle saves her father, but when she is discovered, she is sent into exile and forced to abandon the children she begot from Jason.

To be sure, Hypsipyle paradoxically became an alien to her native environment by transgressing the already transgressive rules set by the other Lemnian women. The poet creates a version of Hypsipyle that defies any norm or categorization. At the outset of the digression in book 4, Statius associates Hypsipyle, as she tends the baby Opheltes, with a foreign goddess, the mother of the gods, who gives orders to the Curetes for the nursing of Jove:
... qualis Berecyntia mater,
dum parvum circa iubet exultare Tonantem
Curetas trepidos; illi certantia plaudunt
orgia, sed magnis resonat vagitibus Ide.
(THEB. 4.782-785)

... like Cybele, while she bids the trembling Curetes dance around the
infant Thunderer; they sound their mystic cymbals in competition, yet
still the baby’s mighty wails resound around Ide.

Just as he did for Thrace, Lemnos, and Thebes, so Statius also casts a mae-
nadic shadow over the Nemean landscape from the outset, this time as the
place of the baby’s death, an event to be remembered by a festival not coinci-
dently called trieteris (4.729), a noun appropriate for the cult of Bacchus.

Most importantly, the didactic story narrated by Hypsipyle translates
into the unsuccessful, wickedly vicious world of the poem. Hypsipyle re-
mains an exile, and the Argives’ first stop in Nemea becomes just a first test
of and taste for the war at Thebes that will result in the permanent alien-
ation of the two peoples, the Thebans and the Argives, leading to the per-
petuation of an endless war, now and in the future, with the attack of the
Epigoni, the next generation of Peloponnesian warriors that will attack
Thebes. Indeed, the female narrator’s own identity is blurred, as Hypsipyle
hastened to save her father, while at the same time she seemingly erased
any ties with her own family: even on Lemnos, Hypsipyle had been in re-
ality an “exile,” a female who does not comply with the behavior of the rest
of the female population but who is, rather, marginalized when she is por-
trayed saving her father from the slaughter.

Hypsipyle’s fixation with the narrative of civil war crimes alienates her
from her own gender, as she is presented at odds with womanhood itself.
Consider, for instance, how she highlights the description of the burning of
her father’s weapons and garments:

ipsa quoque arcanis tecti in penetralibus alto
molior igne pyram, sceptrum super armaque patris
inicio et notas regum velamina vestes,
ac prope maesta rogum confusis crinibus asto
ense cruentato, fraudemque et inania busta
plango metu, si forte premant, cassumque parenti
omen et hac dubios leti precor ire timores.
(THEB. 5.313-319)
I too in the secret recesses of my house build a high-flaming pyre and cast on it my father's scepter and weapons and his well-known garments, the dress of kings. In sadness with disordered hair and bloody sword I stand nearby and fearfully lament the fraud, the empty mound, hoping to cover up. And I pray that the omen bring no harm to my father and that doubting fears of his death be so discharged.

In this scene, Statius fuses two important intertexts: from Vergil, in particular Dido's preparation of her own funeral pyre in *Aeneid* 4; and from Lucan, specifically Cornelia's preparation of a pyre-cenotaph for Pompey, in *De bello civili* 9, even though the Roman general had already been burned and buried in Egypt. Like Cornelia, Hypsipyle performs an empty ritual, and just like Dido, the Lemnian woman brings about her own downfall, by means of a fraud. At the same time, however, as Joanne Brown has observed, Hypsipyle's false lamentation for Thoas calls into question her reliability as a narrator. How are we then to believe Hypsipyle's lamentation for Opheltes as a sincere expression of motherhood? In the perverted world of the *Thebaid*, no narrative is impervious to the *nefas* that looms large over the Argive, Theban, and Nemean landscapes. Ultimately, Hypsipyle cannot escape the foreboded doom. She brings about Opheltes' death, unintentionally, just like the Lemnian mothers who were possessed by Tisiphone and Venus when they were committing their crimes.

Moreover, Hypsipyle's careless mothering of the baby can be traced back to her unwilling impregnation by Jason. After the story of the Lemnian massacre and the saving of her father, Thoas, Hypsipyle narrates at length the stay of the Argonauts on the infamous island. The Argonauts' influence on the women seems favorable in the beginning, as the advent of the male warriors coincides with the reinstitution of gender hierarchies on the island, boundaries that had been previously transgressed through the slaughter of the male population. The female figures, once out of their *sexus*, are now reconstructed: *rediit sexus* ("our sex returned to our hearts," *Theb.* 5.397). The threat of matriarchy is safely closeted for the time being. And yet even when the "natural order" is restored, Hypsipyle fashions herself as a dislocated person. Although previously a virgin, when the slaughter began, she now loses her innocence to Jason and is impregnated by him:

\[
\text{cineres furiasque meorum}
\]
\[
\text{testor ut externas non sponte aut crimine taedas}
\]
\[
\text{attigerim (scit cura deum), etsi blandus Jason}
\]
\[
\text{virginibus dare vincla nouis . . .}
\]
iam nova progenies partusque in vota soluti,
et non speratis clamatur Lemnos alumnis.
nece non ipsa tamen, thalami monimenta coacti,
enitor geminos, duroque sub hospite mater
nomen avi renovo;
(Theb. 5.454-457, 461-465)

By the ashes and the avenging ghosts of my own kin, I swear—the
gods care and know—that by no will of mine and guiltless I became a
stranger's wife, though Jason used his charm to ensnare young virgins
. . . Now comes new progeny and births to answer prayer. Lemnos is loud
with unhoped-for children. I too with the rest bring forth twins, memorials
of a forced bed though they be, and made a mother by my rough guest
I revive their grandfather's name.

Words such as *alumnus*, applied to Hypsipyle's offspring, remind us of
similar use in the case of Opheltes, who is at this very moment in the dan-
gerous lap of *tellus* (Theb. 4.786-787). Hypsipyle describes her reluctance to
enter into a relationship with Jason, based on her knowledge of subsequent
events. The Argonauts soon leave, while she is forced into exile. Repeti-
tion of the past proves dangerous; the naming of Jason's child after Thoas
is a stark reminder of Hypsipyle's hidden truth about her father. Substitu-
tion betokens an aborted renewal and a fresh start doomed to failure. And
indeed, a new beginning for the island, a renovation of gender hierarchies,
has failed anew.

Hypsipyle's actual infatuation with Jason is evident in her reunion
with her sons, Thoas and Euneos (Theb. 6.343). Her first reaction is cold,
but when she recognizes them as the true offspring of Jason, she completely
changes her attitude toward them:

illa velut rupes inmoto saxea visu
haeret et expertis non audet credere divis.
ut vero et vultus et signa Argoa relictis
ensibus atque umeris amborum intextus Jason,
cesserunt luctus, turbataque munere tanto
corruit, atque alio maduerunt lumina fletu.
(Theb. 5.723-728)

She like a stony rock, with a gaze unmoved, does not react nor does she
dare to believe the gods she knows well. But when she recognized their
faces and the signs of Argo on the swords left behind and Jason's name
interwoven on their shoulders, her grief departed and collapsed disturbed by such great gift; her eyes became wet by other tears.

Finally, Hypsipyle's transformation from an impassionate and compassionate narrator into a stone is memorialized also in the ekphrasis on Opheltes' tomb, where the nurse now becomes the object of the narrative itself:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{stat saxea moles,} \\
\text{templum ingens cineri, rerumque effectus in illa} \\
\text{ordo docet casus: fessis hic flumina} \\
\text{monstrat Hypsipyle Danais, hic reptat flebilis infans,} \\
\text{hic iacet.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(THEB. 6.242-246)

There stands a mass of stone, a great temple for the ashes, and therein a sculptured series tells the story: here is Hypsipyle showing the stream to the weary Danai, here crawls the poor baby, here he lies dead.

Hypsipyle is transformed from mobile to static, from narrator to the object of the narrative, from woman to marble, from animate to inanimate. This portrayal of Hypsipyle in stone highlights the affinity of the Lemnian woman with Niobe, a Theban heroine who is metamorphosed into stone—a rock—after the loss of her offspring. Even though Hypsipyle casts herself as someone who can easily dupe the rest of the Lemnian women by pretending to burn and bury her father in book 6, the poet fixes the heroine on a real tomb, of her nursling Opheltes. Statius transfers the heroine's former mobility to the eternal flow of the flumina, as if Hypsipyle had merged into the landscape of Nemea forever.

Through the anaphora of hic, we are left only with some pointers of Hypsipyle's former presence in the poem; meaning is generated through silence, a mute stillness that nevertheless speaks volumes. The transformation of Hypsipyle into stone completes the process: the queen of Lemnos from her conspicuous position as the narrator now becomes part of the story, failed motherhood memorialized in verse and in marble.

VALERIUS'S ARGONAUTICA

I would like to conclude by addressing the importance of polarities such as center and periphery for the culture and society of Domitianic
Rome, by way of Valerius Flaccus’s Roman *Argonautica*. Valerius’s version of Hypsipyle’s saga is quite different from Statius’s rather ominous narrative in *Thebaid* 4–6. Hypsipyle’s piety in saving her father is stressed, as well as her willingness to bear offspring to Jason, as opposed to Statius’s strong language of Hypsipyle being forced to yield and marry the best of the Argonauts, which we saw above.

praecipueque ducis casus mirata requirit
Hypsipyle, quae fata trahant, quae regis agat vis
aut unde Haemoniae molem ratis: unius haeret
adloquio et blandos paulatim colligit ignes,
iam non dura toris Veneri nec iniqua reversae
et deus ipse moras spatiunque indulget amori.

(***ARG.*** 2.351–356)

And most of all, Hypsipyle in awe inquires about the leader’s fortunes, which fates draw him, the power of which king drives him forth, or when comes the mass of the Haemonian ship: she clings upon his words and slowly she gathers in the sweet flames, no longer opposing the beds of Venus and well disposed toward the return of the goddess; even the god himself likes the delay and allows space for the love affair.

Through an aversion to repeating the Aeneas–Dido encounter from *Aeneid* 4, Valerius fashions Hypsipyle as a willing and conscious participant in the Argonautic saga; she is part of the story, a story in which she happily acts as a helper of Jason’s progress toward his *telos*. As Debra Hershkowitz has noted, “Hypsipyle [does] not seem to harbour any guilt over losing her long-protected virginity to Jason.”

By a striking contrast to what Statius chooses to do—memorializing Hypsipyle in an ekphrasis that tells Opheltes’ story—Valerius presents Hypsipyle as the creator of an artifact instead, a cloak for Jason described in an ekphrasis telling her own story:

... chlamydem textosque labores
illic servati genitoris conscia sacra
pressit acu currusque pios: stant saeva paventum
agmina dantque locum; viridi circum horrida tela
silva tremit; mediis refugit pater anxius umbris ... 
tunc ensem notumque ferens insigne Thoantis
“accipe,” ait “bellis mediae ut pulvere pugnae
sit comes, Aetnaei genitor quae flammea gessit dona dei, nunc digna tuis adiungier armis. i, memor, i, terrae quae vos amplexa quieto prima sinu, refer et domitis a Colchidos oris vela, per hunc utero quem linquis Iasona nostro.”  

(Arg. 2.409-413, 418-424)

... a tunic with a woven handiwork. There she has embroidered with a needle the ceremony, witness of her father’s rescue, and the pious chariot: the savage group of the Lemnians stand in fear and allow her to pass; all around in green thread, the horrified forest trembles; in the middle of the shades the father seeks refuge, in agony ... Then bringing the sword, with the well-known emblem of Thoas: “Take this,” she said, “that it may be your companion in war and in the dust where the battle is the thickest, the fiery gifts of the god of Aetna which my father bore, now worthy to be worn together with your weapons. Go now, go, and remember the land, which first embraced you in her quiet bosom! And from the shores of Colchis, once you conquer them, bring back your sails here, in the name of this Jason, whom you leave in our womb.”

The queen’s “generosity” in letting the epic hero pursue the telos of his trip could be considered unique, inasmuch as it is an anti-Didoesque moment in the narrative. “Hypsipyle is the Sense to Dido’s Sensibility, and, in contrast to Dido’s increasingly barbaric character, she is presented as a Romanized daughter and wife,” as Hershkowitz correctly observes. In contrast to Statius’s account, Hypsipyle’s gifts here are seen to be the very items that she commits to the fire in the Thebaid: the clothes of her father (chlamydem, Arg. 2.409 - notas regum velamina vestes, Theb. 5.315) and his weapons (ensem, Arg. 2.418 - armaque patris, Theb. 5.314). In Valerius’s reconstruction of the story, Hypsipyle gives expression to her act of pietas by embroidering the saving of Thoas on the cloak. In this creation of the chlamys, Hypsipyle finds recourse to the power of ekphrasis, rather than becoming part of it herself. Instead, what she heavily underscores in her farewell speech is the pignus amoris, her offspring, which will be an indelible mark on Jason’s future as a father of a little Jason. Whereas Statius’s Hypsipyle calls upon the ashes and the Furies (cineres furiasque meorum testor, Theb. 5.454-455), Valerius’s heroine holds a much more powerful “tool,” per hunc utero quem linquis Iasona nostro, whereby she directs us with an outlook toward the future, not with a foot stuck in the abominable past.
Placing the *Argonautica* in the middle of the Vespasianic regime, since the poem was probably finished around or before 79 CE, it is tempting to read this scene in the light of the hopes placed on the new *gens* that rules Rome, namely Vespasian and his two sons, the positive rebirth of the city and the empire after the decadence of the Julio-Claudians. In Velleius's utopia of a Roman Jason civilizing the barbarians, the public facet of motherhood is encouragingly abetting the forces of imperialism, thus reviving those good ol' Roman values. And yet, the problematization of motherhood in Flavian epic poetry, as we saw in Silius and certainly Statius, in the later years of the Flavian rule goes beyond the confines of a poetically recreated mythological and historical past and is inextricably intertwined with the anxieties of a male regime that has no prominent wives or mothers to display, a sharp contrast to the Julio-Claudian house. Vespasian does not remarry after the death of Domitilla, having secured succession; Domitian and Domitia Longina lose their baby son early on, the only *spes regni*, while Domitian himself does not attempt adoption until late in his reign, and then quite unsuccessfully.

In surviving Flavian art, motherhood seems completely elided, an unimportant theme when compared, for instance, to the Augustan imagery of fertility and abounding motherhood in the *Ara Pacis*. Instead we find symbols of virginity, of Minerva especially, the protectress of the emperor (punishing Arachne in the frieze of the Forum Transitorium), or of Roma in Amazonian dress, or other personified virtues. Cancelleria Relief B portrays Vespasian's *adventus* to the city in 70 CE, with Domitian on his side. On the left side of the fragmented relief, the viewer's gaze is directed toward the personification of Roma, in Amazonian costume, accompanied by one of the Vestals. In relief A, Domitian is the central figure, in either a *profectio*, setting out for war in the frontiers of the empire, or an *adventus*, a victorious return from his war against the Chatti (fig. 10.1). The last of the Flavians is accompanied by Minerva and Mars on the left and an Amazonian figure (possibly Roma) on the right who appears to be urging him on. Whereas literature problematizes the relationship between virginity, *pudicitia*, and the dangers of motherhood, art elides the latter, refocusing the lens solely on the former.

In their epic poems, the Flavian poets construct an idealized discourse on gender and ethnicity that aims at destabilizing stereotypical boundaries. In such reconstructions, Roman sameness and non-Roman otherness seem-
ingly converge, while simultaneously these same boundaries are reshaped from the male perspective of the epic diction. Epic narrative traditionally celebrates the κλέα ἀνδρῶν ("glories of men"), and thus the Flavian epicists expectedly hasten to satisfy the generic expectations for a marginal, abject female voice. I believe the conclusion can be drawn that the construction of Roman identity ultimately rests upon the absorption of elements from outside that bear the marks both of the radically different—the monstrous—and of Rome's truest self, that is, its idealized virtues and merits. The Flavian epicists then subvert by deconstructing or espouse by helping build a utopia, where boundaries are reset or destabilized according to the authorial vision of the empire's future or lack thereof.

Through this quick overview of the Flavian epic landscape, I hope to trigger further interest in a period fascinating in its own right from our modern perspective—a big empire that reaches its peak, with a growing anxiety concerning its future, and a profound questioning of the Vergilian aphorism sine fine. Upon this multifaceted tableau, the poets embroider several female figures as both compelling and captivating women, and unexpected and yet predictable (m)others.
NOTES

This article draws on material presented in greater detail in Augoustakis (2010), with some additions.

1. On similar preoccupations in Statius's unfinished Achilleid, see Augoustakis (forthcoming).


3. The Latin text of the Punica comes from Delz's Teubner edition (1987); translations are taken from Duff's Loeb edition (1934), with modifications.

4. Pace Bernstein (2008), 182, who sees an indirect assertion of the dominance of Rutulian identity in the mass suicide.

5. See Keith (2000), 92; cf. also: "His [the poet's] attribution of praise and blame in the episode also demonstrates an unflattering commitment to the 'natural' hierarchy of gender in the structure of Roman epic warfare, for the glorious achievement of the Saguntines is inspired by Hercules, who sends Loyalty to fortify the citizens out of concern for the city he founded . . ., while their unheroic mutual slaughter is provoked by Tisiphone" (92-93).

6. Cf. Spentzou (2008): "Late first-century A.D. Rome was a thriving and bewildering empire with 'Others' that form a disturbing, festering but also challenging and liberating part of its hegemony. As forms of social and political order are opened to revision in Silius's Rome, there are opportunities for new identifications, such as Silius's Hannibal" (144).

7. The Hypsipyle episode has received a lot of critical attention in the past few years; see, for instance, Dominik (1994), 54-63; Ganiban (2007), 71-95; and McNelis (2007), 88-93. For its relationship with Valerius Flaccus's version of the slaughter in Lemnos in Arg. 2.77-427 (and Apollonius's Arg. 1.601-909), see Vessey (1985); Aricò (1991); and Gibson (2004).

8. The Latin text of the Thebaid comes from Hill's Brill edition (1996); translations are taken from Shackleton Bailey's Loeb edition (2003), with modifications.


10. On Cornelia's cenotaph of Pompey in Lucan's De bello civili 9, see Augoustakis (2011).

11. Nugent (1996) explores the role of the absent father Thoas in Hypsipyle's narrative and links it to that ever-present, poetic father figure in Statius's poetry, Vergil: "She would have no narrative without him; but she would have no narrative with him" (71).


13. Consider also Hypsipyle's representation of her fearful maidenhood, when she refers to her betrothed Gyas, one of the slaughtered Lemnian sons: fortamque, timebam / quem desponsa, Gyan vidi lapsare cruentae / vulnere Myrmidones ("and strong
Gyas, whom I was fearing as his fiancée, I saw fall by the stroke of bloody Myrmidone”;
_Theb._ 5.223–224).

14. _Contra_ Dominik (1997), who claims that Hypsipyle’s refusal to submit to erotic, baser passions inspired by Venus demonstrates “the nobility of her character and shows that she is morally superior to the other Lemnian women” (46).

15. The Nemeans accompany the burial of Opheltes with a dirge, a _carmen_ reported to have been sung by Niobe in the Phrygian manner at the funeral of her children (_Theb._ 6.124–125). On Niobe in Ovid’s _Metamorphoses_ 6 (a mere coincidence?) and Statius, see Rosati (2005), 159–160.


17. The Latin text of the _Argonautica_ comes from Liberman’s most recent Budé edition (2003); translations are mine.

18. Hershkowitz (1998), 140; cf. also her discussion of the ekphrasis on the cloak, where she interprets the myth of Ganymede as “symbolizing both Hypsipyle’s ‘rape’ of young (virgin) Jason (and, likewise, Jason’s ‘rape’ of the young virgin Hypsipyle) and Jason’s forced departure from Lemnos on Jovian business” (142–143, n. 143).

19. Hershkowitz (1998), 146. Also cf. Apollonius Rhodius’s description of Jason’s cloak before he meets Hypsipyle, a work of Athena there ( _Argonautica_ 1.721–768).

20. Cf. Deidamia’s similar address and use of the deictic prayer in Statius’s _Achilleid_ 1.952–954, coupled with the emphasis on the possibilities of Achilles becoming a father via a foreign woman also: _attamen hunc, quem maesta mihi solacia linquis, / hunc saltem sub corde tene et concede precanti / hoc solum, pariat ne quid tibi barbara coniunx (“But this boy, whom you leave with me as a sad comfort, this boy at least hold in your heart and grant this to me begging you, this thing only, let no barbarian wife bear a child for you”).


23. See Margaret Woodhull’s essay, which follows.

WORKS CITED


Mothering and Motherhood in Ancient Greece and Rome


When Augustus's nephew, Marcellus, his favored heir, died unexpectedly in 23 BCE, he left unfinished a building project begun with his mother, Octavia Minor, the emperor's sister. Octavia completed the project, a renovation of an older Republican portico, the Porticus Metelli, at the southern end of the Campus Martius. In it, she recorded the traces of her maternal grief in the form of two memorial libraries for Marcellus, which she added to the older plan (Ovid, Ars amatoria 1.69). The refurbished monument, the Porticus Octaviae, marks the first major architectural project by a woman in Rome's history (fig. 11.1). It initiates a long tradition of imperial mothers as patrons and honorands of architecture in the capital city. Scholars study these monuments individually, but none considers them collectively as a measure of the dynastic strategy that defined the imperial woman by her role as mother producing successive generations of Rome's heirs.

This essay examines five of the monuments built in imperial Rome by or for imperial women from the Julio-Claudian through the Antonine eras: the Augustan porticoes by Octavia and by Livia; the second-century temple for the Deified Matidia; the lost monument thought to have been Sabina's consecration altar; and the Antonine temple of diva Faustina (fig. 11.2). When studied together, these monuments allow us to highlight the use of maternal motifs and concepts and trace shifts in how they were deployed to address the changing realities of dynastic inheritance. The picture that emerges from considering these buildings within the framework of imperial motherhood modifies a prevailing scholarly view that sees the power of the imperial mother waning in the second century of empire—instead arguing for her continued potency as a stabilizing presence in succession politics.
In general, the diminished archaeological, literary, and historical evidence for the early second-century imperial women is held to indicate their political demotion and its resulting diminution of their representations as central figures in dynastic inheritance. In response to this model, recent scholarship has begun to focus on the ascendant image of the emperor as a father figure during this time. Yet when we consider the architectural evidence for imperial motherhood during these first two centuries, we find a different picture: in contrast to the monuments built by their Julio-Claudian predecessors, the buildings for second-century imperial women aggrandize them as mothers in ways Livia and Octavia never enjoyed.

MOTHERS, SONS, AND MONUMENTS IN EARLY IMPERIAL ROME

Architectural patronage in Rome radically changed in the transition from Republic to empire. A practice dominated by elite men, the building of monuments traditionally offered Republican military heroes and politicians the opportunity for permanent self-aggrandizement in the fabric
FIGURE II.2. Plan of Rome: (a) Porticus Octaviae, (b) Porticus Liviae, (c) Temple of Matidia and basilicas of Matidia and Marciana, (d) Temple of Faustina I and Antoninus Pius. Drawing by M. Woodhull.
of the city. Republican women, by contrast, rarely contributed to civic embellishment.

The shift to dynasty in the early decades of Augustus’s rule changed the profile of the typical architectural benefactor in two discernible ways. Increasingly, monumental patronage fell to the hands of one family, the Julio-Claudians, a reflection of their principal role in emerging dynastic politics. At the same time, Julio-Claudian women involved themselves in Augustus’s programmatic rebuilding of Rome. As Augustus and his family concentrated building in their own hands, a cohesive plan for urban renewal and regeneration evolved, and a new, visually unified Rome emerged. Imperial Rome revealed its new political order through beautiful public buildings and temples, revamped amenities, and refurbished monuments of the Republic.6

It was early in this transition that Octavia and her son rebuilt the portico that bore her name. For an elite Republican society habituated to traditional gender roles, Octavia’s involvement in the masculine world of city-building surely challenged Roman sensibilities. Augustus seems to have been sensitive to the political tensions such perceived transgressions might incite, for he fostered new social roles that translated the private activities of feminine domesticity into publicly acceptable practices. An evolving public image of the imperial woman was effectively framed with the values of women’s traditional place in the home, specifically as mothers.7 Civic space for the imperial family was domesticated; Rome was its family, and motherhood became a public and political role for its women. For female members of the new first family, this shift naturalized the transition from elite woman in the private sphere to public figure with political power as producer of heirs. The buildings associated with them reflected this role.

The portico of Octavia is especially instructive here, for it emphasized motherhood in various ways. Begun in the first half of the 20s BCE, it joined a host of other buildings in the Campus Martius either undergoing renovation or being built anew by members of the imperial family (see fig. 11.2:a). Together these monuments initiated a change in the character of the Campus Martius from one whose monuments signaled Republican politics and militarism to one identified with family and dynasty. The plan and design of Octavia’s portico probably differed very little from the Republican building it supplanted. However, its celebration of mothers, symbolized in its new patron and the artwork it housed, stood in stark contrast to its predecessor, a portico erected by the military hero Q. Caecilius Metellus from his extensive victory spoils.

The monument’s traditional four-sided, double colonnade design en-
closed two preexisting Republican temples dedicated to Juno Regina and Jupiter Stator, the two memorial libraries for Marcellus noted above, a curia, and, like other public porticoes, an extensive collection of sculpture and paintings displayed about the grounds. Grand art collections were a regular feature of the Republican portico, but in the Augustan era these were increasingly cultivated to focus attention not just on the identity of the benefactor, but on the cultural values associated with his or her specific social and familial role. Often dedicatory inscriptions, architectural designs, and cultic associations within the complex played off of one another to cultivate specific meanings for a viewer. For visitors to Octavia's portico, decoration and artworks occasioned instances of maternal expression. Through the interplay of these forms, one message was quite distinct: The Roman mother was the link between an old and new Rome. Various artworks attest as much.

Perhaps the most famous statue in the portico was the image of a seated Cornelia, mother of the second-century statesmen of populist causes, Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus (Pliny, *Natural History* 34.31). Although the statue itself is not preserved, its base emerged in excavations in 1878. Its inscription identifies Cornelia by her family filiation, with emphasis on her role as mother: CORNELIA AFRICANI F. GRACCHORUM. Recent studies of the base argue for an Augustan date for the inscription and suggest that the statue of Cornelia replaced a bronze image of a seated goddess. If correct, then the substitution of Cornelia's image reinforces the idea that the Augustan renovation of the complex was especially motivated to emphasize a particular ideal of Roman motherhood concerned with a mother's cultivation of her citizen sons. In the 20s when the colonnade was begun, Marcellus was quickly becoming a favorite of his uncle; he was married to the emperor's daughter, Julia, and had begun his march up the *cursus honorum*, proving himself in his military affairs. As his mother, Octavia evidenced the maternal oversight that fostered Marcellus's rise.

For Romans, Octavia appeared a natural successor to the earlier Cornelia, whose sons' political achievements were often attributed to their mother's grooming. The image of Cornelia in Octavia's portico pointed up for visitors the parallels between the two women; it collapsed the distance between mothers of Rome's noble past and those of its present. For both women, good mothering had been a fact of life. Moreover, numerous other details of their biographies would have further linked them to one another. Both were widowed young and remained unmarried (*uni-rrae*), and both were publicly honored with statues for acknowledged rectitude. Indeed, Octavia's role as a chaste Roman mother had recently cap-
tured the public's attention. As her marriage to Mark Antony unraveled, Octavian seized the opportunity to champion her maternal image over her identity as the scorned wife of his co-triumvir. Despite the public humiliation of abandonment for a foreign queen, Octavia pressed on as a devoted Roman mother, raising Antony’s children by other marriages alongside her own (Plutarch, *Life of Antony* 54). In 35 BCE, the senate recognized Octavia’s virtue with the grant of tribuniciam sacrosanctity and public statues. Widowed by Antony’s death in 31 BCE, she remained alone for nearly two decades. For a Roman audience, Cornelia and Octavia were so well paired that it is tempting to see in the portico’s art collection a portrait of Octavia alongside her Republican counterpart, constituting the virtues of motherhood in Augustus’s renewed Republic.

Other mothers were also represented by artworks in the portico. Several statues showing Venus (Pliny, *Natural History* 36.35) surely alluded to Venus Genetrix, the maternal founder of the Julian line. At least one representation of the goddess appeared in each of the temples in the complex, and another version elsewhere in the precinct, by Phidias, was arguably the model for Cornelia’s statue, perhaps a pendant to it (Pliny, *Natural History* 36.35). Related to these, a statue of Venus’s son, Cupid, holding a thunderbolt alluded to the divine mother-son duo, forecasting their descendants, Octavia and Marcellus (Pliny, *Natural History* 36.28).

These miniature family couplings in the context of the commission reinforced the emerging value of motherhood in the production of a dynastic heir. Framing this rich imagery were decorative details in the architectural elements (small reptiles and foliage), which located the portico’s display within an Augustan program concerned with fecundity and life-nurturing values, such as viewers saw in the nearby Ara Pacis Augustae. The early appearance of these symbolic devices suggests that Octavia’s portico offered an experimental site for building a visual discourse on motherhood for the evolving Augustan line.

Marcellus’s death diminished Octavia’s importance, and for the remaining years of her life, we find little evidence for her activities within the family, testimony to the close connection between her image as a mother of an heir and her elevation in public life. Her own death, however, occasioned unprecedented honors for a woman, with special rites held for her in Rome’s main Forum (Cassius Dio 54.35). With Octavia’s passing, however, a formidable image of the imperial mother arose in her sister-in-law, the empress Livia.

When Livia herself died in 29 CE, nearly five decades later, she left a record of public works that would exceed all other imperial women of the
first two centuries of empire and rival many of Rome's imperial men. Most of the monuments attributed to Livia were closely connected with the concerns of women (the temples of Fortuna Muliebris, Bona Dea, Pudicitia Plebeia, and Patricia, for example); yet it was the grand portico named for the empress and its shrine to the goddess Concordia on the Esquiline hill that best expressed the politics of motherhood for the imperial woman. Despite their childless marriage (or perhaps in response to it), Augustan propaganda had for some time propounded an image of Livia as mother of Rome's future leaders, but this facet of her character had not been so carefully honed, especially while Octavia still lived. In 9 BCE, however, the death of Livia's son, Drusus, occasioned portrait statues of the empress, specially honoring her as a grieving mother. Shortly after this event, Livia and her remaining son, Tiberius, built the Porticus Liviae (figs. 11.2:b, 11.3).

Dedicated on January 16, 7 BCE, Livia's portico rose from the slopes of the Esquiline, a gleaming marble building overlooking central Rome from its perch within the congested Subura. Although the monument is now lost, its history and reception are known from assorted literary references, and its general plan, preserved in fragments of the well-known Severan marble...
map (Ovid, *Fasti* 6.639–642; Cassius Dio 54.23, 55.8; Pliny, *Epistulae* 1.5.9; and *Forma Urbis Romae* fr. nos. 10, 11). Together these sources flesh out the image of an enclosed colonnade close in style to Octavia's and similarly embellished. Ovid noted that famous paintings were displayed about the colonnade (*Ars amatoria* 1.71–72), and Pliny made special note of its lush gardens (*Natural History* 14.11). For visitors to the area, the monument's wide, open plan surely contrasted to good effect with the tightly knit apartment buildings and narrow streets of the neighborhood. The small rectangular design at the center of the portico is thought to be the *aedes Concordia* ascribed to Livia by Ovid in his *Fasti* (6.637–640), wherein he notes its dedication by the empress alone some six months after the portico's dedication by the mother and son team. The date of the shrine's dedication, on June 11, was the holiday Roman mothers celebrated the goddess Mater Matuta—in essence, Rome's equivalent of Mother's Day.

Much of the scholarship on the portico complex focuses on the meaning and symbolism of the *aedes Concordia* and its dedication to the goddess at the expense of the portico that surrounded it. The story of the complex that emerges emphasizes the way Concordia symbolized Livia's uxorial duties. For Romans, Concordia was the guardian of marital health and family life as well as political stability in the state. When Livia dedicated her shrine to Concordia, her actions sent a clear message to Rome's citizenry that the well-being of the royal couple's marriage and its family rested on the rectitude of the wife; marital harmony between emperor and empress, in turn, created political stability.

What gets underplayed in this traditional reading of the monument is the portico itself and the fact that it was dedicated by the empress with her son, Tiberius, in her role as mother. In most studies, Livia-as-wife supersedes Livia-as-mother. Such oversights by modern eyes are understandable, for in the absence of any visible evidence for the monument it is difficult to remember that before visitors to the complex encountered the shrine, they first found themselves confronted by a beautiful new portico. Indeed, its magnificence caused Strabo to extol it as one of Augustan Rome's architectural jewels (Strabo 5.236). Its benefactors were no doubt well advertised in an inscription across its facade (likely similar to one the patroness Eumachia inscribed across the portico she built on her own and her son's behalf in the forum in Pompeii). If so, then visitors to the Porticus Liviae walking up the Argiletum, the main road to the portico, would first encounter the empress symbolized as mother of a potential successor to Augustus, and only secondarily, after entering the portico, would they discover Concordia's shrine, with its allusions to Livia's role as the emperor's wife.
Motherhood, then, was visually the first order of symbolism for Livia's portico. Cast up front, it signaled to viewers that the political goodwill emanating from the princeps toward Tiberius was largely owed to his mother. Although Tiberius was shown favor by the emperor, it was far from clear, even after Drusus's death, that he would succeed him. Augustus did not adopt Tiberius until 4 CE, and thus Livia's joint benefaction with Tiberius is best comprehended as a pragmatic gesture of a mother furthering her son's political trajectory.²⁸

This attempt to separate out maternal from uxorial symbolism is admittedly somewhat artificial. To the Roman mind, these roles went hand-in-hand for an elite woman, a reality borne out by the fact that Livia's Concordia shrine celebrating her marriage was dedicated on Rome’s Mother's Day. Nevertheless, the confrontation with the external portico and its representation of Livia as an active mother who had produced a potential successor necessitates a reading of the monument in which motherhood dominates the building's symbolic narrative.

An argument for emphasis on the maternal can be pressed further if we consider the site's topography, an observation that has not garnered much if any attention. Augustus inherited the lands on the Esquiline from the unsavory Vedius Pollio (Cassius Dio 54.23.5);²⁹ yet why it was Livia, not the emperor, who built up the parcel is unclear until we consider the proximity of the late Vedius's holdings to the shrine of Juno Lucina, the goddess sacred to mothers seeking favor in childbirth, which was just a short walk across the Argiletum (fig. 11.4).³⁰ According to Ovid, Juno Lucina's cult had
originated here with Rome's Sabine foremothers (Fasti 3.167–258). From Ovid's description, the celebration of the goddess's cult was enormously popular. Macrobius even connects it with renewal rituals of the Vestal Virgins (Saturnalia 1.12.6). Moreover, other Roman holidays tied to women's cult life clustered around both Juno's and Concordia's dedication dates. A monument built here by Rome's premier mother, then, was ideal. Enriched by Livia's portico, this traditionally squalid region of the city found itself heavily identified with the symbols of mothering and animated by its celebration.

The porticoes built by Octavia and Livia established a new mode of architectural benefaction, engaging time-honored symbolic capital—Roman social tradition, maternal divinities, visual allusion—to manifest their motherhood in the public buildings they erected. Although speculative, it is further possible that typologically the quadriportico favored by them overlapped semantically with values tied to mothering. In general, Romans preferred the four-sided design for its ability to create an enclosed respite from the hustle and bustle of the city outside. Vitruvius noted that this plan offered protection and a healthful environment for the city's inhabitants (De architectura 5.9.5–9). His emphasis on physical well-being is provocative. From the classical through the early modern era, the types of architectural monuments employed by women patrons most often share a concern for the health or well-being of the community for which they are built. We might understand this "protective" design, coming from the hands of a female patron, to represent a nurturing characteristic of the mother of Rome's first family that is extended to its citizenry.

Pliny makes clear that Livia's portico with its trailing vines was a respite, a break from the brick and stone city, suffused with nature. The description conjures an image not unlike the "Tellus" panel on the Ara Pacis with its overtones of feminine fecundity and the health of the natural world. Such allusions might have foreshadowed Livia's later association in coinage with the legend Salus Augusta. Pliny's soothing portrait of the portico further suggests the orderly vistas favored by Romans and a tranquility rarely found in the city. These porticoes would have thus served a regenerative and beneficial need, a gift with life-affirming assets. A portico had, too, the unique characteristic of being neither fully public nor fully private, an apt metaphor for the emerging public image of the imperial mother, figured so frequently in nurturing terms, but in a manner that ushered those domestic symbols into the public spaces of the city as the family of the emperor became the family of state.

Perhaps stronger evidence that Romans sometimes conceived porti-
coes in feminine terms comes less from an apparent ideological program demanded by the patron and expressed in imagery than from subversive poetic responses found in literature. Propertius and Ovid notoriously re-conceived a variety of Augustan monuments in sexualized terms never intended by the princeps in his benefactions. Ovid pointedly locates sexual intrigue in Livia’s and Octavia’s porticoes in a way that strongly contrasts with their established symbols of motherhood (Ars amatoria 1.71–72; 3.391). As scholars have noted, the rhetorical power of such literary imagery grows from the contrast between a popular notion of finding illicit sex with disreputable women in these spaces and the exemplum of the Roman mother evinced throughout. To be sure, Romans were not so literal in their architectural designs as to allow easy claims to biological and cultural metaphors, but buildings where metaphor focused meaning did exist—such as the Pantheon—and, thus, may offer ways for understanding how building types and patronage intersected for women patrons.

Livia’s and Octavia’s patronage was remarkably experimental. Before Augustus’s rise, structures like these rested exclusively in the hands of men. They typically celebrated masculine virtues of military triumph, political leadership, and economic power. Until the principate, elite mothers rarely appeared on the public stage; far fewer merited monumental honors. New Rome, however, told a story of new political order and indicated this in many novel features of its physical spaces, not the least of which were buildings erected by women. As incipient steps, then, the experimental patronage the early Julio-Claudian women engaged in demanded the veil of tradition. The mother-son benefactions were in line with traditional activities of an elite Republican mother expected to further her son’s political ambitions through her own family ties and social relations. Although the marble manifestations of Octavia and Livia were a far cry from these older intangible and often covert expressions of maternal patronage, the institution of the Republican mother provided imperial women a conventional path into public life, and monumental patronage endowed it with tangible forms.

The characteristic experimentation of this generative era with its imperial mothers functioning as active agents in the development of their public roles declined as the Julio-Claudian line died out and successive dynasties arose. By the early second century, a run of barren empresses had come to define the era of the adoptive emperors. Imperial women no longer took an active role in building Rome, but instead received monumental honors posthumously. Motherhood, nevertheless, remained a dominant concept in the monuments built for them.
In contrast to the abundant historical, literary, and visual record for Rome's first imperial women, comparable evidence for their second-century counterparts is paltry. Mary Boatwright correlates this impoverishment with the fact that the Hadrianic and Trajanic women failed to produce male heirs. For this reason, then, they were far less potent in political life than Julio-Claudian women. As Boatwright puts it, "the biological role of women in the transfer of power was obsolete."42 Motherhood, it would seem, was in danger of losing its political clout for imperial women. Yet if in life these Hadrianic and Trajanic women (namely Trajan's wife, Plotina; his niece, Matidia; his sister and the mother to Matidia, Marciana; and great-niece, Sabina) merited little attention, then it is all the more striking that in death they bore tremendous symbolic power, often receiving monumental honors rarely enjoyed by their predecessors. Moreover, it is rather ironic that despite the failure of biological reproduction to produce a male heir, it was often the reproductive body and symbolic mothers who were commemorated in these monuments. Two Hadrianic structures in particular—the Temple of Deified Matidia (fig. 11.2:c), with its accompanying basilicas for Matidia and her mother, Marciana, and the so-called Sabina Altar—mark the first of a series of known architectural monuments solely honoring imperial women as divae.43

Evidence for the Matidian monument is scanty at best. A fragment of the Severan map preserves a corner of the building's plan (Forma Urbis Romae fr. no. 36b). A fistula inscribed Templo Matidiae (Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum [CIL] 15.7248) and fragments of cipollino columns distributed around the area of Piazza Capranica are its principal archaeological remains. References to it in the Regionary Catalogues place the monument in Region IX and next to a basilica of Neptune commonly associated by scholars with the Stoa of Poseidon in the Saepta.44 From these bits, scholars surmise that the complex rose between the forecourt of Hadrian's refurbished Pantheon to its west and his renovated Saepta to its south. After Hadrian's death and deification in 138, Antoninus Pius erected a temple to the new divus, the Hadrianeum, directly to the east of the temple, and thus the Matidian monument formed the central element in a Hadrianic commemorative complex in the mid Campus Martius. Surprisingly, the diameter of the columns for Matidia's temple (1.7 m) places their height somewhere between 13.7 and 17 m, thereby exceeding the façade elevation of the Pantheon.45 Thus, its height dominated hierarchically its Hadrianic neigh-
bor in this complex, a striking fact for a monument devoted to a woman for whom other evidence is so meager, and testimony to the deep symbolism Hadrian’s mother-in-law held for the emperor.

A rare Hadrianic medallion (ca. 120–121 CE) hints at the overall design of the complex (fig. 11.5). Here, a prostyle temple houses an unidentifiable cult statue (perhaps Matidia?) and is flanked symmetrically by smaller shrines in which two other cult statues stand. Extending from this central grouping at either side are two wings of double-colonnaded porticoes typically identified as the two basilicas for Matidia and Marciana. Here they form a forecourt for the temple, one that perhaps visually complemented a similar configuration for the Pantheon to the west. Scholars associate portions of recently discovered green granite columns with these porticoed basilicas. Judging from Hadrian’s use of such varied stones, Matidia and Marciana’s monuments shared his predilection for coloristic effects found in the stonework of the adjacent Pantheon, a unifying feature of the complex here.

The erection of the Temple of Deified Matidia and its basilicas was occasioned by its honorand’s death and consecration ca. 119–121 CE. It numbered among a group of projects in the central Campus Martius commissioned by Hadrian, but stood out among these as an entirely new construction (see fig. 11.2). Most of Hadrian’s building projects in this area were renovations to earlier Augustan buildings, initiated with an eye to creating a symbolic link between himself and Rome’s first dynasty. The new complex by contrast was unfettered by historical associations and occasioned the opportunity for the emperor to highlight important figures of his own dynastic family. Hadrian’s choice to deify his mother-in-law and honor
her mother alongside her with a new temple and basilicas is puzzling at first glance, for a more logical recipient might have been Trajan’s wife, Plotina, held to have favored Hadrian (Historia Augusta, *Life of Hadrian* 2.10) and credited with orchestrating his marriage to Matidia’s daughter, Sabina, and ultimately, his accession. Plotina’s death and consecration (ca. 121/2 CE) shortly after Matidia’s certainly would have put her in the running as the new temple’s honoree. Hadrian, however, honored Plotina as Trajan’s wife, by adding her name to the temple he built for the late deified emperor.

What, then, motivated Hadrian to build one of the largest temples to date in the Campus Martius to a seemingly retiring member of his family? The answer is best understood in the context of accession politics, for Matidia’s body, unlike Plotina’s, had produced, in Sabina, a child—albeit a daughter—through whom Hadrian secured imperial ancestry, traced to Trajan through three generations of mothers and daughters beginning with his wife. Although Hadrian and Trajan shared a common ancestor (M. Ulpius Traianus), the relation was somewhat distant. Through Sabina’s mother, Hadrian bolstered his weak connection to the late emperor, with the added benefit of displacing any contest of his own somewhat shady adoption. The deification of women in the imperial family other than the empress had few precedents, and the apotheosis of a non-emperor had been discredited as a practice by Vespasian. Hadrian’s return to the practice for his mother-in-law and her mother, then, indicates how critical their production of a child (Matidia in Marciana’s case and Sabina in Matidia’s) through whom Hadrian secured accession truly was. Motherhood—or more precisely, a reproductive figurehead—then, motivated the benefaction. Its acknowledgment in such monumental scale and the innovative form of the *diva* temple draw attention to the perceived fragility of the dynastic model because of its extreme dependency on sustaining some concept of motherhood for its stability.

If producing a child who directly connected Hadrian to Trajan merited built honors for Matidia and Marciana, then it is ironic that the “fictive fertility” of their progeny, Sabina, who produced no heir, was later celebrated in this same region. The so-called Altar of Sabina, now lost, was likely erected by Hadrian for the empress’s consecration and included a collection of marble panels reused on the late-antique Arco di Portogallo. One panel is especially interesting for its unique conceptualization of Sabina (fig. 11.6). In the panel, Sabina rises heavenward on the back of Aeternitas in the first known monumental depiction of an empress’s apotheosis (ca. 136–138 CE). A personification of the Campus Martius and a seated Hadrian watch from below.
Although evidence for the altar is slim, recent studies situating the apotheosis within Sabina's portraiture emphasize an ideological fictionalizing of the empress's fertility. Sabina's idealized youthfulness belied her forty-eight years to foster the image of an empress ever-ripe for childbearing. The veil she raises hints at an equally fictive harmonious marriage to Hadrian.
with its allusion to matronly scenes of Pudicitia and Hera. Penelope Davies develops the discussion of this iconography and proposes that before the late-antique reworking of the panel, a strong play of sunlight raked across the empress, to powerful effect, casting her in a celestial glow as she ascended to the heavens; Hadrian below sat rather diminished by comparison. In Davies's analysis, the visual composition places Sabina physically, but more significantly, symbolically, above Hadrian, elevated by her fictive fertility. While it is impossible to know the original design of the monument, multiple allusions situate Sabina's altar within the context of imperial mothers' monumental honors. For example, the visual hierarchy of the figures in the apotheosis panel recalls the provocative architectural hierarchy of Matidia's monument, while the iconography of apotheosis relates the new empress diva Sabina to her predecessor, diva Plotina. By contrast, however, Sabina's monument honors the imperial mother not for real (and active) childbearing but as an abstract virtue of the political role. The empress's fecundity is made iconic, and its relationship to reality is suppressed. Indeed, Sabina's celestial setting reinforces the timelessness and idealization of such a virtue as an inherent and natural characteristic.

Two major observations emerge from this look at the Hadrianic commemorations. First, as in the Julio-Claudian monuments before them, these were experimental and unprecedented. The Matidian temple honored a diva in Rome's cityscape for the first time, and its scale drew attention to its significance. Similarly, Sabina's apotheosis image from her altar marks the first time an empress’s image appeared in public in this manner. In both cases the honorees were passive recipients, honored posthumously. For modern historians, the shift here from first-century imperial women as active patrons to the second-century commemoration of mothers is palpable. Yet for ancient visitors to the Campus Martius, this shift probably seemed less dissonant, for as commemorations, they fit squarely into the funereal character the Campus Martius developed in the imperial era. Moreover, the move back to this model of honoring a mother satisfied traditional sensibilities concerning women's behavior in society. Still, so few women enjoyed commemoration here that those who merited it were notable. The new Matidian works must have recalled other monuments by and for Roman mothers, like Octavia's portico to the south, featuring commemorative libraries dedicated to Marcellus. Although Octavia's building may have attested to a different sort of imperial woman, the more educated visitor, familiar perhaps with Octavia's history, might recall that both she and Matidia had received the rare honor of a formal public eulogy.

Matidia's complex must have also evoked ties to an earlier monu-
ment honoring Julius Caesar's beloved daughter, Julia, whose tumulus rose nearby. Julia's death in 54 BCE in childbirth left Caesar, her husband Pompey, and the people of Rome bereft, and resulted in their insistence—despite senatorial misgivings—that her body be interred in the Campus Martius. Like Octavia's memorial libraries, it symbolized the liabilities of motherhood. Other circumstances link the three monuments. Like Matidia and Octavia, Julia was eulogized in the Forum; like Matidia's temple, Julia's funeral monument marked a watershed for women in monumental Rome, for no woman before Julia had received honorary burial in the Campus Martius. Filippo Coarelli places the tumulus just north of the Hadrianeum, and, if Boatwright's orientation of the Matidian buildings to the north is correct, then Matidia's temple and her cult statue inside faced symbolically toward her Republican predecessor, and the tombs of Augustus and Hadrian.

THE TEMPLE OF DIVA FAUSTINA: THE IMPERIAL MOTHER REVIVED

The symbolic hierarchy expressed by the Hadrianic monuments was further advanced some four years later when the death and deification of their successor, Faustina the Elder, wife of Antoninus Pius, occasioned the senate's vow of a temple to honor the newest diva. Erected in 141 CE, the temple is one of Rome's best preserved, and like its Hadrianic predecessors, it marks an unprecedented use of architecture to celebrate an imperial mother; in this case, it was the first time a woman was represented in a building in Rome's most politically charged arena, its ancient Forum (figs. 11.2d, 11.7). Coin images show an iron gate across the lower, axial steps where an altar stood just inside it on the staircase. The temple proper housed an over life-sized cult statue of the empress. Rising from its nearly sixteen-foot-tall (4.6 m) podium, Faustina's temple looms above other monuments in the Forum and along the Via Sacra. From this beacon, Faustina the Elder looked out across the ancient center and dominated the space for nearly two decades until the death and deification of her husband, Antoninus Pius, called for the addition of his name next to hers.

It is generally agreed that the temple was intended to honor both the empress and the emperor posthumously, but because Faustina predeceased her husband by twenty years, it is likely that the empress's earlier death provided the impetus for building the monument. The dedicatory inscription, which fills the lower architrave of the monument's façade, DIVAE
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FAVSTINAE EX S C (CIL 6.1005), was inscribed in the wake of her consecration, ca. 141. Only after the emperor’s death in 161 would the dedicatory inscription for him, DIVO ANTONINO ET ([CIL 6.1005], fig. 11.8), have been added on the logic that it was unusual—dangerous even—for an emperor to assume divinity before his actual death (hence, the carved relief of griffins and candelabra still flanking the emperor’s inscription probably continued across the front until 161). We, then, forget that symbolically Faustina alone held oversight of the Forum for twenty years, and thus
we rarely consider what merits justified Faustina's honors and the effect her presence here had on ancient viewers. How, then, might a visitor to the Forum have understood the empress's monument?

In some ways, the temple's reception enjoyed two conceptual phases over time. After Antoninus's death, the monument honored the royal couple together, but made clear the emperor's dominance: visually the inscription that bears his name runs across the frieze above hers and the lettering for his name is larger and more easily read. In this later phase, the monument surely brought to mind the Hadrianic temple for Plotina and Trajan. In the monument's initial phase, however, the empress's reproductive virtues appear to have justified the monument's erection. During the two decades it honored Faustina, it shared similarities with Hadrian's temple for diva Matidia. Like Matidia, Faustina produced not a male heir but instead a daughter through whom her husband's adopted successor, Marcus Aurelius (chosen along with Lucius Verus prior to the emperor's death), might advance more securely. Matidia's temple thus offered a strong precedent, and because it was the only other diva temple in Rome at the time, viewers no doubt understood the similarities between the two monuments and knew that motherhood had merited both women this unusual honor.

Although neither the extant monument nor our archaeological and literary sources suggest any programmatic displays of motherhood in the form of statues or mother-son benefactions such as we find in the Augustan monuments above (however, this does not preclude their presence originally), there is considerable circumstantial evidence that indicates that Faustina's commemoration here owed a debt to her public identity as the mother both of the Antonine line and the Roman people. A rich body of Antonine coinage and art fleshes out this picture. In particular, posthumous numismatic portraits show a bust of diva Faustina on the obverse of coins where Juno or Ceres appear on the reverse. The association between the empress and Juno intimated a congruence between the two figures. Here diva Faustina is compared to the wife of the principal god of the Roman state, Jupiter, a deity to whom emperors were often equated. But Juno was also, as we saw, associated with childbirth and a potent fertility goddess who, for Romans, closely harmonized with the Earth Mother. Similarly, Faustina's posthumous association with the fertility goddess Ceres is attested in an image from Ostia. The establishment of alimentary distributions to the puellae Faustininae to commemorate the empress highlighted Faustina's identity in life as a nurturer and maternal figurehead. Finally, the location of the temple honoring her directly across the Via Sa-
crca from the Atrium and Temple of Vesta was surely calculated to project Faustina as Rome’s contemporary maternal guardian juxtaposed with its symbolic ancient ones (see fig. 11.2).

Initially, then, the temple had to be understood to honor diva Faustina alone, and the facet of her character that most merited consecration seems to have been her centrality to the line. For twenty years, Faustina stood vigilant over the oldest part of the Roman Forum celebrating the new diva as a maternal figure. Later, in its second phase, as the Temple of the Divine Faustina and Antoninus Pius, the monument built on this symbolism by celebrating a marital union and parental oversight that made for stability in the family that was Rome, a theme foreshadowed just up the road from the temple in Livia’s portico a century and a half earlier, and reiterated in much Antonine art and culture.73

A few observations worth further exploration emerge from this analysis of the Hadrianic and Antonine material. Hadrian’s benefactions for Matidia, Marciana, and Sabina and their emphasis on mothers and fertility call for modification of the scholarly paradigm of the impotent imperial woman of the early second century. This model assumes an imperial woman’s diminished personal and economic agency in her lived experience as the standard for assessing her decreased power. Yet the architectural commemoration of these women in the Campus Martius challenges this notion, attesting instead to their powerful and enduring symbolic capital as mothers, even if only as a potentiality.74 The dependency of the dynastic model on the concept and role of the mother places imperial women at the heart of Rome’s political stability. This core function was perhaps acknowledged metaphorically by the centrality of Matidia’s monument within the Hadrianic complex in the Campus Martius, and by Faustina’s temple in the Roman Forum. Indeed, if as is often the case, representation of maternal attributes of an imperial woman (be they a reproductive body or a nurturing aspect) intensifies during moments of dynastic turnover, then motherhood in built form offered an enduring and sustaining rhetoric at such times.

Imperial women’s monuments of the first two centuries of Rome’s empire tell the story of Julio-Claudian empresses as agents of change crafting a public image for their new roles within an emerging political order that depended on the mother for its endurance. Their engendering of Rome’s built spaces correlates with and was a function of their active production of male heirs. It corresponds, too, to a generative era in Rome’s political history when the casting of a new rule permitted experimentation for women. Building patronage represented the most experimental expres-
sion of imperial women's novel activities, for it left permanent evidence of them in the city. Experimentation, however, demanded the cloak of tradition, and for the Julio-Claudian women their active engagement as patrons of monumental Rome was moderated by evoking the traditional Republican mother. Their buildings thus incorporate familial relationships, commemorate their personal losses, and honor them with a biographical specificity lacking in the later monuments.

Conversely, the archaeological and textual evidence for their second-century successors leaves us relatively nothing of the personal lives of Trajanic, Hadrianic, and Antonine women, a lacuna that is commonly held to signal the loss of the imperial mother's status, as they failed to provide male issue. When the architectural evidence for these women is evaluated, however, this picture brightens. Using an analytic matrix defined by scale and space, we note that the second-century monuments for the imperial women are by far grander and more centrally staged in the civic space than those of the Julio-Claudians. Although actual, feminine agency endowed by virtue of real motherhood declined from the first to the second century, it was replaced by a greater symbolic power that was manifested in the unprecedented aggrandizement that second-century imperial women received in architectural honors.

Architecture provided the dynastic ideology of motherhood an enduring presence that transcended the uncertainties of the reproductive body and stabilized its political force. Embedded in the city, buildings anchored the concept of the imperial mother with a repetitive force that demanded attention. It was an apt mode, for it constituted an especially thick sense of motherhood as blocks of stone formed new buildings and brought new life to an old city. One of the most stable symbols of the intact family, the mother, coupled with these durable forms to create an enduring image of the eternal city and its undying political order. Imperial women's architectural monuments were erected continually from that first structure built by Octavia through to late antiquity, creating a network of maternal references that strengthened the fabric of dynasty as much as it did the fabric of the city. In this network, motherhood intersected with architecture to open a complex discursive space for the imperial woman.

NOTES

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5. Kampen (2009), esp. chap. 2.


7. Severy (2003), Milnor (2005), and Kampen (2009) reflect the wealth of recent scholarship on family discourses in imperial culture.

8. Cassius Dio 55.8; Josephus, *De bello Judaico* 75.4; Pliny, *Natural History* 36.28; *Forma Urbis Romae* fr. nos. 31, 31aa, 31bb, 31cc, 31u, 31v, 31z.


11. Pellegrini (1861) and (1868); Lanciani (1878).


13. Hemelrijk (2005), 312–313; Ruck (2004). I am grateful to the anonymous reader for these references.


18. Lanciani (1897), 467; Viscogliosi (1999), 159; Woodhull (1999), for analysis of the scholarship and evidence.


20. Barrett (2002), 199–205, for an overview of these benefactions with notes and bibliography; also Welch (2004), 68–73; on Livia and temple for *divus* Augustus, Torelli (1993).


27. *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (CIL) 10.810; Richardson (1978) demonstrates that Eumachia's building followed the plan and concept of Livia's monument.


38. The few familiar instances—such as Cornelia’s statue in the Campus Martius—are sculptural and sufficiently unusual as to have been noteworthy.
41. Boatwright (1991), whose study considers primarily the Trajanic and Hadrianic women.
42. Boatwright (1991), 536.
43. The role of divae and their monuments in imperial cult is beyond the scope of this essay, but deserves fuller attention.
46. Dressel (1906).
47. Boatwright (1987), 61, explains that the use of the term basilica in this period comports well with descriptions of similar second-century complexes with porticoes.
48. Richardson (1992), 53; granite columns, see also Lissi Caronna (1973), 403; and Boatwright (1987), 61.
49. Boatwright (1987), 61. There is much to explore within this visual and symbolic juxtaposition.
51. De Caprariis (1996); Richardson (1992), 246. Here I draw extensively on Boatwright’s (1987) reading of the monument and its date, ca. 119, cf. 58ff., nn. 73–75, 80; an altar is attested (CIL 6.31893b.1o) and probably stood in the complex.
53. Temporini (1978), 259, also notes that both Matidia and Marciana had eastern cities named for them.
55. Oliver (1949), 39.
56. Oliver (1949), 37–38, further elaborates Marciana’s role here.
57. Davies (2000), 102–119, coined the phrase in her analysis of the often-fictionalized fertility of the empresses depicted in monuments.
61. Octavia’s eulogy (Cassius Dio 54.35); for Matidia’s eulogy: CIL 14.3579 = Smallwood (1966), 114.
62. On the tumulus Iuliae, see de Caprariis (1996), 233; and Richardson (1992), s.v. tumulus Iuliae.
63. Livy, Letter 106; Plutarch, Life of Pompey 53 and Life of Caesar 23; Cassius Dio 39.64; Suetonius, Julius Caesar 84.
64. Coarelli (1999), 291; Boatwright (1987), 60.
66. Roman Imperial Coinage 3.162 no. 1115 = Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum 4.2.42, no. 1507, pl. 36.3.
68. Cassatella (1993), 46.

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ANTS0Y AUGUSTAKIS is associate professor of classics at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. He is the author of *Motherhood and the Other: Fashioning Female Power in Flavian Epic* (Oxford University Press, 2010), *Brill's Companion to Silius Italicus* (Brill, 2010), *Plautus' Mercator* (Bryn Mawr Latin Commentary, 2009), *Statius’s Silvae and the Poetics of Intimacy* (with Carole Newlands, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), *Statius's Thebaid 8* (forthcoming), and *The Blackwell Companion to Terence* (forthcoming), as well as numerous articles on Greek and Latin literature.

YURIE HONG is assistant professor of classics at Gustavus Adolphus College. She earned her B.A. in classics at UCLA and her Ph.D. at the University of Washington. Her research and teaching interests include sex and gender in antiquity, ancient medicine, feminist pedagogy, and classics and feminism in popular culture. She is currently working on a book about representations of pregnancy and childbirth in Archaic and Classical Greek literature.

PRUDENCE JONES is associate professor of classics at Montclair State University. She is the author of two books on Cleopatra VII: *Cleopatra (Life and Times)* (Haus, 2006) and *Cleopatra: A Sourcebook* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2006); and of *Reading Rivers in Latin Literature and Culture* (Lexington Books, 2006). She has also written various articles on Latin literature and the reception of Cleopatra.

MIREILLE M. LEE is assistant professor of art history and classical studies at Vanderbilt University. She is a specialist in the social functions of ancient Greek dress and has published widely in journals and edited volumes. She has been the recipient of fellowships from the Center for Hellenic Studies and the American Council of Learned Societies. Her book-length study of the body and dress in early Greece is in preparation.

GENEVIEVE LIVELEY is senior lecturer in classics at the University of Bristol. Her principal research interests are Augustan literature, critical theory, and the classical tradition. She is co-editor and contributor to *Latin Elegy and Narratology: Fragments of Story* (Ohio State University Press, 2008), and is the author of *Ovid’s Metamorphoses: A Reader’s Guide* (Continuum, 2011) and *Ovid: Love Songs* (Duckworth, 2005).
Her other publications include articles and essays on the classical tradition, cyborgs, and chaos theory.

Lauren Hackworth Petersen is associate professor of art history at the University of Delaware. She is the author of *The Freedman in Roman Art and Art History* (Cambridge University Press, 2006) and has published in the *Art Bulletin* and *Arístusa*, among others. She is the recipient of awards from the Getty Foundation, the American Academy in Rome, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the American Council of Learned Societies.

Patricia Salzman-Mitchell is associate professor of classics at Montclair State University. She is the author of *A Web of Fantasies: Gaze, Image, and Gender in Ovid's Metamorphoses* (Ohio State University Press, 2005) and contributor to and co-editor of *Latin Elegy and Narratology: Fragments of Story* (Ohio State University Press, 2008). She has published several articles on Ovid, Latin literature, and the classical tradition in art and film.

Anise K. Strong is assistant professor of history at Western Michigan University. A Roman social historian specializing in the study of Roman women and their sexuality, she has published articles on incest in the ancient world and on deviant sexuality in HBO's *Rome* series. She is currently completing a book on the representation of Roman prostitutes in ancient literature and art.

Angela Taraskiewicz is lecturer in foreign languages and literatures at Valparaiso University, and a Ph.D. candidate in the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. Her dissertation research examines ritual and narrative intertextuality in Euripidean tragedy.

Angeliki Tzanetou is associate professor of classics at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Her research interests include Greek drama, Greek political theory, gender, and religion. She is the author of *City of Suppliants: Tragedy and the Athenian Empire* (University of Texas Press, forthcoming 2012); and co-editor with Maryline Parca of *Finding Persephone: Women's Rituals in the Ancient Mediterranean* (Indiana University Press, 2007). She has also published articles on ritual and gender in drama and on tragedy and politics.

Margaret L. Woodhull is the director of the Graduate Interdisciplinary Studies program at the University of Colorado Denver. She has been the recipient of a Fulbright Fellowship, a Woodrow Wilson Foundation Grant in Women's Studies, and the Archaeological Institute of America's Woodruff Traveling Fellowship, among others. Her research focuses on women and building patronage in classical antiquity. Currently she is working on a book-length study entitled *Women Building Rome: Gender and the Built Environment in Early Imperial Rome*. 
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Motherhood played a central role in ancient Greece and Rome, despite the virtual absence of female participation in the public spheres of life. Mothers could wield enormous influence as the reproductive bodies of society and, in many cases, of culture. Yet motherhood and acts of mothering have received relatively little focused and sustained attention by modern scholars, who have concentrated almost exclusively on analyzing depictions of ancient women more generally.

In this volume, experts from across the humanities present a wealth of evidence from legal, literary, and medical texts, as well as art, architecture, ritual, and material culture, to reveal the multilayered dimensions of motherhood in both Greece and Rome and to confront the fact that not all mothers and acts of mothering can be easily categorized. The authors consider a variety of mothers—from the mythical to the real, from empress to prostitute, and from citizen to foreigner—to expose both the mundane and the ideologically charged lives of mothers in the Classical world. Some essays focus on motherhood as a largely private (emotional, intimate) experience, while others explore the ramifications of public, oftentimes politicized, displays of motherhood. This state-of-the art look at mothers and mothering in the ancient world also takes on a contemporary relevance as the authors join current debates on motherhood and suggest links between the lives of ancient mothers and the diverse, often conflicting roles of women in modern Western society.

Lauren Hackworth Petersen is Associate Professor of Art History at the University of Delaware in Newark, where she specializes in Roman art and archaeology. She is the recipient of many awards, including an ACLS Collaborative Research Fellowship, a postdoctoral fellowship from the Getty Foundation, and the Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome.

Patricia Salzman-Mitchell is Associate Professor in the Department of Classics and General Humanities at Montclair State University in Montclair, New Jersey. She specializes in Latin poetry, gender studies in Classical literature, film and the Classics, and the Classical tradition. She has published two books and several articles on Latin poetry and gender.