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# Naming Names, Telling Tales: Sexual Secrets and Greek Narrative

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# Naming Names, Telling Tales: Sexual Secrets and Greek Narrative

## **Abstract**

As Creusa finds the courage to reveal her long-concealed union with Apollo, Euripides aligns the powerful narrative at the heart of his *Ion* with the disclosure of a sexual secret. Such disclosures make good stories, interesting in part for their sexual content, but even more, I suggest, for the circumstances that lead to their telling. As Peter Brooks argues in *Reading for the Plot*, narratives engage us in the desires of their characters, which we follow through a trajectory of frustration and fulfillment, propelled by a corresponding passion for knowledge. Among the strongest of those desires, more powerful even than erotic longing or material ambition, is the wish to tell one's own story, "the more nearly absolute desire to be heard, recognized, listened to" (Brooks 1984: 53), so that narratives often include an account of their own origin in a character's quest for recognition. But a story like Creusa's can only be told after a difficult struggle with fear and shame, which have to be overcome before one party in a sexual encounter breaks the bond of silence to reveal what had been a shared and exclusive secret.

## **Disciplines**

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## NAMING NAMES, TELLING TALES

### Sexual secrets and Greek narrative<sup>1</sup>

*Sheila Murnaghan*

ὦ ψυχά, πῶς σιγάσω;  
πῶς δὲ σκοτίας ἀναφήνω  
εὐνάς, αἰδοῦς δ' ἀπολειφθῶ;

My soul, how can I stay silent?  
But how can I cast off shame  
and reveal a hidden union?

(Euripides, *Ion* 859–61)

As Creusa finds the courage to reveal her long-concealed union with Apollo, Euripides aligns the powerful narrative at the heart of his *Ion* with the disclosure of a sexual secret. Such disclosures make good stories, interesting in part for their sexual content, but even more, I suggest, for the circumstances that lead to their telling. As Peter Brooks argues in *Reading for the Plot*, narratives engage us in the desires of their characters, which we follow through a trajectory of frustration and fulfillment, propelled by a corresponding passion for knowledge. Among the strongest of those desires, more powerful even than erotic longing or material ambition, is the wish to tell one's own story, "the more nearly absolute desire to be heard, recognized, listened to" (Brooks 1984: 53), so that narratives often include an account of their own origin in a character's quest for recognition. But a story like Creusa's can only be told after a difficult struggle with fear and shame, which have to be overcome before one party in a sexual encounter breaks the bond of silence to reveal what had been a shared and exclusive secret.

This discussion concerns accounts of heterosexual encounters across a range of genres in archaic and classical Greek literature, from hymn, to tragedy, to historiography, in which the exposure of a sexual secret underlies and enables the narrative, explaining its genesis and defining its motivation. These accounts bring out the tricky power dynamics of heterosexual relationships, in which gendered differences are subsumed in a delicate equilibrium. As scholars of ancient Greek sexuality have stressed, such relationships were always by definition asymmetrical, with the male as the dominant partner.<sup>2</sup> But the fact that they were also private – as much so when sanctioned and open as when illicit and clandestine – itself indicates an element of mutuality: an equal investment in silence that betokens tacit acquiescence in the balance of power between male and female.

This equilibrium can be seen in the *Odyssey*'s early and definitive account of an ideal marriage. Odysseus and Penelope are not equal in power or opportunity, nor are they held to the same standard of sexual fidelity, but they are set apart and united by an equal investment in their marriage and in the exclusive possession of their household. Their inequality is softened by *homophrosynē* or likeness of mind, of which the proof is a shared secret.<sup>3</sup> Odysseus and Penelope's secret concerns their marriage bed, but it signifies, not what they do together there (briefly recounted through the sober metaphor of a law or ritual: λέκτροιο παλαιοῦ θεσμόν, "the ritual of their longstanding bed" [*Od.* 23.296]), but the stability of their relationship, symbolized by the immovable bedpost and secured by Penelope's willing assent to the terms of her marriage.<sup>4</sup> Their shared attachment to the bed effects what Foucault has termed "the stylization of an actual dissymmetry."<sup>5</sup> Narratives engendered by the breaking of a sexual secret point to less settled, more contested relations between male and female; incorporating the voices of characters who overcome shame in order to be heard, they draw their impetus from, in some cases the assertion of power, in others its exposure and resistance.

My first examples involve those matings of gods and mortals that are a basic element of Greek mythology and especially of heroic genealogy, events so frequent and indispensable that individual occurrences can be lumped together in extended catalogue poems. Only when such matings disrupt expected patterns do they generate more elaborated accounts, as in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*.

The *Hymn to Aphrodite* beautifully illustrates the connection between sexual desire and the progress of a narrative. The starting point of the action is the abrupt imposition of desire, recounted in several crisp formulations: Zeus casts sweet desire (ἴμερον ἔμβαλε, 45, 53) into Aphrodite's heart; she falls in love (ἠράσατ', 57); desire seizes her (ἴμερος εἴλεν, 57). The result is rapid forward motion over a broad expanse of space: she rushes (σεύατ', 66) to Troy, making her way swiftly (ρίμφα, 67) through the clouds; when she arrives on Ida, she goes straight (ιθύς, 69) to Anchises' hut. Her appearance there inspires a complementary trajectory as *eros* seizes Anchises (ἔρος εἴλεν, 91) and reimposes itself (144) after she has deflected the doubts that make him initially reluctant to act; at that point, he wants to have sex with her "right now" (αὐτίκα νῦν, 151). These two arcs of desire converge as the pair then go to bed together.

But we are only in a position to be caught up in this forward progress because a confidence has been broken: the secret of Aphrodite's true identity has been revealed by both participants, for each of whom the differential between Aphrodite's status as a goddess and Anchises' as a mortal is too provocative to keep under wraps. Before they have sex, Aphrodite, in order to overcome Anchises' well-founded caution, recasts their relationship as one between well-matched humans; she spins a false tale about being a Phrygian princess, with her sights set on a properly conducted marriage, anticipating the setting in which, according to human conventions, female desire appropriately arises. Under these fabricated conditions of ordinary human intercourse, the expected gender differential (already introduced through her feigned concern with marriage) comes into play, and the male seizes the initiative. Anchises takes Aphrodite's hand (λάβε χεῖρα, 155) and she follows him to the bed, where he undresses her. This process is described in appreciative detail, crowned by an assertion of Anchises' innocence: as far as he knew, the relationship between them was what his actions implied (161–7).

οἱ δ' ἐπεὶ οὖν λεχέων εὐποιήτων ἐπέβησαν,  
κόσμον μὲν οἱ πρῶτον ἀπὸ χροῶς εἴλε φαεινόν,  
πόρπας τε γναμπτάς θ' ἔλικας κάλυκας τε καὶ ὄρμους.  
λῦσε δέ οἱ ζώνην ἰδὲ εἵματα σιγαλόεντα

ἔκδυε καὶ κατέθηκεν ἐπὶ θρόνου ἀργυροῦλου  
Ἀγχίσις· ὃ δ' ἔπειτα θεῶν ἰότητι καὶ αἴσῃ  
ἀθανάτη παρέλεκτο θεῶ βροτός, οὐ σάφα εἰδώς.

When they had climbed into the well-made bed,  
he removed the shining ornaments from her body,  
the pins and twisting bracelets, the earrings and necklaces,  
he untied her sash and took off her brilliant clothes  
and placed them on a chair that was studded with silver nails.  
Anchises then, by the will of the gods and immortal fate,  
went to bed with a goddess, himself a mortal, not knowing the truth.

And yet, once their desires have been satisfied, Aphrodite herself is unwilling to keep Anchises in the dark and maintain their seeming parity; she wakes him up to assert her divine status and finally, obliquely, her identity, which she slips in, in the form of an epithet, as part of an injunction against ever mentioning it (μηδ' ὀνόμαϊνε, 290); she promises punishment from Zeus, εἰ δέ κεν ἐξείπης καὶ ἐπεύξῃαι ἄφρονι θυμῷ / ἐν φιλότῃτι μιγῆναι εὐστεφάνῳ Κυthereίῃ, “if you speak of it and thoughtlessly boast / that you mingled in love with beautiful-garlanded Cytherea” (286–7). Like other gods who name themselves with more fanfare during epiphanies, and like Odysseus with the Cyclops, Aphrodite cannot let her exercise of power remain anonymous. In her case, this assertion of power entails a further twist involving gender: as a female goddess with a merely mortal lover, Aphrodite is concerned to disown the traditional subordination of the female to the male.

At the same time, however, Aphrodite insists that Anchises must himself conceal what she reveals. She threatens harsh punishment at the hands of Zeus if he publicizes their mating and supplies him a cover story to use instead, since the existence of his son will inescapably point back to some sexual act; once again, she generates a false tale in which the sharp power differential between them is occluded. She instructs him to explain that the mother of his son was an ordinary, anonymous wood nymph like the ones who will fill in for her in the task of raising Aeneas.<sup>6</sup> Nothing is said here of Anchises' disobedience, but later myths suggest that he did incur the threatened punishment, and it seems likely that this poet was aware of that feature of the story even if he chose not to mention it (Richardson 2010: 243; Schein 2013: n. 4).

The poet–narrator of the *Hymn* implies that his information comes from the omniscient Muse rather than from human gossip, but by ending his narrative with Aphrodite's injunction he puts himself in a position of bad faith that parallels Anchises' implied betrayal, telling a story that, on his own account, Aphrodite would prefer to have suppressed. The result is a double-edged hymn, which at once glorifies and embarrasses its subject and so exemplifies the close intertwining of praise and blame in archaic Greek poetry. That intertwining is illuminated by the mixture of motives underlying both the revelations of Aphrodite and Anchises and Aphrodite's resistance to further disclosure. The formulation of Aphrodite's prohibition (εἰ... ἐπεύξῃαι, “if you boast,” 286) makes it clear that Anchises' revelation is a glorifying boast – a claim to recognition of status, like her own self-identification, that will also extend to his son Aeneas. But the news of their equally sought mating is also for Aphrodite the basis of a humiliating taunt: on the one hand, Anchises' desire for Aphrodite is a sign of her power over him, an effect of the supreme beauty and charm that the hymn evokes and celebrates; on the other hand, Aphrodite's desire for Anchises is a sign that she is also herself subject to that same power, which has been appropriated by Zeus and imposed on her. Erotic desire has a disturbing capacity to overturn established hierarchies, because it places one being, of whatever status, under

the power of another, as this story of a goddess helplessly in love with a mortal illustrates. Under such circumstances, the outcome is a zero-sum game – Anchises’ conquest is his glory but Aphrodite’s shame (which is why she is in such a hurry to reassert the upper hand) – and a story that simultaneously conveys praise for one and blame for another – Anchises’ potential boast is for Aphrodite a humiliating taunt.<sup>7</sup>

The hymn’s status as a taunt is made clear by Aphrodite, both through her insistence that its events should stay secret and through the tone she has set when telling similar stories about her fellow divinities, reveling in her successful commingling of gods with mortal women and goddesses with mortal men. By the end of the narrative, Aphrodite’s ability to tell such tales has been foreclosed, as she herself explains (252–6).

νῦν δὲ δὴ οὐκέτι μοι στόμα χεῖσεται ἐξονομῆναι  
τοῦτο μετ’ ἀθανάτοισιν, ἐπεὶ μάλα πολλὸν ἀάσθην,  
σχέτλιον, οὐκ ὀνομαστόν, ἀπεπλάγχθην δὲ νόοιο,  
παῖδα δ’ ὑπὸ ζώνῃ ἐθέμην βροτῶ ἐνήθεῖσα.

Now I can no longer open my mouth to name  
this deed among the immortal gods, since I was duped,  
wretchedly, unspeakably. I went out of my mind  
and put a child under my sash, going to bed with a mortal.

As a result, Aphrodite is subject to constant taunting among the gods: she complains to Anchises that because of him she will now every day be the recipient of ὄνειδος (247), a term which stands for blame poetry within epic and epinician poetry (Nagy 1999: 226). And now the poet can call on the Muse for subject matter that includes what Aphrodite herself finds unspeakable (οὐκ ὀνομαστόν, 251): Μοῦσά μοι ἔννεπε ἔργα πολυχρύσου Ἀφροδίτης, “Tell me Muse about the doings of golden Aphrodite” (1).

The *Hymn to Aphrodite* finds the impetus for several poetic genres, both negative and positive, including its own, in the publicized “doings of Aphrodite.” The connection drawn here is echoed in other programmatic episodes in early Greek poetry. The sexual revelation is a mainstay of invective, associated with several definitive practitioners of the form. Achilles’ unspoken desire for Penthesileia is among the provocative topics aired by Thersites, the prototypical blame poet of the Trojan legend.<sup>8</sup> Sexual disclosure as a powerful form of discourse appears both in the biographical traditions surrounding Archilochus and in his works. Reports of sexual escapades, such as orgies in sanctuaries, figured in the invectives through which Archilochus supposedly drove Lycambes and his daughters to suicide (West 1974: 25–8). In the surviving “Cologne epode” (196a West), sexual slurs concerning Neobule, one of those daughters, are deployed by the speaker in his own reported seduction of another woman, whose own privacy is violated by the poem, to the speaker’s advantage.

In the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, sexual disclosure is the subject of a foundational poetic performance that also blurs the boundary between hymn and invective. As soon as Hermes invents the lyre, he sings a song that is at once reminiscent of theogonic poetry and explicitly compared to taunting (54–9; described with a verb, κερτομέω, that can designate blame poetry [Nagy 1999: 261, 263]):

θεὸς δ’ ὑπὸ καλὸν αἶειδεν  
ἐξ αὐτοσχεδίας πειρώμενος, ἥντε κοῦροι  
ἤβηται θαλίησι παραιβόλα κερτομέουσιν,

ἀμφὶ Δία Κρονίδην καὶ Μαϊάδα καλλιπέδιλον,  
ὡς πάρος ὠρίζεσκον ἔταιρείη φιλότητι,  
ἦν τ' αὐτοῦ γενεὴν ὄνομακλυτὸν ἔξονομάζων·

And to [the lyre] the god sang beautifully,  
improvising, trying things out, just the way  
young men at feasts throw out taunting gibes;  
he sang about Zeus son of Cronus and Maia with beautiful shoes,  
telling how they shared lovers' words in companionable closeness,  
and naming his own famous-named lineage.

Hermes, like the poet of the *Hymn to Aphrodite*, and like the poet of his own hymn, makes a song out of a sexual encounter that has been a secret. At the beginning of the poem, we are told that Zeus and Maia mate in her remote cave, in the dead of night (νυκτὸς ἀμολγῶ, 7), when Hera is asleep, escaping the notice of both gods and men (λήθων ἀθανάτους τε θεοὺς θνητούς τ' ἀνθρώπους, 9). But unlike those anonymous singers, Hermes has a personal stake in the contents of his song, which establishes his own status by identifying his parents and especially his divine father. The amorous conversation of Zeus and Maia generates a more pointed form of discourse that elevates its speaker at the cost of their privacy.<sup>9</sup>

Hermes' ambitions clarify one of the main pressures driving the exposure of such secrets: the resulting child's wish to claim a glorious lineage. That motive is one impetus behind the revelations of the *Hymn to Aphrodite*, as Aphrodite herself indicates when she frames the false tale she dictates to Anchises as the answer to a future question about Aeneas' mother.<sup>10</sup> The child is a further interested party, with his own need to be recognized and his own objections to having the power differential between the two lovers cloaked in secrecy. In the *Hymn to Hermes*, Zeus willingly descends to the level of the insignificant nymph Maia (much as Aphrodite descends to the level of Anchises); to hide his affair from Hera, Zeus joins Maia in her obscure circumstances, which are symbolized by the humble cave that conveniently conceals their lovemaking.<sup>11</sup> But those obscure circumstances are intolerable to Hermes; as he explains to Maia, he is determined that they will leave that cave behind to share in the pleasures and privileges of Olympus (166–72), and so he must expose what the cave has concealed and claim his birthright as the son of Zeus.

Hermes' self-asserting song comes in a context in which the establishment of his paternity is a pressing and provocative matter, since it bears on the distribution of divine power (itself the principal subject of the Homeric hymns [Clay 1989: 3–16]): his status as Zeus' son means that room must be found for one more Olympian, mostly at the expense of Apollo. In the different poetic context of the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, the focus of the narrative is on the establishment of multiple heroic genealogies among humans (West 1985: 2), and the recurrent divine–human couplings that structure the work can be presented as routine preludes to the stories of those heroic offspring. Thus the opening lines of the catalogue forecast many similar tales of illustrious women who slept with gods, beginning with ὅσσαις δὴ παρέλεκτο πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε, “however many as the father of men and gods [i.e. Zeus] slept with” (fr. 1.15). The verb used here, παραλέχομαι, is specifically associated with secret sex (Irwin 2005: 42–3); this is in keeping with the way such liaisons are at once openly acknowledged, so that the crucial genealogical point can be made, and yet protected by an element of concealment, such as the mountain-like wave that rises up to hide the lovemaking of Poseidon and Tyro in the episode narrated in the catalogue of heroines in *Odyssey* 11 (235–52).<sup>12</sup>

This discreet combination of brief mention and concealment recurs in other poetic contexts in which the superior status of human heroes is traced to their mixed divine–human parentage.

In the mythical narrative of Bacchylides 17, Theseus meets an act of aggression by Minos with matching conception stories:

If the noble daughter of Phoenix, the girl whose name spells love [Europa], bore you, peerless among mortals, after mingling with Zeus under the crags of Mt. Ida, well the daughter of rich Pittheus bore me, after drawing close to the sea god Poseidon, when the azure-haired Nereids gave her a golden veil.

(Bacchylides 17.29–38)

The woman's inferiority to her divine lover is softened by reference to her father's wealth and high status, and the act itself is hidden, in the recesses of a rocky mountain or through the gift of a veil (κάλυμμα, 38). Allusions to stories of this type are, not surprisingly, a staple of the epinician odes that celebrate those heroes' remoter descendants (Kearns 2013: 57–8).

In tragedy, by contrast, with its focus on trauma and conflict, the difficult revelation and confrontation of hidden knowledge, including sexual secrets, is a frequent driver of the plot.<sup>13</sup> In Euripides' *Bacchae*, the most overtly metatheatrical of our surviving tragedies, this feature of the genre is rooted in the mythology of Dionysus himself. Dionysus' situation is like that of Hermes, except that his human mother Semele is even humbler than Maia. For Dionysus' divinity to be properly recognized, it is essential that Semele's union with Zeus be affirmed. The plot of the *Bacchae* springs from Dionysus' frustration and rage when the story of his conception is distorted. In the prologue, Dionysus identifies himself immediately as "the son of Zeus ... whom Cadmus' daughter Semele bore" (1–2) and then explains why he has come to Thebes and stirred up its women (26–31):

ἐπεὶ μ' ἀδελφαὶ μητρὸς, ἃς ἤκιστα χρῆν,  
Διόνυσον οὐκ ἔφασκον ἐκφῶναι Διός,  
Σεμέλην δὲ νυμφευθεῖσαν ἐκ θνητοῦ τινος  
ἐς Ζῆν' ἀναφέρειν τὴν ἄμαρτίαν λέχους,  
Κάδμου σοφίσμαθ', ὧν νιν οὐνεκα κτανεῖν  
Ζῆν' ἐξεκαυχῶνθ', ὅτι γάμους ἐψεύσατο.

For my mother's sisters – the last ones who should –  
deny that Dionysus was begotten by Zeus.  
Semele, they say, was seduced by some mortal,  
and passed the blame to Zeus for her illicit passion –  
a clever gambit that Cadmus thought up. That's why Zeus killed her,  
they proclaim: because she made up their union.

Dionysus' begetting, like Aeneas' in the *Hymn to Aphrodite*, becomes the subject of a war of words in several genres, with prose forms now mixed in with poetry. Semele's own account, implicit but unrecorded, has been hijacked by her sisters, who have labeled it a lie and a sophistic stratagem. Asserting their superiority, they have allied themselves with invective over encomium to substitute their own moralizing tattle for the truth; in doing so, they project a banal but demeaning equality on the encounter, linking Semele with just "some mortal." The events of the play, through which Dionysus disproves their version by displaying his own power, are equated by him with another speech form, the legal defense: δεῖ... Σεμέλης τε μητρὸς ἀπολογήσασθαι μ' ὕπερ / φανέντα θνητοῖς δαίμον' ὄν τικται Δί, "and I must speak in defense of my mother Semele, revealing myself to mortals as a god



whom she bore to Zeus” (39–42). This formulation casts in civic terms a claim that is central to another Dionysian genre, the dithyramb. The dithyramb frequently stresses the honor due to Semele as the consort of Zeus and mother of Dionysus (cf. Pindar, *Dithyrambs* fr. 70b.30–1, fr. 75.11, 19); this theme is reinforced by mythical narratives in which Dionysus rescues Semele from Hades and makes her a goddess (Hesiod, *Th.* 940ff., Pi., *O.* 2.25, Apollod. 3.5.3).

The *Bacchae*’s chorus of maenads makes a passing reference to rites in Semele’s honor (997), but the play itself, as defined by its dramaturgical protagonist, replaces such myths of rescue and apotheosis with the vindication of a mortal woman’s truthfulness. This comes at great cost to her entire family, as her own insistence on knowing the truth has come at great cost to her, and her own voice is never heard. In the *Ion*, however, Euripides draws on the resources of tragedy to give a voice to Semele’s counterpart, Creusa, whose account of her own sexual encounter with Apollo is the centerpiece of the play.<sup>14</sup> As has already been noted, Creusa’s testimony is strongly marked as the outcome of a struggle with powerful feelings of shame, which have kept her experience a long-held secret. As in the *Bacchae*, the truth is elicited as the corrective answer to a false tale of a more ordinary mortal coupling: Creusa’s old retainer explains Xuthus’ discovery of Ion as his son by imagining that he slept with a slave and sent the resulting child to be raised at Apollo’s temple, planning if necessary to shift the blame to the god (815–31).

Creusa tells her story in two forms, specific to tragedy, that Euripides develops as vehicles for the voicing of normally unspeakable truths, the lyric monologue and the stichomythic exchange. In her monologue, she apostrophizes Apollo with an unprecedented description of what it feels like to be a human girl overpowered by an Olympian god (887–96).

ἦλθές μοι χρυσῶ χαιταν  
μαρμαίρων, εὔτ’ ἐς κόλπους  
κρόκεα πέταλα φάρεσιν ἔδρεπον,  
ἀνθίζειν χρυσανταυγῆ·  
λευκοῖς δ’ ἐμφύς καρποῖσιν  
χειρῶν εἰς ἄντρου κοίτας  
κραυγὰν ὦ μᾶτέρ μ’ ἀδῶσαν  
θεὸς ὀμευνέτας  
ἄγες ἀναιδεία  
Κύπριδι χάριν πράσσων.

You came at me, and dazzled me  
with your golden hair.  
I was piling up petals,  
gleaming yellow in my lap.  
Gripping my pale wrists,  
you made me lie down in a cave,  
while I screamed “Mother!” –  
a god and a lover  
without shame,  
answering to Aphrodite.

In the dialogue that follows, the sympathetic questions of the old man lead her to reiterate the horror of a forced encounter (939–41).

Κρέουσα: ἐνταῦθ' ἀγῶνα δεινὸν ἠγωνίσμεθα.  
Πρεσβύτης: τίν'; ὡς ἀπαντᾷ δάκρυά μοι τοῖς σοῖς λόγοις.  
Κρέουσα: Φοῖβῳ ξυνῆψ' ἄκουσα δύστηνον γάμον.

Creusa: There I fought a bitter fight.

Old Man: How so? Your words are bringing me to the point of tears.

Creusa: I mated with Phoebus against my will in a miserable union.

The plot of the *Ion* is organized in such a way that what Creusa here discloses still remains a secret within the larger world of the play.<sup>15</sup> This allows for an outcome in which Creusa is protected from the shame that applies even to victims of rape (Cairns 1993: 308–9), and normative social relations are upheld, including the fiction of relatively parity between Creusa and her husband Xuthus, even as Ion's divine paternity is affirmed. At the same time, the play's external audience, as well as a select internal audience of the Old Man and the sympathetic chorus, have been granted a rarely heard perspective on the power differential that is cloaked by sexual secrecy. Apollo's mating with Creusa is experienced by her as an abuse of power in the form of a rape, and this is all the more shocking because the story follows the familiar contours of those conventional genealogical reports which are generally left unnarrated.<sup>16</sup> Creusa's shame is different from Aphrodite's embarrassment at her own desire: it stems from an experience that Creusa has not sought but that, because it does not comply with human conventions, dishonors her nonetheless. Her long-maintained commitment to silence about their union may echo Apollo's, but that does not mean that she shares his motives for keeping quiet; her revelation disproves the ostensible connection between silence and acquiescence. With his notable attunement to the inner lives of women, Euripides has used the broken sexual secret as a medium for opening up painful questions about sex and power that more discreet accounts paper over.

Already in his own day, Euripides was famous for bringing out the affinities between mythical heroines and ordinary Athenian women (cf. Ar. *Frogs* 1043–56), and Creusa's helplessness before Apollo echoes the vulnerability of all women to rape and suggests the similarity between rape and ordinary marriage (Rabinowitz 1993: 201), much as Medea's problems as a foreigner in Corinth echo the experiences of all women who marry and enter the unfamiliar terrain of their husband's house (cf. Eur. *Medea* 238–40). Turning to the fifth-century context that informs Euripidean tragedy, we find more explicit descriptions of the well-balanced (if not strictly equal or symmetrical) sexual relationship that defines an ideal union, which we have already met in the *Odyssey*, and narratives concerning historical as well as mythological figures generated by disturbances of that balance.

In the conceptual universe of classical Greece, sex between men and women occurs ideally within the institution of the *oikos*, a realm of private activity in general that surrounds the particular privacy of sexual relations. The *oikos* is a constituent of the public sphere of the *polis* yet differentiated from it, both because it is private and because it encompasses a wider range of personnel, including women, slaves, and children, as well as free male citizens. In the context of the *polis*, those male citizens are theoretically not only similar but equal, but in the *oikos* they intersect with those who are dissimilar and unequal. The *oikos* harbors, and keeps out of sight, two forms of potentially disruptive difference that are played down in public life: differences in wealth between citizens, and differences in legal and social status between citizen men and others, among them women.

The concealment of women within the household is in theory (no matter what may have happened in practice) essential to the well-being of the *polis*, because the visibility of women is understood as a sign of dysfunction. In a widespread classical conception of social order, for

women to be silent and out of view is a sign that all is well. Men are properly exercising their superior authority, so that women are cared for and their interests are protected; women are happily cooperating with the social structures in which they find themselves, and the irrationality and wayward sexuality to which women are subject are under control. Under such conditions, women have no reason to emerge from their hidden quarters to speak or act, as they regularly do in tragedy, the genre in which dysfunction is dramatized. There is an ethic of secrecy about women, symbolized in the essential role of veiling in the wedding ceremony (Cairns 1996: 80; Llewellyn-Jones 2003: 215–58), which is linked, paradoxically, to the idea that there should be no secrets to tell. Instead of the more familiar paradox of the “open secret,” we have a closed non-secret, at once inaccessible and incapable of generating an interesting story.

This paradox is reflected in texts from the classical period that, in contrast to tragedy, give us idealized pictures of a well-functioning society. Of these, by far the most famous is Pericles’ advice at the end of the Funeral Oration: “If I must say something about female virtue, for those of you who are now widows, I will put it all in a brief admonition. There is great glory in not being worse than your existing nature and great glory for her who has the least reputation among men whether for praise or for blame” (Thucydides 2.45.2). Pericles describes a situation in which women fulfill their nature at its best by doing nothing that men would want to talk about, a category that applies to good actions that would generate praise just as much as to bad actions that would generate blame (so here too, in this negative formulation, those seemingly antithetical types of speech are closely linked).

The lack of anything to say prescribed by Pericles is complemented by the full-scale discussion of an ideal classical *oikos*, the house of Ischomachus, including an extensive portrayal of Ischomachus’ wife, found in Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus*, which actively demonstrates that there is nothing remarkable happening behind the closed doors of the house. As readers of the dialogue, we never go inside the house, which remains off-limits to us, but rather hear about it indirectly from Socrates, who reports the description given to him on another occasion by Ischomachus. But Ischomachus’ detailed account assures us that the house has no secrets, a point that is reinforced by his eager willingness to answer any question Socrates puts to him.

In constructing this reassuring picture, Xenophon plays down the element of difference that characterizes the *oikos* in relation to the *polis* and is itself an internal feature of the *oikos*. He portrays a husband and wife who are markedly disparate in age, experience, and authority; the marriage is in fact described through Ischomachus’ anodyne account of how he instructed his wife in her proper role. But in his teaching, Ischomachus characterizes their relationship as a *κοινωνία*, “partnership,” a concept that extends to their sexual relationship in which they are said to be *καὶ τῶν σωμάτων κοινωνήσοντες ἀλλήλοις*, “also sharing their bodies with one another” (10.4), with the explicit and equally sought goal of producing children (7.11). As with the marriage of Odysseus and Penelope, there is a stress on the equal investment of both in the success of the household, however disparate their material contributions, which effects a “necessary equalization of initial differences between the husband and the wife” (Foucault 1985: 156). Ischomachus depicts their daily activities as complementary, differing primarily in the very matter of visibility, since the wife’s proper sphere of activity is indoors and the husband’s is outdoors (7.20–5). The wife’s commensurate enthusiasm for their joint enterprise is displayed in her happy assent to Ischomachus’ teaching, which is glossed by Socrates as “manly understanding” (10.1). The well-ordered household is compared to a *polis* and the wife, as she assumes her proper role, is compared to a magistrate, a *nomophulax* (Murnaghan 1988).

In the first book of the *Politics*, Aristotle similarly politicizes and equalizes the relationship of husband and wife. The wife, he says, is ruled by the husband, but in a manner that he calls

“political” (πολιτικῶς), as opposed to the way in which a father rules his children, which is “monarchical” (βασιλικῶς).

In most political offices, it is true, there is an alternation of ruler and ruled, since they tend by their nature to be on an equal footing and to differ in nothing; all the same, when one rules and the other is ruled, [the ruler] seeks to establish differences in external appearances, forms of address, and prerogatives ... The male always stands thus in relation to the female.

(Aristotle, *Politics* 1, 1259b)

In a conceit that is illogical but evidently useful, the relation of husband and wife is compared to rotating offices in a *polis*, in which the difference between ruler and ruled is insignificant because it is understood to be both arbitrary and transitory. For the married couple, however, the difference is not temporary and reversible but intrinsic and permanent.

In these formulations, marriage is defined as an equilibrium supported by contradictions: the wife must be hidden, but there is nothing to hide; she is subordinated to her husband, but she is also his equal partner. Less idealizing genres, including – as we have seen – tragedy, expose these contradictions, showing their instability under the pressure of challenging but predictable circumstances. A final set of examples is supplied by Herodotus’ *Histories*, a prose narrative with many affinities to tragedy,<sup>17</sup> in a series of episodes in which the narrative is propelled by the revelation of sexual secrets. These episodes occur at important junctures in the narrative, when power changes hands in illegitimate or unexpected ways,<sup>18</sup> and so contribute significantly to the implicit analysis of power, especially tyrannical power, and the causes and effects of its volatility, that runs through the *Histories*.

The first and most prominent of these is the opening story of Gyges and the wife of Candaules, which is brought in as background to what Herodotus presents as the first real event of his narrative, Croesus’ subjection of Greek peoples, but serves to introduce key themes of tyrannical power and historical change.<sup>19</sup> Like the *Hymn to Aphrodite*, the narrative begins with the sudden onset of desire, as the Lydian king Candaules falls in love with his own wife (ἡράσθη ἑωυτοῦ γυναικός, 1.8.1). If Candaules had reacted to this simply by having sex with her, there would be no story to tell, only conventional marital relations, protected at once by polite discretion and by their inherent banality. But he feels the need to convince another man, his spear-bearer Gyges, of his wife’s exceptional beauty, and so decides that Gyges must hide in their bedroom and watch the queen undress for bed.<sup>20</sup> Recognizing Candaules’ proposal as a serious violation of proper norms, Gyges tries to refuse. But Candaules insists, assuring Gyges that the queen will never know what has happened. In this he is wrong; she detects Gyges’ presence and the result is Candaules’ undoing.

In his attempt to dissuade Candaules, Gyges invokes an aphorism, ἅμα δὲ κιθῶνι ἐκδυομένῳ συνεκδύεται καὶ τὴν αἰδῶ γυνή, “when a woman takes off her dress she also takes off her shame” (1.8.3), which clarifies one of the most important, but also generally unspoken, motives for privacy in marriage. Alone with her husband, a woman expresses a sensuality that she should display only to him. This point is made in a less punchy but more explicit way in a recommendation attributed by Diogenes Laertius to Theano, the wife of Pythagoras: τῇ δὲ πρὸς τὸν ἴδιον ἄνδρα μελλούσῃ πορεύεσθαι παρήνει ἅμα τοῖς ἐνδύμασι καὶ τὴν αἰσχρὴν ἀποτίθεσθαι, ἀνισταμένην τε πάλιν ἅμ’ αὐτοῖσι ἀναλαμβάνειν, “And she advised a woman going in to her own husband to put off her shame with her clothes, and on leaving him to put it on again along with them.”<sup>21</sup> The wife’s active sexuality, which is acknowledged here, is only hinted at in most treatments of marriage. One reason for that can be seen in the *Odyssey*, where the

possibility of Penelope as a desiring subject is connected to the fear, which is raised by her dream and by her appearance to the Suitors in Book 18, that she might be interested in someone other than her husband. In the *Oeconomicus*, Ischomachus does, in the course of demonstrating to his wife that she would be more alluring without makeup, cause her to say that she would rather touch his skin in its natural state than covered with lead or other cosmetics (10.6). The occlusion of women's sexuality within marriage is effectively dramatized in the *Hymn to Aphrodite*: as Aphrodite's blatant desire is satisfied within a relationship figured proleptically as a marriage, the demonstrative gesture of taking off the woman's clothes is assigned to the man.

Once her αἰδώς has been violated through the conversion of her proper act of self-display to her husband into an inappropriate show for an outsider, Candaules' wife also puts off her shame in a metaphorical sense as well: like Creusa, she emerges from silence and invisibility to speak of what has been done to her. Not only does the queen's willingness to speak recall Euripides' character, but her testimony is represented in the surviving tragic fragment that (whether it is earlier or later) closely parallels Herodotus' narrative. In the one extant speech of the "Gyges tragedy,"<sup>22</sup> the queen reveals to a group of loyal supporters, presumably represented by the chorus, what she experienced during the preceding night. In Herodotus' version, in which the events that transpire in the bedroom can be told by the narrator, we hear her speaking in ways that actively shape the course of Lydian history. She confronts Gyges and presents him with a choice: "Either the one who planned these things must die, or you, the one who saw me naked and did what is not right" (1.11.3). Her words both name what has been done to her and point to the public consequences of her private violation. As she moves to restore the lost exclusivity of her marriage, she brings about what her tragic counterpart also recognizes as the logical implication of a third person in the bedroom. In the tragic version, the queen says that when she first saw Gyges she feared he was an assassin with designs on Candaules. Herodotus' queen assures that he plays out that role: she forces him to murder the king and replace him as her husband, bringing about dynastic change and setting the stage for the defeat of Croesus five generations later (explicitly defined by the Delphic oracle as punishment for a δόλος γυναικίως, "a woman's treacherous act" 1.91.9).

Candaules' wife not only discloses what has been done to her, but she stages a re-enactment of Candaules' scheme that brings to light its implications, revealing aspects of tyrannical power that Candaules himself does not fully grasp. While Candaules has placed Gyges in their bedroom with the idea that Gyges can simply see the queen and then disappear as if nothing had happened, the queen herself places him there once again ("the attack will come from the same place where he exposed me naked," she explains, again naming Candaules' transgression [1.11.5]) and insists that he act out the logical consequences of being there. Through her determination that what Gyges has seen he must also take possession of, and that when he takes possession of her he must also take possession of the throne, the queen conveys an understanding of political power as rooted in the exclusive control of hidden resources, which is further elaborated throughout the work.

The many stories that make up the *Histories* reflect a vision of political power as inherently unstable and endlessly productive of change, in part because the successful exercise of power depends on maintaining a precarious balance between secrecy and display. The possible connection between revealing a source of power and losing that power is illustrated in the story of Gyges' descendant Croesus, who insists on showing the Athenian wise man Solon his money, much as Candaules insists on showing Gyges his wife. Unlike Gyges, Solon is able to witness Croesus' wealth without being drawn into the historical process of rise and fall; standing outside that process, he articulates both its inevitability and the unreliability of wealth as a source of

happiness. But it is nonetheless clear that Croesus' foolish need to show off contributes to the complex of factors that make his fall at the hands of the Persian Cyrus inevitable.<sup>23</sup>

The most successful wielder of power in the *Histories* is Cyrus' ancestor Deioces, the founder of the Median dynasty, who not only occupies the role of ruler but actually invents it. A gifted man in love with absolute rule (ἐρασθεὶς τυραννίδος, 1.96.2), living at a time when the Medes have no central government, Deioces manipulates the people by making himself indispensable as an arbiter of disputes so that they decide that they must have a king and choose him for that role. He then forces them to build a capital city with a heavily fortified palace at its center and hides himself within it, instituting a series of royal protocols by which his subjects are kept out of his presence and all business is conducted through messengers. In this way, he fends off the jealous rivalry of other men who knew him before as one of them: "if they didn't see him, he would appear to be a person of a different order (ἕτεροῖος)" (1.99.2). Like a harmonious husband and wife, Deioces makes a secret out of what is entirely ordinary. As a result, he reigns for fifty-three years, unites all of the Medes under his rule, and passes his kingdom on to his son.

Deioces' strategy is a definitive recipe for unchallenged political power and a tour de force. It works through the manufacture of difference out of secrecy itself, through concealing the fact that there is nothing to hide. Because Deioces' purchase on power resides in himself (in the cleverness in which he *is* different from other men), he has a rare self-sufficiency that is key to his success. More typically, for rulers like Candaules and Croesus, their power is vested in possessions of high value, whether a supremely beautiful woman or a large amount of gold. And they feel the need to affirm their power by showing off their valuable possessions and soliciting the validation of other men (Travis 2000: 339–40). This inevitably exposes them to rivalry, as Deioces shrewdly recognizes, and as the wife of Candaules makes clear by requiring Gyges, despite his passivity and reluctance, to become Candaules' rival and usurper. And while Candaules and Croesus may be excessive and deluded in their longing for confirmation, they are faced with a difficult challenge, since power is hard to exercise if it is wholly concealed. What must be hidden must also be known to exist, and it is hard to pull off Deioces' feat of maintaining power by showing nothing.

The similarities between the Gyges and the Croesus stories suggest an affinity between wealth and a desirable woman as comparable sources of monarchical power; both need to be kept hidden in the inner bedroom or treasure rooms of the Lydian royal palace as both are also kept hidden in the private houses of democratic Athens. As assets, women resemble wealth, and their value is enhanced when accompanied by wealth.<sup>24</sup> The wealth a woman brings to a marriage can help to equalize her relations with her husband, compensating for her inferior status. Thus Aphrodite, in her false tale, stresses the rich gifts of gold and clothing that her prominent Phrygian parents will supply (139–40), and Theseus when asserting his genealogy in Bacchylides 17 specifies that his mother is the daughter of "rich Pittheus." As the basis of a story about power's loss or limitation, the exposure of a woman is, however, especially interesting because her value is sexual (and so the removal of her clothes is required for Gyges' appraisal just as it is required for Anchises' mating with Aphrodite) and because she is capable of communicating the secrets of the bedroom, herself supplying the material for an intriguing exposé.

Candaules' misstep reveals the instability of tyrannical power, which is hard to display without inspiring rivals (so that even a spectator without ambitions, like Gyges, becomes the king's rival); as a character later in the *Histories* puts it, tyranny is "precarious" (σφαλερόν) because it has "many lovers" (πολλοὶ...ἐρασταί, 3.53.4). But it also suggests that such power is inherently abusive, as it leads him to violate norms of sexual privacy and to treat his wife as a possession to be shown off. The abusiveness of tyrannical power is further elaborated in a series of related stories set in the tyrant's bedroom, in which the tyrant's mistreatment of his wife involves not

just exposing her but misusing her in some further way. These stories substantiate the general claim of Otanes, in his speech against monarchy during the Persian debate on government in Book 3, in which he links the tyrant's disregard for law and convention with his sexual mistreatment of women: "he disrupts traditional customs; he forces women; and he kills men without trial" (3.80.5).<sup>25</sup>

The tyrant's excessive power compared to everyone else is expressed through an abuse of the inherent power differential between husband and wife that is usually masked by the privacy of the bedroom, where it ought to be counterbalanced by mutual respect: the sign of that excess is the wife's defection from the pact of secrecy that defines her marriage. Whether Greek or Eastern, these tyrannical figures are measured against an essentially Greek norm of monogamous marriage (Rosselini and Saïd 1978: 1003), in keeping with a Greek tendency to make the properly functioning *oikos* the basis and precondition of a successful political order (Blok 2002: 241–2).

The first of these stories involves the Athenian tyrant Peisistratus. In the second of the three tries that it takes before he can establish himself in Athens, Peisistratus seizes power through a clever trick and then consolidates that power by marrying the daughter of his powerful former opponent Megacles. But because he has heard that Megacles' family is under a curse, and because he already has grown sons, he wants to avoid having children with his new wife and so he has intercourse with her οὐ κατὰ νόμον, "not in the customary way" (1.61.2; that is, penetrating her anally). This is insulting to her, not because of the act itself, but because Peisistratus is using his legitimate wife solely for pleasure and not for procreation, forestalling the shared goal of marital sex and depriving his wife of her honorable role as a mother (Holt 1998: 234).<sup>26</sup> At first the wife keeps this hidden (ἔκρυπτε) but then (perhaps in response to a question, Herodotus speculates) she tells her mother. Her mother tells her father, who is outraged at the dishonor to himself, breaks off his alliance with Peisistratus, and reunites with Peisistratus' enemies; as a result, Peisistratus is obliged to leave Athens and start all over again. Here the news of the wife's mistreatment is elicited by her interested parents and passed from daughter to mother to father until it results in political change.

Another story, which also involves the flow of information from wronged wife to outraged father, concerns a time of troubled succession in the Persian royal family, when Cambyses' throne is usurped by a Magus named Smerdis, who pretends that he is actually Cambyses' brother, also named Smerdis, who has been secretly murdered by Cambyses. The false Smerdis is exposed by the prominent Persian Otanes (the same man who shortly afterwards proclaims the sexual deviance of tyrants), whose daughter is one of the several wives of the real Smerdis taken over by the false Smerdis. Breaking through the seclusion of the royal household, Otanes manages to communicate with his daughter by sending her secret messages. In response to his first inquiry, she is unable to say whether her current husband is the real or the false Smerdis, so he entrusts her with the mission of finding out.

If he is not really the son of Cyrus, but instead the man I think he is, he cannot get away with sleeping with you and holding power over Persia, but must be punished. This is what you must do. The next time he shares your bed, once you are sure he's asleep, feel for his ears. If he turns out to have ears, know that you are married to Smerdis, the son of Cyrus; if not, then Smerdis the Magus.

(3.69.2–3)

Although Smerdis is not guilty of a sexual offense in the way that Peisistratus is, his usurpation is formulated as a sexual crime: sleeping with Otanes' daughter as an imposter is as worthy of

punishment as seizing political power, and Smerdis' transgression can only be detected through physical contact between husband and wife in bed. Smerdis' illegitimacy is reflected in a physical deficit, which is the result of an earlier punishment, and which is only uncovered in the most private circumstances. Here too there is a faint hint of the wife's sexuality, in the form taken by her brave act of discovery – reaching in the dark for a hidden body part (Purves 2013: 34–5). Otanes' daughter undertakes the experiment, does discover that her husband lacks ears, and communicates this to her father, who initiates a successful conspiracy against him. In this episode, the power imbalance that destabilizes the marital relation is twofold: like any tyrant, Smerdis takes too much power by seizing the throne; as a lowly criminal lacking royal lineage, he is inferior in status to Otanes' daughter, the rightful ruler's concubine and the daughter of a prominent Persian.

Finally, a story involving the most egregious of the Greek tyrants, Periander of Corinth, which is told to the Spartans by the Corinthian Socles in an attempt to dissuade them from reinstating tyranny in Athens by restoring Peisistratus' son Hippias (5.92η.1–4).<sup>27</sup> Periander loses an item that has been entrusted to him by a friend and sends to an oracle of the dead to find out where it is. The ghost of his dead wife Melissa appears to his messengers and says she cannot answer his question because she is cold and naked, since the clothes that were buried with her were never properly burned. As a token of her truthfulness – so that Periander will know this message really comes from her – she adds that Periander has baked his loaves in a cold oven. Periander knows at once what she is talking about: as Socles explains, she is alluding to the fact that he had intercourse with her after she was dead. Periander immediately calls all the women of Corinth to the temple of Hera, where he has them stripped by his guards; their clothes are collected in a pit and burned while he prays to the spirit of Melissa. Then he sends to the oracle again, and Melissa's ghost tells him where he has put his friend's possession.

Once again, the tyrant's excess is expressed in an act of sexual outrage against his wife, which might have remained secret except that she reveals it. Here the power of the outraged wife to make known what she has suffered transcends even her death and takes on an oracular force. The form taken by the wife's revelation is in this case particularly complex. On the one hand, it is a cryptic message, a puzzling metaphor that might reinforce and safeguard Periander's secrecy if it were not that Herodotus' internal narrator Socles intervenes to translate it for his internal audience and thus for us. On the other hand, she, like the wife of Candaules, sets in motion a clarifying restaging of her husband's original crime. She causes him to re-enact his assault on her through a violation of the entire female population of Corinth, which takes the form of removing their clothes. Like Candaules' wife, she does not allow tyrannical high-handedness to remain a secret of the bedroom, but insists that the public, political implications of excessive power must be brought to light as the tyrant's private violation of female honor is translated into a public one. In this case, the particular tyrant in question is not overthrown, but that outcome is transferred to the occasion of the story's retelling, since Socles succeeds in persuading the Spartans not to reinstall Hippias in Athens.

In these stories, Herodotus makes a broad point about the evil and instability of excessive power through the compelling scenario of a woman driven to reveal the secrets of the bedroom. Like Euripides, he draws attention to the vulnerability of women, who are inhibited by shame from disclosing what is done to them. The daughters of Megacles and Otanes communicate only through private channels within the family (and only when asked) and leave it to their fathers to reveal and act upon the abuses to which they testify; the bolder wives of Candaules and Periander are heard in the context of public speech forms available to women, the dramatic dialogue and the oracular utterance, and they themselves dictate the further actions that will publicize the conditions of their mistreatment.



The case of Melissa shows how the voice of the wronged wife serves as a vital building block of the historian's narrative, because it appears in a history within the *Histories*. Socles traces the history of the Corinthian tyrants from generation to generation, stressing their cruel misdeeds, including in his account several oracles and prophecies; and like Herodotus, he claims for himself the authority of personal knowledge, asserting that the Spartans would never have made their proposal if they had experienced tyranny first hand, as the Corinthians have (5.92a.2).<sup>28</sup> Herodotus grounds his narrative in revelations like Melissa's, as the authors of the Homeric hymns ground theirs in the revelations of Aphrodite, Anchises, and Hermes, and Euripides grounds his in the revelations of Creusa. Across multiple periods and genres, such revelations generate narratives that draw attention to the precarious balance between male and female, which secrecy typically protects. Drawn in by our curiosity about the sexual and the hidden, we are led to appreciate the diverse consequences – from the elevated status brought by a distinguished lineage to the bitter humiliation of rape and abuse – when the unspoken disparity built into relations of sexual difference becomes too great to be kept quiet.

### Notes

- 1 My thanks to Mark Masterson and Nancy Rabinowitz for helpful comments on an earlier draft, and to Alex Purves for showing me her forthcoming work on enclosed spaces in Herodotus and for many conversations on topics addressed in this essay.
- 2 For a strong and influential statement of this view, see Halperin 1990: 30. In classical literature, the first extensive portrayals of sexual symmetry between men and women are found in the Greek novels of the imperial period (Konstan 1994).
- 3 Odysseus appears to include exclusive shared knowledge in his description of a happy marriage to Nausicaa, which ends *μάλιστα δέ τ' ἔκλυον αὐτοί*, "they know it best themselves" (*Od.* 6.185). The meaning of this phrase is, however, uncertain. See Hainsworth in Heubeck et al. 1988 ad loc.
- 4 For a far-reaching discussion of Odysseus and Penelope's bed, including its significance as an emblem of their "relative symmetry," see Zeitlin 1996: 19–52.
- 5 Foucault 1985: 151. Foucault applies this description to an ethic of fidelity for husbands as well as wives that emerged in philosophical discussions from the fourth century BCE on; as he points out, the fidelity of men differed from that of women because it depended on a self-mastery that men alone were believed to possess.
- 6 On these nymphs as occupying an intermediate status between mortality and immortality, see Clay 1989: 193–6.
- 7 On the *Hymn's* blurring of the distinction between praise and blame, see Bergren 1989: 1–2. On the relationship of praise and blame in the Greek poetic tradition more generally, see Nagy 1999: 222 ff. Recent overviews of the powers of Aphrodite, with further bibliography, include Cyrino 2010 and Blondell 2013: 1–26.
- 8 *Aithiopsis* p.67, 25–6 B = 47, 7–12 D. On Thersites as a blame poet or satirist in this episode, see Rosen 2007: 91–8 and Fantuzzi 2012: 267–79. A later example is Cerambus, whose story is told by Antoninus Liberalis, a mythographer of the first to third centuries CE. Inventor of the syrinx and first human player of the lyre, Cerambus is turned by the nymphs into a beetle, an animal closely identified with invective, because of his taunting discourse, in which he claims that one of them had sex with Poseidon (*Metamorphoses* 22), see Svenbro 1999; Steiner 2009: 110–15. Demodocus' song at *Odyssey* 8.266–366 recounts the literal exposure of a secret affair: Hephaestus traps Aphrodite and Ares in bed together and makes a spectacle of them. On this episode as a paradigmatic account of Homeric laughter, see Halliwell 2008: 77–86.
- 9 Talk between lovers and talk about love are equally the province of Aphrodite. In the *Theogony*, she receives *παρθενίους ὄρους*, "maidens' conversations" (205) as part of her sphere of power; in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, she herself claims to use *ὄρους καὶ μῆτιας*, "conversations and tricks," to bring couples together (249). Cf. *Il.* 6.156, 14.216, and 22.127. In Pindar and later authors, *ὄρος* itself comes to refer to song (cf. *Pi. P.* 1.98; *N.* 3.11; *N.* 7.69).
- 10 As Bergren notes, this motive mirrors Aphrodite's own compulsion to name herself (1989: 37): "[t]o keep Aphrodite from boasting of the workings of her *ὄρους* ... would be tantamount to forbidding a

- mortal to utter his own genealogy.” The need to assert Aeneas’ genealogy will keep the memory of Aphrodite’s union with Anchises alive, despite her injunction and even if, as has been argued (Clay 1989: 166–70), this is the last instance in cosmic history of this type of unequal mating.
- 11 This is, in effect, an intensification of the concealment proper even to sanctioned lovemaking, which is reflected in the cloud with which Zeus covers himself and Hera during their encounter in *Iliad* 14, at her insistence (*Il.* 14.330–45).
  - 12 On secrecy in love affairs among the gods in general, see Richardson 2010: 254.
  - 13 As feminist scholarship on tragedy has stressed, the genre is particularly compelling as a medium for the normally occluded voices of women, although these are always mediated through the interests and conventions of a male-authored and male-directed genre. See especially Rabinowitz 1993; Zeitlin 1996: 341–74; Wohl 1998; McClure 1999; Foley 2001.
  - 14 On the affinities between Semele and Creusa, see Murnaghan 2006: 107–9.
  - 15 In the prologue, Hermes announces that one of the goals of the plot is keeping Apollo’s sex with Creusa a secret (72–3). On the play’s intertwining of revelation and concealment, see Lee 1997: 30–1.
  - 16 For an analysis that stresses Euripides’ exceptional rendition of the raped women’s perspective, especially in comparison to other versions of similar tales, see Scafuro 1990. Kearns (2013) contrasts Euripides’ treatment of Creusa’s rape with Pindar’s account of Apollo and Cyrene in *Pythian* 9 (to which Euripides may be alluding): Pindar minimizes the differential between the two by giving Cyrene extraordinary powers and describes their union in language that evokes a formal marriage. As Rabinowitz points out (1993: 195–201, 2011: 10–11), Creusa’s report is qualified in ways that prevent her identification as simply a victim. Earlier in the play, the chorus has voiced the conviction that such stories never turn out well for the resulting children (507–8).
  - 17 For a nuanced account of Herodotus’ relationship to tragedy, see Chiasson 2003.
  - 18 See Brooks 1984: 26 on usurpation as “preeminently what it takes to incite narrative into existence.”
  - 19 On the importance of this episode and other related stories involving powerful women for the structure of the *Histories*, see Wolf 1964; Tourraix 1976.
  - 20 On the significance of Candaules’ bedroom and other enclosed spaces in the *Histories*, see Purves 2014.
  - 21 Diog. Laert. 8.43. For both the meaning of Gyges’ aphorism and the comparison, see Cairns 1996: 80–1, 2012: 185–6.
  - 22 The “Gyges Tragedy” can be found in Page 1951.
  - 23 For an analysis that stresses the far-reaching implications of seeing in the Gyges episode, see Travis 2000, esp. 355, for discussion of the consequential differences between Gyges and Solon as spectators.
  - 24 The similar roles of Candaules’ wife and Croesus’ gold in these two prominent narratives is one of several ways in which Herodotus acknowledges the status of women as objects of exchange within marriage, as delineated by Lévi-Strauss (1969); the sequence of repeated violations of this norm through bride thefts that opens the narrative (*Histories* 1.1–4) is another. On marriage and the exchange of women in the Homeric epics, see Von Reden 2003: 49–55; in tragedy, see Rabinowitz 1993; Wohl 1998.
  - 25 For an account of how Herodotus’ narrative bears out Otanes’ analysis of tyranny, see Lateiner 1989: 167–85. On tyrants’ general association with *eros* in Herodotus, see Hartog 1988: 330. On Herodotus’ treatment of this theme in relation to a widespread association between tyranny and sexual excess and abuse throughout Greek culture, see Holt 1998: 225–37.
  - 26 As Dewald argues (1993: 61–2), Candaules similarly insults his wife by viewing her only as object of desire (perhaps what is meant by the information that ἠράσθη, “he fell in love” with her); when she exchanges him for Gyges, she fulfills her proper dynastic role and becomes the ancestress of Croesus. Aphrodite’s loss of status through her liaison with Anchises is reflected in the way that she, by contrast with mortal women, experiences motherhood as humiliation.
  - 27 On this speech and the interpretive issues it has raised, with bibliography, see Moles 2007.
  - 28 On the metahistorical character of this speech, see Moles 2007: 255–6.

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