

Agamemnon (Monday, August 30, 2021)

Savannah: Quick question when Cassandra is referred to as Agamemnon's mistress, I'm assuming it wasn't as a willing mistress? Or was it?

She was a prize of war, made a slave, not at all willing.

Brandon: "and on this pedestal, these words appear. "I am ozymandius, king of kings, look upon my works ye mighty, and despair"

Pandora: Why did Cassandra not want to get out of the chariot?

She sees that if she enters the house, she will be murdered.

Olivia: I always thought the chorus was supposed to be like an off stage group of people, like a narrator. But the characters interact with the chorus. Just sort of confused on that.

Aeschylus innovated the chorus, making it much more active and in dialogue with the main characters.

Ava: At the beginning of the play the watch man is talking, he just says dear gods, but is there a specific one he's speaking or praying to, or was there a god that they believed in that would have been the one to go to?

The Greek gods are numerous, each representative of something and would be invoked depending on the occasion. Like Aphrodite, the goddess of love, or Ares, the god of war. I think here, the watchman is just invoking the gods in general, but once the Chorus enter, they primarily invoke and call upon Zeus, who was the "king" of the gods, or, the "father" god.

Sara M.: Did I understand correctly that Agamemnon Sacrificed the daughter that Clyaemnestra 'avenges' because an oracle said it would please the gods to cease a storm?

Yes, Agamemnon sacrificed their eldest daughter and child, Iphigenia, because he was told this would appease the goddess, Artemis, and ensure the Greek army successfully sail for Troy where the war was to be fought.

Abby: What is a chariot? Sorry if this is a stupid question



Brandon: I know that sacrifice and murder were really common, but how cold blooded to sacrifice your own daughter. How did he not see his own death coming?

His own hubris? Believing that it was condoned by the gods? Believing it was okay, after all, because he won the war? Believing Clytemnestra would forgive and forget? Or, she's just a woman, what kind of power would she have to avenge her daughter? All kinds of possible interpretations.

Luke P: 1. Why is Clytemnestra compared to a man so often my characters? 2. Does the spiders web also symbolize the net and Agamemnon being trapped?

She is in a position of power, ruling Mycenae for ten years during Agamemnon's absence. She refuses the counsel of the old men of Argos. She is also blatantly cheating on Agamemnon with Aegisthus. In Greek myth/saga, she is often representative of a monstrous woman/bad wife in contrast to Penelope, the faithful and obedient wife of Odysseus. Basically, Clytemnestra oversteps the gender boundaries of what the Greeks viewed to be the proper place of women/wives in a patriarchal society. And yes, the spider's web is a great image alongside the net to symbolize how Clytemnestra is laying a trap for Agamemnon.

Emily: Why were Agamemnon and Aegisthus enemies?

They are cousins—their fathers were brothers who fought over the kingdom of Argos. Thyestes (Aegisthus's father) slept with the wife of Atreus (Agamemnon's father). Atreus exacted revenge by feeding Thyestes's children to him in a cannibalistic feast, and then Thyestes cursed the House of Atreus. As his only surviving child, Aegisthus is bound to vengeance against the House of Atreus. Aegisthus is probably also driven by desire for power, like Clytemnestra.

Joe: So did Clytemnestra marry Agamemnon just to murder him for Iphigenia or was the murder of Iphigenia after they were married?

After they were married. Iphigenia was probably about 15 or 16 years old. Her murder was at the start of the Trojan war and Clytemnestra waited during the ten years of war for Agamemnon to return so she could have her revenge over the death of their daughter.

Josiah: Did Agamemnon ultimately really need to kill his daughter?

All depends on one's perspective. Clytemnestra certainly believes he didn't need to do this, but Agamemnon believes it was necessary to appease Artemis and sail to Troy with favorable winds.

Ashley: Is Cassandra the daughter Agamemnon sacrificed?

Isaac: Why did she insist that Agamemnon walk in on the carpets?

To flatter his pride and ego. The crimson carpets represent the high status of the gods. She is tempting him to believe his victory over Troy elevates him to the status of a god, impervious to fate. Agamemnon falls for it and enters the house without the protection of his men.

Connor: In the end, one of the people become mad with Aegisthus, stating he was a coward and conspiring man, and that he has no power and no man will bow down to him. Yet, both Clytemnestra and himself act as if nothing occurred and walk back into the hall as if they have a right to rule. Is that just a nod to ignorance and corrupted power, or is that actually how quickly power shifts occurred, and how quickly people actually accept matters?

This is a great question! I think for Aeschylus's time, Clytemnestra and Aegisthus are representative of tyrants who rule without the consent or will of the people (important for Athenian audiences who believed in principles of democracy not the rule of aristocracy). They

are definitely an example of corrupted power, especially since they take power by killing the king. They also represent violent shifts in power rooted in the old blood feuds, of might over right, vengeance over law. This is a major theme of the trilogy, as Aeschylus showing how a society might progress from violence, war, blood vendettas to law, order, and democracy as instruments of justice and peace.

Luke W: Are there purposeful similarities between Apollo and Agamemnon, since Cassandra is unwilling with both?

That's an interesting insight. Cassandra does not want to be the slave of anyone, man or god; at the same time, she is possessed by her visions, of seeing the truth while never being believed (Apollo's curse for refusing him). Cassandra has certainly been read as a kind of feminist figure, as we'll explore in our reading of Christa Wolf's novel.

Sara: So was Cassandra murdered because of her seeing the murder of Agamemnon? Or something else?

Cassandra is viewed by Clytemnestra as an insult. Even if Cassandra is now a slave, she is after all royalty, a princess of Troy. When Clytemnestra invites Cassandra into the house and Cassandra refuses the rituals of hospitality (very important to the Greeks), Clytemnestra is insulted. Beyond that, her reasons are a bit more ambiguous. If Cassandra is a symbol of Agamemnon's power, as the victorious leader of the Greeks, then perhaps killing her is a way to consolidate Clytemnestra's own power. As a speaker of truth, Cassandra might also present a threat to a tyrannical leader or usurper, which is how the Chorus views Clytemnestra. There are various ways of interpreting Clytemnestra's insistence on murdering Cassandra, and many writers have provided different readings.

Zach: I don't really understand why he sacrificed his daughter. it seems unnecessary.

Isaac: I also do not understand why Agamemnon needed to sacrifice his own daughter.

Savannah: So wait Apollo wanted to have sex with Cassandra, she said no and he got mad, but he still protects her?

She is still his priestess, dedicated to his shrine, even though she says she is "yoked" or enslaved by Apollo's whims. The gods look after their devotees. To rape/kill Cassandra is still viewed as an insult to Apollo. Cassandra, however, seems to want to be free of both men and gods. When she discards and shreds her ceremonial priestess robes, she is claiming her own freedom from the god and her office as his priestess. She then goes into the house, willingly accepting her fate but also mourning her own death.

Brandon: greek gods were nuts

Brandon: zeus turned into a goose to impregnate a woman so hera wouldn't see him

Joe: I mean, depending on which story you read that's how medusa came to be

Sara M: Would it have been unheard of to say no to a god like Apollo?

Lots of stories/myths of humans saying no to or resisting a god. Inevitably, they are often punished for this, like Cassandra. The gods do not like to be refused or resisted. The

stories/myths seem to indicate that the gods are tyrannical or selfish but to resist them is to resist one's fate. Aeschylus, I think, is trying to work through this problem. How do humans shape their own free will when they are also ruled by the necessity or will of the gods (or forces more powerful than humans)? This also links to Agamemnon's conflict over killing his daughter at the behest of a god (or larger political expediency of leading the Greeks in war).

Katarina: Why was Clytaemnestra referred to as a man, numerous of times?

Joe: There was a story of medusa where she was raped by Poseidon in the temple of Athena as a bird which outraged Athena because her temple was disgraced by a human so she cursed Medusa to look the way we know her now

This is a great example of a myth, where the gods are insulted by other gods or in conflict with other gods, but it's humans who bear the brunt of punishment. It seems to reflect the Greeks' views of how humans can be powerless or just the pawns of the gods.

Marcela: Does zeus rape her as a swan or does he come out of swan form?

Joe: it's best not to ask questions

Savannah: God powers I guess

Zach: Zeus is the worst

Brandon: many forms, but one god d**k **(please be mindful of language)**

Olivia: I guess when you're Zeus you can just magically do that

Nikki: When the gods approach humans non disguised, do they normally announce themselves as "I am this god" or do they call themselves by another name?

Typically, humans just recognize the deity of the gods. Because they are so different from humans, even when they appear in human form. When we read *Circe* by Madeline Miller, this will return as a theme (the omnipotence and utterly nonhuman/inhuman nature of gods).

Alyssa: Is Cassandra the daughter that Agamemnon sacrificed?

Savannah: No, Cassandra is a Trojan he nabbed

Luke W: No, his daughter is Iphigenia

Sara M: By the way, Did he feed the gods his son as an offering or did they ask for him to make them a meal or something?

Jehan: he invited the gods to a feast, then fed them his son.

Sara M: Just in an act of malice?

Marcela: A lot of cannibalism

Jehan: its weird, some say it was just so he could feed the gods something they have never eaten before.

Yes, Jehan is correct. Tantalus feeds the gods his children as an act of hubris, a matter of pride, showing off, and the gods are horrified by this. Probably not by the cannibalism but Tantalus overreaching in his arrogance.

Richard: After thinking about it for awhile, and intending to not tread on already asked questions, I guess I would ask, especially considering that this play, like Homer's Odyssey, has a lot to do with the Trojan War and the aftereffects with it, why is it often inferred that Homer is most likely not an actual historical figure, whereas the playwrights of this and the Theban Plays are considered to genuinely have been real, historical figures? Is it simply because The Odyssey was passed down via oral storytelling and these were plays? I don't know, I'm curious. Also, I'm just kind of curious as to their obsession with the aftereffects of the Trojan War in their literature, especially considering that the Greek states existed, like, right up to the creation of the Roman Empire, which is a long, long span of time. It seems interesting to be that fascinated with a single war for THAT long a period of time, as if we were talking about the aftereffects of World War II some centuries later.

These are some interesting questions. The simplest way to answer this is that Homer is likely a composite of different bards (not a single author) who orally transmitted the stories through tradition and constant revision. Most scholars do not believe the Iliad and the Odyssey were composed by the same person, but both epic poems share close similarities in language and style. The texts were probably written down sometime between the 8th and 6th centuries BCE. By Aeschylus's time, along with the other Greek tragedians, there was much more of a written rather than oral culture. What we know of classical authorship and surviving texts is really a matter of time, chance, and history (like the fire at library of Alexandria). As for the Trojan War saga, the enduring obsession/interest in this story is probably due to a number of reasons: its blend of history, legend, and myth; its representation of the gods and humans; the themes of war and conflict. In one sense, I suppose, the Trojan War functions as a kind of universal archetype for all wars.

Richard: I think it's **[Troy]** supposed to be in modern-day Turkey

Richard: Somewhere in Asia Minor.

Yes, that is correct.

Jehan: Why did Agamemnon go to war for his Brother's wife?

Jehan: OR sacrifice his daughter for a war for his Brother's wife?

The myths or legends surrounding Helen and the Trojan War tell how when Helen was to be married, there was a competition amongst the Greek warriors/leaders. She was, after all, the most beautiful woman in the world, a daughter of Zeus. She ended up marrying Menelaus (the brother of Agamemnon) and all the Greek leaders swore an oath that should any man try to abduct or steal Helen from her husband, they would go to war on his behalf. This was intended, I believe, to prevent internal/civil war for the Greeks. Of course, they never accounted for the fact that a foreigner, like Paris of Troy, would abduct Helen (or that Helen might willingly run away, as some versions of the myth suggest). In any case they were bound to go to war to recover Helen.

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Savannah: Why bring Clytemnestra to that [the sacrifice of Iphigenia]?

Because Agamemnon tricked her, lying that he was summoning Iphigenia to Aulis (where the Greek army waited to sail) to be married to Achilles. It would only be natural for the mother to accompany her daughter to be married. If Agamemnon forbid Clytemnestra to be there, then she would have suspected something was wrong.

Sara: So he was torn about sacrificing her or no?

Gabrielle: What is the significance of Agamemnon killing his daughter?

Jehan: was the sacrifice accepted in Greek society?

Yes, generally, many religious rituals required sacrifice-but by Aeschylus's time, this was limited to animals or votive offerings. Human sacrifice was a remnant from a much older, less "civilized" time, represented in the old myths and sagas.

Ava: Would there have ever been a way for this family to break this so called curse of murder and cannibalism or was this part of their fate as part of this family?

This is exactly the problem/question Aeschylus is trying to solve. We get his answer by the end of the third play.

Jehan: This seems close to WW1, where a lot of countries went to war because of assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria.

Jehan: it is through suffering we learn the most, but we can learn without suffering.

Olivia: ^^

Sara: She killed a righteous king?

Sara: in their eyes

Jehan: She attempts to take power, something only a man used to have.

Savannah: I bet the chorus would be cool with vengeance if Clytemnestra was the one who sacrificed her daughter and Agamemnon wanted to kill her

Yes! And Clytemnestra accuses the Chorus of this hypocrisy and gendered double standard on p. 162.

Pandora: power was for men and she was a woman so she was compared to men.

Savannah: I know there's no hero/villain but man I kind of have to agree with her

Who is the tragic hero of this play?

Savannah: Cassandra? She gets fated to die for doing nothing wrong really

Luke W: Clytemnestra for me

Pandora: Clytemnestra

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Sara: I mean how much was Agamemnon really killing his daughter for greed?

Ashley: I have to choose Clytemnestra

Abby: Clytemnestra

Richard: I would say Clytemnestra

Sami: Clytemnestra is who I would think

Alyssa: Clytemnestra

Jehan: Why did she wait for 10 years, maybe kill him right after the sacrifice?

He went off to war; she waited for him to return at the end of the war.

Josiah: you would think Agamemnon, since the play is named by him, but it seems Clytemnestra might be another competitor

Connor: Can I pick the daughter? She was sacrificed without a choice, and also is the one who jump started all of these power struggles. She exposed her father's evil, and also exposed her mother's soon to be monstrous downfall. She herself had a tragic ending, and exposing these corruptions is a heroic act itself, even though unintentional on the daughter's part.

Brandon: I'd say Clytemnestra, because all she wanted was to avenge her daughter and rid herself of an unfaithful husband

Ashley: She has the right to avenge her daughter (coming from a mom's point of view)

Yes, that is her argument. Patriarchal rights. We'll hear more about this in the next two plays.

Savannah: One of the criteria of a tragic hero was being in conflict with the chorus but I think you can sympathize with her for watching her husband kill their daughter for a seemingly pointless war, and I kind of pity her because of that. And she's going to fall soon I'm sure

Zach: I think Clytemnestra because she is doing these "questionable" things for justice and he did horrible things for power and glory

Great answer! Yes, she is seeking justice while he is vain and sacrificed their daughter for power, glory, and wealth.

Richard: Agamemnon is barely in the play, and he murdered his own daughter. The play focuses more on Clytemnestra because she's more sympathetic.

I definitely agree with all of you that Clytemnestra is the tragic hero. Aeschylus's sympathies also seem to be with her. She is human, flawed, and faced with a terrible decision that really has no good outcome. Although her ultimate downfall occurs in the second play, by the end of *Agamemnon*, her hubris is clear: she believes that her murder of Agamemnon is just/justified and that this has put an end to the curse of blood vengeance. She believes violence is an acceptable means to peace, that by taking power through murder she is ensuring a peaceful beginning when really she is just continuing the cycle, passing this problem down to her children, Orestes and Electra, as we'll see in the next play.

The Libation Bearers & The Eumenides (Wednesday, Sep 8, 2021)

Abby: who is on the cover of the orestia?

I'm not sure, since we may have different editions of the book. If it's the same as the cover image on the website, then I believe that would be one of the Furies.

Savannah: For the Eumenides: Would all this be happening if it was a father killed? Like would the furies still show up and say that was your blood you killed? Or is it 'worse' since the mother carried the child for nine months so killing her is a worse offense? Apollo goes on about how the father is the 'real' blood on Pg. 260 does that support this very thing happening if the genders were flipped?

This is one of the central conflicts in the play. Apollo is loyal to the Father god, Zeus, and is determined to establish Zeus's reign over the old gods/laws. If Orestes had killed Agamemnon, it's unlikely the Furies would be so furious with him, but there may have been some other punishment for patricide. The Furies are far more invested in avenging matricide, since they represent the ancient female deities.

Olivia: I'm still confused as to what the furies are. Are they people? Ghosts? A metaphor?

They are goddesses but could also be read as avenging spirits. And yes, they might also function as metaphor for the old law of blood feuds.

Pandora: Why did Athena give the Furies power when they were acting like children when they didn't win the court hearing?

Athena is careful to show them respect. Even though they didn't win, they still have a great deal of power. Athena, as goddess of wisdom, sees the advantage in using persuasion and promising them reverence in Athens. She transforms their status as the Eumenides—the Kindly Ones—as benevolent goddesses of the hearth/home.

Sara: First off, I misunderstood in The Libation Bearers that Pylades was a woman, so I started out very confused in this one

No, Pylades is a man, Orestes's friend.

Savannah: From last week for the Libation Bearers: On pg. 191 Orestes talks about Apollo's oracle telling him to see this trial through, is that oracle Cassandra speaking from the Great Beyond? Or was it the Seer of Delphi/some other oracle?

That would have been the Pythia, the Oracle of Delphi. Though I do think it an interesting possibility that it might be Cassandra, who was also a priestess of Apollo. However, I think it is Apollo directing the Oracle to urge Orestes to murder Clytemnestra and then have faith in the outcome of the trial. My guess is that Apollo wants vengeance for the murder of Cassandra, but that's just an inference (never actually stated in the play).

Shelby: Are the furies that followed oresties a more conscience kind of thing or is it a real thing that people know about and just oresties can see them.

They are real. Keep in mind, in Greek myth, the gods are as visible and real to humans as other humans. They do however torment Orestes's conscience in the attempt to drive him mad.

Isaac: What's the deal with the furies? what are they? Are they like demons ghost or gods?

Connor: On the bottom of pages 266 and 267 roughly beginning at lines 790 and 820, the Furies say the same lines I believe word for word. This happens again at the bottoms of page 268 and 269 beginning lines 847 and 879. I just want to clarify, is this supposed to happen or is it a print error? If it is indeed supposed to occur, it as a response too Athene does not always make sense, as the same words are used for two different statements from her, two different times.

As we discussed in class, this is not a typo. The Furies are relentless in their drive to retain their power—vengeance as justice. They are not listening to Athena but forcing their case, making their appeal and insisting on their rights. Athena listens to them and finds a way to appease their anger through reasonable persuasion, offering them a new and different kind of power based on peace and prosperity.

Alyssa: Still a bit confused about what the furies actually are

Brandon: How do the furies work? are they something left over from the "old gods?" eldritch beings, or just some kind of force like karma?

Ava: Since Clytaemnestra's ghost is in this play, did the Greeks believe in other spiritual beings outside of the the god/godesses, furies, and ghost?

Yes, they believed in the afterlife, represented by the underworld, which was ruled over by Hades (Zeus's brother). When the Olympians defeated the Titans, Zeus took command of the sky, Poseidon the seas, and Hades the underworld. The underworld is richly imagined by the Greeks in many of their myths and stories. For example, Odysseus must make a journey to the underworld, where he encounters the dead heroes of the Trojan War, like Achilles and Agamemnon (who tells Odysseus of how he was murdered by Clytemnestra). The Greeks strongly believed in the spirits of the dead.

Marcela: I was disappointed by the outcome of Orestes's trial. He admitted to killing his mother, why was he able to walk away a free man?

Because he had Zeus, Apollo, and Athena on his side! They are determined to solidify patriarchal law and order.

Sami: Honestly the furies are really confusing on what they are

Grant: If Athena is this wise and enlightened Goddess then why does she have to enlist the help of 10 mortals to help her decide in the ruling of the "case"?

I think this represents Athena establishing justice through participation of citizens to determine the law and punishments for crimes. It's a symbolic move on Aeschylus's part, illustrating how Athens is a "civilized" city-state moving away from tyranny—the rule of one—to democracy—the rule of many. Athena is trying to model this for the Athenians. If she were the only one to decide the case (though she essentially does as the tie breaker), then she'd be a tyrant—instead she sets up a court of law with a jury that hears both sides and then votes, ultimately resolving things without further bloodshed. Aeschylus is celebrating Athens for its

attempts at founding a democracy while also warning Athens of the dangers of slipping back to the old tribal ways or rules of kings/aristocracy.

Zach: Why was Athena so quick to agree with Apollo that a man is more important than a woman. I know Athena is a very strong and powerful goddess and also very quick to anger. I'm just surprised she would go along with that.

She is the daughter of Zeus, emerging fully born out of his head. She ultimately owes her loyalty to the Father. At the same time, she is trying to convince the Furies to become more benevolent goddesses, "domesticating" them in service to the prosperity of the home, which would be the role of women in a Greek patriarchal society. This is not to say women were believed to be less important than men, only that their place should be in service to husband, family, and a well-run home. Women were viewed as important and central to upholding the family, and women who did so were praised and respected (see Penelope, wife of Odysseus). Thus, Clytemnestra is viewed as monstrous and unfeminine for trying to take the place of Agamemnon. We might even think of Electra as a human version of Athena—she is loyal to her father (the rule of the father); she's also angry at her mother, Clytemnestra, who basically keeps Electra a prisoner. Electra believes Clytemnestra fails her as a mother, since Electra remains unmarried without any of her own power or status, which she would have if she were married. In other words, women can often buy into the gender roles or rules of patriarchy if they believe it benefits them. At least, that would be a more contemporary feminist reading; keep some of this in mind when we read *House of Names*.

Victoria: With Athena agreeing with Apollo that men are more important than women, is that something that was common in that time? The mutual "understanding" that men were held higher than women?

See my answer above.

Joe: So was the entire plot of The Eumenides just a plan by Apollo to save Orestes from the Furies? If that's the case then why haven't the Furies attacked anyone else in that family? Clytemnestra killed out of revenge, so why didn't the Furies attack her?

I think the entire plot was a plan by Aeschylus to illustrate and celebrate the movement from vengeance to justice, violence to peace, chaos to prosperity. The Furies represent matrilineal rights and are on Clytemnestra's side for avenging the murder/sacrifice of her daughter, Iphigenia. Apollo is determined to make a point of humiliating and triumphing over the Furies, and reads as pretty misogynist for contemporary readers, but don't mistake Apollo's point of view with that of Aeschylus. Aeschylus, through Athena's ability to appease the Furies, is more concerned with peaceful resolution, and I think he is far more sympathetic to the Furies. Aeschylus understood, and with a great deal of wisdom, that in creating a new peaceful society, it was still important to keep elements of the old world or belief systems; he believed in balance and an ideal of equity—though not the same as our own contemporary ideals (after all, Athens still had slaves/non-citizens).

Brandon: I thought she was a Lannister. *comedy drums*



Luke P: The furies what are they, I looked it up and found that they were female chthonic deities of vengeance. What does this mean?

Chthonic translates as "in, under, or beneath the earth", from "earth") and literally means "subterranean", but the word in English describes [deities](#) or spirits of the [underworld](#), especially in the [Ancient Greek religion](#). The Greek word *khthon* is one of several for "earth"; it typically refers to that which is under the earth, rather than the living surface of the land (as [Gaia](#) or 'Ge' does), or the land as territory. (Wikipedia)

In other words, the Furies are goddesses of the underworld—which makes sense if their law is based on vengeance of the dead. Athena transforms them, still of the earth, but now goddesses of fertility, the hearth, the domestic realm.

Ashley: So what is Athena's thoughts on the tied vote that freed Orestes? Clearly the furies are angry but Athena seems to try and calm them down, by saying it's just a tie so he's really not free? I'm confused by that part.

Athena casts the tie-breaking vote that frees and clears Orestes of his crime so that he can return to Mycenae and rule in peace, the curse of the House of Atreus finally at an end. She tries to placate the Furies with the fact that it was a tied vote, that the citizens/jury listened to their side, and at least half supported them. This way, Athena reassures them that it was a fair trial—following the Mean/the middle way—and that they can take on a new role, no longer as the goddesses of vengeance since the laws of justice will henceforth be decided by a democratic trial and not bloodshed.

Jehan: That was a point that I made in my blog. Apollo seems to be fighting a proxy war against furies.

Yes, Jehan, great point! He is fighting the Furies on behalf of Zeus, but Athena finds a more peaceful resolution through persuasion, respect, and logic.

Sara: Did I miss whatever happened to Electra?

Nope, she just disappears in *The Libation Bearers*. Sophocles and Euripides both wrote tragedies exploring Electra's character and role more thoroughly. Aeschylus seems to write her off as just an avenging force to convince Orestes of the need to murder their mother. Again, we'll get a more nuanced depiction of her when we read *House of Names*.

Now that we've discussed them in more detail, who or what do you think the Furies represent?

Pandora: the old gods? they might represent the past transitioning into the future

Hunter: I felt as though they are personified woes idk

Connor: I believe they are the personified version of justice, vengeance, and corrections. Not good or evil necessarily, just the embodiment of correcting wrongdoings.

Savannah: Are they something only women could invoke? It just seems like the way we have been talking the hysterical almost harpy-esque furies would be a woman's version of a curse? I'm hoping they aren't just something a woman could invoke because I don't know how I'd feel about that

Brandon: personification of violence in pursuit of "justice"

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Ava: The furies seem to represent the over looming darkness of this blood feud

Luke W: The furies seem to act like vigilantes, taking justice into their own hands for crimes men have done.

Pandora: I agree Luke

Connor: I do agree with that passage, however, I am curious as to whether or not we should trust how Apollo depicts them. As you stated, Apollo is not an impartial judge, meaning would he not personify the furies to be more evil than they actually are? Especially using works such as vile and dark pits.

Ashley: So does Electra and Orestes just not care about their sister who died and only cares about their father they were blood

Josiah: I feel like a part the furies take is a representation of woman empowerment and how they are depicted as evil because of the time. Like "this idea is false because we believe a man is higher than a woman" is something believed in that time and is seen throughout the play, especially at the end when Athena shows that Orestes justice was more important because she was avenging his father, rather his mother's blood

Josiah: Is there a bigger significance to the amount of so many representations of justice? Was it a demonstration of how many sides there are or what they are in how people view justice?

Yes, the entire trilogy is concerned with different definitions, rules, beliefs, and practices surrounding justice. This would be a good topic to explore in your blogs!

Christa Wolf, *Cassandra* (Wed, Sep 15, 2021)

Grant: So in Cassandra's refusal to be with a "War Hero" it leads her being another female loss in the war. So now that she is looking back at it does she wish she went with Aeneas and left Troy? Or does she still stand by her values of not being associated with war in a sense? If that makes any sense.

This is a great question and is linked to Wolf's overall anti-war theme as well as her reason for writing Cassandra's story—because it's always the war heroes who are glorified and whose stories are told. We should discuss this more on Monday once we've finished the novel, since we'll have even more insights then.

Sara: I considered the priestess' a lot like nuns, but I thought nuns have to stay celibate and its obvious that the priestess are not (unless I misunderstand the group of women she was with in those scenes). The priestess' sounded more like slaves. Is this just because they are women, therefore having no rights or whatever?

The priestesses are not equivalent to nuns, since Wolf is grounding the religious offices, rituals, and beliefs in Ancient Greek customs and beliefs. Although we see similarities in gendered hierarchies with Catholicism, we should not impose our own gendered, sexual, or religious identities and roles onto the Greeks. As discussed in class, sexual intercourse was part of the ancient fertility rites, dating back to the Minoan civilization and paleolithic times. Wolf is also exploring a shift from matriarchal-centered goddess worship and/or fertility cults

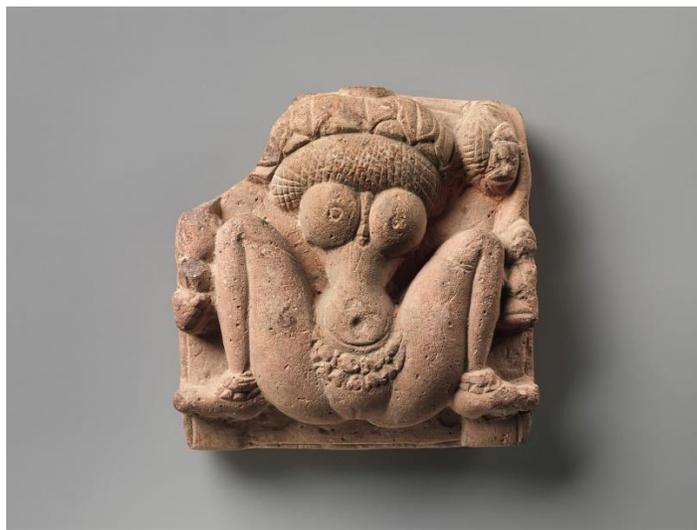
to patriarchal religions, which notably expanded over time alongside conflicts and disputes over territory. The Trojan War was most likely a dispute over territory and trading/shipping rights in the Dardanelles, as Wolf (and archaeologists) have suggested. Helen seems merely to be an excuse for the war, according to Wolf's version. She is an object to be fought over as a matter of male or national honor, but really, *Cassandra* seems to indicate, it is an economic/territorial dispute. But back to the religious sexual rites, these were considered normal in most societies that worshipped fertility goddesses. Some of the oldest archaeological finds of religious figurines, across many cultures in the paleolithic and ancient periods, were represented by fertility goddesses, such as these:



The *Venus of Willendorf* is a 4.4-inch tall carving discovered in Willendorf, Austria. It is believed to have been crafted between 30,000 and 25,000 BCE, making it one of the world's oldest known works of art.



An 8,000-year-old statuette of what could be a fertility goddess unearthed at a Neolithic site in Turkey



Lotus-Headed Fertility Goddess Lajja Gaurica. 6th century India (Madhya Pradesh)



This Minoan Mother goddess figurine (around 1600 BC), found in Crete, would have prefigured the Mycenaean and Trojan cultures by about 400 years. Minoan society was heavily influential of the societies living in Ancient Greece and Asia Minor (where Troy is presumed to have been located). You can see the serpent imagery is heavily associated with the goddess (though I'm not sure why there is a cat on top of her head). Wolf is most likely heavily borrowing from Minoan religious rites and iconography, especially in the various prophetic dreams and religious practices of Cassandra's culture.

Savannah: Pg. 3 and 5 Cassandra is given a way to commit suicide, why doesn't she take it? She knows she's going to die anyway, why not on her own terms? Did she not want to mess with fate? I know you were just talking about fate so I'm sorry if I missed you talking about the suicide options already!

We discussed this in class (see below for student responses to this question). For me, I think it's because she's compelled to remain a witness all the way up until her death. She knows death is coming and has no hope of surviving but life is also precious, every moment of it.

Pandora: Helen was never taken? Was it her choice to leave? What caused Cassandra's seizure on page 39?

Helen was taken by Paris, but then he lost her to the Egyptian king who took her from Paris. Wolf is following Euripides' play, *Helen*, as the source text for this part of Helen's myth. At the end of the Trojan War, Helen is eventually reunited with her husband, Menelaus. As discussed in class, Wolf uses this part of the myth to explore the manufacturing of war on the part of the Trojans. Helen is just a "phantom," the Big Lie, behind the war. Cassandra sees they cannot win a war based on such a lie. Cassandra's seizure on p. 39, one of her first, is brought on by her prophetic vision and understanding that so much of the war is based on falsehood, including false prophecies by Calchas, who was told to provide "favorable predictions" in support of the war. It's an instance where Cassandra suddenly sees the ugly truth of her own family and society, something that she had suppressed or turned a blind eye to, so it's ultimately a traumatic moment for her. It's like Cassandra has a physical reaction to the truth; the truth is solid and cannot be denied even though everyone around her both sees the truth and denies it at the same time.

Alyssa: Cassandra mentions her nurse a few times. Is this her nurse specifically Or is this like the families nurse?

Arisbe, the mother of Marpessa, is equivalent to something like the royal wet-nurse or nanny (not a medical nurse, though she does have lots of knowledge of medicinal herbs).

Ava: When Cassandra mentions different peoples weapons, example being Marpessa's silence and Agamemnon's blustering, are these weapons a good and or a bad thing? Are these "weapons" what leads to their ultimate demise? And what would Cassandra's weapon be?

This is a great question! The weapons could be good or bad depending on how one uses them. Silence is an especially strong theme here, as a weapon women can use to protect themselves, but it can harm them if they don't speak out. See my lecture where I talk a lot about the use of silence and speaking in the novel. Cassandra's weapons are her ability to see and speak the truth (though you could argue for other things too), but her weapons are also turned against her because no one in Troy wants to hear the truth. In this sense, Wolf plays with the whole myth of Apollo's curse—that Cassandra would be able to warn her people of the future, but no one would listen, they would call her mad. The irony, in Wolf's version, is that Cassandra eventually realizes everyone sees and knows the same things as her, they are just denying the reality, choosing to believe in propaganda and myth, choosing to conform to the political silencing that is imposed on anyone who speaks out against the war (like Cassandra).

Richard: I was going to ask two questions. One being, though it was already answered, the idea that Wolf's choice of writing this novel and what it had to do with her own time, where she's living in East Germany 40 some years after WWII, yet still paying for it.

Yes, she uses the myth to reflect on her own experiences as a child in Germany during WWII and an adult in East Germany after the war. Much of her work grapples with her past, as a member of the Aryan (Nazi) Youth party (during the war) and a reluctant Stasi informant in the late 1950s, questioning to what extent citizens are complicit with state violence or coerced to conform. Kind of linked to the Greek themes of Fate and chance/choice.

Luke W: Why didn't Cassandra take her own life? Does she not see a difference between murder and suicide, or is she just accepting her fate?

Marcela: You touched on this a little bit when you were speaking on Apollo's relationship with Cassandra. Why is Apollo in love with her, so in love to gift her with the ability to see the truth and visions if she doesn't feel the same way about him?

Above all, the Greek gods love those humans who love and revere them most. They're a pretty egotistical bunch, but basically, they can't exist without the love and faith of humans. Reminds me of Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*. This is explored a lot more in Miller's *Circe*, which we're reading later in the semester. Cassandra is determined to be a priestess of Apollo, so what's not to love from Apollo's perspective if she's someone who wants to dedicate herself to his rites and worship? The problem for Cassandra, though, is she wants to be a priestess to gain power and status (in her family and society) but does not want to submit to the power of Apollo, and thus he curses her.

Abby: When Cassandra talks about Clytemnestra, she seems like she thinks she was so dishonored by the act of her killing her husband. Was she mad?

Not sure I follow the question. Especially since the word, "mad," in Cassandra's case could mean anger or insanity. I think Cassandra actually respects Clytemnestra, she sees themselves as equals (as powerful women). Neither woman has any love for Agamemnon.

Jada: Do you think Wolf is passing the sense of security she felt when relating her life to that as Cassandra's to those who read it as a way to feel the same?

I also need a bit more clarification here. I do think Wolf is relating her life to Cassandra's story, and as a way for many women (or oppressed peoples) to see themselves reflected by Cassandra. We will discuss this much more next week when we read the first essay by Wolf about why she is rewriting Cassandra's narrative and what she hopes to achieve.

Olivia: I just don't understand why she didn't commit suicide. Did she think she was continuing the line of murder? Or did she see that even if she killed herself, Clytemnestra would still kill Agamemnon?

Yes, partly, she knows she has no power to stop Clytemnestra, and I don't think she even wants to, since Cassandra sympathizes with Clytemnestra over the murder of Iphigenia. Perhaps with Cassandra choosing to live and show up in Mycenae, she thinks this might even solidify for Clytemnestra the plan to kill her husband, but Cassandra also sees it would happen either way.

Richard: The second being that, do you think she chose to write this in the way that she did, where past, present, and future (Wolf's time) are all intermingled because of Cassandra being a Seer?

I really like this insight about the temporal structure of the narrative; it does not just reflect how memory works, but as someone who can see the future and has lived through the future that she foresaw (the fall of Troy), Cassandra is simultaneously located in the past, present, and future. And yes, she is present in Wolf's future as Wolf tries to imagine Cassandra's past.

Connor: She had refused to be associated or part of the war, in the sense of being complicit, but even her refusal to be complicit, she still ended up a part of war, a prisoner and made an example of. With that in mind, and that she was prophetic, did she intentionally choose that option to be a type of martyr, or did she believe that her dissociation with war at first, would not come back to haunt her?

This is an interesting question. On one level, I think Wolf is indicating that all members of society are caught up in the war machine; that we cannot escape it. We are complicit or we resist; we are victims or perpetrators, or sometimes in-between. I believe Wolf is asking us to grapple with the moral ambiguities of wartime. I don't know if Cassandra chooses to be a martyr since she ultimately does not want to die for anyone's cause. This is worth returning to next week once we've read the rest of the novel.

Ari: Who chooses the priestess/seer and members of the group? Aside from the gods, is it its own autonomous entity where people are selected from outside of it, or its own sort of role within the society where one can only be born into it?

I think it's a combination. People can be born into it, they can be selected, or they are called to it as a vocation, or they have a prophetic gift (like Cassandra).

Savannah: Just a general comment I am living for all the Agamemnon bashing in this book. It's beautiful

Pandora: agreed

Zach: Did she have an option of just not being a priestess of Apollo after he tried to have sex with her or was she stuck in that role

She has been initiated and dedicated to that role; plus, I don't think she wants to give it up, nor does she feel she has a choice. Even if she was no longer a priestess, she would still have the gift/curse of prophecy. Cassandra also wants this role—she wants the power and status, at first—but then as the war drags on, and she is silenced for speaking out, she wants to escape. Pay attention to the passages where she talks about the caves and the women there, who function as a counter-society to Troy and the official religion, a place of sanctuary where Cassandra can discover an alternative to being a princess and priestess, a different kind of community that is about life, not “killing and dying.”

Sara: Apollo gave her the gift/curse of being a prophet but Cassandra mentions there was a night when snakes were licking their ears and it was said they will probably become prophets, so was she always destined to become a prophet and in the same vein, also always destined for everyone to forget that happened with the snakes and not believe her?

Dream imagery throughout the book is important. Mainly Wolf's point is that dreams and prophecies are not solid or one thing but up for multiple interpretations.

Brandon: So, if Helen was a myth, a lie, was it just a convenient *cassus belli* for the Greeks to take down Troy?

Yup, for both sides. The Greeks believe Troy has Helen and the Trojans know they don't have Helen. Also, as Cassandra notes with the recollection of the three SHIPS (diplomatic trips to Greece), tensions and conflicts leading up to the war had long been brewing. Helen is just an excuse and never the real cause.

Alyssa: Haha yes, I agree Savannah

Marcela: How is their fate determined?

As discussed in class, the Greeks believed fate was determined by the gods, namely the Moirai:

“...any of three goddesses who determined human destinies, and in particular the span of a person's life and his allotment of misery and suffering. Homer speaks of Fate (*moira*) in the singular as an impersonal power and sometimes makes its functions interchangeable with those of the Olympian gods. From the time of the poet Hesiod (8th century BC) on, however, the Fates were personified as three very old women who spin the threads of human destiny. Their names were Clotho (Spinner), Lachesis (Allotter), and Atropos (Inflexible). Clotho spun the “thread” of human fate, Lachesis dispensed it, and Atropos cut the thread (thus determining the individual's moment of death).” (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Fate-Greek-and-Roman-mythology>)

Joe: Following up with what Ari asked, are all seer's people who have been blessed by gods or are these mostly just people who pretend to predict the future for their own benefit?

It seems, in Wolf's novel, that it's a combination of the two. Some are truly gifted, but most are just manipulating smoke and shadows (or animal entrails), telling what people want to hear, or what they are commanded to foretell as part of propaganda and/or political strategy.

Emily: A few people have asked this but I was also curious as to why she didn't commit suicide

Shelby: when cassandra mentioned her nurse, does she know that cassandra wants to commit suicide. And Cassandra had the chance to so why didn't she.

Janelle: Why exactly is Cassandra referring to Clytemnestra the way she did on pg 9? Does she hate her for what she did or why does she say that she is the woman she thought she was.

As I said earlier, Cassandra does not hate Clytemnestra but partly admires her. Clytemnestra proves that she is far superior to Agamemnon, that she would “not share the throne with this nonentity.” She sympathizes with her, assuming he “treated her vilely while he still controlled her”—in other words, he is despicable, never knowing the true power and strength of Clytemnestra, and a fool for not seeing she would murder him for the death of their daughter. Cassandra says that Clytemnestra “is racked with hatred”—it’s palpable and easily visible when she welcomes him home. Cassandra realizes that because of the kind of woman Clytemnestra is, as someone who will no longer be controlled or insulted by her husband, “that the queen cannot spare my life.” Clytemnestra has no personal animosity toward Cassandra, she is just a symbol of Agamemnon’s insults and disrespect. Cassandra questions, “When did my hatred disappear?”—meaning, unlike Clytemnestra, she is no longer driven by hatred, anger, or revenge; at the end of her life, she is trying to reach some peace within herself and has also learned that hatred is just part of the never-ending cycle of violence.

Josiah: Do you think that Cassandra, being a form of Wolf’s interpretations, is similar or if not the same as the feminism going on nowadays? Does she help in displaying those emotions, thoughts, etc.?

Yes, absolutely! But we will save that for next Wednesday once we’ve finished the book and read the first essay. Do keep this in mind as you keep reading.

Isaac: I was a little confused about the ships, were they war ships? and what was their importance?

The SHIPS were diplomatic missions to Greece (see my answer above to Brandon’s question).

Savannah: Also real quick are they a couple? Marpessa just in love with Cassandra? Or am I misreading their interactions?

No, they are not a couple. Marpessa has grown up with Cassandra, as her childhood friend and then her servant. They do love each other, like family, but it’s also ambivalent, at least more so from Marpessa, considering she is of the lower class and never has as much power as Cassandra. They have a complicated relationship. Marpessa, like her mother Arisbe, does not at all act servile toward Cassandra, often criticizing her or exasperated with Cassandra’s blind privilege, but she is dedicated to her.

So, after looking at the passage on pp. 2-3, why does everyone think Cassandra chooses not to commit suicide?

Savannah: She wants to see how it ends? Wants to see Clytemnestra to know who will kill her?

Pandora: She hasn't seen what she's supposed to see?

Ashley: Didn't she just want to enjoy her best life

Sara: This one was really confusing for me, I think too much of it went right over my head

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Connor: I guess maybe then it takes away from her point of not being associated with war? Killing herself to get away from fate when war could have saved her, gives power to war.

Ava: Cassandra wanted to see what would happen, because she had hope that things might change.

Isaac: I think she knows she still has more to do before she dies.

Janelle: That was my same understanding ^^ I feel like she wants to see more of her life before she actually lets go completely.

Josiah: I felt like she also just wanted to see how things played out

Savannah: Is there something maybe that she wants to see herself be right in the end? I can't remember exactly where but she talks about how she'll be proven right eventually and maybe she wants to keep going to be right? Just so she doesn't feel insane because this poor girl is being gaslit constantly and seeing herself be right must be rewarding?

Jehan: I think she wanted her death to be valuable. To mean something.

Ashley: Is that part of the reason why she wants to become a priestess? Even though when she said she's felt emptiness since childhood?

These are all strong answers!

Jehan: What are some decisions or lack of action that she regrets?

That will probably become clearer as we read to the end of the novel. Many of her regrets, though, are linked to the fact that she remained so willfully blind to what was going on in Troy before she began to speak out, or that she wasted so many of the war years not living more fully, not choosing an option other than or outside of war.

Jehan: Did Calchas had prophetic powers from the gods? Cassandra on a later page appears to not believe in Calchas's prophecies. Was Calchas gifted?

No, Cassandra indicates Calchas is a fraud, whose loyalties (and prophecies) are easily bought and only used to advance his own interests. After all, Calchas is the one who convinced Agamemnon that he needed to appease Artemis by sacrificing Iphigenia.

Savannah: Okay so was it normal for priests to sleep with priestesses? Or Panthous just a really gross dude who is just like that with Cassandra

Yeah, he's pretty gross, and Cassandra eventually loathes and rejects him, but as discussed in class, sexual intercourse could be viewed as part of the religious rites. Also, the Trojans are still influenced by more matriarchal religious practices than the Greeks, which Wolf seems to associate with a greater degree of sexual freedom for the women of Troy (as opposed to the Greeks). And, as discussed in class, the Greeks and Trojans have very different norms and mores when it comes to sexual relationships (at least different from our contemporary society). For example, within Greek society there was a class of women referred to as the:

"Hetaira, (Greek: "female companion"), one of a class of professional independent courtesans of ancient Greece who, besides developing physical beauty, cultivated their minds and talents to

a degree far beyond that allowed to the average Attic woman. Usually living fashionably alone, or sometimes two or three together, the hetairai enjoyed an enviable and respected position of wealth and were protected and taxed by the state. Though they were generally foreigners, slaves, or freedwomen, their freedom was greater than that of the married woman, who was bound to seclusion. That their homes were frequented by married men was not censured by society. They were often hired as entertainers for symposia and family sacrifices. The hetairai of Corinth and Athens were especially noted for their outstanding physical and cultural accomplishments." (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/hetaira>)

Sara: So the reason why they would seem like slaves to use is only the aspect of being forced to have sex with these men, otherwise they had respect in society?

I don't think they are forced, at least as Cassandra tells it, they are willing participants because of the religious rite of initiation. The sex would not have been seen as coerced or degrading. In fact, the one time Panthous attempts to force himself on Cassandra, she rejects him and never has sex with him again. This raises important issues, though, because we will see later how the women of Troy, including Cassandra, are subjected to rape as "spoils" of war.

Grant: I think at one point the job had decently high respect for their job but it got degraded by the patriarchy over time.

Yes, sex work was not at all viewed the way we (as a society/culture) view it now (see above).

Christa Wolf, *Cassandra* (Mon, Sep 15, 2021)

Pandora: What happened to Cassandra's faith in the gods?

I think she loses her faith during the course of the war. She sees how the oracles are used by Troy for war propaganda and how the religious rituals and beliefs become twisted in service of human conflicts.

Savannah: Pg. 79 Cassandra says "Apollo, if you do exist after all..." Does she think she got the curse/gift from some other entity? And on 98 she says she's stopped believing in the gods but how does she explain her cure/gift then? Does she think she's gone crazy and she doesn't have a gift/curse? Or am I very much overthinking this

We discussed in class at length how Wolf interprets/rewrites this part of Cassandra's myth—she takes the mythology and gives it more of a realistic representation. Cassandra's gift/curse is interpreted through her dream; also, often when she breaks out in some prophetic speech, it's not really prophecy but her seeing the "truth" of things that others refuse to see or acknowledge. Her madness really stems from the madness of her society. She also feels divided within herself—can she be loyal to her family/Troy while also remaining loyal to her own integrity and morals?

Alyssa: I noticed at the beginning of the novel and at the end where we left off on page 138 us in third person while the rest of the novel is in first person. Why did she do it this way? Was she just trying to emphasize this repetition to show importance for these closing and opening statements ?

Yes, Wolf ties things back to the beginning. We shift from Cassandra's point of view back to Wolf's perspective/present, standing before the Lion Gate at the ruins of Mycenae, as witness to the place where Cassandra died.

Olivia: Maybe I missed it, but what was the whole point of trying to set Polyxena as bait for Achilles? I mean what was going to be gained if they actually did go through with it? How would this have fixed anything?

They believed if they killed Achilles they would win the war; they succeed in killing him but still end up defeated. We discussed at length why this plan/scene is so central to Cassandra's narrative and her realization that she could no longer remain complicit with or silent about her own people's blindness and self-destruction.

Abby: What did wolf mean when she said on page 107 "They asked Apollo to take the baby from her?"

They were praying for Apollo to cause Polyxena to abort her pregnancy from Andron. It's a weird scene, since Arisbe, or any other medicinal healer would have known how to expel an unwanted pregnancy without intervention of a god.

Isaac: I think I might be missing something about the role that the gods played in ancient Greece. Why do they fight on the battlefield with humans, and why do they pick certain sides to fight with?

We discussed in class (see below for student answers to this question).

Marcela: What is the significance of the stone lions at the end of the novel?

See my answer above to Alyssa's question. The stone lions are depicted on the Lion Gate entrance to the citadel of Mycenae.

Jehan: When Troilus went into the temple, was he expecting Achilles to let him go? It seems as though Achilles is only called a murderer when he is in the temple.

As discussed in class, yes, Troilus believed the Temple of Apollo would secure sanctuary. Achilles breaks all of these "civilized" rules of war, exposing there is nothing "civilized" in war—its brutality and violence has no bounds (as represented by "Achilles the brute").

Ava: Since this was her fate, would she have been able to change it if she chose to run away with Aeneas or would her fate end up catching back up with her? Was this an inexitable fate or was it subject to change?

I think Cassandra's "fate" is not necessarily to die at the hands of Clytemnestra but that she is fated to bear witness to the truth and her life until the very end. It's against her nature to run away, like Aeneas. She has struggled and worked hard to remain a witness, to not run from the truth.

Grant: I know this may not pertain to Cassandra in the novel but I noticed that while I was doing my resource page that there are different "versions" and more specifically different versions when talking about how she receives the power to tell prophecies. So my question is how does she official get them does she sleep with Apollo first or not at all?

I don't know if there is an answer to this—the origins of Cassandra's source myth. Myths are passed down over centuries and receive different interpretations and versions based on the storyteller. Kind of the theme of our whole class. 😊

Sara: Pg 138 "The pain will remind us of each other. When we meet later, if there is a later, we will recognize each other." Is this her wondering about an after life? Because at this point she knows how it all ends?

Possibly? I think she is imagining a community of survivors who have a shared narrative of pain and trauma. Even if she knows how it all ends, I always find that Cassandra still clings to the possibility of life and survival (not just an afterlife).

Ashley: So her father disowned her because she didn't speak up of the death of his son Troilus? Or was it because he was murdered in the temple? I feel like he would be more upset over Hector since he was considered the chief hero of the family. Why would she say anything when the people didn't believe her anyways but they were all mad at her? Also, when Hector had the dream of getting "Pushed out of the war womb" was he foreseeing his own death?

To your last question, that's a great interpretation of Hector's dream! Also, "pushed out of the war womb," indicates how his own myth of war hero is born out of his death. Priam ultimately disowns Cassandra because she refuses to agree with or condone their plan to use Polyxena as bait for Achilles (as discussed in class). And it's not just this one instance but years of Cassandra trying to push back and years of Trojan women being silenced and pushed aside during the war. Cassandra also asks herself why she just didn't comply/agree—she cannot remain silent or neutral in the face of corrupt power, even if no one wants to hear her.

Brandon: Did Penthesilea actually exist in greek myth, or was she a creation of the author?

Yes, she is an actual figure of myth, as the leader of the Amazons. We didn't get into discussion of the Amazons in Wolf's novel, but certain questions are raised by Wolf's inclusion of Penthesilea: Wolf represents women who love to wage wars in the character of Penthesilea and the Amazonian warriors. How does she represent these women? Why does Cassandra keep away from these women? How is Cassandra's position and approach to war different from these women's? Do you agree with Wolf's suggestion that such women are mere proxies for patriarchy's worst excesses? (see pp. 117-120)

Layth: I read a little bit about Wolf herself and I'm wondering what prompted her to go see all the real world places that are in the Oresteia and the other greek plays.

We will discuss this Wednesday after reading Wolf's first essay where she writes about her trip to Greece and various inspirations for *Cassandra*.

Connor: Cassandra, having the prophetic foresight from Apollo, can see what is around her as it relates to time. Being as in some interpretations, this is often a curse, is there hate or disdain for the Gods, or is that not a feeling she would have because it might worsen her situation to be even more out of favor with them?

This is an interesting question. In Wolf's version, Cassandra is not disdainful of the gods, but of how humans have twisted their versions and relationships with the gods.

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Olivia: The author makes it seem like Cassandra was just another female casualty of war, but is she? She constantly talks about how Cassandra was feared by many and people from everywhere knew of her powers (even if they didn't believe her). So is she just another casualty? She's not like any other woman, not even her sister.

This is complicated. Yes, Cassandra has a lot of power and status—she often even presents herself as superior to or above other women (part of her hubris/character flaw). In the end, though, she realizes she is no different from other women, that war and patriarchy turn all women into objects, “living statues.”

Sara: End of ph 129 I think, She is talking about her overwhelming pain and it makes sense that she would be in physical pain but I was wondering if it felt like it was mental pain or just the physical pain?

So much of Cassandra's pain is mental pain—trauma and dissociation, though often accompanied by physical pain (her imprisonment/torture, her rape). She is overwhelmed by the pain of losing her home, her identity, her family, her very sense of wholeness.

Why are the gods so involved in human lives and conflicts?

Savannah: Boredom? They've got nothing to lose and might as well go fight. Need that worship/praise?

Isaac: I think its probably based on who worships them most but im really not sure

Zach: as forms of entertainment?

Olivia: I agree with Savannah ^

Pandora: I was going to say the gods were bored.

Josiah: Does Wolf's Cassandra seem similar to feminism that is going on around us nowadays? Or was it really only more similar for the time it was created; around the Cold War?

I think Wolf is speaking to the conditions of women's lives throughout much of history, as part of her feminist critique of patriarchy and war.

Janelle: on pg 117 there is a quote that says “they kill whomever they love, love in order to kill” what is meant by this

I believe this is Panthous criticizing the Amazons. He fears them and their violence (from a patriarchal perspective). He sees them as women out of control, and Cassandra doesn't seem to agree with his perspective, even though she has trouble with the Amazons—she is trying to understand how both men and women are capable of violence and hatred, that women are not just naturally pacifists. Women can be complicit with the violence of patriarchy and war.

Brandon: well, when half your city dies of the plague one year, and the next you get massive crops.....easiest explanation is fickle gods

Savannah: I guess they think Achilles is the only thing that's really giving the Greeks power? If he's out of the game they'd win or at least a better shot

Abby: They want themselves to always be right

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Savannah: Cassandra knows Achilles doesn't have actual interest in women (pg. 83) and is very harsh with them so I think she's calling out using Polyxena because she knows he's not really interested in her?

Discussion of Cassandra's dream about the sun and moon—which shines brighter (p. 87)? Why does Marpessa tell her this “a completely perverted question”?

Sara: Because they are both necessary?

Brandon: no matter how she answers, a god will be pissed

Olivia: Because they both shine bright in their own way? Why compare them?

Pandora: I think its because there's multiple answers based on opinions.

Hunter: Comparison is bad when the gods are the one who created both to begin with

Josiah: Because they each have their own purpose in brightness, one is brighter in its own way

Grant: it's sort of a trick question

Savannah: Also I feel like Cassandra knows how much of a screw up Paris is so why are we trusting him to shoot the arrow?!

Ashley: unethical. Was her vision of Troilus unclear because he was killed in the temple? I thought she mentioned something about it being foggy. Or unclear.

Savannah: Want to get this out to maybe get a response for the discussion archives: I love how Clytemnestra was handled in this book, Cassandra and her bits were really interesting. (Page 42 being sooo intriguing to me) I think it fits with the theme of women being forced to play a part, or to fight each other rather than the patriarchy

I agree with this, Savannah! Clytemnestra, in Cassandra's view, is not a monster but a woman of power playing a role to retain that power. Cassandra sees and respects Clytemnestra (to an extent) and also realizes her murder is impersonal—Clytemnestra isn't jealous of Cassandra, as so many versions of the myth assert, but is trapped by her role. She cannot allow Cassandra to live because this would only weaken her own power. Cassandra doesn't agree with this but sees and accepts the fact of it.