If We Were Birds

Dramaturgical Actor Packet

Connecticut Repertory Theater, Spring 2019

Directed by Helene Kvale

Dramaturgy by Lizz Mangan and Eddie Vitcavage

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A Note from the Dramaturgs

If We Were Birds deals with mature content that may be considered triggering to some, including:

- Violence
- Rape
- Brutality
- Infanticide
- Cannibalism

If at any point throughout this process you feel uncomfortable or are impacted by the material, please know that there are many resources available to you. Do not hesitate to reach out to Helene (helene.kvale@uconn.edu) or Marie (marie.percy@uconn.edu) with any concerns that you have. It is our job to create a safe environment in which you all feel secure and comfortable.

Similarly, Counseling and Mental Health Services is located on Arjona Floor 4 (right across from Mirror Lake). CMHS has drop-in hours, in which you do not need an appointment to speak with one of their counselors. If at any time you feel as if you need to speak with someone about the content on the show, they are available to help. These hours are:

- Monday-Friday from 1-3 PM in Arjona (check-in at the CMHS front desk)
- Tuesday from 10AM-12PM in Student Union Room 410

More information is available at www.counseling.uconn.edu, including numbers to call if you are seeking a more long-term appointment schedule.

If you have any questions or would like additional resources, please reach out to us and we will help you to the best of our ability. Your safety is at the utmost importance to all of us. We are looking forward to this process with all of you!

Table of Contents

About the Playwright ---------- 3
About the Play ---------- 3
The Birds ---------- 4
The History of Ancient Greece ---------- 5
Women in Ancient Greece ---------- 8
The Bacchae Festival ---------- 10
Praising the Gods ---------- 11
The Loom and Weaving ---------- 12
The #MeToo Movement ---------- 13
Rape and Trauma ---------- 15
Glossary of Greek References ---------- 18
Additional Reading----------20

Please note that additional resources will be published on a website that will be shared with the cast and creative team within the first week of rehearsals. We will update this regularly with new information.

About the Playwright

Erin Shields is a Canadian actress and playwright based in Toronto. Her plays include *If We Were Birds, Soliciting Temptation, Mistatim/Instant,* and *Paradise Lost*. She studied at the Rose Bruford College of Speech and Drama in London, England. She is also a founding member of the Groundwater Productions.

About the Play

If We Were Birds is a re-telling of Ovid's myth *Tereus, Procne, and Philomela.* It was first produced in 2011 at the Tarragon Theatre in Toronto, Ontario. It is the recipient of awards such as the 2011 Governor General's Award, Drama Montparnasse, and Alberta Theatre Projects's Enbridge Emerging playRites Award.

The Birds

One of the many questions that scholars studying Ovid's myth ask is why all three characters are transformed into birds. No one is quite sure of this answer, but it is assumed that the worst punishment in the world was metamorphosing, or placing a human brain in the body of an animal. Many notice that the characteristics* of the birds that Philomela, Procne, and Tereus transform into reflect their characters in the myth.

** Something to consider: what stereotypes or generalizations towards women do these characteristics and associations hold? **

Procne and the Nightingale

The nightingale song was considered to be one of mourning in the Greek tradition, but there is also a beauty in it. Ovid may be implying that Procne continues to sing to mourn the loss of her son, her ultimate sacrifice and vengeance. Occasionally, the sad life of the nightingale was used to measure grief by.

Tereus and the Hoopoe

The hoopoe is considered to be a very regal bird based off of the two rows of feathers on its head that look like a crown. These feathers are also considered to represent Tereus's sexual nature as well as military metaphor. It also has a rather predatory nature. The hoopoe also searches in piles of human waste for insects, possibly reflecting the atrocity of Tereus's last meal.

Philomela and the Swallow

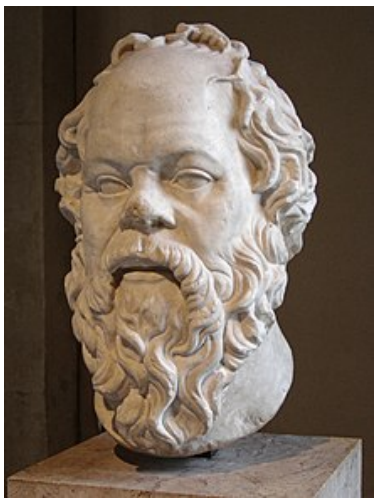
The swallow was once believed to have healing capabilities for humans. Swallows were known for being able to heal the sight of their blind chicks, and it was rumored that a swallow's blood could also cure human sight injuries. Also, the swallow is able to twitter but not sing because their tongue is very short. Swallows also have very fast and swerving flight patterns and rarely walk. Finally, swallows are typically associated with Aphrodite, Greek goddess of love.

The History of Ancient Greece

2000 BCE: The First Settlers begin to form Greece.
1194 BCE: The Trojan War begins between Athens and Sparta.
1184 BCE: The Trojan War Ends.
c. 850 BCE: The Greek Alphabet is developed.
c. 800 BCE: Homer begins writing *The Odyssey* and *An Iliad.*
776 BCE: First Olympic Games.
650 BCE: The Rise of the Tyrants, wealthy tradesmen (coined Tyrants) take power from the aristocrats and rule over Greece.
621 BCE: Draco, the first legislator, implements new harsher laws. More crimes were now punishable by death.
600 BCE: Money is first introduced.
508 BCE: Democracy is introduced.
460 BCE: Democracy is replaced with an aristocracy.
431 BCE: The Peloponnesian War begin between Athens and Sparta.
404 BCE: The Peloponnesian War ends, with Sparta as the victor.
403 BCE: Democracy is reinstituted.
399 BCE: Socrates is found guilty of disrespecting the Gods and is executed.
347 BCE: Plato dies.
336 BCE: Alexander the Great becomes King. He dies in 323 BCE.
322 BCE: Aristotle dies.
146 BCE: The Romans defeated the Greeks and Greece becomes part of the Roman Empire.

Famous figures from Athens included…

Herodotus – "Father of history"
Socrates, Plato, Aristotle – Philosophers
Hippocrates – "Father of medicine"
Aeschylus, Euripides, Aristophanes, Sophocles – Playwrights



Socrates

About the Athenian Empire

"The might of the Athenian Empire encouraged an arrogance in the policy makers of the day which grew intolerable to her neighbors. When Athens sent troops to help Sparta put down a Helot rebellion, the Spartans refused the gesture and sent the Athenian force back home in dishonor, thus provoking the war which had long been brewing. Later, when Athens sent their fleet to help defend its ally Cocyra (Corfu) against a Corinthian invasion during the Battle of Sybota in 433 BCE, their action was interpreted by Sparta as aggression instead of assistance, as Corinth was an ally of Sparta." – Ancient History Encyclopedia

Athens, Thrace, and Thebes

Women in Ancient Greece

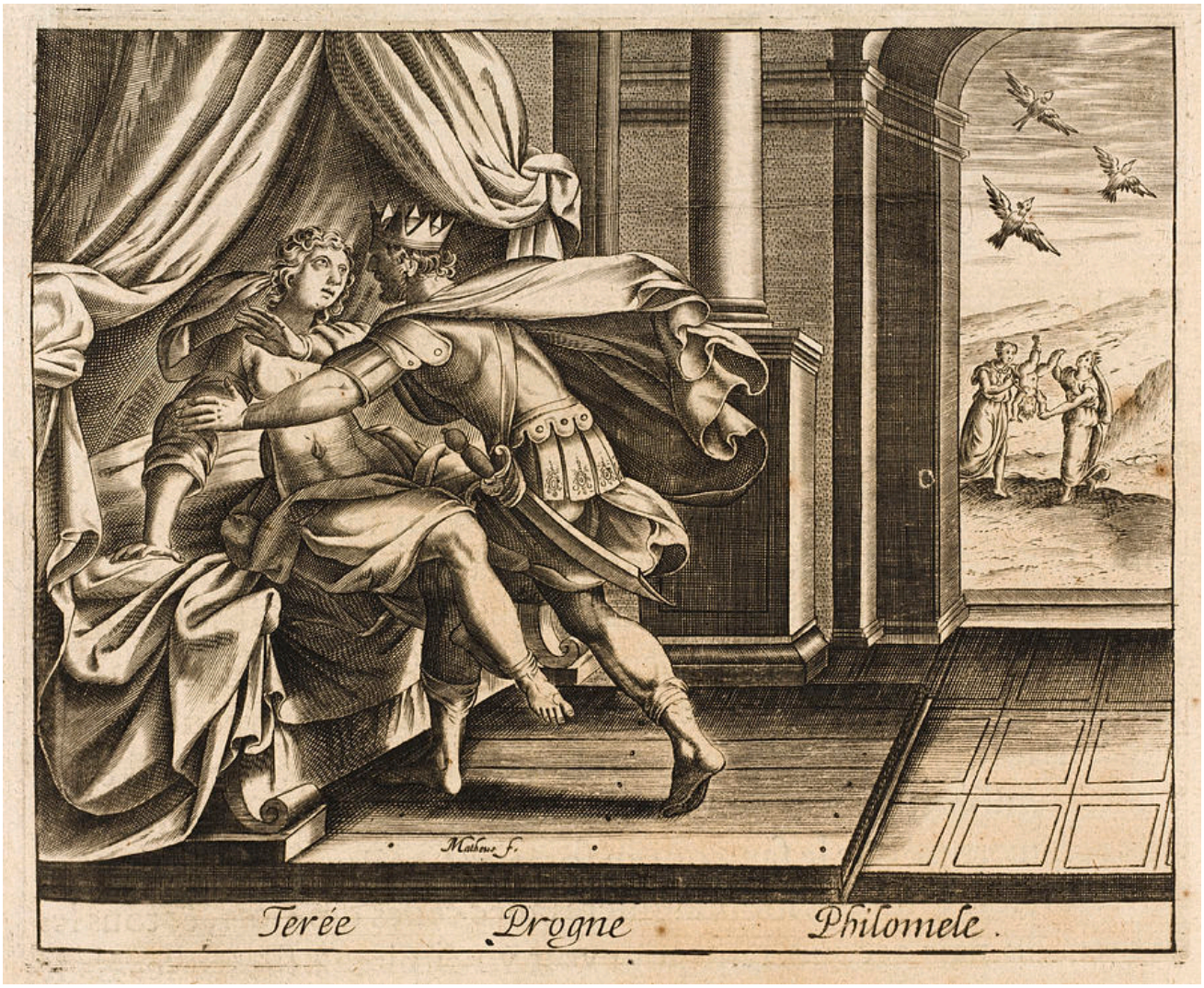
- "Again, the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled; this is the principle of necessity, extends to all mankind…"
  - *The Female Role, Athens, 4 BC*
- "For the slave has no deliberative faculty at all; the woman has, but it is without authority…"
  - *The Female Role, Athens, 4 BC*
- Good behavior for women was commonly defined in terms of a wife's service to her husband.
- Women were technically not considered citizens.
- The perfect wife should be 4 years past puberty and married in the fifth.
- "Marry a virgin, so you can teach her good habits. Marry a girl who lives close to you."
- "A man can win nothing better than a good wife, and nothing more painful than a bad one."
- "The two best days in a woman's life are when someone marries her and when he carries her dead body to the grave." – *Ephesus*
- Aside from weavers, one of the most common jobs for women was a wet-nurse for the upper-class families.
- For many women, becoming a mother was the main purpose of marriage. However, many women did not survive childbirth.

- Divorce was also rather common in Ancient Greece. The men would pay back the dowry set for the marriage so the woman would have money to live off of. The man would also keep the children. Women who were divorced were often not desirable because they were not virgins.

"'Procne's husband, Tereus, has seduced her sister; in revenge, she plans to murder their son. But now outside my father's house, I am nothing, yes often I have looked on women's nature in this regard, that we are nothing.'

Young women, in my opinion, have the sweetest existence know to mortals in their father's homes, for their innocence always keeps children safe and happy. But when we reach puberty and can understand, we are thrust out and sold away from our ancestral gods and from our parents. Some go to strange men's homes, others to foreigner's, some to joyless houses, some to hostile. And all this once the first night has yoked us to our husband, we are forced to praise and to say that all is well."

- An excerpt from *The Lot of Women, Athens, mid-5th cent. BC*



The Bacchae Festival

Beginning in Ancient Greece, women joined together and took to the forests and mountains to worship Dionysus, God of Wine in Bacchae Festivals, typically lasting 3 days every year. The women who celebrated were also called Maenads, and they would drink, dance, have orgies, and even poison and assassinate others, without having their identities revealed. The festivals were always secret and occurred at night. The male-dominated government tried to crack down on these festivals by implementing strict laws, but this was not entirely successful. A priestess would lead the other women into the woods and up to the mountains, carrying all of the sacred objects for the festival. Some of the necessities were Phrygian Flutes, drums, cymbals, castanets, cheeses, jugs of wine, vegetables, and fish.

Worshipping the Gods

Hymen

God of marriage ceremonies. The name references a *hymenaios*, or a genre of Greek lyric poetry sung while the bride is in procession to the groom's house. This song serves as an invitation for him to attend a wedding, He is meant to attend weddings, otherwise they will fall into disarray.

Artemis

Goddess of the hunt, the moon, and chastity. Those who worshipped her had various ways of doing so. "Festivals in honor of Artemis include Brauronia, held in Brauron and the festival of Artemis Orthia in Sparta. Young girls were initiated into the cult of Artemis at puberty. However, before marrying (an event in which they had little say, and which occurred shortly after puberty), they were asked to lay all the accoutrements of virginity (toys, dolls, locks of their hair) on an altar to Artemis" (*Crystalinks*).

The Loom and Weaving

- The principles of weaving are very similar today as they were in ancient Greece.
- Each pattern was individual and hand-made.
- Spinning and weaving were a common domestic occupation in the country.
- Weaving was, for the most part, slave-labor and done in the home.
- The ladies of the house worked on the more luxurious patterns and fabrics with designs and colorful threads.
- Large tapestries and embroidery were produced for sale, and on order, for public display. Each was individually weaved.
- There was significant freedom of design. There were no patterns that could be followed exactly like the modern day.
- Looms were typically upright against the wall. As the work was being made it rolled itself up at the top. All weaving was done by hand.
- Weaving was a form of self-expression and creativity, especially amongst the upper-class women. Having access to more expensive textiles allowed for better pieces to be woven.

Other Myths and Stories That Utilize Weaving

- Arachne
- Odysseus
- Penelope

The #MeToo Movement

Backstory
Though the "Me Too" hashtag blew up in October of 2017, the event that was the catalyst for the movement started 20 years before in 1997. The creator of the movement, Tarana Burke, listened to a 13-year-old girl recount an experience of sexual abuse. She was speechless, at the time, but the impact lead Tarana to create Just Be Inc., an organization set to help victims of sexual assault. The catchphrase of this organization?

Me Too.

This is a timeline of major events in the #MeToo movement:

2017
October 5 – Actress Ashly Judd speaks out against Harvey Weinstein.
October 12 – Roy Price, head of Amazon Studios, resigns after Isa Hackett speaks out against him.
October 15 – Actress Alyssa Milano tweets, "If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet". The hashtag takes Twitter by storm.
October 18 - Olympic Gymnast McKayla Maroney tweets about being assaulted by her coach Lawrence G. Nassar.
October 29 – Anthony Rapp is the first to make accusations against Kevin Spacey by recounting advances made towards him when he was only 14.
November 10 – Louis C.K. confirms a NYT report accusing him of sexual misconduct.
November 29 – The Today Show reveals that co-host Matt Lauer has been fired due to sexual misconduct accusations.
November 30 – Garrison Keillor is fired from his position at Minnesota Public Radio after sexual misconduct accusations.

2017 (Cont'd)
Dec 11 – Chef Mario Batali takes a leave of absence from his show and restaurants after accusations.

2018
January 1 – Times Up is formed by 300 former Hollywood women.
January 7 – Many stars wear black in solidarity with the Times Up movement.
January 11 – 5 women accuse James Defranco of sexual misconduct in an LA Times interview.
April 23 – Stan Lee is accused by a former massage therapist of sexual misconduct.
April 26 – Bill Cosby is convicted of drugging and molesting women.
May 10 – Spotify announces it will no longer promote R. Kelly on its playlists.
September 16 – Christine Blasey Ford accuses Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh of sexual misconduct.
September 25 – Bill Cosby is sentenced to 10 years in prison. He is the first #MeToo era celebrity to be imprisoned.
September 27 – Brett Kavanaugh appears in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Weeks later, he is sworn in on the 114th judge on the Supreme Court.
December 1 – Cleveland radio announces it will stop playing *Baby It's Cold Outside* due to questionable lyrics.
December 2 – Neil deGrasse Tyson is accused of sexual misconduct.
December 5 – Lena Dunham apologizes for lying in order to discredit a woman reporting sexual assault.

2019
January 1 – Lifetime releases a six-episode docuseries exploring R. Kelly's abuse and child pornography charges

Rape and Trauma

"Rape is one of the most underreported war crimes that there are." – U.N. specialist on sexual violence in conflict for U.N. Women, Pablo Castillo-Diaz

"Sexual violence in conflict needs to be treated as the war crime that it is; it can no longer be treated as an unfortunate collateral damage of war." – U.N. Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura

Why does it happen?
It is not about pleasure.
It is an exercise of power.
It is a way to break up communities and families.
It is a way to take advantage of those who are considered vulnerable.
While primarily targeted at women, men are subject to being victims as well.
It is still happening today.

Where does it happen?
Rwanda.
Bosnia-Herzegovina.
Nanking.
Berlin.
Bangladesh.
Syria.
Burma.
Boko Haram.
These are a few of the renowned locations

Symptoms of PTSD

- Intrusive thoughts
- Flashbacks
- Trouble sleeping
- Nightmares
- Emotional numbness/dissociation
- Avoiding people and places that remind the individual of the traumatic event
- Irritable/aggressive behavior
- Jumpiness
- Difficulty concentrating

Rape and Trauma in Art

“What Were You Wearing?” Exhibit. This puts 18 different outfits on display based off of descriptions of what victims were wearing at the time of their assault. This seeks to break the stigma that clothing is the cause of rape.

“Carry That Weight”, a performance art piece started by Emma Sulkowicz (they/them), a student at Columbia University. Emma committed to carrying a standard dorm-sized mattress as long as their rapist was still in attendance at Columbia.

“Stares on Stares”, a performance art piece started by a group of friends to raise awareness. The group will travel to various events and stand silent in entryways.

Survivor Advocate: Anne Marie Goetz

From NYU Global Citizen:

"Dr. Goetz has been Clinical Professor at CGA since January 2014. She served at the United Nations since 2005 as a Policy Director of Governance, Peace and Security, first at UNIFEM and since 2011 at UN Women. She was a Professorial Fellow in Political Science at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex where she worked since 1991. She also served the United Nations Development Programme in Chad and Guinea in the mid-1980s. While at the UN Dr. Goetz spearheaded initiatives to promote women's empowerment in the UN's peace building work in post-conflict situations, and to support women's organizations' efforts to participate in peace talks and post-conflict decision-making. She spearheaded initiatives to ensure that the Security Council addresses sexual violence in conflict as a tactic of warfare, and to build peacekeepers' capacities to detect and prevent these abuses.

Dr. Goetz is a political scientist studying how development policies in fragile states promote the interests of marginalized social groups, particularly poor women. She was researched democratization and good governance reforms in South Asia and East Africa. This has included research on pro-poor and gender-sensitive approaches to public sector reforms, anti-corruption initiatives, and decentralization, and political liberalization and state building in fragile states and post-conflict situations.

Professor Goetz is the author of seven books on the subjects of gender, politics and policy in developing countries, and on accountability reforms – including the 2009 edited volume: Governing Women: Women in Politics and Governance in Developing Countries (Routlegde), and the UNIFEM flagship report: Who Answers to Women? Gender and Accountability. Professor Goetz has also engaged advisory work related to gender, democratization, and governance, including direct advisory work for developing country governments, for multilateral economic institutions and bilateral donors, and for NGOs. She is on the editorial board of the Oxfam journal" Gender and Development, is a Board member of the NGO Gender at Work, and is a member of UN Women's 'Champions of Women Peace & Security and Human Rights' group."

Glossary of Greek References

Ares

Aphrodite (3) – Goddess of love, beauty, pleasure, procreation.
Triton (11) – Messenger of the sea.
Hymen (11) – God of marriage.
Ares (15) – God of war.
Hephaestus (17) – God of fire, metal working, masonry, forges, sculpture.
Athena (28) – Goddess of wisdom, courage, inspiration, civilization, law, strength.
Persephone (32) – Queen of the underworld
Acropolis (32) – any citadel of building on a high hill in Greece.
Herse (32) – mortal woman in Greek mythology. Athena placed the baby Erichthonius in a basket and gave it to Herse and her sisters, instructing them not to open it. The sisters ultimately opened the basket, and inside was a child that was half serpent, half human. The sisters were driven to insanity and jumped off the Acropolis.
Helios (38) – God of the sun.
Artemis (42) – Goddess of the hunt, moon, and chastity.
Amazons (42) – Greek women from warrior tribes that were concerned with war.

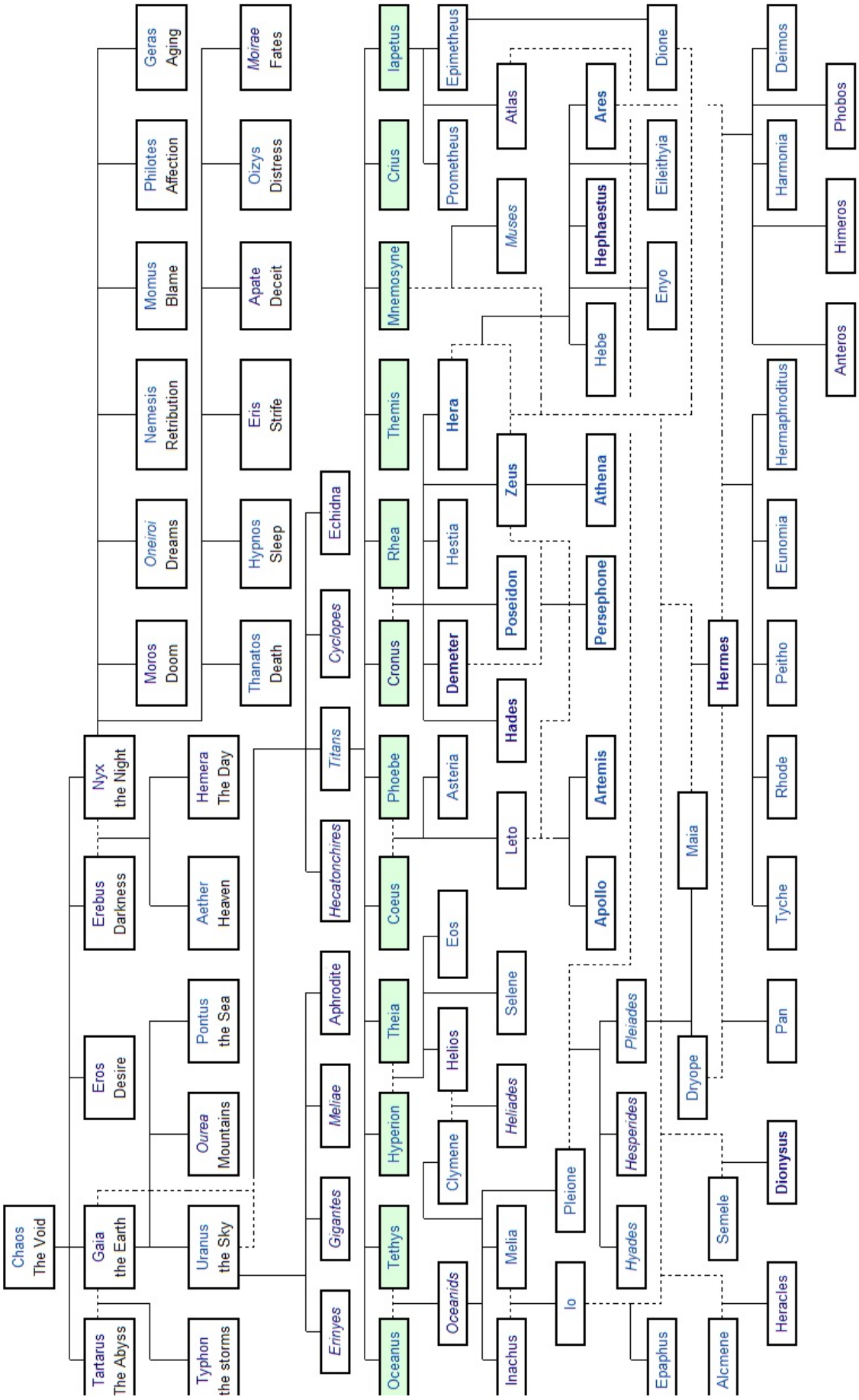
Persephone

An Amazon Woman

Niobe (42) – daughter of Tantalus, she's a common archetype of a grieving mother, mourning for her children. She boasted to Leto that she had six sons and six daughters (Leto only had two). Consequently, Apollo killed all of her sons and Artemis all of her daughter.
Hesiod's *Theogony* (44) – a poem that describes the genealogy and origins of the Greek Gods and Goddesses. The flowchart on the following page shows these connections.
Poseidon (64) – God of the sea, water, earthquakes, and horses.

Acropolis

Greek Gods and Goddesses



Additional Reading

All of the books and articles listed below will be made available in the room, but it may be more beneficial if you received personal copies. If there are selections of a book that you would like copied, please let either Eddie or Lizz know and we will be glad to help!

- Nadia Murad's *The Last Girl: My Story of Captivity, and My Fight Against the Islamic State*
- Eduoard Louis's *History of Violence*
- *The Metapmorphoses: A New Translation* by Charles Martin
- *Women's Life in Greece and Rome* by Mary R. Lefkowitz and Maureen B. Fant
- *Mass Rape: The War Against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina* by Alexandra Stiglmayer
- *Rape, War, and the Socialization of Masculinity: Why Our Refusal to Give Up War Ensures that Rape Cannot be Eradicated* by Eileen L. Zurbriggen
- *War's Dirty Secret: Rape, Prostitution, and Other Crimes Against Women* by Anne Llewellyn Barstow
- *Tactical Rape in War and Conflict: International Recognition and Response* by Brenda Fitzpatrick (Online Access through the UConn Library!)
- *War Rape, Natality, and Genocide* by Robin May Schott