
THE EXILE OF GREEK METIS: RECOVERING A MATERNAL DIVINE ONTOLOGY

S h é H a w k e

Prolegomena ...

The Orphic gods are very strange, starting with the First Born, the First Genitor, at once masculine and feminine, known as Phanes-Metis or Protogonos ... and also Erikapaios. But there is also Zeus, in the fifth reign who ... on the advice of Night replaces the First Born back within his body, thus turning himself into the matrix, the shell of an egg as large as the All. ... Phanes-Metis [the unity of All] ... undergoes [in the five reigns that follow] ... the trial of separation and fragmentation through the process of differentiation.¹

The divinity of woman is still hidden, veiled ... we are deprived of our own ends and means.²

Phanes-Metis-Erikapaios appears as the tripartite progenitor of *All* in the first generation of the Orphic Pantheon, from which the Sacred Orphic and Bacchic and Eleusinian Mysteries (hereafter The Mysteries)³ are spawned. The focus of this paper is to locate and recover the cosmic mucosity of the Metis fragment of the primordial trinity that is the “First Cause” or divine “First Genitor”⁴ the totality both transcendent

¹ Marcel Detienne, *The Writing of Orpheus: Greek Myth in Cultural Contact*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 157.

² Luce Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, trans. Gillian. C. Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 71.

³ The word Mysteries is derived from the Greek *muo*, meaning to close the mouth, and not reveal hidden meanings. Mead says Thomas Taylor defines Mysteries as: “Sacred dramas performed at stated periods. The most celebrated were those of Isis, Sabazius, Cybele, and Eleusis ... The selection of [Orphic] Logia, were generally called ‘deposits’” of a reverential type. George Robert Stow Mead, *Orpheus* (London: The Theosophical Society, 1965), 37.

⁴ Thomas Taylor, *The Mystical Hymns of Orpheus: Translated from the Greek with a Preliminary Dissertation of the Life and Theology of Orpheus* (London: Self Published, 1787).

and immanent in all matter pertaining to the Orphic pantheon.⁵ The transmission of what became known as the Orphic Mysteries is ascribed to Orpheus from the sixth generation of the Orphic pantheon, although Mead suggests there were multiple “Orphic narrators and editors,”⁶ relating unified rights and principles from “testaments containing the divine will.”⁷ These Orphic Mysteries, Hymns and associated narratives of origin locate Metis in the holy order of things, and also describe how Zeus sought to encompass all her knowledge and wisdom. In a similar vein, I seek to determine and understand what provoked Zeus, in the fifth generation, to exceed the digestion of knowledge, and strike Metis from the record – to force her into theological exile. Feminist philosophical and theological critiques from Luce Irigaray, Jane Ellen Harrison and Pamela Sue Anderson, are further applied to problematize the impact on the modern world of the persistent disavowal of women’s divinity initiated by Zeus. Concomitantly, the paper gives voice to the origin of the mother/daughter separation drama, proposed herein through Athena’s loss of mother Metis, her original “love-object,”⁸ and our collective Cosmic Mother.

Evidence of the specificity of the existence of the ultra-sexed Metis/Phanes/Erikapaios trinity (hereafter referred to as Metis or The Trinity), is paradoxically scant yet complex for several reasons, especially because she appears in two generations of the Orphic theogony in Olympian Greece – one in which she is revered, the other in which she is reviled.⁹

⁵ Orphic Mysteries/Hymns represent the origin, doctrine, and expression of the *sacred dramas* of the Orphic Pantheon/Olympian Dynasty, of which the splitting of the Orphic Cosmic Egg is considered, a beginning. These terms are used interchangeably but all pertain to the same epoch. Scholars have applied the terms specific to their particular focus of inquiry, such as cosmogony, theology, mythology, mysteries. It is important to say at the outset however, that the ineffability of the Mysteries can only be roughly represented.

⁶ Mead, *Orpheus*, 26–35.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁸ See Sigmund Freud’s use of this term in “Mourning and Melancholia,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XIV, trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957), 245.

⁹ See attached Genealogical Table in the Appendix for a composite rendition of the Olympian Dynasty, gleaned from the classics: Apollodorus, *Apollodorus I and II: The Library* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1921), and Hesiod, *Theogony*, trans. R. Lattimore (Michigan: Michigan University Press, 1959), and modern scholars such as Robert Graves, *Greek Myths and Legends* (London: Cassell 1956); Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths I and II* (Har-

Metis, as the originary gestational producer of life rests archetypally in the domain of the feminine. Her embodied and cosmic self throughout the Olympian Dynasty is rendered in the female, the numinous Creatrix, as I, Detienne, Campbell, Taylor and others imply further in their work:

Mother of Gods, great nurse of all, draw near
 Divinely honor'd, and regard my pray'r ...
 From thee at first both Gods and men arose
 From thee the sea and ev'ry river flows
 (Orphic Hymn XXVI to The Mother of the Gods)¹⁰

Throughout The Mysteries the identity of Metis is at times masked, and she is variously *called* “the thrice unknown darkness”, the “mother substance”, the “Cosmic Egg.”¹¹ Yet Metis remains scantily *described*. Her veiling after this first generation is intentional for the purpose of preserving The Mysteries from the profanity of uninitiated mortals and lesser Gods.

The story of Metis becomes more complicated when she re-appears in the fifth reign of the Orphic Pantheon (mythically rather than mysteriously inscribed) as the victim of her husband Zeus’ consumption of her and the creation wisdom she embodied ... “But when Metis was about to bring forth bright-eyed Athena, Zeus craftily deceived her with cunning words”¹² and swallowed her after asking: “Could you ... turn yourself into – say – a drop of water?”¹³ After Hephaestus split open Zeus’ aching head by the River Triton, Metis in her fluid form leaked away into Thalassa (historically and geographically understood as The Aegean Sea, although the myth is figuratively constituted) and took refuge in the aquascape where her familial water deities dwelt. Believing he had succeeded in the matricidal act, and in order to contain and privatise Metis’ multigenerational knowledge and wisdom, Zeus claimed their daughter Athena as his alone – “un

mondsworth: Penguin, 1960), and Edward E. Barthell, *Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Greece* (Florida: University of Miami Press, 1971).

¹⁰ Thomas Taylor, *The Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries* (London: Self Published, 1792), 151.

¹¹ Mead, *Orpheus*.

¹² Hesiod, *Theogony*, 143–145.

¹³ Joseph Campbell, *Occidental Mythology: The Masks of God* (New York: Penguin, 1991), 22.

mothered, born from his hydro-cephalic head – his best idea,”¹⁴ an act that simultaneously rescinds Athena’s matrilineage.

Despite these differently motivated attempts at obfuscation in the Grecian world, Metis is also located as counterpart to mysteries and myths from other regions, most notably Apsu in the Babylonian, meaning “the waters of Chaos before Creation.”¹⁵ These parallels and indeed her multiple naming and appearances, confuse the genealogical search immensely. This paper orbits around facets of the Orphic Genealogy of Gods and Goddesses un-yolked from the “Cosmic Egg” that begins the Olympian Dynasty, and actuates The Mysteries. To support the labour of that overdue enterprise, I attempt a trace in both source and meaning of the water deity Metis – Metis I from the first generation, to Metis II of the fifth generation of Olympus, in which her relinquishment of Athena and subsequent exile takes place.

However, scant the story remnants are, the creation mysteries (and later myths) pertaining to Metis show themselves to be both figurative progenitors and maternal co-informants to aqua-centric evolution, applied in this paper to disrupt dominant masculinised terra-centric doxology that privilege Zeus. Locating Metis, and her co-evolved sacred relationship to water myth/eologically, linguistically and symbolically, adds an elemental cross-current to this inquiry. The subsequent retrieval of Metis from her Zeusian exile and his appropriation and “introjection of her power”¹⁶ constitutes a future focus that re-centres a feminine divine, hitherto located as a peripheral moon to a masculinised sun.¹⁷ This paper also maps an ontology of maternal asylum, and a mythico-narrative refiguration of Metisian genealogy, and Noëtic intel-

¹⁴ Shé Hawke, *Aquamorphia* (Carindale: Interactive Publications, 2014), 7.

¹⁵ See Mircea Eliade *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 41, for a discussion on the ethnographic parallel of water and symbols in the divine. Eliade retells the story of Apsu and Tiamet who are cast as aquatic monsters and who become buried “in the meshes and were put into caves” (110) which ever after located the divine hero Marduk (read as equivalent to Zeus) as sovereign. Metis also goes by the names of Libyan Medusa, Egyptian Maat, and Sanskrit Medha, all of which mean *sovereign female wisdom*. Until the fifth generation of Olympus, Metis was a revered deity representative of the Triple Goddess of creation, Metis/Phanes/Erikapaos from the ‘Gens Orphica’ (Mead, *Orpheus*, 27).

¹⁶ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1985), 91.

¹⁷ In Roman astronomy Metis is located as a peripheral moon to Jupiter/Zeus.

ligibility to rectify the erasure of maternal divinity, and to progress a transformational consciousness that responds to Irigaray's provocation to "unveil",¹⁸ and reclaim "mother, daughter, holy spirit."¹⁹ As Ferrell argues, "An absence of maternal ontology is a cause of anxiety."²⁰ By championing a maternal divine, with Metis as a refigured referent, I add a crucial fragment to an ontology of the maternal – of origin – that serves to interrogate the symbolic violence of patriarchal discourse and myth, and unbox the "containers" and "envelopes"²¹ of the underwritten sovereign identity of women and their Mysteries.

The Mysterious Mysteries

The Principle of Principles, i.e. of deiform processions from itself ... super-essential ramifications, and super-luminous blossoms.²²

Mapping the Orphic cosmogony and heavens is beset with ambiguity and mystification of terms, such as: "The Ineffable Mysteries", "Immense Principles", "The First Cause", "The Cosmic Egg".²³ This paper discovers their links to an originary and unitary divine, and the fundamentals of triadic and monadic construction of Greek and Near Eastern cosmological structures evidenced in The Mysteries. These configurations locate an immense set of principles akin to a genealogy of the soul,²⁴ the fluid essence from which Metis dispersed all forms of creation, and in which:

¹⁸ Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*.

¹⁹ Hawke, *Aquamorphia*, 6.

²⁰ Robyn Ferrell, *Copula: Sexual Technologies, Reproductive Powers* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 2.

²¹ Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, 5.

²² Mead, *Orpheus*, 75.

²³ Taylor, *The Mystical Hymns*; Taylor, *The Eleusinian*; Mead, *Orpheus*; William Keith Chambers Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion: A Study of the Orphic Movement* (London: Methuen, 1935); William Q. Judge, *The Ocean of Theosophy* (London: Theosophical University Press, 1893); Paul Lafargue, "The Myth of Athena," Marxists Internet Archive, trans. Einide O' Callaghan, 1890, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lafargue/1890/09/athena.htm> ..

²⁴ Comparable to other Creation narratives and structures such as Genesis from the First Testament.

being simply considered, is represented under the symbol of an *egg*. And this is the first triad of the intelligible Gods ... and here you may perceive that the egg is that which is united; but that the three-shaped [Phanes/ Metis/Erikapaios] and really multiform God is the separating and discriminating cause of that which is intelligible.²⁵

Such super-luminous archaic principles have been translated, diluted, lost and veiled over time and place for different purposes, not the least of which was Zeus' desire to become the *All*, as this paper discovers. Veiling after the first generation of Olympos, may have been a decisive act to protect Mysteries from falling into mortal and profane hands and the power-driven motivations of the extraordinary junior god that was Zeus. Taylor²⁶ further suggests that because the originary Mysteries are so "ineffable and unknown, and incapable of verbal enunciation," several commentators and poets simply pass over the whole intelligible order of the "Cosmic Egg" and commence their genealogies in the second and third generations with Night, Chaos, Eros and Gaea. I further argue that veiling represents a temporal or myth/eological exile, or asylum seeking and disappearing for safety reasons (such as to evade Zeus' terminal consuming passions, in the fifth generation). Mead, subsequent to Taylor's pronouncements states that later Greek philosophers such as Plato intellectualised the Orphic Life (rather than expressing its divine nature) to protect it from profanation, and this is where the sacred lineage of Metis and her creation wisdom comes into trouble – with this dilution of Mystery to protect the true sacred.²⁷ Robert Graves refers to this secreted telling as "a process of iconotropy."²⁸ Adepts and mystics are those who have gained the sacred knowledge and who are initiated into the deepest and most secret mysteries of life. They decide the direction of iconography and salutation and are licensed to narrate through symbols and allegory. Plato and Pythagoras, are among their

²⁵ Taylor, *The Hymns of Orpheus*, xv.

²⁶ Taylor, *The Hymns of Orpheus*, xix.

²⁷ As a result we end up with surface philosophy and parables palatable for the polis of the day. Mead suggests the veiling of Mysteries and Orphic rites (in which Metis is located), is akin to what Shankaracharya did with the Upanishads. "Orpheus was to the Greeks what Veda Vyasa was to the Hindus, Enoch to the Ethiopians, and Hermes to the Egyptians" (Mead, *Orpheus*, 47), that is, he was guardian to much but invented nothing – a mystical choreographer.

²⁸ Graves, *Greek Myths and Legends*, 31.

number according to Neo-Platonists Taylor and Mead.²⁹ The more commonly known line of descent in mystical Orphic, Bacchic and Eleusinian knowledge and narration, according to those commentators is represented below:

Orpheus
Hesiod and Homer
Pherecydes
Onomacritus
Pythagoras
Plato
Charax of Syria
Damascius
Hierocles
Taylor

Figure 1. Orphic Line of Succession

In the Preface to *The Hymns of Orpheus*, Manly P. Hall says of Taylor and his translation of Orphic divinities:

Thomas Taylor was fully aware that the choicest secrets of the divine learning were entrusted not to words but to emblems, symbols, allegories, myths and legends. Only the philosophic few whose hearts and minds were illuminated by the contemplation of eternal things could lift the veil that covered the face of the Mother of the Gods.³⁰

The cloaking of the “Mother of the Gods” through analogy and allegory from the first generation of Olympus onwards may hence be understood as a necessary order of secrecy, or ontological émigré. Whereas in the fifth generation, and at the hands of Zeus, Metisian exile was a life-preserving necessity – life-preserving for Athena, the progenic frag-

²⁹ Taylor, *The Hymns of Orpheus*; Mead, *Orpheus*.

³⁰ Manly P. Hall, ‘Preface,’ to Taylor, *The Hymns of Orpheus*, n.p.

ment of the *All!* Taylor suggests that the ways of knowing common to modern philosophy are flawed, and do not sufficiently account for the sort of transcendental theology he has translated from archaic Greek sources, such as The Orphic Hymns.³¹ Mead (who is the intellectual and theological successor of Taylor), warns the Neo-platonic student regarding recovery of the soul and the divine, that, “minds deeply steeped in materialism will be repelled by the sublime metaphysics of mystical religion, but the blame should lie rather with the poverty of our language.”³²

Mead, Taylor, Blavatsky, and more latterly Graves, Kerényi, Harrison, Campbell, and Walker³³ present sketches of the cosmology of the Orphic heaven from “Orphic mystagogy”³⁴ in simplistic terms for easier access of uninitiated mortals, re-presented here in the figures that follow. These myth/eologists extrapolate on what are known as the Septenary Scale (scale of sevens) and Triads (scale of threes) that are pivotal to grasping the state of the Orphic Heaven before it took material form. Their representations are weighted with esotericism, exotericism, mysticism, and philosophy. Mead, and Taylor particularly trace matter back to the first materiality of ultra-milk that emanated from the splitting of the “Cosmic Egg”, or for the purposes of this paper: Metis I.³⁵

³¹ See also Plato’s *Philebus*, and Proclus on the *Theology of Plato*, in Mead, *Orpheus*. “It is said that the hieroglyphical treatise on the famous Columns of Hermes or Seth, which Josephus affirms were still existing in his time (De Mirville, *Pneumatologie*, iii. 70), was the source of the sacred science of Khem, and that Orpheus, Hesiod, Pythagoras and Plato took from there the elements of their theology. There were a number of Hermes’, the greatest being called Trismegistus, the ‘Thrice Greatest’ because it spoke of the three great powers that ‘veiled the one divinity’ (Chron. Alexand., 47)” in Mead, *Orpheus*, 63.

³² Mead, *Orpheus*, 50.

³³ Some of them are translators of the Hesiodic and Orphic Theogonies, Apollodorus, Plato and Sophocles.

³⁴ Mead, *Orpheus*, 2.

³⁵ However, Mead sometimes ascribes the Cosmic Egg to Chaos. Somewhere in the ineffable “whirlpool” came the “Dawn of First Creation” variously named and situated in the Cosmos. Mead, *Orpheus*, 155.

Metisian Genealogy in two parts

Metis was infinitely wise. She in fact, knew more than all the Gods.³⁶

So who was this “venerated parthenogenetic Creatrix of All,”³⁷ Metis I – from the first generation of the Orphic Pantheon – and why does her refiguration matter? For Irigaray and contemporary feminist philosophy, Metis matters because without a feminine divine referent there seem to be clear and enduring limits to the spiritual life of women. Without coherent reference *woman* is in danger of ongoing estrangement from her source, as is evident in the myth of Athena.³⁸ As Penelope Deutscher argues, “feminist practices can only be amended when philosophical conceptions of divinity are amended”³⁹, when divine women like Metis are returned from their exile, and afforded their place in myth/eology and philosophy. Irigaray too, extrapolates about *woman* being generically lost in relation to deification – eternally exiled, “Defined as the often dark, even occult mother-substance ... we are in need of our *subject*, our *substantive*, our *word*, our *predicates*: ... our generic incarnation, our genealogy.”⁴⁰ Carol P. Christ concurs, suggesting that oppressive “symbolic systems cannot simply be rejected, they must be replaced.”⁴¹ Hence, our task may not be to simply reinstall feminine divinity but to simultaneously exceed the boundaries of “masculine domination”⁴² that have prevailed for so long, lest we

³⁶ Campbell, *Occidental Mythology*, 49.

³⁷ Hawke, *Aquamorphia*, 5.

³⁸ Freud influenced by Greek myths, advanced the notion that the mother/daughter separation drama was evidence of daughters’ retraction from supposedly monstrous, diabolical mothers, rather than holding to account the theft of those daughters by masculine perpetrators. Freud barely skims the phallic pond in this regard.

³⁹ Penelope Deutscher, “The Only Diabolical Thing About Women: Luce Irigaray on Divinity,” *Hypatia* 9, no. 4 (1994): 88.

⁴⁰ Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, 71.

⁴¹ Carol P. Christ, “Why Women Need the Goddess: Phenomenological, Psychological and Political Reflections” in *The Politics of Women’s Spirituality: Essays by Founding Mothers of the Movement*, ed. Charlene Spretnak (New York: Anchor Books, 1982), 73.

⁴² Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

“revert to familiar structures in times of crisis, bafflement or defeat,”⁴³ that rob us of our subjectivity.

Metis I in the Mysteries

The “Mother of the Gods” that Manly P. Hall mentions in his introduction to Taylor,⁴⁴ is sparingly narrated in the story of the Orphic heavens. Only a Platonist descended through the line of Pythagoras the mystic,⁴⁵ could make proper sense of the material. Quoted here verbatim in old English, Taylor says:

And here I muft acquaint the reader, that I fhall everywhere deduce my information from the writings of the latter Platonifts; as the only fources, on this fublime and obfolete enquiry. The vulgar fyftems of mythology are here entirely ufelefs; and he who fhould attempt to elucidate the theology, or hymns of Orpheus, by any modern hypothefts, would be as ridiculously employed, as he who fhould expect to find the origin of a copious ftream, by purfuing it to its laft and moft intricate involutions.⁴⁶

Taylor’s point is that cosmology and theology according to his predecessors Plato and Pythagoras, are aligned with maths, mysticism and cosmic waters, and that the collision between these facets is challenging for modern theologians, philosophers and cosmologists alike. Yet it is critical to realising divinity.

In the writings of Mead, Taylor and the Theosophists, the cosmological Septenary Scale (structured in sevens) is the base explanation of all that exists in the cosmos, and this is where we first encounter Metis – the origin of origins. The Septenary Scale represents a magical set of coordinates, yet the significance of the numbering and naming

⁴³ Christ, “Why Women Need the Goddess,” 73.

⁴⁴ Thomas Taylor, *A Dissertation on The Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries* (London: Theosophical Research Society, 1981), facsimile reprint from London: Self Published, 1792.

⁴⁵ Orphism or the Orphic Mysteries share coherency with the Bacchic and Eleusinian Mysteries, which according to Taylor (informed by Herodotus ii: 81) have their origins in Egyptian and Pythagorean rites. Mead, *Orpheus*, 3, suggests the Orphic rites were revealed via symbols and consistent with the times for conveying divine lore. Mead also offers lengthy comparisons to Vedic Lore and divinity. See also Proclus (*Theol. I. v. 9*) in Mead, *Orpheus*.

⁴⁶ Taylor, *The Hymns of Orpheus*, 13 (This is a 1981 facsimile reprint of the original in Old English 1787).

of the components of the scale is not made entirely clear to the uninitiated. The specificity of this knowledge seems to be confined to those deeply engaged in esoteric inquiry.⁴⁷ Theosophists such as Blavatsky and Judge describe the scale as follows:

The divisions of the sevenfold universe may be laid down roughly as: The Absolute [or space], Spirit, Mind, Matter, Will, Akasa or aether, and Life. . . . Our knowledge begins with differentiation, and all manifested objects, beings, or powers are only differentiations of the Great Unknown.⁴⁸

Judge further explains that all universal cataclysms (for instance, the Big Bang; the Great Flood) are evolutionary imperatives for the *Great Unknown* to assume its preferred form until perfection is attained. Essentially there is a constant cycle of evolution, and involution, that is designed by a primordial essence or energy, formless and genderless. The entity (rather than the gross mass) of the Earth is sevenfold and associated with six other entities. This chain of sevenfold-ness is called the “Earth Chain” or “Sevenfold Planetary Chain,”⁴⁹ and refers to man’s⁵⁰ consciousness of such concepts. As with the planets, man himself is constituted of seven parts of which only the body is visible. The last three parts are recognised as the Holy Trinity⁵¹ or the Higher Vehicles of the *real man* [read as “real subject”] (See Figure 2). The Lower Four Vehicles relate more to embodiment and are subject to transience, disintegration, and separation from each other prior to and upon death. However, as Judge⁵² (drawing on the classification of A.P. Sinnett) explains below: within these is the visible physical man (brain and body)

⁴⁷ And as such is beyond the specificity of this inquiry.

⁴⁸ Judge, *Ocean of Theosophy*, 14.

⁴⁹ Judge, *Ocean of Theosophy*, 23. See also Helena. P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled Vol. 1* (London: Theosophical Society Press, 1877). Her comparative discussion on mysticism between east and west is extensive if unwieldy.

⁵⁰ The word ‘man’ is an example of one of those poorly translated terms that stand in for all humans.

⁵¹ The Holy Trinity is described in Christian Doctrine (following from this archaic knowledge) as Father, Son and Holy Ghost. It could be reconfigured thus: giver of life, receiver of life, and the unseen life. Jewish, Kabbalistic, Babylonian and Egyptian cosmology uses similar scales and representations, unlike Hinduism that divides the cosmos into four.

⁵² Judge, *Ocean of Theosophy*, 31.

and the unseen visible man, such as the Astral Body (spirit body), Passions and Desires (libidinal body), and Life principle (vitality):

1.	The Body	(Rupa)
2.	Vitality	(Prana-Jiva)
3.	Astral Body	(Linga-Sarira)
4.	Animal Soul	(Kama-Rupa)
5.	Human Soul	(Manas)
6.	Spiritual Soul	(Buddhi)
7.	Spirit	(Atma)

Figure 2. Western schema and Sanskrit equivalents

The goal for humankind is to live the correct path according to divine laws.⁵³ If upon death the life has been good and correct, reunion with the divine, mother substance [Metis], or the fluid light of the universe is possible. If the work is not complete, the soul remnant descends to Tartarus (the underworld) waiting for the time of renewal of spirit and form. The Theosophists (for whom Mead was secretary) were informed by Indian, Tibetan, and Chinese mysticism. Sanskrit language permeates their explanations offered here for comparative purposes and to locate Metis I against the architecture of eastern mysticism.

Taylor, and Mead⁵⁴ also describe the Septenary Scale specific to Greek cosmology. This is a crucial underlay to a greater inquiry because it is where the first trace of Metis is located and presented textually.

⁵³ This implies the divine laws of the Mysteries, not the plot of common myths.

⁵⁴ The poets W B. Yeats, William Blake, and Oscar Wilde were also cognisant of these scales and their mythic meaning. Psychoanalysts Sigmund Freud and Sándor Ferenczi spent time discussing the mystical with Yeats and Wilde (see Nancy A. Smith, “Angels in the Architecture: Contemporary Case of Orphic Functioning,” in *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis* 29, no. 4 (2001): 575–584. Yeats was a member of the Golden Dawn (the Western equivalent of the Theosophical Society) whose doctrine was informed by the Buddhi of India and Tibet, and Egyptian creationism.

The intricacies of the greater schema are the work of a bigger project of inquiry.

“Taylor sums up the emanation of primal principles or monads, setting forth the Septenary order.”⁵⁵ This septenary framework consists of a monad (structured as the irreducible elemental unity of a greater system, both organic and inorganic) and two triads (structured in threes) as the following diagrams⁵⁶ indicate:

1.	The Ineffable
2.	Being
3.	Life
4.	Intellect
5.	Soul
6.	Nature
7.	Body

Figure 3a: The Septenary Scale 1

This order has parallel scales although there is no logical transference except for the repetition of the sevens, broken down into two triads and one monad. It doesn't have obvious correspondences; it is a different kind of maths not immediately reasonable, but the scale continues thus, if somewhat superimposed:

⁵⁵ Mead, *Orpheus*, 60.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 61–62.

1.	Primordial
2.	Noëtic
3.	Noëtic and Noëric
4.	Noëric
5.	Supercosmic
6.	Liberated or Supercelestial
7.	Cosmic

Figure 3b: Septenary Scale 2 – The Triads

This is how it is written for the metaphysical mind to grasp, delivered through Judge’s more accessible reading of it in *The Ocean of Theosophy*. Other representations, via adepts and poetic inscriptions are more confusing still, adding their own mystical inflections to archaic traces of knowledge.⁵⁷

As Mead explains, the Noëtic Triad is “classified according to Father (F), Power (P), and Intellect (I),”⁵⁸ with Metis representing the latter aspect of Intellect, and Phanes and Erikapaios aligned with Father and Power respectively and allegedly all parts of the “one many all”.⁵⁹ I am interested in the Intellectual (I) third of the Noëtic (intelligible and therefore of superior dignity) and Noëric (intellectual and of high order to an ordinary mind but not a dignified one) Triads reported in Taylor’s translation of the Orphic Theogony and Mead’s diagrammatic account. Metis is located in the more dignified Noëtic triad, whereas Zeus is located in the less dignified Noëric Triad. My reading here may be simplistic, even vulgar in Taylor’s reckoning, but the Noëtic [Intelligible] Triad is composed of “Gods which are conjoined to the *one itself*,”⁶⁰ meaning fragments of the one.

⁵⁷ The French poet Jules Michelet in his work *The Sea [La Mer]* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1883) explains the ineffable monad in poetic terms, as does Wystan Hugh Auden, in *The Enchafed Flood: The Romantic Iconography of the Sea* (New York: Hoik, 1967).

⁵⁸ Mead, *Orpheus*, 69.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 64.

Words such as *father* do complicate the picture. These terms were constructed to explain the emerging materiality of the cosmos and its earthly creations. At this stage of mythological history, *father* was not a privileged term *per se*. As Judge explains, “Human beings [as diluted apostatic forms of the divine] did not appear here in two sexes first. The first were of no sex, then they altered into hermaphrodite, and lastly separated into male and female.”⁶¹ It was not until Zeus’ reign, five generations after the emanation of matter from the splitting of the *Cosmic Egg* that the generic words *father* and *he* entered into story and gained primacy and privilege. As Mead says of this time, “the insanity of phallicism inculcated its virus into the community.”⁶² This has been sustained, and as French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu suggests of “masculine domination”, it is simply empowered by its constant reiteration: “When we try to understand masculine domination, we are ... likely to resort to modes of thinking that are the product of that domination.”⁶³ Gatens⁶⁴ similarly argues, “It cannot simply be a matter of removing superficial biases, since the bias is now understood as intrinsic to the structure of the theories in question;” what is required is new structures, or refiguring of originary structures. Hence, some scholars have colluded with this semiotic use of the personal pronoun to substantiate the particularities of their gender bias, while others have sought to overhaul it or explain its use. As White has observed:

For the Orphics, Metis is the great primordial goddess, aquatic and polymorphous, and to show that she can never be subordinated to any *oversimplified Olympic ordering principle*, [italics mine] they no longer represent her as female but, in a male dominated society, give her masculine status.⁶⁵

Hence, in the Orphic pantheon, Metis I was both she and he, a holy water deity representing the creative power that predates a differentiated cosmos. In the following table of the Noëtic Triad, Metis’ place

⁶¹ Judge, *Ocean of Theosophy*, 78.

⁶² Mead, *Orpheus*, 3.

⁶³ Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, 5.

⁶⁴ Moira Gatens, “A Critique of the Sex Gender Distinction” in *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality* (London: Routledge, 1986), 120.

⁶⁵ Kenneth White, “A Wave and Wind Philosophy” in *The Southern Eastern Review* 1 (1990): 113–120.

in the order of the primordial and divine or as the core part of *the first cause* is quite apparent, as Figure 4. adapted from Taylor, and Mead, shows:

	(f.)	Aether		
(F.)	(p.)	Chaos		
	(i.)	Egg		
	(f.)		The	
(P.)	(p.)	Egg containing	Triple	chaos, time and necessity
	(i.)		God	
(I.)	(f.)	Phanes		
	(p.)	Erikapaios/Protogonus		
	(i.)	Metis		

Figure 4: The Noëtic [Intelligible] Triad

The Noëtic/Noëric Triad is problematic as it combines the Intelligible and the Intellectual, that is, more dignified and less dignified immense principles and deities. Following from that however, we come to Zeus in the Noëric Triad. Cronus occupies the position of the Father (F.), Rhea occupies Power (P.), and Zeus occupies Intellect (I.).⁶⁶ This may become clearer by consulting the genealogy chart (See Appendix).

Mead continues with the simple explanation that these “immense principles” from the “first cause” are beyond our generic present human comprehension, “and is a reflection of that ‘thrice-unknown darkness’ which is the veil of the Ineffable ... and the membrane of the cosmos.”⁶⁷ To demonstrate his meaning as precisely as possible, Mead further quotes from Taylor’s *Mystical Hymns of Orpheus* p. xxiv:

according to the theology of Orpheus, all things emanate from an immense principle, to which through the imbecility and poverty of human con-

⁶⁶ Mead, *Orpheus*, 74.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 63.

ception we give a name, though it is perfectly ineffable, and in the reverential language of the Egyptians is a *thrice-unknown darkness*, in the contemplation of which all knowledge is refunded into ignorance.⁶⁸

It may be enough to know that the Triple God born from and parallel to the “Cosmic Egg”, Phanes, Metis, and Erikapaios (Holy Trinity) is of one power that created Chaos and subsequently the new dynasty of Mt Olympus, and indeed the whole cosmos. According to Orphic theology, which is in itself timeless, the *first principle* follows thus:

Time is symbolically placed for the one principle of the universe; but Æther and Chaos for the two posterior to this one; and Being, simply considered, is represented under the symbol of an Egg. And this is the first of the intelligible [Noëtic] Gods.⁶⁹

Mead further explains that all that *became* from the moist opened Egg, came first from a boundless “Mother Substance”, which manifests endless change, that is, Metis, Phanes, and Erikapaios⁷⁰ who represent Consciousness, Light and Life respectively. They/it/she continued to do the work of the universe and fragment the original mucosity to make manifest the cosmos and world as we know it, as Judge’s description attempts to explain. This fluid over-soul or “mother substance” is the archaic holy trinity, or “the first born”.⁷¹

The discussions of Mead and Taylor regarding the soul and its mathematical dilutions and divisions are frustrated by a lack of corporeal and literary accessibility, suspended in conjecture and trace. Those texts that allude to Metis (in her first and subsequent forms) do so in accordance with their own archaeological, anthropological, theological and mythological excavations and writerly bias, as well as a duty of care to protect the true sacred.⁷² It follows that the representation of the first Metis as the primordial moist mother substance from which Chaos emerged,

⁶⁸ Ibid., 63.

⁶⁹ Wolfii in Mead, *Orpheus*, 68.

⁷⁰ Translators apply different spellings for the Gods and Goddesses. Where I quote verbatim, I use the spelling of the source. Outside of direct references I use one spelling consistently.

⁷¹ Detienne, *The Writing of Orpheus*, 157.

⁷² See also the excavative works of Maria Gimbutus, *The Living Goddesses* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Monica Sjoo and Barbara Mor, *The Great Cosmic Mother* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1987).

did not suffer so much from falling into the *disavowed* spaces of darkness. On the contrary, the story of Metis I was deliberately secreted. Disavowal appears four generations later, and becomes exile.

Transitioning from Mystery to Myth: Metis I to Metis II

Woman is hidden in the thought of the father ... and the voice clearly expresses the father's wishes.⁷³

In the beginning then, after the "Cosmic Egg" dispersed its moist contents – although this was not the first or only beginning – there were the First Divinities, which included Chaos, Night, Eros and Gaea, who were non-gendered and self-creating⁷⁴. The Twelve Titans⁷⁵ were gendered and followed these Divinities in the fourth generation. These were the new gods of Mt Olympus of whom Zeus and Metis II are progeny (See Appendix for Genealogical Table). In the generations to come the Titans would produce demi-gods and mortals. Chaos is thought of as the comprehensible beginning (as opposed to the ineffable beginning already discussed through cosmic architecture) for many mythographers.

The story of the beginning is represented popularly in Hesiod's *Theogony*, a long theological song about the creation of the dynasty of the New Gods of Mt Olympus. It also appears in the more poetic Homeric tales and hymns, Apollodorus and Sophocles and, as discussed, in The Orphic Hymns and associated Mysteries. Each of these discussants preferences different generational beginnings and it is only the latter that prefigures Phanes/Metis/Erikapaios as the originary progenitors.

⁷³ Luce Irigaray, *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 196.

⁷⁴ Please see Apollodorus, *Apollodorus I and II*; Hesiod, *Theogony*; Vernant, *The Universe*; Graves, *Greek Myths and Legend*; Graves, *The Greek Myths I and II*; Campbell, *Occidental Mythology* for elaboration.

⁷⁵ Oceanus and Tethys appeared first and are the parents of Metis II. They were thought of as the rivers encircling the world related to all 3,000 water deities, and were followed by Iapetus, Clymene, Hyperion, Thea, Coeus, Phoebe, Themis, Mnemosyne, Rhea and Cronus, the parents of Zeus.

According to Kerényi⁷⁶ Hesiod was the last mythological account that always mentioned the female deity first, a sign that sometime after his *Theogony*, (written circa 800BC), the politics and/or memory of Mt Olympus and the gendered representations of myth (primarily through Homer) had changed and would be empowered and spoken in favour of the masculine/heroic voice.⁷⁷

Under Zeus' reign a non-tender mood flourished, with repression of the feminine divine one of his imperatives, while the perceived naturalness of andriocentrism proliferated. Zeus knew Metis II was the embodiment of all wisdom so he sought to marry⁷⁸ her and continue the royal line in his favour. However, Gaea had prophesied that Metis II would deliver a deposing son. Apollodorus, Graves, and Harrison⁷⁹ explain that on the back of that prophecy, Zeus decided to literally consume Metis II having impregnated her, in order to embody all her wisdom and become the ALL, concomitantly ridding himself of a possible deposing son.

Mead explains that original and sublime theology was over time transposed into myth – such as those myths we know of Zeus – the consequence of which was the “commencement of a degraded and barren period, [in which] the theology became corrupted through the negligence and confusion of its votaries,”⁸⁰ but remained iterated, even if poorly so, with feminine originary divinity one of the casualties. Campbell reports: “The function of the female has been systematically devalued, not only in a cosmological sense, but also in a personal psychological [sense]”⁸¹ This shift resulted from the imperious matricidal

⁷⁶ Kerényi, *The Gods of the Greeks* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1958).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁷⁸ First and second-generation deities produce in and of themselves, not with consorts. Marriage in Greek cosmology: is “a co-arrangement of the Gods, a connascent co-operation in their productions.” Mead, *Orpheus*, 111. This could be read as Zeus as Metis II's consort to produce the next generation in the royal Orphic line. After Zeus's matricidal act he reverses the consort-ing rights for subsequent generations.

⁷⁹ Please see Apollodorus, *Apollodorus I and I*, Graves, *Greek Myths and Legends*, and Jane E. Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922) for elaboration.

⁸⁰ Mead, *Orpheus*, vii.

⁸¹ Campbell, *Occidental Mythology*, 152–158.

tendencies of Zeus. But there is more to the story than Zeussian myths tell ...

Apart from being the undisputed progenic embodiment of wisdom at this time, Metis II was a shape-shifter, not an uncommon attribute for sea-related creatures (aquagenies) and deities. As Graves, and Campbell explain, Metis was a patient entity but finally became tired of Zeus' painstaking efforts to engage her as a consort. She succumbed to his efforts of seduction, knowing it would be thus and would create the next in the lineage of the great Arché that she was.

Metis is ... the ability to foresee everything, never to be caught short or taken aback ... Metis has the power to transform herself ... a duel of wits develops between the spouses, Metis and Zeus. Who will win?⁸²

Zeus remembered the prophecy passed down from Gaea, that sons overthrow fathers, at the time Metis was impregnated. He was afraid Metis would bear a deposing son and had to devise a way to rid the world of them both while somehow managing to maintain Metis' wisdom. He challenged her shape-shifting cleverness. To appease him, she provided evidence of her skill. She changed into a lion, among other things. He finally set the ultimate challenge – “Could you even turn yourself into – a drop of water?”⁸³ She met this challenge and he swallowed her down, consumed her whole, not realising that she had transformed herself into the primordial elemental aspect from which she created the universe.

But when she was about to bring forth the goddess bright-eyed Athene, Zeus craftily deceived her with cunning words and put her in his own belly, as Earth and starry Heaven devised. For they advised him so, ... for very wise children were destined to be born of her, first the maiden Tritogeneia, equal to her father in strength and wise understanding; but afterwards to bear a son of overbearing spirit, king of gods and men.⁸⁴

Jane Ellen Harrison suggests the subsequent denaturalised birth of Athena from Zeus' head was “a dark desperate effort to make *thought* the basis of being and reality, (and the shadowy parent in the *Kypria*

⁸² Ibid., 22.

⁸³ Ibid., 22.

⁸⁴ Hesiod, *Theogony*, 143–145.

is the Orphic Metis) ... patriarchalism wished to rid her of her matriarchal ancestry."⁸⁵ Athena Tritogeneia,⁸⁶ thus becomes a mouthpiece of Zeusian intention.⁸⁷ Graves goes on to explain "It is also dogmatic insistence on wisdom as a male prerogative; hitherto the Goddess alone had been wise."⁸⁸ Zeus now acted as if he embodied all the wisdom of the universe and that he had become, "Better than a mother ... working out the idea of mother, of the maternal ideal ... as [a] reflexive extension of his 'own' gaze".⁸⁹ In the process, woman and mothering were despatched from the economy as Metis sought refuge in the Thalassal Ocean of her own creation from the first generation. Campbell continues:

So the great problem of sovereignty is solved. The world has a leader [due to his embodiment of Metis and his birth of Athena] whose authority can never again be open to question, because he is sovereign to himself. Nothing can threaten the cosmic order now?⁹⁰

Myth tells us that Athena was born as the result of an intense headache suffered by Zeus, cured by Hephaestus who split his head open with an axe. He had somehow swallowed Metis and not killed the baby! That baby had magically developed into a woman fully grown, fully armed and fully wise.⁹¹ It is a tall story indeed, yet it has prevailed.

After Athena's birth, Metis is not mentioned again in popular myth and Athena becomes the spokesperson of the gods, denying, or living in ignorance of her birthright, her divine aquatic maternal origins. She "no longer has any divinity deriving from her sex... there is no longer

⁸⁵ Jane E. Harrison, *Prolegomena*, 648.

⁸⁶ *Tritogeneia* is a name attributed to Athena because she was born by the River Triton. But, *Tritogeneia* etymologically speaking also means "thrice-born", the "ternary number of the Pythagorean doctrine". Lafargue, "The Myth of Athena."

⁸⁷ Graves, *Greek Myths and Legends*.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁸⁹ Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 81.

⁹⁰ Campbell, *Occidental Mythology*, 26–29.

⁹¹ In psychoanalytic terms this is called the *wise baby* syndrome, where the infant is forced through lack of maternal care to develop quickly and wisely. Ferenczi's notion of the *Thalassal Trend* partially takes up these concerns through an analysis of longing and melancholia. See Sándor Ferenczi, *Thalassa: A Theory of Genitality* (New York: Norton, 1955).

any woman God, and God the mother of the daughter, there is no longer any spirit if divinity, circulating between mother and daughter, woman and woman”⁹² because as Athena declares ...

No mother gave me birth.

I honour the male, in all things but marriage.

Yes, with all my heart I am my Father’s child ...⁹³

Through his supposed embodiment of Metis, Zeus alleged that he had successfully annulled the prophecy of Gaea and ensured for himself private internal access to the wisdom of Metis, thereby making himself, as Vernant say “Métioesis – the god who is fully Metis: resourcefulness personified”⁹⁴ Wisdom/intellect had up until this point been attributed to the element of water through Metis, but Zeus changed the elemental conditions and thereafter attributed wisdom to himself, as the God of intellectual air, that would become the domain of masculine governance cosmically and in an embodied sense in the polis of Athens. Yet, if we return to the Orphic Theogony and the expression of the “Cosmic Egg”, Metis as Intellect was present in soul form before any amount of embodiment or mortal agency was evident. We can speculate that as a divine deity, she could not have been completely eliminated; that Zeus’ plan failed while Metis lives on in the Thalassal and cosmic worlds.

I marvel at the successful way the western tradition has stitched up women’s divinity and imbued the popularly told story of Zeus and his legacy of masculine domination as an accepted referent and the associated relegation of *woman* to the realm of the monstrous, diabolical or dangerous. Zeus has not been brought to justice for his cannibalisation of Metis, and theft of Athena, mythically or through theological analysis. The critique of millennia-old patriarchy is weighted by the enduring absence of, and access to Mysteries, that include a feminine divine. The remedy must include new and different modes of being and understanding.

⁹² Luce Irigaray, *Elemental Passions*, trans. Joanne Collie and Judith Still (New York: Routledge, 1992), 1–2.

⁹³ Euminides 736-40 in Irigaray, *Marine Lover*, 95.

⁹⁴ Jean-Pierre Vernant, *The Universe, The Gods and Men*, trans. Linda Asher (New York: Harper Perennial, 2001), 29.

Where other versions of creation and the heavens would leave Metis out of the telling, or drastically minimise her contribution, The Hymns of Orpheus and associated theogony would locate Metis and bring forth her story from antiquity. Further, the Orphic theogony and later commentaries would name Zeus's original sin for what it was; the consumption not just of Metis, but also of all that had preceded him and universal access to female divinity. "Zeus is diligently, jealously active. He takes as his own all women, those receptacles of past and future power: ancestress, mother, wives, sisters, daughters."⁹⁵ Zeus has been falsely remembered – having "embosomed" his progenitor⁹⁶ – as creator of *All*, through mythic reiteration that remains a gross misrepresentation of the holy Mysteries, as Guthrie demonstrates:

Of our world Zeus was not simply ruler, but creator. How can this be, since all was created before he was born? ... Zeus swallows Phanes [Metis' duplicity], and with Phanes, who is the first-born, and the origin of all, he may be regarded as taking into himself all things that exist... in the hollow of his own belly ... Therefore together with him all things within Zeus were created anew, the shining height of the broad *aither* and the sky, the seat of the unharvested sea and the noble earth, great Ocean and the lowest depths beneath the earth, and rivers and boundless sea and all else ... mingled like streams in the belly of Zeus.⁹⁷

Yet, Metis as the bearer of deep wisdom existed before Time as a formless Creatrix, although poorly narrated as we have seen. Marcel Detienne, and Jean-Pierre Vernant suggests the whole Metis discussion in mythology and history is comparatively virgin ground made conspicuous in Greek thought by its absence.⁹⁸ This discussion has already located Metis in that conspicuous absence, not as someone polluted or corrupted by Zeus' version of wisdom (*métioesis*), which is superficial mimicry at best, but as an originary source of a more tender wisdom derived from *Immense Principles*.

⁹⁵ Irigaray, *Marine Lover*, 150.

⁹⁶ Mead, *Orpheus*, 70

⁹⁷ Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, 80–83.

⁹⁸ Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Cunning and Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), 1–34.

While Detienne and Vernant have produced a detailed study of the nature of Metis (proper noun) or métiösis (adjectival) as wily intelligence, they admit that they fail, as other Greek historians and mythologists do, to give Metis mother of Athena more than “a walk-on part.”⁹⁹ They do, however, corroborate the findings of Taylor and Mead that, “In the theogonies attributed to Orpheus, ... Metis plays a major role and is presented as a great primordial deity at the beginning of the world”¹⁰⁰ spawned from an original amniosis, and aligned with intelligence and creation. In the Orphic Theogony she is clearly considered the *All*, the inventor of creation, rationality and wisdom.¹⁰¹

Un-hemming Philosophical Context

And his most beloved daughter [Athena], born of his voracious loves with Metis woman of the sea, will have only one passion, to be her father’s thought.¹⁰²

Calling Zeus to account for what Irigaray calls his “original sin”¹⁰³ is not a new or singular line of inquiry. Irigaray has long been a proponent of speaking “truth’s other side”¹⁰⁴ articulating the subsequent and persistent exile and disavowal of maternal divinity that women the world over have endured for millennia. French feminisms have contributed much to the re-discovery of the “originality of our works”¹⁰⁵ along with scholars such as Gatens who reminds us that

Classical Athens ... is named after Athena who was born not “of woman” but “of man”: she sprang from the head of Zeus... Like Hobbes’ artificial man, she is the product of man’s reason; she has no mother. Or has she? An often

⁹⁹ Ibid., 5.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 5.

¹⁰¹ This tension between air and water is covered ficto-critically by Irigaray in *Marine Lover*.

¹⁰² Ibid., 150.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 173.

¹⁰⁴ Luce Irigaray, “When Our Lips Speak Together,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 6, no. 1 (1980): 69–79.

¹⁰⁵ Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, 111.

neglected part of this myth is that Zeus “gave birth” to Athena only after he swallowed whole the body of his pregnant wife [Metis].¹⁰⁶

Discovering a myth/eological truth and responding to the challenge of maternal disavowal is crucial to a refiguration¹⁰⁷ of Metis as a maternal divine referent for feminine sovereignty. Hence, the provocation to map an ontology of maternal asylum towards both embodied and sacred refiguration of women’s divinity, in which “the corpus of a triple figuration, calling forth the notion of a fluidity of body of the many and the one, the human and the divine ... re-imagine and re-invent.”¹⁰⁸

In her book *Feminist Philosophy of Religion* Pamela Sue Anderson argues that feminists “have to find new configurations of old myths continually, in creating mimetic refigurations of mythical visions.”¹⁰⁹ She articulates the common desire of understanding the sacred and suggests that understanding occurs philosophically, symbolically and mythically, as Irigaray also suggests. Anderson follows the mimetic lead of Paul Ricoeur, in reading the three forms of mimesis [imitation] “as narrative prefiguration, configuration and refiguration.”¹¹⁰ She uses this technique to undermine the *economy of the same* that has cast women as marginal and men as central. Anderson explains:

First, as prefiguration, mimesis represents the pre-understanding which is necessary for the narrative constitution of practical knowledge of the everyday world.¹¹¹

Prefiguration can be read as the accepted knowledge that follows some sense of coherency and normalcy in the face of changing conditions. In a prefigurative sense, Metis resides outside coherent and accepted story. When mentioned at all, she is situated as secreted (Me-

¹⁰⁶ Moira Gatens, cited in Rosalyn Diprose and Robyn Ferrell, *Cartographies: Post-structuralism and the Mapping of Bodies and Spaces* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1991), 81.

¹⁰⁷ As posited by Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984); and Pamela Sue Anderson, *A Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (London: Blackwell, 1997).

¹⁰⁸ Sigrid Hackenberg y Almansa, “The Distant (dis-tent) Stillness that is ‘Breth,’” in *Breathing with Luce Irigaray*, eds. Emily A. Holmes and Lenart Škof (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 207.

¹⁰⁹ Anderson, *Feminist Philosophy of Religion*, 139.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 144.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 144.

tis I) or marginal (Metis II). Writing both Metis fragments back into story suggests a change in conditions, or an expansion or re-ordering of knowledge. Continuing Anderson's three forms, the second is configuration. This, she says:

Represents the synthesizing activity by which the knowledges of actions and characters are made the object, or the text, of a conscious and systematic unity as in the organised plot of an historical narrative... textual configurations can also be mythical ... the text of a myth is not strictly speaking the mimesis of an actual event, but it does give unity and meaning to historical events.¹¹²

In this context, the story of Zeus and his theft of Athena gives unity and meaning to a particular community and historical discourse – myth. Recovering Metis from her absence (protective custody) or minimisation (asylum) threatens to disrupt the accepted, coherent, patriarchal mythic story, particularly of Metis II. This is where the third form of mimesis – refiguration – becomes useful:

The activity of the reader(s) who uses knowledge of prefiguring and configuring to go beyond the narrative unity of a configured text; this could mean to move beyond a dominant myth in order to create the world(s) of patriarchy.¹¹³

While Greek mythic interpretations, translations or refigurations have favoured the masculine, refiguration can also be used to re-install the mystical Metis, and dis-assemble the normative frames of Zeusian patriarchy, and masculine morphology. In so doing, refiguration becomes an operative narrative tool in overturning pre-existent figuration that serve as reiterations of fiction, rather than histo/theologically located Mysteries. Anderson elucidates Irigaray's refiguration that interrupts that which has buried female conceptions of desire and power for millennia. Irigaray's response to Nietzsche in *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche* precluded in her earlier work on *Divine Women* is a meticulous account of such refiguration that interrogates Nietzsche's hydrophobia and fear of the feminine and points to the currency of my inquiry. Refiguration is a potent tool in re-dressing the cosmic justice, and dis-

¹¹² Ibid., 145.

¹¹³ Ibid., 145.

figuring the “economy of the same”, as Irigaray posits: “it seems to me that we certainly have to incite a return [refiguration] to the cosmic, but at the same time ask ourselves why we were stopped, as we were becoming divine.”¹¹⁴

Future promise from a shrouded past

Without representation of the mother-daughter relationship – divine or corporeal – *woman* exists in a state of de facto exclusion.¹¹⁵

Retrieval of Metis from her Zeusian exile extends Irigaray’s provocation to unveil what has been obscured from the symbolic order and the language and “law of the father”, and the philosophical imaginary as Anderson¹¹⁶ describes it. This retrieval further, “(re)-discover[s] a possible space for the feminine imaginary”¹¹⁷ to evolve and champion its correlative relation to water as the “liquid ground,”¹¹⁸ despite patriarchal discourse that has consumed and effaced the immanence and transcendence of our fluid gestational origins: “You have swallowed my gaze. You see, inwardly by my gaze.”¹¹⁹ The ongoing challenge of future focus is to restore the generative gestational water deity Metis from asylum to sovereignty, and interrogate the constant hegemonic reiteration of masculine domination. As psychologist of religion and myth, Eliade explains of water:

The Waters symbolise the entire universe of the virtual; they are the *fons et origo*, the reservoir of all potentialities of existence; they *precede* every form and *sustain* every creation ... To the aquatic cosmogony correspond ... the hylogonies, the beliefs according to which mankind is born of the Waters.¹²⁰

¹¹⁴ Luce Irigaray, *Divine Women*, trans. Stephen Muecke (Sydney: Local Consumption Press, 1986), 3.

¹¹⁵ Diane Perpich, “Subjectivity and Sexual Difference: New Figures of the Feminine in Irigaray and Cavarero,” in *Breathing with Irigaray Luce Irigaray*, eds. Emily A. Holmes and Lenart Škof (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 167.

¹¹⁶ Anderson, *Feminist Philosophy of Religion*.

¹¹⁷ Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 164.

¹¹⁸ Irigaray, *Marine Lover*.

¹¹⁹ Irigaray, *Elemental Passions*, 50.

¹²⁰ Eliade, *Images and Symbols*, 151.

The verdict of this myth/eological inquiry is that water has been exiled in the common imaginary, and with it Metis its progenitor, and ours. The classic works of Hesiod and Apollodorus make similar if oblique claims. Until now, Metis has remained undiscovered in the clefts beneath and beyond the abyss, awaiting her recovery and restoration to the vatic stage, despite being the “self produced primeval matter, the ocean of uterine blood before creation, holding future forms in the condition of formlessness or Chaos”¹²¹ or the divine cosmic origin of Irigaray’s analysis.¹²²

The interpretation of myth and the Mysteries (and for the purposes of this inquiry, feminine divine Mysteries) as a discourse of “multiplicity” also opens up the space for reparation through the creative industry of narrative poiesis – writing anew what was lost in the old. Athena, the subject of the first mother/daughter separation drama, may yet be reunited with her maternal divinity. As Irigaray reminds us, “No human subjectivity, no human society has ever been established without the help of the divine,”¹²³ but locating the specificity of that divine and fusing the discursive split, has remained a trial. Mythologically, Zeus has been complicit in removing daughters from mothers, such as Athena, Aphrodite and Persephone, and “None of these daughters had a mother in whom to confide.”¹²⁴ Freudian¹²⁵ psychoanalysis has partnered in that complicity in the modern age by naming the mother/daughter separation drama, and the loss of the first “love object” as, “daughters turning away from mothers,”¹²⁶ effectively removing the value of the “placental economy”¹²⁷ from discourse. In fact, those daughters have

¹²¹ Barbara C. Walker, *Women’s Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets* (San Francisco: Harper, 1983), 723.

¹²² Also hailed as Isis of Egypt, Neith of Sumaria, Kali Ma in the Hindu, Sophia/Hokkhmah in the Judeo-Christian tradition, or the generic but often un-named Divine Mother in Greece.

¹²³ Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, 62.

¹²⁴ Irigaray, *Thinking the Difference: For a Peaceful Revolution*, trans. Karin Montin (Routledge, 1994), 106.

¹²⁵ Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia”, 258.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, 41.

all been stolen by Zeus: “framed, buried, encircled, entombed.”¹²⁸ How to proceed?

Making the unknowable knowable and recognisable is predicated on the retrieval of obscure, fragmented and vulnerable components, such as the divine maternal lineage of Metis, and the restoration of daughters to mothers. The unveiling exploration in this inquiry recognises the precariousness of story surrounding the maternal loss of the originary *love object* Metis, and the advance of the masculine enterprise to render corporeal femininity flawed and fragile as Irigaray has analysed:¹²⁹ “She cannot turn back toward her mother, or lay claim ... to that place of origin; she will not represent “her” relation to “her” origin; she will never go back inside her mother,”¹³⁰ resulting in what Freud himself declares as “*displacement* of the origin desire for the little girl.”¹³¹

Unveiling is vital and expands Irigaray’s earlier work to decode traces of both water story and maternal divinity. Such critical work necessitates an untangling of the fixed-ness of epistemological inquiry and bordered thinking that have reduced (almost to invisibility) the fragmented ephemeral utterings and interpretations of obscure mysteries and cosmogony, preferring instead the commonly upheld myths that champion male figures and winners as heroic and factual. Such meta-narratives do not serve the quest for origin, as Irigaray reminds us: “as long as woman lacks a divine made in her image, she cannot establish her subjectivity.”¹³²

¹²⁸ Irigaray, *Elemental Passions*, 24, among other writers and writing, engages in lengthy critique of Freud’s flawed proposition about mother/daughter relations, especially Persephone and Demeter. Freud uses common Greek myth as evidence in his incomplete narrative analysis of Sophocles play about Oedipus from which he derived the Oedipus complex. The complex of sons deposing fathers, I argue begins with Cronus (Zeus’ father) deposing Uranus (Zeus’ grandfather) and is completed in the Orphic pantheon with Zeus eating his wife just in case she bore him a deposing son. I elaborate in work forthcoming.

¹²⁹ See Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” for his take on the *first love object* and maternal longing.

¹³⁰ Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, 42.

¹³¹ Freud cited in Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, 42.

¹³² Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, 63.

Evolving Eternal Waters

Mythologist Paul Lafargue¹³³ offers an evolutionary explanation for the location and displacement of some of the mysterious and mythic characters and fragments of story addressed in this exposition, to help communicate how sacred mysteries became syncretised over time to re-appear as common myths. For instance:

The myth of Athena [daughter of Metis] was not produced all of a piece, nor does it present the immutability of mathematical formula. In common with all things, both in the natural and the intellectual world, it has been subject to the laws of evolution.¹³⁴

Lafargue implies that representations of myth as dilutions of mysteries over millennia have been adapted to serve the human conditions of the time and the power structures that inform them. Following his evolutionary suggestion, Metis, as Athena's mother, and Athena as Metis' stolen daughter, has suffered from epistemological and ontological extinction, in accordance with a greater evolutionary and in-volutionary predisposition.

This paper has engaged in a clarification of what the story of Metis was/is and might mean; of how she has been (or not been) metamorphosed, secreted, remodelled, reconfigured and interpellated over different ages for different purposes – from the locus of the sacred Orphic Mysteries in the first reign of Olympus, to a cameo presence in the life and myth of Athena in the fifth reign of Olympus. By enacting a *remodelling*, I have situated Metis as a central player not only in Orphic sacred mysteries generally, but in women's mysteries specifically, and as the under-explored site of the first mother/ daughter loss, monstrously reiterated through modern psychoanalysis. I, along with Irigaray, fairly and squarely *throw the book* at the matricidal manoeuvres of Zeus, from whom we inherit the tragic legacy of estrangement from our divine source, along with a habitus of precariousness, for simply being woman-born. In *Divine Women*, Irigaray sums up the arrogation of our origin, our separation, our exile, thus:

¹³³ Lafargue, *The Myth of Athena*, n.p.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

“The only diabolical thing about women is their absence of God, and the fact that, without a God, they find themselves squeezed into modes which don’t suit them, which exile them ... mask them ... taking away their progress in love, art, thought, her/their ideal and divine achievement.”¹³⁵

While it may be impossible to truly grasp the vastness of the deities of Orphic Ancient Greece, it must become possible to re-think what we believe we know so well, what we have accepted over time about mother/daughter relations and maternal divinity, and in a more immediate sense the work that both mysteries and myth perform. Our access to divine motifs, which Athena herself was denied, becomes critical if we are to enact a feminist poesis, a refiguration, and reconciliation of past erasures of maternal divinity. My original provocation to re-install our maternal divine past in the present, serves to imagine a future differently oriented, a future in which the ontological and exilic theology of Metis can be resolved and re-made as sacred ...

Her holy moist Metisian fragments ...
 a sovereign orb atomised by cosmic mayhem ...
 this Aquamater ...
 invites us home to the sacred covenant ...
 through Phanes/Metis/Erikapaios ...
 mother
 daughter
 Holy Spirit¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Irigaray, *Divine Women*, 6.

¹³⁶ Hawke, *Aquamorphia*, 5–6.

Metisian Genealogy

Phanes/Metis/Erikapaios

|

Chaos

|

Gaia = Uranus

|

Oceanus=Tethys/ Cronus=Rhea/ Iapetus=Clymene/ Hyperion=Theia/ Crius/ Coes=Phoebe/ Themis/ Mnemosyne=Zeus/ Cyclops/ Hundred Handers

|

Rivers/Oceanids/**Metis= Zeus** | Prometheus/Epimetheus | Leto=Zeus/ Asteria=Perses | The Muses (Calliope=Eagrus)

|

Athena | Apollo/Artemis | **Orpheus = Eurydice**

|

Helios/Selene/Eos | Hecate

|

Hestia/Hera=Zeus/Demeter=Zeus/Hades/Poseidon

|

Persephone=Hades

|

Ares/Eileithyia/Hebe/Hephaestus

Appendix 1: Orphic/Metisian Genealogical Table

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