

In the concluding sections of her essay, Nyquist alludes to some earlier texts that you may or may not already know: Aeschylus' set of three plays on the House of Agamemnon (the *Oresteia*) and *Midsummer Night's Dream*. She is drawing a contrast between what happens in Milton's poem and in these other two texts, and it goes something like this.

The *Oresteia* begins at the conclusion of the Trojan war, when the Greek commander Agamemnon returns home. In his absence, his wife Clytemnestra has ruled the country cruelly, has also taken as a lover a man whose father was grievously injured by Agamemnon's father -- so grievously that he had cursed Agamemnon's house before dying. She has not forgiven Agamemnon for killing their daughter as a sacrifice to ensure favorable winds for the Greek fleet. When Agamemnon returns with a Trojan princess and his concubine, Clytemnestra slaughters them. In the second play, the children of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra (Electra and Orestes) avenge their father's death: Orestes kills both his mother and her lover, but then is pursued by the Furies, female spirits of vengeance particularly concerned with the murder of kindred. In the final play, Orestes seeks to have his guilt adjudicated by a trial, presided over by the goddess Athena -- Athena decides in his favor, and conciliates the Furies by welcoming them to Athens as beneficent powers.

What Nyquist is interested in here is the forms of resistance to masculine rule enacted by Clytemnestra (because of her love for her daughter) and then by the Furies, on the half of Clytemnestra as Orestes's mother. In this text, as she points out, female bonding is associated with murder, adultery, and the insatiable pursuit of vengeance -- so obviously it must be suppressed (notably, by Athena, a goddess who -- like Sin -- was born from her father's head without the participation of a mother).

Midsummer Night's Dream not only has actual Amazons, who were fighting against Athens until its king, Theseus, managed to woo their queen; it also has a pissed off fairy queen, who refuses to give her husband something he wants, a little boy who is the child of a woman she loved -- as a consequence of their quarrel, crops are failing, the weather is strange, and all of nature is in disorder. Finally, the play follows four young Athenian lovers whose affections are mismatched, and further shuffled by a troublemaking fairy. In the process, one young woman believes herself mocked by the other, and begs her to remember that time (prior to falling in love with the young men) when their friendship was all in all to them, and they were one heart in two bodies.

In both these texts, Nyquist points out that the existing or remembered bonds between women present an obstacle to kings, fathers, and so on, and these bonds are represented in very prejudicial terms: Clytemnestra's loyalty to her daughter gets conflated with adultery and murder. Obviously, the Amazons must be prevented from conquering Athens, and Clytemnestra must be brought to justice. In *Paradise Lost*, by contrast, there is no other woman -- much less a mother -- for Eve to form a bond with; Adam has no real rival. If Eve initially resists "yielding" to him, it is in favor of a kind of experience rather than an actual alternate bond with another person.

Nyquist also invokes Freud. I don't want to get too deeply into this topic, but -- broadly speaking -- she is making a large argument that psychologies are shaped by the conditions of childhood and families, and these in turn change over time as social and economic structures change. Freud's understanding of the mind and his tools for analyzing that mind are thus not valid in a transhistorical way, but rather for particular historical conditions -- especially those relating to the idea of the home as a private, domestic sphere, versus the public culture of politics, work, and trade. (I've already mentioned that medieval people seem to have had little resembling modern ideas of privacy, and the home would typically have been a place of production rather than the place where you went to rest from producing. There are many other changes in the nature of the family that would go along with these and other observed developments). Nyquist argues that Milton's text not only reflects the emergence of those conditions, but participates in creating them.

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