

# ‘We call her Pallas, you know’: Naming, taming and the construction of Athena in Greek culture and thought

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## 1. Taming the wild bugaboo

The current collection of papers has a predecessor: a 1963 special supplement of another journal, *Greece & Rome*, devoted to essays relating to Athena.<sup>1</sup> The contributions to that volume sought to make sense of a range of aspects pertinent to the interpretation of the goddess, and one of them at least, Herington’s appraisal of the goddess in Athenian literature and cult, remains a go-to study.<sup>2</sup> Amid the various attempts to advance scholarship there was a different kind of contribution, a poem by John Heath-Stubbs,<sup>3</sup> which in one respect conveys what it is that scholars do when they seek to interpret Athena. But in another way the poem brings out one of the pitfalls of trying to interpret religious beings – that of taking away from what was once found appealing about that figure. This is not a problem confined to the 1963 collection: it is one that accompanied earlier attempts to make sense of Athena, and it is one that has accelerated if anything in the half century since. Heath-Stubbs writes about a visit to the Akropolis on a trip to Athens where, rather than, first, getting a sense of the awe that other visitors had experienced,<sup>4</sup> what he first found was a place where a goddess was once ‘tamed.’ Athens was the location where an ‘owl-shrieking bugaboo’ was turned into ‘an image of Wisdom.’ And the result is as follows: there is no goddess because ‘She has departed.’ However, as he starts to climb down the hill, he reflects on how he encounters something akin to epiphany: ‘turn your back, and stumble down the steep track – then suddenly the mathematical candour...owl-clawed, hooks to the heart.’ A

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1 Hooker, 1963.

2 Herington, 1963.

3 Heath-Stubbs, 1963.

4 For instance, Virginia Woolf’s reflections in her diary for 21 April 1932 are more typical. For her, the Parthenon is ‘more complex & splendid & robust than I remembered. The yellow pillars...gathered, grouped, radiating there on the rock...crowds flying as if suppliants...The temple, like a ship, so vibrant, taut, sailing, though still all these ages’ (1982, p. 90-1).

lesson to take from this poem for scholars concerned with the interpretation of Athena is this – when we seek to make sense of the goddess, some aspects can get squeezed out.

A prevailing framework for interpreting the goddess is as an exemplar of intelligence, civilisation and culture. Athena is typically interpreted as a deity that disciplines, that binds, and that binds together various disparate things. As generally understood, the goddess is understood as a personage concerned with creating and advancing culture by working against anything elemental, monstrous or in some way uncanny. This is a way of interpreting Athena that has prevailed despite various turns in scholarship. At the close of the nineteenth century, Hegel envisaged Athena as ‘the spirit of the Athenians’ (1956 [1899]) and this view of the goddess, as an exemplar of all that a culture might aspire to, continues to inform the understanding of the goddess.<sup>5</sup> The model that is informing Heath-Stubbs’ image of the goddess is one of these: the evolutionary approach to Athena as a pre-hellenic goddess who had been co-opted by the Greeks, and most notably by the culturally-advanced Athenians, and turned into a deity concerned with the high minded pursuits that they idealised.<sup>6</sup> The model that replaced it, the one developed by Detienne and Vernant which I shall survey below, has tended to play up even further Athena’s civilising qualities.<sup>7</sup>

My contribution to the current collection of Athena-related papers will review the standard approach to the goddess. It will then offer an alternative way to frame a study of the subject. Finally it will focus on one particular aspect of the subject – one that is especially apposite for the hundredth edition of a journal named after the ‘other name’ of the goddess, – what it means to call the deity by a specific name, whether ‘Athena’ or ‘Pallas’ or any of the many other ways to name this goddess.

## 2. Who or what is Athena? Asking the wrong questions?

Heath-Stubbs does not name the goddess, beyond calling her ‘She.’ At the other extreme, classical scholarship usually writes about the deity as ‘Athena’. Has this created a skewed image of what the goddess meant in the ancient world? In order to start addressing this question, I shall rehearse how the goddess is generally understood in classical scholarship.

Athena is envisaged as an enduringly popular deity who is key to many ancient sources, including some of most canonical works of ancient literature, not least the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*,<sup>8</sup> and the *Oresteia*, the foundational Greek tragedy.<sup>9</sup> The goddess is also important to comedy: more so than has been often acknowledged.<sup>10</sup> Athena is also a major player in many myths. These include those that the goddess herself is central in, her extraordinary birth above all; they also include those of other deities, notably Zeus, where it is again the birth of the goddess that is key, this time because it is the emergence of the goddess that enables the conclusion of the

5 See, most recently, Kennedy 2009, p. 1.

6 See e.g. Herington, 1955. For a survey of explanations of Athena in terms of the deity’s hypothesised origins, see Deacy, 2008, p. 33–44.

7 See, notably, their seminal study, Detienne and Vernant, 1978.

8 Athena in Homer: see e.g. Synodinou, 1986 (on the *Iliad*); Clay, 1983 (on the *Odyssey*).

9 Athena in tragedy: the major study is, now, Kennedy, 2009. See also Papadopoulou, 2001.

10 See e.g. Anderson, 1995, Deacy, 2016 forthcoming.

rise to power of Zeus, stopping the until now inextricable pattern of sons overthrowing their fathers before in turn becoming overthrown by their own sons. Athena is born in place of the prophesied son, who would have exceeded in power all other deities, Zeus included, as ‘the king of gods and men, possessing an overbearing (*huberbios*) heart’ (Hes. *Th.* 898).<sup>11</sup> Athena also has a greater set of associations with heroes and heroines than any other deity – I have said it before; it is as though one of the qualifications for being a hero in Greek myth is to have Athena as a patron.<sup>12</sup> Thus, with Athena’s aid, Odysseus returns home, Achilles defeats Hektor, and Orestes is able to return to Argos absolved of matricide. The two Ajaxes bear this out negatively, Greater Ajax by rejecting Athena’s help on the battlefield and incurring a divine wrath that leads to his suicide, and Lesser Ajax by doing something awful in Athena’s sanctuary at Troy that, at Alk.fr. 298 turns Athena *gorgōpis* (‘gorgon-eyed,’ ‘gorgon-faced,’ ‘irate’).<sup>13</sup> And as for mythological females, many of their lives turn on an association with Athena – often one that leads to their suffering and death. For every Penelope, whose cunning in Ithaca is supported by Athena’s secret workings, there are the likes of Medusa beheaded under Athena’s guidance; the Kekropids who leap to their deaths unable to cope with Athena’s wrathful anger; and Iodama, killed by the goddess in combat.<sup>14</sup>

This mythologically-rich goddess is also regarded as a key figure in terms of various cultic functions, with a major role as a deity of wool working and numerous other functions that see her interacting with other deities, including Hephaistos in skilled craft, Ares in war, and – as Detienne and Vernant showed – in many areas where one might not, at first, expect to find this goddess such as the sea, the horse, and agriculture.<sup>15</sup> For instance, through the invention of the bit, Detienne and Vernant envisage Athena as the power that ‘confers power over the brutal violence of the creature of Poseidon’ (1978: p. 196). The same terms of opposition are discerned, by Detienne, in an agrarian context:

« Athena intervenes as a power endowed with *sollertia*, manual dexterity and practical intelligence: she makes the instrument, the technical means for rapid harvesting of Demeter’s wheat. As opposed to Demeter, who symbolizes the cultivated and fertile earth, Athena represents the artifice and technical invention which serves to complement the activity proper to the corn goddess » (1971, p. 163).

Within the operational field of technology, the model of an elemental-technological opposition was found by Detienne and Vernant to be applicable to Athena’s relation with Hephaistos, who, as the technological power *par excellence*, ‘is a god inseparable from fire,’ whereas ‘Athena’s mastery comes about through the uses of powers that are technical as much as magical...it is only with the active cooperation of her partner Hephaistos that Athena can exercise the particular mode of operation in this context’ (1978, p. 280-1). These scholars’ ingenuity showed that what looks at first glance odd ends up making perfect sense in relation to Greek thinking about such matters as craft and cleverness. Their Athena, a power of *mētis*

11 Athena in Hesiod: see, to date, Brown, 1952; Jeanmaire, 1956; Detienne and Vernant, 1978, chs. 1-2.

12 Deacy 2008, p. 58.

13 Athena as *gorgōpis*, cf. Eur. *Hel.* 1316; Eur. *El.* 1257. On the crimes of Little Ajax, including a comparison with his namesake, see Deacy and McHardy, 2015.

14 Athena and women: see Deacy, 2008, p. 71-77.

15 See, notably, Detienne 1971; Detienne and Vernant, 1978, p. 187-213.

(‘cunning intelligence’), was one with a huge range of areas of competence. They interpreted Athena as a kind of problem solver, whose ingenuity was to make the sea, which in its natural state can be dangerous and changeable, navigable, and whose ingenuity likewise made fire, deadly in its natural stage, an essential ingredient of civilised life.

The narrative about Athena that I have assembled thus far in this section could be expanded further: to account for the many cults of the goddess, and to explain many other myths beyond those surveyed so date. Moreover, the enduringly popular deity of classical antiquity has been many times revived by postclassical users, in the public art of many cities for instance, such that the ancient goddess has an ‘afterlife’ as a deity whose presence is so customary that it can go unnoticed.<sup>16</sup> Thus it is a narrative that can straddle the boundary between classical and postclassical representations.

However, there is a problem with this kind of narrative. Underlying it is an assumption that there is an abstract, broadly consistent figure with a personality, whose ancient life can be written, and whose postclassical ‘afterlife’ can be charted as well. So enduring is it that a good deal of scholarship on the goddess has been asking which way of interpreting this mythological character is the correct one, as though there is an actual Athena to discover, who somehow exits behind the various sources. Athena has meaning for scholars in large part as an abstracted figure, made up of various stories, cults, literature and artistic representations, from the earliest sources, through antiquity, and beyond. This conviction that there is a discrete figure, Athena, has led to a range of readings, and to debate over which quality, or set of qualities, of the goddess is the most important. For some, the goddess is an original warrior deity who grew into a goddess with more peaceful traits; for others, the goddess began in the opposite way, as a fertility and peaceful power that came to be turned into a warrior, co-opted by patriarchy.<sup>17</sup> For others still, neither starting point gets one very far because however far back one might try to go towards some original, simple core, what one finds are complexities and nuances. Detienne and Vernant were instrumental in this approach, emphasising that to try to find an original Athena is a waste of time.<sup>18</sup> Instead of using the evidence to try to locate what Athena originally was, they sought instead to use the evidence to determine what Athena meant to its creators or intended users.

I advocated an approach that owes much to Detienne and Vernant but that also deals with something that concerns me, namely that, by showing what was wrong with others’

16 On the ubiquity of Athena in modern Western cities, see Deacy and Villing, 2001; Shearer, 1996.

17 See here the summary in Luyster, 1965, p. 133.

18 See here e.g. Detienne, 1971, p. 162: ‘The traditional form of analysis, which proceeds from etymology and seeks to define a god by his essence, would seem to have a choice between two solutions only, both of them equally undemonstrable: to postulate, initially, either a warrior divinity or a fertility power whose traits are progressively modified; or to admit, from the outset, the existence of two distinct but complementary Athenas, the combination of which must account for the most important functions of this power.’ Detienne continues by setting out what is wrong with this approach: ‘All these genetic interpretations not only make the mistake of seeking to define Athena as a power apart from the other gods, but they err, equally, in failing to distinguish the fields of activity proper to Athena and the modes of action utilized by this divinity’. The question of Athena’s origins has tended to be treated more cautiously, although many studies remain fuelled by a desire to uncover the origins of the goddess: e.g. Pötscher, 1987; Papachatzis, 1988.

interpretation of Athena, these pioneers introduced a further way of understanding the goddess as a consistent, logical figure – as though each individual user of the goddess was governed by the same concepts of what the goddess was. Detienne summed up their way of understanding the goddess as follows: ‘Athena is eminently endowed with a form of practical and cunning intelligence which is applied in great part to the world of technology, with its particular type of objects and modes of action’ (1971, p. 166). This approach is justifiable – each user of Athena is drawing on previous uses of the goddess. For instance, the Athena of Solon 4 is engaging with Homer’s Athena to produce a traditionally epic goddess while also playing with and subverting this goddess.<sup>19</sup> And Sappho 1 updates the intervening Athena of epic to construct a goddess, Aphrodite, who intervenes as the poet’s Athena-like co-fighter (*summachos*) in the vein of Diomedes’ Athena at *Il.* 5.115-29. However, this approach relies upon a way of thinking about Athena that does not square with how the Greeks seem to have understood deities. Detienne and Vernant shifted the interpretation of Athena from a person to a power, but as a power, their Athena still held a consistent meaning. I want to shift the focus further away still from an assumption that Athena has any coherent, underlying meaning. I shall do this by considering a current focus in the study of myth in Anglophone scholarship, one that is bringing to Anglophone scholarship Barthes’ concept of myth as a moment,<sup>20</sup> and which comes at a time when Religious Studies scholars are arguing for a turn from a how to define religion towards what it means to do religion – or even to ‘religion.’<sup>21</sup>

This is the move to stop taking about myth as a noun, that is, as some kind of thing with a particular set of meanings, and to begin instead to consider myth as a verb, as something that does. Thus the emphasis is moving towards what it means to ‘myth’ rather than on myth as having an intrinsic value. Many studies have been taken up with questions around how to define mythology, how to define religion and, likewise, how to define specific deities, not least Athena, who is one of the most widely discussed.<sup>22</sup> The premise is broadly that, by coming up with the criteria for defining the goddess, one has the basis of an investigation of what the subject under discussion is, and is not. Some studies proceed by starting with specific traits and deeming these especially key. Sometimes, for example, Athena is regarded as an original warrior deity, who came to be fused with an earth mother.<sup>23</sup> Others, meanwhile, begin from the premise that Athena is an archetype of a patriarchal female.<sup>24</sup> But, by asking ‘what is Athena?’, is one asking the wrong question?

The all-too-common starting point for interpreting any given piece of evidence is an underlying concept of what the goddess supposedly signifies – the image is then read in relation to this abstracted notion of the goddess. Indeed, there is a tendency to write about Athena as though this deity is a real person with a character, a biography and a history. One reason why

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19 See, notably, Irwin, 2005, Lewis, 2006.

20 Barthes, 1957.

21 On myth from noun to verb, voir Morales, 2007; on religion as an act of doing, see Nye, 2004.

22 See for example the Athena-related scholarship assembled in Deacy and Villing, 2001, p. 383-395, and, now, Deacy, 2015.

23 E.g. Herington, 1955 speculates on the origins of the Athenian goddess in two hypothesized earlier goddesses, one warlike, one peaceful.

24 Kerényi, 1978; Shearer, 1996.

Bernal's hypothesis of originally black, or 'usefully black' Athena was shocking was that he was proposing an alternative narrative for the history of the goddess from a narrative of the deity associated with Greek cultural and political values and who has stood as a symbol of Western cultural values. Instead he proposed a different Athena, who came from Africa and who was regarded by ancient Greeks as such, but whose origins were concealed by Eurocentric 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century scholars attempting to rewrite the history of Western Civilisation.<sup>25</sup>

Rather than writing about Athena as an abstract figure with a coherent existence, it is time to ask what it means to 'do' Athena, and to consider what meanings are being created when Athena is represented in any given context. But in order to embark on this approach, there is one further issue to explore – which applies to the study of any deity, but potentially to Athena more than any other. As well as considering what it means to perform an act of Athena-ing, I shall ask what it means to name the goddess in the first place.

### 3. What's in a name? Pallas, Athena and other divine names

Thus far in this paper, I have been giving a specific name to the deity under discussion: Athena. But Athena is a deity with many names, more perhaps than any other deity: even Aphrodite, who, at Eur. *Hipp.* 1, describes herself as one that is 'powerful' and *ouk anonymous* – literally 'not anonymous' or 'not without names': in positive terms, 'many-named'. The numerous names of Athena are especially notable at the start of Homeric Hymn 28. The poet begins: 'Pallas Athena, glorious goddess, I sing' (1) and then lists the following ways to name the subject: 'Glaukopis, Polymetis, Possessing-an-unbending-heart, Pure Parthenos, Saviour of Cities, Valiant, Tritogeneia.' (1-4). From one perspective, the goddess is being depicted as multi-faceted, such that there are numerous potential versions of the goddess, and the poet will pick from these to describe the mythological episode he is going to represent: the goddess' first ever epiphany, the birth from the head of Zeus. Alternatively, it could be that each epithet is present in what he will narrate.

The usual way to deal with epithets is as specialist guises,<sup>26</sup> where 'Athena' remains largely unmarked, and serves as the overriding name, and the others become interesting insofar as they elaborate certain aspects of the subject. This approach may be exemplified by that taken by Rosenzweig, who organises a book on a specific deity, Aphrodite, in a specific locality, Athens, around epithets of this goddess – there are chapters on Aphrodite Pandemos, on Aphrodite Peitho, on Aphrodite in the Gardens, and on Aphrodite Ourania – with the purpose of furthering understanding what the deity signified in the city. Rosenzweig states that her method has the potential to be applied to that of any deity.<sup>27</sup> From this angle, a book on Athena in Athens might start with, say, Polias, then consider other epithets of the goddess in a protective role, including Poliouchos ('front-fighter', 'champion'), then move to the goddess in the guise of Parthenos ('maiden'), before moving, perhaps, to epithets linked with political institutions such as Boulaia ('reasoner'), all with the goal of demonstrating the variety of roles of the goddess, and where possible identifying common ground between the specific roles. This tendency

25 See, esp. Bernal, 1987, 1991, 2001, 2006.

26 See, notably, Vernant's overview of Zeus via epithets (1980, p. 96-99).

27 Rosenzweig, 2004, p. 5.

marginalises something about the goddess: that she is often not actually called just Athena but, as at the start of Homeric Hymn 28, she also has a preceding name, Pallas.

On the specialised guise approach, the first name is the main one, while the one which follows illuminates one specific aspect of it. Does it follow that 'Pallas' is more important than 'Athena'? Or should the two be taken as a pair, as expressing distinct aspects of the same goddess? If so, why? For instance, in *Iliad* 1, when Achilles reminds Thetis of a time when three deities sought to bind Zeus, why do two of the conspirators – Hera and Poseidon – have single names while the third conspirator has two? The passage in question is where Achilles asks Thetis to recall the occasion she had herself recounted many times when:

Alone of the immortals [you] averted unseemly destruction from the son of Kronos of the dark clouds at the time when the other Olympians – Hera and Poseidon and Pallas Athena – wanted to put him in bonds. But you went, goddess, and freed him from his bonds when you quickly summoned to high Olympos the hundred-handed one whom the gods call Briareos, but all men Aigaion, for he is far mightier than his father, who exulting in his glory, sat beside the son of Kronos. The blessed gods feared him, and stopped binding Zeus (397-406, tr. author).

When a particular author refers to a goddess named Pallas, should we think of Athena as intimated as well: as 'Pallas (Athena)'? Or is the name Pallas expressing a particular set of qualities that might be missed through this move?

For the current discussion, I am going to set my limits to classical evidence, specifically classical Athenian evidence. After that, something different starts to happen: Pallas becomes a name that Athena acquires after she kills someone with that name, notably her father.<sup>28</sup> As is often the way with late evidence, what it depicts might be present earlier, or it might not. For example, there may be a fit with concepts of the Palladion, the image of Pallas with particular tutelary or talismanlike power. This topic is a minefield that needs its own space for unravelling. Such a study could take account of the mess of stories about the image; and the study might explore the fit between the Palladion and the Athena Polias or Wooden Athena and with the Palladion court at Athens which tried cases of accidental homicide, and which might take its name from an act of such killing either by Athena of someone called Pallas, or from an act of killing that took place in the presence of the statue.<sup>29</sup> My focus for the present study will be, firstly Plato's *Kratylos*, the one place where there is a discussion in a classical Greek work about the meaning of the name Athena and the name Pallas, and secondly, Euripides' *Ion*, where one commentator has argued that Athena and Pallas denote conflicting aspects of the goddess. Before embarking on this study, I shall stress, briefly, what I am *not* interested in – namely

28 See e.g. the following accounts of the final of five homonymous deities sharing the name 'Athena', all of which appear to be drawn from an original work, possibly Alexandrian, though perhaps from the Aristotelian corpus. Cic. *Nat. D.* 3.59; Clem. Alex. *Protr.* 2.28; Arn. *Adv. Nat.* 4.14; Firm. Mat. *Err. prof. rel.* 16.1-2; Ampel. 9.10. For an overview, see Deacy, 2008, p. 142-144.

29 On the intricately overlapping and varied traditions for Athena and the Palladion, see Roberston, 1996. On the palladion, see notably, Sourvinou-Inwood, 2011, p. 225-262.

speculating about the actual origins of the divine name.<sup>30</sup> This risks an etymological fallacy of a kind that Socrates is perhaps committing in the work that I shall now examine.

#### 4. ‘We call her Pallas, you know’: Pallas and Athena in Plato’s *Kratylos*

‘Pallas’ and ‘Athena’ comprise two of a series of etymologies offered by Socrates in the long central section of the *Kratylos* (391a-427d) after Socrates is called on to arbitrate in an argument between Kratylos and Hermogenes over whether the assignment of names is arbitrary (Hermogenes) or intrinsically meaningful (Kratylos). When he gets to Athena (406d-407c), Socrates says ‘it is not difficult to explain the reason of one of her two names,’ Pallas:

As I see it, we would be right in thinking this name is derived from her dancing in weapons and armour, for lifting oneself or anything else up, whether above the earth, or in the hands is called ‘shaking’ (*pallein*) and ‘dancing’ or being shaken: (*pallesthai*), or ‘being shaken, and ‘being danced’ (406d-407a, tr. author).

Socrates thus drives the name Pallas from *pallein* and offers evidence to back up this derivation: the armed dances, the *pyrrhike*, performed in connection with the goddess – which involved shaking and rapid motion. Accepting the explanation, Hermogenes asks: ‘How do you explain the other name? Socrates responds: ‘That is a much more serious matter.’ First he identifies a consensus among the ‘ancients’ and contemporary ‘Homeric scholars’ who understand the name Athena to signify ‘mind’ (*nous*) and ‘understanding’ (*dianoia*). Next he claims that, preceding these interpreters, ‘the name-maker also seems to have had a similar conception about her, and he gives her a greater name still, “intelligence of god” (*hē theou noēsis*), seeming to say that she is *ha theonoo*.’ According to Socrates, it required some language manipulation to reach this interpretation: the name-maker ‘used the *alpha* as a dialect variation in place of *eta*, and took out the *iota* and *sigma* in *noēsis*.’ But then Socrates offers a different possibility: ‘perhaps the name does not have this meaning; perhaps he called her Theonoe because she has better knowledge of divine things (*ta theia noousa*) than others.’ Then he muses that the ‘name-maker may have wanted to convey ethical intelligence (*en ethei noēsis*) in the person of this goddess, until, finally, via some further tweaking, the name-maker, or someone in his wake, ‘thinking it more refined, called her ‘Athena’ instead of ‘Ethonoe’ (407a-c, tr. author).

There is a great deal that would benefit from an investigation beyond this current paper, including the relationship between the etymologies of ‘Athena’ and ‘Pallas’ and the depiction of the goddess elsewhere in Plato (e.g. at *Laws* 920e); the significance of ‘Pallas’ and ‘Athena’ within the overall scope of the etymologies in the *Kratylos*; and, what it means for Athena to be grouped with Hephaistos and Ares, two other deities identified as specifically Athenian (406d). In a forthcoming book,<sup>31</sup> I read the etymology of ‘Athena’ in relation to Athena’s birth from Zeus as expressed mythologically and in terms of ancient numerology, as the apotheosis of the number seven. What is noteworthy in terms of the present study is the division of the goddess in relation to two distinct names, and thus two different natures.

30 Herington, 1955, hypothesises two originally separate goddesses later merged under the name of ‘Athena’ – a maiden warrior called Pallas across Greece but Parthenos by the Athenians, and Athena, a peaceful, agrarian deity.

31 Deacy, forthcoming.



Usually now, as in antiquity, the etymologies in the *Kratylos* are regarded as serious exercises, but as exercises in what?<sup>32</sup> In competitive performance possibly, where Socrates is trying to outdo contemporary practitioners of etymology at their own game,<sup>33</sup> or in how to reach the nature and form of any name.<sup>34</sup> If the latter, why are some of the etymologies so fanciful, and – as with ‘Athena’ – why are they sometimes rambling and far-fetched? One approach would be to regard Socrates as thinking on the hoof, trying increasingly desperately to match the names of the goddess with particular areas of competence, beginning with ‘Pallas’ which causes him no difficulty. But then, on moving to the ‘weightier matter’ of ‘Athena’, his analysis becomes more speculative and veers towards the more preposterous word-play that characterises some of the other etymologies.

Another approach would be to see Socrates as undertaking a serious study of what it means to name the goddess. Such a reading has implications not just for an understanding of how the nature of the deity is being represented, but also for the interpretation of the linguistic theory proposed in the *Kratylos*, and its relationship with Plato’s broader philosophy. ‘Athena’ denotes *nous* and signifies the intellect, access to divine knowledge and intelligence of character. The name stands for nothing short of Platonic wisdom.

If the analysis of the name ‘Athena’ conveys such profound meaning, what, then, are we to do with ‘Pallas’, which, connoting rapid, violent bodily movement, stands a pole apart from the detached wisdom indicated by ‘Athena’. Again, there is the potential for regarding Athena as key to Plato’s linguistic theory, here as exemplifying the Heracliteanism that recurs in Plato.<sup>35</sup> From this perspective the two names exemplify forms in flux, and a unity in opposites around body (‘Pallas’) and mind (‘Athena’).

Is there any other evidence for Athena as a deity with two distinct names and natures? Other sources too associate Pallas with rapid motion. For example in Euripides’ *Herakles*, Pallas is the name used when the goddess makes a sudden and violent appearance like she did in her contest with the giant Enkelados.<sup>36</sup> The intervention happens when Herakles is about to do something that goes beyond what Hera had intended in accordance with her plan to turn him into the slayer of his wife and children. He has been driven mad and, as Hera intended, he kills his wife and children believing them to be the family of his enemy Lykos. But he then he keeps going, and turns to attack his father Amphytrion. How Amphytrion experiences the sudden appearance of the goddess is as something destructive, as though the goddess is adding to the destruction being wrought by Herakles. He describes it as a ‘hurricane shaking the house’ making the roof fall, and exclaims: ‘What are you doing child of Zeus [*Diō pai*]? Pallas, you are conveying to this house a horrible confusion, as once you brought to Enkelados’ (904-9, tr. author). Again there is the shaking motif, with Athena’s appearance understood at first as a hurricane: either because of Athena’s effect on the elements, or because Athena is the hurricane. Again, too, there is the association between violent shaking and the stand-off with Enkelados. Then the chorus describe what *they* experienced: ‘a phantom’ whom they took to be Pallas, ‘shaking a spear with a crested

32 Surveys of the problems posed by the etymologies include Baxter, 1992, and Riley 2005, esp. p. 1-7.

33 Barney, 1998.

34 Taking the etymologies seriously: see Sedley 2003, esp. p. 25-50.

35 See Baxter, 1992, p. 99-101; Barney, 2001, p. 149-161.

36 On Athena and Herakles in the *Herakles*, see Deacy, 2005.

head.' Once more the goddess is named Pallas in the context of movement, though with spear rather than shield, first making a violent spectacle by shaking her spear, and then performing an act of interpersonal violence: 'She threw a rock at the chest of Herakles, which held fast his murderous madness, and knocked him unconscious' (1002-6, tr. author).<sup>37</sup>

### 5. 'Pallas, my god': Pallas and Athena in Euripides' *Ion*

Thus the differentiation in the *Kratylos* between different names of Athena as carrying distinct meanings of the goddess can, tentatively, be looked for elsewhere. But is there any support for such a way of perceiving the goddess? Loraux thought so – in Euripides' *Ion*, where she argued that the goddess constructed by the play can be split into two sets of traits depending on what act of naming is carried out. And as far as Loraux is concerned, this is deliberate: 'no word is gratuitous, especially in a tragic text, and to use one word in place of another is, essentially, to use *another* word' (1993, 139: emphasis Loraux's).

The purpose, according to Loraux, is to represent the pivotal character, Kreousa, as a woman reading her life history in relation to two distinct – and irreconcilable – women's stories. The first of these is that she is a well-born young girl, of the royal house – the daughter of Erechtheus, who is married to Xouthos, the Thracian king. But their marriage is not producing what it should: there is no offspring. The second narrative is that of the young woman deflowered and impregnated by a god. As narrated at several points in the play (8-81, 338-356, 859-922) including by Kreousa herself, she once had sex with Apollo in a cave by the Long Rocks, then returned to the cave to abandon his child, Ion. The goddess that Kreousa represents is a double of Kreousa herself, a nurturing figure thanks to her connections with the earth-born Erichthonios, the infant whom Athena took out of the earth (269), and provided with guardian serpents (1428). But there is another version of the goddess competing with this one, who manifests under another name: a violent, murderous goddess named Pallas. At 209-11, the chorus look at the goddess taking part in the gigantomachy as depicted on the tapestries on Apollo's temple at Delphi. One group, making the same sort of wordplay as that in the *Kratylos*, asks: 'Do you see her, shaking (*pallein*) her *gorgōpis* shield against Enkelados?' The others respond by recognising the goddess who is making the shaking action as 'Pallas, my god'. The reference to the *gorgōpis* shield is consonant with the many depictions of an armed goddess carrying a gorgon-faced shield at the gigantomachy, while also intimating the gaze of the goddess herself when, roused to fury, the gorgon's stare becomes her own: with shield lifted up to cover and uncover her face. The goddess that the Athenian women see is an antagonist, a warrior and a pulsating dancer, whose panoply includes the gorgon's face staring out of the shield that she is shaking. Such connotations are borne out later in the play where Pallas is more than an antagonist, but is envisaged as a killer, of the gorgon (991), whose skin she wears as the aegis (996) and drops of whose blood she gives to the infant Erichthonios (1001).<sup>38</sup>

As played out in the *Ion*, then, the goddess contributes to the disjunction between what Kreousa wants to be and what she actually is. She wants to be a child-nurturer, a *kourotrophos*,

37 Cf. Athena's reconstruction of Dionysos out of the still-palpitating (*pallein*) heart that was the only part of him left alive once the Titans had dismembered his body (Kern *Orph. Frag.* 35).

38 See, further, Loraux, 1993, p. 226 n. 196; p. 227, n. 201.

but she is a would-be child-killer, who exposed the infant Ion. And then, when Kreousa hears that Xouthos will adopt a son, Ion, she plots to kill the youth unaware of his actual parentage. Kreousa sets up a specific version of the goddess as a model for her own actions. She sets herself up as copying the actions of Athena, who once gave serpents to protect Erichthonios, just as she gave the serpent bracelets to Ion. According to Loraux, what she actually imitates is the behaviour of Pallas:

The daughter of Erechtheus, bearer of the aegis, and using Athena's magic instruments, closely imitates the daughter of Zeus, although in reverse: overcome by Phiochos in their erotic agon, on the one hand, and on the other, posing a threat to the life of the child who is a stand-in for Erichthonios. More accurately, we might say that, having failed to duplicate Athena's actions, she imitates Pallas instead (1993, p. 226-7).

In another study, on the nature of divine femininity, Loraux argues that the femininity of a goddess will not be the same as that of mortal females, but, rather, will be displaced, and more pure.<sup>39</sup> In the *Ion*, likewise, the femininity of the goddess functions at a level beyond, and above, that of the femininity of Kreousa, whose attempt to model herself on the goddess is never more than partial. But, from another perspective, the femininity of Athena is something flexible and negotiable, just like the femininity of Kreousa. The *Ion* is playing with the sexuality of the goddess, positioning it on a spectrum between virginity and maternity. How far we go with this reading depends upon which aspects of the narrative were in place by the late fifth century. In other sources,<sup>40</sup> Athena is like Kreousa – having a sexual struggle with a god the outcome of which is a child, but where the goddess does what is impossible for a mortal woman. Athena successfully defends herself from being deflowered, while ensuring that the encounter results in a pregnancy and a child. And the goddess also manages to do the impossible over what happens next: she abandons the child – like Kreousa does – and like other unmarried parthenoi do,<sup>41</sup> yet she also ensures the child's protection by providing serpents to guard and perhaps nourish him, a chest to contain (and hide) the child and the serpents, and the Kekropids to watch over the chest and its inhabitants. When asked by Ion, who wants to know about the origins of Erichthonios, 'Did Athena take him up from the earth?', Kreousa answers that she took the baby into 'her arms as a parthenos,' but 'she wasn't the mother' (269-70, tr. author). Does she say this to throw him off the scent? Or it is because, for Kreousa, Athena needs to be a virgin to reflect her own view of herself as somewhere on the spectrum of parthenos and mother?<sup>42</sup>

In the *Ion*, then, the names 'Athena' and 'Pallas' connote contrary aspects of the goddess, as suits the *Ion*'s discourse around female subjectivity that we do not see otherwise until New Comedy.

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39 Loraux, 1992.

40 See Deacy, 1997.

41 On this recurrent mythological motif, see Deacy 1997, esp. p. 43-46.

42 On Kreousa's self-construction in relation to models of mythological female femininity see Deacy 2013, p. 399, with n. 17. On the interplay between Kreousa as desiring subject and rape victim, see Rabinowitz, 2011, p. 10-11.

## 6. Conclusions

I shall move to a conclusion by returning to the two of the passages investigated earlier in this article in light of my analysis of the divergent meanings that, in some contexts at least, are carried by 'Athena' and 'Pallas.' At the start of the narrative of the birth of the goddess in Homeric Hymn 28, Zeus bears the goddess from his head (4); at the end the goddess removes her weapons in a gesture of recognition of the authority of Zeus (14-16). In the middle there is the appearance of the goddess moving rapidly, her weapons flashing, shouting a war cry, with the result that the whole *kosmos* quakes as well (7-14). The hymn potentially offers different versions of the goddess, including a more circumspect figure (Athena?) and a rapidly moving warrior (Pallas? Though also Glaukopsis or 'Gleaming') whose shaking movements create cosmic upheaval.<sup>43</sup>

I shall end by returning to the Homeric passage that names Pallas Athena as one of the conspirators in a plot to overthrow Zeus. According to Achilles, to ensure that the gods would stop binding Zeus, Thetis brought up from Tartarus one of the Hundred Handed, a figure who also has two names: Briareos and Aigaion. The two-named Pallas Athena, who constrains Zeus, is potentially being counterposed with the two-named one ensures the release of Zeus. This interpretation can be supported by another feature of the passage, the detail that Briareos/Aigaion was two-named because he was superior to his father. This is a description that applies to Achilles himself, who as the result of Zeus' strategy to avoid the birth of a child by Thetis who would surpass all gods, is superior to all mortals, Peleus included. Thus Achilles, a son 'mightier than his father,' reminds Thetis how another such son once assisted her. This interpretation also resonates with a recurrent theme in ancient literature, where Athena is a potential challenger to the rule of her father.<sup>44</sup> This theme has been missed by most commentators. This approach provides a route into gaining a little more understanding of one of the most frustratingly elusive references in Homer. It also serves to illustrate the complexities surrounding acts of naming that relate to the names 'Athena' and 'Pallas'.

It is time to move away from the long-standing and enduring framework for interpreting the goddess as an inherently meaningful concept that sits behind any given piece of evidence. One step towards this goal is to place greater emphasis upon the names used in any specific passage. I have made a move in this direction by exploring the divergent meanings put on 'Athena' and 'Pallas' in Plato's linguistic theory, and by considering Loraux's argument that 'Athena' and 'Pallas' connote different qualities in Euripides' *Ion*.

This paper emerges out of issues around the interpretation of Athena that I am exploring in a forthcoming book (Deacy, forthcoming). My thanks to Prof. C. Bonnet for the invitation to contribute to this timely collection.

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43 In my forthcoming monograph, I explore this issue of whether the hymn presents a unified, though multifaceted deity, or whether it offers a series of different possible goddesses.

44 I address this issue in Deacy, forthcoming.

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