

THE PROPHET, THE MOTHER, THE AVENGER:
AN EXAMINATION OF GAIA'S CULT WORSHIP AND THE "BRICOLAGE" IN HER MYTH

BY

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A thesis
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Master of Arts in Classical Studies.

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Cover image - Gaia hands Erichthonios up to Athena while Hephaistos looks on. Attic red-figure pelike, Erichthonios Painter, c. 440-430 BC. London, BM E 372. Image: Reeder (1995) 256, cat. 68.

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Abstract

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This thesis is a study of the cult of the Greek goddess Gaia (Gē). Gaia's cult has long been interpreted by scholars through the lens of her mythical roles. She featured in literature as the mother of the Titans, as an oracular goddess at Delphi, and as the mythical mother of Erichthonios; she is also a force that watched over curses and oaths. Her cult has been most strongly associated with Delphi, where she was part of the Previous Owners myth, a tradition that made her the primary goddess at Delphi before Apollo took over. She is also strongly associated with Athens, where almost all of our literary evidence comes from.

Early 20th century scholarship characterised Gaia as a universally-worshipped "Mother Earth" figure; more specifically, she has been identified as the Greek version of the Anatolian Mother Goddess, Kybele. Gaia's cult worship as an oracular goddess and as a mother figure is overstated, and I argue that these associations are examples of confirmation bias. In this thesis, I examine the sources for both myth and cult to establish where the boundaries lie between the two, both through re-examination of the primary sources and through a critical appraisal of secondary discussions.

To compare, I examine the positive evidence for Gaia's cult, with a particular focus on the epigraphical evidence, including a 5th century BCE statue base and inscriptions from the 4th century BCE that describe a *ἱερόν* of Gaia at Delphi and Attic deme calendars that provide sacrifices to Gaia, some of which are expensive. Further evidence is offered by Pausanias and Plutarch, who attest to a sanctuary of Gaia at Delphi in the 1st and 2nd centuries CE, cults of Gē Kourotrophos and Gē Themis in Athens, and other cults of Gaia elsewhere. I also explore the significance of Gaia as the mother of Erichthonios, the autochthonous founder of Athens, in myth and Athenian literature.

I conclude that Gaia was not worshipped at Delphi before the 5th century BCE. Gaia was receiving cult worship in Athens from the 5th century BCE in the form of deme sacrifices.

Also in Athens, Gaia's worship as Gē Themis appears around the 4th century BCE, while Pausanias attests to a temple of Gē Kourotrophos on the acropolis. Before the time of Pausanias, Kourotrophos appears to be a separate deity. Finally, I conclude that Gaia rarely receives cult worship under the epithet "Meter" and cannot be identified as the Greek version of Anatolian Kybele.

Cover image: Gaia hands Erichthonios up to Athena while Hephaistos looks on. Attic red-figure pelike, Erichthonios Painter, c. 440-430 BC. London, BM E 372. Image: Reeder (1995) 256, cat. 68.

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Introduction

“Any echoes of cultic history that may have gone into the making of a particular myth are radically reshaped and adapted, by a process of *bricolage*, to fit the ‘needs’, the ‘spaces’, created by the mythological schemata structuring that myth...”¹

This thesis is a study of the cult of the Greek goddess Gaia, who is also known as Gē. Gaia’s cult has long been interpreted by scholars through the lens of her mythical roles and, at times, overstated. Her cult has been most strongly associated with Delphi, where myth depicts Gaia as the primary deity worshipped at the Delphic oracle at a time before Apollo took over. Scholars have used the myth to confirm their theory that Gaia received cult worship at Delphi in the Mycenaean period. Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood termed this tradition the Previous Owners myth and firmly argued that Gaia’s myth does not reflect the reality of her cult worship either at Delphi, or anywhere else in Greece.²

Throughout my thesis I have taken the systematic comparison of myth and cult history that Sourvinou-Inwood uses to expose the Previous Owners myth and applied it to other areas of Gaia’s cult. I examine the sources for both myth and cult to establish where the boundaries lie between the two, both through re-examination of the primary sources and through a critical appraisal of secondary discussions. I first build on Sourvinou-Inwood’s examination of Delphi, paying particular attention to the mythical variations of the myth by analysing the literature. Then, I examine Gaia’s association with other oracles in Greece, her perceived identity as a “Mother Earth” figure, and her cult worship in Athens. Throughout, I have drawn on a wide range of 20th and 21st century literature on Gaia’s cult worship and traced the origins of their conclusions. What I have found is that the majority of secondary literature on the scope of Gaia’s cult either references literature like Aeschylus or Euripides to prove that her cult had ancient roots, or references secondary scholarship that references such literature, rather than archaeological or epigraphical evidence. As a result,

¹ Sourvinou-Inwood (1987) 216.

² Sourvinou-Inwood (1987) 215.

scholarship tends to overstate Gaia's cult worship; I argue that these associations are examples of confirmation bias.

My first chapter examines Gaia's cult worship at Delphi from the Mycenaean period through to the 2nd century CE. I examine Mycenaean figurine deposits excavated from under the temple of Apollo and the temple of Athena Pronaia, 5th century BCE statue bases dedicated at the site, archaeological evidence of a 4th century ἱερόν of Gē, and testimony from Pausanias and Plutarch that confirms Gaia had a sanctuary at Delphi in the 1st and 2nd centuries CE. Furthermore, I discuss the Previous Owners myth in more depth and analyse the earliest literary evidence that depicts Gaia as a Previous Owner, then compare it with the broad history of scholarship on the subject.

My second chapter is dedicated to a thorough investigation of the various mythical traditions that depict Gaia as a Previous Owner, along with other divine figures like Themis, Poseidon, and Dionysos. I compare the ways in which Apollo comes to possess the Delphic oracle and offer explanations for why certain literary sources may have selected one version of Gaia's myth over another. Some of the sources I consider include the *Homeric Hymn III to Apollo*, *Aristonoös' Hymn to Apollo*, *Aeschylus' Eumenides*, *Euripides' Iphigenia Among the Taurians*, Pindar, Apollodorus, and Hesiod's *Theogony*.

In my third chapter I look at other oracles Gaia was associated with, specifically those at Olympia, Patras, Aigai, and Dodona. Many of these oracles are mentioned as part of the Previous Owners myth to demonstrate that Gaia was often an oracular goddess, when in reality both our archaeological evidence and literary evidence is limited.

My fourth chapter deals with Gaia's cult worship in a 'mother' or nurturing capacity. Literature depicts Gaia as both the mother of the Titans and Olympians, as well as the mother of Athens' autochthonous founder, Erichthonios. I look at the cult of Gē Kourotrophos in Athens, and the limited number of late inscriptions to Gē Meter outside Attica. I will also discuss the fallacious argument that Gaia's cult was brought to Greece from Anatolia and Gaia was a universally worshipped "Mother Earth" figure that could be identified as the Greek version of the Anatolian Mother Goddess, Kybele.

Finally, in Chapter 5 I look holistically at Gaia's cult worship in Athens. Aside from Delphi, she is most strongly associated with Athens, where almost all of our literary evidence comes from. I examine epithets she was commonly associated with in epigraphical evidence and use inscriptions to discuss Gaia's presence in Athenian festivals. For a broader picture of Gaia's cult worship, I examine Attic deme calendars that provide sacrifices to Gē, along with testimony from Pausanias that describes Gaia as a goddess associated with the growth of crops, justice, and the underworld.

This thesis was challenging to write for several reasons. The first, and more difficult, was the issue of structure. Reconciling the common overlap between mythical, archaeological, epigraphical, and secondary evidence made it hard to choose how to divide my topics. Take for example *Aristonoös' Hymn to Apollo*, which is literary evidence, and then take the fact that this hymn was also dedicated as an inscription at Delphi, *FD III 2.191*. It contains multiple different elements of the Previous Owners myth – namely Gaia, Themis, the Delphic serpent, and transition from Gaia to Apollo that is both violent and peaceful. It becomes almost impossible to neatly allocate this evidence into a chapter, let alone a paragraph. For this reason, the thesis' structure will always be an approximation, and where in doubt I have separated evidence based on the most significant characteristics it exhibits.

Another major issue I had was identifying the date and provenance of inscriptions. Given that so much of my argument rests on tracing the timeline of Gaia's cult worship around Greece, my conclusions must remain tentative where inscriptions are central to the argument. The third and final obstacle I overcame to complete this thesis was the fact that a large amount of scholarship on Gaia is not in English. Regardless of these issues, I hope to show that Gaia featured in a rich variety of myth, while featuring far more modestly in cult worship than much scholarship has concluded.

All translations are my own, unless specified.

Chapter One: Gaia at Delphi

Mycenaean Gaia/Bronze Age

There are two time periods of evidence that are commonly discussed in scholarship on Gaia's worship at Delphi. The first period is from the late Bronze Age until the 6th century BCE in which some scholars believe Gaia was worshipped at Delphi instead of Apollo.³ This argument is based on the idea that Gaia was a Mycenaean goddess who was worshipped in a Mycenaean shrine at Delphi, either on the site of the later Temple of Apollo or the Temple of Athena. Evidence for Gaia's worship in this period is scarce. The second period of time is from the 5th century BCE until the 2nd century CE, approximately the time of Pausanias. During this time, we have far more evidence for Gaia's worship at Delphi.

To begin, we will look at any evidence of Gaia's worship at Delphi in the late Bronze Age. Beneath the floor in the Archaic temple of Athena Pronaia there was a deposit of Mycenaean figurines. The deposit was placed in the ground around the 7th century BCE, but the figurines themselves were earlier.⁴ It contained a few pieces of metal, stone and glass, and 175 female figurines along with one animal figurine. Most of the figurines are the Late Psi type, with nine dated to the L.H. IIIB period.⁵

These figurines have been used as evidence for Gaia's worship as they are female, which is the sole basis for their identification as the goddess herself.⁶ As late as 1991, Jean-François Bommelaer stated that it is commonly accepted that the cult of Athena at Delphi was preceded by an older goddess.⁷ This goddess was likely Gaia as "anthropomorphic figurines

³ Harrison (1903) 261; (1927) 166; Farnell (1907) 9; Rose (1929) 137; De La Coste-Messelière and Flacelière (1930) 286; Guthrie (1950) 229; Ferguson (1989) 73; for a more expansive list, see Sourvinou-Inwood (1987) 215 n. 2.

⁴ Sourvinou-Inwood (1989) 218. See also Demangel (1926) 14-28 and French (1971) 107. Lucien Lerat's excavation dated this deposit to the end of the Geometric period or the beginning of the Archaic period (1956) 710.

⁵ Müller (1992) 481, 485.

⁶ Sourvinou-Inwood (1989) 218.

⁷ See against, Sourvinou-Inwood (1989) 220 with n. 20 and 21. She rebuts the following scholars who also support the cult of an older goddess in the temple of Athena: Béquignon, Y. (1949), "De quelques usurpations

[were] found on the spot, which are numerous and all feminine”.⁸ By extension, he argues that Gaia must have once possessed a sanctuary at the spot of the temple of Athena Pronaia and the oracle in its immediate vicinity.

Elizabeth French describes this deposit as votive on the basis that the figurines were found alongside a single animal statue that had “definitive” cult associations.⁹ Sylvie Müller agrees that Mycenaean female figurines are almost always accompanied by animal figurines at Mycenaean cult sites.¹⁰ However, she takes the opposite view of this particular deposit: the single animal figure is an outlier and the deposit should rather be considered as a deposit exclusively of female figurines. Deposits of this type are common at Mycenaean burial locations. Müller suggests the deposit beneath the Temple of Athena Pronaia could have come from nearby graves that were accidentally or intentionally disrupted just before the development of Athena’s sanctuary.¹¹ Even Bommelaer acknowledges that the 7th century material discovered at the Temple of Athena is less typical of small Mycenaean sanctuaries and may have instead come from disturbed tombs.¹²

If this deposit is indeed indicative of a likely Mycenaean cult place at the site of Temple of Athena Pronaia, as Sourvinou-Inwood suggests, then there is still the question of who was

d’Apollon en Grèce centrale d’après des recherches récentes”, *Rev. Arch*: 62-8; Cassola, F. (1975), *Inni Omerici*, Milan: 89; Herrmann, H.-V. (1959), *Omphalos*, Munster: 100

⁸ Bommelaer (1991) 48: En témoigneraient les figurines anthropomorphes trouvées sur place, qui sont nombreuses et toutes féminines.

⁹ French (1971) 107. She cites Nicholls (1970), “Greek Votive Statuettes and Religious Continuity, c. 1200-700 B.C.” in *Auckland Classical Essays, presented to E. M. Blaiklock*, ed. B. F. Harris, Auckland and Oxford: Oxford University Press. In comparison, Scott (2014) 44 states that archaeologists generally have a difficult time reaching a consensus on what material can definitively be called votive prior to the second half of the 7th century BCE.

¹⁰ Müller (1992) 481, 484. For this reason, she is sceptical of a Mycenaean shrine at the site of the temple of Athena Pronaia: Notons aussi l'absence curieuse, et passée sous silence jusqu'à aujourd'hui, de figurines animales dans le dépôt (à un exemplaire près). Dans les contextes cultuels bien attestés en Grèce propre, on n'a jamais observé d'ensembles où les figurines féminines soient présentes à l'exclusion des figurines animales (contrairement à ce qui se passe pour les statuettes). Par contre, ce phénomène s'observe couramment dans les tombes.

¹¹ Müller (1992) 484: On pourrait risquer une autre explication: le dépôt proviendrait de tombes, ouvertes accidentellement ou intentionnellement, sans doute juste avant l’aménagement du sanctuaire d’Athéna. See also Sourvinou-Inwood (1989) 218 n. 11, who agrees but does not explicitly say the deposit may have come from graves; see Scott (2014) 44 n. 41 and 42; Demangel (1926) 13-28, 36.

¹² Bommelaer (1991) 48.

worshipped at this cult place.¹³ Sourvinou-Inwood's suggestion, however, is itself contested.¹⁴

The argument that the nearby Temple of Apollo held a Mycenaean shrine is weaker. There was a much smaller deposit of Mycenaean figurines found. Here, only five figurines of the Late Psi type were discovered alongside *rhyta* and fragments of terracotta bovines.¹⁵ Unlike at the Temple of Athena Pronaia, Sourvinou-Inwood states there was no shrine in the sanctuary of Apollo.¹⁶ Aside from the small number of figurines, *rhyta* found in the deposit are considered rare at Mycenaean shrines – rather, they are common in domestic, funerary, and other cultic contexts.¹⁷ Michael Press, however, is less certain. Due to the small and fragmentary nature of the deposit, he states it is impossible to say definitively whether there was a Mycenaean shrine at Delphi.¹⁸

Further, even if we accept that there was a goddess worshipped at either location during the Mycenaean period, there is no reason to believe this goddess was Gaia. There is no evidence for any oracular activity at Delphi before the eighth century BCE. The site seems to have been uninhabited from the early proto-geometric period until the mid-ninth century.¹⁹ Due to such a gap in archaeological activity, it seems improbable that any hypothetical elements of a Mycenaean Gaia cult could have been inherited by a cult of Apollo or Athena.²⁰ Finally, in the unlikely event that cult rituals were sustained without practice throughout several hundred years and elements of that Mycenaean cult were

¹³ Sourvinou-Inwood (1989) 218. See also Scott (2014) 44.

¹⁴ Michael Press (2012) 5, states that the evidence for this Mycenaean shrine at Delphi is less certain than Sourvinou-Inwood claims. Mycenaean figurines are in no way proof of the existence of a shrine as they are commonly found in tomb and settlement contexts.

¹⁵ French (1971) 107. See also Sylvie Müller (1992) 476.

¹⁶ Sourvinou-Inwood (1987) 218.

¹⁷ Sourvinou-Inwood (1989) 218 with n. 10-11. She does not elaborate on what these other cultic contexts may be, but cites French, E. 1981, "Mycenaean figures and figurines, their typology and function" in R. Hägg and N. Marinatos (eds.), *Sanctuaries and Cults in the Aegean Bronze Age, Proceedings of the First International Symposium at the Swedish Institute in Athens, 12th-13th May 1980*, Stockholm: Swedish Institute at Athens: 173-178. See also Müller (1992) 476: Elles ne semblent pas forcément liées à un lieu réservé au culte ou à des activités rituelles et elles assument sans doute des significations variées selon les contextes de découverte; and Press (2012) 5.

¹⁸ Press (2012) 5.

¹⁹ Chappell (2006) 342. See also Morgan 107f. n. 63 and 64.

²⁰ Sourvinou-Inwood (1987) 219, 219 n. 15. On the lack of archaeological activity, she cites Rolley, C. (1977), "Les trépieds à cuve clouée", *Fouilles de Delphes V*, École Française d'Athènes, Athènes, 1977: 135-8, 142-3.

inherited by later Greek cult on the same site, surely we would first conclude that it was a proto-Athena that was worshipped in the Mycenaean shrine, not Gaia.²¹ Ultimately, the female figures found at the Temple of Athena cannot be identified as Athena and certainly not as Gaia.²² I therefore do not think that the Mycenaean figurines discovered at Delphi support a theory of Gaia's pre-eminence at Delphi before Apollo. It is plausible to me that there was a Mycenaean shrine at the location of the temple of Athena Pronaia, but the deity worshipped there was likely not Gaia.

We must consider how little we know about the specifics of Mycenaean religion. The vast majority of all Minoan and Mycenaean figurines are female and it is unclear who they might represent.²³ There is nothing to distinguish these figurines as Gaia and we have no evidence that Gaia was ever a figure in Mycenaean religion. It is only if we first assume that Gaia was worshipped at Delphi in the Mycenaean period that these figurines appear to support our assumption.²⁴

5th century archaeological evidence

Now, we must examine what evidence we have for Gaia's worship at Delphi in the Archaic period. The earliest piece of solid evidence for Gaia's worship at Delphi is a statue base with her name inscribed on the top. The base was made up of six fragments of a single stone found near the Castalia in April 1930, dated to 500-450 BCE. It has four sealing holes in the top that would have held the statue's two bronze feet. The top also bore the 5th century BCE retrograde inscription "Α Γ": Gē.²⁵ The front side had a 4th century BCE inscription "ΓΑ".²⁶ The statue was presumably the figure of the goddess, as the base had sealing holes for each foot, turned to the left and larger than life size. This statue base has the same measurements as five other blocks recovered from Delphi: all are identical in height

²¹ For further discussion of perceptions of Gaia as a Mycenaean goddess see Chapter 2, p. 41 and Chapter 4, p. 85 below.

²² Sourvinou-Inwood (1989) 218.

²³ Sourvinou-Inwood (1989) 218 n. 12. She also provides a rebuttal for the Linear B inscription *a-ta-na po-ti-ni-ja* as Gaia (219 n. 17). Roux (1976) 23 states that Gaia was a Mycenaean goddess and believes the inscription names a Mycenaean version of Gaia.

²⁴ Sourvinou-Inwood (1987) 217-218.

²⁵ de La Coste-Messelière and Flacelière (1930) 283.

²⁶ de La Coste-Messelière and Flacelière (1930) 284.

(0.316m) and depth (0.99m), with the same sized band running across the top of the front face (0.078m wide).²⁷ The remaining blocks include:

1. A 5th century BCE base that has an inscription “Themis” on the upper face in retrograde letters, found near the Castalia. Like the Gaia statue base, this base has the same dedication on the front side from left to right in 4th century BCE characters.
2. A base with no inscription on the upper face, with an inscription on the front in 4th century BCE letters: “Kallisto”. This base, along with the following three bases, were found close to the Temple of Apollo at Delphi.
3. A base with the remains of an artist’s signature on the upper face: “\ · ΑΘΩΝ ἔργον” – date unknown. This base, along with the Kallisto base, have foot holes for statues that indicate their figures were smaller than life size.²⁸
4. A complete block, although today broken into several pieces. There is a later inscription - a decree of proxeny dated to 198 BCE – on the front face. This block has no foot holes for a statue.²⁹
5. A block without an inscription – date unknown. This block also has no foot holes.

It is clear these blocks were not part of the same votive offering. The Themis and Gaia statue bases appear to have been dedicated in the 1st half of the 5th century, while the other inscriptions are later. The Themis and Gaia stones are the only ones with inscriptions in retrograde characters.³⁰ Furthermore, the bases’ provenance links them together as both were found near the Castalian spring, while the others were found close to the Sanctuary of Apollo.³¹ However, all the bases’ identical physical characteristics suggest that they were cut at the same time or for the same original purpose, either the late 6th century or early 5th century.

De La Coste-Messelière and Flacelière offer several explanations for the bases’ separate provenances. They may have been part of a set of blocks made to crown the Polygonal Wall

²⁷ de La Coste-Messelière and Flacelière (1930) 287; Courby (1927) 163-165.

²⁸ de La Coste-Messelière and Flacelière (1930) 289.

²⁹ de La Coste-Messelière and Flacelière (1930) 290.

³⁰ de La Coste-Messelière and Flacelière (1930) 289.

³¹ de La Coste-Messelière and Flacelière (1930) 288.

at Apollo's temple.³² The Gaia and Themis blocks may have been removed and reused as later dedications at the Castalia. Alternatively, the blocks may have been dedicated at the Temple of Apollo itself, then reused as spolia in the Castalia.³³ If the former is true, then de La Coste-Messelière and Flacelière suggest there may have been a sanctuary of Gaia actually at the Castalia, which was later relocated near to the Temple of Apollo.³⁴ Regardless of the original purpose of the Gaia statue base, the dedication of the statue is clear; it is the earliest physical evidence of Gaia's cult at Delphi but not evidence that she was worshipped at the oracle before the 5th century BCE.³⁵

The Previous Owners myth

Despite the lack of evidence for early Gaia worship, it is common for 20th and 21st century scholarship to overstate her cult worship at Delphi before Apollo.³⁶ These sources support a version of cult history where Gaia, and sometimes Themis, was worshipped as the primary oracular goddess at Delphi before Apollo's cult replaced her. This argument, which Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood calls 'the Previous Owners myth', was common until the 1980s and is both fallacious and based on *a priori* assumptions.³⁷ She argues that 20th century scholarship exhibits confirmation bias when it uses examples of Gaia in literature to support the Previous Owners myth. Even after the publication of her seminal 1987 article, "Myth as

³² de La Coste-Messelière and Flacelière (1930) 290-291. See also Courby (1927) 164: Les monuments votifs dont nous avons ici les restes ne faisaient évidemment pas partie du même ex-voto: ils sont d'époques diverses: la statue de THEMIS paraît la plus ancienne (1^{re} moitié du Ve siècle), celle de la dalle III la plus récente (fin du Ve siècle).

³³ de La Coste-Messelière and Flacelière (1930) 290: Sans doute n'est-il pas interdit de penser que les pierres GE et THEMIS, avec leur soubassement, ont pu être détachées, à basse époque, de l'ex-voto dont elles auraient fait partie près de l'opisthodomos du Temple, au-dessus du Sanctuaire de la Terre, à l'endroit indiqué par M. Courby, pour être transportées et remployées à Castalie.

³⁴ de La Coste-Messelière and Flacelière (1930) 291. For more on de La Coste-Messelière and Flacelière's support for the Previous Owners myth, see p. 286. They state there must have been many more statues of Gaia as she was the original owner of Apollo's oracle. Naturally, there is no evidence, aside from the statue bases now associated with the temple of Apollo, to support the idea that Gaia ever had a sanctuary at near the Castalia. Nevertheless, they consider the Castalia, the gorge between the Phaedriades, and other "ancient traditions, poorly known" significant locations to Gaia and Python's myth. For more on Python, see Chapter 2, p. 44 below.

³⁵ Other evidence of Gaia statues is rare. Apart from the Delphi base, Pausanias tells us there was an ancient *xoanon* of Gaia in the temple of Ge Eurysternos at Aigai (7.25.13) and an image of Gaia on the Athenian acropolis begging Zeus for rain (1.24.3). See de La Coste-Messelière and Flacelière (1930) 285 with n. 3.

³⁶ Sourvinou-Inwood (1987) 215 n. 2 provides a comprehensive list of this scholarship. See Harrison (1903) 261; Farnell (1907) 7-9; Rose (1929) 137; Guthrie (1950) 229; Roux (1976) 21-34; Ferguson (1989) 71; and Landi (2012) 136.

³⁷ Sourvinou-Inwood (1987) 215-241, see page 215 for the first mention of the term.

History: The Previous Owners of the Delphic Oracle”, a few scholars still claim with confidence that Delphi hosted a cult of Gaia prior to the establishment of Apollo’s oracle.³⁸

While myths may have roots in the history of cult, they are shaped by and reflect religious, social, and intellectual realities of the societies that produce them.³⁹ Sourvinou-Inwood states: “any echoes of cultic history that may have gone into the making of a particular myth are radically reshaped and adapted, by a process of *bricolage*, to fit the ‘needs’, the ‘spaces’, created by the mythological schemata structuring that myth...”⁴⁰ While we know that some myths can reflect historical events, it is difficult to accept a mythological version of historical events when it is contradicted by archaeological or epigraphical evidence. Yet, we know that myth can indirectly reflect cult history.⁴¹ At Delphi, we have the luxury of mythical, archaeological, and epigraphical evidence to compare. In this case, at Delphi, I will consider how myth interacts with existing cult evidence but will argue that myth without any other evidence to support it is not, *ipso facto*, evidence of Gaia’s worship.

The relationship between Greek myth and religion is one of the most contested subjects in classical scholarship.⁴² Scholarly argument in scholarship has swung back and forth during the 19th and 20th centuries concerning whether or not Greek myth reflected ritual. Greek myths are not one unified category about which generalisations can typically be made, but it is undeniable that Greek myth was significant to Greek religion, whether or not myth reflects Greek rituals.⁴³ As Herodotus notes, myth was a necessary tool for Greek religion to assign histories, attributes, and names to various deities and places (2.53). Without myth, gods and heroes lose differentiation for us, and for the Greeks.⁴⁴ Ultimately, variations of the same myth should often be considered regional – that is, there was no mechanism for

³⁸ For example, Ferguson (1989) 73 and Bommelaer (1991) 48.

³⁹ Sourvinou-Inwood (1987) 216.

⁴⁰ Sourvinou-Inwood (1987) 216.

⁴¹ For example, Farnell (1907) is an early scholar that supports Gaia as a Previous Owner but bases his conclusion on archaeological evidence, which is then supplemented and embellished by myth (see Chapter 1, p. 26 below).

⁴² Parker (2011) 22 with n. 55.

⁴³ Parker (2011) 23.

⁴⁴ Parker (2011) 25.

even powerful cults to standardise one version of a myth. We should therefore regard variations in myth as natural, rather than with suspicion.⁴⁵

For this thesis' purpose, it is not necessary, even if it were possible, to create a blanket definition of myth and how myth functions in societies at large. We acknowledge that there are a wide variety of myths and mythical functions across different cultures, sometimes even within the same culture. The most common weakness of attempts to rigidly define myth is selectivity – privileging certain kinds of myth as 'real' and using them as evidence of societal practice can falsely prove predetermined theories.⁴⁶ Another issue is the equitability of concepts, whereby scholars equate two similar myths from two different cultures without considering each myth's unique societal context. This issue, explained by Eric Csapo, is especially pertinent to our considerations of Gaia's presence at Delphi.⁴⁷ As this thesis will demonstrate, 20th century scholarship on Gaia at Delphi has heavily relied on myth to confirm Gaia's cult worship at the site. Yet select parts of this literary evidence have been privileged, and there is a tendency to over-equate concepts of an earth goddess from other parts of the ancient world, and from our own modern world. For this reason, much interpretation of Gaia's myth reflects more about our own cultural baggage than it reveals about cult worship in ancient Delphi. On Gaia at Delphi, I will be considering myth as a useful tool that reflects religious and social ideology in Athens and Delphi, rather than as proof of Gaia's worship at either location.

All the evidence 20th century scholars have used to support the conclusion that Gaia was an ancient goddess who preceded Apollo dates to the 5th century BCE onwards.⁴⁸ In contrast, Apollo's supremacy at Delphi is well-established from the time of the *Iliad* and the *Homeric Hymn* III to Apollo.⁴⁹ Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, performed in 458 BCE, is one of the most compelling and earliest pieces of literary evidence for Gaia's worship at Delphi. As we have established, Gaia received cult worship at Delphi at least at the start of the 5th century as indicated by the statue bases dedicated to Gaia and Themis. It is possible that there was

⁴⁵ Parker (2011) 30.

⁴⁶ For more on the enormous and complex area concerning myth and myth's functions, see Csapo (2005) 2. As an example, he discusses Jane Harrison's confidence that Greek myth always describes real religious ritual.

⁴⁷ Csapo (2005) 7. See the later discussion in Chapter 3, p. 82 on the relationship between Kybele and Gaia.

⁴⁸ See n. 36, above.

⁴⁹ Sourvinou-Inwood (1987) 216-217.

Gaia cult at Delphi that Aeschylus was referencing. However, the archaeological and epigraphical evidence is scant, and we have no way of knowing how far back the Gaia cult at Delphi dates.⁵⁰ Therefore, we must consider why Aeschylus has decided to depict Gaia (and Themis) as Previous Owners of the Delphic oracle. This question has spurred many scholars to cite Aeschylus as proof that Gaia received cult worship before Apollo.⁵¹ The first eight lines of *Eumenides*, spoken by the Pythia, list Gaia as the original owner of the oracle:

Πρῶτον μὲν εὐχῆ τῆδε πρεσβεύω θεῶν
τὴν πρωτόμαντιν Γαῖαν· ἐκ δὲ τῆς Θέμιν,
ἢ δὴ τὸ μητρὸς δευτέρα τόδ' ἔζητο
μαντεῖον, ὡς λόγος τις· ἐν δὲ τῷ τρίτῳ
λάχει, θελούσης, οὐδὲ πρὸς βίαν τινός,
Τιτανὶς ἄλλη παῖς Χθονὸς καθέζετο
Φοίβη· δίδωσιν δ' ἢ γενέθλιον δόσιν
Φοίβω· τὸ Φοίβης δ' ὄνομ' ἔχει παρώνυμον.

First of the gods I assign precedence in my prayer to the first prophet, Gaia. After her was Themis, who sat second at her mother's oracle, as the story goes. For the third allotted seat, with willingness, not by force from anyone, was another Titan, the child of Chthonia, Phoebe. And she gave it as a birthday gift to Phoebus Apollo, who had the name derived from Phoebe.

The Pythia describes the succession from Gaia to Themis to Apollo “ὡς λόγος τις” – ‘as the story goes’. This phrasing frames the progression of the oracle's owners as an accepted myth, here extolled by the Pythia, a woman of religious authority at the oracle itself. The phrasing is significant because the Pythia establishes this version of the myth as the only version of the myth in the *Eumenides* universe by acknowledging it as the accepted λόγος. As we will see in Chapter 2, Gaia and Themis are not the only Previous Owners that appear in myths on Delphi, but they are the only ones acknowledged here. While these lines are

⁵⁰ Landi (2012) 136.

⁵¹ For example, Harrison (1903) 261; Farnell (1907) 7; Guthrie (1950) 229; Ferguson (1989) 71; and Landi (2012) 136.

often used as proof of Gaia's oracle, it seems more significant that Aeschylus has selected this specific version of the myth to open the play. Again, in Chapter 2, we will see more examples of Gaia's myth and literature often confused for evidence of Gaia's cult history - although the *Eumenides* is the most striking example.

There are several reasons why Aeschylus chose to depict Gaia as a Previous Owner. It is likely that he included Gaia in the lineage because she was already associated with Delphi as evidenced by the 5th century statue base. However, this begs the question: where did the original myth come from? It is possible that this was an Aeschylean innovation made to reflect the themes of the *Oresteia*: family, revenge, and *hubris*. It may be Aeschylus' invention to reject the violent takeover of past versions of the story - Apollo gained the oracle legitimately, and therefore legitimately instructed Orestes to kill his mother (*Eum.* 84: καὶ γὰρ κτανεῖν σ' ἔπεισα μητρῶον δέμας), reflecting the end of the play where Athena decides in Orestes' favour. The Pythia differentiates between those she honours in prayer as Previous Owners (Gaia, Themis, and Phoebé), and other deities connected to the area who are worthy of praise.⁵² The Pythia honours Athena Pronaia among others (*Eum.* 21-26) to establish the connection that Orestes will have with Athena herself.

Πρωτόμαντιν likely means 'the first oracular deity [at Delphi]' rather than 'the first to prophecy anywhere' based on the emphasis on first, second, and third oracle holders.⁵³ Alan Sommerstein states that "οὐδὲ πρὸς βίαν τινός" is a sentence that blends two separate phrases - "οὐδὲ πρὸς βίαν" "and not by force" and "οὐδὲ βίαι τινός" "and not against anyone's will".⁵⁴ The use of this phrase by Aeschylus marks an explicit rejection of the dominant tradition where Apollo took the oracle at Delphi by force, to be further discussed below.⁵⁵ This is further reinforced by the Pythia honouring Apollo's predecessors 'first' and 'second'. Aeschylus' decision to include Phoebé in the lineage is unusual as Phoebé is not elsewhere associated with Delphi.⁵⁶ Scholarship on Phoebé's role as an Aeschylean Previous Owner is limited. One early scholar, Donald S. Robertson, suggested in 1941 that the

⁵² Sommerstein (2009) 359 n. 10.

⁵³ Sommerstein (1989) 80. See also Paus. 10.5.5 for Gaia's oracle at Delphi, as well as other oracles of Gaia at Achaia (Plin. *NH* 28.147) and Olympia (Paus. 5.14.10).

⁵⁴ Sommerstein (1989) 80.

⁵⁵ Sommerstein (1989) 80.

⁵⁶ Sommerstein (1989) 81.

Previous Owners myth was a watered-down reflection of Zeus' allotment of honours after the defeat of the Titans (Hes. *Theog.* 885).⁵⁷ The progression of the oracle from Gaia to Themis to Phoebe is a series of benefactions of three generations of male gods: Ouranos gives the oracle to his wife Gaia, Kronos gives it to his sister Themis, and Themis gave it to her sister Phoebe on behalf of Zeus.⁵⁸ Phoebe was Aeschylus' dramatic invention because in the *Theogony*, Apollo was born well after the division of honours by Zeus, and thus the oracle could not pass directly to him. Furthermore, Aeschylus was determined to avoid conflict or power struggles in this procession of oracular owners, so he inserted Phoebe into the narrative instead of passing the oracle to any other god already associated with the oracle, like Poseidon.⁵⁹

While this theory seems like a neat answer to the anomaly, I do not believe that the inclusion of Phoebe as a Previous Owner is intended to directly reference Hesiod's *Theogony*. There is also no evidence to suggest that Ouranos, Kronos, or Zeus play any role in the oracle's succession. I believe that Phoebe has been included in the progression as both an aetiological explanation for the epithet "Phoebus" and as a means to peacefully bridge the gap between Themis and Apollo, who otherwise have no obvious connection. When Apollo accepts the oracle as a γενέθλιον δόσιον "birthday gift" and takes the epithet Φοῖβος, *Eumenides* explicitly rejects a narrative of violent takeover. A peaceful transition of the oracle's ownership is well-suited to the themes of the play as it reflects the nuances of female-male relationships and a shift in power from older to younger gods. These themes are especially reinforced by the roles Apollo, Athena, and the Erinyes play later in the play. The peaceful transition also contrasts to the violent overthrow of Ouranos and Kronos in *Agamemnon* 168-75.⁶⁰ I personally find this the most convincing explanation for Aeschylus' reference to Gaia in the opening lines, as it is an answer for which we need not look outside the text. I think it is especially strengthened by the reference's place in the play, and the inclusion of Phoebe.

⁵⁷ Robertson (1941) 69.

⁵⁸ Robertson (1941) 70.

⁵⁹ Robertson (1941) 70. He states Poseidon was already "a traditional master of Delphi... [who was dismissed in *Eumenides*] with half a line" (*Eum.* 27).

⁶⁰ Sommerstein (1989) 81.

However, there are two other theories that cast our glance further beyond Aeschylus' manipulation of myth for dramatic effect. Firstly, the 5th century BCE was a major turning point in Greek history. It was both a time of enormous conflict – religious, political, and social – and a time of reflection on the past.⁶¹ As Michael Scott states, the ancient Greeks in the 5th century were searching for ways to answer the questions of how, when, and why the oracle at Delphi began.⁶² In the fifth century BCE, Delphi was embroiled in religious conflict that implicated Sparta, Phocis, and Athens in a bitter feud. In 458 BCE, Sparta invaded Athenian-backed Phocis, and again in 449/8 BCE, triggering the Second Sacred War, and eventually contributing to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War.⁶³ Athens backed Phocis as a way of maintaining power at Delphi and the oracle, which ultimately increased their control over the Delian league.⁶⁴ Athenian interest in the origins of Delphi, therefore, had far more militaristic intentions.

The *Eumenides* was performed at a time when Athens was flexing its imperialist arm in Delphic waters. Perhaps the solution to the Previous Owners myth lies with Athens' desire to present itself as closely connected to the Delphic oracle, which would help justify Athens' manipulation of Delphi's wealth and influence. As will be discussed later, Gaia was closely tied to Athens' identity as an autochthonous *polis* and received cult worship in Athens during the 5th century.⁶⁵ While we cannot say for certain, it is entirely possible that Aeschylus' decision to include Gaia in the mythical foundation of the Delphic oracle was the product of political rhetoric at the time. If Gaia was tied to the oracle at a time before even Apollo, then perhaps the opening lines of *Eumenides* were intended to suggest that the Athenians were more qualified than most to make decisions about the oracle. The Pythia's evocation of Gaia as the first and most important goddess in the Delphic succession may have implicitly reminded viewers that the Athenians claimed that they alone were the direct descendants of Gaia.

⁶¹ Scott (2014) 39.

⁶² Scott (2014) 35.

⁶³ Walsh (1986) 331.

⁶⁴ Scott (2010) 77.

⁶⁵ For example, Gaia received cult worship at Eleusis in 480 BCE (*IG* I² 5) and on the Acropolis (*IG* I³ 7) in 460-420 BCE. See below, Chapter 4, p. 67 for more on autochthony.

An alternative theory for Aeschylus' reference to Gaia is that the Delphic sanctuary itself was responsible for the introduction of the myth sometime around the early 5th century dedication of the Gaia and Themis statue bases. It is possible that Delphi perpetuated the Previous Owners myth in order to compete with the oracle at Dodona and this was simply the version of the myth Aeschylus was most familiar with.⁶⁶ The oracle of Zeus at Dodona not only claimed to be the oldest oracle in all of Greece, it was one of the largest and most powerful alongside Delphi. Furthermore, it was an oracle of Zeus, rather than Apollo, which may have given Dodona an edge of perceived superiority. As a result, the two sanctuaries had an established rivalry in Greece.⁶⁷ Both were linked to Deucalion, the grandfather of Delphus, who was the eponymous founder of Delphi.⁶⁸ In an effort to establish itself as the senior oracle, Delphi may have promulgated a version of the myth where Apollo was simply a beneficent inheritor from the original oracle owner, Gaia herself. Therefore, Aeschylus' reference to Gaia as a Previous Owner was unlikely to reflect the true history of the cult, but rather the history that the Delphic sanctuary wished to perpetuate.

4th century onwards archaeological evidence.

After the statue bases, we find indisputable evidence of Gaia's worship at Delphi from the 4th century BCE. *CID* II 62 comes from Phokis, Delphi, dated to 335/4 BCE:

δραχμαὶ τετρώκοντα. Θευφάντῳ κ[α]ὶ Σίῳ ἐν τῷ Πασίωνος ἔργῳ, ἐν τῷ σκέλει τῷ ποτὶ τὸ τᾶς Γᾶς ἱερόν, πλίνθων ἴ[κ][α]τι τριῶν ἀτεροπλεύρων, τῶν πλευρίων παρξοᾶς τοῦ ἄνω σίχου τοῦ ὑπὸ τὸ ὑποδόκιον, ἐκάστου τοῦ πλευρίου δραχμαὶ τέτορες, σύμπα[ς] μισθὸς δραχμαὶ ἐνενήκοντα δύο.

40 drachmas. For Theuphantos and Sion in the work of Pasion, on the side wall by the temple of Gē, for the twenty-three blocks with two visible faces, for the carving of the sides of the course high up below the beam on which the rafters rest, four drachmas for each of the sides, the whole payment ninety-two drachmas.

⁶⁶ Scott (2014) 39.

⁶⁷ Parke (1967) 36-37.

⁶⁸ Parke (1967) 38.

(col. III fr. A 1-10)

This inscription contains a series of accounts of the financial college of the temple overseers and refers to the sanctuary of Gē during the reconstruction of the Temple of Apollo. It was found on the terrace of the opisthodomos of the Temple of Apollo and mentions the sanctuary of Gaia adjacent to the temple of Apollo.⁶⁹ Sourvinou-Inwood states that, despite this evidence, it is often believed that Gaia had a pre-Archaic temple underneath the Temple of Apollo.⁷⁰ After the temple was destroyed in 548 BCE, the temple's terrace was extended and a retaining wall was constructed, which theoretically could have dismantled and obscured a temple of Gaia. However, we have no archaeological evidence to support this theory as none of the buildings under the terrace can be definitively labelled Gaia's temple.⁷¹ The presence of Gaia's sanctuary at Delphi is unambiguous from the 4th century BCE onwards, but it is uncertain when this sanctuary was established .

It is clear that this sanctuary survives until the 2nd century CE according to Plutarch (Plut. *Mor.* 420C) and Pausanias (10.5.5). Both are reliable primary sources for the cult history of Delphi and are interested in myths associated with the oracle. Plutarch was a priest at Delphi for the last thirty years of his life.⁷² For this reason, we can take his testimony as fairly accurate evidence for contemporary Gaia cult and the history of Delphi's oracle as perceived by the Delphic historians and officials at the time. He states:

Περιελθόντες οὖν ἐπὶ τῶν μεσημβρινῶν καθὼν ἐζόμεθα κρηπίδων τοῦ νεῶ πρὸς τὸ τῆς Γῆς ἱερὸτό θ' ὕδωρ ἀποβλέποντες· ὥστ' εὐθύς εἰπεῖν τὸν Βόηθον, ὅτι καὶ ὁ τόπος τῆς ἀπορίας συνεπιλαμβάνεται τῷ ξένῳ. “Μουσῶν γὰρ ἦν ἱερὸν ἐνταῦθα περὶ τὴν ἀναπνοὴν τοῦ νάματος, ὅθεν ἐχρῶντο πρὸς τε τὰς λοιβάς καὶ τὰς χέρνιβας τῷ ὕδατι τούτῳ...

⁶⁹ Landi (2012) 136 n. 71. See also Farnell (1907) III, 308 n. 14; *BCH* (1902) 65; Plut. *De Pyth. orac.* 402 C-D; De La Coste-Messelière (1936) 63; Sourvinou-Inwood (1987) 221 n. 29; and Scott (2014) 41 n. 36.

⁷⁰ Sourvinou-Inwood (1987) 221-222.

⁷¹ Sourvinou-Inwood (1987) 222.

⁷² *OCD* s.v. “Plutarch, of Chaeronea”, Russell (2015).

So we went around: then we sat on the southern foundations of the temple and looked towards the sanctuary of Gē and the water; and immediately Boethos said that the place offered assistance for a problem to the visitor. “For a shrine of the Muses was once near the mouth of the spring, from where libations and purifications were performed by the water...”

(Plut. *De Pyth. orac.* 402C)

Plutarch states in no uncertain terms that there was a contemporary sanctuary of Gaia at Delphi, as he viewed it beside a spring from the southern steps of the temple of Apollo. This sanctuary sat in the triangular area south of the temple of Apollo, between the Bouleuterion to the west, the dedication of the Boeotians and the Chalcidians to the south, and the Portico of the Athenians to the east.⁷³

τὰς δὲ Μούσας ἰδρύσαντο παρέδρους τῆς μαντικῆς καὶ φύλακας αὐτοῦ παρὰ τὸ νᾶμα καὶ τὸ τῆς Γῆς ἱερόν, ἧς λέγεται τὸ μαντεῖον γενέσθαι διὰ τὴν ἐν μέτροις καὶ μέλεσι χρησμοδίαν. ἔνιοι δὲ καὶ πρῶτον ἐνταῦθ᾽ ἀφασιν ἠρώων μέτρον ἀκουσθῆναι, συμφέρετε περὰ τ', οἰωνοί, κηρόν τε, μέλισσαι·
εἶτα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπίδεᾷ γενομένην ἀποβαλεῖν τὸ σεμνόν.

They established the Muses as co-judges and guardians of the oracle here near the stream and the sanctuary of Gē, to whom it is said that the oracle belonged as the oracular responses were in poetry and lyrics. Some say that the heroic poetry was first heard there:

‘Collect your feathers, birds, and bees, your beeswax.’

Then she became inferior to the god and lost her holy position.”

(Plut. *De Pyth. orac.* 402 D-E)

⁷³ Landi (2012) 135: Stando alle indicazioni di Plutarco, il santuario di Gaia e delle Muse parrebbe trovare una corretta collocazione nell'area triangolare posta a sud del tempio di Apollo e compresa tra il Bouleuterion ad ovest, il donario dei Beoti a sud e il Portico degli Ateniesi ad est: la zona si configura come un campo di rocce naturali. She cites Valgiglio E. (1992), *Plutarco, Gli Oracoli della Pizia*, Naples: 141 n. 2.

As for any associations with the Muses, Plutarch distances himself from the veracity of the story by using words like “λέγεται”, “ἔνιοι... φασιν”, and has Boethos tell the story that the Muses were co-managers of the oracle, which once belonged to Gaia. The Muses are sometimes depicted as daughters of Gaia (Alcman fr. 5, Campbell; Paus. 9.29.4; Diod. Sic. 4.7.1-2), but the worship of Gaia and the Muses together appears unique to Delphi. In Plutarch’s version of the myth, Gaia lost her right to hold the oracle and deliver prophecies after she became “inferior” “ἐπιδεᾶ” to Apollo.

Plutarch’s testimony is verified by Pausanias’ 2nd century CE writing. While the accuracy of Pausanias’ work has sometimes been called into question, he ultimately provides us with invaluable testimonies of the Greek landscape, uses local sources for myth, and tends to be accurate when dealing with cult information. He states:

φασὶ γὰρ δὴ τὰ ἀρχαιότατα Γῆς εἶναι τὸ χρηστήριον, καὶ Δαφνίδα ἐπ’ αὐτῷ τετάχθαι πρόμαντιν ὑπὸ τῆς Γῆς.

For they say in the beginning the oracle belonged to Ge, and Daphnis was appointed as prophetess by Gē.

(Paus. 10.5.5)

Susan Scheinberg states that Daphnis was a nymph who became the first prophetess at Delphi. Nymphs are often associated with prophecy, which may explain why Pausanias includes Daphnis in a version of the Previous Owners myth.⁷⁴ After the Pythia invokes Gaia in the opening lines of the *Eumenides*, she also honours the Nymphs at Delphi alongside Poseidon and Athena Pronaia (*Eum.* 21-26).

⁷⁴ Scheinberg (1980) 6-8. See, among others, Paus. 8.37.11 and 9.3.9, along with Philochorus of Athens (3rd century BCE): “Φιλόχορος φησιν ὅτι νύμφαι κατεῖχον τὸν Παρνασσόν, τροφοὶ Ἀπόλλωνος, τρεῖς, καλούμεναι Θριαί, ἀφ’ ὧν αἱ τε μαντικαὶ ψῆφοι θριαὶ καλοῦνται καὶ τὸ μαντεύεσθαι θριαῖσθαι” “Philochorus says that nymphs lived on Parnassus, the nurses of Apollo, three, who are called the Thriai, after whom the pebbles used in divination, *thriai*, and the verb to prophesy, *thriasthai*, are named” (*FGrHist* 328 F195).

History of Scholarship

The 20th century progression of ideas surrounding Delphi's cult history has been an ongoing debate about the nature of the interaction between myth and cult. Scholarship on the subject is divided into two arguments: those who support the Previous Owners myth, and those that do not. This debate is characterised by milestone scholars who fundamentally change the current of the argument, closely followed by clusters of scholars who do not know of, or do not accept, the work of these scholars.

The first milestone scholar was Jane E. Harrison. Her work contributed significantly to the early 20th century tradition of reading myth as history. She formulated much of her work as backlash against the positivism that was common in classical scholarship of the late 19th century.⁷⁵ Furthermore, her work was influenced by her suffragist leanings: she states that proto-Greek society was “known by the awkward term matriarchal”.⁷⁶ By largely using literature such as Aeschylus (e.g. *Eumenides*, *Danaids*) and accounts of Pausanias (Books 1-10), she concluded that Gaia held the oracle of Delphi before Apollo.⁷⁷ Harrison's later 1927 monograph, *Themis*, reiterated that Gaia had an oracle at Delphi before Apollo.⁷⁸ Harrison was enormously influential and, given that she was responding to a positivist tradition, she rehabilitated the place of myth in cult history. While we conclude that the Previous Owners myth does not reflect cult history at Delphi, myth is an illuminating and necessary part of the study of Greek cult.

Shortly after Harrison's 1903 work, Lewis Farnell published his 1907 volumes dedicated to cataloguing Greek religious practice. Farnell took a different approach to Harrison as he was concerned with separating literary and cult evidence, although he often used the former to supplement the latter. These two scholars neatly frame the alternative approaches to Gaia's cult at Delphi within several years of each other. Significantly, however, Farnell also supported Gaia as a Previous Owner. Unlike Harrison, Farnell based his conclusion on archaeological evidence – namely, the Delphic inscription *CID* II 62 detailing “τὸ Γᾶς ἱερὸν”.

⁷⁵ Peacock (1988) 181.

⁷⁶ Harrison (1903) 261.

⁷⁷ Harrison (1903) 261.

⁷⁸ Harrison (1927) 166.

As we know, this inscription is dated to approximately 335 BCE and does not confirm Gaia had cult at Delphi before Apollo. Nevertheless, Farnell had a sounder basis for his conclusion than Harrison. He supported this cult evidence with literary evidence.⁷⁹ Between these sources, Farnell says “we can regard [Gaia’s oracle] as accepted in the main by the Greek world”.⁸⁰

One of the most important scholars on Gaia’s cult at Delphi is Martin Nilsson. In 1941, Nilsson built on Farnell’s method of separating myth from cult history and made the first real challenge to the idea that Gaia was a Previous Owner of the Delphic oracle. He stated that the passage of the Delphic oracle from Gaia to Themis to Apollo is a “mythical tradition”.⁸¹ Neither Themis nor Gaia was ever worshipped as the primary goddess of the Delphic oracle.⁸² He notes there was a sanctuary of Gaia and the Muses in an Archaic building south of the temple of Apollo, but does not state this was proof of Gaia’s ancient worship.⁸³ His rejection of the Previous Owners myth is, in turn, rejected by scholars such as Parke and Wormell⁸⁴, and Defradas.⁸⁵ In 2012, Alice Landi takes Nilsson’s argument completely out of context and cites him alongside Farnell as a scholar who supports the Previous Owners myth.⁸⁶

⁷⁹ Farnell (1907) 9. Namely, he cites Aeschylus (*Eum.* 1-8); Euripides (*IT.* 1259-1272); Pausanias (10.5.6); Apollodorus (*Bibl.* 1.4); the *Homeric Hymn III to Apollo* (300), as well as Plutarch (*Plut. de Pyth.* 402C-E; *Plut. de Defect.* 414A-B), with particular concern for myth on Python as a symbol of Gaia’s worship.

⁸⁰ Farnell (1907) 9.

⁸¹ Nilsson (1941) 171 with n. 7. On the myth, see Aesch. *Eum.* 1ff.; Eur. *Iph. Taur.* 1259ff. See also Dieterich (1905) 60; and Halliday (1913) 129.

⁸² Nilsson (1941) 171: Daß die blasse Gestalt der Themis keine Orakelgöttin gewesen sein kann, sondern nur als eine Vertreterin der Untrüglichkeit der Sprüche hinzukam, ist anerkannt; dagegen ist die Auffassung verbreitet, daß das Orakel wirklich ursprünglich der Ge gehört habe, die als Orakelgöttin angesprochen wird.

⁸³ Nilsson (1941) 458 with n. 10 and 11: Südlich vom Tempel des Apollon war ein Heiligtum der Ge und eins der Muses; man will es in einem archaischen Bau mit einem viereckigen Raum und einer Apside wiederfinden. The fact that he references the Muses suggests that Plutarch (*De def. orac.* 402 C) is his main source. See also Courby (1927) 186 f.

⁸⁴ Parke and Wormell (1956), I p. 14 n. 5 - Nilsson (1941) 159 paradoxically refuses to accept an original oracle of Gaia and supposes the notion was derived from the belief in vapour from the earth as inspiring the Pythia.

⁸⁵ Defradas (1972 ed., 1st ed. published 1954) 114 n. 2 uses Nilsson as an example of a scholar who rejects the Previous Owners myth when he states: “On a beau dire que le culte de la Terre à Delphes est peut-être une reconstruction tardive, il n'est pas possible de nier la présence du serpent dans le mythe primitif, et ce serpent n'a de ses que dans une religion chthonienne.”

⁸⁶ For example, Landi (2012) 133-4, n. 59 lists Nilsson (1941) 458 accompanying the statement: Anche per quanto attiene a Delfi, la maggior parte delle fonti è concorde nel considerare Gaia quale primitiva titolare del culto oracolare.

Nilsson's theory did not gain widespread acceptance until approximately the 1980s when Walter Burkert stated that speculatively, Greek worship of Gaia has been used as the "prototype of all piety" in both ancient and modern times.⁸⁷ She was important politically, rhetorically, and conceptually, yet her role in customary Greek religion was "exceedingly modest". What little cult she did receive had likely developed out of ceremonial libations that were poured into the earth.⁸⁸ Between Nilsson and Burkert there were very few scholars that rejected the Previous Owners' myth. Nevertheless, in 1967 Olof Pettersson noted that Gaia's oracle at Delphi before Apollo has never been able to be verified.⁸⁹ A few years later in 1973, Dietrich accepted that Gaia and Themis were associated with Delphi in a mythical capacity. However, he still clung to the conviction that there was a "chthonic cult" operating at Delphi before Apollo was worshipped, which the myth reflects.⁹⁰

Sourvinou-Inwood's 1987 article marked a turning point in 20th century scholarship and renewed a positivist approach to understanding Gaia and Gaia's cult. She concluded that Gaia was not the primary oracle goddess at Delphi and did not receive cult worship at the site before Apollo. However, she stated that the myth makes sense within a purely mythical framework.⁹¹ She methodically broke down and debunked the elements of myth that appear to confirm Gaia was a Previous Owner of the Delphic oracle and stressed the importance of avoiding confirmation bias.⁹² These elements included Mycenaean Gaia, Gaia and Poseidon as husband and wife, the Delphic serpent, literary sources like Aeschylus, Euripides, and Pindar, as well as other symbols of Apollo's cult like the Pythia and the *omphalos* co-opted by the Previous Owners myth.⁹³ Sourvinou-Inwood's work has been extremely influential in shaping this chapter and my own understanding of the role myth plays in Gaia's cult history. After her article was published, scholarship has largely accepted that Gaia was not a Previous Owner at the Delphic oracle. Recent scholars like Michael

⁸⁷ Burkert (1985) 175.

⁸⁸ Burkert (1985) 175.

⁸⁹ Pettersson (1967) 64 n. 64, cites Delcourt, M. (1955), *L'oracle de Delphes*, Paris: Payot, p. 142. See also Farnell (1907) 308; Fontenrose (1959) 256 ff.; Amandry (1950) 203 ff., 208 ff.; Defradas (1954) 52.

⁹⁰ Dietrich (1973) 308 with n. 5. See Aesch. *Eum.* 1ff.; Aesch. *PV.* 211 ff.; Eur. *Iph. Taur.* 1259ff.; and Pausanias 10.5.6.

⁹¹ Sourvinou-Inwood (1989) 232-233.

⁹² Sourvinou-Inwood (1989) 217-218.

⁹³ Sourvinou-Inwood (1989) 220-228.

Scott (2014) and Michael Press (2012) conclude that while Gaia was a figure richly represented in Delphic myth, she was a minor figure in cult.⁹⁴

Despite these various scholars that argued strongly against Gaia's widespread cult, the myth persisted. After Nilsson, in 1954 Jean Defradas stated that Gaia was the deity worshipped at Delphi during the time of Hesiod, not Apollo, which has "long been attested by the countless figurines discovered in excavations".⁹⁵ As we have seen, the figurines at Delphi are not compelling evidence of Gaia's Mycenaean worship. In the same year, William K. C. Guthrie largely accepted that Gaia myth can be read as evidence for her cult practice. He used Aeschylus to argue for Gaia's presence at Delphi pre-Apollo: "[at Delphi] it was universally acknowledged that Gaia had been the earliest occupant of the shrine (Aesch. *Eum.* 2)".⁹⁶ He also uses the myth of the Delphic serpent to prove that the oracle once belonged to Gaia.⁹⁷

Resistance to Nilsson and even Sourvinou-Inwood's conclusions, which continued to privilege mythical evidence for Gaia's cult at Delphi, was likely spurred on by the romanticism or drama of the Previous Owners myth. Nilsson suggests it was perhaps Delphi's rugged physical landscape and associated shroud of mystery that lent undue credit to the theory of Gaia's supremacy as an oracle goddess before Apollo.⁹⁸ John Ferguson, who published in the same year as Sourvinou-Inwood, supports the Previous Owners myth. He did not list Sourvinou-Inwood in his bibliography and appeared unaware of her conclusions. Almost 50 years after Nilsson reflected on the romanticism surrounding the Delphic myth, Ferguson based his support for Gaia as a Previous Owner on the natural topography of

⁹⁴ Scott (2014) 34 with n. 4; Press (2012) 3, who states modern Greek religion handbooks "barely reference Gaia" e.g. Bremmer (1994); Mikalson (1995). See also Harrison (1903) 263-4, (1927) 241; Farnell (1907) 2; Rose (1929) 45-46; Guthrie (1954) 53-54. See against Nilsson (1941) 456-61; Georgoudi (2002).

⁹⁵ Defradas (1st ed. published 1954) 52: Il est probable que la divinité qui y règne n'est pas encore Apollon, mais Gaia la déesse Terre, dont la présence est depuis longtemps attestée par les innombrables figurines découvertes dans les fouilles.

⁹⁶ Guthrie (1950) 229.

⁹⁷ Guthrie (1950) 80.

⁹⁸ Nilsson (1941) 172 with n. 3: Perhaps the myth of Gaia's oracle at Delphi came from an association of the oracle with vapours from a chasm in the earth, and from stories of a goatherd who discovered the chasm. Diodorus, although a late source dated to the 1st century, is the only source that suggests the oracle of Gaia was discovered when a herdsman noticed that his goats were behaving strangely at the chasms around Delphi. Subsequently, the herdsman began to behave strangely and speak oracles: δι' ἃς αἰτίας θαυμαστωθῆναι τε τὸ μαντεῖον καὶ νομισθῆναι τῆς Γῆς εἶναι τὸ χρηστήριον. καὶ χρόνον μὲν τινα τοὺς βουλομένους μαντεύεσθαι προσίοντας τῷ χάσματι ποιεῖσθαι τὰς μαντείας ἀλλήλοις... (16.26.3-4).

Delphi, as he stated that the chasms in the ground are fitting for an earth goddess.⁹⁹ Aeschylus (*Eum.* 1-8) and Euripides (*IT.* 1244-49) indicated Gaia was worshipped at Delphi before Apollo, which, he stated, archaeological evidence confirms.¹⁰⁰ This evidence is namely the female figurines discovered under the sanctuary of Athena Pronaia and the temple of Apollo, which are “perhaps the earth goddess”.¹⁰¹ After 1989, sources are widely aware of Sourvinou-Inwood’s work and tend to disagree with the Previous Owners myth. However, even Alice Landi, whose 2012 work on Gaia’s myth and cult worship is the most expansive piece of scholarship on the goddess, tended to overstate evidence of Gaia’s worship at Delphi.¹⁰² She stated that most sources agree that Gaia was the original owner of the oracular cult at Delphi.¹⁰³ The *omphalos* is a symbol consecrated to Gaia, as was water nearby, and Aeschylus above all attests to the “memory of Gaia’s ancient prophetic power”.¹⁰⁴ She also explained that Gaia’s ancestral role as the original oracular power at Delphi, as well as at Dodona and Olympia, was “absolutely confirmed”.¹⁰⁵

Scholarship that still supported the Previous Owners myth after Nilsson’s 1941 publication tended to exhibit confirmation bias. This scholarship goes a long way to find ‘evidence’ of Gaia’s worship in myth, often at the expense of common sense. For example, to explain why Gaia did not feature in Hesiod’s depiction of the Delphic oracle’s establishment, Defradas suggested that the *Theogony* suffered from a transmission error, or a disjointed juxtaposition of two separate legends that accidentally leaves Gaia out of the narrative.¹⁰⁶ In reality, it simply seems that Hesiod is not concerned with the myth of Gaia, or was

⁹⁹ Ferguson (1989) 71.

¹⁰⁰ Ferguson (1989) 70-71.

¹⁰¹ Ferguson (1989) 25. In the introduction to his monograph, Ferguson (p. ix) states that he privileges archaeological evidence in his approach to Greek religion, yet he acknowledges that he has not excluded literary evidence where archaeological evidence lacks.

¹⁰² Landi (2012) 128. She cites Dieterich (1925), James (1959), Borgeaud (1996), Georgoudi (2002), Parker (2005), and Sourvinou-Inwood (2011) as the most significant contributors to the history of Gaia’s scholarship.

¹⁰³ Landi (2012) 134: Anche per quanto attiene a Delfi, la maggior parte delle fonti è concorde nel considerare Gaia quale primitiva titolare del culto oracolare. Notably, she cites Nilsson (1941) I, 458 and Sourvinou-Inwood (1991) 217-243, neither of whom support the Previous Owners myth.

¹⁰⁴ Landi (2012) 136: Il ricordo dell’antico potere profetico di Gaia doveva, comunque, mantenersi piuttosto radicato se, ancora al tempo di Eschilo, il tragediografo costruisce l’*incipit* delle Eumenidi su una solenne invocazione alla dea compiuta dall’Pizia.

¹⁰⁵ Landi (2012) 159: In particolare, dal punto di vista dell’analisi relativa alla distribuzione delle aree sacre, al di là di Atene e degli altri siti testimoniati, senz’altro si conferma il ruolo ancestrale di Gaia all’origine della tradizione mantica praticata a Dodona, Delfi, ed Olimpia, veri e propri luoghi simbolo del potere profetico della Grecia.

¹⁰⁶ Defradas (1954) 65-66.

completely unaware of it. In the same vein, Ferguson took his use of mythological evidence as far as suggesting that Euripides' *Ion* reflects Gaia's presence at Delphi when the temple attendants asks Creusa: "Crops or children?" (Eur. *Ion* 303).¹⁰⁷ In reality, the attendant, Ion, asks: "καρποῦ δ' ὕπερ γῆς ἤκετ' ἢ ποίων πέρι;" "Have you come on behalf of the land's crops, or what is your errand?" (Kovacs). Ferguson's version of the translation lends itself neatly to two common realms of Gaia's management: crops and children. The real translation, rather, reflects an important theme of the play: Creusa and Ion play a role in Athens' autochthonous identity as descendants of Erichthonios. Furthermore, it also foreshadows Creusa's moment of realisation that Ion is her son. This example demonstrates how literature, especially tragedy, will manipulate myth in order to suit the dramatic requirements of staging, like dramatic irony. In this case, such solutions should be our first point of call when evaluating literature before labelling it as evidence of cult worship.

As Stella Georgoudi stated in 2002, archaeological evidence does not confirm that Gaia was worshipped before Apollo at Delphi. This fact is often admitted with regret, as sources continue to firmly believe in a "primitive" Gaia who held the oracle before being erased by gods of a newer order.¹⁰⁸ This echoes what Nilsson stated in 1941, that emotional responses to Delphic myth, or Delphi itself, lead many to want to label Gaia as a Previous Owner. It is simply a more exciting version of the myth, that Apollo took the oracle away from a goddess originally worshipped at the site. The romanticism of the topic compromises a clear picture of Delphi's archaeological history and of the true reach of Gaia's worship. Individually, elements like the female Pythia, the Delphic *omphalos*, the 'earthy' chasms in the mountains, or even the mythical serpent can be explained without being tied to Gaia.¹⁰⁹ Yet, they are often tied together to create a stronger picture of Gaia as a Previous Owner that is unsupported in cult history.

¹⁰⁷ Ferguson (1989) 73.

¹⁰⁸ Georgoudi (2002) 115.

¹⁰⁹ Ferguson (1989) 71 states the Delphic *omphalos* was a symbol of Gaia. Landi (2012) 136 n. 73 also states that the snake *baetyl* and the Delphic *omphalos* are symbols of Gaia, citing Kerényi, K. (1963), *Gli Dei e gli Eroi della Grecia. Il Racconto del Mito, la Nascita della Civiltà*, Milan: 396. On the Pythia, see Dillon (2001) 105-106. On the association of nearby springs with Gaia's cult, see Landi (2012) 135. See against: Sourvinou-Inwood (1987) 224-225.

In conclusion, the Mycenaean figurines from the deposits cannot be associated with Gaia, and there is no other evidence that Gaia was worshipped at Delphi before the 5th century BCE. The statue base labelled “Gē” provides evidence of her worship in the 5th century, followed by the inscription *CID* II 62 that describes maintenance work completed on the ἱερόν of Gaia in the 4th century. Plutarch and Pausanias confirm the presence of the ἱερόν in the 1st and 2nd centuries CE. Scholarly conclusions over the origin of Gaia’s cult at Delphi have changed significantly during the 20th and 21st centuries as scholars before the publication of Sourvinou-Inwood’s 1989 work tended to accept that Gaia’s myth at Delphi proved her cult history as a Previous Owner.

Chapter Two: Gaia and Other Divine Figures in Delphic Myth

This section considers how Gaia is characterised as a Previous Owner in myth and will examine the other deities she is associated with at Delphi. Themis, Poseidon, Dionysos, and the Delphic serpent, sometimes called Python, are all divine figures associated with Gaia at the Delphic oracle before Apollo. I will also compare versions of the myth in which Apollo seizes the oracle from Gaia violently with versions where the transition is peaceful. I do not examine Roman myth, or myth after the 2nd century CE, but will use Plutarch and Pausanias where they recount myth alongside their empirical observations. The literature I will examine is by no means exhaustive, but includes major versions of the myth, alongside any interesting variations.

Gaia and Themis

Firstly, I will examine myths that associate Gaia with Themis. Themis, “Justice”, is Gaia’s daughter in the *Theogony* (126-146). She is often listed as a Previous Owner at Delphi alongside Gaia and is so frequently associated with the myth that she is occasionally associated with the oracle independently of her mother. As discussed above, Gaia and Themis both received cult worship at Delphi in the 5th century as shown by their statue bases, which appear to have been dedicated at roughly the same time. As with Gaia, we have little background for Themis’ cult history, but Nilsson states she was likely associated with the narrative of Delphi’s ownership as a metaphor for the oracle’s justice and integrity.¹¹⁰ Landi states that the progression of Gaia to Themis and the associated figure Gē Themis in Athens suggests that pre-Apolline oracles are always right and just, which in turn elevates Gaia’s character ethically.¹¹¹

We have one example in myth where Gaia and Themis are the same deity. Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound*, produced posthumously¹¹², describes Gaia and Themis as the same

¹¹⁰ Nilsson (1941) 171.

¹¹¹ Landi (2012) 133.

¹¹² Sommerstein (2009) 432-33. The play has disputed authorship and is dated approximately 455-430 BCE.

person – Prometheus’ mother. While Gaia-Themis is not linked to Delphi, she is a prophetic figure:

έμοι δέ μήτηρ ούχ ἄπαξ μόνον Θέμις
καί Γαῖα, πολλῶν ὀνομάτων μορφή μία,
τὸ μέλλον ἦι κρανοῖτο προυτεθεσπίζει,
ὡς οὐ κατ’ ἰσχὺν οὐδὲ πρὸς τὸ καρτερὸν
χρεΐη, δόλωι δὲ τοὺς ὑπερσχόντας κρατεῖν.

Not only once had my mother, Themis and Gaia, many names for one form, foretold to me how the future was fated to happen, how it was fated not by might nor by force, but by trickery that the victors would prevail.

(Aesch. *PV*. 209-213)

This identification of Gaia and Themis as one goddess is most likely an *ad hoc* invention by Aeschylus. Sommerstein identifies the only evidence of a cult figure called Gē Themis as *IG II² 5130 (C.I.A. 3.350)*, which he dates to the Roman period.¹¹³ This inscription was written on a seat in the Theatre of Dionysos in Athens:

ιερίας Γῆς Θέμιδος

Of the priestess of Gē Themis.

The Theatre of Dionysos was refurbished in the 4th century BCE, so this is the earliest possible date of the seat inscription, but we have no method to confirm or further narrow the date.¹¹⁴ Gaia may have acquired the cult epithet Θέμις in Athens through her prophetic associations at Delphi, rather than as a figure associated with justice. Farnell finds it improbable that Gaia, a goddess with rather fractured worship, could be a symbol of “high

¹¹³ Sommerstein (2009) 467 n. 24.

¹¹⁴ Stafford (1997) 163.

ethical ideas".¹¹⁵ Alternatively, cult worship to the figure of Gē Themis may have originated from Aeschylus' reference to the Previous Owners myth and the resulting conceptual links Gaia and Themis have with the oracle of Delphi.¹¹⁶ This theory is supported by the fact that Themis' cult and literary presence is independent from Gaia since the time of Homer until the start of the 5th century BCE.¹¹⁷ At this time, Gaia's increasingly political aspect may have led her to be associated with the goddess of social order because they were perceived to serve a similar role in the community's worship.¹¹⁸

Given that *IG II² 5130* is later than *Prometheus Bound*, Sommerstein looks within the play for an explanation for this unusual identification. Aeschylus wanted Prometheus to be one of the Titans, but also the son of a prophetic goddess.¹¹⁹ As the son of Gaia, Prometheus is a Titan himself and played a role in aiding Zeus' victory over the other Titans.¹²⁰ As he and his mother helped Zeus win the war, Zeus' subsequent persecution of Prometheus seems especially harsh. However, as the son of Themis, Prometheus has intimate knowledge of a prophecy that will defeat Zeus' plan: Heracles, who eventually frees Prometheus, would be born as a distant result of the marriage between the last surviving son of Aegyptus, Lynceus and Hypermestra, the daughter of Danaus (853-70). Prometheus states:

τοιόνδε χρησμὸν ἢ παλαιγενῆς μήτηρ ἔμοι διήλθε, Τιτανίς Θέμις.

Such is the prophecy that was narrated to me by my mother of ancient birth, Themis the Titaness.

(Aesch. *PV*. 873-4, Sommerstein)

¹¹⁵ Farnell (1907) 12-13. He claims this is reinforced by the idea that the once-oracular altar of Themis at Olympia was also referred to as the 'ὄ Γαῖος'. In reality, Pausanias states that altars of Gaia and Themis are both found at Olympia – Gaia's altar on the Gaion and Themis' on the Stomion (Paus. 5.14.10-14)

¹¹⁶ Stafford (1999) 163.

¹¹⁷ Stafford (1997) 165.

¹¹⁸ Stafford (1997) 165, n. 38. See also Borgeaud (2004) 17. He states this is based on the cult of Gē-Themis evidenced by the seat for a priestess in the Theatre of Dionysos.

¹¹⁹ Sommerstein (2009) 467 n. 24.

¹²⁰ In Hesiod's *Theogony*, Gaia advised Zeus to release the hundred-handed giants Cottus, Gyges, and Briareus from beneath the earth to defeat the Titans. Zeus did so, and the giants used guile, not force, which completes Gē-Themis' prophecy mentioned above (Hes. *Theog.* 626-8, 669-75, 713-20).

Despite the identification of his mother as simply “Themis”, this stresses why Aeschylus chose to identify Gaia-Themis as Prometheus’ mother to suit the plot.

Now we turn to sources that mention both Gaia and Themis at Delphi. Aristonoos of Corinth’s *Hymn to Pythian Apollo* (350-325 BCE) describes Apollo’s cleansing at Tempe after defeating Python. While it is a literary source, it was also inscribed at Delphi, *FD III 2.191*. For this reason, the inscription can be used as evidence of Gaia’s cult worship at Delphi around the 3rd century BCE. The hymn names Apollo as Leto’s child, “forever the occupant of the holy-founded Pythian oracular sanctuary” (1-3, LeVen) and links the laurel, the lyre, and the sacred law of the future as symbols of his oracle at Delphi.¹²¹ Lines 9-24 of the hymn are especially significant:

Ἔνθ’ ἀπὸ τριπόδων θεο-
κλήτων, χλ[ω]ρότομον δάφναν
σειών, μαντοσύναν ἐποι-
χνεῖς, ἰῆ ἰὲ Παιάν,
φρικώεντος ἔξ ἀδύτου
μελλόντων θέμιν εὐσεβῆ
χρησμοῖς εὐφθόγγου τε λύρας
αὐδαῖς, ὦ ἰὲ Παιάν.

Ἄγνισθεις ἐνὶ Τέμπεσιν βουλαῖς
Ζηνὸς ὑπειρόχου, ἐπεὶ Παλλὰς
ἔπεμψε Πυθῶδ(ε), <ἰῆ> ἰὲ Παιάν,
πίσας Γαῖαν ἀνθοτρόφον Θέμιν
τ’ εὐπλόκαμον θεάν, <αἰ> ἐν εὐλιβάνους
ἔδρας ἔχεις, ὦ ἰὲ Παιάν.

¹²¹ LeVen (2014) 300.

On your god-gained tripod, shaking your freshly-cut laurel, you practised the art of divination, oh, oh Paian, from the awe-inspiring innermost sanctuary, the holy law of the future, with prophecies and the voice of the sweet-sounding lyre.

Cleansed at Tempe by the will of eminent Zeus, since Athena sent you to Delphi, oh Paian, persuading flower-growing Gaia and the fair-haired goddess, Themis, you always have a well-incensed seat, oh Paian.

Pauline LeVen explains that the hymn uses neologistic compound adjectives to describe two divergent narratives of Apollo's establishment of the oracle at the same time.¹²² Gaia is called ἀνθοτρόφος "flower-growing" (18), which is a unique adjective. By choosing to highlight a sweeter aspect of Gaia's character, the author has distanced Gaia's association with monsters like Typhoeus (*Theog.* 821-2) and her defiance of Zeus (*HH* III 341-2). It is still clear that Apollo wins a violent victory over Python as he must be cleansed by Athena. By reinforcing the justice of Apollo's oracular law, θέμιν (14), and describing his catalogue of gifts from the Olympians, the hymn presents a mixed mythological background for the Previous Owners myth, both violent and peaceful.¹²³

Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, dated to the late 5th century, also depicts both Gaia and Themis as Previous Owners. It is drastically different to Aeschylus' *Eumenides*: Apollo violently seizes the oracle from Themis when he defeats the serpent at Delphi. The Chorus describe Gaia's snake that lived in a sacred grove at Parnassus as the "ποικιλόνωτος οἰνωπὸς δράκων" "dark-faced snake with a many-coloured back" (1244) that was a symbol of "γᾶς πελώριον" "the mighty Gaia" (1246). The intense description of the snake serves to bolster the power of the monster that Apollo overcomes.¹²⁴ After the defeat he delivers prophecies from the sanctuary beside the Castalia (1250-1258). In this passage, the verb tense shift from aorist to the present tense in lines 1254-58, which creates the impression

¹²² LeVen (2014) 302.

¹²³ LeVen (2014) 302-303.

¹²⁴ Kyriakou (2006) 398-399.

that the hymn has reached a conclusion. It is therefore a surprise when Gaia becomes hostile in the next stanza and attempts to take revenge on Apollo:¹²⁵

Θέμιν δ' ἐπεὶ Γαῖαν
παῖδ' ἀπενάσσατο <Λατῶος> ἀπὸ ζαθέων
χρηστηρίων, νύχια
Χθῶν ἐτεκνώσατο φάσματ' ὄνειρων,
οἷ πολέσιν μερόπων τά τε πρῶτα
τά τ' ἔπειθ' ὅσ' ἔμελλε τυχεῖν
ὑπνῶ κατὰ δνοφεράς χαμεύ-
νας ἔφραζον· Γαῖα δὲ τὰν
μαντείων ἀφείλετο τι-
μὰν Φοῖβον φθόνῳ θυγατρός.
ταχύπους δ' ἐς Ὀλυμπον ὄρμαθεις ἄναξ
χέρα παιδὸν ἔλιξεν ἐκ Διὸς θρόνων,
Πυθίων δόμων χθονίαν ἀφελεῖν μῆνιν θεᾶς.

But when <Leto's> child sent away Themis, the daughter of Gaia, from the sacred seat of the oracle, Chthōn gave birth to dream apparitions at night, which told in sleep to the mass of mortals on their dark beds those things that once were and the things that would happen later. Gaia thus took the office of the oracle away from Apollo out of jealousy for her daughter. Hurrying to Olympos with speed, the lord flung his infant hand around Zeus' throne, begging him to liberate his Pythian temple from the chthonic wrath of the goddess.

(Eur. *IT* 1259-1273)

Zeus responds by removing the truth (ἀλαθοσύναν) from Gaia's dreams and reinstalling Apollo as the only oracular god at Delphi (1273-1283). In this passage, the retaliation is

¹²⁵ Kyriakou (2006) 399.

based on the familial bond between Gaia and Themis.¹²⁶ Themis herself is not part of the action but serves as a catalyst for Gaia's outrage and retaliation. As in the *Theogony*, Gaia is especially anthropomorphic in *Iphigenia Among the Taurians* when she resists Apollo – traditionally, gods and heroes do not begrudge or want to appropriate another god's honours, but are keen to safeguard their own.¹²⁷ Gaia's intervention on Themis' behalf is an act of “φθόνος” “envy/ill-will” against Apollo. However, Apollo's seizure of the sanctuary is also an act of φθόνος.¹²⁸

In context, the Chorus sing this ode to foreshadow the play's ending where Apollo's guidance to Orestes was correct. In contrast, Iphigenia's prophetic dream only told a half-truth. Sourvinou-Inwood states this is a wider metaphor for Apollo's (and Zeus') triumph over the older order of Gaia and Themis at the oracle. Their guidance is presented as civilised and reliable, whereas Gaia's dreams are uncontrollable.¹²⁹ Alternatively, Apollo may have seized the Delphic oracle from Gaia and Themis in the first place because Gaia delivered her oracles via dreams. This easy access to the prophetic world and the lack of need for an intermediary threatened the traditional religious order.¹³⁰

It is worth noting a similarly violent transition from Gaia to Apollo in Pindar (fr. 55 SM, c. 500-438 BCE). While it does not mention Themis at all, the tiny fragment contains a retaliation from Gaia similar to that in Euripides' *Iphigenia Among the Taurians*:

πρὸς βίαν κρατῆσαι Πυθοῦς τὸν Ἀπόλλωνα, διὸ καὶ ταρταρῶσαι ἐζήτει αὐτὸν ἡ Γῆ.

After Apollo took possession of Pytho by force, Gē then sought to cast him into Tartarus.

¹²⁶ Cropp (2000) 250-251.

¹²⁷ Kyriakou (2006) 401.

¹²⁸ Kyriakou (2006) 404.

¹²⁹ Sourvinou-Inwood (1989) 230 with n. 67.

¹³⁰ Stoneman (2011) 109.

It is clear that Apollo uses violence to take Delphi from Gaia (πρὸς βίαν κρατῆσαι) and Gaia responds in kind.¹³¹ We are left to wonder if she perhaps appeals to Zeus to cast him into Tartarus or whether she pursues her revenge in some other way. This fragment is especially valuable as it is early, perhaps contemporary with Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, and yet relays a version of the Previous Owners myth that is not peaceful. In turn, this makes it less likely that the Previous Owners myth was Aeschylus' original invention.

Finally, Euripides' *Orestes*, dated to 408 BCE, refers to Themis alone as a Previous Owner.¹³² While this version does not reference Gaia, Themis' identity as a Previous Owner casts doubt on the justice of Apollo's oracle. Early in the play, Electra laments Orestes' suffering at the hands of the Furies and indirectly blames Apollo:

ἄδικος ἄδικα τότ' ἄρ' ἔλακεν ἔλακεν, ἀπό-
φονον ὄτ' ἐπὶ τρίποδι Θέμιδος ἄρ' ἐδίκασε
φόνον ὁ Λοξίας ἐμᾶς ματέρος.

Unjust the god, and unjust the commands Loxias uttered, uttered when on the tripod of Themis he pronounced the doom of unnatural murder upon my mother.

(Eur. *Or.* 163-165 Kovacs)

When Electra links Apollo's position on the tripod of Themis with his decree that Orestes should kill Clytemnestra, she implies that Apollo was equally unjust to possess the oracle. Themis' name, literally "θέμις" "justice", reinforces the idea that Themis' rule over the oracle was more just than Apollo's.¹³³ Alternatively, Electra's reference may simply foreshadow Apollo's resolution of the plot as a *deus ex machina* at the play's end (*Or.* 1625-1665).

¹³¹ "Πυθοῦς" here refers to Delphi, not to the serpent, Python.

¹³² Kovacs (2002) 400. Note as well Apollodorus' account from the 1st/2nd century CE that also refers to Apollo's violent seizure of the oracle directly from Themis by destroying the serpent that guarded the oracle: ἦκεν εἰς Δελφούς, χρησμοδούσης τότε Θέμιδος: ὡς δὲ ὁ φρουρῶν τὸ μαντεῖον Πύθων ὄφις ἐκώλυεν αὐτὸν παρελθεῖν ἐπὶ τὸ χάσμα, τοῦτον ἀνελὼν τὸ μαντεῖον παραλαμβάνει (1.4.1).

¹³³ Biehl (1965) 23. He cites Wilamowitz, U. (1927), *Der Glaube der Hellenen*, Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, I² 202.

Poseidon received or in what context. Poseidon is not generally associated with other oracles. Gaia and Poseidon are linked in Anazarbos where an inscription details a small altar dedicated to Zeus Soter, Poseidon Asphaleios and Gaia Edraia, “the seated one”, perhaps in the sense of “with a secure base” (*SEG* 7.513).¹³⁷ There appears to be a thematic connection between the three gods and their epithets – “Σῶτερ, saviour” and “Ἀσφάλειος, protector” suggest they are invoked as gods of safety. This could potentially tell us something about their cult if we had any more parallels in other inscriptions.

Much later in the 2nd century CE, Pausanias states that Gaia Chthonia and Poseidon shared cult worship at Delphi as early oracle holders:

ἔστι δὲ ἐν Ἑλλήσι ποίησις, ὄνομα μὲν τοῖς ἔπεσιν ἔστιν Εὐμολπία, Μουσαίω δὲ τῷ Ἀντιοφήμου προσποιοῦσι τὰ ἔπη· πεποιημένον οὖν ἔστιν ἐν τούτοις Ποσειδῶνος ἐν κοινῷ καὶ Γῆς εἶναι τὸ μαντεῖον, καὶ τὴν μὲν χρᾶν αὐτήν, Ποσειδῶνι δὲ ὑπηρετήν ἐς τὰ μαντεύματα εἶναι Πύρκωνα. καὶ οὕτως ἔχει τὰ ἔπη·

αὐτίκα δὲ Χθονίης φωνὴ πινυτὸν φάτο μῦθον,
σὺν δέ τε Πύρκων ἀμφίπολος κλυτοῦ Ἐννοσιγαίου.

χρόνῳ δὲ ὕστερον, ὅσον τῇ Γῇ μετῆν, δοθῆναι Θέμιδι ὑπ’ αὐτῆς λέγουσιν, Ἀπόλλωνα δὲ παρὰ Θέμιδος λαβεῖν δωρεάν· Ποσειδῶνι δὲ ἀντὶ τοῦ μαντείου Καλαύρειαν ἀντιδοῦναί φασιν αὐτὸν τὴν πρὸ Τροιζῆνος.

There is among the Greeks a poem, the name of the work is Eumolpia, and the work is assigned to Mousaios, the son of Antiophemos.¹³⁸ In this it is stated that Poseidon and Gē shared the oracle [at Delphi], but she declared her oracles herself, while Pyrkon was the minister of Poseidon’s oracles. And thus the work went;

At once the voice of Chthonia spoke a prudent tale,
And with her, Pyrkon, the servant of the glorious Earth-Shaker.

¹³⁷ Landi (2012) 151.

¹³⁸ This figure appears to be the mythical poet Mousaios, sometimes referred to as the son of Eumolpus, or the son of Orpheus. For other sources that attest to the mythical poet as the son of Antiophemos, see Schol. *ad Soph. Oed. Col.* 1047; *Suda* s. v. Μουσαῖος μ 1294.

At a later time, as much [of the oracle] as Gē was concerned with, they say she gave to Themis, and Themis gave it to Apollo as a gift. They say Apollo gave Kalaureia, in front of Troizen, to Poseidon in exchange for [his share of] the oracle.

(Paus. 10.5.6)

It is significant that in Mousaios' version of the myth, only Gaia can announce her own oracles. Poseidon, on the other hand, must have an attendant speak them. Presumably, as Pausanias has access to the complete *Eumolpia*, he is correct in identifying Gaia with the epithet Chthonia. Some scholars claim that, as Poseidon was a Mycenaean god who was Gaia's husband, Gaia must have also been a Mycenaean deity worshipped at Delphi.¹³⁹ However, as discussed above, we have no evidence that Gaia had any direct parallel in Mycenaean religion. We also do not have any mythical parallels for Poseidon and Gaia as husband and wife.¹⁴⁰ Sourvinou-Inwood strongly rejects that Poseidon was ever a husband of Gaia in terms of myth or cult worship or that Poseidon was worshipped at Delphi during the Mycenaean period.¹⁴¹

However, Pausanias nevertheless connects Poseidon's myth to Delphi. He states that Mount Parnassus was founded by the eponymous founder, who may have been a son of Poseidon and the nymph Cleodora (10.6.1). Sommerstein claims that Poseidon was also the father of Delphus, the eponymous founder of Delphi.¹⁴² Poseidon had an altar inside the temple of Apollo because "ὅτι τὸ μαντεῖον τὸ ἀρχαιότατον κτῆμα ἦν καὶ Ποσειδῶνος" "Poseidon also had a share of the oldest oracle" (10.24.4). Finally, Scott states that there was a version of the myth where Poseidon gave Delphi to Apollo in exchange for a sanctuary at Tainaron in southern Greece.¹⁴³ This evidence suggests that in the 2nd century CE, Poseidon had mythical ties to the foundation of Delphi. However, we have no evidence of

¹³⁹ See Rose (1929) 63, 67, 137: Gaia was once Poseidon's wife – Poseidon's fresh water fertilises the earth: see also Farnell (1907) 9; Dietrich (1973) 177; and Roux (1976) 25, 29-30. See against Sourvinou-Inwood (1987) 220-221.

¹⁴⁰ Sourvinou-Inwood (1987) 221 n. 24 and n. 25. For a more in-depth rebuttal of Poseidon as Gaia's husband, see Burkert (1985) 136-8. For further rebuttal of Poseidon's name meaning 'husband of Earth', Sourvinou-Inwood also cites Chadwick, J. (1976), *The Mycenaean World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 94-5.

¹⁴¹ Sourvinou-Inwood (1989) 220-221.

¹⁴² Sommerstein (2009) 359 n. 16.

¹⁴³ Scott (2014) 35.

this mythical tradition prior to Pausanias and no evidence of Poseidon's cult worship at Delphi prior the 3rd century BCE.

Gaia and Dionysos

There is also limited mythical evidence that Dionysos was once a Previous Owner at Delphi. Scott states this tradition often arose from the argument that Dionysos' followers were women,¹⁴⁴ thus explaining the choice of a female oracular priestess at Delphi. He also states that 3rd century BCE sources attested to Dionysos' alleged tomb inside the temple of Apollo at Delphi (Philoch. *FGrHist.* 328 f7).¹⁴⁵ By Plutarch's time at the latest, it was a common myth that Dionysos oversaw Delphi during the three winter months of every year (Plut. *Mor.* 388E). This myth was also reflected in cult worship, but there is not specific connection between Dionysos and Gaia.¹⁴⁶

Gaia and the serpent

Gaia and the Delphic serpent, sometimes known as Python, are frequently associated with each other. In some versions of the myth, the serpent is Gaia's child and guards the oracle on her behalf.¹⁴⁷ Serpents in myth are regularly described as the children of Gaia and retain a special bond with her.¹⁴⁸ Some versions of the myth do not associate Gaia with the serpent, but all versions with the serpent in them include a violent defeat by Apollo, who then takes over the oracle. The serpent is ultimately referred to in multiple ways, with

¹⁴⁴ Scott (2014) 35 n. 14 cites Parke, H. W., and Wormell, D. E. (1956a), *The Delphic Oracle Vol. I: The History*. Oxford.

¹⁴⁵ Scott (2014) 35 n. 14 cites: Amandry, P. (1950), *La mantique apollinienne à Delphes: Essai sur le fonctionnement de l'oracle*. Paris: Boccard: 196–200.

¹⁴⁶ Scott (2014) 140-2. Dionysos seems to have been worshipped to the immediate east of the *peribolos* of Apollo's sanctuary from the middle of the 4th century BCE onwards; there was likely a Delphic Dionysion somewhere between the sanctuary and the nearby ancient polis. Votive offerings to Dionysos have also been found at the site.

¹⁴⁷ Ogden (2013) 36, 45. He states that while Gaia has a chthonic capacity and snakes are sometimes chthonic symbols, the connection between the two often goes deeper.

¹⁴⁸ Ogden (2013) 247. See Typhon (Hes. *Theog.* 868; Pind. *Pyth.* 1. 15–28), Ladon, Python (Pind. fr. 55 SM; Eur. *IT.* 1247 ff.; Hyg. *Fab.* 140); the Serpent of Ares and the Spartoi (Eur. *Phoen.* 931); the Gorgon (Eur. *Ion* 987–96); the Aegis (Diod. 3.70.3–6); Campe (Diodorus 5. 71. 2–6); and Herodotus (1.78.3) who states that snakes are always children of the earth.

different names, genders, origins, and habitat.¹⁴⁹ Despite this, early scholars support the identification of the Delphic serpent as a symbol of Gaia, particularly in the *Homeric Hymn III to Apollo*.¹⁵⁰ Landi interprets the Naxian column, erected in 570-550 BC, as the spot of Python's destruction.¹⁵¹

The *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* is by far the earliest literary evidence for the establishment of the Delphic oracle, but it tends to be overlooked because it does not conform with our modern, pre-conceived picture of the Delphic oracle presided over by Gaia as a Previous Owner. Martin West states that the *Homeric Hymn III to Apollo* is an amalgamation of two separate hymns: a Delian hymn, lines 1-178, and a Pythian hymn, lines 179-546. The Pythian hymn, which deals with the founding of Delphi, is the older of the two. It was likely composed in central Greece shortly after the First Sacred War (591/590 BCE).¹⁵² This hymn is one of the earliest pieces of literature on the Delphic oracle. The purpose of the hymn is to glorify Apollo, so it may have had a vested interest in excluding a version of the myth where Gaia previously held the oracle. Apollo does not steal the oracle from another god, but vanquishes the snake that guards the location:

ἀγχοῦ δὲ κρήνη καλλίρροος, ἔνθα δράκαιναν
κτεῖνεν ἄναξ Διὸς υἱὸς ἀπὸ κρατεροῦ βιοῖο
ζατρεφέα μεγάλην, τέρας ἄγριον, ἧ κακὰ πολλὰ
ἀνθρώπους ἔρδεσκεν ἐπὶ χθονί, πολλὰ μὲν αὐτούς,
πολλὰ δὲ μῆλα ταναύποδ', ἐπεὶ πέλε πῆμα δαφαινόν.

Nearby is the beautiful-flowing spring, where the lord, son of Zeus, killed the great fattened serpent with his fierce bow, a savage monster, who did many evils to people in the land, much to them, much to the long-striding herds, since she was a bloody misery.

(300-304)

¹⁴⁹ Ogden (2013) 42, 46 respectively.

¹⁵⁰ Farnell (1907) 9; Rose (1929) 137; Defradas (1954) 114 n. 2.

¹⁵¹ Landi (2012) 135.

¹⁵² West (2003) 9-10. Earlier sources like Allen and Halliday (1936) 185 and Parke (1967) 38 date the hymn from around 700 BCE.

According to T.W. Allen and W.R. Halliday, the snake at Delphi was “very generally supposed” to represent an earlier Pythian cult dispossessed by Apollo but they state this theory is theological speculation rather than genuine tradition.¹⁵³ It is noteworthy that the Hymn, which is one of the earliest known accounts of the Delphic oracle’s foundation, makes no mention of Gaia. Apollo shoots the serpent with arrows to save the people of Delphi:

... οὐδέ τί τοι θάνατόν γε δυσηλεγέ’ οὔτε Τυφωεύς
ἀρκέσει οὐδέ Χίμαιρα δυσώνυμος, ἀλλὰ σέ γ’ αὐτοῦ
πύσει γαῖα μέλαινα καὶ ἠλέκτωρ Ὑπερίων.”
ὥς φάτ’ ἐπευχόμενος, τὴν δὲ σκότος ὄσσε κάλυψεν.
τὴν δ’ αὐτοῦ κατέπυσ’ ἱερὸν μένος Ἥελίοιο·
ἐξ οὔ νῦν Πυθῶ κικλήσκειται, οἳ δὲ ἄνακτα
Πύθιον <αὔ> καλέουσιν ἐπώνυμον, οὔνεκα κεῖθι
αὐτοῦ πῦσε πέλωρ μένος ὄξεος Ἥελίοιο.

“... neither will Typhoeus ward off your ruthless death nor will hateful Chimaera, but you will be decayed by the black earth and the beaming sun.” So he vowed, and darkness covered her eyes. She decomposed by the divine power of Helios; now the place is called Python, and people call the lord Pytheios, named after the place where the monster decayed by the swift force of Helios.

(367-374)

Here, the snake is comparable to Sphinx or Echidna or the dragon that Cadmus slew at Thebes, as it plays the role of a local menace that must be overcome by a god or hero in order to establish civilization.¹⁵⁴ Allen and Halliday state that stories of serpents that break down and become part of the landscape are perhaps common as the Greeks believed that

¹⁵³ Allen and Halliday (1936) 245. They are an early source that do not support the Previous Owners myth, stating that the succession of cults preceding that of Apollo at Delphi appears first in the fifth century B.C. (Aesch. *Eum.* I, Eur. *IT.* 1245).

¹⁵⁴ Allen and Halliday (1936) 198-199.

snakes decompose rapidly.¹⁵⁵ The reference to the earth decomposing Python's body alludes to the "earth that gives men life" at the earlier line 363 "χθονί βωπιανείρη". This shows the cyclical nature of the earth's role in the life and death of beasts and men.¹⁵⁶ The hymn also serves as aetiology for Apollo's epithets Pythios¹⁵⁷, Telpousios¹⁵⁸, and Delphinios.¹⁵⁹ Mike Chappell states that scholars only see connections to Gaia in the hymn when they approach it with the myth in mind. This hymn reflects a version of the myth that has no allusions to Gaia.¹⁶⁰ It is likely the myth of Gaia as a Previous Owner developed after the hymn was composed and Gaia's connection with the snake was secondary.¹⁶¹

Daniel Ogden offers three mythical justifications for Apollo's slaying of the Python, regardless of the consequences – Python was harassing Leto, Python was harassing locals at Delphi, or Apollo needed to defeat the snake to seize the oracle. He does not attempt to reconcile these varying traditions but states that all conform to the common mythological pattern of a sun god vanquishing a chthonic serpent.¹⁶² Ultimately, there is no need to say that the snake's presence shows a poet is deliberately suppressing a story that contains Gaia. The hymns make sense on their own and fit a pattern of a hero or god who defeats a monster that threatens civilisation.¹⁶³

Plutarch, interestingly, also does not link the serpent to Gaia:

¹⁵⁵ Allen and Halliday (1936) 252. They cite Strabo 281, 346, 427; and Pausanias 5.5.9-10. These sources refer to foul-smelling earth and water sources, but none are linked directly to snakes, and this theory does not hold much weight.

¹⁵⁶ Richardson (2010) 133.

¹⁵⁷ *BNP* s.v. "Python": Πύθιος is likely derived from πύθεσθαι "to decay" from the rotting corpse of the snake.

¹⁵⁸ *BNP* s.v. "Τελφούσιος: an epithet of Apollo that relates to the Telpousa, the fountain in Boeotia, dear to Apollo see *H. Hom.* 3.244, 3.247.

¹⁵⁹ Richardson (2010) 133.

¹⁶⁰ Chappell (2006) 340-341. For contrary opinion, he cites Defradas (1954) 64-7 n. 13; Parke and Wormell (1956) 1.7 n. 7 argue that the female serpent is a representation of Gaia, which is unsupported in the hymn alone. Roux (1976) 43-9 n. 37 accepts the historicity of the myth of Gaia at Delphi before Apollo.

¹⁶¹ Chappell (2006) 341-342, see 341 n. 53 with bibliography and discussion. See also Sourvinou-Inwood (1989) 225ff, especially n. 45.

¹⁶² Ogden (2013) 11 n. 22. Ogden pp. 33-36 discuss Ladon, a serpentine figure, who guarded the apples of the Hesperides on Hera's behalf. Pisander of Camirus, Apollonios, and Pherecydes all imply that Ladon was Gaia's child (Pisander of Camirus, *FGrH* 16 F8; Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 1398 (cf. 1434, φρουρὸν ὄφιν, 'guardian snake'), and that Gaia sent up the apples he guards (Pherecydes F16c-17 Fowler). See also Fontenrose 1959: 90-1, 121-45, 217-30.

¹⁶³ Chappell (2006) 342.

καὶ γάρ τοῦτο δὴ τούνταῦθα πρεσβύτατον ὄν χρόνῳ τε καὶ δόξῃ κλεινότατον ὑπὸ
θηρίου χαλεποῦ δρακαίνης πολὺν χρόνον ἔρημον γενέσθαι καὶ ἀπροσπέλαστον
ἱστοροῦσιν, οὐκ ὀρθῶς τὴν ἀργίαν ἀλλ' ἀνάπαλιν λαμβάνοντες· ἡ γὰρ ἐρημία τὸ
θηρίον ἐπηγάγετο μᾶλλον ἢ τὸ θηρίον ἐποίησε τὴν ἐρημίαν.

And on this one here [the oracle at Delphi], which is the oldest in time and the most famous in nature, they give an account that it was made desolate and unapproachable by a dangerous beast, a snake, but they incorrectly take the lack of cultivation [as due to the snake] when it was the opposite; for the desolation drew in the beast rather than that the beast created the desolation.

(Plut. *De def. or.* 414A-B)

Plutarch then mentions a female snake, “δρακαίνα”, that inhabited the oracle at Delphi in ancient times. He notes that the place was desolate before the snake’s arrival – that is, the snake did not create desolation at Delphi. It is unclear what purpose this statement makes, other than perhaps suggesting that the snake was less dangerous than it was believed to be. It also suggests that there was a belief that Delphi was less inhabited, or inactive, while the snake lived there until Apollo populated and civilized the area. He makes no explicit mention of Gaia as the mother of the snake, but his earlier statement at *De Pyth. or.* 402D-E allows for the possibility that the snake lived there while Gaia held the oracle.

Several ancient sources explicitly link Gaia with the Delphic serpent. For example, Theopompus, a 4th century BCE historian from Chios, recounts the story of Delphi’s takeover significantly earlier than Pausanias. In his version of the myth, Apollo is purified after he shoots the serpent (τὸν Πύθωνα τὸν δράκοντα) that guards Gaia’s oracle. After doing so, he takes control of the oracle (*FGrH* 2b 115 F 80.30-35). 400 years later, Pausanias tells a similar story of the myth:

τὸν δὲ ἀποθανόντα ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος ποιηταὶ μὲν δράκοντα εἶναι καὶ ἐπὶ τῷ
μαντείῳ φύλακα ὑπὸ Γῆς τετάχθαι φασί.

Poets say that the one killed by Apollo was a serpent that was appointed by Gē as a guard of the oracle.

(Paus. 10.6.6)

Here, he acknowledges the tradition was a poetic one rather than reflective of cult. The use of “ποιηταὶ... φασί” distances Pausanias from the story in the same way as Plutarch.

The variations in the myth of the Delphic serpent reflect divergent traditions over time as well as deliberate textual choices made by poets and tragedians to suit the plot of their work. Beyond the serpent, Gaia is associated in myth with numerous figures, but especially with Themis. Themis, who appears almost as frequently in literature concerning the establishment of the Delphic oracle as Gaia does, is still considered a Previous Owner. However, she is ultimately not depicted by secondary scholarship with the same air of primordality as Gaia.

In conclusion, the various versions of the myth concerning Gaia at Delphi can be summarised in the following way (see Table 1, below). Of the twelve literary sources discussed, our oldest source is the Homeric Hymn to Apollo and the latest we consider is Pausanias. Almost all directly discuss the Delphic oracle (except Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*), seven depict Gaia as a Previous Owner, five contain Themis, six contain the serpent, eight involve violent transitions from Gaia to Apollo, and in two versions of the myth, Gaia retaliates and attempts to punish Apollo for the seizure. We can see from this breakdown that Gaia (or Themis) is often the Previous Owner of the Delphic oracle in myth and is frequently forcefully removed from her position by Apollo. It is rarer, however, that she seeks to punish Apollo or Zeus and she is never successful in her revenge.

Table 1 – Versions of myth relating to Gaia at Delphi.

Author	Work	Lines	Date	Discusses Delphic oracle?	Gaia as Previous Owner?	Themis?	Serpent?	Violent or peaceful?	Retaliation?	Other
"Homer"	<i>Homeric Hymn to Apollo</i>	300 ff.	c. 591/590 BCE (West)	Yes	No	No	Yes	Violent	No	-
Pindar	-	fr. 55 SM	1st half 5th century BCE (Loeb)	Yes	Yes	No	No	Violent	Yes	Gaia asks for Apollo to be thrown in Tartarus
Aeschylus	<i>Eumenides</i>	1 ff.	458 BCE	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Peaceful	No	Birthday gift to Apollo
Aeschylus	<i>Prometheus Bound</i>	209 ff.	produced posthumously; no later than 430 BCE (Loeb)	No	No	Yes	No	-	No	Equates Gaia and Themis
Euripides	<i>Iphigenia Among the Taurians</i>	1259-1272	approx. 415 BCE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Violent	Yes	Gaia hijacks prophecy via dreams
Euripides	<i>Orestes</i>	163-165	408 BCE (Loeb)	Yes	No	Yes	No	Violent	No	-
Theopompus	<i>Fragments of Greek History</i>	2b 115 F 80	378/7-320 BCE	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Violent	No	-
Diodorus	-	16.26	1st century BCE	Yes	Yes	No	No	Peaceful	No	-
Plutarch	<i>On the Pythian Oracles</i>	402C-E	1st century CE	Yes	Yes	No	No	Peaceful	No	-
Plutarch	<i>On the Failure of Oracles</i>	414A-B	1st century CE	Yes	No	No	Yes	Violent	No	Combined with 402C-E, links Gaia to the serpent
Apollodorus	<i>Bibliotheca</i>	1.4.1	1st/2nd c. CE	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Violent	No	-
Pausanias	-	10.5.5; 10.6.6	2nd century CE	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Violent	No	Daphnis was Gaia's prophetess

Chapter Three: Gaia at Other Oracles

Modern sources associate Gaia with the oracle at Dodona.¹⁶⁴ This association is largely based on Pausanias' description of Dodona:

τὰς Πελειάδας δὲ Φημονόης τε ἔτι προτέρας γενέσθαι λέγουσι καὶ ᾄσαι γυναικῶν
πρώτας τάδε τὰ ἔπη: “Ζεὺς ἦν, Ζεὺς ἐστίν, Ζεὺς ἔσσεται: ὦ μέγαλε Ζεῦ. Γᾶ καρποὺς
ἀνίει, διὸ κλήζετε Ματέρα γαῖαν.”

The Peleïades are said to have been born even earlier than Phemonoe and they were the first women to sing these hymns: “Zeus was, Zeus is, Zeus will be: oh great Zeus. Gē sends up crops, therefore praise Mother Gē.”

(Paus. 10.12.10)

Sources that associate Gaia with Dodona interpret the song to the Peliades as evidence of Gaia's worship as they are female. These sources also state that Gaia delivers oracles to worshippers through dreams. In the *Iliad*, Achilles appeals to Zeus at Dodona, where the god is attended by the Selloi “Σελλοὶ” - attendants who sleep on the ground (16.233-235). This, along with Euripides' depiction of Gaia's revenge against Apollo via dream-prophecies (*IT*. 1259-1273) possibly motivates scholarship to make this argument. However, there is no other evidence for Gaia's worship at Dodona. Even if Pausanias implies that this chant is still current at Dodona, he does not state that the oracle at Dodona actually belonged to Gaia.

¹⁶⁴ *RE* s.v. “Gaia” col. 467: Es ist wohl nicht unwahrscheinlich, daß Orakel von Dodona ursprünglich der Erde gehörte, wenn man sich des asketischen Rituals der am Boden lagernden Seller erinnert; Farnell (1907) 8 cites the ritual chant in Pausanias 10.12.10 and states there was once primitive worship of the earth-goddess who was “at one time associated with the Aryan sky-god”; *DAGR* (1919) s.v. “Tellus Mater” 76: A Dodone, où Gaea avait pour prêtresses les Péliades et où elle était chantée, de concert avec Zeus, dans un hymne que nous avons cité, Pausanias mêle la personnalité de l'antique divinité à l'obscur tradition d'une lignée de Sibylles qui se rattachaient aux Péliades. Euripide exploite cette tradition: il invoque comme divinités justicières et Gaea et Zeus, dont l'œil perspicace note les actions coupables des mortels ; Hammond (1986) 39: at Dodona, Zeus derived his importance as an oracle god of the sanctuary when he displaced a Bronze Age “Mother Goddess” who was then assimilated with Aphrodite; Ferguson (1989) 67; Landi (2012) 132 states Zeus and Gaia shared their sanctuary, and Gaia was maintained by the Peleïades priestesses. See against: Parke (1967) 22; Vandenberg (2007) 29.

Rather, the hymn seems to allude to Gaia's agrarian capacity by praising her for providing a harvest.

At Olympia, Pausanias attests to an altar of Gaia and states that this altar was the site of a much older oracle, also of Gaia:

ἐπὶ δὲ τῷ Γαίῳ καλουμένῳ, βωμός ἐστιν ἐπ' αὐτῷ Γῆς, τέφρας καὶ οὔτος· τὰ δὲ ἔτι ἀρχαιότερα καὶ μαντεῖον τῆς Γῆς αὐτόθι εἶναι λέγουσιν. ἐπὶ δὲ τοῦ ὀνομαζομένου Στομίου Θέμιδι ὁ βωμός πεποιήται. τοῦ δὲ Καταιβάτου Διὸς προβέβληται μὲν πανταχόθεν πρὸ τοῦ βωμοῦ φράγμα, ἔστι δὲ πρὸς τῷ βωμῷ τῷ ἀπὸ τῆς τέφρας τῷ μεγάλῳ.

On what is called the Gaion, there is an altar of Gē herself, and this is also made of ashes. In more ancient times, there is said to have been an oracle of Gē on that spot. On the location called the Stomion, the altar of Themis has been built. Around the altar of Zeus Kataibates [the Descender] runs a fence on all sides – this altar is near the large altar made of ashes.

(5.14.10)

It is possible that Pausanias here uses a distancing technique to indicate that the oracle was part of a mythical tradition. When he talks about the altar of Gē, he says “there is” “ἔστιν” but when he turns to the idea of an oracle, he states “there is said to be” “εἶναι λέγουσιν”. Despite this, modern sources claim that there was definitely an oracle of Gaia and Zeus at Olympia, and Gaia was an ancient goddess worshipped on the site.¹⁶⁵ Yet, we have no

¹⁶⁵ Farnell (1907) 11: There is “no doubt [Gaia’s] worship goes back to very primitive times in that region, as the fact of the altar bearing the name of the deity suggests an early state of religious thought and ritual”. He notes that Zeus is otherwise rarely associated with oracles. See also *DAGR* (1919) s.v. “Tellus Mater” 75: Le Gaios de l'Apis d'Olympie portait un autel sur lequel se dressait une statue de Gaea; tout à côté était un second autel érigé à Thémis. Le premier était placé, disait la légende, sur un tertre de cendres grises, du haut duquel la déesse rendait des oracles dès la plus haute antiquité; *RE* s.v. “Gaia” col. 469: In Olympia lag ein Ort Gaion (Gaios) mit einem Aschenaltar der G., fruher sollte ebendort eine Orakelstatte der G. gewesen sein, Pausanias V.14.10. Unweit davon, auf dem, Stomion, notieren wir einen Altar der Themis, Pausanias ebd. (uber die Lage der Altare unwahrscheinliche Vermutungen bei Curtius Die Altare von Olympia 21ff.); Ferguson (1989) 55, who states that it is possible to think “equally speculatively” that a primitive earth goddess was

archaeological or epigraphical evidence that attests to an oracle of Gaia at Olympia and we must accept Pausanias' word that there was simply an altar of Gaia on the mound known as the Gaion. It seems significant that Gaia and Themis are worshipped beside one another at Olympia, just as at Delphi. As Pausanias states that there may have been an oracle to Gaia at the site in earlier times, this perhaps reinforces the view in ancient and modern literature that both goddesses were associated with oracles.

At Patras, there appears to be a statue of Gaia inside the sanctuary of Demeter, along with an image of Demeter herself and Kore:

τοῦ δὲ ἄλλους ἱερὸν ἔχεται Δήμητρος· αὕτη μὲν καὶ ἡ παῖς ἐστᾶσι, τὸ δὲ ἄγαλμα τῆς Γῆς ἐστι καθήμενον. πρὸ δὲ τοῦ ἱεροῦ τῆς Δήμητρος ἐστι πηγὴ· ταύτης τὰ μὲν πρὸς τοῦ ναοῦ λίθων ἀνέστηκεν αἰμασιά, κατὰ δὲ τὸ ἐκτὸς κάθοδος ἐς αὐτὴν πεποιήται. μαντεῖον δὲ ἐνταῦθα ἐστὶν ἀψευδές, οὐ μὲν ἐπὶ παντί γε πράγματι, ἀλλὰ ἐπὶ τῶν καμνόντων. κάτοπτρον καλωδίῳ τῶν λεπτῶν δήσαντες καθιάσι, σταθμώμενοι μὴ πρόσω καθικέσθαι τῆς πηγῆς, ἀλλ' ὅσον ἐπιψαῦσαι τοῦ ὕδατος τῷ κύκλῳ τοῦ κατόπτρου. τὸ δὲ ἐντεῦθεν εὐξάμενοι τῇ θεῷ καὶ θυμιάσαντες ἐς τὸ κάτοπτρον βλέπουσι· τὸ δὲ σφισι τὸν νοσοῦντα ἦτοι ζῶντα ἢ καὶ τεθνεῶτα ἐπιδείκνυσι.

Beside the grove [of Apollo and Aphrodite] is a sanctuary of Demeter. She and her daughter are standing, but the statue of Gē is seated. In front of the sanctuary of Demeter is a spring. On the side of this towards the temple stands a wall of stones, while on the outer side has been made a descent to the spring. Here there is an infallible oracle, not for everything, but only for the sick. They tie a mirror to a fine cord and let it down, judging the distance so that it does not sink deep into the spring, but just far enough to touch the water with its rim. Then they pray to the goddess and burn incense, after which they look into the mirror, which shows them the patient either alive or dead.

likely worshipped here before Zeus; Landi (2012) 131: I suoi vaticini, infatti, sostanziano l'oscura origine della pratica mantica a Dodona, a Delfi e nel territorio di Egira, ma anche ad Olimpia non manca un primitivo altare dedicato alla dea.

(Paus. 7.21.11-13, Jones)

The goddess they pray to after lowering the mirror is Demeter, not Gaia. Demeter is the main subject of the paragraph and is referred to most recently before the reference to τῆ θεῶ (πρὸ δὲ τοῦ ἱεροῦ τῆς Δήμητρος ἐστὶ πηγή). Despite this, early secondary sources tended to attribute the oracle to Gaia.¹⁶⁶ For example, Farnell states that the ritual at the oracle was ancient, consecrated to the “earth-goddess or earth-spirit” and may have later been taken over by “her younger sister” Demeter.¹⁶⁷ In this case, even Farnell admits that the oracle belongs to Demeter at the time of Pausanias.

Finally, at Aigai in Achaia, Pausanias states there is a temple of Gē Eurysternos also called the “Gaion”:

Γῆς δὲ ἱερόν ἐστιν ὁ Γαῖος ἐπὶ κλησὶν Εὐρυστέρνου, ξόανον δὲ τοῖς μάλιστα ὁμοίως ἐστὶν ἀρχαῖον. γυνὴ δὲ ἡ ἀεὶ τὴν ἱερωσύνην λαμβάνουσα ἀγιστεύει μὲν τὸ ἀπὸ τούτου, οὐ μὴν οὐδὲ τὰ πρότερα ἔσται πλέον ἢ ἐνὸς ἀνδρὸς ἐς πεῖραν ἀφιγμένη. πίνουσαι δὲ αἶμα ταύρου δοκιμάζονται· ἢ δ’ ἂν αὐτῶν τύχη μὴ ἀληθεύουσα, αὐτίκα ἐκ τούτου τὴν δίκην ἔσχεν.

The Gaios is a sanctuary of Gē with the epithet Eurysternos, in which there is the most ancient statue [of the goddess]. The woman who takes on the priestesshood must live purely from that point on, and before attaining office must have had sexual relations with only one man. [Candidates] undergo scrutiny for office by drinking bull’s blood. Anyone who happens to not speak the truth will be punished immediately because of this test.

(7.25.13)

¹⁶⁶ DAGR (1919) s.v. “Tellus Mater”: Par une association d'idées analogues, Gaea s'unit aux Fleuves et procrée avec eux les héros topiques ; et elle est dans un rapport analogue avec les sources, à Patras par exemple, où, en compagnie de Déméter, elle prophétise auprès d'une fontaine fatidique. See against: Landi (2012) 139-140.

¹⁶⁷ Farnell (1907) 12.

Pausanias does not state there was an oracle in this temple. However, Pliny states the priestess of Gaia drinks bull's blood before prophesying (*NH* 28.41.147: *ibi enim sacerdos Terrae vaticinatura sanguinem tauri bibit prius quam in specus descendat*).¹⁶⁸ The discrepancy between Pliny and Pausanias has not affected secondary scholarship, which largely states with confidence that Gaia was an oracular goddess at Aigai.¹⁶⁹ "Eurysternos" is a rare epithet that appears in the *Theogony*, meaning "of the wide bosom".¹⁷⁰ At the beginning of the universe, Chaos comes into existence first; Gaia "εὐρύστερνος" comes second (*Hes. Theog.* 116). The epithet perhaps simply refers to the all-encompassing nature of the earth or Gaia's fertility.¹⁷¹ A scholion on the *Theogony* states that Mnaseas of Patras referred to a shrine of Eurysternos at Delphi in a lost collection of Delphic oracles:

Μνασέας ὁ Παταρεὺς (*FHG* III 157, 46) ἐν τῇ τῶν Δελφικῶν χρησμῶν συναγωγῇ
†εὐρύστερνας ἱερόν φησιν ἀναστῆσαι†.

Mnaseas of Patras in the collection of Delphic oracles, says there stood a shrine for Eurysternos at Delphi.

(*Schol. Hes. Theog.* 117c)

This connection perhaps strengthens a case for Gaia's oracular presence at both Delphi and Aigai as Mnaseas establishes the epithet Eurysternos is associated with a shrine at Delphi. Based on Gaia's connection with the epithet, it is likely the shrine that Mnaseas refers to is a shrine to Gē Eurysternos at Delphi.

¹⁶⁸ While Pausanias also mentions the consumption of bull's blood at Aigai, the blood's role in cult worship is unclear. I think similarities between Pausanias and Pliny's testimonies on this point have led scholarship to assume Pausanias is indirectly referring to an oracle of Gaia at Aigai. Bull's blood was widely believed to be poisonous in ancient Greece: Diodorus (11.58.3) and Plutarch (*Them.* 31.5-6) state that Themistocles drank the blood of a bull sacrifice and promptly died. For different theories, see: Roller (1983) 299-313; Ekroth (2002) 111 n. 252; and Landi (2012) 137.

¹⁶⁹ Farnell (1907) III, 11-12 n. 21; *DAGR* (1919) s.v. "Tellus Mater" 74-76; *RE* s.v. "Gaia" col. 469; Nilsson (1941) I, 458; Pettersson (1961) 65; Landi (2012) 137.

¹⁷⁰ *BNP* s.v. "εὐρύστερνος": having a wide chest, having an ample bosom. The epithet applies to Gaia, Ouranos, and sometimes Athena (*Theocr.* 18.36).

¹⁷¹ *DAGR* s.v. "Tellus Mater" 74.

Scholarship, especially from the first half of the 20th century, has associated Gaia with oracles at Dodona, Olympia, Patras, and Aigai alongside the Delphic oracle. The basis for these associations is often Pausanias, who is concerned with recounting mythical details associated with cult sites. At Dodona, Pausanias recounts what he states is an ancient hymn that associates Gaia with Zeus at the oracle but does not state that Gaia was an oracular goddess herself. It is possible that the hymn he recounts is not ancient but rather contemporary to Pausanias, in which case Gaia is evoked as an agricultural goddess responsible for good harvests. At Olympia, he states there was an altar dedicated to Gaia, while acknowledging a possible earlier oracle on the site. At both Dodona and Olympia, he signals he is retelling a myth by using the words “γενέσθαι λέγουσι” and “εἶναι λέγουσιν”. At Patras, there is an oracle of Demeter, while Gaia merely has a cult site within Demeter’s sanctuary. At Aigai, he makes no mention of an oracle to Gaia at all; rather, the tradition in scholarship appears to have arisen from Pliny’s description of the same cult.

Chapter Four: Autochthony, *Gē Meter*, and the Kourotrophos

Perception of Gaia's cult worship is often complicated by scholars' identification of the goddess with various "mother" or "nurse" epithets. 20th century scholarship calls Gaia the Mother, the Mother of All, the Mother of the Gods, the Kourotrophos (Nurse of the Young), the ancestral mother of the Athenians, and sometimes she is identified as the Greek equivalent of the Near Eastern goddess Kybele.¹⁷² Gaia's worship in any of these capacities is often overstated, conflated with one another, and discussed in vague terms to create a larger image of an all-powerful "Mother Earth" goddess, who is Gaia. In reality, Gaia is associated with these epithets, but when we look at the evidence for each epithet individually, we find the associations are far more conservative. The complicated identity of Gaia as a mother goddess is furthermore complicated by our modern perceptions and the 20th century cultural legacy of Gaia as a figure in New Age religions¹⁷³ or in environmental movements.¹⁷⁴

This chapter aims to investigate Gaia's cult worship in a maternal capacity, whether as the mother of the gods, the mother of young children, or the mother of the Athenian *polis*. It will also consider how our perceptions of this capacity are complicated by an overabundance of literary references to the "earth" rather than Gaia. In contrast to our epigraphical evidence, there is far more literary evidence that characterises the earth as a nurturing, maternal figure. However, as already discussed, not all references to earth, γῆ, are the goddess, *Gē*, Γῆ. It is difficult at times to differentiate between the two, which complicates discussions of *Ge*'s characterisation in literature. The decision to capitalise *Gaia*/*Gē* is often an arbitrary one at the translator's whim. Another issue in scholarship is

¹⁷² For example, Dieterich (1903); Rose (1929) 45; Guthrie (1950) 54; Keeler (1960) 40.

¹⁷³ Bøgh (2007) 312: "Moreover, the still growing popularity of this supposedly primordial goddess among non-specialists (e.g. feminists, Wicca adherents, psychologists and transvestites) has cast a shadow of frivolity on the subject." Despite Bøgh's rather random and perhaps problematic collection of "non-specialists", the gist of the statement is true.

¹⁷⁴ The scope of this discussion is enormous. For several sources among many, see *Gaia in Turmoil: Climate Change, Biodepletion, and Earth Ethics in an Age of Crisis*, eds. E. Crist and H. B. Rinker, MIT Press, 2009: xi-xvi; Tyrrell, T. (2013), *On Gaia: A Critical Investigation of the Relationship between Life and Earth*, Princeton: Princeton University Press: 3-13; Lovelock, J. and Lovelock, J.E. (2000), *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth*, Oxford: Oxford University Press: 22-32.

the common conflation of Gaia with Near Eastern goddesses like Kybele. The significant blending of Gaia with other earth deities and cultures contributes to the overstatement of Gaia's cult in Greece. It also confuses the distinct identities of multiple other goddesses, like Rhea and Demeter, while perpetuating prejudiced theories of "primitive" trans-cultural earth worship.¹⁷⁵

This chapter aims to demonstrate that references to Gaia in early literature, like the *Theogony*, and later references to "the earth" have complicated modern perceptions of Gaia's worship in a "Mother" capacity. Our early literary evidence, like the *Theogony* and the *Homeric Hymns*, tends to come from outside Attica. Later literature from the 5th century BCE onwards tends to come from Athens in the form of political and philosophical speeches. As for cult worship, there is an extremely limited capacity in which Gaia appears to be worshipped with the epithet "Meter". We have only three such inscriptions that are all late in time and from outside of Attica.

The history of scholarship on Gaia as a "Mother Earth" figure clearly shows a trend of support for the tradition from Albrecht Dieterich in 1905 continuing through to until Olof Pettersson firmly rejected the idea in 1967. Dieterich states that a belief in "Mother Earth" came first, which then led to the worship of Demeter and Magna Mater. This theory profoundly influenced later interpretations of Gaia's place in the Greek pantheon, as well as modern understandings of how the Greeks perceived the land around them.¹⁷⁶ Dieterich states Gaia was worshipped in the Mysteries but, unlike Jane Harrison, he does not support the idea of a pre-Greek matriarchy or Gaia's supposed role in such a divine hierarchy.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Scholars, largely early, have argued that the Mother Goddess is a female deity common to all early religions, as first seen in Greece in Hesiod's *Theogony*. Bøgh (2007) 312 outlines some of the history: This "mother goddess" notion was reinvented by Bachofen, J. J. (1967, first published in German in 1861), *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right: Selected Writings of J. J. Bachofen*, tr. by R. Manheim, Princeton: 98-99, who links worship of a Mother Goddess and general "immature matriarchy" with a primitive phase of human society. Later, E. O. James (1959) 11: "Whether or not the Mother Goddess was the earliest manifestation of the concept of deity, her symbolism unquestionably has been the most persistent feature in the archaeological record of the ancient world". See against: Georgoudi (2002) 113-114.

¹⁷⁶ Tortorelli Ghidini (2015) 51.

¹⁷⁷ Dieterich (1905) 82-84.

William K. C. Guthrie and Keeler provided significant support for Dieterich's theory. Guthrie stated that Gaia is the figure behind "Mother Earth" and the "Great Mother" in Greek religion. This figure was all-powerful, all-encompassing, and was both the soil and an early chthonic power that also delivered oracles. She blurred the lines between a divine being and the physical element that was tilled by the Greeks. Gaia and Ouranos' marriage could be seen as metaphorical evidence for Gaia's personification as a feminine maternal element, as Ouranos fertilised Gaia's soil when it rained.¹⁷⁸ Gaia was therefore the most important deity among "the aboriginal peoples of Greece and the neighbouring lands of the Aegean", and was responsible for all human, animal, and vegetable life.¹⁷⁹ There was no single conception of Gaia, she was rather the Mother of each man's individual community.¹⁸⁰

Keeler's work similarly concludes that, based on patterns in myth, all religion begins with a universal "earth mother". He treats aspects of myth like fact, while stating that myths must not be taken verbatim.¹⁸¹ Therefore, Keeler approaches myths from a viewpoint where fertility goddesses and an "earth mother" have strong cult presences reflected in poetic patterns.¹⁸² Naturally, this method of investigation is fraught with confirmation bias, as we have seen concerning the myth of the Previous Owners. Ferguson is a later scholar who frequently discusses the "earth mother" and does not provide references for many claims. He describes low-lying temples that "speak of an ancient earth mother living in the folds of the earth".¹⁸³ On a "mother goddess" figure, Ferguson states that Ge was worshipped primarily as the mother goddess, while Artemis, Aphrodite, Demeter, Kybele, and Hera were also regarded as earth, fertility, and mother goddesses.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁸ Guthrie (1950) 54. See Aeschylus' *Danaids* fr. 44 (Sommerstein): Ouranos desires Gaia and fertilises her with rain. She conceives and gives birth to food for mortals. Guthrie states that these rites were based on the promise of immortality, which was ritualistically and metaphorically connected to the rebirth of dead grain "being restored to the womb of Mother Earth" (Guthrie (1950) 292).

¹⁷⁹ Guthrie (1950) 57.

¹⁸⁰ Guthrie (1950) 109.

¹⁸¹ Keeler (1960) 40.

¹⁸² Pettersson (1960) 15-16.

¹⁸³ Ferguson (1989) 42. See also: 10, 15, 16, 18, 20, 24, 38, 39-40, 54, 80.

¹⁸⁴ Ferguson (1989) 15, 18, 20, 24, 38 respectively. See also Vermaseren (1977) 10.

As Farnell attempts to base his conclusions on cult evidence, rather than mythical evidence, he does not elaborate at length about a “Mother Gaia” theory for Gaia’s worship. However, even he tends to operate through the “good old method of assimilation” by identifying Gaia as a figure who hovers behind most other female deities like Themis, Rhea, Kybele, and Demeter.¹⁸⁵ It is not until 1967 when Pettersson, who evaluates the early work of Dieterich and Keeler, concludes that there is no evidence that Minoan or Mycenaean religions prioritised one powerful goddess and Gaia cannot be identified in ‘Near Eastern’ religions.¹⁸⁶ The most significant piece of scholarship on the topic is Stella Georgoudi’s breakdown of evidence for Gaia’s worship in Greece as the “Great Goddess”, “Mother Goddess”, “Great Mother Goddess”, or “Mother Earth”. She concludes that Gaia rarely received cult worship in this capacity, and we do not have evidence that such a divinity, depicted as cross-cultural and all-powerful, yet primitive, was ever worshipped in Greece. Therefore, it is wrong to identify this fictitious figure as Gaia by another name and she criticises those who still firmly believe in this “primitive Gaia” while admitting that she has been “erased” by “new gods”.¹⁸⁷

Gaia the Mother

While there is evidence of the cult of Gaia and the cult of the Mother Goddess across Greece, the Mother is not necessarily always Gaia.¹⁸⁸ It appears that references to Gaia’s cult worship in a maternal capacity are scarce. The first of these capacities we will examine is Gaia explicitly as “Mother” - Γῆ Μητέρα, of which there are only three known inscriptions. All three are from outside Attica and are likely dated to the 2nd century CE or later. The first inscription, *SEG* 42:1322 was found on an altar dedicated in approximately 150-200 CE in Areni, near the ancient site of Arpaneal in modern Armenia.

¹⁸⁵ Georgoudi (2002) 118.

¹⁸⁶ Pettersson (1967) 86.

¹⁸⁷ Georgoudi (2002) 113-114, 115: On sait cependant que ni les fouilles jusqu'à ce jour ni d'autres données culturelles n'ont pu confirmer la 'priorité' de Gê sur Apollon ou Zeus - ce qu'on avoue parfois à regret, tout en continuant à croire fermement à une Gaia primitive, qui aurait régné sur ses oracles 'telluriques' avant d'en être 'effacée' par des 'nouveaux dieux.'

¹⁸⁸ Early sources like the *DAGR* (1919) state that in a large number of cases, the two should preferably be identified as one and the same: *DAGR* s.v. “Tellus Mater” 76: Il y a beaucoup de témoignages en Grèce d'un culte de la Terre, et beaucoup de témoignages aussi d'un culte d'une Mère qui n'est pas toujours nécessairement la Terre, mais qui, dans un grand nombre de cas, doit être de préférence identifiée avec elle.

Ἐμίλιος
Οὐάλης
Γῆ Μετρ[ί]
Ὀλυβρι
θεᾶ δεσπο-
ίνα.

Emilios Ouales [dedicated this] to Gē Meter Olybris, the mistress goddess.

This inscription is the first known reference to the epithet “Meter Olybris” for Gaia. Jurij Vinogradov suggests this epithet is perhaps connected with Zeus’ epithet Olybreus in other parts of Asia Minor.¹⁸⁹ However, he also states that the specification θεᾶ δέσποινα means “we need not limit the functions of this goddess to the sphere of activities of the Greek Demeter... *Gē Meter Olybris* could be freely identified with other powerful goddesses of Asia Minor – the Mother of the Gods, Kybele, πότνια θηρῶν, Ma, etc.”¹⁹⁰ As will be demonstrated in other secondary sources concerning Gē Meter, Vinogradov’s conflation of Gaia and other Greek goddesses, especially Kybele, is unfounded. His first theory, that *Meter Olybris* is an epithet that reflects Zeus’ local cult, is more plausible.

The second inscription, *SEG 29:978* (I.Porto 7) dated to the 2nd century CE, is from Portus near Rome. It details a dedication to Mother Gē in return for good crops:

[M]ητρὶ Γῆ ΠΡΟΣ	Καμινᾶς καὶ Σερ[α]-
ΔΕΞΙ καρπῶν	πίων εὐσεβεῖ[ας]
καλῶν	δ(ῶρον) [ἀ(νέθηκαν)]

¹⁸⁹ Vinogradov (1992) 17. The meaning of “Olybris” is unclear. Vinogradov references four other inscriptions where the epithet appears: *CIL*, VI, 2823, Rome 1st half of the 3rd century: Διὶ Ὀλυβρι | τοῦ Κιλικῶν | ἔθνους τῆς | λαμπροτάτης (μητροπόλεως) | Ἀναζαρ || βέων Αὐρ(ήλιος) | Μάρκος στάτωρ | εὐχῆς χάριν; Robert, J. and L. (1950), *Hellenica*, IX, 67 n. 1. Provenance unknown. Ankara, Archaeological Museum: Διὶ Ὀλυβρι κύριω | Χίλω(ν) ἱερέυς; Harper, R. P. (1969), *Anatolian Studies* XIX 27 n. 3.09, Comana, Cappadocia: Διὶ Ὀλυβρε[ι] | κέ Ἐπηκό[ω]...; Steph. Byz., s.v. Ἄδανα ... ταύτην ᾤκισεν Ἄδανος... ἔστι δὲ ὁ Ἄδανος Γῆς καὶ Οὐρανοῦ παῖς, καὶ Ὅστασος καὶ Σάνδης καὶ Κρόνος καὶ Ῥέα καὶ Ἰαπετὸς καὶ Ὀλυμβρος.

¹⁹⁰ Vinogradov (1992) 17.

ΦΥ{?}

To Mother Ge for the bearing of good fruits, Kaminas and Serapion lay out this gift in reverence... {the assistant priestesses}.

It is unclear exactly what should be interpreted for the word beginning ΦΥ, but *SEG* commentary suggests it could be “φυ{τουργοι}” (plant tenders), “ὕφ{ιερεῖς}” (assistant priestesses), or “φύ{λακες}” (protectors).¹⁹¹ The priestesses/gardeners/protectors of the shrine, Kaminas and Serapion make an explicit dedication to Mother Gē. It is clear that Mother Gē is worshipped here in an agricultural capacity, and perhaps had a shrine in the area.

The third inscription where Gē Meter appears is *St. Pont.* III 56, undated. It comes from Neapolis, in Thrace, and forms part of a funerary epitaph:

... δέξατο Γῆ μήτηρ τρία σώματα ἀμφ’ ἐνὶ τύμβῳ ἄνδρα γυναῖκα παῖδα γεραροῦς ἐν βίῳ.

Gē Mother receive three bodies in the same tomb: father, mother, child, majestic in life.

(lines 17-20)

Gaia also plays a role in other funerary inscriptions but not as Γῆ Μήτηρ.¹⁹² She is also associated with the underworld and curses¹⁹³, as well as oaths¹⁹⁴. Ultimately, the evidence

¹⁹¹ Pleket and Stroud (1979) *SEG* s.v. “SEG 29-978. Portus. Dedication to Ge Meter, 2nd cent. A.D.”

¹⁹² Funerary inscriptions: *IC* II vii 5 in Crete (1st c. BCE) “τοῖς Γαῖα καὶ Αἰδης”; in Miletupolis (2nd/1st c. BCE) *IMT LApollon/Milet* 2318 “οἶον ἐν ἡρώεσσι πανέξοχον ἔδρακεν Ἡώς, Νειλέα, τοῖον ἔσω Γαῖα κέκευθε μυχοῦ ἄρτι γενειάζοντα...”; in Morgantina *SEG* 29:927-935 (1st c. BCE) “Γᾶ Ἑρμᾶ θεοὶ | κα[τ]αχθόνιοι | ἀπ[α]γάγετε”; and *SEG* 53:869 in Oinoe, Attica (1st c. CE) “[Πό]τνια Φερσ[ε]φ[ε]λ[ε]όν>η καὶ [πα]ντρόφε Γαῖα καὶ Ἑρμα...”.

¹⁹³ Curse tablets: in Attica Ziebarth, *Neue Verfluchungstafeln* 13: “Γῆ κάτοχε”; *SEG* 37:214 (400-350 BCE) “πρὸς Ἑρμῆν Κάτοχον καὶ Γῆν καὶ Περσεφόνηαν”; in Boiotia *SEG* 54:524 360-330 BCE: “παρατίθομαι Ζοῖδα τὴν Ἑρετρικὴν, τὴν Καβείρα γυναῖκα, [τ]ῆ Γῆ καὶ τῷ Ἑρμῆ”; in Italy *SEG* 47:1483 (3rd c. BCE) “[- - Η]ερμᾶ καὶ Γᾶ”; in the Aegean Islands *IG* XII, 6 2:1246 “[πα]ντρόφε Γαῖα καὶ Ἑρμᾶ...”; in Attica *IG* III App. 98 “φ[ί]λη Γῆ κάτεχε Εὐ[ρυ]πτόλεμον”; *IG* III App. 99 “δαίμονι χθονίωι καὶ <Γ>ῆι χθο-νίαι καὶ τοῖς χθονίοις πᾶσι”; *IG* III App. 100

for Gaia with the epithet Μήτηρ is scarce and inconsistent, as one is agricultural, one is funerary, and one is unknown. As these inscriptions are all late, we can conclude that there is no evidence of a cult of Gē Meter at all pre-2nd century CE.

Gaia the Mother of All and Mother of the Gods

In light of this, we must turn to another version of the “mother” epithet. In Greek literature, the most common ‘mother’ epithet associated with Gaia is the epithet “γῆ πάντων μήτηρ” “Gē, the mother of all” or a close variation. In Hesiod’s *Works and Days* (750-650 BCE), Hesiod advises the reader to cut cattle rations in half during the winter to allow the family to eat more. He says to do this:

... εἰς ὃ κεν αὖτις γῆ πάντων μήτηρ καρπὸν σύμμικτον ἐνεΐκη.

... until Ge, the mother of all, once again bears her various fruit.

(562-3)

Here we see our first piece of evidence that Gaia is referred to as πάντων μήτηρ. It is unsurprising that this is how Hesiod has chosen to refer to Gaia when he spends much of *Theogony* depicting Gaia “εὐρύστερνος” “the wide-bosomed one” as the second force that comes into being after Chaos (116). She is the mother of the Titans, natural features like the land and the sea, as well as monsters like the Giants and the Cyclopes (126-146). She is

“[Ε]ρμῆ καὶ Γῆ, ἱκετεύω ὑμᾶς τηρ<ε>ῖν ταῦτα”; *IG* III App. 101 (c. 380 BCE) “Ερμῆς χθόν(ν)ιος {²⁶χθόνιος}²⁶ Γῆ κάτ[οχ]ος καὶ πρὸς τὴν Φρεσοφόνην {²⁶Περσεφόνην}²⁶”.

¹⁹⁴ Oaths: in Attica *SEG* 41:50 (303/2 BCE) “[ὁ][μνύω· Δία, Γῆν], Ἥλιον, Ἀθηνᾶν [Ἀρείαν, Ποσειδῶ, Ἄρη, καὶ θεοὺς πάντα]...”; *IG* II³ 1 318 (338/7 BCE) “[ὄρκος· ὀμνύω Δία, Γῆν, Ἥλιον, Ποσειδῶ, Ἀθηνᾶ][ν, Ἄρη...]”; *IG* II³, 1 488 (mid-4th c. BCE) “ὀμνύναι δὲ Δία Γ[ῆν Ἥλιον]...”; *IG* II³ 1 912 (269/8 BCE) “ὀμνύω Δία Γῆν Ἥλιον Ἄρη Ἀθηνᾶν...”; *IG* II² 127 (356/5 BCE); in Smyrna, *Smyrna* 14 254/243 BCE: “ὀμνύω Δία, Γῆν, Ἥλιον, Ἄρη, Ἀθηνᾶν Ἀρείαν καὶ τὴν Ταυροπόλον καὶ τὴν Μη[τέρ]α τὴν Σιτυληνὴν καὶ Ἀφροδίτην Στρατονικίδα καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους θεοὺς πάντας καὶ πάσας”; in Delphi *SEG* 48:588 (c. 302 BCE, inscribed c. 171 BCE) “ὀμνύω Δία, Γῆν, Ἥ[λι]ον...”; in Herakleia *SEG* 47:1563 (323-313/2 BCE) “ὀμνύω Δία Γῆν Ἥλιον Ποσειδῶ Ἀθηνᾶν Ἀρείαν καὶ τὴν Ταυροπόλον...”; in Milos *SEG* 45:1876 (4th/3rd c. BCE) “[Ζεὺς καὶ ἡ] Γῆ καὶ ὁ Ἥλιος καὶ ὁ Μεῖς...”; in Messene *SEG* 41:322 (c. 295 BCE) “ὀμνύω Δία, Γῆν, Ἥλιον, Ἀθηνᾶν, θεοὺς ὀρκίους καὶ πατρίους...”; in Olympia *SEG* 29:405 (365/364 BCE) “ὀμνύω Δία Γᾶν Πο[σειδῶ Ἀπό]λλωνα Ἀθάναν...”; in the Chersonnese *IosPE* I² 401 (early 3rd c. BCE) “ὀμνύω Δία, Γᾶν, Ἄλιον, Παρθένον, [θ]εοὺς Ὀλυμπίους καὶ Ὀλυμπίας...”; in Pergamum *IvP* I 13 (c. 263 BCE) “ὀμνύω Δία, Γῆν, Ἥλιον, Ποσειδῶ, Δήμητρα, Ἄρη, Ἀθηνᾶν ἀρείαν...”; see also *NGSL* 14 from Beroia, concerning the position of a gymnasiarch; and *SEG* 41 40 from Athens, about an alliance between Athens and Sicyon.

anthropomorphised as an active participant in the birth and protection of first the Titans (207-210), then the Olympians, when she aids her daughter Rhea to protect baby Zeus:

τὸν μὲν οἱ ἐδέξατο Γαῖα πελώρη
Κρήτη ἐν εὐρείῃ τρεφόμεν ἀπιταλλέμεναί τε.
ἔνθά μιν ἴκτο φέρουσα θοὴν διὰ νύκτα μέλαιναν,
πρώτην ἐς Λύκτον· κρύψεν δέ ἐ χειρσὶ λαβοῦσα
ἄντρῳ ἐν ἠλιβάτῳ, ζαθέης ὑπὸ κεύθεσι γαίης,
Αἰγαίῳ ἐν ὄρει πεπυκασμένῳ ὑλήεντι.
τῷ δὲ σπαργανίσασα μέγαν λίθον ἐγγυάλιξεν
Οὐρανίδῃ μέγ' ἄνακτι, θεῶν προτέρων βασιλῆϊ.

Huge Gaia received him in broad Krete to bring him up and tend to him. There she first came to Lyctus, carrying him quickly through the dark night. Taking him in her arms, she hid him deep in a cave, in the depths of the sacred earth on the densely forested Mount Aigaion. She gave a large stone wrapped in swaddling clothes to Ouranos' lordly son, the earlier king of the gods.

(Hes. *Theog.* 479-86)

Gaia is a character who protects Zeus from his father Kronos. Kronos' consumption of his children mirrors Ouranos' own imprisonment of the Titans inside Gaia (154-160). In both situations, Gaia plays an active role in resolving the conflict – Gaia instructs Kronos to castrate his father, just as she in turn hides Zeus from Kronos. Depictions of Gaia in the *Theogony* are significant because Gaia is more active and anthropomorphised than lots of other, later depictions of the goddess. As discussed above, Dieterich states that, as Gaia was foremost in the *Theogony*, she was originally foremost in Greek worship. He claims her worship was later replaced by that of other deities, like Demeter.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ Dieterich (1905) 36.

Other literary evidence for Gaia as the “mother of all” or the “mother of the gods” comes from the *Homeric Hymn to Gē* (HH 30). This hymn is dated to just after 591/590 BCE.¹⁹⁶ The hymn is dedicated “to Gē the mother of all” “εἰς Γῆν μητέρα πάντων”, where Gaia is hailed as “the mother of all” “Γαῖαν παμμήτειραν” in the opening line. She is characterised as “well-founded, the eldest” “ἡϋθέμεθλον, πρεσβίστην” (1-2) and one who nourishes everything on the land “ἡ φέρβει ἐπὶ χθονὶ πάνθ’ ὀπόσ’ ἐστίν” (2). She is fertile in both children and crops “εϋπαιδές τε καὶ εϋκαρποὶ τελέθουσιν” (5) and she supports law and order for men, women, and children (11-16). Finally, at the end of the poem, Gaia is called “mother of the gods” “θεῶν μήτηρ” (17). Allen and Halliday states that this hymn is in genuine Homeric style – they do not believe it is merely an Orphic hymn. They argue that παμμήτειραν is a different form of the epithet “all-mother” “παμμήτωρ” that later appears in Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound* (90).¹⁹⁷ On θεῶν μήτηρ, they state that from early on, both Gaia and Rhea are confused with each other, and each is identified as the mother of the gods.¹⁹⁸

Indeed, in *Prometheus Bound*, Prometheus appeals to Gaia to witness the suffering the Olympians are inflicting on him, after Hephaistos and Kratos chain his arms and legs. He refers to Gaia as “παμμητόρ τε γῆ” “Gē the all-mother” (Aesch. PV. 90). This epithet could be derived from “παμμήτειραν” in the *Homeric Hymn to Gē*, as Allen and Halliday suggest. The context of Prometheus’ appeal seems to identify Gaia as a separate, perhaps partisan force in contrast to the Olympians. This ‘othering’ of Gaia is something that is often reflected in later references to Gaia – she is neither an Olympian, nor a Titan, nor a monster. As a pre-Titan force, Gaia was perhaps viewed as someone who could enact justice on those outside the law’s traditional bounds, like Hephaistos and Kratos.

Another example of Aeschylus referencing Gaia as “Mother” is a fragment from *Suppliants*. This play is believed to be part of a trilogy containing *Danaïdes*, *Egyptians*, and *Suppliants*. It was almost certainly performed between 470 and 459 BCE.¹⁹⁹ The Danaïdes are the Chorus,

¹⁹⁶ West (2003) 10.

¹⁹⁷ Allen and Halliday (1936) 430.

¹⁹⁸ Allen and Halliday (1936) 431. They cite Solon fr. 36.3-7. Yet, they acknowledge that in Hesiod’s *Theogony*, Gaia was the mother of the Titans and Kronos.

¹⁹⁹ Sommerstein (2009) 279.

and in the following lines they beg Zeus and Gaia to protect them from the Herald, who represents Aegyptus' sons:

μᾶ Γᾶ, μᾶ Γᾶ, †βοᾶν†
φοβερὸν ἀπότρεπε·
ὦ παῖ, Γᾶς παῖ, Ζεῦ.

Mother Gē, Mother Gē,
Ward off the terrifying {assailant};
Oh father, child of Gē, Zeus!

(Aesch. *Supp.* 890-92)

Alan Sommerstein states that Aeschylus disrupts the ordinary divine genealogy to portray Gaia as the mother of Zeus. Rhea, the traditional mother of Zeus, was also identified as the “Asiatic mother-goddess Kybele”, who in turn was occasionally identified as Gaia (see Soph. *Phil.* 391-4).²⁰⁰ On this passage, Albrecht Dieterich states that the μᾶ/Γᾶ/παῖ words are “Lallformen” or “babble-forms” of a primitive language that mean mother and father, which are indicative of a primitive religion.²⁰¹ Olof Pettersson disagrees with Dieterich: not only are these “babble-forms” not primitive, but Aeschylus is not representative of everyday Greek religion.²⁰² Dieterich over-emphasises the vague examples of Gaia in literature to portray her as an important “Mother Earth” figure.²⁰³

Lastly, we have a fragment of Solon, presumably late 7th/early 6th century BCE, transmitted through Aristotle in the 4th century. Here, Solon refers to Gaia as the “great mother of the Olympian gods”:

²⁰⁰ Sommerstein (2009) 403 n. 185.

²⁰¹ Dieterich (1905) 38: Es sind Worte der primitiven Sprache, “Lallformen” für “Mutter” und “Vater”, wie man mit Recht erklärt hat: es sind auch Lallformen primitiver Religion.

²⁰² Pettersson (1967) 40-42, 46. To press his point, Pettersson notes that Dieterich does not discuss Sophocles as representative of everyday religion, particularly because Sophocles does not mention Gaia. Rather, Sophocles appears to be the most representative of everyday religion, which perhaps explains the lack of references to Gaia (p. 49). See also Nilsson (1941) 461.

²⁰³ Pettersson (1967) 51.

συμμαρτυροίη ταῦτ' ἄν ἐν δίκη χρόνου
μήτηρ μεγίστη δαμόνων Ὀλυμπίων
ἄριστα, Γῆ μέλαινα, τῆς ἐγώ ποτε
ὄρους ἀνεΐλον πολλαχῆ πεπηγότας·
πρόσθεν δὲ δουλεύουσα, νῦν ἐλευθέρη.

Dark Gē, the great mother of the Olympian gods, will be my best witness for these things in the verdict of time, that I took away her once-fixed boundary markers in many places. Once a slave, now she is free.

(Solon fr. 36.3-7) (as attested in Aristotle's *Constitution of Athens*, 36.3-6)

It appears that Solon refers to Gaia as “μέλαινα” “dark” in a political context. He refers to the goddess as a force that will both be his witness and was the object of his action to free her from boundary markers. Ultimately, this is a fragmented reference and the overall context is impossible to determine. These references to Gaia as explicitly the “mother of the gods”, or the “mother of all” are relatively rare. There is no doubt that Gaia would have been acknowledged in some contexts as the mother of the Titans, and perhaps even in her Hesiodic capacity as the cosmological force that helped bring the universe into existence. However, none of these references are unequivocally references to cult and cannot establish the nature of any cult to Gaia, Mother of the Gods. As a result, early cult to Gaia in this capacity seems unlikely.

Autochthony

While Gaia may not have been worshipped as the “mother of all”, she was characterised as a mother generally, and more specifically as the ancestral mother of the Athenians. Gaia is characterised in Athenian literature as the goddess who gives the Athenians their autochthonous status. An *autochthon* is a person who is born from the earth without human parents. Autochthonous people live on the same ground that birthed them,

whether they were earthborn themselves, or descended from an earthborn person.²⁰⁴ *Poleis* that claimed to be autochthonous, like Athens and Thebes, believed their earthborn status made them superior to other city-states that were populated by migrants, as they allegedly neither moved onto the land nor displaced a pre-existing population. Autochthony narratives that evoked this superiority became a powerful political tool to inspire patriotism within a *polis*. Therefore, Athenian literature frequently maintains the tradition by identifying the earth as the mother and nurse of Athens. Yet, as always, the lines are often blurred between the abstract noun, earth, and the goddess, Gaia.

Nicole Loraux states, “autochthony must be earned”, as it is only the *polis*’ first ancestors that are literally born from the soil. While the autochthon’s descendants owe their existence to the earth, they themselves are one step removed from the process. For this reason, she states, it is common for Athenian political speeches and literature to invoke their autochthonous identity to strengthen the whole *polis*’ link to the earth.²⁰⁵ However, all Athenian citizens are still entitled to call themselves autochthonous, even with human parents. The benefit of an autochthonous narrative meant that Athenian citizens could claim they had not migrated from somewhere else, which made them a superior people and a people naturally inclined to democracy.²⁰⁶ The use of Gaia in these speeches is part of a political ideology and the link is a rhetorical one rather than an explicitly religious one. We therefore cannot accept such references as proof of cult. Robert Parker states that it is common in Athenian speeches to characterise the earth as mother or father to reinforce Athenian autochthonous identity.²⁰⁷ Patriotism is sometimes seen as an obligation of a citizen like a child’s loyalty to a parent. Yet, since the land is also a goddess who is home to other deities, patriotic devotion is also a form of piety.²⁰⁸

The narrative of the relationship between the Athenians and their land increased during the Classical period, but the word for land is not always γῆ or γαῖα.²⁰⁹ The following sources do not use the terms γῆ or γαῖα, but nevertheless contribute to the growing narrative. Plato’s

²⁰⁴ *OCD* s.v. “autochthons”.

²⁰⁵ Loraux (2000) 14-15.

²⁰⁶ Mikalson (2005) 58-60.

²⁰⁷ Parker (1996) 138 n. 61, n. 63. He references Lys. 2.17; Pl. *Menex.* 237e-238a; Dem. 60.5; Isoc. *Paneg.* 25.

²⁰⁸ Parker (1996) 252.

²⁰⁹ Morgan (2015) 69.

*Menexeu*s (239a) describes how Athenian citizens are afforded unique legal equality due to the equality of their birth as they are born from “one mother” (μιᾶς μητρὸς πάντες ἀδελφοὶ φύντες). Similarly, Isocrates’ *Panegyricus* states that the Athenians were a superior people as they did not come to possess the land by driving others out, or finding it unoccupied, but by being born directly from the earth. The Athenians alone therefore have the right to call their *polis* “nurse and fatherland and mother” (τὴν πόλιν ἔχοντες προσεπειῖν: μόνοις γὰρ ἡμῖν τῶν Ἑλλήνων τὴν αὐτὴν τροφὸν καὶ πατρίδα καὶ μητέρα καλέσαι προσήκει) (Isoc. 4.24-25). Demosthenes’ funeral oration is very similar to Isocrates. He states that the land (πατρίδα) is a common possession, while men who were born straight from the earth are its indigenous sons, and so are their descendants. This is the basis for their citizenship – resident foreigners are more like adoptive children, not blood (60.4-5). Lastly, Lysias similarly states that as the Athenians were autochthonous, they claimed the land as their mother (2.17-19). While these speeches deal with the city of Athens and the ground it rests on, there is no evidence that these sources are references to cult of the goddess Gaia.

The main context in which the goddess Gaia manifests as an autochthonous figure in Athenian literature is as the mother of Erichthonios.²¹⁰ According to Apollodorus, Erichthonios was a son of Hephaistos and Athena (or Hephaistos and Atthis), yet Gaia was his birth mother: Hephaistos attempted to rape Athene, who fought him off. She wiped semen off her thigh with a piece of wool, which she threw to the ground:

ἐκείνη δὲ μυσσασθεῖσα ἐρίῳ ἀπομάξασα τὸν γόνον εἰς γῆν ἔρριψε. φευγούσης δὲ αὐτῆς καὶ τῆς γονῆς εἰς γῆν πεσοῦσης Ἐριχθόνιος γίνεται.

She, feeling disgusted, wiped off the semen with wool and hurled it to the earth. As she was fleeing and the semen fell to the earth, Erichthonios was born.

(3.14.6)

²¹⁰ A version of this myth goes back to the *Iliad* (2.546-549) that describes the “ζείδωρος ἄρουρα” that births Erechtheus, rather than Erichthonios. Note that this figure is not explicitly Gaia, but almost certainly refers to her.

Apollodorus' testimony is an example of the ambiguity between the noun, γῆ, and the goddess, Γῆ. While Athena's action of casting away the wool suggests the former, the result of Erichthonios' birth suggests the latter. Once Erichthonios was born, Athena raised him, placing him in a chest that she gave to the daughters of Cecrops. Some of the sisters looked inside the chest and were driven mad by Athena, then killed themselves by jumping off the acropolis. The baby had a snake coiled around it. Erichthonios later became the king of Athens, set up the wooden statue of Athena on the acropolis, created the Panathenaia, and married Praxithea (3.14.6).

Pausanias states that "they say that Erichthonios had no human father, but that his parents were Hephaistos and Gē" "πατέρα δὲ Ἐριχθονίῳ λέγουσιν ἀνθρώπων μὲν οὐδένα εἶναι, γονέας δὲ Ἥφαιστον καὶ Γῆν" (1.2.6).²¹¹ Some see the myth of Erichthonios as serving a narrative function to bypass human mothers entirely from the founding of Athens. A single mother, the earth itself, produces a child – without sexual function. Furthermore, Erichthonios is entrusted to the goddess Athena who, by defending her virginity, caused the child's conception via the ground.²¹² It is clear that, while we have no way of knowing how widely Gaia was recognised or worshipped as the mother of Erichthonios in Athens, she is closely identified with Athena's autochthonous role in Greek myth and literature.

In Euripides' *Erechtheus*, the titular king of Athens must sacrifice a child on the Delphic oracle's orders to protect the city from Eumolpus and his Theban army. As he has no sons, his wife Praxithea advocates for the sacrifice of their daughter, Chthonia, in place of an adopted son. The sacrifice is "for the land" "πρὸ γαίᾳς" (fragments 359 and 360, line 39,

²¹¹ See also Paus. 1.14.6 and 1.18.2; Eur. *Ion* 20ff.

²¹² Loraux (2000) 24, 86-87: Loraux supports her reading of gendered autochthonous narratives designed to systemically exclude women from Athenian citizenships by referring to Demosthenes' funeral oration (60.4-5). See also Georgoudi (2002) 121, 123: Georgoudi discusses how Gaia is sometimes characterised as the "motherland" – yet this motherland is also a "fatherland". By identifying the earth as Gaia, or Mother Earth, there is a predisposition to accept that earth is feminine. Therefore, when ancient sources have described the earth as the "fatherland", scholars believe that this distinction is a deliberate choice. By assuming, perhaps implicitly, that the earth was always worshipped in the Mediterranean as a mother, then the testimonies of Isocrates, Plato, and Demosthenes seem marked, even hostile, towards women. Tortorelli Ghidini (2015) 49-52 states that *matris* used in place of *patris* as "homeland" has derogatory nuances (Pl. *Resp.* 9.575d). Alternatively, *metropolis*, a term without precise references to kinship, is rarely used in an etymological sense as the "city of the mother" (Pind. *Pyth.* 4.20; Thuc. 1.24), instead more frequently as "birthplace". The term refers to the city of Aegina (Pind. *Nem.* 5.7-8); Athens (Soph. *OC* 707); Thebes (Soph. *Ant.* 1122).

Collard and Cropp).²¹³ Tortorelli Ghidini states that the Delphic oracle's instruction to Erechtheus and its consequences centred the importance of blood in exerting one's citizenship.²¹⁴ Praxithea's advocacy for her daughter's right to be sacrificed is not advocacy for female empowerment, rather a statement that even a woman who was Erechtheus' natural-born child was superior for the oracle's purpose than an adopted stranger. While Chthonia is not sacrificed to the goddess Gaia, rather the ground, the act evokes the same narrative of patriotism and autochthony as Plato and Isocrates. Rosivach theorises that this trend in literature and political speeches may have arisen with Athens' increased imperial aggression expansionism in the late 5th century BCE.²¹⁵

Kourotrophos

The later Byzantine lexicon, the Suda, directly links the myth of Erichthonios with the epithet Kourotrophos, which is often applied to Gaia:

Κουροτρόφος γῆ: ταύτη δὲ θῦσαί φασι πρῶτον Ἐριχθόνιον ἐν ἀκροπόλει καὶ βωμὸν ἰδρύσασθαι, χάριν ἀποδιδόντα τῇ γῆ τῶν τροφείων· καταστῆσαι δὲ νόμιμον τοὺς θύοντάς τι τι θεῶ, ταύτη προθύειν.

Gē Kourotrophos: They say Erichthonios first sacrificed to her on the acropolis and established an altar, giving thanks to Gē for her nursing; he brought into being the law that someone sacrificing to a god must first sacrifice to her.

(Suda κ 2193)

Kourotrophos, "the nurse of children", was a deity sometimes invoked alone and sometimes as an epithet of other male and female deities, like Gaia.²¹⁶ Other deities associated with

²¹³ Chthonia, of course, is a form of χθών, "earth".

²¹⁴ Tortorelli Ghidini (2015) 53.

²¹⁵ Rosivach (1987) 294-7: "It may only have been in the fifth century, when the Athenians became rivals to the Spartans (with their myths of migration and conquest), that they theorized the implications of being indigenous."

²¹⁶ *OCD* s.v. "Kourotrophos": the Kourotrophos, while "lacking in mythology, she is evidently an important figure of cult, appearing frequently in sacrifice groups connected with fertility and childcare".

this epithet include Athena, Demeter, Eileithyia, and Hecate, as well as Hermes, Zeus, and Apollo.²¹⁷ The Kourotrophos has been described by Theodora Hadzisteliou Price as a manifestation of mother or nurse worship, perhaps both.²¹⁸ Deities who had Kourotrophos as an epithet were usually parents (or virgins) who birthed, raised, or otherwise nurtured children. Owing to the large number of deities associated with the epithet and the ambiguity of the name as a stand-alone deity, the Kourotrophos has a complicated legacy in scholarship.²¹⁹ We cannot always identify another god or goddess behind the figure of Kourotrophos in Greek inscriptions or sacrificial calendars.

Nevertheless, scholars in the 20th and 21st centuries have tried to consistently identify Kourotrophos as the goddess Gaia.²²⁰ As I will discuss, there are a small number of explicit references to a Gē Kourotrophos in Athens. Gaia is also characterised in Athenian literature and political narratives as a mother of the Athenian people. However, scholars have over-emphasised the presence of Gē Kourotrophos in cult worship by assuming, on the basis of these inscriptions and literary references, that the larger number of inscriptions for simply “Kourotrophos” are also Gaia.²²¹ Take, for example, a fragment from Choricus of Gaza, who was writing in the late 5th/early 6th century CE, quoting Solon.²²² Choricus states that Solon referred to the earth, γῆ, as “λιπαρὴ κουροτρόφος”, but this statement does not mean Gē Kourotrophos received cult worship in Athens during the time of Solon. While the earth, rather than the goddess Gaia, is often characterised as a τροφός in Athenian literature, this does not indicate that “Kourotrophos” can always be identified as Gaia.

There are two possible explanations for the discrepancies surrounding the identification of Gē Kourotrophos. Martin Nilsson describes Kourotrophos as a “Sondergöttin” who was

²¹⁷ For more on male kourotrophic deities, see Hadzisteliou Price (1978) 8-9.

²¹⁸ Hadzisteliou Price (1978) 2.

²¹⁹ Hadzisteliou Price (1978) 1.

²²⁰ For example, Nilsson (1941) 457; Simms (1998) 94 n. 16; Dillon (2001) 222.

²²¹ Matthew Dillon claims that Gaia was naturally kourotrophic, so Kourotrophos was specifically an epithet of Gaia in Athens. Despite Dillon, no major post-1980 sources have thoroughly evaluated the issue and concluded that Gaia is the Kourotrophos' first port of call.

²²² Fragment 43 of Solon (Gerber) was transmitted through Choricus' *Declamations* (2.5): “γῆ μὲν γὰρ τοῖς ἐνοικοῦσιν ἐπίσταται φέρειν ὅσα τίκτουσιν/Ἔραι, ὑπτία τε πᾶσα καθειμένη καὶ τὸ τοῦ Σόλωνος/λιπαρὴ κουροτρόφος” “for the earth knows to produce for its inhabitants as much as the Seasons bear, since [the produce] lies down across [the earth's] back and, as Solon said, [the earth] is a rich nurse of the young”.

originally worshipped on her own and later subordinated to Gaia.²²³ However, even Kourotraphos' older origins do not make Gaia a pre-Greek goddess.²²⁴ Nilsson's explanation accounts for the separation of Gaia and Kourotraphos in 4th century Attic deme calendars before the appearance of later inscriptions citing a sanctuary of Gē Kourotraphos and Demeter Chloe. However, Landi states that the Kourotraphos would "almost certainly" be Gaia in Attica until the time of the late inscription to Demeter Kourotraphos in the Theatre of Dionysos (*JG II*² 5153).²²⁵ She also states that in certain literary contexts such as Solon, the Kourotraphos can also be identified as Gaia.²²⁶ Michael Press notes that Gaia is titled Gē Kourotraphos as the mother of Erichthonios in Athens. Beyond this capacity, "it is not at all clear that [Kourotraphos] is to be identified with Gē generally".²²⁷

There are further sources that acknowledge that the link between Gaia and Kourotraphos is more tenuous.²²⁸ Price has surveyed the literary and epigraphical evidence for Kourotraphos' cults, shrines, and altars in Athens, as well as in the demes of Eleusis, Piraeus, Sounion, Marathon, and Erchia. This shows that in most cases in classical Attica and even later times, Kourotraphos is largely referred to without an associated goddess and her shrines are simply called Kourotraphia. Philologists have often criticized early glosses of Kourotraphos as Gē Kourotraphos.²²⁹ For example, Kritylla's call for silence in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusai* states:

εὐφημία ἔστω, εὐφημία ἔστω. εὐχεσθε ταῖν
 Θεσμοφόροιν,
 καὶ τῷ Πλούτῳ, καὶ τῇ Καλλιγενείᾳ, καὶ τῇ
 Κουροτρόφῳ...

²²³ Nilsson (1941) 457.

²²⁴ Pettersson (1967) 50.

²²⁵ Landi (2012) 140-141.

²²⁶ Landi (2012) 130: Parrebbe, in ogni caso, da riferirsi a Gaia la menzione della Kourotraphos ravvisabile in un frammento di Solone attestato da Coricio di Gaza. This conclusion is common in older sources, for example *DAGR* (1919) s.v. "Tellus Mater" 74 states that *Kourotraphos* is not an exclusive epithet of Gaia – yet the "κουροτρόφος λιπαρή" "the rich nurse of children" in Solon "ne devait être autre que Gaea".

²²⁷ Press (2012) 4 n. 6. For a further discussion on why Gē Kourotraphos is not the Mother of All, see Georgoudi (2002) 128.

²²⁸ For example, Robert Parker (2005) 426 states that Gaia and Kourotraphos are separate figures in all cultic texts pre-Roman period.

²²⁹ Hadzisteliou Price (1978) 101-117, esp. 107.

Observe ritual silence! Observe ritual silence! Give thanks to the two Thesmophorian goddesses, and to Plouton, and to Kalligenia, and to Kourotrophos...

(295-301)

Nevertheless, Robert Simms states in passing: “This parallel is attested likewise for Athens in Aristophanes, *Th.* 295-298: the two Thesmophoroi, Plouton, Kalligeneia, Kourotrophos (= Gē), Hermes, and the Graces”.²³⁰ His gloss of “Gē” ignores the evidence that in the late 5th century, Kourotrophos appears to be an independent deity to Gaia.²³¹

There is no doubt that 5th century literature tends to portray Gaia as a nursing deity, “τροφός”, likely on account of her association with the myth of Erichthonios, but we do not find any explicit references to “Gē Kourotrophos”. In *Phoenician Women*, Gaia is explicitly addressed in a choral ode as “πάντων δὲ Γᾶ τροφός” (Gē, the nurse of all) (686). This address is part of the choral ode that recounts the autochthonous creation of the Theban Spartoi from the teeth of Ares’ dragon (657-675). In *Seven Against Thebes*, the earth, γῆ, is explicitly the mother μήτηρ and τροφός of the Theban *polis* and its people (Aesch. *Sept.* 16-20). Several other literary texts refer to the land as a τροφός, but do not use the word γῆ: in Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus*, Creon reminds Oedipus that one’s “οἶκοι” “home” is owed respect as it was their τροφός when they were children (759-760); in Euripides’ *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, Iphigenia calls Mycenae “πατρίς” and thanks it for raising Orestes, “χάριν ἔχω τροφᾶς” (845-849). Lastly, in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus describes Ithaca as “τρηχεῖ, ἀλλ’ ἀγαθὴ κουροτρόφος” (jagged, but a good nurse of the young) (9.27). Despite the use of the term “kourotrophos” in this quote, the word γῆ is not used.

Gē Kourotrophos

There is one inscription from Attica that explicitly refers to Γῆ Κουροτρόφος, rather than Κουροτρόφος alone:

²³⁰ Simms (1998) 94 n. 16

²³¹ See below, Chapter 4, p. 77 for more on deme calendars.

IG III² 4869

Καλλίας Ἀγαθάρχου Γῆ κουροτρόφω.

Kallias, son of Agatharkhos, to Gē Kourotrophos.

This may have been the same sanctuary as the one Pausanias describes on the Athenian acropolis. The sanctuary was also dedicated to Demeter Chloe:

ἔστι δὲ καὶ Γῆς Κουροτρόφου καὶ Δήμητρος ἱερὸν Χλόης: τὰ δὲ ἐς τὰς ἐπωνυμίας ἔστιν αὐτῶν διδαχθῆναι τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν ἐλθόντα ἐς λόγους.

There is a sanctuary of Gē Kourotrophos and Demeter Chloe: you can learn about their names by going to talk with the priests.

(1.22.3)

As mentioned in the Suda, there was likely a shrine of Gē Kourotrophos on the western side of the Athenian acropolis. This temple was originally known simply as the Kourotrophion.²³² Pausanias' suggestion that a visitor speaks with the priests perhaps indicates that the names were distinctive or unusual. The epithet "Χλόης" "the green one" is an epithet of Demeter that evokes an agricultural connection to the young shoots of a plant or otherwise green foliage.²³³ Johannes Kirchner links two other inscriptions to *IG III² 4869* and Pausanias 1.22.3, suggesting all four sources describe the same sanctuary on the Athenian acropolis.²³⁴

IG III² 4756

[Κ]ουροτρόφιον

IG III² 4757

[Κο]υροτρ[οφ- -

²³² Farnell (1907) 17.

²³³ *BNP* s.v. "χλόη": see also Aristoph. *Lys.* 835.

²³⁴ Kirchner, *IG* 1935, IV, 301.

It is unclear when the inscriptions were dedicated, or even if they are referring to the same shrine. Ultimately, it is only in the explicit mention of the sanctuary of Γῆ Κουροτρόφος on the Athenian acropolis that we have evidence for Gaia as the Kourotrophos in Attica.²³⁵ However, Gaia is not the only deity worshipped as a Kourotrophos in Athens at this time.²³⁶ Furthermore, Gē Kourotrophos' temple on the acropolis also houses Demeter Chloe, so it may be unusual for the name of the temple to simply be the “Κουροτρόφιον”.

The following inscriptions are evidence to the Kourotrophos alone and we have no way of confirming their identities:

Table 2 – *Inscriptions for Kourotrophos in Attica.*

Inscription	Date	Greek	English
<i>IG I</i> ² 859	Archaic	[Κ]ορο[τ]ρόφ[ιον]	“Kourotrophion” on an Archaic boundary stone near the Propylaea.
<i>IG I</i> ³ 240 fr. 11 (also <i>LSCG Suppl.</i> 9, B)	410-404 BCE	[ΓΓ?] ΓΓ Κοροτρόφ[ι]... Λετῶν : ἕμ π[όλει?]... Ἀθηνά[ι]... Ἀθην[άαι]...	“1 drachma, ½ obol for Kourotrophos... for Leto; in the city... to Athena... to Athena...”
<i>SEG</i> 21:540, IB, col. I, 19-29	410-399 BCE	... [ι]σταμένο [ἐκ τῶν κα]τὰ μῆνα [— —] [Ἀθηνά]αι βῶς κριτή [— —] [ἱερέω]συνα [ΓΓΓ] [Κοροτ]ρό[φ]ωι χοῖρος...	“Having dedicated at the end of the month... to Athena, a select bull... the priesthood (3 drachmas), a pig for Kourotrophos...”
<i>IG II</i> ² 1039, col. III, 57-58	83-78 BCE	ἔθυσαν δὲ καὶ τὰ Συλλεῖ[α] κα[ὶ] ἑκαλλιέρησαν, ὁμ[οίως δὲ κα]ὶ τὰ ἐξιτητήρια ἐν ἀκροπόλει τῆι τε Ἀθηνᾶι τῆι Πολιάδι καὶ τῆι Κουρο[τρ]όφωι καὶ τῆι Πανδρόσ[ωι κα]ὶ ἑκαλλιέρησαν.	“[The ephebes] sacrificed the Sulleia [sacrifice in honour of Sulla] and they obtained good omens, likewise on the day of leaving Athens on the acropolis, for Athena Polias and Kourotrophos and Pandrosus and they obtained good omens.”
<i>IG III</i> ² 5183 (also <i>SEG</i> 16:187)	2 nd c. CE	[εἶ]σοδος πρὸς [σηκ]ὸν Βλαύ[της] [καὶ Κουροτρόφου] [ἀνειμένα — — —]	“Allow entrance into the sacred precinct of Blaute and Kourotrophos...”
<i>IG I</i> ² 840	n/a	[Κο][ρ]οτρόφοι ἕμ π[όλει]...	“Kourotrophos in the city”

This table shows that there are several references to Kourotrophos in Attica from the Archaic period through the 2nd century CE without an associated god or goddess. There is a

²³⁵ Farnell (1907) 308 n. 16a.

²³⁶ Hadzisteliou Price (1978) 101 lists Gaia, Athena, Eileithyia, Demeter, and Iphigenia as examples of goddesses with the epithet Kourotrophos. She also acknowledges the Kourotrophos may be a stand-alone goddess.

significant gap of 300 years between some of our earlier evidence like *SEG* 21:540, *IB* and *IG* I³ 240, and *IG* II² 1039 when Kourotrophos receives sacrifices on the Athenian acropolis.

Attic deme calendars

Some of the strongest evidence that suggests that Kourotrophos was not exclusively Gē Kourotrophos in the 4th century BCE in Attica comes from Erchian and Marathonian sacrificial calendars. Separate sacrifices, with separate victim types, are provided for Gē and for Kourotrophos. The deme calendars for Thorikos and Salamis do not make provisions for any sacrifices for Gē at all. Landi states that this is strong evidence that Kourotrophos and Gē are not always the same figure in Attica, increasing our doubt about Kourotrophos' interpretation.²³⁷

First, we will look at the Erchian sacrificial calendar (*SEG* 21:541 or *LSCG* 18), dated 375-350 BCE. The Erchians appear to celebrate their own version of the Athenian *Arrephoria* in their deme, with sacrifices to Kourotrophos, Athena Polias, Aglauros, Zeus Polieus, Poseidon, and Pandrosos.²³⁸ There are separate references to Gē and Kourotrophos.

Table 3 – *Erchian deme calendar*.

Inscription	Greek	English
col. I.1 A, 24-28	Γαμηλιῶνος ἐβ-δόμηι ἰσταμέ-νο, Κουροτρόφ-ωι, ἐν Δελφινί-ωι Ἐρχ(ιᾶσιν): χοῖρ(ος), ΙΗΗ.	On the 7 th Gamelion, a pig for Kourotrophos in the Delphinion at Erchia, 3 drachmas.
col. I.1 A, 60-62	[Σ]κιροφοριῶνο-ς τρίτη(ι) ἰσταμ-ένου Κουροτρ-όφωι, ἐμ πόλει Ἐρχ(ιᾶσι) : χοῖρος, ΙΗΗ.	On the 3 rd Skirophorion, a pig for Kourotrophos on the acropolis at Erchia, 3 drachmas.
col. II.1 B, 7-11	ἕκτη ἐπὶ δέ-κα, Κοροτρόφ-ωι, ἐν [Ε]κάτης Ἐρχιᾶσι, χοῖ-ρος, ΙΗΗ.	On the 16 th [of Metageitnion], a pig for Korotrophos in Hekate's temple at Erchia, 3 drachmas.
col. II.1 B, 33-37	—τετράδι φθί-νοντος, Κουρ-οτρόφωι, ἐν Ἡ-ρας Ἐρχιᾶσι, χοῖρος, ΙΗΗ.	On the 27 th [of Gamelion], a pig for Kourotrophos in Hera's temple at Erchia, 3 drachmas.
col. III.1 Γ, 1-8	—[Ε]κατομβαιῶν-ος δεκάτει ὑ-στέραι, Κουρ-οτρόφωι, ἐς Σ-ωτιδῶν Ἐρχι(ᾶσι), χοῖρος, οὐ φο-ρά, ΙΗΗ.	On the 21 st of Hekatombaion, a pig for Kourotrophos at Sotidon in Erchia, 3 drachmas, no carrying away.
col. IV.1 Δ, 1-8	Ἐκατομβαιῶν-ος δεκάτει ὑ-στέραι,	On the 21 st of Hekatombaion, a pig for

²³⁷ Landi (2012) 153: Elemento questo che non fa che accrescere il dubbio interpretativo.

²³⁸ Jameson (1965) 156-157.

	Κορο-[τρ]όφωι, ἐπὶ τ-[δ]᾽ Ἄκρο Ἐρχιᾶ(σι), χοῖρος, οὐ φο-ρά, ΙΗΗ.	Korotrophos on the acropolis at Erchia, 3 drachmas, no carrying away.
col. V.1 E, 17-22	τετράδι φθ-ίνοντος, Γῆ-ι, ἐμ Πάγωι, Ἐ-ρχιᾶσι(ν), οἷς κύουσα, οὐ φ-ορά, Δ.	On the 27 th [of Boedromion], a pregnant ewe for Ge on the Pagos (Hill) at Erchia, no carrying away, 10 drachmas.

In the Erchian calendar, Kourotrophos is a common recipient of sacrifices jointly with other deities of the city. Kourotrophos appears with Artemis, who is associated with the upbringing of girls and with Apollo Lykeios, a deity associated with passage of men into adult military and civic participation.²³⁹ Kourotrophos is also associated with Athena Polias, Zeus Polieus, and Poseidon. There are six total sacrifices to Kourotrophos and all are piglets worth 3 drachmas. Two have “no carrying away”; one takes place in Hera’s sanctuary, one takes place in Hekate’s sanctuary, and two occur on the Erchian acropolis. In comparison, Gē receives a pregnant sheep worth 10 drachmas on the “Pagos” at Erchia, no carrying away. The two sacrificial profiles are different enough that it gives us reason to believe that Gē and Kourotrophos cannot be identified as the same figure in this calendar.

The Marathonian sacrificial calendar (*JG* II² 1358 or *SEG* 50:168) dated 400-350 BCE has a sacrifice on the 10th of Elaphebolion to Gē, which Sara Wijma points out is very close to the City Dionysia in Athens and may have been associated with the larger festival.²⁴⁰

Table 4 – *Marathonian deme calendar*.

Inscription	Greek	English
col. II.1, 6	Κουροτρόφω[ι οἷς ΔΗ (?)]	For Kourotrophos: [a female sheep, 11 drachmas?]
col. II.1, 9-10	ΓΗΗ Γῆι ἐγ γύαις βοῦς κύουσα ΠΔΔ [ΔΔ (?) ιερῶσυνα ΗΗΗ (?)] τελετήι σπυδια : ΔΔΔΔ.	[Second quarter, in Poseideon...] for Ge in the fields, a pregnant cow, 90 (?) drachmas, [priestly dues, 4 drachmas?], at the rite, baskets (?), 40 drachmas.
col. II.1, 13	Γῆι ἐπὶ τῶι μαντείωι οἷς ΓΗ.	[Third quarter, in Gamelion...] for Ge at the oracle, a sheep, 11 drachmas.
col. II.1, 14-15	Κουροτρόφωι χοῖρο[ς ΗΗΗ, τράπε]ζα Η, ιερῶσυνα ΗΗΙΣ.	[Third quarter, in Gamelion...] for Kourotrophos, a piglet, [3 drachmas, a

²³⁹ Lambert (2000) 77.

²⁴⁰ Wijma (2013) 203. She also notes the Erchian sacrifice on the 16th to Dionysos and Semele. By comparison, Lambert (2000) 60 states that the sacrifice to Gē on the 10th of Elaphebolion has “no obvious connection” to the Dionysia.

		table], 1 drachma, priestly dues, 2 drachmas, 1½ obols.
col. II.1, 17-18	Ἐλα[φη]βολιώνος δεκάτη ἰσταμένο· [Γῆι ἐπὶ τῶι] μαν[τε]ίωι τράγος παμμέλας ΔΓ ἱε[ρώ]συνα ..]	On the 10 th of Elaphebolion, [for] [Ge at the] oracle, a completely black male goat, 15 drachmas priestly dues...
col. II.1, 31	Κοροτρόφωι χοῖρος ΗΗΗ, ἱερώσυνα ΗΗ.	[In Skirophorion, before Skira...] for Korotrophos, a piglet, 3 drachmas, priestly dues, 2 drachmas 1½ obols.
col. II.1, 37-38	Κοροτρόφωι οἷς ΔΗ χοῖρος ΗΗΗ ἱερώσυνα Η[ΙC] Δαφνηφόροις ΓΗΗ	[in Hekatombaion...] for Korotrophos, a sheep, 11 drachmas, a piglet, 3 drachmas, priestly dues, 1 drachma, [1½ obols], for the laurel-bearers, 7 drachmas.
col. II.1, 42	Κοροτρόφωι χοῖρος ΗΗΗ, ἱερώσυνα ΗΙC.	[in Hekatombaion...] for Korotrophos, a piglet, 3 drachmas, priestly dues, 1 drachma, 1½ obols.
col. II.1, 56	Κουροτρόφωι	for Kourotrophos...

The sacrifice to “Gē in the fields” “Γῆι ἐγ γύαις” in column II, line 9 appears to have been 90 drachmas, like most other oxen in the calendar. Stephen Lambert states, however, that this creates “something of an anomaly”. We know that a premium is generally attached to the pregnant animals compared to non-pregnant animals of the same species – compare the prices of sheep elsewhere in the calendar. Pregnant ones are 16 or 17 drachmas, while male sheep are 12 drachmas and non-pregnant females are 11 drachmas.²⁴¹ Furthermore, the sacrifice is accompanied with baskets at the rite (τελετῆι σπυδία) worth some 40 drachmas. It is unclear what the baskets must have contained – Lambert suggests perhaps winter fruits, or preserved summer ones, which may have been thematically connected to “Gē in the fields”. However, he states that 40 drachmas seems expensive for a non-animal offering.²⁴²

Next, in column II, line 13 there is a sacrifice to “Gē at the oracle” “Γῆι ἐπὶ τῶι μαντείωι” of a female sheep for 11 drachmas. Later, in column II, line 17-18, Lambert supplies “[Γῆι ἐπὶ τῶι]” to the existing “μαν[τε]ίωι” on the basis of the similarity of the phrasing and the tight spacing at the end of the line to suggest that the recipient’s name was no longer than Γῆι.²⁴³ However, the difference in the victim type is problematic in this identification. The victim at

²⁴¹ Lambert (2000) 55.

²⁴² Lambert (2000) 59.

²⁴³ Lambert (2000) 60.

line 17 is a completely-black male goat worth 15 drachmas, which is significant as Gaia, a goddess, would receive a male victim. Chthonic sacrifices are often characterised by black or pregnant animal victims.²⁴⁴ In comparison, the five references to Kourotrophos in the calendar with legible sacrifices have victims as follows: two sheep worth 11 drachmas each and four pigs worth 3 drachmas each. Since the victim profiles for Gē and Kourotrophos are so different, this calendar again does not appear to support the idea that Kourotrophos is actually Gē Kourotrophos.

In the Thorikos sacrificial calendar (*SEG* 33:147 dated 380-375 BCE), there were three sacrifices to Kourotrophos.

Table 5 – *Thorikos deme calendar*.

Inscription	Date	Greek	English
<i>SEG</i> 33:147, face a.19-23; Thorikos (calendar)	380-375 BCE	ἐπὶ Σούνιον Ποσειδῶνι ἀμνὸν κριτόν : Ἀπόλλωνι χίμαρον κριτόν, Κουροτρόφῳ χοῖρον κριτήν : Δήμητρι τέλ[εο]-[ν], Διὶ Ἑρκείῳ τέλεον, Κοροτρόφῳ χοῖρ[ον]...	[in the month of Boedromion]... at Sounion, a choice lamb for Poseidon; a choice male goat for Apollo, a choice pig for Kourotrophos; a full-grown animal to Demeter, a full-grown animal to Zeus Herkeios, a pig to Kourotrophos...
<i>SEG</i> 33:147, face a.40-44; Thorikos (calendar)	380-375 BCE	Μονυχιῶνος, Ἀρτέμιδι Μονυχ[ίαι τέλε]-{ε}ον { ²⁶ τέλεον} ²⁶ , ἐς Πυθίον Ἀπόλλωνος τρίτ[τοαν, Κορ]-οτρόφῳ χοῖρον, Λητοῖ αἶγα, Ἀ[ρτέμιδι] αἶγα...	In the month of Mounichion, a full-grown animal for Artemis Mounichia, a triple sacrifice at the temple of Pythian Apollo, a pig for Kourotrophos, a goat for Leto, a goat for Artemis...
<i>SEG</i> 21:527, 8-12 (NGSL 1; LSCG Suppl. 19); Salamis (calendar)	363/362 BCE	τὰς ἱερεωσ-ύνας κοινὰς εἶναι ἀμφοτέρων εἰς τὸν αἰεὶ χρόν-ον τῆς Ἀθηναίας τῆς Σκιράδος, καὶ τὴν τῷ Ἡρακλέου-υ τῷ ἐπὶ Πορθμῶνι, καὶ τὴν τῷ Εὐρυσάκῳ, καὶ τὴν τῆ-ς Ἀγλαύρο καὶ Πανδρόσο καὶ τῆς Κοροτρόφῳ.	The priesthoods will be held in common for the two [families] for all time of Athena Skiras, and Herakles at Porthmos, Eurysachos, Aglauros, Pandrosos, and of Kourotrophos.
<i>SEG</i> 21:527, 43-46 (Salamis calendar)	363/362 BCE	κήρυκι ἄρ-τον, Ἀθηναίᾳ ἱερεῖαι ἄρτον, Ἡρακλέος ἱερεῖ ἄρτο-ν, Πανδρόσο καὶ Ἀγλαύρο ἱερεῖαι ἄρτον,	A loaf for the herald, a loaf for the priestess of Athena, a loaf for the priest of Herakles, a loaf for the priestess of Pandrosos and Aglauros, a

²⁴⁴ Parker (2011) 283: Other identifiable trends in chthonic sacrifices include burning the victim whole, wineless libations, blood being poured into the ground, and “no carrying away” for meat consumption.

		Κοροτρό-φο καὶ καλαθηφόρωι ἄρτον...	loaf for the basket-bearer of Kourotrophos...
SEG 21:527, 85 (Salamis calendar)	363/362 BCE	Μουνιχιῶνος· ἐπὶ Πορθμῶι· Κουροτρόφωι αἶγα Δ	In the month of Mounichion, at Porthmos, a goat for Kourotrophos (10 drachmas)

Neither of these calendars provide sacrifices for Gaia, and there is no discernible pattern that links the sacrifices of Kourotrophos to those we have for Gaia in other calendars. Here, Kourotrophos receives two pigs, one goat, and “the basket-bearer for Kourotrophos” receives a baked loaf.

Inscriptions outside Attica

Outside of Attica, it is again far from obvious that the Kourotrophos is always Gaia.²⁴⁵ There is no known epigraphical evidence for “Gē Kourotrophos” outside of Attica. There are a few inscriptions to Kourotrophos from Delos, Kos, Samos, and Sparta. *IG XI 2, 203* from Delos in 269 BCE details a series of rules about sacrifices on Delos for those that conduct them. It lists constructions and dedications applied to the Kourotrophion.²⁴⁶ *LSCG 154* from Kos in 270-240 BCE describes regulations concerning purification rites in the Asklepieion and offers a sacrifice to Kourotrophos. *LSCG Supplement 80* from Samos, no date, lists sacrifices of cakes and honey for Kourotrophos and Hermes, as well as Artemis and Apollo.²⁴⁷ *IG V 1, 29* from Sparta in 167-146 BCE deals with foreign citizenship decrees when the *koine* of the Acharnians list their decisions made in the month of Kourotrophos (μηνὸς Κουροτρόπου). Finally, *IG IX I² 208* from Acharnia in the mid-2nd century BCE categorises Acharnian wealth and lists dedications in the Kourotrophion.²⁴⁸

Anatolian Mother Goddess

Gaia has sometimes been identified as the Greek equivalent of the “Near Eastern Mother Goddess”, sometimes called Kybele, who in turn is sometimes called the Mother of the

²⁴⁵ Landi (2012) 153.

²⁴⁶ Landi (2012) 153: Una serie di norme, specie in materia di sacrifici, atte a regolare l'amministrazione degli ieropi di Delo.

²⁴⁷ Landi (2012) 153. See also *LSCG* p. 2, n. 2-3.

²⁴⁸ Landi (2012) 158. See also *LSCG* p. 2, n. 4.

Gods.²⁴⁹ This identification supports a version of cult history where Gaia is a supreme universal goddess worshipped by all cultures. As I have shown, Gaia is worshipped in some cases as a mother, but there is no evidence that Gaia is the Greek equivalent of Kybele. By conflating the two, this theory in scholarship obscures Gaia's true cult worship, as well as the worship of other associated earth goddesses like Rhea.

Firstly, we must examine Kybele as an independent goddess. The background of the Phrygian goddess Kybele, also known as *Matar* (Mother), is murky.²⁵⁰ In Anatolia, Kybele is explicitly the Anatolian Mother Goddess and the mother of other gods. *Matar* appears in 10 inscriptions from Phrygia, twice with the epithet *Kubileya*, "of the mountain" from which the name Kybele is also derived.²⁵¹ The cult of *Matar* likely arrived in mainland Greece by the mid-6th century BCE.²⁵² Birgitte Bøgh states that in Greek cult, the figure Μήτηρ was derived directly from *Matar*, yet over time the identity of Greek Μήτηρ has been debated.²⁵³ Kybele was most likely the original identity of the Greek Μήτηρ, as well as the Mother of the Gods who was worshipped in Greece.²⁵⁴ By extension, several Greek sources state that Phrygia is the ancestral home of the rites for the Mother of the Gods.²⁵⁵ Yet, despite this provenance, the identity of the Greek Μήτηρ has become conflated with other goddesses like Gaia, Rhea, and Demeter over time – largely an issue of modern scholarship. One ancient source, the 4th century BCE Derveni Papyrus, states that a whole host of ancient earth goddesses were equivalent: "Gē and Meter and Rhea and Hera are the same thing" (Derveni Papyrus col. XVIII line 7 in *ZPE* 47 (1982)). However, the Derveni Papyrus is not an authoritative source on mainstream Greek religion.

²⁴⁹ Roller (1999) 9-24 provides a comprehensive breakdown of the history of scholarship on this point. Some of the early sources she cites include Bachofen (1967) 97; Ramsay, W. M. (1888), "A Study of Phrygian Art", *JHS* 9: 350-82; Showerman, G. (1901), *The Great Mother of the Gods*, Madison, Wis. Reprinted Chicago, 1969: 230-32; and Graillot, H. (1912), *Le culte de Cybèle, mère des dieux, à Rome et dans l'empire romaine*, Paris: 5, 365. On later scholarship, she cites Graves, R. (1948), *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth*, New York: 529; Stone, M. (1976), *When God Was a Woman*, New York; and Gimbutas, M. (1982), *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: 195-200, (1989), *The Language of the Goddess*, San Francisco: 316-317.

²⁵⁰ Bøgh (2007) 305.

²⁵¹ Bøgh (2007) 306.

²⁵² Bøgh (2007) 307.

²⁵³ Bøgh (2007) 306.

²⁵⁴ Roller (1999) 169.

²⁵⁵ Pindar identifies the Phrygian Mother of the Gods as Kybele (fr. 80 SM), as does Strabo (10.3.12, 12.5.3).

Early scholarship is confident that Kybele can be identified as Gaia. Herbert J. Rose identifies the Anatolian goddess Kybele as “practically indistinguishable from Gē” or even Rhea. He also states that Kybele is blended with a widely worshipped and ancient power, the Mother, who is either Gaia herself or closely related to the earth.²⁵⁶ As late as 1999, Lynn Roller states that, while the fusion with any Greek goddess was never complete, “the assimilation of Meter with other figures such as Gaia, Rhea, and Demeter only underscores how widely the syncretism had progressed and how much the character of the Anatolian Mother had come to influence her Hellenic counterparts”.²⁵⁷ This means that more than one Greek goddess is associated with the Anatolian Mother Goddess.

Furthermore, Rhea is an equally likely candidate as Gaia for a Greek identification of this goddess. Kybele is especially identified as Rhea, due to the ancient Greek conflation of the two goddesses’ similar rituals from the 6th century BCE onwards.²⁵⁸ Kybele is often depicted seated on a throne, and in Athens she quickly assimilates with Demeter and Rhea, from whom she derives her role as Mother of the Gods.²⁵⁹ In contrast, Gaia the Mother, or ‘Mother Earth’ was only rarely represented in epigraphy or Greek art, where she was usually shown as a mature woman rising up from the ground. She was not represented with the common symbols of Kybele, such as the *tympanon* and lions.²⁶⁰ Athenian drama from 430-400 BCE presents the Mother of the Gods as a figure that should somehow be viewed as Rhea, Demeter, Gaia, Aphrodite, and Artemis all at once.²⁶¹ While Gaia can be invoked as “the Mother of the Gods”, “Mother”, or the “Mother of All”,²⁶² Rhea is also the Mother of the Gods²⁶³, while Demeter is sometimes called the Mother.²⁶⁴ By the 460s BCE, the Lesser

²⁵⁶ Rose (1929) 45.

²⁵⁷ Roller (1999) 169. Bøgh (2007) 317 agrees: these Greek goddesses (especially Gaia) have been listed as Kybele by another name.

²⁵⁸ Roller (1999) 169.

²⁵⁹ Bøgh (2007) 307.

²⁶⁰ Roller (1999) 170.

²⁶¹ Munn (2016) 61. Aristophanes *Birds*: “the Phrygian... Great Mother of gods and men, Mistress Kybele” (972-5); Sophocles, as above; Euripides’ *Bacchae* (78-79) “Phrygian mother... Kybele”. For more on Athenian drama’s depictions of the Great Mother, see Roller (1996), and Munn (2006) 61-62.

²⁶² Munn (2006) 56: Munn references *Homeric Hymn* 30, Hesiod’s *Works and Days* (563), *Theogony* (117); also Sophocles’ *Philoctetes* (391-2)

²⁶³ Munn (2006) 56 n. 2: Homer; Hesiod; Euripides’ *Bacchae* (59, 128) *Ῥέα Μάτηρ*, (78-79) *Μάτηρ μεγάλη Κυβέλλα*, identified as Rhea. Apollonius *Argonautica* 1.1125-51 identifies *Μήτηρ Δινδυμῆ πολυπότνια* “*Dindymian Mother, Great Mistress*”, and *Μήτηρ Ἰδαίη* “*Idaian Mother*” (Dindymon and Ida are mountains) as *Ῥεῖη πολυπότνια* “*Great Mistress Rhea*” who is the object of Phrygian worship.

Mysteries honoured the “Mother of Agrai”, which was preliminarily associated with the Greater Mysteries of Demeter at Eleusis.²⁶⁵ The cult of Μητήρ features in nine Athenian plays within 25 years (430-405 BCE) – Euripides’ *Helen* conflates the Phrygian mother with Demeter especially closely.²⁶⁶

The Mother of the Gods is the goddess worshipped in the Metroön in the Athenian *agora* from the end of the 5th century BCE. The Metroön, the Shrine of the Mother, housed the state archives.²⁶⁷ Mark Munn states that there is no consensus, modern or ancient, that the Mother of the Gods was Gaia.²⁶⁸ Bøgh states that the goddess worshipped in the Metroön was Kybele, rather than Gaia, Rhea, or Demeter.²⁶⁹ Yet, Philippe Borgeaud states that the Mother of the Gods was more likely Gaia – the goddess in the Metroön was the guardian of the city’s archives and was likely a political figure with official cult. The establishment of the worship to the Mother of the Gods in the Athenian *agora* towards the end of the fifth century recalled and reinforced the importance of a conglomerate of other female deities: Gaia, Themis, and the Erinyes, all goddesses that “guaranteed justice”.²⁷⁰

From the end of the 5th century onwards, it was common for poets and theologians to identify goddesses like Gaia with Kybele, perhaps as a means of assimilating and domesticating foreign power.²⁷¹ Paradoxically, Borgeaud suggests that there was a tradition that identified an originally Greek Mother of the Gods with a foreign deity (perhaps Kybele)

²⁶⁴ Munn (2006) 56 n. 3: Euripides’ *Helen* 1301-68: ὄρεϊα μήτηρ θεῶν “Mountain Mother of the Gods” called Δηῶ, an epithet of Demeter (*HH* II 47, 211, 492). See also Euripides’ *Phoenician Women* 683-87, *Bacchae* 275-76: Δημήτηρ θεά, γῆ δ’ ἔστιν, ὄνομα δ’ ὅπότερον βούλει κάλει “Divine Demeter, who is Ge, call her whatever name you wish”.

²⁶⁵ Parker (1996) 188.

²⁶⁶ Roller (1999) 167: see Euripides’ *Cretans*, *Hippolytos*, *Palamedes*, *Helen*, *Bacchae*; Aristophanes’ *Birds*; Sophocles’ *Philoctetes*; a Diogenes fragment (Nauck p. 776); and a fragment of unknown authorship and date.

²⁶⁷ Parker (1996) 188.

²⁶⁸ For example, Scholion to Aeschines (3.187.1) identifies the Mother of the Gods as a sanctuary of Rhea. See Munn (2006) 64.

²⁶⁹ Bøgh (2007) 308. By direct comparison, Borgeaud states that Ge was the Mother of the Gods to the Athenians since the time of Solon: Borgeaud (2004) 17. Also see against: Parker (1996) 188-9, 189 n. 133. He references E. Will in *Éléments orientaux dans la religion grecque ancienne: Colloque de Strasbourg 1958* (Paris 1960), 95-112, esp. 103, 111. Will “shows that the true indigenous *παμμήτηρ* is Earth (Aesch. *PV* 90, etc.), not Rhea”. Despite this, Parker does not accept that Gaia and the “Mother of the Gods” are truly synonymous at any point in ancient history.

²⁷⁰ Borgeaud (2004) 17.

²⁷¹ Parker (1996) 189, n. 134.

from Phrygia, Lydia, or Crete.²⁷² Given the difference in identifications of the Great Mother Goddess, it is impossible to definitively identify the figure as Gaia, or use cult for the Great Mother Goddess as evidence of Gaia's worship. While she clearly was associated with the Great Mother, perhaps through her equivalence to Kybele, Gaia is not another name for either goddess.

In conclusion, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that Gaia was commonly worshipped in ancient Greece under the epithets "Great Mother Goddess", "the Mother of All", "Mother Earth", or "the Mother of the Gods". There is no evidence to suggest that Gaia was a Mycenaean deity that was worshipped foremost among a pantheon, or that her cult directly preceded that of another deity, like Demeter. There is also no evidence that she was a figure imported from Anatolia or Phrygia or Egypt, or even that any of these civilisations worshipped a single, universal, maternal deity.

The imagined universal Gaia is the product of the early 20th century desire to better understand Greek religion and the religions of its Minoan, Mycenaean, and Near Eastern precursors. It comes from a desire to react against a growing culture of positivism in Greek scholarship, and to appropriate and reintegrate myth into our understanding of everyday Greek religion. It is also coupled with a desire to perpetuate the myth of a matriarchal society, or at least a female-worshipping pre-Greek society, whether to discuss a historical narrative that in some way empowers women, or whether to use such societies in contrast to the patriarchal ones we have more evidence for.²⁷³ The depiction of Gaia as an important proto-Greek deity can be problematic when it feeds the belief that "primitive cultures" are not capable of worshipping anthropomorphic, male-oriented religions so instead worship elements like the earth and the sky. The Mycenaeans are used as a model for an early, underdeveloped society that worshipped Gaia and were later replaced by the Greeks and their patriarchal pantheon. This model is often dressed as a natural course that all civilisations undertake when they transition from savageness to enlightenment. By

²⁷² Borgeaud (2004) 29.

²⁷³ For a particularly disturbing implication of this theory, see Carl Jung's theory of the "Mother complex" in (1969 ed., 1st ed. 1936), "Psychological Aspects of the Mother Archetype" in *Four Archetypes: Mother, Rebirth, Spirit, Trickster*, trans. From German by R. F. C. Hull. Princeton, NJ: 19: "The effects of a mother-complex on the son may be seen in the ideology of the Kybele and Attis type: self-castration, madness, and early death." Roller (1999) 16 discusses this at length.

extension, it is implied that the Mycenaeans are much like some cultures in the world today that still worship the natural elements, and thus the narrative of Gaia's worship becomes a tool to unjustifiably measure how 'civilised' a given society is.

Chapter Five: Gaia's Worship in Athens

Gaia was worshipped with the epithet Karpophoros, “the bearer of grain”, in Athens.²⁷⁴ The most significant inscription pertaining to this epithet is *IG II² 4758* (also catalogued as *IG III 166*), which is dated to 1st/2nd century CE:

Γῆς Καρποφόρου κατὰ μα{ι}ντείαν.

Of Gē Karpophoros according to the oracle.

This inscription was cut into the rock to the north of the Parthenon, corresponding to the 7th column from the north-west corner of the *peristasis*.²⁷⁵ Other inscriptions that attest to Gē Karpophoros are rare.²⁷⁶ Other deities referred to as Karpophoros include Zeus and Demeter.²⁷⁷ This inscription may have accompanied a statue of Gē Karpophoros that was dedicated on the instruction of an oracle in a time of drought. Landi suggests the dedication of the statue may have been made during a bread shortage that occurred during the time of the sophist Lollianos of Ephesos (Philost. *Vit. Soph.* 1.23).²⁷⁸ More recently, Bernard Holtzmann goes as far to suggest that the inscription does not only refer to a statue, but to a *temenos* dedicated to Gaia on the acropolis.²⁷⁹ Pausanias attests to one statue of Gaia on the Athenian acropolis:

ἔστι δὲ καὶ Γῆς ἄγαλμα ἱκετευούσης ὕσαι οἱ τὸν Δία, εἴτε αὐτοῖς ὄμβρου δεῖσαν Ἀθηναίους εἴτε καὶ τοῖς πᾶσιν Ἑλλῆσι συμβὰς αὐχμὸς.

²⁷⁴ *BNP* s.v. “Καρποφόρος”: the epithet applies to Gaia (for example, Pind. *Pyth.* 4.6), as well as to trees (Herod. 1.193.4) and Demeter (Aristoph. *Ran.* 384).

²⁷⁵ Landi (2012) 147: L'iscrizione, tagliata nella roccia a nord del Partenone, in corrispondenza della settima colonna della peristasi, a partire dall'angolo nord-occidentale (Fig. 10), ha permesso di ricostruire l'esatto posizionamento dell'opera, la cui realizzazione fu dovuta, stando all'ipotesi maggiormente diffusa, al consiglio di un oracolo di Delfi probabilmente invocato dagli Ateniesi a seguito di un prolungato periodo di calore e siccità.

²⁷⁶ In Ephesos c. 25 BCE, *SEG* 26.1243 describes a priest of Ge Karpophoros; in Termessos: *TAM III*,1 164 undated; *TAM III*,1 161 c. 180 AD; *TAM III*,1 19 undated.

²⁷⁷ Zeus: for example, *SEG* 47:1761,1; and *IG XII Suppl.* 265, 2nd c. BCE. Demeter: for example, *IG II² 4730*; *SEG* 27:530; *SEG* 48:1472, 50 CE.

²⁷⁸ Landi (2012) 147, cites Graindor, P. (1934), *Athènes sous Hadrien*, Cairo: Imprimerie nationale, p. 139.

²⁷⁹ Landi (2012) 147, cites Holtzmann, B. (2003), *L'Acropole d'Athènes. Monuments, Cultes et Histoire du Sanctuaire d'Athéna Polias*, Paris: Picard, p. 182.

[On the Athenian acropolis] there is an image of Gē supplicating Zeus to rain on her – whether the Athenians themselves were lacking storms or whether all the Greeks stood together in a drought.

(Paus. 1.24.3)

The connection between the inscription, *IG II² 4758*, and this passage of Pausanias is not guaranteed. Farnell states that the connection between Pausanias and *IG II² 4758* is weak, but the oracle in question is most likely Delphi, which “at this late period, still remembered its early affection for the earth-goddess”.²⁸⁰ Farnell bases this identification on the Previous Owners myth, but his underlying point still stands since by the time of the inscription there was cult of Gaia at both Delphi and Athens. Nonetheless, we cannot be sure that the statue is the one Pausanias describes, even though it is a satisfying notion to think that we have a tangible inscription that links the two. In theory, the statue referred to in Pausanias could be that of Gē Kourotrophos from the nearby sanctuary on the acropolis (1.22.3).²⁸¹ Interestingly, Pausanias notes that the statue is a testimony to the Athenians’ artistic workmanship (1.24.3) and that he does not know exactly why the statue was dedicated. Even if we cannot prove that the two testimonies are linked, we can still conclude on the basis of the inscription *IG II² 4758* that a statue of Gaia was dedicated in a fertility or growth capacity, due to the epithet *Καρποφόρος*; relief from drought would also fit this capacity.

Possibly related to this is Gaia’s role at the Plynteria on the Athenian acropolis. The Plynteria was a festival that occurred on the last day of the year and was dedicated to the ritual cleansing of Athena Polias’ statue on the Athenian acropolis.²⁸² Young, unmarried women held the office of washing and dressing the statue and it appears that this honour was restricted to one *genos* in Athens, the Praxiergidai.²⁸³

²⁸⁰ Farnell (1907) III, 17.

²⁸¹ Landi (2012) 141.

²⁸² Landi (2012) 155. See also Burkert (1985) 79.

²⁸³ Parker (2011) 226.

An inscription dated 460-420 BCE, *IG I² 80* (= *LSCG 15*), limits the Plynteria rites to the Praxiergidai:

[τά]δε ἡο Ἀπόλλων ἔχρεσεν ἄ[μεινον Πραχσιεργίδαις][ἀμ]φιεννύουσιν τὸν πέπλον
τ[ὲν θεὸν καὶ προθύουσιν][Μοί]ραις, Διὶ Μοιρ(α)γέτει, Γ[ἔ]ι-----]

Apollo issued the following oracle: it is better [for the Praxiergidai] to put the peplos on [the goddess and make preliminary sacrifice] to the Fates, to Zeus Moiragetes, to Gē ...

(fr. A, lines 10-12, tr. Lambert and Osbourne AIO)

Landi states that the ritual of purification was likely connected to the symbolic passage between the ancient world of primordality, represented by the Fates and by Gaia, and the modern world of civil order, as represented by Zeus Moiragetes.²⁸⁴ This inscription directly ties Gaia's cult worship to the ritual of the Plynteria in the 5th century BCE, which demonstrates that Gaia was of particular importance on the acropolis.

Gaia received worship at another public festival in Athens, the Genesisia, which commemorated dead ancestors and was celebrated on the 5th of Boedromion.²⁸⁵ This included sacrifices to Gaia, who was associated with the dead who lived beneath the earth, as well as a source of wealth and food for those still living.²⁸⁶ In particular, the gifts offered to the deceased consisted of libations, seasonal fruits, and flowers.²⁸⁷

The 5/6th century CE lexicographer Hesychius defines the Genesisia as:

Γενέσια· ἑορτὴ πένθιμος Ἀθηναίοις. οἱ δὲ τὰ νεκύσια. καὶ ἐν ἡ ἡμέρᾳ τῆ γῆ θύουσι.

²⁸⁴ Landi (2012) 155.

²⁸⁵ Parker (1996) 48-49.

²⁸⁶ Parker (2007) 28. See also Landi (2012) 154.

²⁸⁷ Parker (2007) 27-28 with n. 83 and 84.

Genesia: an Athenian mourning festival; festival of the dead. A day of sacrifices to Gē.

(337)

Despite the fact that Hesychius is writing approximately 1000 years after the Genesia was regularly celebrated, Landi still uses him as a source for Gaia's cult worship. In reality, it is likely that Gaia received moderate worship during the Genesia as a chthonic figure, along with other deities and each household's ancestors.²⁸⁸ In a similarly chthonic capacity, it is clear that Gaia is worshipped on the Areopagus alongside the Semnai, Pluto, and Hermes. Pausanias states:

πλησίον δὲ ἱερὸν θεῶν ἐστὶν ἃς καλοῦσιν Ἀθηναῖοι Σεμνάς... τοῖς δὲ ἀγάλμασιν οὔτε τούτοις ἔπεστιν οὐδὲν φοβερὸν οὔτε ὅσα ἄλλα κεῖται θεῶν τῶν ὑπογαίων. κεῖται δὲ καὶ Πλούτων καὶ Ἑρμῆς καὶ Γῆς ἄγαλμα: ἐνταῦθα θύουσι μὲν ὅσοις ἐν Ἀρείῳ πάγῳ τὴν αἰτίαν ἐξεγένετο ἀπολύσασθαι, θύουσι δὲ καὶ ἄλλως ξένοι τε ὁμοίως καὶ ἄστοί.

[On the Areopagus] nearby is the sanctuary of the goddesses who the Athenians call the Semnai... But as statues, neither these nor of any of the underworld deities are terrible. There are statues of Pluton, Hermes, and Gē, to whom people who receive acquittal on the Areopagus offer sacrifice; sacrifices are also offered on other occasions by both citizens and foreigners.

(Paus. 1.28.6)

Within the sanctuary of the Semnai there are statues of Pluton, Hermes, and Gaia. It is significant that these receive sacrifices from defendants who are acquitted of murder by the Areopagus council. These deities are commonly grouped together on curse tablets as chthonic deities.²⁸⁹ It was also believed that Oedipus' tomb stood inside the temple of the

²⁸⁸ Landi (2012) 154 n. 184. See also *DAGR* (1919) s.v. "Tellus Mater" 77 n. 16; *RE* s.v. "Gaia", col. 468; Farnell (1907) 23, n. 16b; Nilsson (1941) 458.

²⁸⁹ See n. 193 above for more on curse tablets.

Semnai.²⁹⁰ It is unclear whether the acquittal sacrifices also include those to the Semnai, or just Pluton, Hermes, and Gaia. Naturally, the Semnai were associated with the Areopagus as it was the site where Athena ruled in Orestes' favour during his murder trial. If the sacrifices did not include the Semnai as recipients, perhaps Pluton, Gaia, and Hermes received sacrifices as the earth was considered a source of wealth and prosperity.

Further down the Athenian acropolis there is an inscription to Gē Themis in the Theatre of Dionysos, *IG II² 5130*, as discussed above.²⁹¹ Stafford lists four further inscriptions as evidence of this cult:

IG II² 5109 – ιερέως Θέ[μιδος] – of the priest of Themis (= *IG III 329*)

IG II² 5103 – ὀληφόρου Ἀθηνᾶς Θέμιδος – of the Olephoros of Athena Themis (= *IG III 323*)

IG II² 5130 – ιερίας Γῆς Θέμιδος – of the priestess of Gē Themis (= *IG III 350*)

IG II² 5098 – ἑρσηφόροις β' χλόης Θέμιδος – of the two hersephoroi of Themis Chloe (= *IG III 318*)

All four inscriptions were on seats in the Theatre of Dionysos. They are all clustered together, which leads Stafford to hypothesise how the different offices may have been linked. The theatre was refurbished in the late 4th century BCE, although we have no way of determining how long the offices ran for, or when they were established.²⁹² *IG II² 5109* may refer to Gē Themis, but we cannot be sure. It is likely that *IG II² 5103* is associated with a larger Athena sanctuary, rather than a Themis sanctuary.²⁹³

However, Stafford makes the argument that *IG II² 5098* could “speculatively” refer to two *hersephoroi* of Gē Themis and Demeter Chloe, rather than of a single deity named Chloe

²⁹⁰ Guía and Stevens (2017) 275.

²⁹¹ See Chapter 2, p. 34.

²⁹² Stafford (1999) 163.

²⁹³ Stafford (1999) 164 n. 34.

Themis.²⁹⁴ She makes this argument on the basis of Theodora Hadzisteliou Price's analysis of *IG II² 5131*:

ὑμνητριάς [ἱερ]ίας Κουροτρόφου Δήμητρος Πειθοῦς (= *IG III 351*).

At first glance, this inscription describes the singer-priestess of Demeter Kourotrophos and Peitho, but Price notes that the lack of punctuation on chairs leaves room for doubt about the deities' identities. She rather reads this inscription as shorthand for "Gē Kourotrophos, Demeter Chloe, and Peitho", which means one priestess would manage the two small neighbouring shrines described by Pausanias (1.22.1).²⁹⁵ As discussed previously regarding the Kourotrophos, I would extend Price's argument to suggest that Kourotrophos in this inscription might be the stand-alone deity. Nevertheless, given these associations and Price's theory of shorthand, Stafford then asks whether we should apply a similar argument to *IG II² 5098* and accept the inscription as further evidence of Gē Themis. I personally do not think we should include *IG II² 5098* as evidence of Gē Themis' worship because the priestess of Gē Themis already has a seat within the theatre block.

Gaia also receives cult worship in the lower city of Athens. Inside the enclosure of Zeus Olympios there was a sanctuary of Gē Olympia. The epithet Olympia comes from an association with Zeus Olympios, which in turn references Zeus' cult at Olympia.²⁹⁶

ἔστι δὲ ἀρχαῖα ἐν τῷ περιβόλῳ Ζεὺς χαλκοῦς καὶ ναὸς Κρόνου καὶ Ἰρέας καὶ τέμενος Γῆς ἐπίκλησιν Ὀλυμπίας. ἐνταῦθα ὅσον ἐς πῆχυν τὸ ἔδαφος διέστηκε, καὶ λέγουσι μετὰ τὴν ἐπομβρίαν τὴν ἐπὶ Δευκαλίωνος συμβᾶσαν ὑπορρυῆναι ταύτη τὸ ὕδωρ, ἐσβάλλουσί τε ἐς αὐτὸ ἀνὰ πᾶν ἔτος ἄλφιστα πυρῶν μέλιτι μίξαντες.

Inside the enclosure there are ancient things: a bronze Zeus, a shrine of Kronos and Rhea and a precinct of Gē with the epithet Olympia. Inside this, the floor opens to the size of a cubit, and they say that along this bed flowed off the water after the

²⁹⁴ Stafford (1999) 164.

²⁹⁵ Price (1978) 113. See above, Chapter 4, p. 71 for further discussion of Kourotrophos as an epithet.

²⁹⁶ *BNP* s.v. "Ὀλυμπίας": The epithet often applies to the Muses. For more on Gaia's cult at Olympia, see Chapter 3, p. 52 above.

deluge that occurred in the time of Deucalion, and into it they cast every year wheat meal mixed with honey.

(Paus. 1.18.7-8, tr. Jones)

Again, Pausanias uses “λέγουσι” before discussing the myth of Deucalion and the flood to indicate it is a myth, rather than fact. However, the annual ritual of pouring honey and flour into the hole is more certain. Landi suggests this ritual can be classified as a sort of “hydrophoria” and was perhaps carried out to memorialise the victims of the Deucalion flood.²⁹⁷ She suggests it may have had underlying associations with a more primitive custom, recalling a time when Athens was largely a hunter-gatherer society (“una società ancora sostanzialmente a base agricola”) and did not cook their dough.²⁹⁸ Farnell speculates that this ritual may have taken place annually during the Anthesteria festival, as he also accepts that it was like a version of the “hydrophoria” in remembrance of the victims of the flood.²⁹⁹ Of course, Pausanias does not explicitly connect the myth of the flood with the ritual involving the honey-meal. It is likely that the sanctuary of Gē Olympia is the same one mentioned by Thucydides.³⁰⁰ He cites a temple of Gaia outside of the Acropolis area:

τὰ γὰρ ἱερὰ ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ἀκροπόλει καὶ ἄλλων θεῶν ἐστι, καὶ τὰ ἔξω πρὸς τοῦτο τὸ μέρος τῆς πόλεως μᾶλλον ἴδρυται, τό τε τοῦ Διὸς τοῦ Ὀλυμπίου καὶ τὸ Πύθιον καὶ τὸ τῆς Γῆς καὶ τὸ τοῦ ἐν Λίμναις Διονύσου, ὧς τὰ ἀρχαιότερα Διονύσια τῇ δωδεκάτῃ ποιεῖται ἐν μηνὶ Ἀνθεστηριῶνι, ὥσπερ καὶ οἱ ἀπ’ Ἀθηναίων Ἴωνες ἔτι καὶ νῦν νομίζουσιν.

²⁹⁷ Landi (2012) 146 with n. 135. Deucalion and his wife repopulate the world by creating people from rocks after they were spared from the flood that otherwise destroyed the Bronze Age civilisation (Apollod. 1.7.2). Ovid’s later version of the myth suggests it was Themis’ oracle that told them how to throw the “bones of their mother” over their shoulder to create people. They interpret this as rocks, which are the bones of Gaia (Ov. *Met.* 376-394).

²⁹⁸ Landi (2012) 146: E proprio tale cerimonia potrebbe in qualche modo adombrare la memoria di un primitivo costume che, legato ad una società ancora sostanzialmente a base agricola, lungi dal cuocere il composto in forma di focaccia, preferisce versarlo sostanzialmente crudo all'interno della crepa.

²⁹⁹ Farnell (1907) III, 24. He cites Theophrastus *de Plant. Hist.* 9.8.7. See also Burkert (1985) 175, who states the *hydrophoria* may have conceptual links with Gaia, as described in Paus. 1.18.7.

³⁰⁰ Nilsson (1941) I, 457 and Landi (2012) 144.

On the Acropolis itself are the sanctuaries of the other gods as well as of Athena, and the sanctuaries which are outside the Acropolis are situated more in that quarter of the city, namely those of Olympian Zeus, of Pythian Apollo, of Gē, and of Dionysus in Limnae, in whose honour is celebrated the more ancient Dionysia on the twelfth of the month Anthesterion, just as the Ionian descendants of the Athenians also are wont even now to celebrate it.

(Thuc. 2.15.3-5, tr. Smith)

The sanctuaries of Pythian Apollo and Dionysos “έν λίμναις” “of the marshes” have never been precisely located.³⁰¹ Λίμναις is the name for the neighbourhood of lower Athens due to its marshy terrain and is an epithet also associated with Artemis.³⁰² Alongside evidence of Gē Karpophoros above, it appears that Gaia’s cult is associated with some degree of control over water, perhaps relating to rain and the produce of crops.³⁰³

Finally, we have evidence that Gaia was worshipped in wider Attica. Aside from the deme calendars of Erchia, Marathon, Salamis, and Thorikos discussed in Chapter Four, we have an inscription that details a sacrifice for Gaia at Eleusis in approximately 480-470 BCE:

[ἔδοχσε]ν [: τῆι βολῆι] : καὶ [τ]ῶι δέμοι : ἠότε Παραιβάτες [: ἐγραμμάτευε νν] νν
 [προτέ]λεια : θ[ύε]ν : τὸς ἱεροποιῶς : Ἐλευσινίων : καὶ [τ 15]ν ν
 [. . . Ἐλ]ευσιν[. . . 5 . .]ει : ἡερμῆι Ἐναγονίῳ : Χάρισιν : αἶγα : [. 15]ον
 [Ποσειδ]ῶνι : [κριὸ]ν : Ἀρτέμιδι : αἶγα : Τελεσιδρόμοι : Τριπ[τολέμοι . . . 5 . .] ν
 [Πλούτο]γι : Δ[ολί]χοι : Θεοῶν : τρίτταν : βόραρον : έν τῆι ἔορ[τῆι vac.]

The Council and the People decided, when Paraibates [was secretary]:
 the religious officials shall make the [preliminary] sacrifices of the Eleusinia (?) and ...
 Eleusis . . . for Gē(?), for Hermes Enagonios and the Graces a goat . . .
 [for Poseidon a ram], for Artemis a goat, for Telesidromos and Triptolemos . . .

³⁰¹ Parker (2005) 55. See also Landi (2012) 144.

³⁰² *BNP* s.v. “Λίμναις”: see Paus. 3.7.4 and Callimachus fr. 305.

³⁰³ Parker (2011) 431 links water especially with Gē Kourotrophos as she provides water for all life. I would extend this argument to Gē Karpophoros for the same reason.

[for Plouton], for D[oli]chos(?), for the Two Goddesses three victims led by a bull at the festival.

(IG I³ 5, tr. Lambert AIO 1284)

The inscription prescribes sacrifices to be made before and during the Eleusinia, where athletic games would have occurred. It is not certain that Gaia is in fact the deity that receives a goat alongside Hermes Enagonios “of the games” and the Graces, but Lambert and Nilsson make this case.³⁰⁴ The deities that receive the sacrifices include gods like Pluton, the Two Goddesses (Demeter and Kore), and Poseidon. Other deities related to gods of the festival games are also included such as Telesidromos “the race-finisher” and perhaps Dolichos “long-distance”.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁴ Lambert, *AIO* 1284; Nilsson (1941) I, 458: Bemerkenswerter sind die Kulte in den Demen. Verständlich ist, daß ihr neben vielen anderen Göttern ein Voropfer in Eleusis gebracht wurde.

³⁰⁵ Parker (2011) 328. See also Landi (2012) 154. She notes another possible set of public games dedicated to Zeus and Gaia Eurysternos, location unknown (Pind. *Pyth.* 9.171-179; Schol. *Pind. Pyth.* 9.177).

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have examined the evidence for Gaia's cult using literary, epigraphical, and archaeological evidence. Through this process, I have concluded that Gaia was not worshipped at Delphi in Mycenaean times. Rather, Gaia begins to receive cult worship at Delphi in the 5th century BCE as shown from an inscribed statue base, alongside a statue base dedicated to Themis. Despite this, 20th and 21st century scholarship tends to claim that Gaia was worshipped as the primary oracle goddess at Delphi before Apollo. This tradition was termed "the Previous Owners myth" by Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood and was primarily based around attempts to explain early literature that depicted Gaia as the primary deity at the Delphic oracle before Apollo. The Previous Owners myth is further fuelled by the "mystery" of Delphi as a location, the perceived glamour of the Pythia's oracles, our limited understanding of Mycenaean religion, and a lack of understanding of the interaction between Gaia's myth and cult worship. This lack of understanding applies when modern scholars draw conclusions about Gaia's cult worship from myth, but it also applies when these scholars consider how the ancient Greeks viewed the relationship between Gaia's myth and her cult. This is clearly demonstrated when Plutarch and Pausanias, who both make efforts to separate their accounts of myth and cult (as with their descriptions of Gaia's temple at Delphi), are used frequently to justify the Previous Owners myth.

Farnell, Nilsson, Sourvinou-Inwood, and Landi are the most significant scholars in the history of scholarship concerning Gaia at Delphi, as they provide comprehensive examinations of Gaia's myth and cult worship at approximately 25-year intervals throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. That said, each is influenced by, or reacts to, common trends in scholarship on Greek myth. Farnell is an early scholar who uses archaeological evidence, rather than just mythological evidence, to draw conclusions about Gaia at Delphi. However, Nilsson is the first scholar to conclude that Gaia has extremely scarce cult worship, and he arrives at his conclusions by rejecting much of the mythical evidence that other scholars accept. As mentioned, Sourvinou-Inwood conclusively broke down the myths and widely influenced scholars who came after her. Lastly, Landi provides the most in-depth examination of Gaia's

cult worship across Greece but tends to ignore some of Sourvinou-Inwood's conclusions and reference the Previous Owners myth as fact, not fiction.

In archaeological terms, we first have evidence of a temple to Ge at Delphi in the second half of the 4th century BCE, which survived at least until Pausanias observed it in the 2nd century CE. The establishment of this sanctuary appears to reflect shifts in the socio-political climate across Greece from the 5th century onwards as Delphi becomes an important powerhouse and key influence over inter-state conflict. Gaia's temple is an enormously significant piece of evidence for the discussion of her cult worship at Delphi, but historically scholars have been uninterested in discussing it at length. It is rather referenced in passing as a means of confirming the Previous Owners myth.

Myth concerning Gaia's worship at Delphi had a wide range of variations. While Aeschylus was one of the earliest sources, we have no evidence to suggest that his was the dominant version of the myth. Gaia features commonly in myth alongside the Delphic serpent and Themis, and less commonly with divine figures like the Muses, the Nymphs, Dionysos, and Poseidon. In terms of worship outside of Delphi, this thesis has discussed Gaia's association with other oracles across Greece like Olympia, Dodona, and Patras. In reality, some of these locations do not have an oracle at all, but Gaia has some form of minor presence at the site, like a statue or an altar. Most of our evidence for these altars comes from Pausanias.

This thesis has also showed that a "Mother Gaia" figure is largely the invention of modern scholarship as Gaia has extremely limited, fractured cult worship in a 'mother' capacity. The "Mother Gaia" myth has many of the same characteristics as the Previous Owners myth – both involve scholarship cherry-picking mythical evidence to support cult. The image of a "Mother Gaia" figure has often been co-opted by the general public for non-Classical purposes, such as environmental or political rhetoric. In turn, scholarship has frequently associated Gaia with the Anatolian Mother Goddess, Kybele, as a way of bolstering the theory that Gaia was a universally worshipped, important goddess who was associated with cultures in early stages of social development. The "Mother Gaia" myth reveals more about the sociological struggles we face in modern times, like climate change, than it does about ancient Greek religion.

In Athens, Gaia featured in literature as the mother of autochthonous Athenian citizens, an image that was used extensively as a political tool to bolster Athenian claims to power. A subset of this myth manifested in cult worship for the figure *Gē Kourotrophos*. Gaia is often worshipped as the *Kourotrophos* in Athens, but most references to simply ‘*Kourotrophos*’ are not identifiable as Gaia. In Athenian cult worship, Gaia was most commonly a figure who looked after children and crops. She was also associated with water, oaths, oracles, death, justice, and the underworld. Athenian deme calendars from the 5th and 4th centuries BCE confirm that Gaia received sacrifices, some of which were expensive. These calendars also confirm that *Kourotrophos* and Gaia were separate cult figures in the 5th century.

I believe the inaccurate representations of Gaia’s myth (like the *Previous Owners* tradition, or the myth of “*Mother Gaia*”) have gained so much traction over time because we want to be able to make conclusive statements about Greek religion. That in itself is not a bad thing, but much scholarship on the subject uses a methodology that accepts mythical evidence as proof of cult worship for Gaia. Despite more and more research in the 20th century disproving the instinct to include mythical evidence as proof of cult, some sources continue to state, without evidence, that Gaia received widespread cult worship from the Bronze Age through to the 2nd century CE. Generally speaking, Gaia features in myth with some frequency and often in dramatic contexts. When it comes to cult worship, however, she appears to be a minor figure. Yet, where and how she does feature is a fascinating subject simply obscured by persistent traditions in scholarship unsupported by our evidence.

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