

classical MYTHOLOGY

Seventh Edition

MARK P.O. MORFORD  ROBERT J. LENARDON





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- **An expanded art program:** Sixty-six new illustrations—selected from both the ancient and the modern world—appear throughout the text and are accompanied by substantial and informative captions. **Three new maps** are also included.
- **Text boxes**—incorporated for the first time—explore a variety of new topics and highlight interpretative approaches.
- **A selected bibliography** is included for each chapter.
- **More explanatory material** is integrated throughout, including a “Glossary of Mythological Words and Phrases in English.”
- **Companion website:** www.classicalmythology.org includes chapter-by-chapter summaries, suggested activities, maps, and practice test questions. The website has been revised to enhance the multifaceted subjects treated in the text and to provide links to numerous helpful resources.

about the authors

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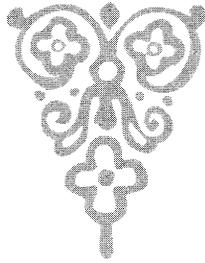
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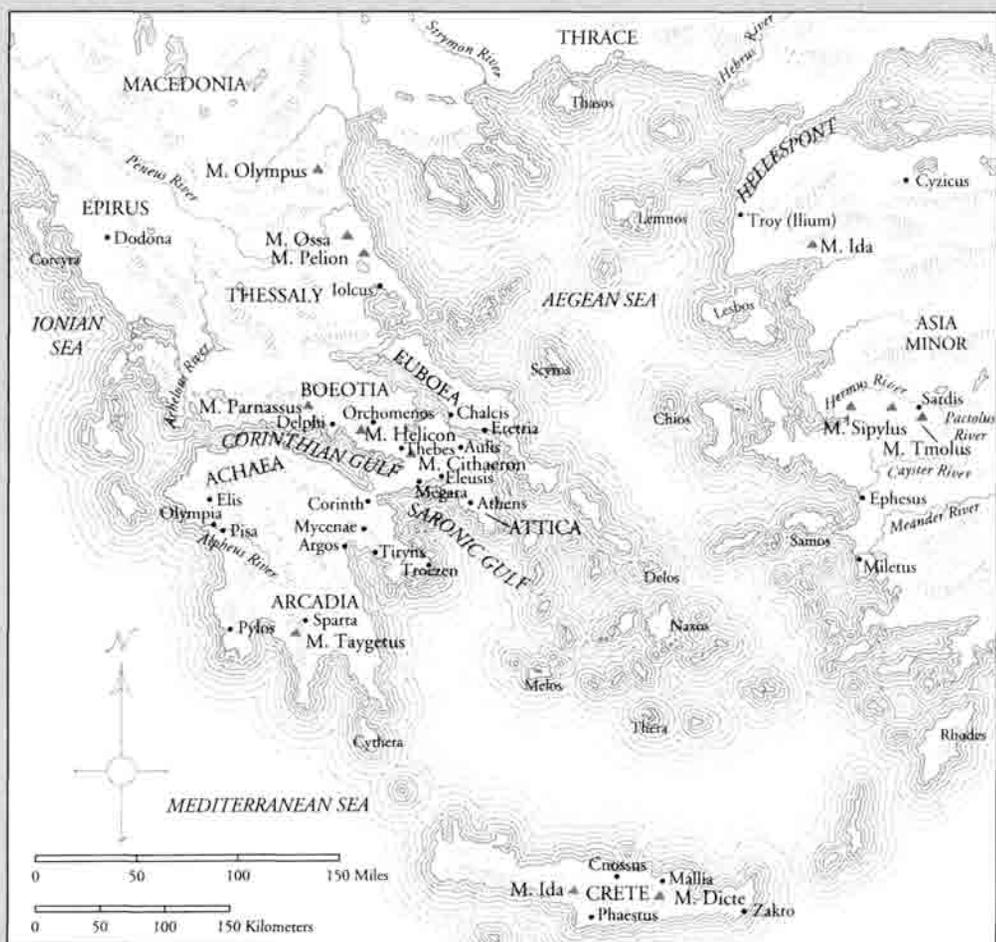
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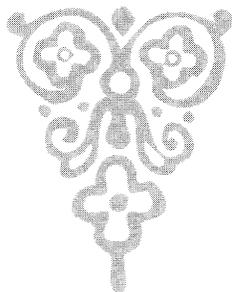
CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY





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SEVENTH EDITION



MARK P. O. MORFORD

University of Virginia, Emeritus

ROBERT J. LENARDON

The Ohio State University, Emeritus

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Dedicated to the memory of
WILLIAM ROBERT JONES
teacher, scholar, and friend



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PREFACE



This is the seventh edition of *Classical Mythology*, which was first published in 1971. Successive revisions have been extensive, in grateful response to sensitive, knowledgeable, and appreciative critics over these many years. They have encouraged us to remain firm in our conviction that the literary tradition of Greek and Roman mythology must always remain our first consideration but have also confirmed our need to incorporate, as much as possible, additional comparative and interpretative approaches and the evidence from art and archaeology.

As a result, this new edition of our work, more than ever, stands as a comprehensive study of classical mythology, where one may go to explore the nature of the Greek and Roman gods, goddesses, heroes, and heroines and to enjoy the most significant sources that constitute the substance of their legends. Enriched with this knowledge and appreciation, readers will be prepared to make exciting comparisons of all sorts—anthropological, psychological, literary, artistic, and musical—and to pursue whatever further explorations they may desire.

Our translations of the ancient authors become more extensive with each edition. We include here, among Greek authors, all thirty-three Homeric Hymns; all the important passages in Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days*; excerpts (many of them substantial) from Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Herodotus, Plato, Lucian, Pindar, the pre-Socratic philosophers, and the lyric poets; and, among Latin authors, selections from Ovid, Vergil, Statius, Manilius, and Seneca. All translations are our own.

We have always considered the powerful influence of classical mythology upon diverse artistic forms (painting, sculpture, literature, music, opera, dance, theater, and cinema) to be a most vital, enjoyable, and rewarding study. This is why we believe our treatment (in Part 4) of the survival of this influence and our inclusion of depictions of myth in art from ancient through modern times to be of the utmost importance. The tenacious persistence of Greek and Roman mythology as a living force throughout the ages but particularly in contemporary society has become one of its most identifiable characteristics. After all, the beauty and power of its inspiration have never died. It is retold and reinter-

preted with infinite variations, repeatedly and continuously; these gods and goddesses, these heroes and heroines and their legends never have remained fixed but constantly change through refreshingly new metamorphoses that illuminate not only the artists but also their society and their times. We can never really pronounce with finality upon the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice and the legend of Heracles, or upon the character of Achilles or Helen, because no sooner is the pronouncement made than the myth, the legend, and its characters have been transformed anew and we are compelled to include and discuss the most recent transformations and the fresh insights they provide for our own world. This eternal afterlife of classical mythology is truly miraculous.

We each take the major responsibility for certain sections: Professor Lenardon has written Chapters 1–16 and Chapter 28, and Professor Morford Chapters 17–27. In this edition, as in the many revisions that have followed the first, both of us have contributed freely throughout the text.

There are many more illustrations in this edition, and Professor Morford is responsible for both the selections and the captions. Research for ancient representations has been made far easier by the publication, now complete in eight double volumes, of the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae (LIMC)*, the essential foundation of any research into ancient art on mythological subjects. Professor Morford also acknowledges the help of Thomas Carpenter's survey, *Art and Myth in Ancient Greece*, and, for art and music since 1300, Jane Davidson Reid's *Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts*. Nevertheless, he has found that his own reading and observation from constant visits to museums and exhibitions (essential for contemporary art) have been the primary foundations of his selection and commentary. Professional art historians are quite arbitrary in the details that they choose to give about works of art, particularly those concerning size (which even *LIMC* does not give) and medium. The most detailed source for Greek vases, the *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum*, is incomplete and patchy in its coverage. The most time-consuming labor has been that of finding out details of size, which are necessary if the student is to appreciate a work of art in its context. In nearly every case these details have been supplied, and where they are missing (in about six of the illustrations), they simply have not been available in any form.

Consistency in spelling has proven impossible to attain. In general we have adopted Latinized forms (Cronus for Kronos) or spellings generally accepted in English-speaking countries (Heracles not Herakles). The spelling of Greek names has become fashionable today, and so we have included an Appendix listing the Greek spellings with their Latinized and English equivalents.

NEW TO THIS EDITION

Minor revisions have been made throughout the text; the major revisions and additions are the following:

The Introduction in previous editions has been revised and expanded to become two chapters: Chapter 1, "Interpretation and Definition of Classical Mythology," has additional material on important theorists with expanded treatments of feminist issues, homosexuality, and rape; Chapter 2, "Historical Background of Greek Mythology," incorporates the most recent results of the ongoing excavation of Troy under the direction of Manfred Korfmann.

Chapter 3, "Myths of Creation," now ends with biographical details about Hesiod, followed by a translation of *Theogony*, lines 1–115, entitled "Hesiod and the Muses."

Added to the end of Chapter 4, "Zeus' Rise to Power: The Creation of Mortals," is a treatment of "Parallels in Myths of Greece and the Ancient Near East," which surveys major themes in Near Eastern epics that are also found in Greek mythology.

A summary and elucidation of Euripides' *Medea* is appended to Chapter 24, "Jason, Medea, and the Argonauts," which focuses upon the translation of the three crucial scenes between Jason and Medea, with interpretative commentary.

Additional translations are found in Chapter 19, which now includes the scene from the *Iliad* in which Achilles learns of the death of Patroclus, is consoled by his mother Thetis, and reaches the tragic decision to face his own death by returning to battle (Book 18, lines 18–38 and 50–126); and in Chapter 20, which now translates the *Odyssey*, Book 19, lines 525–553, an excerpt from Penelope's first encounter with Odysseus disguised as a beggar, in which she describes her dream about her geese.

Chapter 28, "Classical Mythology in Music, Dance, and Film," has been significantly revised and expanded. The American contribution has in particular received more detailed attention, and the dance section is new.

In general, more interpretative and exploratory material has been added throughout, both in the text and in boxes. Some of these additions, including the "Glossary of Mythological Words and Phrases in English," come from *A Companion to Classical Mythology*, which had previously been published to supplement the fifth edition of *Classical Mythology*.

Every chapter now includes its own Select Bibliography.

Finally, more than fifty new black-and-white illustrations and two color plates have been added, and the maps have been revised to increase their clarity and readability.

As a result of these many additions to the text, our work has become more comprehensive than ever, a single substantive book embracing the content, interpretation, and influence of classical mythology.

WEBSITE

The Website for *Classical Mythology* has been revised to elucidate and enhance, to an even greater degree, the multifaceted subjects treated in the text. The site

features chapter-by-chapter summaries, suggested activities, maps, and test questions. We have harnessed the potential of the Internet to search out resources of every sort, particularly in the visual arts. Included are updated bibliographies and discographies of works in music and film on CD, VHS, and DVD, keyed to each chapter. We encourage readers to take a look for themselves at the many riches and rewards that can be found there: www.oup-usa.org/sc/0195143388.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We have received help and encouragement from many colleagues, students, and friends over the years, and in the publishing of each of the seven editions numerous people have provided valuable critical reviews or been involved in editorial development and production. To all who have contributed so much, we are deeply grateful.

We are particularly gratified that this new edition is published by Oxford University Press, and we want to thank Robert Miller, Executive Editor, for his efforts on our behalf, and also Liam Dalzell and all the others who have been responsible for editing and production.

Michael Sham, of Siena College, has also made valuable contributions, particularly in the creation of our Website and its revision to accompany the seventh edition.

From the beginning, Charles Alton McCloud has shared with us his expertise in music, dance, and theater.

Martha Morford was a constant support to the authors, with her critical acumen and profound knowledge of the history of art, and she is remembered with deep gratitude.

Mark P. O. Morford
Robert J. Lenardon

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Mark Morford is Professor Emeritus of Classics at the University of Virginia, where he joined the faculty in 1984 after teaching for twenty-one years at The Ohio State University and serving as Chairman of the Department of Classics. He also served as Kennedy Professor of Renaissance Studies at Smith College, where he holds research appointments in the Department of Art and the Mortimer Rare Book Room of the Neilson Library. As Vice President for Education of the American Philological Association he actively promoted the cooperation of teachers and scholars in schools and universities. Throughout his fifty years of teaching he has been devoted to bringing together teachers of classical subjects and teachers in other disciplines. He has published books on the Roman poets Persius and Lucan and the Renaissance scholar Justus Lipsius (*Stoics and Neostoics: Lipsius and the Circle of Rubens*), as well as many articles on Greek and Roman literature and Renaissance scholarship and art. His book *The Roman Philosophers* was published in 2002.

Robert Lenardon is Professor Emeritus of Classics at The Ohio State University, where he was on the faculty for twenty-five years and served as Director of Graduate Studies in Classics. He has taught at several other universities, among them the University of Cincinnati, Columbia University, and the University of British Columbia. He was a Visiting Fellow at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge University, and has written articles on Greek history and classics and a biography, *The Saga of Themistocles*. He has served as book review editor of *The Classical Journal* and presented radio programs about mythology in music, a subject dear to his heart; the afterlife of classical subjects and themes in literature, film, and dance have also become favorite areas of teaching and research. For the fall semester of 2001, he was appointed Visiting Distinguished Scholar in Residence at the University of Louisville, Kentucky.







PART ONE



The Myths of Creation
THE GODS

INTERPRETATION AND DEFINITION OF CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY

The impossibility of establishing a satisfactory definition of *myth* has not deterred scholars from developing comprehensive theories on the meaning and interpretation of myth, often to provide bases for a hypothesis about its origins. Useful surveys of the principal theories are readily available, so we shall attempt to touch upon only a few theories that are likely to prove especially fruitful or are persistent enough to demand attention.¹ One thing is certain: no single theory of myth can cover all kinds of myths. The variety of traditional tales is matched by the variety of their origins and significance; as a result, no monolithic theory can succeed in achieving universal applicability. Definitions of myth will tend to be either too limiting or so broad as to be virtually useless. In the last analysis, definitions are enlightening because they succeed in identifying particular characteristics of different types of stories and thus provide criteria for classification.

The word *myth* comes from the Greek word *mythos*, which means “word,” “speech,” “tale,” or “story,” and that is essentially what a myth is: a story. Some would limit this broad definition by insisting that the story must have proven itself worthy of becoming traditional.² A myth may be a story that is narrated orally, but usually it is eventually given written form. A myth also may be told by means of no words at all, for example, through painting, sculpture, music, dance, and mime, or by a combination of various media, as in the case of drama, song, opera, or the movies.

Many specialists in the field of mythology, however, are not satisfied with such broad interpretations of the term *myth*. They attempt to distinguish “true myth” (or “myth proper”) from other varieties and seek to draw distinctions in terminology between myth and other words often used synonymously, such as *legend*, *saga*, and *folktale*.³

MYTH, SAGA OR LEGEND, AND FOLKTALE

Myth is a comprehensive (but not exclusive) term for stories primarily concerned with the gods and humankind’s relations with them. **Saga**, or **legend** (and we use the words interchangeably), has a perceptible relationship to history; how-

ever fanciful and imaginative, it has its roots in historical fact.⁴ These two categories underlie the basic division of the first two parts of this book into "The Myths of Creation: The Gods" and "The Greek Sagas: Greek Local Legends." Interwoven with these broad categories are **folktales**, which are often tales of adventure, sometimes peopled with fantastic beings and enlivened by ingenious strategies on the part of the hero; their object is primarily, but not necessarily solely, to entertain. **Fairytales** may be classified as particular kinds of folktales, defined as "short, imaginative, traditional tales with a high moral and magical content;" a study by Graham Anderson identifying fairytales in the ancient world is most enlightening.⁵

Rarely, if ever, do we find a pristine, uncontaminated example of any one of these forms. Yet the traditional categories of myth, folktale, and legend or saga are useful guides as we try to impose some order upon the multitudinous variety of classical tales.⁶ How loose these categories are can be seen, for example, in the legends of Odysseus or of the Argonauts, which contain elements of history but are full of stories that may be designated as myths and folktales. The criteria for definition merge and the lines of demarcation blur.

MYTH AND TRUTH

Since, as we have seen, the Greek word for myth means "word," "speech," or "story," for a critic like Aristotle it became the designation for the plot of a play; thus, it is easy to understand how a popular view would equate myth with fiction. In everyday speech the most common association of the words *myth* and *mythical* is with what is incredible and fantastic. How often do we hear the expression, "It's a myth," uttered in derogatory contrast with such laudable concepts as reality, truth, science, and the facts?

Therefore important distinctions may be drawn between stories that are perceived as true and those that are not.⁷ The contrast between myth and reality has been a major philosophical concern since the time of the early Greek philosophers. Myth is a many-faceted personal and cultural phenomenon created to provide a reality and a unity to what is transitory and fragmented in the world that we experience—the philosophical vision of the afterlife in Plato and any religious conception of a god are mythic, not scientific, concepts. Myth provides us with absolutes in the place of ephemeral values and with a comforting perception of the world that is necessary to make the insecurity and terror of existence bearable.⁸

It is disturbing to realize that our faith in absolutes and factual truth can be easily shattered. "Facts" change in all the sciences; textbooks in chemistry, physics, and medicine are sadly (or happily, for progress) soon out of date. It is embarrassingly banal but fundamentally important to reiterate the platitude that myth, like art, is truth on a quite different plane from that of prosaic and transitory factual knowledge. Yet myth and factual truth need not be mutually ex-

clusive, as some so emphatically insist. A story embodying eternal values may contain what was imagined, at any one period, to be scientifically correct in every factual detail; and the accuracy of that information may be a vital component of its mythical *raison d'être*. Indeed one can create a myth out of a factual story, as a great historian must do: any interpretation of the facts, no matter how credible, will inevitably be a mythic invention. On the other hand, a different kind of artist may create a nonhistorical myth for the ages, and whether it is factually accurate or not may be quite beside the point.⁹

Myth in a sense is the highest reality; and the thoughtless dismissal of myth as untruth, fiction, or a lie is the most barren and misleading definition of all. The dancer and choreographer Martha Graham, sublimely aware of the timeless "blood memory" that binds our human race and that is continually revoked by the archetypal transformations of mythic art, offers a beautifully concise summation: as opposed to the discoveries of science that "will in time change and perhaps grow obsolete . . . art is eternal, for it reveals the inner landscape, which is the soul of man."¹⁰

MYTH AND RELIGION

As we stated earlier, true myth (as distinguished from saga and folktale) is primarily concerned with the gods, religion, and the supernatural. Most Greek and Roman stories reflect this universal preoccupation with creation, the nature of god and humankind, the afterlife, and other spiritual concerns.

Thus mythology and religion are inextricably entwined. One tale or another once may have been believed at some time by certain people not only factually but also spiritually; specific creation stories and mythical conceptions of deity may still be considered true today and provide the basis for devout religious belief in a contemporary society. In fact, any collection of material for the comparative study of world mythologies will be dominated by the study of texts that are, by nature, religious. Religious ceremonies and cults (based on mythology) are a recurrent theme in chapters to follow; among the examples are the worship of Zeus at Olympia, Athena in Athens, Demeter at Eleusis, and the celebration of other mystery religions throughout the ancient world. The ritualist interpretation of the origins of mythology is discussed later in this chapter.

Mircea Eliade. Mircea Eliade, one of the most prolific twentieth-century writers on myth, lays great emphasis upon religious aura in his conception of myth as a tale satisfying the yearning of human beings for a fundamental orientation rooted in a sacred timelessness. This yearning is only fully satisfied by stories narrating the events surrounding the beginnings and origins of things. Eliade believes that God once in a holy era created the world and this initial cosmogony becomes the origin myth, the model for creations of every kind and stories about them. His concept develops a complex mysticism that is difficult. Like a religious sacrament, myth provides in the imagination a spiritual release from

historical time. This is the nature of true myths, which are fundamentally paradigms and explanations and most important to an individual and society.¹¹ This definition, which embraces the explanatory nature of mythology, brings us to another universal theory.

MYTH AND ETIOLOGY

There are some who maintain that myth should be interpreted narrowly as an explication of the origin of some fact or custom. Hence the theory is called *etiological*, from the Greek word for cause (*aitia*). In this view, the mythmaker is a kind of primitive scientist, using myths to explain facts that cannot otherwise be explained within the limits of society's knowledge at the time. This theory, again, is adequate for some myths, for example, those that account for the origin of certain rituals or cosmology; but interpreted literally and narrowly it does not allow for the imaginative or metaphysical aspects of mythological thought.

Yet, if one does not interpret *etiological* ("the assignment of causes or origins") too literally and narrowly but defines it by the adjective *explanatory*, interpreted in its most general sense, one perhaps may find at last the most applicable of all the monolithic theories. Myths usually try to explain matters physical, emotional, and spiritual not only literally and realistically but figuratively and metaphorically as well. Myths attempt to explain the origin of our physical world: the earth and the heavens, the sun, the moon, and the stars; where human beings came from and the dichotomy between body and soul; the source of beauty and goodness, and of evil and sin; the nature and meaning of love; and so on. It is difficult to tell a story that does not reveal, and at the same time somehow explain, something; and the imaginative answer usually is in some sense or other scientific or theological. The major problem with this universal etiological approach is that it does nothing to identify a myth specifically and distinguish it clearly from any other form of expression, whether scientific, religious, or artistic—that is, too many essentially different kinds of story may be basically etiological.

RATIONALISM VERSUS METAPHOR, ALLEGORY, AND SYMBOLISM

The desire to rationalize classical mythology arose far back in classical antiquity, and is especially associated with the name of Euhemerus (ca. 300 B.C.), who claimed that the gods were men deified for their great deeds.¹² The supreme god Zeus, for example, was once a mortal king in Crete who deposed his father, Cronus. At the opposite extreme from Euhemerism is the metaphorical interpretation of stories. Antirationalists, who favor metaphorical interpretations, believe that traditional tales hide profound meanings. At its best the metaphorical approach sees myth as allegory (allegory is to be defined as sustained metaphor), where the details of the story are but symbols of universal truths. At its worst

the allegorical approach is a barren exercise in cryptology: to explain the myth of Ixion and the Centaurs in terms of clouds and weather phenomena is hardly enlightening and not at all ennobling.¹³

Allegorical Nature Myths: Max Müller. An influential theory of the nineteenth century was that of Max Müller: myths are nature myths, all referring to meteorological and cosmological phenomena. This is, of course, an extreme development of the allegorical approach, and it is hard to see how or why *all* myths can be explained as allegories of, for example, day replacing night, winter succeeding summer, and so on. True, some myths are nature myths, and certain gods, for example Zeus, represent or control the sky and other parts of the natural order; yet it is just as true that a great many more myths have no such relationship to nature.¹⁴

MYTH AND PSYCHOLOGY: FREUD AND JUNG

Sigmund Freud. The metaphorical approach took many forms in the twentieth century through the theories of the psychologists and psychoanalysts, most especially those of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. We need to present at least some of their basic concepts, which have become essential for any understanding of mythic creativity. Freud's views were not completely new, of course (the concept of "determinism," for example, "one of the glories of Freudian theory" is to be found in Aristotle),¹⁵ but his formulation and analysis of the inner world of humankind bear the irrevocable stamp of genius.

Certainly methods and assumptions adopted by comparative mythologists—the formulations of the structuralists and the modern interpretation of mythological tales as imaginative alleviating and directive formulations, created to make existence in this real world tolerable—all these find a confirmation and validity in premises formulated by Freud. The endless critical controversy in our post-Freudian world merely confirms his unique contribution.

Among Freud's many important contemporaries and successors, Jung (deeply indebted to the master, but a renegade) must be singled out because of the particular relevance of his theories to a fuller appreciation of the deep-rooted recurring patterns of mythology. Among Freud's greatest contributions are his emphasis upon sexuality (and in particular infantile sexuality), his theory of the unconscious, his interpretation of dreams, and his identification of the Oedipus complex (although the term *complex* belongs to Jung). Freud has this to say about the story of King Oedipus:

His fate moves us only because it might have been our own, because the oracle laid upon us before our birth the very curse which rested upon him. It may be that we are all destined to direct our first sexual impulses toward our mothers, and our first impulses of hatred and resistance toward our fathers; our dreams convince us that we were. King Oedipus, who slew his father Laius and wedded his mother Jocasta, is nothing more or

*less than a wish-fulfillment—the fulfillment of the wish of our childhood. But we, more fortunate than he, in so far as we have not become psychoneurotics, have since our childhood succeeded in withdrawing our sexual impulses from our mothers, and in forgetting the jealousy of our fathers. . . . As the poet brings the guilt of Oedipus to light by his investigation, he forces us to become aware of our own inner selves, in which the same impulses are still extant, even though they are suppressed.*¹⁶

This Oedipal incest complex is here expressed in the masculine form, of a man's behavior in relationship to his mother, but it also could be expressed in terms of the relationship between daughter and father; the daughter turns to the father as an object of love and becomes hostile to her mother as her rival. This is for Jung an Electra complex.

Dreams for Freud are the fulfillments of wishes that have been repressed and disguised. To protect sleep and relieve potential anxiety, the mind goes through a process of what is termed "dream-work," which consists of three primary mental activities: "condensation" of elements (they are abbreviated or compressed); "displacement" of elements (they are changed, particularly in terms of allusion and a difference of emphasis); and "representation," the transmission of elements into imagery or symbols, which are many, varied, and often sexual. Something similar to this process may be discerned in the origin and evolution of myths; it also provides insight into the mind and the methods of the creative artist, as Freud himself was well aware in his studies.¹⁷

Thus Freud's discovery of the significance of dream-symbols led him and his followers to analyze the similarity between dreams and myths. Symbols are many and varied and often sexual (e.g., objects like sticks and swords are phallic). Myths, therefore, in the Freudian interpretation, reflect people's waking efforts to systematize the incoherent visions and impulses of their sleep world. The patterns in the imaginative world of children, savages, and neurotics are similar, and these patterns are revealed in the motifs and symbols of myth.

As can be seen from Freud's description in the earlier quote, one of the basic patterns is that of the Oedipus story, in which the son kills the father in order to possess the mother. From this pattern Freud propounded a theory of our archaic heritage, in which the Oedipal drama was played out by a primal horde in their relationship to a primal father. The murder and the eating of the father led to important tribal and social developments, among them deification of the father figure, the triumph of patriarchy, and the establishment of a totemic system, whereby a sacred animal was chosen as a substitute for the slain father. Most important of all, from the ensuing sense of guilt and sin for parricide emerges the conception of God as Father who must be appeased and to whom atonement must be made. In fact, according to Freud, the Oedipus complex inspired the beginning not only of religion but also of all ethics, art, and society.

It is clear that Freud's connection between dreams and myths is illuminating for many myths, if not for all. In addition to the story of Oedipus one might single out, for example, the legend of the Minotaur or the saga of the House of

Atreus, both of which deal with some of the most persistent, if repressed, human fears and emotions and, by their telling, achieve a kind of catharsis.

Carl Jung. Jung went beyond the mere connection of myths and dreams to interpret myths as the projection of what he called the "collective unconscious" of the race, that is, a revelation of the continuing psychic tendencies of society. Jung made a distinction between the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious: the personal concerns matters of an individual's own life; the collective embraces political and social questions involving the group. Dreams therefore may be either personal or collective.

Thus myths contain images or "archetypes" (to use Jung's term, which embraces Freud's concept of symbols), traditional expressions of collective dreams, developed over thousands of years, of symbols upon which the society as a whole has come to depend. For Jung the Oedipus complex was the first archetype that Freud discovered. There are many such archetypes in Greek mythology and in dreams. Here are some of the ways in which Jung thought about archetypes, the collective unconscious, and mythology. An archetype is a kind of dramatic abbreviation of the patterns involved in a whole story or situation, including the way it develops and how it ends; it is a behavior pattern, an inherited scheme of functioning. Just as a bird has the physical and mental attributes of a bird and builds its nest in a characteristic way, so human beings by nature and by instinct are born with predictable and identifiable characteristics.¹⁸ In the case of human behavior and attitudes, the patterns are expressed in archetypal images or forms. The archetypes of behavior with which human beings are born and which find their expression in mythological tales are called the "collective unconscious." Therefore, "mythology is a pronouncing of a series of images that formulate the life of archetypes."¹⁹ Heroes like Heracles and Theseus are models who teach us how to behave.²⁰

The following are a few examples of archetypes: The *anima* is the archetypal image of the female that each man has within him; it is to this concept that he responds (for better or for worse) when he falls in love. Indeed the force of an archetype may seize a person suddenly, as when one falls in love at first sight. Similarly, the *animus* is the archetypal concept of the male that a woman instinctively harbors within her. The old wise man and the great mother and symbols or signs of various sorts are also among the many Jungian archetypes. These appear in the dreams of individuals or are expressed in the myths of societies.

The great value of Jung's concept is that it emphasizes the psychological dependence of all societies (sophisticated as well as primitive) upon their traditional myths, often expressed also in religion and ritual. But Jung's theories, like those we have already examined, have their limitations; they are not the only key to an understanding of mythology.

The Legacy of Freud. Freud's theories about the origin of mythological themes have attracted devotion and criticism in the century since their promulgation—

evidence for their undeniable importance. Classical scholars in the English-speaking world have been more dismissive than others: the important book by H. J. Rose on Greek mythology virtually ignores psychological and psychoanalytical approaches to myth, and the former Regius Professor of Greek at the University of Oxford, Hugh Lloyd-Jones, writing toward the end of the twentieth century, is skeptical yet appreciative of the work of other Regius Professors (Dodds and Kirk), which is based on deep knowledge of Greek language and literatures and some knowledge of comparative sociology, psychology, and religion. Lloyd-Jones is contemptuous of psychoanalytical interpretations of Greek literature and myth by writers unfamiliar with Greek language and history. More gently, Jan Bremmer observes: "Historical and linguistic knowledge remains indispensable."²¹

From the beginning Freud has been under attack from biologists and psychoanalysts. E. O. Wilson, writing in 1998, says that "Freud guessed wrong" with regard to dreams and the unconscious. Wilson embraces the theory of J. A. Hobson that "dreaming is a kind of insanity," which in a way reorganizes information stored in the memory and is not an expression of childhood trauma or repressed desires. Discussing the incest taboo, Wilson prefers "the Westermarck effect" (named after the Finnish anthropologist E. A. Westermarck, who published his theory in 1891 in *The History of Human Marriage*). Westermarck wrote that human avoidance of incest is genetic and that the social taboo comes from this "epigenetic" attribute. In contrast, Freud believed that the desire for incestuous relations (in men directed toward their mothers or sisters) was "the first choice of object in mankind," and therefore its repression was enforced by social taboos. Clearly very different interpretations of the myth of Oedipus will flow from these competing theories.²²

There will be other theories, and all of them, it can safely be said, will implicitly or explicitly support, attack, or comment upon Freud. This is the measure of his genius.

Freud's theories have been a springboard for anthropologists and sociologists—most notably Claude Lévi-Strauss, whose theories have been applied to Greek myth with success by the so-called Paris school, namely Jean-Pierre Vernant, Pierre Vidal-Naquet, and Marcel Detienne.²³ These mythographers combine the study of human societies with psychological theories that explain the origins of myth in terms of the minds of individuals. (Jung was particularly concerned with the collective unconscious of society, as we have seen.) The work of these French scholars is fundamental for any attempt to understand the place of myth in human societies, but, like the theories of Freud and Jung, it overvalues similarities in the minds of individuals and collective rituals and myths of societies while undervaluing variations among individual human societies.

Before we consider Lévi-Strauss and other structural theorists, we begin with earlier mythographers who associated myth with religion and ritual in society.

MYTH AND SOCIETY

Myth and Ritual: J. G. Frazer, Jane Harrison, and Robert Graves. A ritualist interpretation of mythology is one of the most influential and persistent points of view. Despite its faults, Sir J. G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough* remains a pioneering monument in its attempts to link myth with ritual. It is full of comparative data on kingship and ritual, but its value is lessened by the limitations of his ritualist interpretations and by his eagerness to establish dubious analogies between myths of primitive tribes and classical myths.

Similarly the works of Jane Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* and *Themis*, are of seminal importance. Harrison falls in the same tradition as Frazer, and many of her conclusions about comparative mythology, religion, and ritual are subject to the same critical reservations. Frazer and Harrison established fundamental approaches that were to dominate classical attitudes at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Renowned novelist and poet Robert Graves has written an influential treatment of Greek myths that is full of valuable factual information unfortunately embedded in much fascinating but unsubstantiated and idiosyncratic analysis. For him the definition of "true myth" is "the reduction to narrative shorthand of ritual mime performed in public festivals, and in many cases recorded pictorially on temple walls, vases, seals, bowls, mirrors, chests, shields, tapestries, and the like."²⁴ He distinguishes this true myth from twelve other categories, such as philosophical allegory, satire or parody, minstrel romance, political propaganda, theatrical melodrama, and realistic fiction. We single out Graves because he was perceptive enough to realize that literary distinctions may be as enlightening as any other type of classification for classical mythology.

Yet stated most bluntly, this ritualist theory says that "myth implies ritual, ritual implies myth, they are one and the same."²⁵ True, many myths are closely connected with rituals, and the theory is valuable for the connection it emphasizes between myth and religion; but it is patently untenable to connect *all* true myth with ritual.

Myth as Social Charters: Bronislaw Malinowski. Important in the development of modern theories is the work of Bronislaw Malinowski, who was stranded among the Trobriand Islanders (off New Guinea) during World War I; he used his enforced leisure to study the Trobrianders.²⁶ As an anthropologist and ethnographer he placed a high value on fieldwork in order to reach his final ideological goal: "to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize his vision of *his* world. . . ."²⁷

His great discovery was the close connection between myths and social institutions, which led him to explain myths not in cosmic or mysterious terms, but as "charters" of social customs and beliefs. To him myths were related to practical life, and they explained existing facts and institutions by reference to tradition: the myth confirms (i.e., is the "charter" for) the institution, custom,

or belief. Clearly such a theory will be valid only for certain myths (e.g., those involving the establishment of a ritual), but any theory that excludes the speculative element in myth is bound to be too limited.

THE STRUCTURALISTS: LÉVI-STRAUSS, PROPP, AND BURKERT

Claude Lévi-Strauss. More recently, the structural theories of Claude Lévi-Strauss have enriched the anthropological approach to myth, and they have a connection with Malinowski's most important concept, that is, the link between myth and society.²⁸

Lévi-Strauss sees myth as a mode of communication, like language or music. In music it is not the sounds themselves that are important but their *structure*, that is, the relationship of sounds to other sounds. In myth it is the narrative that takes the part of the sounds of music, and the structure of the narrative can be perceived at various levels and in different codes (e.g., culinary, astronomical, and sociological). From this it follows that no one version of a myth is the "right" one; all versions are valid, for myth, like society, is a living organism in which all the parts contribute to the existence of the whole. As in an orchestral score certain voices or instruments play some sounds, while the whole score is the sum of the individual parts, so in a myth the different, partial versions combine to reveal its total structure, including the relationship of the different parts to each other and to the whole.

Lévi-Strauss' method is therefore rigorously analytical, breaking down each myth into its component parts. Underlying his analytical approach are basic assumptions, of which the most important is that all human behavior is based on certain unchanging patterns, whose structure is the same in all ages and in all societies. Second, he assumes that society has a consistent structure and therefore a functional unity in which every component plays a meaningful part. As part of the working of this social machine, myths are derived ultimately from the structure of the mind. And the basic structure of the mind, as of the myths it creates, is *binary*; that is, the mind is constantly dealing with pairs of contradictions or opposites. It is the function of myth to mediate between these opposing extremes—raw/cooked, life/death, hunter/hunted, nature/culture, and so on. "Mythical thought always progresses from the awareness of oppositions towards their resolution."²⁹ Myth, then, is a mode by which a society communicates and through which it finds a resolution between conflicting opposites. The logical structure of a myth provides a means by which the human mind can avoid unpleasant contradictions and thus, through mediation, reconcile conflicts that would be intolerable if unreconciled. Lévi-Strauss would maintain that all versions of a myth are equally authentic for exploring the myth's structure.

The theories of Lévi-Strauss have aroused passionate controversy among anthropologists and mythographers. His analysis of the Oedipus myth, for exam-

ple, has been widely criticized. Yet whatever one's judgment may be, there is no doubt that this structural approach can illuminate a number of Greek myths, especially with regard to the function of "mediating." But the approach is open to the same objections as other comprehensive theories, that it establishes too rigid, too universal a concept of the functioning of the human mind. Indeed, the binary functioning of the human mind and of human society may be common, but it has not been proved to be either universal or necessary. Finally, Lévi-Strauss draws most of his evidence from primitive and preliterate cultures, and his theories seem to work more convincingly for them than for the literate mythology of the Greeks. His approach is better applied, for example, to the early Greek succession myths than to the Sophoclean, literate version of the legends of Oedipus and his family. We should all the same be aware of the potential of structuralist theories and be ready to use them as we seek to make meaningful connections between the different constituent elements of a myth or between different myths that share constituent elements. As we noted earlier, Lévi-Strauss was particularly influential upon the Paris school.

Vladimir Propp. The structural interpretation of myth was developed, long before the work of Lévi-Strauss, by Vladimir Propp in his study of the Russian folktale.³⁰ Like Lévi-Strauss, Propp analyzed traditional tales into their constituent parts, from which he deduced a single, recurrent structure applicable to all Russian folktales. Unlike Lévi-Strauss, however, he described this structure as linear, that is, as having an unchanging temporal sequence, so that one element in the myth always follows another and never occurs out of order. This is significantly different from the pattern in Lévi-Strauss' theory, where the elements may be grouped without regard to time or sequence.

Propp divided his basic structure into thirty-one functions or units of action (which have been defined by others as *motifemes*, on the analogy of morphemes and phonemes in linguistic analysis). These functions are constants in traditional tales: the characters may change, but the functions do not. Further, these functions always occur in an identical sequence, although not all the functions need appear in a particular tale. Those that do, however, will always occur in the same sequence. Finally, Propp states that "all fairy tales are of one type in regard to their structure."³¹

Propp was using a limited number (one hundred) of Russian folktales of one sort only, that is, the Quest. Yet his apparently strict analysis has proven remarkably adaptable and valid for other sorts of tales in other cultures. The rigid sequence of functions is too inflexible to be fully applicable to Greek myths that have a historical dimension (e.g., some of the tales in the Trojan cycle of saga), where the "facts" of history, as far as they can be established, may have a sequence independent of structures whose origins lie in psychological or cultural needs.

On the other hand, Propp's theories are very helpful in comparing myths that are apparently unrelated, showing, for example, how the same functions

appear in the myths, no matter what names are given to the characters who perform them. Mythological names are a strain on the memory. Merely to master them is to achieve very little, unless they can be related in some meaningful way to other tales, including tales from other mythologies. Dreary memorization, however, becomes both easier and purposeful if underlying structures and their constituent units can be perceived and arranged logically and consistently.

A very simple example would be the structural elements common to the myths of Heracles, Theseus, Perseus, and Jason, whose innumerable details can be reduced to a limited sequence of functions. It is more difficult to establish the pattern for, say, a group of stories about the mothers of heroes (e.g., Callisto, Danaë, Io, and Antiope). Yet, as Walter Burkert shows (see the following section), they resolve themselves into a clear sequence of five functions: (1) the girl leaves home; (2) the girl is secluded (beside a river, in a tower, in a forest, etc.); (3) she is made pregnant by a god; (4) she suffers punishment or rejection or a similar unpleasant consequence; and (5) she is rescued, and her son is born.³²

We can say definitely that in most cases it is helpful to the student to analyze a myth into its constituent parts. There should be four consequences:

1. A perceptible pattern or structure will emerge.
2. It will be possible to find the same structure in other myths, thus making it easier to organize the study of myths.
3. It will be possible to compare the myths of one culture with those of another.
4. As a result of this comparison, it will be easier to appreciate the development of a myth prior to its literary presentation.

Structuralism need not be—indeed, cannot be—applied to all classical mythology, nor need one be enslaved to either Lévi-Strauss or the more rigid but simpler structure of Propp's thirty-one functions; it basically provides a means toward establishing a rational system for understanding and organizing the study of mythology.

Walter Burkert. Walter Burkert has persuasively attempted a synthesis of structural theories with the more traditional approaches to classical mythology.³³ In defining a theory of myth he developed four theses, which are in part based upon structural theories and in part meet the objection that these theories are not adequate for many Greek myths as they have come down to us after a long period of development. According to Burkert, classical myths have a "historical dimension" with "successive layers" of development, during which the original tale has been modified to fit the cultural or other circumstances of the time of its retelling. This will be less true of a tale that has sacred status, for it will have been "crystallized" in a sacred document—for example, the myth of Demeter in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. In contrast, many Greek myths vary with the time of telling and the teller—for example, the myths of Orestes or Meleager appear differently in Homer from their treatment in fifth-century Athens or in Augustan Rome.

Burkert therefore believes that the structure of traditional tales cannot be discovered without taking into account cultural and historical dimensions. With regard to the former, the structure of a tale is shaped by its human creators and by the needs of the culture within which it is developed. Therefore the structure of a tale is "ineradicably anthropomorphic" and fits the needs and expectations of both the teller and the audience. (Indeed, as Burkert points out, this is why good tales are so easy to remember: "There are not terribly many items to memorize, since the structure has largely been known in advance.") Further—and here we approach the historical dimension—a tale has a use to which it is put, or, expressed in another way, "Myth is traditional tale applied."

This refinement of the structural theory allows for the development of a tale to meet the needs or expectations of the group for whom it is told—family, city, state, or culture group, for example. A myth, in these terms, has reference to "something of collective importance." This further definition meets a fundamental objection to many earlier "unitary" theories of myth. If myth is a sacred tale or a tale about the gods, how do we include, for example, the myths of Oedipus or Achilles? Similar objections can easily be made to other theories that we have been describing. The notions of "myth applied" and "collective importance" avoid the objection of rigid exclusivity, while they allow for the successive stages in the historical development of a myth without the Procrustean mental gymnastics demanded by the theories of Lévi-Strauss.

Here, then, are the four theses of Burkert's modified synthesis of the structural and historical approaches:

1. Myth belongs to the more general class of traditional tale.
2. The identity of a traditional tale is to be found in a structure of sense within the tale itself.
3. Tale structures, as sequences of motifs, are founded on basic biological or cultural programs of actions.³⁴
4. Myth is a traditional tale with secondary, partial reference to something of collective importance.

These theses form a good working basis upon which to approach the interpretation of myth. They make use of the significant discoveries of anthropologists and psychologists, while they allow flexibility in exploring the structure of classical myths. Finally, they take account of the historical development of myths and of the culture within which they were told. It will be useful to refer to these theses when studying individual traditional tales.

COMPARATIVE STUDY AND CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY

Comparisons among the various stories told throughout the ages, all over the world, have become influential in establishing definitions and classifications. In the modern study of comparative mythology, much emphasis tends to be placed

upon stories told by preliterate and primitive societies, and too often the developed literature of the Greeks and Romans has virtually been ignored. It was not always so; for pioneers in the field, such as Frazer (identified earlier), classical mythology was understandably fundamental. Our survey has shown that the comparative study of myths, especially by anthropologists (as opposed to philologically trained classicists), has been one of the most fruitful approaches to the interpretation of myths.

Oral and Literary Myth. The primary reason for the relative neglect of classical mythology is that many insist that a true myth must be oral, and some would add that it also must be anonymous. Today this is certainly the most persistent definition of all with support from many quarters. Reasons are easy to find in an argument that runs something like this: The tales told in primitive societies, which one may go to hear even today, are the only true myths, pristine and timeless. Such tales represent the poetic vision, the history, the religion, even the science of the tribe, revealing the fascinating early stages of development in the psyche of humankind. The written word brings with it contamination and a specific designation of authorship for what has been passed on by word of mouth for ages, the original creator with no more identity at all. For Malinowski (discussed earlier), myths were synonymous with the tales of the Trobrianders, which they called *lili'u*, the important stories a society has to tell.³⁵ For those sympathetic to this view, folktales hold a special place, even those that have become a literary text composed by an author, who has imposed a unity upon a multiplicity of oral tales.

What has all this to do with classical mythology?

We do not concur with those who place such a narrow definition upon the word *myth*. We would not write a book titled *Classical Mythology* with the conviction that the literary texts that we must deal with are not mythology at all. First of all, myth need not be just a story told orally. It can be danced, painted, and enacted, and this, in fact, is what primitive people do. As we stated at the beginning of this chapter, myth may be expressed in various media, and myth is no less a literary form than it is an oral form. Furthermore, the texts of classical mythology can be linked to the oral and literary themes of other mythologies.

We have established that, over the past few decades, comparative mythology has been used extensively for the understanding of the myths of any *one* culture. Greek mythology, largely because of the genius of the authors who told the stories in their literary form, has too often in the past been considered as something so unusual that it can be set apart from other mythologies. It is true that Greek and Roman literature has certain characteristics to be differentiated from those of the many, oral preliterate tales gathered from other cultures by anthropologists. Yet the work of the structuralists has shown that classical myths share fundamental characteristics with traditional tales everywhere. It is important to be aware of this fact and to realize that there were many successive

layers in the development of Greek and Roman myths before their crystallization in literary form. The Homeric poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, no doubt had oral antecedents.³⁶ Often, and especially in structural interpretations, the earlier stages of a myth are discovered to have been rooted in another culture, or at least show the influence of other mythologies. For example, there are obvious parallels between the Greek creation and succession myths and myths of Near Eastern cultures (we explore these in the Additional Reading at the end of Chapter 4); such structural and thematic similarities do at least show how Greek myths are to be studied in conjunction with those of other cultures.

It is gratifying to report that comparative studies in the classics are becoming more and more abundant (made evident in our bibliographies), the focus being the identification of structures and motifs in Greek and Roman literature that are common to mythologies of the world.

Joseph Campbell. Joseph Campbell is the comparative mythologist who is the best known among the general public, and his body of work embraces mythologies of every sort—oral, literary, whatever—in the world throughout the centuries. In his vast all-embracing scheme of things, classical mythology is not of major significance, but it easily could be. He has done much that is worthwhile to popularize the study of comparative mythology, and for this we are grateful, even though we wish that, in his popularizations at least, he had paid more serious attention to the Greeks and the Romans. Perhaps he will appeal most of all to those who seek to recognize the kindred spiritual values that may be found through a comparison of the myths and legends of various peoples over the centuries. It is difficult to know how Campbell should be classified under our previous headings: with those who link mythology and society or religion or psychology?³⁷ His inspiring influence upon Martha Graham and her powerful re-creations of mythology in dance is discussed in Chapter 28. A clear and comprehensive introduction to his numerous works is offered by Robert A. Segal in *Joseph Campbell: An Introduction*.³⁸

FEMINISM, HOMOSEXUALITY, AND MYTHOLOGY

Feminism. Feminist critical theories have led to many new, and often controversial, interpretations of classical myths. They approach mythology from the perspective of women and interpret the myths by focusing especially on the psychological and social situation of their female characters. These theories share with structuralism a focus on the binary nature of human society and the human mind, especially in the opposition (or complementary relationship) of female and male. Social criticism of the male-centered world of Greek mythology goes back at least to Sappho, who, in her *Hymn to Aphrodite* (see pp. 197–198) used the image of Homeric warfare to describe her emotions, and in her poem on Anaktoria contrasts what she loves, another human being, with what conventional men love, the panoply of war.³⁹ In 1942 the French philosopher Simone Weil took basically the same approach in her essay on the *Iliad* (translated

by Mary McCarthy as *The Iliad, or the Poem of Force*), focusing on the issues of violence, power, and domination, fundamental to Homeric mythology.

More recently feminist scholars have used the critical methods of narratology and deconstruction to interpret the traditional tales, associating them with the theories of psychologists (especially Freud) and comparative anthropologists. Many feminist interpretations have compelled readers to think critically about the social and psychological assumptions that underlie approaches to mythology, and they have led to original and stimulating interpretations of many myths, especially where the central figure is female. The work of feminist scholars has led to greater flexibility and often (although by no means always) greater sensitivity in modern readings of classical literature. Helene P. Foley's edition of *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* is a good example of how feminist interpretations can be incorporated in an array of varied interpretative viewpoints.⁴⁰ Feminist authors too are creating new versions of traditional tales designed to illuminate their point of view about political, social, and sexual conflict between men and women in our world today—for example, the two novels (originally in German) by Christa Wolf, *Cassandra* and *Medea*. Nevertheless, some scholars (among them leading classical feminists) have warned against the tendency to interpret classical myths in the light of contemporary social and political concerns. For example, Marilyn Katz criticizes those who object on moral grounds to the apparent infidelity of Odysseus to his wife, saying that “such an interpretation . . . imports into the poem our own squeamish disapproval of the double standard.”⁴¹

Feminist interpretations of mythological stories are often determined by controversial reconstructions of the treatment and position of women in ancient society, often making no distinctions between the Greek version and that of the Roman Ovid and thus embracing two civilizations inhabiting a vast area over a lengthy period of time. We single out two major topics that influence feminist theories of myth: the position of women in Greece and the theme of rape.

WOMEN IN GREEK SOCIETY. The evidence for the position of women in Greek society is meager and conflicting. It is also virtually impossible to make valid broad generalizations, since the situation in sixth-century Lesbos must have been different from that in Athens of the fifth century, and as time went on women in Sparta gained a great deal of influence. For a long time, we have been reading the literature and looking at the art, and for us, some of the revisionist histories today depict a civilization that we cannot recognize in terms of what little direct evidence we do possess, controversial as it may be. A good place to begin for one's own control of what little we do know with any kind of certainty is with a study by A. W. Gomme, “The Position of Women at Athens in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries B.C.”⁴² We offer here a few basic observations to give a sense of balance to the controversy.

First of all, the claim is made today that women were not citizens in the ancient world. This is not true. Aristotle (*Athenian Constitution*, 42.1) makes it very

clear that citizenship depended upon the condition that both parents be citizens: "Those born of parents who are both citizens share in citizenship, and when they are eighteen years old, they are registered on the rolls. . . ." It is evident over and over again that in Greek society the citizens were very much aware of the difference between citizens and noncitizens (resident aliens and slaves) in the structure and benefits of society. Women citizens, however, did not vote; to keep things in perspective, one should remember that women did not win the vote anywhere until the first quarter of the twentieth century. Were there no women citizens in the world before that time? in England? in America? It is only in the first quarter of the last century that women have gained not only political but also legal rights equal to those of men, sad as that fact may be in our judgment of humankind. In Athens a woman citizen benefited greatly from the prosperity and the artistic expression and freedom of the democracy and empire. She was very important in religious ceremonies, some of which excluded the participation of males. Women did not walk outdoors veiled, a few became intoxicated and had affairs, and many were very outspoken (amazingly so for this period of time in the history of Western civilization) about their own inferior position as citizens in relation to that of the males. It is difficult to believe all women were illiterate. It is likely that their education was different from that of the men. Much would depend upon contingencies such as class and individual needs. (The women of Sappho's Lesbos must have been able to read and write.) Athenian women went to the theater, where they saw and heard vivid depictions of the strength of their character and convictions and debates about their rights. They also saw varied portraits, not all evil but mixed, as it should be, many of great and noble wives such as Alcestis in Euripides and Deïanira in Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*, among others. In art, women appear idealized and beautiful, but not nude (as men could be) until the fourth century B.C. because of Greek mores. The mythological world of goddesses and heroines reflects the real world of Greek women, for whom it had to have some meaning.

THE THEME OF RAPE. A fertile and seminal topic has become the theme of rape. What are we today to make of the many classical myths of ardent pursuit as well as those of amorous conquest? Are they religious stories, are they love stories, or are they in the end all fundamentally horrifying tales of victimization? Only a few basic observations about this vast and vital subject can be made here, with the major purpose of insisting that the questions and the answers are not simple but complex.

In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Apollo's pursuit of Daphne is the first of the love stories in the poem. To some it is a beautiful idyll, to others, a glorification of male supremacy and brutality. Quite simply put, it can mean whatever one wants it to mean. Certainly it has been one of the most popular themes among artists throughout the centuries because it is subject to so many varied overt and subtle interpretations, primary among them not necessarily being that of rape in the

sense of the word today. The case is similar in the history of music; the very first opera was *Daphne*, and she has been a profound, spiritual inspiration in the years to follow.

The Greeks and Romans were fascinated with the phenomena of blinding passion and equally compulsive virginity. The passion was usually evoked by the mighty gods Aphrodite and Eros, who could gloriously uplift or pitilessly devastate a human being and a god. The equally ruthless force of chastity was symbolized by devotion to Artemis. Usually, but by no means always, the man defines lust and the woman chastity. In the case of Hippolytus and Phaedra (among others) these roles are reversed.

The motif of pursuit by the lover of the beloved with the implicit imagery of the hunter and the hunted is everywhere and becomes formulaic with the pursuit ending in a ritualistic acquiescence or the saving of the pursued from a fate worse than death, often through a metamorphosis. The consummation of sex need not be part of the scenario of this ancient motif, played upon with versatile sophistication by a civilized poet such as Ovid.

Many seduction scenes are ultimately religious in nature, and the fact that it is a god who seduces a mortal can make all the difference. Zeus may single out a chosen woman to be the mother of a divine child or hero for a grand purpose intended for the ultimate good of the world, and the woman may or may not be overjoyed. These tales are told from different points of view, sometimes diametrically opposed. For example, Zeus took Io by force, or their son Epaphus was born by the mere touch of the hand of god.

There is no real distinction between the love, abduction, or rape of a woman by a man and of a man by a woman. Eos is just as relentless in her pursuit of Cephalus or Tithonus as any other god, and they succumb to the goddess. Salmacis attacks innocent and pure Hermaphroditus and wins. Aphrodite seduces Anchises, who does not stand a chance against her devious guile. It is possible, if one so desires, to look beyond the romantic vision of beautiful nymphs in a lovely pool enamored of handsome Hylas to imagine a horrible outrage as the poor lad, outnumbered, is dragged down into the depths.

The title for a famous story that has become traditional may be misleading or false. Paris' wooing of Helen is usually referred to as the Rape of Helen. Yet the ancient accounts generally describe how Helen fell quickly and desperately in love with the exotic foreigner Paris and (despite her complaints about Aphrodite) went with him willingly to Troy. Of course a different version can find its legitimacy, too, if an artist wishes to depict a Helen dragged away screaming her protests against the savage force of a bestial Paris. The designation of the seduction/abduction of Helen by Paris as the "Rape of Helen" was established at a time when the word "rape" did not necessarily have the narrow, sole connotation it has today, that of a brutal, forceful sexual act against an unwilling partner.

The Rape of Persephone is quite another matter. Hades did brutally abduct Persephone, who did indeed cry out to no avail. Zeus and Hades saw this as

the divine right of gods and kings. Demeter and Persephone did not agree. On the other hand, a religious artist or critic might maintain that god's will is god's will, and it was divinely ordained to have Hades and Persephone as king and queen of the Underworld.

This book bears testimony again and again in a multitude of ways to the light these Greek and Roman tales have thrown on our civilization. They explored countless issues and emotions (among them passion and lust), as burning for them (both men and women) as they are for us, in their own images, just as we explore them in ours; we are no less obsessed with the subject of sex than were the ancients, and our depictions certainly can be much more violent and ugly, yet often not as potent. Critics of classical mythology in previous generations sometimes chose not to see the rape: some critics today choose to see nothing else.

It is fundamental to realize an obvious fact that too often is completely overlooked in our rush to interpretative, righteous judgment about the message of a story. The same tale may embody themes of victimization and rape or sexual love or spiritual salvation, one or all of these issues, or more. Everything depends upon the artist and the person responding to the work of art: his or her gender, politics, philosophy, religion, sexual orientation, age, experience or experiences—the list could go on. A major contention of this book is that there is no one “correct” interpretation of a story, just as there is no one “correct” definition of a myth.

Homosexuality. Homosexuality was accepted and accommodated as a part of life in the ancient world. There were no prevailing hostile religious views that condemned it as a sin. Much has been written about this subject in this era of gay liberation, and fundamental works are listed in the bibliography at the end of the chapter. Dover, in his classic study *Greek Homosexuality*, offers a scrupulous analysis of major evidence for ancient Greece, much of which pertains to Athens. This fundamental work is required reading, but his conclusions need to be tempered by other more realistic appreciations of sexuality in the real world, both ancient and modern. Particularly enlightening because of its wider perspective is *Homophobia: A History*, by Byrne Fone. The remarks that follow concentrate on homosexuality in ancient Greece. There were similarities among the Romans but differences as well. The period of time stretches over centuries and the subject again is vast, complex, and controversial.

A prevailing view persists that Athens (representing a kind of paradigm of the Greco-Roman world) was a paradise for homosexuals, particularly in contrast to the persecution so often found in other societies. There is some truth in this romantic vision, but homosexual activity had to be pursued in accordance with certain unwritten rules, however liberal they may have been. In Athens, a particular respectability was conferred when an older male became the lover of a younger man, and it was important that each should play his proper role in

the sexual act. The relationship was particularly sanctified by a social code if the primary motive was, at least ostensibly, education of a higher order, the molding of character and responsible citizenship. Longer homosexual relationships between two mature men, promiscuity, and effeminacy were sometimes not so readily accepted. Some homosexuals were made notorious because of their behavior. Gay pride today could not approve of many attitudes and strictures about sexuality in Athens or for that matter in Greece and Rome generally.

In the mythology, as one would expect, homosexuality may be found as an important theme. Aphrodite and Eros in particular play significant roles as deities particularly concerned about homosexual love. Several important myths have as their major theme male homosexual relationships: Zeus and Ganymede, Poseidon and Pelops, Apollo and Hyacinthus, Apollo and Cypris, the friendship of Achilles and Patroclus, Orestes and Pylades (especially in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*), and Heracles and Hylas. In Roman legend the love and devotion of Nisus and Euryalus is a particularly moving example.

Female homosexuality in Greek and Roman mythology and society is as important a theme as male homosexuality, but it is not nearly as visible. Sappho (mentioned earlier), a lyric poetess from the island of Lesbos (sixth century B.C.), in a fervent and moving poem (pp. 197–198) invokes Aphrodite's help to win back the love of a young woman with whom she has been involved, and her relationships with women are evident both in other poems and in the biographical tradition and have been the subject of endless interpretation. (For those interested in Sappho's biography, the ancient testimony is collected and translated in the Loeb Classical Library, published by Harvard University Press.) From Sappho comes the term *lesbian* and the association of Aphrodite with lesbian love.

Lesbianism is not so readily detectable in the mythology generally. Sometimes it can be deduced as a subtext here and there; for example, it may be a latent motif in stories about the strong bond of affection among Artemis and her band of female followers and in the depiction of the society and mores of the warlike Amazons.

THE MORES OF MYTHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Rather than imagine what Greek and Roman society was like over thousands of years in its feminist and homosexual attitudes and then impose tenuous conclusions upon an interpretation of mythological stories treated by many individual artists with different points of view, perhaps it may be more fruitful and fair to look at the mythology itself to determine if there is any consistency in the social values it conveys.

Along with its nonjudgmental acceptance of homosexuality, and the beautiful stories it inspires, Greek and Roman mythology overall reflects the point of view of a heterosexual society, from the depiction of the Olympian family of deities on down. Homer's *Odyssey* is the most heterosexual of poems, and one,

must look long and hard to read any subtext to the contrary. So is the *Iliad* for that matter, although a subtext comes more easily. True, the poem turns upon Achilles' love for Patroclus, but both men are depicted as heterosexuals, leaving the bond between them open for others to read between the lines. Enhancing and illuminating the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus is Achilles' love for Briseis amid the profound depictions of the couples Priam and Hecuba, Hector and Andromache, and, perhaps the most searching of all, Paris and Helen. True, feminists today have a strong case against the inequalities and injustices inflicted upon women by men. But there are valid cases to be made against all wrongs of all societies in the past. We should not excuse them but try to understand and learn. The Homeric poems embrace many, many timeless moral issues, among them man's inhumanity to man. Their artistic, moving, and meaningful documentation is a possession and an education forever.

Homer sets the stage for the basic qualities of the literature to follow. The body of Greek drama, as we have it, is shot through with family and religious values, raised to lofty heights by genius. The great families of tragedy, to be sure, are dysfunctional and neurotic, but the ties that bind them together are those of man and woman, husband and wife, father and mother, brother and sister, son and daughter. It would be difficult to imagine more powerful familial and religious bonds than those in the legend of Oedipus. The mutual devotion between Oedipus and his daughters Ismene and, more particularly, Antigone is extreme. Equally powerful is the feud between Oedipus and his sons Eteocles and Polynices. Oedipus dies committed to God, and Antigone remains true to the memory of her brother Polynices because of family and religion. The legend of the *Oresteia* may be an even better example. The criteria by which Herodotus singles out Tellus the Athenian and Cleobis and Biton as the happiest of men are embodied in ennobling tales (translated on pg. 136-137) confirming the fact that marriage and the family were at the core of the politics and mores of the Greek city-state (*polis*). Roman mythology is possibly even more dominated by religious, familial, and, we may add, patriotic mores.

We all read this vast body of classical literature in different ways, and this is how it should be. The texts have something to say to each of us because they spring from a civilization that is all-embracing (not merely bizarre) and all too recognizable and helpful in the face of our own issues and conflicts and their resolution, not least of all those between heterosexuals and homosexuals and men and women.

SOME CONCLUSIONS AND A DEFINITION OF CLASSICAL MYTH

Our survey of some important interpretations of myth is intended to show that there is something of value to be found in a study of various approaches, and we have included only a selection from a wide range of possibilities. There are others that might be explored; belief in the importance and validity of diverse in-

terpretations naturally varies from reader to reader. About this conclusion, however, we are convinced: it is impossible to develop any one theory that will be meaningfully applicable to *all* myths; there is no identifiable Platonic Idea or Form of a myth, embodying characteristics copied or reflected in the mythologies of the world. The many interpretations of the origin and nature of myths are primarily valuable for highlighting the fact that myths embrace different kinds of stories in different media, which may be classified in numerous different ways.

We realize fully the necessity for the study of comparative mythology and appreciate its many attractive rewards, but we are also wary of its dangers: oversimplification, distortion, and the reduction of an intricate masterpiece to a chart of leading motifs. Greek and Roman mythology is unique, but not so unique that we can set it apart from other mythologies. In other words, it will illuminate other mythologies drawn from primitive and preliterate societies, just as they will help us understand the origin, development, and meaning of classical literature. We must, however, be aware of the gulf that separates the oral legends from the literary mythological thinking that evolved among the Greeks and Romans and also among their literary antecedents in the Near East. It is misleading, of course, to posit a "primitive" mentality, as some anthropologists and sociologists do, as if it were something childlike and simple, in contrast to the "sophisticated" mentality of more advanced societies such as that of the Greeks.⁴³ In fact, it has been clearly proved (as attested to earlier) how far the myths of primitive societies reflect the complexities of social family structures, and their tales may be profitably compared to classical literature. Yet there are important differences, and even our earliest literary sources (Homer, Hesiod, and the lyric poets) provide artistic presentations of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual values and concepts in influential works of the highest order, whatever their debts. Greek and Roman mythology shares similar characteristics with the great literatures of the world, which have evolved mythologies of their own, whether or not they have borrowed thematic material from the ancients. Classical mythology has at least as much (if not more) in common with English and American literature (not to mention French and German, among others)⁴⁴ as it does with preliterate comparisons of oral folktale and the scrutiny of archaic artifacts, however enlightening these studies may be. Greek and Roman mythology and literature look back to an oral and literary past, use it, modify it, and pass on the transformation to the future.

Since the goal of this book is the transmission of the myths themselves as recounted in the Greek and Roman periods, literary myth is inevitably our primary concern. Many of the important myths exist in multiple versions of varying quality, but usually one ancient treatment has been most influential in establishing the prototype or archetype for all subsequent art and thought. Whatever other versions of the Oedipus story exist,⁴⁵ the dramatic treatment by Sophocles has established and imposed the mythical pattern for all time—he is the poet who forces us to see and feel the universal implications. Although his

art is self-conscious, literary, and aesthetic, nevertheless the myth *is* the play. We cannot provide complete texts of Greek tragedy, but insofar as possible the original text of the dominant version of a myth will be translated in this book. We believe that a faithful translation or even a paraphrase of the sources is far better than a bald and eclectic retelling in which the essential spirit and artistic subtlety of literary myth is obliterated completely for the sake of scientific analysis. It is commonplace to say that myths are by nature good stories, but some are more childish, confused, and repetitious than others; the really good ones are usually good because they have survived in a form molded by an artist. These are the versions to which we may most profitably apply the criteria established by Aristotle in his *Poetics* on the basis of his experience of Greek tragedy. Is the plot (*muthos*) constructed well with a proper beginning, middle, and end? Have the powerful techniques of recognition and reversal been put to the best use? What about the development of characterization—does the protagonist have a tragic flaw? Most important of all, does the work effect a catharsis (an emotional and spiritual purging) involving the emotions of pity and fear, possibly a goal for all serious mythic art?

There are two indisputable characteristics of the literary myths and legends of Greek and Roman mythology: their artistic merit and the inspiration they have afforded to others. We have, to mention only one example, from the ancient world touching renditions of the story of Orpheus and Eurydice. The number of retellings of their tale in Western civilization has been legion (in every possible medium), and it seems as though the variations will go on forever.⁴⁶ Thus we conclude with a short definition that concentrates upon the gratifying tenacity of the classical tradition (in literature and art, but not oral), inextricably woven into the very fabric of our culture:

A classical myth is a story that, through its classical form, has attained a kind of immortality because its inherent archetypal beauty, profundity, and power have inspired rewarding renewal and transformation by successive generations.

The Greeks created a substantial and significant body of myth in various media. The Romans and many subsequent societies have been and continue to be captivated by it. In view of this phenomenal fact, the versions of *Oedipus* by Seneca, Corneille, von Hoffmannsthal, and Cocteau have equal validity as personal expressions of the authors' own vision of Sophocles and the myth, for their own time and their own culture. The same may be said of the depiction of a myth on a Greek vase and a painting by Picasso, or a frieze of ancient dancers and a reinterpretation by Isadora Duncan, and the music (no longer to be heard) for a fifth-century performance of *Electra* and the opera by Strauss, and so on. This book has been written out of the desire to provide a lucid and comprehensive introduction to Greek mythology so that the reader may know, appreciate, and enjoy its miraculous afterlife (*Nachleben*, as the Germans call it), which we feel compelled to survey as well because it is integral to the whole contin-

uum. The creation of classical myth has never really stopped, but from the time of Homer it has constantly been reborn and revitalized, expressed in exciting and challenging new ways through literature, art, music, dance, and film.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER I

SOURCES FOR CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY

Traditional tales were handed down orally until they were stabilized in a written form that spread over a wide area. The geography and topography of the Greek world often made communications by land and sea difficult, and these natural tendencies to cultural separatism were enhanced by tribal, ethnic, and linguistic variations. The Greek myths, therefore, varied greatly from place to place, as did the cults of individual gods. With the coming of writing, perhaps in the eighth century, "standard" versions of myths began to be established, but the sophistication of succeeding generations of poets led also to ingenious variations. Even in the central myths of Athenian drama—whose stories were well known to and expected by their audiences—substantial variations are found, as, for example, in the legends of Electra. The problem of variations is especially acute in saga, where differing literary versions and local variations (often based on local pride in the heroic past) make it virtually impossible to identify a "standard" version. This is especially the case with local heroes like Theseus at Athens. Nevertheless, there is a body of recognized principal sources for classical mythology from which major versions may be identified.

Greek Sources. Pride of place goes to Homer (to use the name of the poet to whom the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are ascribed), whose poems stabilized the myths of the Olympian gods and exercised an unparalleled influence on all succeeding Greek and Roman writers. The *Iliad* is much more than the story of the wrath of Achilles or the record of an episode in the tenth year of the Trojan War, for it incorporates many myths of the Olympian and Mycenaean heroes, while its picture of the gods has ever since been the foundation of literary and artistic representations of the Olympian pantheon. The poems themselves, which developed over centuries of oral tradition, perhaps took something like their final form in the eighth century, the *Iliad* being somewhat earlier than the *Odyssey*. The written text was probably stabilized at Athens under the tyranny of Pisistratus during the second half of the sixth century. Our debt to Homeric mythology and legend will be apparent in this book.

Important also for the Olympian gods and the organization of Olympian theology and theogony are the works of Hesiod, the Boeotian poet of the late eighth century, perhaps as late as 700. His *Theogony* is our most important source for the relationship of Zeus and the Olympians to their predecessors, the Titans, and other early divinities; it also records how Zeus became supreme and organized the Olympian pantheon. Hesiod's *Works and Days* also contains impor-

tant mythology. Thus substantial portions of these works appear in translation or paraphrase in the earlier chapters.

The thirty-three *Homeric Hymns* are a body of poems composed in honor of Olympian deities, most of which embody at least one myth of the god or goddess. Four (those to Demeter, Apollo, Hermes, and Aphrodite) are several hundred lines long and are the most significant sources for those gods' myths; others are very short indeed and appear to be preludes for longer compositions that have not survived. Because of their importance we have translated all these hymns complete.⁴⁷ The *Homeric Hymns* were composed at widely different times, some perhaps as early as the eighth or seventh century, some (for example, the *Hymn to Ares*) as late as the fourth century B.C. or Hellenistic times.

Another group of archaic poets whose work is an important source for mythology is the lyric poets, who flourished, especially in the islands of the Aegean Sea, during the seventh and sixth centuries. The lyric tradition was continued in the complex victory *Odes* of the Theban poet Pindar during the first half of the fifth century and in the dithyrambs of his rival and contemporary, Bacchylides of Cos. The lyric choruses of the Athenian dramatists also enshrine important versions of myths.

In the fifth century, the flourishing of the Greek city-states led to the creation of great literature and art, nowhere more impressively than at Athens. Here the three great writers of tragedy, Aeschylus (who died in 456), Sophocles, and Euripides (both of whom died in 406), established the authoritative versions of many myths and sagas: a few examples are the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus for the saga of the House of Atreus; the Theban plays of Sophocles for the saga of the family of Oedipus; and the *Bacchae* of Euripides (translated in large part in Chapter 13) for the myths of Dionysus.

After the fifth century, the creative presentation of myths in Greek literature gave way to more contrived versions, many of which were composed by the Alexandrian poets in the third century. Neither the *Hymns* of Callimachus nor the hymn to Zeus of Cleanthes has great value as a source for myth, but the epic *Argonautica*, of Apollonius of Rhodes (ca. 260 B.C.), is the single most important source for the saga of the Argonauts. Other Alexandrian versions of the classical myths are discussed in Chapter 27.

The principal Greek prose sources are the historians and the mythographers. Of the former, Herodotus is preeminent, although some myths are recorded in Thucydides (last quarter of the fifth century). Herodotus (born ca. 485) traveled widely, both within the Greek world and to Persia and Egypt, and he recorded traditional tales wherever he went. Some of his stories contain profound and universal truths of the sort we would associate with myth as well as history; his account of the meeting between Solon and Croesus, which we have translated in Chapter 6, is a perfect example of the developed "historical myth," giving us insight into Greek interpretations of god and fate that arose out of their factual and mythical storytelling.

The mythographers were late compilers of handbooks of mythology. Of these, the work ascribed to Apollodorus with the title *Bibliotheca* (*Library of Greek Mythology*), which is still valuable, perhaps was composed around A.D. 120. The *Periegesis* (*Description of Greece*) of Pausanias (ca. A.D. 150) contains many myths in its accounts of religious sites and their works of art.

The philosophers, most notably Plato (fourth century B.C.), used myth for didactic purposes, and Plato himself developed out of the tradition of religious tales' "philosophical myth" as a distinct literary form. His myth of Er, for example, is a philosophical allegory about the soul and its existence after death. It is important as evidence for beliefs about the Underworld, and its religious origins go back to earlier centuries, in particular to the speculations of Pythagorean and Orphic doctrine. The Roman poet Vergil (discussed later in this chapter), in his depiction of the afterlife, combines more traditional mythology developed out of Homer with mythical speculations about rebirth and reincarnation found in philosophers like Plato. Thus by translating all three authors—Homer, Plato, and Vergil—on the Realm of Hades (Chapter 15) we have a composite and virtually complete summary of the major mythical and religious beliefs about the afterlife evolved by the Greeks and Romans.

One late philosopher who retold archaic myths for both philosophical and satirical purposes was the Syrian author Lucian (born ca. A.D. 120), who wrote in Greek. His satires, often in dialogue form, present the Olympian gods and the old myths with a good deal of humor and critical insight. "The Judgment of Paris," found in Chapter 19, is a fine example of his art.

Roman Sources. The Greek authors are the foundation of our knowledge of classical myth. Nevertheless, the Roman authors were not merely derivative. Vergil (70–19 B.C.) developed the myth of the Trojan hero Aeneas in his epic, the *Aeneid*. In so doing, he preserved the saga of the fall of Troy, a part of the Greek epic cycle now lost to us. He also developed the legend of the Phoenician queen Dido and told a number of myths and tales associated with particular Italian localities, such as the story of Hercules at Rome. Several passages from Vergil appear in Chapter 26 as well as Chapter 15.

Vergil's younger contemporary Ovid (43 B.C.–A.D. 17) is the single most important source for classical mythology after Homer, and his poem *Metamorphoses* (completed ca. A.D. 8) has probably been more influential—even than Homer—as a source for representations of the classical myths in literature and art. A kind of epic, the poem includes more than 200 legends arranged in a loose chronological framework from the Creation down to Ovid's own time. Many of the most familiar stories come from Ovid, for example, the stories of Echo and Narcissus, Apollo and Daphne, and Pyramus and Thisbe. Ovid's poem on the Roman religious calendar, *Fasti*, is a unique source for the myths of the Roman gods, although he completed only the first six months of the religious year. We include a great deal from Ovid, in direct translation or in paraphrase.

The historian Livy (59 B.C.–A.D. 17) recorded the foundation myths of Rome in the first book of his *Ab Urbe Condita*. He is the source for many of the legends from Roman history that are closer to myth than history. Other Roman writers had antiquarian interests, but none wrote continuous accounts comparable with those of Livy.

Later in the first century A.D., there was a literary renaissance during the reign of the emperor Nero (54–68). The tragedies of Seneca present important versions of several myths, most notably those of Phaedra and Hippolytus, Medea, and Thyestes, the last named being the only surviving full-length version of the myth.

In the generation following Seneca, there was a revival of epic. The *Argonautica* of Valerius Flaccus (ca. 80) and the *Thebaid* of Statius (d. 96) are important versions of their respective sagas. After this time, there are few original works worth notice. One exception is a novel by the African rhetorician Apuleius (b. 123) formally titled *Metamorphoses* but better known to us as *The Golden Ass*. This is our source for the tale of Cupid and Psyche, while its final book is invaluable for its account of the mysteries of Isis.

Interest in mythology continued to be shown in a number of handbooks of uncertain date. We have mentioned the *Bibliotheca* of Apollodorus in Greek; in Latin, compendia were written by Hyginus (perhaps in the mid-second century) and Fulgentius (perhaps an African bishop of the sixth century). This tradition was revived during the Renaissance, especially in Italy, and we discuss some of the important handbooks of mythology in Chapter 27.

The Eclectic Variety of the Sources. It is readily apparent that this literary heritage offers infinite variety. The religious tales of Hesiod contrast with the sophisticated stories of Ovid. The historical legend of Herodotus differs in character from the legendary history of Homer. The philosophical myth of Plato and the romantic storytelling of Apuleius reveal contrasting spiritual hues. The dramatic environments of Aeschylus and Seneca are worlds apart. Yet *all* these authors from different periods and with diverse art provide the rich, eclectic heritage from which a survey of Graeco-Roman mythology must be drawn.

Translations. All the Greek and Roman works named here (except for the late Latin handbooks of mythology) are available in inexpensive translations. The Loeb series includes texts with facing translations, the latter of widely varying quality and readability, with improved, new editions made available annually. The translations published by Penguin and by the University of Chicago Press are generally both reliable and in some cases distinguished. But there is considerable choice and contemporary translations (some of them excellent) of standard works appear with surprising and gratifying frequency.⁴⁸ Yet one needs to be wary. Dover publications offers several Greek and Roman translations that should not be purchased indiscriminately; dramas are available individually, in thrift editions at an extremely modest price, but the poetic translations by

Sir George Young (1837–1930), for example, may be a bit more difficult for modern readers than they bargained for; yet the series includes the acceptable *Medea* by Rex Warner. The free translations of *The Oresteia* and of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* by the distinguished poet Ted Hughes stand as exceptional reinterpretations but can hardly serve as the basis for determining what Sophocles actually said—a vital concern for the student of mythology. Robert Fagles and Stanley Lombardo are, each in his own very different way, commendable translators for today's audiences, although one should be aware of the interpretative liberties they take as they impose their will upon a text. In the case of Homer, Richmond Lattimore wins the crown for his most faithful and poetic transmission of Homer's *Iliad*. Caveat emptor! Oxford University Press offers in its series Oxford World's Classics attractive paperback volumes of good translations of many works that might supplement our text, among them Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, translated by M. L. West, and Sophocles' *Antigone*, *Oedipus the King*, and *Electra*, translated by H. D. F. Kitto; other translations include Homer's *Odyssey*, Apollodorus' *The Library of Greek Mythology*, and Euripides, *Bacchae*, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, and *Rhesus* (translated by James Morwood).

The translations presented in this book are our own, and we attempt to offer accurate and accessible versions for the reader who knows no Greek or Latin and wants to come as close as possible to the original sources.

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THE GODS, RELIGION, AND THE OCCULT

See the Select Bibliography at the end of Chapter 6.

NOTES

1. See the bibliography for this chapter.
2. G. S. Kirk, *The Nature of Greek Myths* (Harmondsworth and Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 27. Kirk identifies a "traditional tale" as a myth that has "succeeded in becoming traditional . . . [and is] important enough to be passed from generation to generation."
3. See especially H. J. Rose, *A Handbook of Classical Mythology*, 6th ed. (London: Methuen, 1958), pp. 12–14, for his designations of myth, saga, and folktale.
4. *Legend* may be used as a general term like *myth* in its broadest sense. Often, however, it is defined as equivalent to *saga* and made to refer to stories inspired by actual persons and events. Thus for us *legend* and *saga* are one and the same. Many prefer the German word *Märchen* for the designation of folktales because of the pioneering work of the brothers Grimm (1857) in collecting and collating variations of oral tales and publishing their own versions.
5. Graham Anderson, *Fairytales in the Ancient World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 1. He has identified several motifs from familiar fairytales in Greek and Roman stories (e.g., those of *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, *Red Riding Hood*, and *Bluebeard*, among many others) and offers a comparison of *Cupid and Psyche* and *Beauty and the Beast*.

6. Sometimes *fable* is also applied as a general term, but it is better to restrict its meaning to designate a story in which the characters are animals endowed with human traits, the primary purpose being moral and didactic.
7. Cf. Paul Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths? An Essay on the Constitutive Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988 [1983]), on the creation of truth and history.
8. This has become a commonplace explanation of the human need for mythology; it has been formulated with particular conviction by Leszek Kolakowski in his *The Presence of Myth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989 [1972]). Kolakowski frames his discussion in terms of a contrast between myth and science; for him science in its technological aspect represents the truth that is to be distinguished from myth.
9. A case for discussion is presented by the excerpts from the historical myth of Herodotus, translated in Chapter 6.
10. Martha Graham, *Blood Memory* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), p. 4.
11. Ivan Strenski, *Four Theories of Myth in Twentieth-Century History* (Iowa City: Iowa University Press, 1987), pp. 71–128, provides a clear critique of Eliade's complexity. Among Eliade's many works, we single out in this context *Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries* (London: Harvill, 1960) and *Myth and Reality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).
12. See Chapter 27, especially pp. 669–670.
13. For Ixion and the Centaurs, see pp. 602–603.
14. See Friedrich Max Müller, *Comparative Mythology: An Essay* (1856; reprint of rev. ed. of 1909, Salem, N.H.: Ayer Company Publishers, 1977), which includes an "Introductory Preface on Solar Mythology" by Abram Smythe Palmer and a parody by R. F. Littledale, "The Oxford Solar Myth," i.e., Müller himself. For an assessment of Müller's theories, see the essay by R. M. Dorson, "The Eclipse of Solar Mythology," in T. A. Sebeok, ed., *Myth: A Symposium* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), pp. 25–63.
15. Also "contextualism" or "situationism" and "behaviorism" are to be found in Aristotle's writings, "the first scientific work on bio-social psychology . . . practically unknown to students of human nature today." For these and other observations explaining the profound debt of modern psychology to the perceptions of Greek dramatists and philosophers, see Patrick Mullahy, *Oedipus Myth and Complex: A Review of Psychoanalytic Theory* (New York: Grove Press, 1955), pp. 335–337.
16. "The Interpretation of Dreams," in A. A. Brill, ed., *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud* (New York: Random House, Modern Library, 1938), p. 308, quoted at greater length by Mullahy as an introduction to Chapter 1 of *Oedipus Myth*. Plato in his *Republic* (571C) has a famous description of the unbridled nature of dreams that includes the mention of intercourse with one's mother.
17. We do not attempt to summarize a complex and fruitful subject; see Mullahy, *Oedipus Myth*, pp. 102–113. For the beginner, Richard Wollheim, *Freud* (Glasgow: William Collins, 1971), provides a concise introduction to Freudian thought; similarly, one might consult Frieda Fordham, *An Introduction to Jung's Psychology*, 3d ed. (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1966), with a foreword by Jung. The bibliography for both Freud and Jung is, not surprisingly, voluminous and accessible.
18. Cf. Xenophanes, translated on p. 131.
19. Richard I. Evans, *Dialogue with C. G. Jung*, 2d ed. (New York: Praeger, 1981), p. 167.
20. Cf. Joseph Campbell, *Myths to Live By* (New York: Viking Press, 1972). Typically and

- unfortunately, Campbell does not pay enough attention to the Greeks and the Romans.
21. Jan Bremmer, "Oedipus and the Greek Oedipus Complex," in J. Bremmer, ed., *Interpretations of Greek Mythology* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 41–59 (the quotation is from note 42).
 22. E. O. Wilson, *Consilience* (New York: Knopf, 1988), pp. 81–85 and 193–196.
 23. See R. L. Gordon, ed., *Myth, Religion, and Society: Structuralist Essays by M. Detienne, L. Gernet, J.-P. Vernant, and P. Vidal-Naquet* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
 24. Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1993 [1955]), vol. 1, p. 10. The basic assumption that permeates his writing has merit: an early matriarchal society once existed in Europe with the worship of a great mother deity, and subsequently there was an invasion of a patriarchal society from the north and east; but many of his detailed arguments are extravagant and rash.
 25. E. R. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), p. 13; quoted in Kirk, *Nature of Greek Myths*, pp. 67 and 226. The best short expositions of the ritualist theory are the essays by Lord Raglan, "Myth and Ritual," and S. E. Hyman, "The Ritual View of Myth and the Mythic," in Sebeok, *Myth*, pp. 122–135 and 136–153.
 26. Bronislaw Malinowski, "Myth in Primitive Psychology" (1926); reprinted in *Magic, Science and Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1955).
 27. Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (New York: Dutton, 1961 [1922]), p. 25. For a survey of Malinowski's views in a historical context see Strenski, *Four Theories of Myth*, pp. 42–69.
 28. The best introduction to Lévi-Strauss is the "Overture" to *The Raw and the Cooked*, and classicists should read his article "The Structural Study of Myth" (which includes his interpretation of the Oedipus myth), to be found in Sebeok, *Myth*, pp. 81–106.
 29. Lévi-Strauss, quoted in G. S. Kirk, *Myth: Its Meaning and Function in Ancient and Other Cultures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 44.
 30. Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 2d ed., rev. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968 [1928]). Chapter 2 (pp. 19–24) is the essential statement of Propp's methodology.
 31. Propp's thirty-one functions are set out in his third chapter, pp. 25–65. The term *motifeme* was coined by the anthropologist Alan Dundes.
 32. This sequence of five functions is worked out by Walter Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), n. 22, pp. 6–7. He points out that the metamorphosis of the mother (e.g., Callisto into a bear, Io into a cow) is not part of a fixed sequence of functions.
 33. See Burkert, *Structure and History*.
 34. See W. Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred: Tracks of Biology in Early Religion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), especially Chapter 3, "The Core of a Tale."
 35. See Strenski, *Four Theories of Myth*, pp. 42–69, for a critical discussion of Malinowski's definition of myth.
 36. Some attempt to find the oral antecedent of a literary version of a Greek myth and turn to late compendia of tales such as that of Apollodorus to identify the original version. The original version of a myth (oral or literary and usually hypothetical) is

sometimes designated as the Ur-myth. It is difficult and often impossible to ascertain with any certainty the precise details or the date of versions of a classical story told by a late author, but the pursuit is interesting and can be rewarding—but it is beyond the scope of this introductory book.

37. Robert A. Segal, *In Quest of the Hero* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. xi–xxii, identifies differences among Freud, Jung, and Campbell in their psychological explanations of the hero myth.
38. Robert A. Segal, *Joseph Campbell: An Introduction* (New York: Meridian, 1997 [1987]). The bibliography for Joseph Campbell is considerable. See, for example, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 2d ed., Bollingen Series 17 (New York: Princeton University Press, 1968); *The Masks of God*, 4 vols. (New York: Viking Press, 1959–1968). These are preferable to his works for a more general audience of television viewers, for whom his approach is exceedingly attractive, but disappointing to the serious classicist who expects a deeper appreciation of Greek and Roman mythology; see *The Power of Myth*, with Bill Moyers (New York: Doubleday, 1988).
39. Numbers 1 and 16 in D. A. Campbell's *Greek Lyric* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967), vol. 1.
40. Helene P. Foley, ed., *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Translation, Commentary, and Interpretive Essays*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.
41. Marilyn Katz, *Penelope's Renown: Meaning and Indeterminacy in the Odyssey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 13. A starting point for the study of feminism and mythology is Mary R. Lefkowitz, *Women in Greek Myth* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986). The "moderate" approach of the author, however, is vigorously criticized by some feminists.
42. A. W. Gomme, "The Position of Women at Athens in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries B.C." in Gomme, A.W., ed., *Essays in Greek History and Literature*. Freeport, N.Y.: Essay Index Reprint Series, Books for Libraries Press, 1967 [1925].
43. This was the attitude, for example, of L. Lévy-Bruhl, *Primitive Mentality* (New York: Macmillan, 1923 [1922]).
44. A realization forcefully brought home after a reading of George Steiner, *Antigones* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), which discusses treatments of the Antigone theme in European literature; also Ian Donaldson, *The Rapes of Lucretia: A Myth and Its Transformations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982). Jane Davidson Reid provides a comprehensive collection of works indebted to Greece and Rome in *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts, 1300–1990s*, in 2 volumes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).
45. See Lowell Edmunds, *Oedipus: The Ancient Legend and Its Later Analogues* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), a survey of the many variations in ancient, medieval, and modern versions of this eternal myth.
46. See the bibliography on Orpheus at the end of Chapter 16; and we should not forget the Orpheus of music, theater, and the dance. A most fascinating collection of poetry by internationally acclaimed authors, *Gods and Mortals: Modern Poems on Classical Myths*, ed. by Nina Kossman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), includes thirty-one works inspired by the theme of Orpheus and Eurydice.
47. Invaluable is the Greek edition by T. W. Allen, W. R. Halliday, and E. E. Sikes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963 [1934]). See also J. S. Clay, *The Politics of Olym-*

pus: Form and Meaning in the Major Homeric Hymns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

48. A particularly good buy is *Ten Plays by Euripides* (New York: Bantam Books, 1960) in very readable translations by Moses Hadas and John McLean—all the plays of Euripides that one usually reads and all in one volume! Also in their catalogue is *The Complete Plays of Sophocles* in the stately translation of R. C. Jebb, perhaps a little too stately even in the revision by Hadas.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF GREEK MYTHOLOGY

As we have already seen, the historical dimension is a prominent feature of Greek legend or saga, and an outline of the historical background will be helpful for a fuller understanding.¹ Our knowledge of the early history of Greece and the Aegean is constantly changing, thanks to the fresh discoveries of archaeologists and other scholars. Consequently our view of Greek religion and mythology has been (and will continue to be) modified by new knowledge, not least in the area of legends that cluster around the sagas of Mycenae and Troy.

The foundations of modern archaeological work in the Mycenaean world were laid by the brilliant pioneer Heinrich Schliemann (1822–1890), who, because of his love of Greek antiquity in general and Homer in particular, was inspired by a faith in the ultimate historical authenticity of Greek legend. Although Schliemann's character and achievement have come under vehement attack, it is impossible to deny him pride of place.² In the 1870s he went to Troy, Mycenae, and Tiryns and confirmed the reality of the wealth, grandeur, and power of the cities, kings, and heroes of Minoan-Mycenaean saga. Sir Arthur Evans followed at the turn of the century, unearthing the splendid and grand complex of the Palace of Minos at Cnossus in Crete. A whole new world had been opened up.

For a long time, it was believed that Greece had not been inhabited before the Neolithic period. But we know today that the country was settled in Paleolithic times (before 70,000 B.C.). With the present state of excavation and study, our knowledge of this early period remains tentative. Evidence for the Neolithic period (ca. 6000–3000 B.C.) is more abundant. Archaeology has revealed settled agricultural communities (i.e., outlines of houses, pottery, tools, and graves). It is conjectured that the Neolithic inhabitants came from the east and the north. For our purposes it is noteworthy that evidence of religion seems apparent; particularly significant are little female idols, their sexuality exaggerated by the depiction of swollen bellies, buttocks, and full breasts. Male figures also are found (some ithyphallic), although in far fewer numbers. Was a fertility mother-goddess worshiped in this early period, and perhaps already associated with a male consort? The interpretation of prehistoric icons for an understanding of the worship of gods and goddesses in patriarchal and matriarchal societies has become a subject of intense scrutiny.³

THE BRONZE AGE

The Stone Age gave way to the Bronze Age in Greece, Crete, and the Islands with a migration from the east (the movement was from Asia Minor across the Aegean to the southern Peloponnesus and up into Greece). These invaders were responsible for the building of the great Minoan civilization of Crete. The Bronze Age is divided into three major periods: Early, Middle, and Late; these periods are also labeled according to geographical areas. Thus the Bronze Age in Crete is designated as Minoan (from the tradition of King Minos); for the Islands the term is Cycladic (the Cyclades are the islands that encircle Delos); in Greece it is called Helladic (Hellas is the Greek name for the country). The Late Bronze Age on the mainland (i.e., the late Helladic period) is also identified as the Mycenaean Age, from the citadel of power (Mycenae) dominant in Greece during this period. The chronology with the terminology is as follows:⁴

3000–2000 B.C.	Early Bronze Age	Early Minoan Early Cycladic Early Helladic
2000–1600 B.C.	Middle Bronze Age	Middle Minoan Middle Cycladic Middle Helladic
1600–1100 B.C.	Late Bronze Age	Late Minoan Late Cycladic Late Helladic; also the Mycenaean Age

MINOAN CIVILIZATION

The Minoan civilization grew to maturity in the Middle Bronze Age and reached its pinnacle of greatness in the following period (1600–1400 B.C.). The palace at Cnossus was particularly splendid (although another at Phaestus is impressive, too). The excavations confirm the tradition (as interpreted later, for example, by Thucydides) that Cnossus was the capital of a great thalassocracy (sea-power) and that Minoan power extended over the islands of the Aegean and even the mainland of Greece. The complex plan of the palace at Cnossus suggests the historical basis for the legend of the labyrinth and the slaying of the Minotaur by Theseus. Tribute was in all probability exacted from her allies or her subjects; Cnossus could have won temporary control over Athens, and the monarchy there could have been forced to pay tribute for a time, but subsequently Athens would have won freedom from Cretan domination. The fact that Cnossus had no walls (unlike the fortress citadels of Hellas) indicates that its confident security depended upon ships and the sea. The sophistication of Minoan art and architecture implies much about the civilization, but more particularly the painting and the artifacts reflect a highly developed sense of religion, for example,

the importance of the bull in ritual, the dominant role of a snake goddess, and the sacred significance of the double ax.⁵ It seems fairly clear that the worship of a fertility mother-goddess was basic in Minoan religion.

About 1400 B.C., Cretan power was eclipsed (archaeology reveals signs of fire and destruction) and the focus of civilization shifted to the mainland of Greece. Did the mainland Greeks overthrow Cnossus and usurp the Minoan thalassocracy, with the Athenians playing a significant role? Was an earthquake solely responsible for the eclipse of this island power? Theories abound, but there is no general agreement except insofar as scholars may be divided into two groups: those who stress the dominant influence of the Minoans on the mainland civilization, and refuse to attribute the downfall of Crete to a Mycenaean invasion, as against those who argue for Mycenaean (Greek) encroachment and eventual control of the island. We incline to the latter view.

Excavations on the island of Thera (modern Santorini, about seventy miles northwest of Crete) have unearthed exciting new finds, among them interesting frescoes, and have indicated clear signs of destruction by earthquakes in the Minoan-Mycenaean period which may be dated ca. 1600 B.C.; it had been conjectured that these same earthquakes were responsible for the disintegration of power on the island of Crete but they appear now to have been earlier. At any rate, archaeologists have turned to the mythical tale about Atlantis (recorded by Plato in his *Critias* and *Timaeus*), a great island culture that vanished into the sea; conflict between Atlantis and Attica for control of the sea had broken out when earthquake and flood caused the astonishing disappearance of Atlantis. Does this Platonic legend reflect in any way the actual destruction of Thera, or of Crete itself, and the subsequent encroachment of Mycenaean power?⁶ Again no certain answer is forthcoming.

THE MYCENAEAN AGE

On the mainland of Greece, the Middle Bronze Age (or Middle Helladic period) was ushered in by an invasion from the north and possibly the east. These Indo-Europeans are the first Greeks (i.e., they spoke the Greek language) to enter the peninsula; gradually they created a civilization (usually called Mycenaean) that reached its culmination in the Late Helladic period (1600–1100 B.C.).⁷ They learned much from the Minoans; their painting, palaces, and pottery are strikingly similar, but there are some significant differences. Schliemann was the first to excavate at Mycenae, the kingdom of the mythological family of Atreus, corroborating the appropriateness of the Homeric epithet, "rich in gold." Cyclopean walls (so huge and monumental that they were said to be built by the giant Cyclopes of myth) typically surround the complex palace of the king and the homes of the aristocracy; the entrance to Mycenae was particularly splendid, graced as it was with a relief on which two lions or lionesses flanking a column were sculptured—presumably the relief was of political and religious sig-

nificance, perhaps the emblem of the royal family. A circle of shaft graves within the citadel, set off in ritual splendor, has revealed a hoard of treasures—masks of beaten gold placed on the faces of the corpses, exquisite jewelry, and beautifully decorated weapons. Larger (and later) tholos tombs (also typical of Mycenaean civilization elsewhere and confirming a belief in the afterlife), built like huge beehives into the sides of hills below the palace complex, were dramatically and erroneously identified by Schliemann as both the treasury of Atreus and the tomb of Clytemnestra.

Schliemann's discoveries established the certainty of a link between the traditional tales of Greek saga, especially those contained in the Homeric poems, and the actual places named in the poems, for example Mycenae. Archaeologists have proved that these places were prosperous centers during the Mycenaean Age, and the distinction must be appreciated between the legends of heroes associated with Mycenaean palaces (Agamemnon at Mycenae, Heracles at Tiryns, Oedipus at Thebes, and Nestor at Pylos, to name four such heroes) and the actual world revealed by archaeologists. Carl Blegen's (1887–1971) discovery of the Mycenaean palace at Pylos settled once and for all the controversy over its site and established the plan of the palace, with its well-preserved megaron (i.e., central room with an open hearth); and his conclusion seems inevitable that this is the palace of the family of Nestor. It is difficult to imagine to what families, other than those of the legends, these citadels could have belonged. Yet, of course, we must be wary of a naive belief in the details of the poetic tradition.

In religion there were important differences between the Minoans and the Mycenaean. The northern invaders of 2000 B.C. worshiped in particular a sky-god, Zeus, and in general their religious attitudes were not unlike those mirrored in the world of Homer's celestial Olympians. How different from the spiritual atmosphere of the Minoans dominated by the conception of a fertility mother-goddess, with or without a male counterpart! At any rate, Greek mythology seems to accommodate and reflect the union of these two cultures, as we shall see in Chapter 3.

LINEAR B

Clay tablets inscribed with writing have been found on the mainland (an especially rich hoard was found at Pylos, which helped immeasurably in their decipherment). These tablets were baked hard in the conflagrations that destroyed these Mycenaean fortresses when they fell before the onslaught of the invaders.⁸ The key to the decipherment of the Linear B tablets was discovered in 1952 by Michael Ventris, who was killed in 1956 in an accident. His friend and collaborator, John Chadwick, has written for the layperson a fascinating account of their painstaking and exciting work on the tablets, one of the most significant scholastic and linguistic detective stories of this or any other age.⁹ Important for our

study is the finding of the names of familiar deities of classical Greece: Zeus and Hera (listed as a pair), Poseidon, Hermes, Athena, Artemis, Eileithyia (Eleuthia in the tablets), and the name Dionysus (if this is the god, a startling discovery, since it has usually been assumed that the worship of Dionysus did not come to Greece until after the Mycenaean age); also identified is an early form of the word *paean*, which was later applied as a title or epithet for Apollo. Similarly, Eualios appears, a name identified in classical times with Ares. The word *potnia* (mistress or lady) is frequent, and thus support is added to the theory that the Mycenaeans as well as the Minoans worshiped a goddess of the mother-fertility type and that the concept of chthonian deities that this implies was merged with that of the Olympians. The gods are listed in the tablets as the recipients of offerings (i.e., of animals, olive oil, wheat, wine, and honey), which suggests ritual sacrifice and ceremonial banquets.

TROY AND THE TROJAN WAR

Schliemann and Wilhelm Dörpfeld (his contemporary and successor) were pioneers at Troy in archaeological campaigns from 1871 to 1894. Carl Blegen was the next archaeologist to provide a significant reexamination of the site from 1932 to 1938; after Blegen's, excavations have been renewed since 1988 by a team of archaeologists, led by Manfred Korfmann from the University of Tübingen (Germany) and C. Brian Rose, like Blegen before him, from the University of Cincinnati.¹⁰

There were nine settlements on the site of Troy, situated at the hill of Hisarlik. Troy I was settled in the Early Bronze Age (ca. 2920–2450 B.C.), and there continued to be successive settlements on the site for a long period of history. It was an important city in the historical Greek period (Troy VIII, Ilium, ca. 700–85 B.C.) The Romans restored the city on a large scale in the first century A.D. (Troy IX, Ilium, 85 B.C.–ca. A.D. 500); the imperial family of Augustus Caesar honored the city as the home of their ancestor Aeneas. It was flourishing in the time of Constantine the Great (in the fourth century), and it survived until the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. Of the seven major settlements in the Minoan-Mycenaean period (Troy I–VII), Troy II (ca. 2600–2450 B.C., the citadel contemporary with the Late Troy I settlement) is particularly interesting because of treasure Schliemann claimed to have found at that level and his inaccurate assumption that he had found the city of Priam and the Trojan War. A picture that has become famous shows Schliemann's wife Sophia decked out in some of the jewelry from this treasure (called "The Gold of Troy" or "Priam's Treasure"), which Schliemann gave to the Berlin Museum. It disappeared during World War II, and not until the 1990s did the world learn that it resided in the Pushkin Museum in Moscow. When the Red Army overran Berlin at the end of World War II, they shipped the valuable treasure off to Russia.¹¹ Troy III–V belong to the period ca. 2450–1700 B.C. (Early and Middle Bronze Ages). Troy VI

(Troia or Ilios, ca. 1700–1250 B.C., Middle-Late Bronze Age) was identified by Dörpfeld as the city of the Trojan War. The collapse of Troy VI is dated ca. 1250 B.C. by the new excavators, who believe that the final building phase was ended by a severe earthquake. The fortification walls of Troy VI are particularly impressive, and Dörpfeld identified this settlement as the great city of King Priam, besieged and taken by the Greeks. According to Blegen, however, Troy VI was devastated by an earthquake, but it was the next city, Troy VII (Troy VIIa to be exact), that was the scene of the Trojan War, since for Blegen the evidence seems to provide signs of a siege and fire, indicative of the Trojan War: burnt debris and human skeletal remains, amid signs of devastation, wrought by invaders. For him the fall of Troy VIIa (not Troy VI) belonged ca. 1250. The new excavators date Troy VII ca. 1250–1040 B.C., Late Bronze Age–Early Iron Age, its first phase VIIa ending ca. 1150 B.C. There is a continuity of culture between Troy VI and Troy VIIa; the ruins of houses and citadel walls were reused for repairs; buildings are much smaller, more cramped and clearly arranged; the style of pottery remains Mycenaean; and the population and number of storage vessels are increased. All signs of a city under siege? After all, both Troy VI and Troy VIIa could be the city of Priam in two different phases. Blegen may, after all, be right, but of course much is in great dispute. Thus far, at any rate, Korfmann's conclusions seem to support Blegen's thesis.

And so, sad to say, *absolute* archaeological and historical proof for the identification of Priam's city and the reality of the Trojan War has yet to be found and, indeed, may never be found. Nevertheless, the temptation is overwhelming to conjecture that the excavated Troy (whether Troy VI or Troy VIIa or both) must be the city of Priam that fell to the Greeks; as for chronology, the date of the conflict was ca. 1250–1150 B.C., not too far from the traditionally accepted date of 1184 B.C. for the fall of Troy.¹²

The citadel for Troy VI was newly constructed in eight successive stages, its size (20,000 square meters) greater than any so far found in western Asia Minor, indicating its prestige and power. The fortifications consist of gently sloping walls of ashlar masonry, four to five meters thick and over six meters high, topped by a superstructure of mud-brick, with the inclusion of massive towers. The principal palaces on the summit no longer survive, but remains of large, impressive buildings have been found along the edge of the acropolis within the fortifications. There were several gates leading into the citadel, the principal one to the south, flanked by a tower.

The excavations that are in progress have revealed for Troy VI clear indications of a systematic division between the citadel itself and the lower area of habitation, making the size of the whole settlement approximately 200,000 square meters, with a population of approximately 7000. Sections of a ditch cut in bedrock (south of the mound) have been discovered, which define the outer limit of the inhabited zone of Troy VI. In the lower town traces of habitation indicate that a Bronze Age settlement existed between the central fortress and the outer

ditch. "The outer defense system consisted of an over-ten-foot-wide rock-cut ditch which would have stopped the advance of any horsedrawn chariot outside. . . ." ¹³ Behind this ditch was a fortification wall, "a palisade built of wooden posts set directly into the bedrock. . . . A parallel series of postholes undoubtedly served as support beams for a sentry walk behind the wall." There are also clear indications of an entrance gate with doorposts (about three meters wide), presumably offering access to a major street through the lower town. Also, part of this fortification wall of the lower town of Troy VI was found to join up to the northeast bastion of the citadel; "at no other Bronze Age site is there evidence for such a sophisticated wooden fortification system." A cemetery with cremation-burial urns lay to the south. Many bones attest to the common use of the horse. There is evidence from pottery of commercial links between Troy and the Mycenaean world. Thus we have greater proof that Troy VI, a large, palatial trading center, with its fortified citadel and inhabited lower city, protected by a ditch and a wall, could certainly have been of a magnitude and significance worthy of the power of Priam celebrated in the heroic tradition. From the conjecture that the Trojans probably charged tolls for those traveling through the Dardanelles or Hellespont, serious economic causes may be easily conjured up to explain a conflict between the Mycenaeans and the Trojans.

The excavators have also found, just as Blegen did, indications within the lower town of a violent destruction for the end of Troy VIIa, for example, a hastily buried fifteen-year-old female and "a number of long-range weapons, such as arrowheads and spearheads, and over one hundred stone pellets, probably used for slings, which were piled in heaps. This may indicate defeat in battle because successful defenders usually clean up such piles, whereas victorious aggressors tend not to care about them." Perhaps the most exciting and significant find of all, thus far, is a bronze stamp seal in the Luwian script, an Indo-European language found in the Hittite kingdom and some other sites in Western Anatolia (modern Turkey). Found in a house inside the citadel of Troy VI, here is the very first evidence for writing in Bronze Age Troy. New Hittite texts recently discovered elsewhere "indicate strong connections between the Hittite kingdom and 'Wilusa,' which should probably be identified with Troy." Also one of the texts (called the Alaksandus treaty) identifies among the deities of Wilusa a deity named Appaliunas, almost certainly the name for Apollo, the great god on the side of the Trojans in the *Iliad*. The cult of Apollo is believed to be Anatolian or Cypriot in origin; after all, Homer does call him "Lycian-born."

Other excavations under Korfmann's direction in the area of the Troad have unearthed further confirmation for the authenticity of Homeric geography and legend. Five miles south west of Troy lies Besika Bay, where the original seashore at the time of the Trojan War has been identified; nearby, a cemetery containing about 200 graves surrounded by a single wall has been unearthed; the cremations and burials were accompanied by pottery and funeral offerings

which are unmistakably Mycenaean and of the thirteenth century (the period of late Troy VI or Troy VIIa). It is difficult to resist the identification of this cemetery as that of the camp of the invading Greeks and Besika Bay, from which the island of Tenedos can be seen about six miles away, as the harbor where the Greeks anchored and encamped. Nearby is the headland of Yassi Tepe (formerly named Cape Troy) where there rises a great cone-shaped tumulus, Besik Tepe (now called Sivri Tepe), which most certainly goes back to the Bronze Age and very probably is the great tumulus mentioned by Homer. It must also be the mound, believed in classical times to be the tomb of Achilles and visited by Xerxes and Alexander the Great, who was inspired by his love of the *Iliad* and saw himself and his comrade Hephaestion as a second Achilles and Patroclus.

In the epic cycle of saga, the great leaders of the Mycenaean kingdoms banded together to sail against Troy and, even though the historical facts remain a matter of conjecture, the romance of this poetic legend has a reality too. Until it is disproven with certainty (an unlikely prospect), we have every right to believe that there once was an Agamemnon and a Clytemnestra, a Hector and an Andromache and an Achilles, who lived and died, no matter how fictitious the details of the story that they inspired; and handsome Paris and beautiful Helen ran away together in the grip of Aphrodite, providing the inciting cause for a great war that has become immortal. The final results of the re-excavation of Troy will, we fervently hope, provide some secure answers at last. The scientific, contemporary archaeologist and historian will settle for nothing less than written proof; dare one expect some such confirmation of the Trojan War now that a sample of writing has been found in Bronze Age Troy?¹⁴

END OF THE MYCENAEAN AGE AND HOMER

The destruction of the later phases of Troy VII (VIIb, to the beginning of the tenth century B.C.) marked the troublesome period of transition from the Late Bronze Age to the Age of Iron. The Greeks, we are to assume, returned from Troy in triumph. Yet not long after their return, the Mycenaean Age in Greece was brought to a violent end, perhaps precipitated by internal dissension. The widely held theory that the destruction was entirely the work of Dorians invading from the north and east has been questioned. Some historians not very convincingly associate the destruction of the Mycenaean kingdoms with the "sea peoples" mentioned in an Egyptian inscription put up by the pharaoh Rameses III in the twelfth century B.C., but there is still no certainty about the details of the end of the Bronze Age in Greece.

Darkness descends upon the history of Greece, a darkness that is only gradually dispelled with the emergence of the two great Homeric epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, in the eighth century B.C. The stories of the earlier period were kept alive by oral recitation, transmitted by bards like those described in the epics themselves. "Homer" almost certainly belongs to Asia Minor or one of the is-

lands (e.g., Chios) off the coast. In the cities of this area in this period, we find that monarchy is the prevailing institution; significantly enough, the social and political environment for the bard of this later age is not unlike that of his predecessors in the great days of Mycenae. With the re-excavation of Troy, some scholars prefer to describe Homer as an Anatolian (rather than a Greek) poet, and from the various traditions single out Smyrna as most likely for his birthplace, thus focusing his roots and that of his poetry upon Asia Minor (modern Turkey). Nevertheless, in light of our present limited knowledge, no final answers can be given to what has become "the Homeric question or questions"; the narrative of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* seems to have a particularly Greek point of view, and the poet (or poets) who first set them down did so in Greek.

Most important for the appreciation of the cumulative nature of the growth of the legends is the realization that there were two major periods of creative impetus, one before the destruction of Mycenaean civilization and one after. The Homeric poems maintain the fact and fiction of the Bronze Age, but they also portray their own Age of Iron. To mention but one example, archaeology shows us that burial was prevalent in the Mycenaean Age, but in Homer cremation is common. The saga of the Argonauts reflects an interest in the Black Sea that is historical—but was this interest Mycenaean, or do the details belong to the later age of Greek colonization (ca. 800–600 B.C.)? The legend as we have it must be a composite product of both eras. The Theseus story blends, in splendid confusion, Minoan-Mycenaean elements with facts of the later historical period of monarchy in Athens.

The Homeric poems were eventually set down in writing; this was made possible by the invention of an alphabet.¹⁵ The Greeks borrowed the symbols of the Phoenician script and used them to create a true alphabet, distinguishing by each sign individual vowels and consonants, unlike earlier scripts (such as Linear B) in which syllables are the only linguistic units. This stroke of genius, by the way, is typically Greek in its brilliant and inventive simplicity; surely no one of our countless debts to Greek civilization is more fundamental. Is the invention of the Greek alphabet and the setting down of the Homeric epics coincidental? Presumably the dactylic hexameter of epic poetry cannot be reproduced in the clumsy symbols of Linear B. At any rate, when tradition tells us that the legendary Cadmus of Thebes taught the natives to write, we may wonder whether he is supposed to have instructed them in Mycenaean Linear B or in the later Greek alphabet.

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NOTES

1. Emily Vermeule, *Greece in the Bronze Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), offers a survey (now out of date) that contains important earlier bibliography. Vermeule regretfully ignores Homer as evidence; many archaeologists today have returned to Homer cautiously with important results. See note 14 for Fitton's more recent survey.
2. Schliemann's life and career are the material for a bizarre and exciting success story. He amassed a fortune so that he could prove the validity of his convictions, which he pursued with passion. Earlier biographies tend to be romantically sympathetic: Emil Ludwig, *Schliemann: The Story of a Gold-Seeker* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1931);

- Robert Payne, *The Gold of Troy* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1959); Lynn and Gray Poole, *One Passion, Two Loves* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1966); and Irving Stone, *The Greek Treasure* (New York: Doubleday, 1975). More recently Schliemann has been characterized as a liar and a fraud: David A. Traill, *Schliemann of Troy: Treasure and Deceit* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995). Less scholarly, but nevertheless critical and more balanced, is the biography by Caroline Moorehead: *Lost and Found: The 9,000 Treasures of Troy: Heinrich Schliemann and the Gold That Got Away*. New York: Viking, 1996 [1994]. Susan Heuck Allen, *Finding the Walls of Troy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), another detractor, argues that Schliemann obscured his debts to the British archaeologist Frank Calvert for the identification and the excavation of the mound of Hisarlik as the site of Troy.
3. See the bibliography for Iconography and Religion, p. 34.
 4. The dates for these periods are serviceable. It is rash to insist on greater precision for this early period, the evidence for which fluctuates daily. The chronology of the Bronze Age is a subject of passionate dispute. Thus, attempts at a more precise chronology with further subdivisions within the periods are not reproduced here. For a scholarly treatment consult pertinent chapters and charts in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 3d ed., vol. 2, pt. 1, *The Middle East and the Aegean Region 1800–1380 B.C.*, ed. I. E. S. Edwards, N. G. L. Hammond, and E. Sollberger (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1973); and pt. 2, *The Middle East and the Aegean Region c. 1380–1000 B.C.* (1975).
 5. For a more detailed interpretation of the evidence in terms of Minoan-Mycenaean religion, see W. K. C. Guthrie, "The Religion and Mythology of the Greeks," in Edwards et al., eds., *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 2, pt. 2, chap. 40.
 6. For a survey of the excavations at Thera, the relationship to Crete, and theories about Atlantis, see Christos G. Doumas, *Thera: Pompeii of the Ancient Aegean* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1983).
 7. Some believe that a later wave of invaders (ca. 1600 B.C.) is to be specifically identified as the Achaeans in Homer; it is better to consider Achaeans virtually an equivalent term for the Mycenaean Greeks.
 8. Linear A tablets (Linear B is derived from the Linear A script), found on Crete, have not yet been deciphered; apparently Minoan Linear A is not Greek. Linear B tablets (written in an early form of Greek) have also been found at Cnossus with provocative implications for historical reconstruction. Hostile criticism of Evans is offered by Leonard R. Palmer, *Mycenaeans and Minoans*, 2d ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965).
 9. John Chadwick, *The Decipherment of Linear B*, 2d ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1958).
 10. Blegen's results have been published in a series of highly technical volumes. Like the reports of his excavations at Pylos, they are a monumental testimony to the scientific precision of modern archaeological procedures. Blegen has provided a survey of the excavations at Troy for the general reader: Carl W. Blegen, *Troy and the Trojans* (New York: Praeger, 1963). We are grateful to Manfred Korfmann, C. Brian Rose, and Getzel Cohen for information about the new excavations of Troy.
 11. The official catalog of the "Gold of Troy" exhibition at the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow (with beautiful color illustrations) has been published: Vladimir Tolstikov and Mikhail Treister, *The Gold of Troy: Searching for Homer's Fabled City*.

Translated from the Russian by Christina Sever and Mila Bonnichsen (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1996).

12. An excellent survey of the problems is given by Michael Wood, *In Search of the Trojan War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).
13. Details and quotations about the excavations come from the Newsletters of the Friends of Troy, offered by the Institute for Mediterranean Studies in Cincinnati, and *A Guide to Troia*, by the director of the excavations, Manfred Korfmann, and his staff, Excavation Guides Series: 1 (Istanbul: Ege Press, revised edition, 1999). Scholarly annual excavation reports appear in *Studia Troica* (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern), published in both German and English, which also includes interdisciplinary research concerning Troy.
14. J. Lesley Fitton, in her survey of Bronze Age archaeology, *The Discovery of the Greek Bronze Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), sensibly observes (p. 203): "It seems a sad decline to our modern recognition that the material remains of a pre-literate society, incompletely recovered, can properly be expected only to answer limited and impersonal questions." Nevertheless, she concludes (p. 197) that "Without writing, 'proof' [of the Trojan War] is well nigh unimaginable."
15. The argument for connecting Homer with the invention of the alphabet has been cogently made by H. T. Wade-Gery, *The Poet of the Iliad* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1952). See also Barry B. Powell, *Homer and the Origins of the Greek Alphabet* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

MYTHS OF CREATION

There were many myths about creation among the Greeks and Romans, and these myths have many parallels in other mythologies, such as Egyptian, Sumerian, Babylonian, and Hebraic. Homer (ca. 800 B.C.)¹ has the Titans Oceanus and Tethys (identified later in this chapter) responsible for the origin of the gods (*Iliad* 14. 201) and reflects a primitive belief in the geographical nature of the universe as a flat disc with hills, touched at its rim by the vast dome of the heavens. The deity Oceanus is the stream of ocean that encircles the earth (see figure on page 585). But Homer does not by any means provide a complete account of genesis. Hesiod (ca. 700), as far as we can tell, was the first to give literary expression to a systematic explanation of how the gods, the universe, and humankind came into being. At any rate his, the earliest account to survive, may be considered the classic Greek version. The genealogical scheme is presented in his *Theogony*, while his *Works and Days* adds significant details.

CREATION ACCORDING TO HESIOD

In the opening of the *Theogony*, Hesiod devotes many lines to the beauty and power of the Muses, with particular emphasis upon their ability to inspire the infallible revelation of the poet (a complete translation of the opening section of the poem is found in the Additional Reading at the end of this chapter). This ardent invocation to the Muses is no mere artistic convention but rather the utterance of a prophetic visionary.² Hesiod's vehement sincerity may be illustrated by these lines from the *Theogony* (22–34):

 They, the Muses, once taught Hesiod beautiful song, while he was shepherding his flocks on holy Mount Helicon; these goddesses of Olympus, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus first of all spoke this word to me, "Oh, you shepherds of the fields, base and lowly things, little more than bellies, we know how to tell many falsehoods that seem like truths but we also know, when we so desire, how to utter the absolute truth."

Thus they spoke, the fluent daughters of great Zeus. Plucking a branch, to me they gave a staff of laurel, a wondrous thing, and into me they breathed a divine voice, so that I might celebrate both the things that are to be and the things that were before; and they ordered me to honor, in my song, the race of

the blessed gods who exist forever, but always to sing of them themselves, the Muses, both first and last.

Hesiod's attention to the Muses is steeped in a religious aura of divinely inspired revelation. As he begins his genesis, Hesiod asks the Muses, "Tell me how first gods, earth, rivers, the boundless sea . . . the shining stars, and the wide heavens above came into being." This is their answer (*Theogony* 116–125):

☞ Verily, very first of all Chaos came into being, but then Gaia wide-bosomed, secure foundation of all forever, and dark Tartarus in the depth of the broad land and Eros, the most beautiful of all the immortal gods, who loosens the limbs and overcomes judgment and sagacious counsel in the breast of gods and all humans. From Chaos, Erebus [the gloom of Tartarus] and black Night came into being; but from Night were born Aether [the upper atmosphere] and Day, whom Night bore when she became pregnant after mingling in love with Erebus.

The Greek word *Chaos* suggests a "yawning void." Exactly what it means to Hesiod is difficult to establish.³ His account of creation, fraught with problems, begins paratactically, that is, very first of all Chaos (not a deity particularly, but a beginning or a first principle, perhaps a void) came into being (or was), but then (next) came Gaia (Gaea or Ge, Earth)⁴ and the others, all presumably out of Chaos, just as Hesiod actually states that "from Chaos" came Erebus and dark Night. Although some are adamant in their disagreement, we believe that this is the correct translation and interpretation of Hesiod (see Ovid's description of Chaos as the primal source, discussed later in this chapter). Tartarus is a place deep in the depths of the earth (*Theogony* 713 ff.); Erebus is the gloomy darkness of Tartarus; later it may be equated with Tartarus itself.

THE PRIMACY AND MYSTERY OF EROS

Love, typically a potent force in tales of creation and procreation, inevitably appears early in the *Theogony*. Hesiod, as we have just seen, characterizes the most beautiful Eros by one of his many descriptive touches, which strive to lift his didacticism to the realm of poetry. For the Romans, Eros was called Cupid (or Amor).

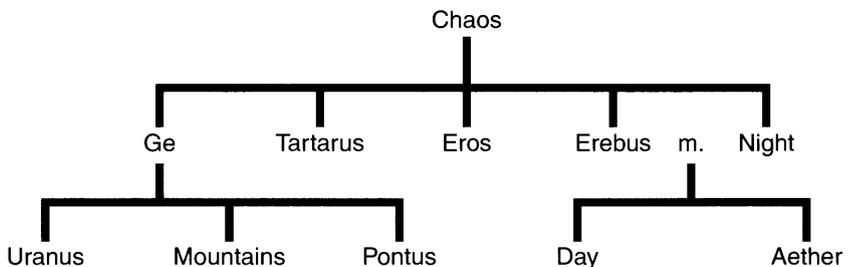


Figure 3.1. Descendants of Chaos

Another myth of creation is found in *Birds*, a comedy by the playwright Aristophanes (fifth century B.C.). For all its mock heroism and burlesque of religious and philosophical speculation, this account reflects earlier theory and illustrates both the multiplicity of versions and the primacy of Eros. A chorus of birds proves that the birds are much the oldest of all the gods by the following tale (683 ff.):

☞ Chaos, Night, black Erebus, and broad Tartarus were first. But Ge, Aer [the lower atmosphere], and Uranus [Sky] did not exist. In the vast hollows of Erebus first of all black-winged Night, alone, brought forth an egg, from which Eros, the desirable, burst forth like a swift whirlwind, his back glistening with golden wings. He mingled in broad Tartarus with Chaos, winged and dark as night, and hatched our race of birds and first led it to light. There was no race of immortals before Eros caused all things to mingle. From the mingling of couples, Uranus, Oceanus, Ge, and the immortal race of all the blessed gods came into being.

The Eros responsible for this fury of procreation may very well be the same Eros who is, in the later tradition, appropriately called Phanes (the one who first shone forth or gave light to creation) and Protogonus (first-born). If so, we have in Aristophanes a parody of a myth that was the basis of a religion ascribed to Orpheus in which the world-egg was a dominant symbol. Orpheus and Orphism are discussed in Chapter 16 and with them other religions similar in nature, designated generically as mystery religions.⁵ The link between myth and profound religious thought and experience in the ancient world is a continuing and fascinating theme.

CREATION ACCORDING TO OVID

Ovid, a Roman poet who wrote some seven hundred years after Hesiod, provides another classic account of genesis, different in important respects from that of Hesiod. Ovid is eclectic in his sources, which include not only Hesiod but many other writers, in particular, Empedocles, a fifth-century philosopher, who theorized that four basic elements (earth, air, fire, and water) are the primary materials of the universe.

Ovid's Chaos (*Metamorphoses* 1. 1–75) is not a gaping void but rather a crude and unformed mass of elements in strife from which a god (not named) or some higher nature formed the order of the universe.⁶ Ovid's poem *Metamorphoses*, which concentrates upon stories that involve transformations of various sorts, could very well provide a basic text for a survey of mythology. We shall on occasion reproduce Ovid's versions, since it is often his poetic, sensitive, and sophisticated treatment that has dominated subsequent tradition. But we must remember that Ovid is Roman, and late, and that his mythology is far removed in spirit and belief from that of earlier conceptions. Mythology for him is little more than inspirational, poetic fodder, however successful and attractive the

end product may be. Both the poetic and the real worlds of Hesiod and Ovid are poles apart.

THE SACRED MARRIAGE OF URANUS (SKY) AND GAIA (GE, EARTH) AND THEIR OFFSPRING

But let us return to Hesiod's *Theogony* (126–155):

 Gaia first brought forth starry Uranus, equal to herself, so that he might surround and cover her completely and be a secure home for the blessed gods forever. And she brought forth the lofty mountain ranges, charming haunts of the divine nymphs who inhabit the hills and dales. And she also bore, without the sweet union of love, Pontus, the barren deep, with its raging surf.

But then Gaia lay with Uranus and bore the deep-eddying Oceanus, and [the Titans, namely] Coeus, and Crius, and Hyperion, and Iapetus, and Theia, and Rhea, and Themis, and Mnemosyne, and golden-crowned Thebe, and lovely Tethys.

After them, she brought forth wily Cronus, the youngest and most terrible of her children and he hated his lusty father.

Moreover, she bore the Cyclopes, insulant at heart, Brontes (“Thunder”) and Steropes (“Lightning”) and bold Arges (“Bright”), who fashioned and gave to Zeus his bolt of thunder and lightning. They had only one eye, set in the middle of their foreheads but they were like the gods in all other respects. They were given the name Cyclopes (“Orb-eyed”) because one single round eye was set in their foreheads.⁷ Might and power and skill were in their works.

In turn, Gaia and Uranus were the parents of three other sons, great and unspeakably violent, Cottus, Briareus, and Gyes, arrogant children. A hundred invincible arms and hands sprang out of their shoulders and also from out of their shoulders there grew fifty heads, all supported by their stalwart limbs. Invincible was the powerful strength in these mighty hulks. Of all the children that Gaia and Uranus produced these were the most terrible and they were hated by their father from the very first.

For Hesiod, it appears, the first deity is female, a basic, matriarchical concept of mother earth and her fertility as primary and divine; comparative studies of iconography from primitive societies provide abundant evidence to confirm this archetype of the primacy of the feminine.⁸ The male sky-god Uranus (another fundamental conception), produced by Earth herself, emerges, at least in this beginning, as her equal partner; in matriarchal societies, he is reduced to a subordinate; in patriarchal societies he becomes the supreme god.

So it is, then, that the personification and deification of sky and earth as Uranus and Ge (Gaia) and their physical union represent basic recurring themes in mythology. Uranus is the male principle, a god of the sky; Ge, the female goddess of fertility and the earth. Worship of them may be traced back to very early times; sky and rain, earth and fertility are fundamental concerns and sources of

wonder to primitive agricultural peoples. The rain of Uranus might, for example, be imagined as his seed that fertilizes the hungry earth and makes her conceive. Thus develops the archetypal concept of a “sacred” or “holy marriage,” a translation of the Greek phrase *hieros gamos*. The sky-god and the earth-goddess appear again and again under various names and guises (for example, Uranus and Ge, Cronus and Rhea, and Zeus and Hera) to enact this holy rite.

The worship of the female earth divinity has many important facets, whether or not she assumes the dominant role in the partnership with her male consort. But whatever her name and however varied her worship, she is significant in all periods, either maintaining her own identity or lurking behind, influencing, and coloring more complex and sophisticated concepts of female deity. Ge, Themis, Cybele, Rhea, Hera, Demeter, and Aphrodite are all, either wholly or in part, divinities of fertility.⁹ Certainly the emotional, philosophical, religious, and intellectual range of the worship of the mother-goddess is vast. It may run the gamut from frenzied orgiastic celebrations, with the castration of her devoted priests, to a sublime belief in spiritual communion and personal redemption; from a blatant emphasis upon the sexual attributes and potency of the female to an idealized vision of love, motherhood, and virgin birth.¹⁰

The *Homeric Hymn to Earth, Mother of All* (30), in its invocation of Gaia (Ge), gives us the essentials of her primary archetype:

👤 About Earth, I will sing, all-mother, deep-rooted and eldest, who nourishes all that there is in the world: all that go on the divine land, all that sail on the sea and all that fly—these she nourishes from her bountifulness. From you, reverend lady, mortal humans have abundance in children and in crops, and it is up to you to give them their livelihood or take it away. Rich and fortunate are those whom you honor with your kind support. To them all things are bounteous, their fields are laden with produce, their pastures are covered with herds and flocks, and their homes are filled with plenty. These rule with good laws in cities of beautiful women and much happiness and wealth attend them. Their sons glory in exuberant joy and their daughters, with carefree hearts, play in blossom-laden choruses and dance on the grass over the soft flowers. These are the fortunate whom you honor, holy goddess, bountiful deity.

Hail, mother of the gods, wife of starry Uranus. Kindly grant happy sustenance in return for my song and I will remember both you and another song too.

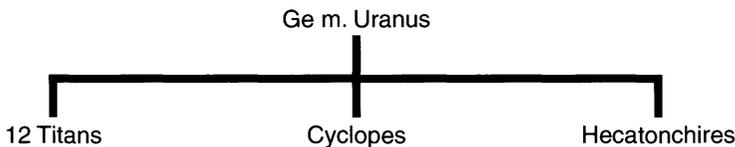


Figure 3.2. Children of Ge and Uranus

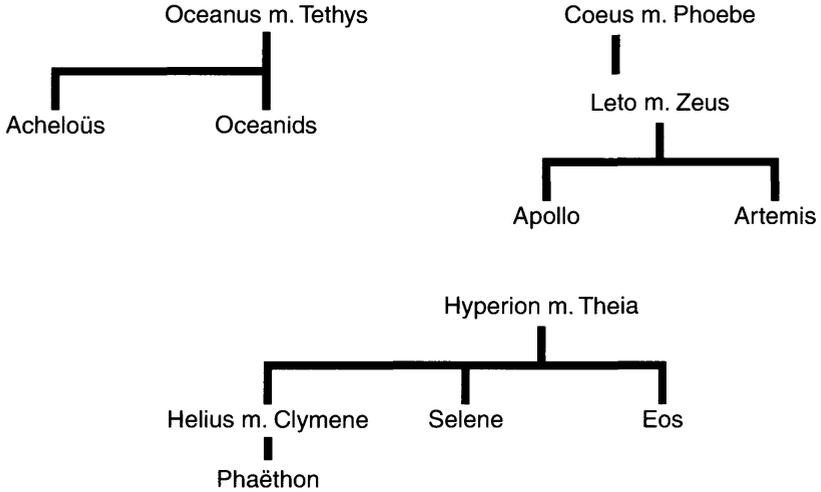


Figure 3.3. Descendants of the Titans

THE TITANS AND THEIR DESCENDANTS: OCEAN, SUN, MOON, AND DAWN

The Titans, children of Uranus and Ge, are twelve in number: Oceanus, Coeus, Crius, Hyperion, Iapetus, Theia, Rhea, Themis, Mnemosyne, Phoebe, Tethys, and “wily Cronus, the youngest and most terrible of these children and he hated his lusty father” (*Theogony* 137–138). They are for the most part deifications of various aspects of nature, and important for their progeny, although a few assume some significance in themselves. In the genealogical labyrinth of mythology, all lineage may be traced back to the Titans and to the other powers originating from Chaos. From these beginnings Hesiod continues to create a universe both real and imagined, physical and spiritual, peopled with gods, demigods, deified or personified abstractions, animals, monsters, and mortals; we cannot list them all here, but we shall select the most important figures. The Titans are best considered in pairs, since there are six males and six females; and the inevitable, incestuous matings of some of these brothers and sisters produce cosmic progeny.

Oceanus and the Oceanids. Oceanus and his mate, Tethys, produced numerous children, the Oceanids, three thousand daughters and the same number of sons, spirits of rivers, waters, and springs, many with names and some with mythological personalities.¹¹ Hesiod provides an impressive list, but he admits (*Theogony* 369–370) that it is difficult for a mortal to name them all, although people know those belonging to their own area.

Hyperion and Helius, Gods of the Sun. The Titan Hyperion is a god of the sun, more important than his sister and mate, Theia. They are the parents of Helius,

Selene, and Eos. Helios, like his father, is a sun-god. Duplication of divinities is common in the early scheme of things; they may exist side by side, or their names and personalities may be confused. Very often the younger generation will dominate the older and usurp its power.

The conventional picture of the sun-god is in harmony with the Homeric conception of geography described at the beginning of this chapter. The sun-god dwells in the East, crosses the dome of the sky with his team of horses, descends in the West into the stream of Oceanus, which encircles the earth, and sails back to the East, chariot and all. The *Homeric Hymn to Helios* (31) offers a glowing picture. Euryphaëssa (the word means “widely shining”), given as the wife of Hyperion and mother of Helios, is probably just another name for Theia.

 Now begin to sing, O Muse Calliope, daughter of Zeus, about shining Helios, whom ox-eyed Euryphaëssa bore to the son of Earth and starry Uranus. For Hyperion married glorious Euryphaëssa, his own sister, who bore him beautiful children: rosy-fingered Eos and Selene of the lovely hair and weariless Helios like the deathless ones, who shines for mortals and immortal gods as he drives his horses. The piercing gaze of his eyes flashes out of his golden helmet. Bright beams radiate brilliantly from his temples and the shining hair of his head frames a gracious countenance seen from afar. The exquisite, finely wrought robe that clothes his body shimmers in the blast of the winds. Mighty stallions are under his control. Then he stays his golden-yoked chariot and horses and stops there at the peak of the heavens, until the time when he again miraculously drives them down through the sky to the Ocean.

Hail, lord, kindly grant a happy sustenance. From you I have begun and I shall go on to celebrate the race of mortal men, the demigods, whose achievements the Muses have revealed to mortals.

Phaëthon, Son of Helios. A well-known story concerns Phaëthon (whose name means “shining”), the son of Helios by one of his mistresses, Clymene.¹² According to Ovid’s account (*Metamorphoses* 1. 747–779; 2. 1–366), Phaëthon was challenged by the accusation that the Sun was not his real father at all. His mother, Clymene, however, swore to him that he was truly the child of Helios and told him that he should, if he so desired, ask his father, the god himself.

Ovid describes in glowing terms the magnificent palace of the Sun, with its towering columns, gleaming with gold and polished ivory. Phaëthon, awed by the grandeur, is prevented from coming too close to the god because of his radiance; Helios, however, confirms Clymene’s account of Phaëthon’s parentage, lays aside the rays that shine around his head, and orders his son to approach. He embraces him and promises, on an oath sworn by the Styx (dread river of the Underworld), that the boy may have any gift he likes so that he may dispel his doubts once and for all. Phaëthon quickly and decisively asks that he be allowed to drive his father’s chariot for one day.

Helios tries in vain to dissuade Phaëthon, but he must abide by his dread oath. He reluctantly leads the youth to his chariot, fashioned exquisitely by Vul-

can,¹³ of gold, silver, and jewels that reflect the brilliant light of the god. The chariot is yoked; Helios anoints his son's face as protection against the flames, places the rays on his head, and with heavy heart advises him on his course and the management of the horses.

Phaëthon, young and inexperienced, is unable to control the four-winged horses who speed from their usual path. The chariot races to the heights of heaven, creating havoc by the intensity of the heat, then hurtles down to earth. Ovid delights in his description of the destruction; among the many transformations that result because of the heat, the Ethiopians at this time acquired their dark skins and Libya became a desert. Earth herself is ablaze and unable to endure her fiery anguish any longer.

Jupiter, in answer to Earth's prayer, hurls his thunder and lightning and shatters the car, dashing Phaëthon to his death. The river Eridanus receives and bathes him, and nymphs bury him with the following inscription upon his tomb: "Here is buried Phaëthon, charioteer of his father's car; he could not control it, yet he died after daring great deeds."¹⁴

Selene, Goddess of the Moon. Selene, daughter of Hyperion and Theia, is a goddess of the moon. Like her brother Helios, she drives a chariot, although hers usually has only two horses. The *Homeric Hymn to Selene* (32) presents a picture.



Tell in song about the moon in her long-winged flight, Muses, skilled in song, sweet-voiced daughters of Zeus, the son of Cronus. The heavenly gleam from her immortal head radiates onto earth. The vast beauty of the cosmos emerges under her shining radiance. The air, unlit before, glistens and the rays from her golden crown offer illumination whenever divine Selene, having bathed her beautiful skin, put on her far-glistening raiment, and yoked the powerful necks of her shining team, drives forward her beautifully maned horses at full speed in the evening; in mid-month brightest are her beams as she increases and her great orbit is full. From the heavens she is fixed as a sure sign for mortals.

Once Zeus, the son of Cronus, joined in loving union with her; she became pregnant and bore a daughter, Pandia, who had exceptional loveliness among the immortal gods.

Hail, kind queen with beautiful hair, white-armed goddess, divine Selene. From you I have begun and I shall go on to sing of mortal demigods whose achievements minstrels, servants of the Muses, celebrate in songs from loving lips.

Selene and Endymion. Only one famous myth is linked with Selene, and that concerns her love for the handsome youth Endymion, who is usually depicted as a shepherd. On a still night, Selene saw Endymion asleep in a cave on Mt. Latmus (in Caria). Night after night, she lay down beside him as he slept. There are many variants to this story, but in all the outcome is that Zeus granted Endymion perpetual sleep with perpetual youth. This may be represented as a punishment (although sometimes Endymion is given some choice) because of

Selene's continual absence from her duties in the heavens, or it may be the fulfillment of Selene's own wishes for her beloved.

Apollo, Sun-God, and Artemis, Moon-Goddess. Many stories about the god of the sun, whether he be called Hyperion, Helius, or merely the Titan, were transferred to the great god Apollo, who shares with them the same epithet, Phoebus, which means "bright." Although Apollo was, in all probability, not originally a sun-god, he came to be considered as such. Thus Phaëthon may become the son of Apollo, as sun-god. Similarly Apollo's twin sister Artemis became associated with the moon, although originally she probably was not a moon-goddess. Thus Selene and Artemis merge in identity, just as do Hyperion, Helius,



The Endymion Sarcophagus. Marble, ca. 200–220 A.D.; width 73 in., height 28 in. (with lid). The sarcophagus is shaped like a trough in which grapes were pressed. On the lid is a portrait of its occupant, Arria, with nine reliefs: those on the extreme left and right are of mountain gods, appropriate to the setting of the myth on Mt. Latmos; the next pair are representations of seasons, Autumn on the left and Spring on the right; the next pair are Cupid and Psyche on the left and Aphrodite and Eros on the right; the next pair are Ares on the left and his lover, Aphrodite, on the right. Balancing Arria is the union of Selene and Endymion. In the center of the main panel Selene descends from her chariot, whose horses are held by a nymph, to join Endymion, who lies to the right. Night pours the opiate of sleep over him (note the poppy-head between the heads of Night and the lion) and Cupids play around the lovers and beneath the right lion's head. Cupid and Psyche embrace beneath the left lion's head. Oceanus and Ge, respectively, lie to the left and beneath Selene's horses, and the horses of the chariot of Helius can be seen rising at the left, while Selene's chariot disappears to the right. The myth of Endymion was a common subject for Roman sarcophagi (seventy examples are known from the second and third centuries A.D.) because it gave hope that the sleep of death would lead to eternal life. (*The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1947 (47.100.4).* All rights reserved, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art.*)



Aurora, artist unknown. Watercolor and gold paper collage on silk, ca. 1820; $14\frac{1}{2} \times 14\frac{1}{4}$ in. The goddess in this painting, formerly called *Venus Drawn by Doves*, has been identified as Aurora (Eos) by verses that accompany other copies, beginning: "Hail, bright Aurora, fair goddess of the morn!/Around thy splendid Car the smiling Hours submissive wait attendance." Her chariot is drawn by doves and winged cupids fly around it. Aurora is dressed in early nineteenth-century clothing, appropriate for the American landscape to which she brings the light of a new day. (Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection, Williamsburg, Virginia. Reproduced by permission.)

and Apollo; and Selene and Artemis also are described by the adjective "bright," Phoebe (the feminine form of Phoebus).¹⁵ Therefore the lover of Endymion becomes Artemis (or Roman Diana).

Eos, Goddess of the Dawn, and Tithonus. Eos (the Roman Aurora), the third child of Hyperion and Theia, is goddess of the dawn, and like her sister Selene drives a two-horsed chariot. Her epithets in poetry are appropriate, for instance, rosy-fingered and saffron-robed. She is an amorous deity. Aphrodite, the goddess of love, caused her to long perpetually for young mortals because she caught her mate Ares in Eos' bed,¹⁶ but her most important mate was Tithonus, a handsome youth of the Trojan royal house. Eos carried off Tithonus; their story is

simply and effectively told in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (5. 218–238), which is translated in its entirety in Chapter 9.

 Eos went to Zeus, the dark-clouded son of Cronus, to ask that Tithonus be immortal and live forever. Zeus nodded his assent and accomplished her wish. Poor goddess, she did not think to ask that her beloved avoid ruinous old age and retain perpetual youth.

Indeed as long as he kept his desirable youthful bloom, Tithonus took his pleasure with early-born Eos of the golden throne by the stream of Oceanus at the ends of the earth. But when the first gray hairs sprouted from his beautiful head and noble chin, Eos avoided his bed. But she kept him in her house and tended him, giving him food, ambrosia, and lovely garments. When hateful old age oppressed him completely and he could not move or raise his limbs, the following plan seemed best to her. She laid him in a room and closed the shining doors. From within his voice flows faintly and he no longer has the strength that he formerly had in his supple limbs.

These poignant few lines depict simply and powerfully the beauty of youth and the devastation of old age, the devotion of love even though sexual attraction has gone, and give a warning to us all: Be careful what you pray for, since God may grant your request. Oscar Wilde puts it more cleverly: “When the gods choose to punish us, they merely answer our prayers.” Later writers add that eventually Tithonus was turned into a grasshopper.

THE CASTRATION OF URANUS AND THE BIRTH OF APHRODITE

We must now return to Hesiod (*Theogony* 156–206), and his account of the birth of the mighty goddess of love, Aphrodite (the Roman Venus). The children of Uranus and Ge (the twelve Titans, including the last-born, wily Cronus, who especially hated his father; the Cyclopes; and the Hecatonchires) all were despised by their father from the beginning (as we learned earlier).

 As each of his children was born, Uranus hid them all in the depths of Ge and did not allow them to emerge into the light. And he delighted in his wickedness. But huge Earth in her distress groaned within and devised a crafty and evil scheme. At once she created gray adamant and fashioned a great sickle and confided in her dear children. Sorrowing in her heart she urged them as follows: “My children born of a presumptuous father, if you are willing to obey, we shall punish his evil insolence. For he was the first to devise shameful actions.”

Thus she spoke. Fear seized them all and not one answered. But great and wily Cronus took courage and spoke to his dear mother: “I shall undertake and accomplish the deed, since I do not care about our abominable father. For he was the first to devise shameful actions.”

Thus he spoke. And huge Earth rejoiced greatly in her heart. She hid him in an ambush and placed in his hands the sickle with jagged teeth and revealed the whole plot to him. Great Uranus came leading on night, and, desirous of



love, lay on Ge, spreading himself over her completely. And his son from his ambush reached out with his left hand and in his right he seized hold of the huge sickle with jagged teeth and swiftly cut off the genitals of his own dear father and threw them so that they fell behind him. And they did not fall from his hand in vain. Earth received all the bloody drops that fell and in the course of the seasons bore the strong Erinyes and the mighty giants (shining in their armor and carrying long spears in their hands) and nymphs of ash trees (called Meliae on the wide earth).

When first he had cut off the genitals with the adamant and cast them from the land on the swelling sea, they were carried for a long time on the deep. And white foam arose about from the immortal flesh and in it a maiden grew. First she was brought to holy Cythera, and then from there she came to sea-girt Cyprus. And she emerged a dread and beautiful goddess and grass rose under her slender feet.

Gods and human beings call her Aphrodite, and the foam-born goddess because she grew amid the foam (*aphros*), and Cytherea of the beautiful crown because she came to Cythera, and Cyprogenes because she arose in Cyprus washed by the waves. She is called too Philommedes (genital-loving) because she arose from the genitals.¹⁷ Eros attended her and beautiful desire followed her when she was born and when she first went into the company of the gods. From the beginning she has this honor, and among human beings and the immortal gods she wins as her due the whispers of girls, smiles, deceits, sweet pleasure, and the gentle delicacy of love.

The stark power of this passage is felt even in translation. The real yet anthropomorphic depiction of the vast Earth enveloped sexually by the surrounding Sky presents its own kind of poetic power. The transparent illustration of basic motives and forces in human nature, through this brutal allegory of Aphrodite's birth, provides fertile material for modern psychology: the youngest son whose devotion to his mother is used by her against the father, the essentially sexual nature of love, the terror of castration. The castration complex of the Freudians is the male's unconscious fear of being deprived of his sexual potency, which springs from his feeling of guilt because of his unrecognized hatred of his father and desire for his mother. Hesiod provides literary documentation for the elemental psychic conscience of humankind. Finally, Hesiod, with characteristic simplicity, suggests Aphrodite's powers of fertility by a brief and beautiful image, "and grass rose under her slender feet."

Is it Hesiod's art that gets to the essence of things, or is it that he is close to the primitive expression of the elemental in human nature? It is a commonplace to say that, although elements of the more grotesque myths may be detected in

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Saturn Devouring One of His Children. By Francisco Goya y Lucientes (1746–1828); oil on plaster, transferred to canvas, 1820–1822, 57½ × 32½ in. The savagery of Saturn (Cronus) expresses Goya's insight into human cruelty and self-destructiveness, themes that dominated his thoughts in his old age. (*Madrid, Prado.*)

Greek literature, they were humanized and refined by the Greeks and transformed by their genius. Yet it is also true that these primitive elements were retained deliberately and consciously because of the horror, shock, and revelation they contain. The Greeks did not suppress the horrible and horrifying; they selected from it and used it boldly with profound insight and sensitivity. Thus Hesiod's account may reflect a primitive myth, the ultimate origins of which we can never really know, but his version gives it meaning with an artistry that is far from primitive.

CRONUS (SKY) AND RHEA (EARTH) AND THE BIRTH OF ZEUS

Cronus united with his sister Rhea, who gave birth to Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Hades, Poseidon, and Zeus. Cronus devoured all these children, except Zeus, as Hesiod relates (*Theogony* 453–506):



Great Cronus swallowed his children as each one came from the womb to the knees of their holy mother, with the intent that no other of the illustrious descendants of Uranus should hold kingly power among the immortals. For he learned from Gaia and starry Uranus that it was fated that he be overcome by his own child. And so he kept vigilant watch and lying in wait he swallowed his children.

A deep and lasting grief took hold of Rhea and when she was about to bring forth Zeus, father of gods and men, then she entreated her own parents, Gaia and starry Uranus, to plan with her how she might bring forth her child in secret and how the avenging fury of her father, Uranus, and of her children whom great Cronus of the crooked counsel swallowed, might exact vengeance. And they readily heard their dear daughter and were persuaded, and they counseled her about all that was destined to happen concerning Cronus and his stout-hearted son. And they sent her to the town of Lyctus in the rich land of Crete when she was about to bring forth the youngest of her children, great Zeus. And vast Gaia received him from her in wide Crete to nourish and foster.

Carrying him from Lyctus, Gaia came first through the swift black night to Mt. Dicte. And taking him in her hands she hid him in the deep cave in the depths of the holy earth on the thickly wooded mountain.¹⁸ And she wrapped up a great stone in infant's coverings and gave it to the son of Uranus, who at that time was the great ruler and king of the gods. Then he took it in his hands, poor wretch, and rammed it down his belly. He did not know in his heart that there was left behind, in the stone's place, his son unconquered and secure, who was soon to overcome him and drive him from his power and rule among the immortals.

Cronus and Rhea are deities of sky and earth, doublets of Uranus and Gaia, whose power they usurp, and their union represents the reenactment of the universal sacred marriage. But in the tradition, Cronus and Rhea have a more specific reality than their parents. Cronus appears in art as a majestic and sad deity, sickle in hand. He rules, as we shall see, in a golden age among mortals; and

after he is deposed by Zeus, he retires to some distant realm, sometimes designated as the Islands of the Blessed, one of the Greek conceptions of paradise. Cronus is called Saturn by the Romans.

Rhea, too, has a definite mythical personality, although basically yet another mother-goddess of earth and fertility. She sometimes is equated with Cybele, an Oriental goddess who intrudes upon the classical world; the worship of Rhea-Cybele involved frenzied devotion and elements of mysticism. Her attendants played wild music on drums and cymbals and she was attended by animals. The *Homeric Hymn to the Mother of the Gods* (14) pays tribute to this aspect of Rhea's nature:

 Through me, clear-voiced Muse, daughter of great Zeus, sing a hymn to the mother of all gods and all mortals too. The din of castanets and drums, along with the shrillness of flutes, are your delight, and also the cry of wolves, the roar of glaring lions, the echoing mountains, and the resounding forests.
So hail to you and, at the same time, all the goddesses in my song.

RELIGIOUS AND HISTORICAL VIEWS

Of great mythological significance is Hesiod's account of the birth of Zeus on the island of Crete.¹⁹ We can detect in this version some of the basic motives in the creation of myth, especially when we take into account later variations and additions. From these we learn that after Rhea brought forth Zeus in a cave on Mt. Dicte, he was fed by bees and nursed by nymphs on the milk of a goat named Amalthea. Curetes (the word means "young men") guarded the infant and clashed their spears on their shields so that his cries would not be heard by his father, Cronus. These attendants and the noise they make suggest the frantic devotees of a mother-goddess: Ge, Rhea, or Cybele. The myth is etiological in its explanation of the origin of the musical din and ritual connected with her worship.

Like many myths, the story of the birth of Zeus on Crete accommodates an actual historical occurrence: the amalgamation of at least two different peoples or cultures in the early period. When the inhabitants of Crete began to build their great civilization and empire (ca. 3000), the religion they developed (insofar as we can ascertain) was Mediterranean in character, looking back to earlier Eastern concepts of a mother-goddess. The northern invaders who entered the peninsula of Greece (ca. 2000), bringing with them an early form of Greek and their own gods (chief of whom was Zeus), built a significant Mycenaean civilization on the mainland, but it was strongly influenced by the older, more sophisticated power of Crete. The myth of the birth of Zeus reads very much like an attempt to link by geography and genealogy the religion and deities of both cultures. Zeus, the male god of the Indo-Europeans, is born of Rhea, the Oriental goddess of motherhood and fertility.

Two dominant strains in the character of subsequent Greek thought can be understood at least partly in terms of this thesis. W. K. C. Guthrie clearly iden-

tifies this dual aspect of the religion of classical Greece in the contrast between the Olympian gods of Homer and the cult of the mother-goddess Demeter at Eleusis:

The Mother-goddess is the embodiment of the fruitful earth, giver of life and fertility to plants, animals and men. Her cult takes certain forms, involving at least the more elementary kinds of mysticism, that is, the belief in the possibility of a union between the worshipper and the object of his worship. Thus the rites may take the form of adoption as her son or of sexual communion. Orgiastic elements appear, as in the passionate, clashing music and frenzied dancing employed by the followers of Rhea or Cybele. . . . What an essentially different atmosphere we are in from that of the religion of the Achaean heroes described by Homer. There we are in clear daylight, in a world where the gods are simply more powerful persons who might fight for or against one, with whom one made bargains or contracts. The Achaean warrior did not seek to be born again from the bosom of Hera. He was indeed the reverse of a mystic by temperament.²⁰

IMAGES OF CREATION MYTHS

How does one represent the Creation of the world out of emptiness and timelessness? Greek artists did not attempt to do so, for they preferred to create images of particular episodes—for example the birth of Aphrodite (see figure on p. 172) and scenes representing the triumph of the Olympian gods over the Titans and Giants. Victories of the Olympians over snake-legged monsters derive from Eastern myths (see Chapter 4, p. 98) and are common in Greek vase painting from the sixth century B.C. on, while monsters are common in Greek art of the “orientalizing” period of the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. The most popular subjects for Greek artists were the Gigantomachy and related scenes, in which the forces of order (Zeus and the Olympians) triumph over those of disorder and violence (the Titans, the Giants, and Typhoeus). Such scenes often carry a political message, most commonly focusing on the superiority of Greek civilization over the barbarians, especially in the period after the Greek victory over the Persians in 480–479 B.C. (for example, the metopes on the east side of the Parthenon at Athens and the painting on the inside of the shield of Athena Parthenos in the same temple: see Chapter 8, pp. 161–162). At Delphi, the Gigantomachy was represented in the west pediment of the temple of Apollo (ca. 520 B.C.) and on the north frieze of the treasury of the Siphnians (ca. 525 B.C.: shown here). It was the principal subject of the sculptures on the great altar of Zeus at Pergamum (ca. 150 B.C.), where it glorified Telephus, ancestor of the reigning dynasty and son of Heracles, whose help was crucial in the victory of Zeus over the Giants. One of the most complex programs, which included the Gigantomachy and the creation of woman (Pandora), was that of the Parthenon (see Chapter 8, pp. 158–162). We show four different solutions to the problem of representing Creation—two from Greece, one from Australia, and one from eighteenth-century Britain.



Gigantomachy. Detail from the north frieze of the Treasury of the Siphnians at Delphi, ca. 525 B.C.; marble, height 25 in. From left, two giants attack two goddesses (not shown); Dionysus, clothed in a leopardskin, attacks a giant; Themis (a Titan but also a consort of Zeus) drives a chariot drawn by lions; a lion attacks a giant; Apollo and Artemis chase a running giant; corpse of a giant protected by three giants. The names of all the figures were inscribed by the artist. The giants are shown as Greek hoplites—a device both for making the battle more immediate for a Greek viewer and for differentiating between the Olympians and the giants. (*Delphi Museum*.)

We can detect the ramifications of this paradox again and again in many places in the development of Greek civilization, but perhaps we feel it most clearly in the mysticism and mathematics that permeate Greek philosophical attitudes: the numbers of Pythagoras and the immortality of the soul in Orphic doctrine; the dichotomy of Platonic thought and Socratic character in the search for clarity and definition through rational argument coupled with the sound of an inner voice, the depths of a trance, and divine revelation in terms of the obscure and profound symbols of religious myth. God is a geometer and a mystic.

MYTHOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Ample material is all too apparent for testing the most persistent of interpretative theories discussed in Chapter 1. Here are myths predominantly about nature, which accord with the analysis of Max Müller, although we need not, like Müller, argue that all subsequent mythological stories must be interpreted as allegories of cosmological and natural phenomena.

Feminist concerns are addressed prominently: mother Earth is the first and most fundamental deity, and the feminine will always remain aggressively assertive, if not *always* dominant, in Graeco-Roman mythology; but it is encroached upon by masculine conceptions of the divine, as patriarchy in both society and religion gains a supremacy, which is not, by any means, always absolute over matriarchy.



Zeus Attacks Typhoeus. Apulian red-figure oinochoe by the Arpi painter, late fourth century B.C. Zeus rides in a chariot driven by Hermes; the snake-legged Typhoeus tries to defend himself with a rock as a huge wind-monster puffs vainly against the Olympian gods. (*British Museum.*)

Most apparent is the constant interweaving of structuralist motifs. The dualities (binary opposites) of Lévi-Strauss are everywhere: chaos/order, male/female, sky/earth, youth/age, and beauty/ugliness. Psychological and psychoanalytical motifs abound: Freudian sexuality is blatantly manifest in the castration of Uranus, and the subconscious motivations of the psyche reveal themselves in the recurring pattern of the victory of the ambitious son in his battle

Nawura, Dreamtime Ancestor Spirit. By Djawida, 1985; natural pigments on bark, 61 × 27 in. In the religion of the Aborigines of Australia the Dreaming (or Dreamtime)—a European term—is the period outside of time in which the creation and ordering of the cosmos takes place and in which supernatural beings and ancestors are agents of creation. Being outside of time, it is always present. Djawida's painting shows an ancestral creator and culture-hero who taught human beings the arts of living. Unlike the Greeks, the Aborigines do not set a dividing gulf between human and animal creation. So Nawura has a crocodile jaw and six fingers on each hand (like his wives), and he is accompanied by various animals (turtle, crocodile, kangaroo, fish, platypus, emu) and various attributes of the arts that he taught. In contrast, the Greek Prometheus is unequivocally human in form and attributes. (*National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.*)





for power against his ruthless father. The Jungian archetype of the holy marriage that is enacted three times (by Uranus and Gaia, Cronus and Rhea, and finally Zeus and Hera) is equally basic and universal. And the characters in these conflicts in the beginning of things are themselves archetypes: earth mother and queen, sky father and king, vying for control and settling for an uneasy and sometimes bitter reconciliation between the sexes.

Above all, these stories are etiological, beautiful and powerful mythical explanations of the origins and nature of the universe and the devastating physical and emotional force of Love.

ADDITIONAL READING

HESIOD AND THE MUSES (*THEOGONY*, I–II5)

The poet Hesiod has a much greater identity than his predecessor Homer, who is more immediately linked to an oral tradition and belongs to the coast of Asia Minor or the adjacent islands. The date for Hesiod is in much dispute, but he probably composed his two poems the *Theogony* and *Works and Days* in the period ca. 700. Which was written first also is uncertain, and other works (e.g., the *Catalogs of Women and Heroines* and *Divination by Birds*) are dubiously to be attributed to him personally. Certainly the *Shield of Heracles* belongs later.

As we have seen, in the *Theogony* Hesiod provides some information about his life. More details are to be found in his *Works and Days*, a didactic poem about farming incorporating important mythological stories, which are excerpted in the next chapter. From these two poems, the following biographical sketch may be drawn.

Hesiod's father came from Cyme, situated in the larger area of Aeolis in Asia Minor. He eventually crossed the Aegean and settled in Ascra, a town near Mt. Helicon, in Boeotia, where Hesiod was born and lived his life and which he describes with his usual dour outlook as (*Works and Days* 640) "bad in winter, difficult in summer, and never good at all." Hesiod had a son, so we must assume

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The Ancient of Days. By William Blake (1757–1827); relief etching printed on paper with hand coloring, 1794, about 9½ × 6½ in. The Platonic notion of the Creator as geometer is dramatically expressed by Blake in the frontispiece to his book *Europe: A Prophecy*, printed and published by him at Lambeth in 1794. His Creator is Urizen (the root of whose name is the Greek word meaning "to set limits"), creator of the material world, author of false religions, and tyrant over the human spirit because of his reasoning powers and materialism. By his act of creation, Urizen separated the beings who represent, respectively, the Spirit of Joy and Poetry and the Spirit of Repressive Religion and Law. The compasses derive from Milton's lines (*Paradise Lost* 7. 225–227: "He took the golden compasses prepar'd/ . . . to circumscribe/ This Universe and all created things"): Milton could well have been thinking of Plato's demiurge (creator). Thus the Greek and biblical myths of the separation of earth and sky, and of the coming of evil, contribute to Blake's political and religious allegory. (*Smith College, Mortimer Rare Book Room.*)

that he got married. After all, misanthrope that he is, Hesiod still recommends a good marriage, if it can be found. Perhaps he was embittered by his experiences with his wife—an idle conjecture! He does tell us for a fact about his embitterment because of betrayal by his brother Perses.

After the death of their father, Hesiod had a serious dispute with Perses over their inheritance. The case was brought before a court, and the judges, who were bribed by Perses, cheated Hesiod of his fair share. Hesiod composed the *Works and Days* as an admonition to his brother to follow the path of justice and obey the righteous dictates of the one god Zeus. The *Theogony* too is drenched in a similar religious fervor, describing the genesis of the world, mortals, and the gods and tracing the momentous events that led to the supremacy of Zeus.

Hesiod grew up as a farmer and a shepherd and became a poet, and he once sailed to Chalcis on the island of Euboea. There, at the funeral games of Amphidamas, he won the first prize in the poetry contest, a tripod, which he dedicated to the Muses at the very spot on Mt. Helicon where he had received their divine inspiration.

Here is the text of the opening section of the *Theogony*, a lengthy tribute and invocation to his beloved Muses, some but by no means all of which has been included in the body of this chapter. The Muses are discussed further in the concluding section of Chapter 5.



HESIOD BEGINS HIS *THEOGONY* WITH A HYMN TO THE MUSES (1–21)

With the Heliconian Muses let us begin to sing, who have as their own Mount Helicon, lofty and holy. Round about the waters of a violet-hued spring they dance on delicate feet, and also round the altar of Zeus, the mighty son of Cronus. After they have bathed their soft skin in the brook, Permessus, or Hippocrene, “The Horse’s Spring,” or the holy Olmeius, at the very peak of Helicon they perform their choral dances, lovely and enticing, with firm and flowing steps. From here they set forth, enveloped and invisible in an impenetrable mist and proceed on their way in the night, singing hymns with exquisite voice in praise of: Zeus, who bears the aegis, and his queen Hera, of Argos, who walks on golden sandals, and bright-eyed Athena, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, and Phoebus Apollo, and Artemis, who delights in shooting arrows, and Poseidon, who firmly embraces the earth and violently shakes it, and revered Themis, and Aphrodite, with her seductive eyes, and golden-crowned Hebe, and beautiful Dione, and Leto, and Iapetus, and wily Cronus, and Eos, and great Helius, and bright Selene, and Earth, and great Oceanus, and black Night, and the holy race of the other immortals, who live forever.

THE MUSES TEACH AND INSPIRE HESIOD (22–35)

They, the Muses, once taught Hesiod beautiful song, while he was shepherding his flocks on holy Mount Helicon; these goddesses of Olympus, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus first of all spoke this word to me, “Oh, you shepherds of the fields, base and lowly things, little more than bellies, we know how to tell many falsehoods that seem like truths but we also know, when we so desire, how to utter the absolute truth.” Thus they spoke, the fluent daughters of great Zeus. Pluck-

ing a branch, to me they gave a staff of laurel, a wondrous thing, and into me they breathed a divine voice, so that I might celebrate both the things that are to be and the things that were before; and they ordered me to honor, in my song, the race of the blessed gods who exist forever, but always to sing of them themselves, the Muses, both first and last. But enough of this digression about my personal encounter with the Muses amidst the oaks and stones of the mountain.²¹

HESIOD BEGINS HIS HYMN TO THE MUSES ONCE AGAIN (36–73)

You then, come, let us begin with the Muses, who by their song delight the great mind of Zeus on Olympus, as they reveal with harmonious voices, the things that are and the things that are to be and the things that were before. The sweet sound flows from their tireless lips and the household of loud-thundering Zeus, their father, laughs in joy at their song, resounding pure as a lily. The peaks of snowy Olympus and the homes of the gods resound. Pouring forth their divine music, first of all they celebrate in song the revered race of the gods from the very beginning, those whom Gaia and Uranus bore and the deities, givers of good things, who were their offspring. Next they begin by extolling Zeus, father of both gods and men and they end their song with him, praising the extent to which he is pre-eminent among the gods and the greatest in might. And then in turn, singing about the race of human beings and that of the powerful giants, they delight the mind of Zeus on Olympus—these Olympian Muses, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus, who bring forgetfulness of ills and cessation of sorrows. Mnemosyne (“Memory”), the mistress of Eleutheræ on Mount Helicon bore them in Pieria, after mingling with the son of Cronus. For nine nights clever Zeus lay with her, mounting her holy bed, apart from the other immortals. When it was due time, after the seasons had come round and the months had passed and the many days were completed, near the highest peak of snowy Olympus, she gave birth to nine daughters, all of like disposition, with hearts committed to song and minds free from care. There on Olympus they perform their lovely dances and have their beautiful home. By their side also the Charites (“Graces”) and Himeros (“Desire”) dwell amidst delightful abundance. From their lips they sing a lovely song, celebrating with praise the privileges and solicitous behavior of all the immortals. After their birth, they went to the top of Olympus with their divine song, delighting in their beautiful voices. And the black earth echoed and reechoed to their singing. A lovely sound rose up from their delicate footsteps, as they returned to their father. He rules as king in heaven, he himself holding the bolt of thunder and glowing lightning, after having conquered with his might his father Cronus. To each of the immortals he distributed privileges fairly and assigned honors equitably.

ALL NINE MUSES (ESPECIALLY CALLIOPE) INSPIRE KINGS (74–103)

These things then the Muses sang, having their home on Olympus, the nine daughters begotten by great Zeus: Clio and Euterpe and Thalia and Melpomene and Terpsichore and Erato and Polyhymnia and Urania and Calliope. She is the most important of them all because she attends upon revered kings. They pour honeyed dew on the tongue of anyone of the kings cherished by Zeus, whom they, the daughters of great Zeus, honor and look upon favorably at his birth; and from his mouth words flow as sweet as honey. All the people look up to

him as he dispenses justice with fair impartiality; and soon speaking with confidence and knowledge he would end even the greatest of disputes. For this very purpose there are wise kings to settle quarrels easily among people who wrong each other in their dealings, by prevailing in the achievement of just retribution with gentle persuasion. As he passes through the city, they greet him with honey-eyed respect, like a god, and he is conspicuous in any assembly. Such is the nature of the holy gift that the Muses bestow among mortals. From the Muses and Apollo come singers and lyre-players on this earth but kings come from Zeus. Blessed is the one whom the Muses love. Sweet is the sound of the words which flow from his lips. For if anyone has a fresh grief in his soul and his troubled heart is parched with sorrow and then a bard, servant of the Muses, sings a hymn about the glorious accomplishments done by men of old and the blessed gods who have their homes on Olympus, soon the one in distress forgets his woes and does not remember any of his troubles, which have been dispelled so quickly by this gift of song bestowed by the goddesses.

HESIOD INVOKES THE MUSES TO TELL THROUGH HIM THE STORY OF GENESIS (104–115)

Hail, daughters of Zeus. Give me enticing song. Celebrate the holy race of the immortal gods existing forever, those who were born from Earth (Ge) and starry Heaven (Uranus) and those from dark Night and those whom the briny Sea (Pontus) nurtured. Tell how in the beginning gods and Earth (Gaia) came into being and rivers and the boundless sea with its raging surf and the shining stars and the wide firmament above and the gods who were born of them, givers of good things, and how they divided up their wealth and how they shared their honors and also how in the first place they occupied Olympus with its many clefts. You Muses, who have your homes on Olympus, reveal these things to me, and tell from the beginning, which of them first came into being. . . .

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

See the Select Bibliography at the end of Chapter 4.

NOTES

1. Dates for Homer and Hesiod are tentative and controversial.
2. Since the Muses are the daughters of Zeus, their revelation comes from the infallible knowledge of the supreme god.
3. Perhaps Hesiod may anticipate the pre-Socratic philosophers who sought a primal world substance or substances. Thales (ca. 540) seems to provide a startling break with mythological and theological concepts when he claims water to be the source of everything, with shattering implications for both science and philosophy.
4. We shall use the names Gaia, Gaea, and Ge, which mean "earth," interchangeably.
5. For the Orphic myth of creation in particular, see pp. 362–363.
6. The concept of god creating something out of nothing is not found in the Greek and Roman tradition.
7. These Cyclopes are distinct from the Cyclops Polyphemus and his fellows.

8. See the bibliography for Iconography and Religion, p. 34. This matriarchal concept belongs to both the matriarchs and the patriarchs; it depends upon whose point of view you are talking about.
9. Cf. Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype*, 2d ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).
10. Indeed some scholars are ready to find Ge's presence in every goddess and are deeply suspicious of even the most circumspect virgin deities.
11. Included are many important rivers such as the Nile, Alpheus, and Scamander, to mention only three in this world, and the Styx, an imaginary one in the realm of Hades. The patronymic Oceanid regularly refers to a daughter of Oceanus and not a son.
12. For other lovers of Helius, Leucothoë, Clytië, and Rhode, see pp. 607 and 617.
13. When a Roman version of a myth is recounted, the Roman names of the original text will be used. Vulcan is Hephaestus, Jupiter is Zeus, etc. For the Roman names of the major Greek deities, see the beginning of Chapter 5, p. 108.
14. His sisters (daughters of the Sun) in their mourning for Phaëthon are turned into trees, from whose bark tears flow, which are hardened into amber by the sun and dropped into the river. Away in Liguria his cousin, Cycnus, mourns for him, and he too changes and becomes a swan.
15. Artemis, like Selene, as a moon-goddess is associated with magic, since the link between magic and the worship of the moon is close. Apollo and Artemis themselves have a close link with the Titans. The Titan Coeus mated with his sister Phoebe, and their daughter Leto bore Artemis and Apollo to Zeus. Coeus and Phoebe are little more than names to us, but Phoebe is the feminine form of Phoebus, and she herself may very well be another moon-goddess. Hecate, goddess of the moon, ghosts, and black magic, is but another aspect of both Selene and Artemis (see pp. 208–210).
16. Orion, Cleitus, and Cephalus were also all beloved by Eos.
17. Perhaps an intentional play upon the word *philommeides*, "laughter-loving," a standard epithet of Aphrodite.
18. There is trouble in the text concerning Hesiod's identification of the mountain as Dicte or Aegeum.
19. Another version places the birth on the mainland of Greece in Arcadia.
20. W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Greeks and Their Gods* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), p. 31.
21. This sentence is an interpretation of line 35, which literally means: "But why all this about an oak or a stone?"

ZEUS' RISE TO POWER: THE CREATION OF MORTALS

THE TITANOMACHY: ZEUS DEFEATS HIS FATHER, CRONUS

When Zeus had grown to maturity, Cronus was beguiled into bringing up all that he had swallowed, first the stone and then the children.¹ Zeus then waged war against his father with his disgorged brothers and sisters as allies: Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Hades, and Poseidon. Allied with him as well were the Hecatonchires and the Cyclopes, for he had released them from the depths of the earth, where their father, Uranus, had imprisoned them. The Hecatonchires were invaluable in hurling stones with their hundred-handed dexterity, and the Cyclopes forged for him his mighty thunder and lightning. On the other side, allied with Cronus, were the Titans—with the important exception of Themis and her son Prometheus, both of whom allied with Zeus. Atlas, the brother of Prometheus, was an important leader on the side of Cronus.

The battle was of epic proportions, Zeus fighting from Mt. Olympus, Cronus from Mt. Othrys. The struggle is said to have lasted ten years.² An excerpt from Hesiod conveys the magnitude and ferocity of the conflict (*Theogony* 678–721):

 The boundless sea echoed terribly, earth resounded with the great roar, wide heaven trembled and groaned, and high Olympus was shaken from its base by the onslaught of the immortals; the quakes came thick and fast and, with the dread din of the endless chase and mighty weapons, reached down to gloomy Tartarus.

Thus they hurled their deadly weapons against one another. The cries of both sides as they shouted reached up to starry heaven, for they came together with a great clamor. Then Zeus did not hold back his might any longer, but now immediately his heart was filled with strength and he showed clearly all his force. He came direct from heaven and Olympus hurling perpetual lightning,

Zeus. Bronze, ca. 460 B.C., height 82 in. The viewer feels awe at the superhuman size, divine nudity, and commanding mien of the god as he hurls his thunderbolt. This statue was found in the sea off Cape Artemisium (at the northern end of Euboea). The identification with Zeus is more likely than with Poseidon hurling his trident. (*National Museum of Athens*.)



and the bolts with flashes and thunder flew in succession from his stout hand with a dense whirling of holy flame. Earth, the giver of life, roared, everywhere aflame, and on all sides the vast woods crackled loudly with the fire. The whole of the land boiled, and as well the streams of Ocean, and the barren sea. The hot blast engulfed the earth-born Titans and the endless blaze reached the divine aether; the flashing gleam of the thunder and lightning blinded the eyes even of the mighty. Unspeakable heat possessed Chaos.

The sight seen by the eyes and the sound heard by the ears were as if earth and wide heaven above collided; for the din as the gods met one another in strife was as great as the crash that would have arisen if earth were dashed down by heaven falling on her from above. The winds mingled the confusion of tremor, dust, thunder, and the flashing bolts of lightning (the shafts of great Zeus), and carried the noise and the shouts into the midst of both sides. The terrifying clamor of fearful strife arose, and the might of their deeds was shown forth. They attacked one another and fought relentlessly in mighty encounters until the battle was decided.

The Hecatonchires (Cottus, Briareus, and Gyes), insatiate of battle, were among the foremost to rouse the bitter strife; they hurled three hundred rocks, one right after another, from their staunch hands and covered the Titans with a cloud of missiles and sent them down far beneath the broad ways of the earth to Tartarus and bound them in harsh bonds, having conquered them with their hands even though they were great of spirit. The distance from earth to gloomy Tartarus is as great as that of heaven from earth.

The Hecatonchires guarded the Titans imprisoned in Tartarus. Atlas was punished with the task of holding up the sky. In some accounts, when Zeus became secure in power he eventually relented and gave the Titans their freedom.

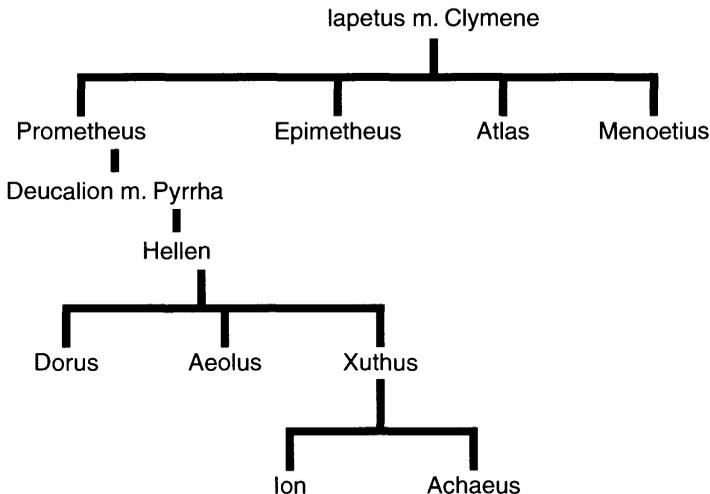


Figure 4.1. The Family of Prometheus

THE GIGANTOMACHY: ZEUS DEFEATS THE GIANTS AND TYPHOEUS

Another threat Zeus had to face came from giants that Earth produced to challenge the new order of the gods, or that had been born when the blood from the mutilation of Uranus fell upon the ground; these monstrous creatures are called Gegeneis, which means "earthborn." (See figure on p. 67.) The many details of the battle vary, but it is generally agreed that the struggle was fierce and ended with the imprisonment of the giants under the earth, usually in volcanic regions where they betray their presence by the violence of their natures. Thus, for example, the giant Enceladus writhes under volcanic Mt. Aetna in Sicily.

One of the most vicious of the monsters who opposed Zeus was the dragon Typhoeus (or Typhaon or Typhon). (See figure on p. 68.) He sometimes joins others in their conflict with the gods, or he may do battle alone, as in Hesiod's account (*Theogony* 820–880):



When Zeus had driven the Titans from heaven, vast Gaea brought forth the youngest of her children through the love of Tartarus and the agency of golden Aphrodite. The hands of the mighty god were strong in any undertaking and his feet were weariless. From the shoulders of this frightening dragon a hundred snake heads grew, flickering their dark tongues; fire blazed from the eyes under the brows of all the dreadful heads, and the flames burned as he glared. In all the terrible heads voices emitted all kinds of amazing sounds; for at one time he spoke so that the gods understood, at another his cries were those of a proud bull bellowing in his invincible might; sometimes he produced the pitiless roars of a courageous lion, or again his yelps were like those of puppies, wondrous to hear, or at another time he would hiss; and the great mountains resounded in echo.

Now on that day of his birth an irremediable deed would have been accomplished and he would have become the ruler of mortals and immortals, if the father of gods and men had not taken swift notice and thundered loudly and fiercely; the earth resounded terribly on all sides and as well the wide heaven above, the sea, the streams of Ocean, and the depths of Tartarus. Great Olympus shook under the immortal feet of the lord as he rose up and earth gave a groan. The burning heat from them both, with the thunder and lightning, scorching winds, and flaming bolts reached down to seize the dark-colored sea. The whole land was aboil and heaven and the deep; and the huge waves surged around and about the shores at the onslaught of the immortals, and a quake began its tremors without ceasing.

Hades who rules over the dead below shook, as did the Titans, the allies of Cronus, in the bottom of Tartarus, from the endless din and terrifying struggle. When Zeus had lifted up the weapons of his might, thunder and lightning and the blazing bolts, he leaped down from Olympus and struck, and blasted on all sides the marvelous heads of the terrible monster. When he had flogged him with blows, he hurled him down, maimed, and vast earth gave a groan. A flame flared up from the god as he was hit by the bolts in the glens of the dark craggy

mountain where he was struck down. A great part of vast earth was burned by the immense conflagration and melted like tin heated by the craft of artisans in open crucibles, or like iron which although the hardest of all is softened by blazing fire and melts in the divine earth through the craft of Hephaestus. Thus the earth melted in the flame of the blazing fire. And Zeus in the rage of his anger hurled him into broad Tartarus.

From Typhoeus arise the winds that blow the mighty rains; but not Notus, Boreas, and Zephyr³ who brings good weather, for they are sprung from the gods and a great benefit for mortals. But the others from Typhoeus blow over the sea at random; some fall upon the shadowy deep and do great harm to mortals, raging with their evil blasts. They blow this way and that and scatter ships and destroy sailors. Those who encounter them on the sea have no defense against their evil. Others blowing over the vast blossoming land destroy the lovely works of mortals born on earth, filling them with dust and harsh confusion.⁴

The attempt of the giants Otus and Ephialtes to storm heaven by piling the mountains Olympus, Ossa, and Pelion upon one another is sometimes linked to the battle of the giants or treated as a separate attack upon the power of Zeus. In fact there is considerable confusion in the tradition concerning details and characters in the battle of the giants (Gigantomachy) and the battle of the Titans (Titanomachy). Both conflicts may be interpreted as reflecting the triumph of the more benign powers of nature over the more wild powers or of civilization over savagery. Historically, it is likely that they represent the fact of conquest and amalgamation when, in about 2000 B.C., the Greek-speaking invaders brought with them their own gods, with Zeus as their chief, and triumphed over the deities of the existing peoples in the peninsula of Greece.

THE CREATION OF MORTALS

Various versions of the birth of mortals existed side by side in the ancient world. Very often they are the creation of Zeus alone, or of Zeus and the other gods. Sometimes immortals and mortals spring from the same source. A dominant tradition depicts Prometheus as the creator of man; and sometimes woman is created later and separately through the designs of Zeus.

After describing the creation of the universe and animal life out of the elements of Chaos, Ovid tells about the birth of mortals, depicting the superiority and lofty ambition of this highest creature in the order of things (*Metamorphoses* 1. 76–88); Ovid's "man" (*homo*) epitomizes the human race.



Until now there was no animal more godlike than these and more capable of high intelligence and able to dominate all the rest. Then man was born; either the creator of the universe, originator of a better world, fashioned him from divine seed, or earth, recently formed and separated from the lofty aether, retained seeds from its kindred sky and was mixed with rain water by Prometheus, the son of Iapetus, and fashioned by him into the likeness of the gods who control

all.⁵ While other animals look down to the ground, man was given a lofty visage and ordered to look up to the sky and fully erect lift his face to the stars. Thus earth that had been crude and without shape was transformed and took on the figure of man unknown before.

THE FOUR OR FIVE AGES

Ovid goes on to describe the four ages: gold, silver, bronze, and iron. We prefer, however, to excerpt Hesiod's earlier account of these ages, which for him are five in number, since he feels compelled to include the historical age of heroes. After he has recounted the story of Pandora and her jar, his introduction to the description of the five ages suggests both the multiplicity of versions of the creation of mortals and the futility of even attempting to reconcile the diverse accounts (*Works and Days* 106–201).



If you like, I shall offer a fine and skillful summary of another tale and you ponder it in your heart: how gods and mortal humans came into being from the same origin.

THE AGE OF GOLD

At the very first the immortals who have their homes on Olympus made a golden race of mortal humans. They existed at the time when Cronus was king in heaven, and they lived as gods with carefree hearts completely without toil or trouble. Terrible old age did not come upon them at all, but always with vigor in their hands and their feet they took joy in their banquets removed from all evils. They died as though overcome by sleep. And all good things were theirs; the fertile land of its own accord bore fruit ungrudgingly in abundance. They in harmony and in peace managed their affairs with many good things, rich in flocks and beloved of the blessed gods. But then the earth covered over this race. Yet they inhabit the earth and are called holy spirits, who are good and ward off evils, as the protectors of mortal beings, and are providers of wealth, since they keep watch over judgments and cruel deeds, wandering over the whole earth wrapped in air. For they have these royal prerogatives.

THE AGE OF SILVER

Then those who have their home on Olympus next made a second race of silver, far worse than the one of gold and unlike it both physically and mentally. A child was brought up by the side of his dear mother for a hundred years, playing in his house as a mere baby. But when they grew up and reached the measure of their prime they lived for only a short time and in distress because of their senselessness. For they could not restrain their wanton arrogance against one another and they did not wish to worship the blessed immortals or sacrifice at their holy altars, as is customary and right for human beings. Then in his anger, Zeus, the son of Cronus, hid them away because they did not give the blessed gods who inhabit Olympus their due. Then the earth covered over this race too. And they dwell under the earth and are called blessed by mortals, and although second, nevertheless honor attends them also.

THE AGE OF BRONZE

Father Zeus made another race of mortal humans, the third, of bronze and not at all like the one of silver; terrible and mighty because of their spears of ash, they pursued the painful and violent deeds of Ares. They did not eat bread at all but were terrifying and had dauntless hearts of adamant. Great was their might, and unconquerable hands grew upon their strong limbs out of their shoulders. Of bronze were their arms, of bronze were their homes, and they worked with bronze implements. Black iron there was not. When they had been destroyed by their own hands, they went down into the dark house of chill Hades without leaving a name. Black death seized them, although they were terrifying, and they left the bright light of the sun.

THE AGE OF HEROES

But when the earth covered over this race too, again Zeus, the son of Cronus, made still another, the fourth on the nourishing earth, valiant in war and more just, a godlike race of heroic men, who are called demigods, and who preceded our own race on the vast earth. Evil war and dread battle destroyed some of them under seven-gated Thebes in the land of Cadmus as they battled for the flocks of Oedipus; the end of death closed about others after they had been led in ships over the great depths of the sea to Troy for the sake of Helen of the beautiful hair. Some, father Zeus, the son of Cronus, sent to dwell at the ends of the earth where he has them live their lives; these happy heroes inhabit the Islands of the Blessed with carefree hearts by the deep swirling stream of Ocean. For them the fruitful earth bears honey-sweet fruit that ripens three times a year. Far from the immortals, Cronus rules as king over them; for the father of gods and men released him from his bonds. Honor and glory attend these last in equal measure.

THE AGE OF IRON

Far-seeing Zeus again made still another race who live on the nourishing earth. Oh, would that I were not a man of the fifth generation but either had died before or had been born later. Now indeed the race is of iron. For they never cease from toil and woe by day, nor from being destroyed in the night. The gods will give them difficult troubles, but good will be mingled with their evils. Zeus will destroy this race of mortals too, whenever it comes to pass that they are born with gray hair on their temples. And a father will not be in harmony with his children nor his children with him, nor guest with host, nor friend with friend, and a brother will not be loved as formerly. As they grow old quickly they will dishonor their parents, and they will find fault, blaming them with harsh words and not knowing respect for the gods, since their right is might. They will not sustain their aged parents in repayment for their upbringing. One will destroy the city of another. No esteem will exist for the one who is true to an oath or just or good; rather mortals will praise the arrogance and evil of the wicked. Justice will be might and shame will not exist. The evil person will harm the better, speaking against him unjustly and he will swear an oath besides. Envy, shrill and ugly and with evil delight, will attend all human beings in their woe. Then Aidos and Nemesis both^o will forsake them and go, their beautiful forms shrouded in white, from the wide earth to Olympus

among the company of the gods. For mortals sorry griefs will be left and there will be no defense against evil.

The bitterness and pessimism of this picture of his own age of iron are typical of Hesiod's general crabbed, severe, and moral outlook. But his designation of the five ages reflects a curious blend of fact and fiction. Historically his *was* the age of iron, introduced into Greece at the time of the invasions that brought the age of bronze to a close. Hesiod's insertion of an age of heroes reflects the fact of the Trojan War, which he cannot ignore.

This conception of the deterioration of the human race has been potent in subsequent literature, both ancient and modern. The vision of a paradise in a golden age when all was well inevitably holds fascination for some, whether imagined as long ago or merely in the good old days of their youth.⁷

It would be wrong to imply that this theory of the degeneration of the human race was the only one current among the Greeks and Romans. Prometheus' eloquent testimony in Aeschylus' play, translated on pages 90–91, listing his gifts to humans, rests upon the belief in progressive stages from savagery to civilization.⁸

PROMETHEUS AGAINST ZEUS

In the *Theogony* (507–616) Hesiod tells the stories of Prometheus and his conflict with Zeus, with the human race as the pawn in this gigantic clash of divine wills. He begins with the birth of Prometheus and explains how Prometheus tricked Zeus (507–569):



Iapetus led away the girl Clymene, an Oceanid, and they went together in the same bed; and she bore to him a child, stout-hearted Atlas; she also brought forth Menoetius, of very great renown, and devious and clever Prometheus, and Epimetheus,⁹ who was faulty in judgment and from the beginning was an evil for mortals who work for their bread. For he was the first to accept from Zeus the virgin woman he had formed. Far-seeing Zeus struck arrogant Menoetius with his smoldering bolts and hurled him down into Erebus because of his presumption and excessive pride. Atlas stands and holds the wide heaven with his head and tireless hands through the force of necessity at the edge of the earth, and in the sight of the clear-voiced Hesperides; this fate Zeus in his wisdom allotted him.

And Zeus bound devious and wily Prometheus with hard and inescapable bonds, after driving a shaft through his middle; and roused up a long-winged eagle against him that used to eat his immortal liver. But all the long-winged bird would eat during the whole day would be completely restored in equal measure during the night. Heracles, the mighty son of Alcmena of the lovely ankles, killed it and rid the son of Iapetus from this evil plague and released him from his suffering, not against the will of Olympian Zeus who rules from on high, so that the renown of Theban-born Heracles might be still greater than before on the bountiful earth. Thus he respected his famous son with this token of honor. Although he had been enraged, the mighty son of Cronus gave up the



Atlas and Prometheus. Laconian black-figure cup, ca. 560 B.C. The two Titans endure the punishments of Zeus: Atlas holds up the star-studded heavens and helplessly watches the vulture (or eagle) attack his brother, Prometheus, who is bound to a column. The motif of the column is repeated in the lower register, with lotus-leaf decoration, while the snake on the left seems not to be part of the narrative. (*Vatican Museums.*)

anger that he had held previously because Prometheus had matched his wits against him.

For when the gods and mortals quarreled at Mecone,¹⁰ then Prometheus with quick intelligence divided up a great ox and set the pieces out in an attempt to deceive the mind of Zeus. For the one group in the dispute he placed flesh and the rich and fatty innards on the hide and wrapped them all up in the ox's paunch; for the other group he arranged and set forth with devious art the white bones of the ox, wrapping them up in white fat.

Then the father of gods and men spoke to him: "Son of Iapetus, most renowned of all lords, my fine friend, how partisan has been your division of

the portions!" Thus Zeus whose wisdom is immortal spoke in derision. Wily Prometheus answered with a gentle smile, as he did not forget his crafty trick. "Most glorious Zeus, greatest of the gods who exist forever, choose whichever of the two your heart in your breast urges." He spoke with crafty intent.

But Zeus whose wisdom is immortal knew and was not unaware of the trick. And he foresaw in his heart evils for mortals, which would be accomplished. He took up in both his hands the white fat, and his mind was enraged, and anger took hold of his heart as he saw the white bones of the ox arranged with crafty art. For this reason the races of human beings on earth burn the white bones for the immortals on the sacrificial altars.

Zeus the cloud-gatherer was greatly angered and spoke to him: "Son of Iapetus, my fine friend, who know thoughts that surpass those of everyone, so you have then not yet forgotten your crafty arts." Thus Zeus whose wisdom is immortal spoke in anger. From this time on he always remembered the deceit and did not give the power of weariless fire out of ash trees to mortals who dwell on the earth.

But the noble son of Iapetus tricked him by stealing in a hollow fennel stalk the gleam of weariless fire that is seen from afar. High-thundering Zeus was stung to the depths of his being and angered in his heart as he saw among mortals the gleam of fire seen from afar.

THE CREATION OF PANDORA

Hesiod goes on to describe the dread consequence of Zeus' anger at Prometheus for his theft of fire (*Theogony* 570–616):

 Immediately he contrived an evil thing for mortals in recompense for the fire. The renowned lame god, Hephaestus, fashioned out of earth the likeness of a modest maiden according to the will of the son of Cronus. Bright-eyed Athena clothed and arrayed her in silvery garments and with her hands arranged on her head an embroidered veil, wondrous to behold. And Pallas Athena put around her head lovely garlands of budding flowers and greenery. And she placed on her head a golden crown that the renowned lame god himself made, fashioning it with his hands as a favor to his father, Zeus. On it he wrought much intricate detail, wondrous to behold, of the countless animals which the land and the sea nourish; many he fixed on it, amazing creations, like living creatures with voices; and its radiant loveliness shone forth in profusion.

When he had fashioned the beautiful evil in recompense for the blessing of fire, he led her out where the other gods and mortals were, exulting in the raiment provided by the gleaming-eyed daughter of a mighty father. Amazement took hold of the immortal gods and mortals as they saw the sheer trick, from which human beings could not escape. For from her is the race of the female sex, the ruinous tribes of women, a great affliction, who live with mortal men, helpmates not in ruinous poverty but in excessive wealth, just as when in overhanging hives bees feed the drones, conspirators in evil works; the bees each day, the whole time to the setting of the sun, are busy and deposit the white honeycombs, but the drones remain within the covered hives and scrape to-

gether the toil of others into their own belly. Thus in the same way high-thundering Zeus made women, conspirators in painful works, for mortal men.

He also contrived a second evil as recompense for the blessing of fire; whoever flees marriage and the troublesome deeds of women and does not wish to marry comes to ruinous old age destitute of anyone to care for him. He does not lack a livelihood while he is living but, when he has died, distant relatives divide up the inheritance. And again even for the one to whom the fate of acquiring a good and compatible wife in marriage falls as his lot, evil continually contends with good throughout his life. Whoever begets mischievous children lives with a continuous sorrow in his breast; in heart and soul the evil is incurable. Thus it is not possible to go beyond the will of Zeus nor to deceive him. For not even the goodly Prometheus, son of Iapetus, got out from under his heavy wrath and a great bondage held him fast, even though he was very clever.

Once again Hesiod's dominant note is despair. He provides another dismal account of Prometheus in the *Works and Days* (47–105); despite some minor repetitions, it is worth quoting for its elaboration of the theft of fire and its variations on the creation of woman. The evil is now specifically named; she is Pandora, which means "all gifts," and she has a jar (see Color Plate 19).¹¹

 Zeus, angered in his heart, hid the means of human livelihood because wily Prometheus deceived him. And so he devised for human beings sorrowful troubles. He hid fire. Then the good son of Iapetus, Prometheus, stole it for human beings from wise Zeus in a hollow reed, without Zeus who delights in thunder seeing it.

But then Zeus the cloud-gatherer was roused to anger and spoke to him: "Son of Iapetus, who know how to scheme better than all others, you are pleased that you stole fire and outwitted me—a great misery for you and men who are about to be. As recompense for the fire I shall give them an evil in which all may take delight in their hearts as they embrace it."

Thus he spoke and the father of gods and men burst out laughing. He ordered renowned Hephaestus as quickly as possible to mix earth with water and to implant in it a human voice and strength and to fashion the beautiful and desirable form of a maiden, with a face like that of an immortal goddess. But he ordered Athena to teach her the skills of weaving at the artful loom, and golden Aphrodite to shed grace about her head and painful longing and sorrows that permeate the body. And he commanded the guide Hermes, slayer of Argus, to put in her the mind of a bitch and the character of a thief.

Thus he spoke and they obeyed their lord Zeus, son of Cronus. At once the famous lame god molded out of earth the likeness of a modest maiden according to the will of Zeus. Bright-eyed Athena clothed and arrayed her, and the Graces and mistress Persuasion adorned her with golden necklaces. The beautiful-haired Seasons crowned her with spring flowers, and Pallas Athena fitted out her body with every adornment. Then the guide and slayer of Argus contrived in her breast lies and wheedling words and a thievish nature, as loud-thundering Zeus directed. And the herald of the gods put in her a voice, and

named this woman Pandora, because all who have their homes on Olympus gave her a gift, a bane to men who work for their bread.

But when the Father had completed this sheer impossible trick he sent the swift messenger of the gods, the renowned slayer of Argus, to bring it as a gift for Epimetheus. And Epimetheus did not think about how Prometheus had told him never to accept a gift from Olympian Zeus but to send it back in case that in some way it turned out to be evil for mortals. But he received the gift and when indeed he had the evil he realized.

Previously the races of human beings used to live completely free from evils and hard work and painful diseases, which hand over mortals to the Fates. For mortals soon grow old amidst evil. But the woman removed the great cover of the jar with her hands and scattered the evils within and for mortals devised sorrowful troubles.

Hope alone remained within there in the unbreakable home under the edge of the jar and did not fly out of doors. For the lid of the jar stopped her before she could, through the will of the cloud-gatherer Zeus who bears the aegis. But the other thousands of sorrows wander among human beings, for the earth and the sea are full of evils. Of their own accord diseases roam among human beings some by day, others by night bringing evils to mortals in silence, since Zeus in his wisdom took away their voice. Thus it is not at all possible to escape the will of Zeus.

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE MYTHS OF PROMETHEUS AND PANDORA

The etiology of the myth of Prometheus is perhaps the most obvious of its many fascinating elements. It explains procedure in the ritual of sacrifice and the origin of fire—Promethean fire, the symbol of defiant progress. Prometheus himself is the archetype of the culture god or hero ultimately responsible for all the arts and sciences.¹² Prometheus is also the archetype of the divine or heroic trickster (cf. Hermes and Odysseus).

Other archetypal themes once again abound, and embedded in them is a mythological etiology that provides causes and explanations for such eternal mysteries as: What is the nature of god or the gods? Where did we come from? Do we have a dual nature, an earthly, mortal body and a divine, immortal soul? Are human beings the pawns in a war of rivalry between supernatural powers? Did they lose a paradise or evolve from savagery to civilization? What is the source of and reason for evil? In the person of Pandora the existence of evil and pain in the world is accounted for.

The elements in the myth of the creation of woman reveal attitudes common among early societies. Like Eve, for example, Pandora is created after man and she is responsible for his troubles. Why should this be so? The answer is complex, but inevitably it must lay bare the prejudices and mores inherent in the social structure. But some detect as well the fundamental truths of allegory and see the woman and her jar as symbols of the drive and lure of procreation, the womb and birth and life, the source of all our woes.¹³

The theme of the first woman as the bringer of evil is particularly fraught with social, political, and moral implications. The most obvious interpretation of Hesiod is that Pandora was the first woman (like Eve in the Bible) and responsible for evil. Thus for the Greeks the world, before Pandora, was populated only by men—an extremely difficult concept. Did Prometheus create only men out of clay? Hesiod's account is riddled with irreconcilable contradictions because various stories have been awkwardly but poetically conflated. In the myth of the Ages of Mankind both men and women are created by Zeus or the gods, and both men and women are held responsible for evil, for which they are punished by the gods. Should we assume that Pandora was sent with her jar of evils (and Hope) to a happy humankind? At any rate, amidst all this confusion, Hesiod is more accurately condemned as a misanthropist, rather than only as a misogynist.

Details in the story of Pandora are disturbing in their tantalizing ambiguity. What is Hope doing in the jar along with countless evils? If it is a good, it is a curious inclusion. If it too is an evil, why is it stopped at the rim? What then is its precise nature, whether a blessing or a curse? Is Hope the one thing that enables human beings to survive the terrors of this life and inspires them with lofty ambition? Yet is it also by its very character delusive and blind, luring them on to prolong their misery? It is tempting to see in Aeschylus' play *Prometheus Bound* an interpretation and elaboration: human beings were without hope until Prometheus gave it to them along with the benefit of fire. The hope Prometheus bestows on mortals is both blind and a blessing. The pertinent dialogue between Prometheus and the chorus of Oceanids runs as follows (248–252):



PROMETHEUS: I stopped mortals from foreseeing their fate.

CHORUS: What sort of remedy did you find for this plague?

PROMETHEUS: I planted in them blind hopes.

CHORUS: This was a great advantage that you gave mortals.

PROMETHEUS: And besides I gave them fire.

Fundamental to both Hesiod and Aeschylus is the conception of Zeus as the oppressor of humankind and Prometheus as its benefactor. In Aeschylus the clash of divine wills echoes triumphantly through the ages. His portrait, more than any other, offers the towering image of Prometheus as the Titan, the bringer of fire, the vehement and weariless champion against oppression, the mighty symbol for art, literature, and music of all time.

AESCHYLUS' *PROMETHEUS BOUND*

Aeschylus' play *Prometheus Bound* begins with Strength (Kratos) and Force (Bia), brutish servants of an autocratic Zeus, having brought Prometheus to the remote and uninhabited land of Scythia. Hephaestus accompanies them. Kratos urges the reluctant Hephaestus to obey the commands of Father Zeus and bind Prometheus in bonds of steel and pin him with a stake through his chest to the



Prometheus. By Gustave Moreau (1826–1898); oil on canvas, 1868, 80½ × 48 in. Moreau's Prometheus is a defiant hero who ignores the vulture's beak and gazes into the future, knowing that his release and the defeat of Zeus lie ahead. Although chained among the rocks of the Caucasus, he is bound to a column, like the figure in the Laconian cup (the previous photo). At his feet lies a dead vulture, exhausted by its victim's obduracy. (Paris: Musée Gustave Moreau.)

desolate crags. It was Hephaestus' own brilliant "flower" of fire, deviser of all the arts, that Prometheus stole, and for this error ("sin" is not an inappropriate translation) he must pay to all the gods "so that he might learn to bear the sovereignty of Zeus and abandon his love and championship of mortals" (10–17).

Aeschylus, with great skill and economy, provides us with the essentials for the conflict and the mood of the play. The violent struggle pits a harsh, young,

and angry Zeus against the defiant determination of a glorious and philanthropic Prometheus.¹⁴

Hephaestus, in contrast to savage Strength and Force, is sensitive and humane; he curses his craft, hates the job he has to do, and pities the sleepless torment of Prometheus. Hephaestus also expresses an important theme of the play in his realization that Zeus has seized supreme rule of gods and mortals only recently: "The mind of Zeus is inexorable; and everyone is harsh when he first comes to power." The contrast is presumably intended to foreshadow the later Zeus, who will learn benevolence through experience, wisdom, and maturity. Certainly Zeus, fresh from his triumphant defeat of his father and the Titans, might indeed be uneasy and afraid. He may suffer the same fate as Cronus or Uranus before him; and Prometheus, his adversary, knows the terrifying secret that might lead to Zeus' undoing: Zeus must avoid the sea-nymph Thetis in his amorous pursuits, for she is destined to bear a son mightier than his father. In his knowledge of this lies Prometheus' defiant power and the threat of Zeus' ultimate downfall.

The first utterance of Prometheus after Strength, Force, and Hephaestus have done their work is glorious, capturing the universality of his great and indomitable spirit (88–92):

 O divine air and sky and swift-winged breezes, springs of rivers and countless laughter of sea waves, earth, mother of everything, and all-seeing circle of the sun, I call on you. See what I, a god, suffer at the hands of the gods.

In the course of the play, Prometheus expresses his bitterness because, although he with his mother fought on the side of Zeus against the Titans, his only reward is torment. It is typical of the tyrant to forget and turn against his former allies. Prometheus lists the many gifts he has given to humankind for whom he suffers now (442–506):

 **PROMETHEUS:** Listen to the troubles that there were among mortals and how I gave them sense and mind, which they did not have before. I shall tell you this, not out of any censure of humankind, but to explain the good intention of my gifts. In the beginning they had eyes to look, but looked in vain, and ears to hear, but did not hear, but like the shapes of dreams they wandered in confusion the whole of their long life. They did not know of brick-built houses that face the sun or carpentry, but dwelt beneath the ground like tiny ants in the depths of sunless caves. They did not have any secure way of distinguishing winter or blossoming spring or fruitful summer, but they did everything without judgment, until I showed them the rising and the setting of the stars, difficult to discern.

And indeed I discovered for them numbers, a lofty kind of wisdom, and letters and their combination, an art that fosters memory of all things, the mother of the Muses' arts. I first harnessed animals, enslaving them to the yoke to become reliefs for mortals in their greatest toils, and I led horses docile under the reins and chariot, the delight of the highest wealth and luxury. No one before

me discovered the seamen's vessels which with wings of sail are beaten by the waves. Such are the contrivances I, poor wretch, have found for mortals, but I myself have no device by which I may escape my present pain.

CHORUS: You suffer an ill-deserved torment, and confused in mind and heart are all astray; like some bad doctor who has fallen ill, you yourself cannot devise a remedy to effect a cure.

PROMETHEUS: Listen to the rest, and you will be even more amazed at the kinds of skills and means that I devised; the greatest this: if anyone fell sick, there existed no defense, neither food nor drink nor salve, but through lack of medicines they wasted away until I showed them the mixing of soothing remedies by which they free themselves from all diseases. I set forth the many ways of the prophetic art. I was the first to determine which dreams would of necessity turn out to be true, and I established for them the difficult interpretation of the flight of birds with crooked talons, which ones are by nature lucky and propitious, and what mode of life each had, their mutual likes, dislikes, and association; the smoothness of the innards and the color of the bile that would meet the pleasure of the gods, and the dappled beauty of the liver's lobe. I burned the limbs enwrapped in fat and the long shank and set mortals on the path to this difficult art of sacrifice, and made clear the fiery signs, obscure before. Such were these gifts of mine. And the benefits hidden deep within the earth, copper, iron, silver, and gold—who could claim that he had found them before me? No one, I know full well, unless he wished to babble on in vain.

In a brief utterance learn the whole story: all arts come to mortals from Prometheus.

When Hermes, Zeus' messenger, appears in the last episode, Prometheus is arrogant and insulting in his refusal to bow to the threats of even more terrible suffering and reveal his secret. The play ends with the fulfillment of the promised torment; the earth shakes and cracks, thunder and lightning accompany wind and storm as Prometheus, still pinned to the rock, is plunged beneath the earth by the cataclysm; there he will be plagued by the eagle daily tearing his flesh and gnawing his liver. Prometheus' final utterance echoes and affirms the fiery heat and mighty spirit of his first invocation: "O majesty of earth, my mother, O air and sky whose circling brings light for all to share. You see me, how I suffer unjust torments."

IO, ZEUS, AND PROMETHEUS

In order to appreciate Aeschylus' depiction of Zeus and his vision of the final outcome of the conflict between Zeus and Prometheus,¹⁵ we must introduce the story of Io, a pivotal figure in *Prometheus Bound*.¹⁶ In the series of exchanges between Prometheus and the various characters who come to witness his misery, the scene with Io is particularly significant in terms of eventual reconciliation and knowledge.

Io was loved by Zeus; she was a priestess of Hera and could not avoid detection by the goddess. Zeus failed to deceive Hera, who in retaliation turned Io into a white cow,¹⁷ and to guard her new possession, she set Argus over her. Argus, whose parentage is variously given, had many eyes (the number varies from four in Aeschylus to one hundred in Ovid) and was called Argus Panoptes (the “all-seeing”); because his eyes never slept all at once, he could have Io under constant surveillance. Zeus therefore sent Hermes to rescue Io; Hermes lulled Argus to sleep by telling him stories, and then cut off his head—hence his title Argeiphontes, or “slayer of Argus.” Hera set Argus’ eyes in the tail of the peacock, the bird with which she is especially associated. Io still could not escape Hera’s jealousy; Hera sent a gadfly that so maddened her that she wandered miserably over the whole world until finally she came to Egypt. There by the Nile, Zeus restored her human form, and she gave birth to a son, Epaphus.¹⁸

In *Prometheus Bound*, Aeschylus describes Io’s sufferings in some detail to illustrate the ultimate wisdom, justice, and mercy of an all-powerful Zeus. In agony because of the stings of the gadfly and tormented by the ghost of Argus, Io flees over the earth in mad frenzy. She asks why Zeus has punished her, an innocent victim of Hera’s brutal resentment, and longs for the release of death. This is how the uncomprehending Io tells Prometheus of her anguish (645–682):

 Again and again in the night, visions would appear to me in my room and entice me with seductive words: “O blessed maiden, why do you remain a virgin for so long when it is possible for you to achieve the greatest of marriages? For Zeus is inflamed by the shafts of desire and longs to make love to you. Do not, my child, reject the bed of Zeus but go out to the deep meadow of Lerna where the flocks and herds of your father graze, so that the longing of the eye of Zeus may be requited.” I, poor wretch, was troubled every night by such dreams until at last I dared to tell my father about them. He sent numerous messengers to Delphi and Dodona to find out what he must do or say to appease the gods; and they returned with difficult and obscure answers, cryptically worded. At last an unambiguous injunction was delivered to Inachus, clearly ordering him to evict me from his house and city to wander without a home to the ends of the earth; if he did not comply, the fiery thunderbolt of Zeus would strike and annihilate his whole race.

In obedience to this oracle of Apollo, my father, unwilling as was I, expelled and drove me from my home; indeed the bridle bit of Zeus forcefully compelled him to do such things. Straightway my body was changed and my mind distorted; with horns, as you can see, and pursued by the sharp stings of a gadfly, I rushed in convulsive leaps to the clear stream of Cerchnea and the spring of Lerna. The giant herdsman Argus, savage in his rage, accompanied me, watching with his countless eyes my every step. A sudden unexpected fate deprived him of his life; but I, driven mad by the stings of the gadfly, wander from land to land under the scourge of god.

As the scene continues, Prometheus foretells the subsequent course of Io’s wanderings. Eventually she will find peace in Egypt, where (848–851):

 Zeus will make you sane by the touch of his fearless hand—the touch alone; and you will bear a son, Epaphus, “Him of the Touch,” so named from his begetting at the hand of Zeus.

Aeschylus' version of the conception of Epaphus is religious. Io has been chosen by Zeus and has suffered at the hands of Hera for the fulfillment of a destiny, and she will conceive not through rape but by the gentle touch of the hand of god. Prometheus, with the oracular power of his mother, foresees the generations descended from Io, the culmination of his narrative being the birth of the great hero Heracles, who will help Zeus in the final release of Prometheus. Thus the divine plan is revealed and the absolute power of almighty Zeus is achieved; in mature confidence he will rest secure, without fear of being overthrown, as the supreme and benevolent father of both gods and mortals.

As Aeschylus' other plays on Prometheus survive only as titles and fragments, we do not know how he conceived details in the ultimate resolution. From Hesiod (p. 83) we know that Heracles, through the agency of Zeus, was responsible for killing the eagle and releasing Prometheus—after Prometheus had revealed the fatal secret about mating with Thetis. Conflicting and obscure testimony has Chiron, the centaur, involved in some way, as Aeschylus seems to predict; Chiron, wounded by Heracles, gives up his life and his immortality in a bargain for the release of Prometheus.¹⁹

ZEUS AND LYCAON AND THE WICKEDNESS OF MORTALS

Prometheus had a son, Deucalion, and Epimetheus had a daughter, Pyrrha. Their story, from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, involves a great flood sent by Zeus (Jupiter) to punish mortals for their wickedness. In the passage given here, Jupiter tells an assembly of the gods how he, a god, became a man to test the truth of the rumors of human wickedness in the age of iron. There follows an account of Jupiter's anger at the evil of mortals, in particular Lycaon (1. 211–252).

 “Reports of the wickedness of the age had reached my ears; wishing to find them false, I slipped down from high Olympus and I, a god, roamed the earth in the form of a man. Long would be the delay to list the number of evils and where they were found; the iniquitous stories themselves fell short of the truth. I had crossed the mountain Maenalus, bristling with the haunts of animals, and Cylene, and the forests of cold Lycaeus; from these ridges in Arcadia I entered the realm and inhospitable house of the tyrant Lycaon, as the dusk of evening was leading night on.

“I gave signs that a god had come in their midst; the people began to pray but Lycaon first laughed at their piety and then cried: ‘I shall test whether this man is a god or a mortal, clearly and decisively.’ He planned to kill me unawares in the night while I was deep in sleep. This was the test of truth that suited him best. But he was not content even with this; with a knife he slit the throat of one of the hostages sent to him by the Molossians and, as the limbs were still warm

with life, some he boiled until tender and others he roasted over a fire. As soon as he placed them on the table, I with a flame of vengeance brought the home down upon its gods, worthy of such a household and such a master.

"Lycaon himself fled in terror, and when he reached the silence of the country he howled as in vain he tried to speak. His mouth acquired a mad ferocity arising from his basic nature, and he turned his accustomed lust for slaughter against the flocks and now took joy in their blood. His clothes were changed to hair; his arms to legs; he became a wolf retaining vestiges of his old form. The silver of the hair and the violent countenance were the same; the eyes glowed in the same way; the image of ferocity was the same.²⁰

"One house had fallen but not one house only deserved to perish. Far and wide on the earth the Fury holds power; you would think that an oath had been sworn in the name of crime. Let all quickly suffer the penalties they deserve. Thus my verdict stands."

Some cried approval of the words of Jove and added goads to his rage, others signified their assent by applause. But the loss of the human race was grievous to them all and they asked what the nature of the world would be like bereft of mortals, who would bring incense to the altars, and if Jupiter was prepared to give the world over to the ravagings of animals. As they asked these questions the king of the gods ordered them not to be alarmed, for all that would follow would be his deep concern; and he promised a race of wondrous origin unlike the one that had preceded.

THE FLOOD

Set upon destroying humankind, Jupiter rejects the idea of hurling his thunderbolts against the world because he fears they may start a great conflagration that could overwhelm the universe. As Ovid continues the story, the god has decided on a different means of punishment: a great flood (260–290). The motif of the Flood is one of the most important and universal in myth and legend.²¹



A different punishment pleased him more: to send down from every region of the sky torrents of rain and destroy the human race under the watery waves. Straightway he imprisoned the North Wind, and such other blasts as put storm clouds to flight in the caves of Aeolus, and let loose the South Wind who flew with drenched wings, his dread countenance cloaked in darkness black as pitch; his beard was heavy with rain, water flowed from his hoary hair, clouds nestled on his brow, and his wings and garments dripped with moisture. And as he pressed the hanging clouds with his broad hand, he made a crash, and thence thick rains poured down from the upper air. The messenger of Juno, Iris, adorned in varied hues, drew up the waters and brought nourishment to the clouds. The crops were leveled and the farmers' hopeful prayers lay ruined and bemoaned the labor of the long year in vain destroyed.

Nor was the wrath of Jove content with his realm, the sky. His brother Neptune of the sea gave aid with waves as reinforcements. He called together the rivers and, when they had entered the dwelling of their master, said: "Now I cannot resort to a long exhortation. Pour forth your strength, this is the need—

open wide your domains, and all barriers removed, give full rein to your streams." This was his command. They went back home and opened wide their mouths for their waters to roll in their unbridled course over the plains. Neptune himself struck the earth with his trident; it trembled and with the quake laid open paths for the waters. The streams spread from their course and rushed over the open fields and swept away, together and at once, the trees and crops, cattle, human beings, houses, and their inner shrines with sacred statues. If any house remained and was able to withstand being thrown down by so great an evil, yet a wave still higher touched its highest gables, and towers overcome lay submerged in the torrent.

DEUCALION AND PYRRHA

Ovid provides further elaborate and poetical description of the ravages of the terrible flood and then concentrates upon the salvation of the pious couple, Deucalion (the Greek Noah) and his wife, Pyrrha, and the repopulation of the world (311–421).

 The greatest part of life was swept away by water; those whom the water spared were overcome by slow starvation because of lack of food.

The territory of Phocis separates the terrain of Thessaly from that of Boeotia, a fertile area when it was land, but in this crisis it had suddenly become part of the sea and a wide field of water. Here a lofty mountain, Parnassus by name, reaches with its two peaks up to the stars, the heights extending beyond the clouds. When Deucalion with his wife was carried in his little boat to this mountain and ran aground (for the deep waters had covered the rest of the land) they offered worship to the Corycian nymphs,²² the deities of the mountain, and prophetic Themis, who at that time held oracular power there. No man was better than Deucalion nor more devoted to justice, and no woman more reverent towards the gods than his wife, Pyrrha.

When Jupiter saw the earth covered with a sea of water and only one man and one woman surviving out of so many thousands of men and women, both innocent and both devout worshipers of deity, he dispelled the clouds, and after the North Wind had cleared the storm, revealed the earth to the sky and the upper air to the world below. The wrath of the sea did not endure and the ruler of the deep laid aside his trident and calmed the waves. He summoned the sea-god Triton, who rose above the waters, his shoulders encrusted with shellfish; he ordered him to blow into his resounding conch shell and by this signal to recall the waves and the rivers. Triton took up the hollow horn which grows from the lowest point of the spiral, coiling in ever widening circles. Whenever he blows into his horn in the middle of the deep, its sounds fill every shore to east and west. Now too, as the god put the horn to his lips moist with his dripping beard and gave it breath, it sounded the orders of retreat and was heard by all the waves on land and on the sea, and as they listened all were checked.

Once more the sea had shores and streams were held within their channels, rivers subsided, and hills were seen to rise up. Earth emerged and the land grew in extent as the waves receded. And after a length of time the tops of the woods

were uncovered and showed forth, a residue of mud left clinging to the leaves. The world had been restored.

When Deucalion saw the earth devoid of life and the profound silence of its desolation, tears welled up in his eyes as he spoke to Pyrrha thus: "O my cousin, and my wife, the only woman left, related to me by family ties of blood, then joined to me in marriage, now danger itself unites us. We two alone are the host of the whole world from east to west; the sea holds all the rest. Besides assurance of our life is not yet completely certain. Even now the clouds above strike terror in my heart. What feelings would you have now, poor dear, if you had been snatched to safety by the Fates without me? In what way could you have been able to bear your fear alone? Who would have consoled you as you grieved? For I, believe me, would have followed, if the sea had taken you, dear wife, and the sea would have taken me with you. How I wish I might be able to repopulate the earth by the arts of my father and infuse the molded clods of earth with life. As it is, the race of mortals rests in just us two—thus have the gods ordained—and we remain the only vestiges of human beings." Thus he spoke and they wept.

They decided to pray to the goddess Themis and seek help through her holy oracles with no delay. Together they approached the waves of the river Cephissus, which, although not yet clear, was cutting its accustomed course. When they had drawn water and sprinkled their heads and clothes, they turned their steps from there to the temple of the goddess; its pediments were discolored with vile moss and its altars stood without fire. As they reached the steps of the temple, both fell forward on the ground, and in dread awe implanted kisses on the cold stone. They spoke as follows: "If the divine majesty is won over and made soft by just prayers, if the anger of the gods is turned aside, tell, O Themis, by what art the loss of the human race may be repaired and give help, O most gentle deity, in our drowned world."

The goddess was moved and gave her oracle: "Go away from my temple, cover your heads and unloose the fastenings of your garments, and toss the bones of the great mother behind your back." For a long time they were stupefied at this; Pyrrha first broke the silence by uttering her refusal to obey the orders of the goddess; with fearful prayer she begged indulgence, for she feared to hurt the shade of her mother by tossing her bones. But all the while they sought another explanation and mulled over, alone and together, the dark and hidden meaning of the obscure words given by the oracle. Then the son of Prometheus soothed the daughter of Epimetheus with pleasing words: "Unless my ingenuity is wrong, oracles are holy and never urge any evil; the great parent is the earth; I believe that the stones in the body of earth are called her bones. We are ordered to throw these behind our backs."

Although the Titan's daughter was moved by the interpretation of her husband, her hope was still in doubt; to this extent they both distrusted heaven's admonitions. But what harm would there be in trying? They left the temple, covered their heads, unloosed their garments, and tossed the stones behind their steps as they were ordered. The stones (who would believe this if the antiquity of tradition did not bear testimony?) began to lose their hardness and rigidity and gradually grew soft and in their softness assumed a shape. Soon as they

grew and took on a more pliant nature, the form of a human being could be seen, in outline not distinct, most like crude statues carved in marble, just begun and not sufficiently completed. The part of the stones that was of earth dampened by some moisture was converted into flesh; what was solid and unable to be so transformed was changed into bone; what once had been a vein in the stone remained with the same name; in a short time, through the will of the gods, the stones hurled by the hands of the man assumed the appearance of men, and those cast by the woman were converted into women. Hence we are a hard race and used to toils and offer proof of the origin from which we were sprung.

The earth of her own accord produced other animals of different sorts, after the moisture that remained was heated by the fire of the sun; and the mud and soggy marshes began to swell because of the heat, and fertile seeds of things began to grow nourished by the life-giving earth, as in a mother's womb, and gradually took on a certain form.

Deucalion and Pyrrha had a son Hellen, the eponymous ancestor of the Greek people; for the Greeks called themselves Hellenes and their country Hellas.²³

SUCCESSION MYTHS AND OTHER MOTIFS

Literature of the ancient Near East has many parallels to Hesiod's account of genesis and the gods. One of the most striking is the archetypal motif known as the Succession Myth. In the Babylonian epic of creation, which begins with the words by which it is entitled (*Enuma Elish*, "When on high"), Marduk plays a role similar to that of Zeus in the conflict for power; and Marduk, like Zeus, attains ultimate control by defeating a monster, Tiamat, who thus resembles Typhoeus. Likewise the epic *Kingship in Heaven* reveals common thematic patterns; especially startling is the episode that tells how Kumarbi defeats Anu by biting off his genitals, a brutal act not unlike the castration of Uranus by Cronus. The flood archetype is particularly fascinating because of its presence worldwide, in virtually all cultures (see note 21). The wickedness of mortals and their punishment are also persistent themes, as well as their salvation. The Additional Reading at the end of this chapter provides a more detailed identification of parallels between the myths of Greece and those of the ancient Near East.

Among the many themes inherent in the character and career of Zeus himself, the following deserve special emphasis. Even though a god, his life illustrates special motifs that appear again and again not only in the lives of other deities but also in the mortal lives of the heroes of saga, to be sure with infinite variations and amplifications. Zeus is the child of extraordinary parents; both of his parents are gods. The circumstances of his birth are unusual or difficult; he must avoid being swallowed by his father. He must be brought up in secret, and his life as an infant is both precarious and charmed, progressing in accordance with the motif of the Divine Child. He grows up close to nature and the world of animals; and, after an idyllic childhood, with special care and training, upon

reaching manhood, he must come into his own by overcoming challenges and adversaries: his father Cronus and the Titans, the Giants, and Prometheus. Very special on the list of his triumphs is the slaying of a dragon. By killing Typhoeus, Zeus, the supreme god, may be proclaimed as the archetypal dragonslayer—one of the most powerful and symbolic of all divine and heroic achievements.

In the end, as we shall see in the next chapter, Zeus emerges as the ultimate victor and wins a bride, a kingdom, and supreme power. He triumphs to become almighty god, although even then his exploits and trials are by no means over.

ADDITIONAL READING

PARALLELS IN MYTHS OF GREECE AND THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Five basic myths are important for the identification of parallels in the myths of ancient Near Eastern civilizations. These are the myths of Creation, Succession, the Flood, the Descent to the Underworld, and the hero-king Gilgamesh. They have striking parallels in Greek mythology, as we have already observed. "Are there migrating myths?" asks Walter Burkert, and he and others answer that the similarities are undeniable evidence for the influence of Near Eastern cultures over Greek mythology. How this influence traveled cannot be known precisely, but trade is the most likely means, as it has been shown that contacts between the Greek and Near Eastern worlds flourished especially in two periods, the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.²⁴ Near Eastern myths appear in the cultures of Sumer and Akkad—southern and northern Mesopotamia, respectively. The Sumerians were the earliest (from the fourth millennium B.C.) to develop a civilization with urban centers, such as Ur and Uruk. They developed *cuneiform* ("wedge-shaped") script on clay tablets, and their religious architecture was distinguished by *ziggurats* (temple towers). They were absorbed by Semitic peoples speaking a different language (Akkadian), but still using cuneiform script. The chief Akkadian urban center (from the late third millennium) was Babylon, which reached its first zenith under king Hammurabi, around 1800 B.C. Babylon was conquered in about 1250 B.C. by the northern Akkadians, who established the Assyrian empire, with its center at Nineveh.

Among the peoples associated with the Akkadians were the Hurrians of northern Syria, who in their turn were absorbed by the Hittites after about 1400 B.C. The Hittite empire flourished in Anatolia (the central and eastern area of modern Turkey) during the second millennium B.C., with its center at Hattusas, the modern Boghaz-Köy. Hittite myths absorbed Hurrian themes and the names of Hurrian gods, and several of these myths have themes in common with Greek myth. The same is true of Egyptian, Phoenician, and Hebraic myths, the last-named being more familiar to Western readers, especially in the biblical Christian narratives of Genesis (Chapters 1 and 2), Psalms (many references, for example, Psalms 33 and 104), and Job (Chapter 38).

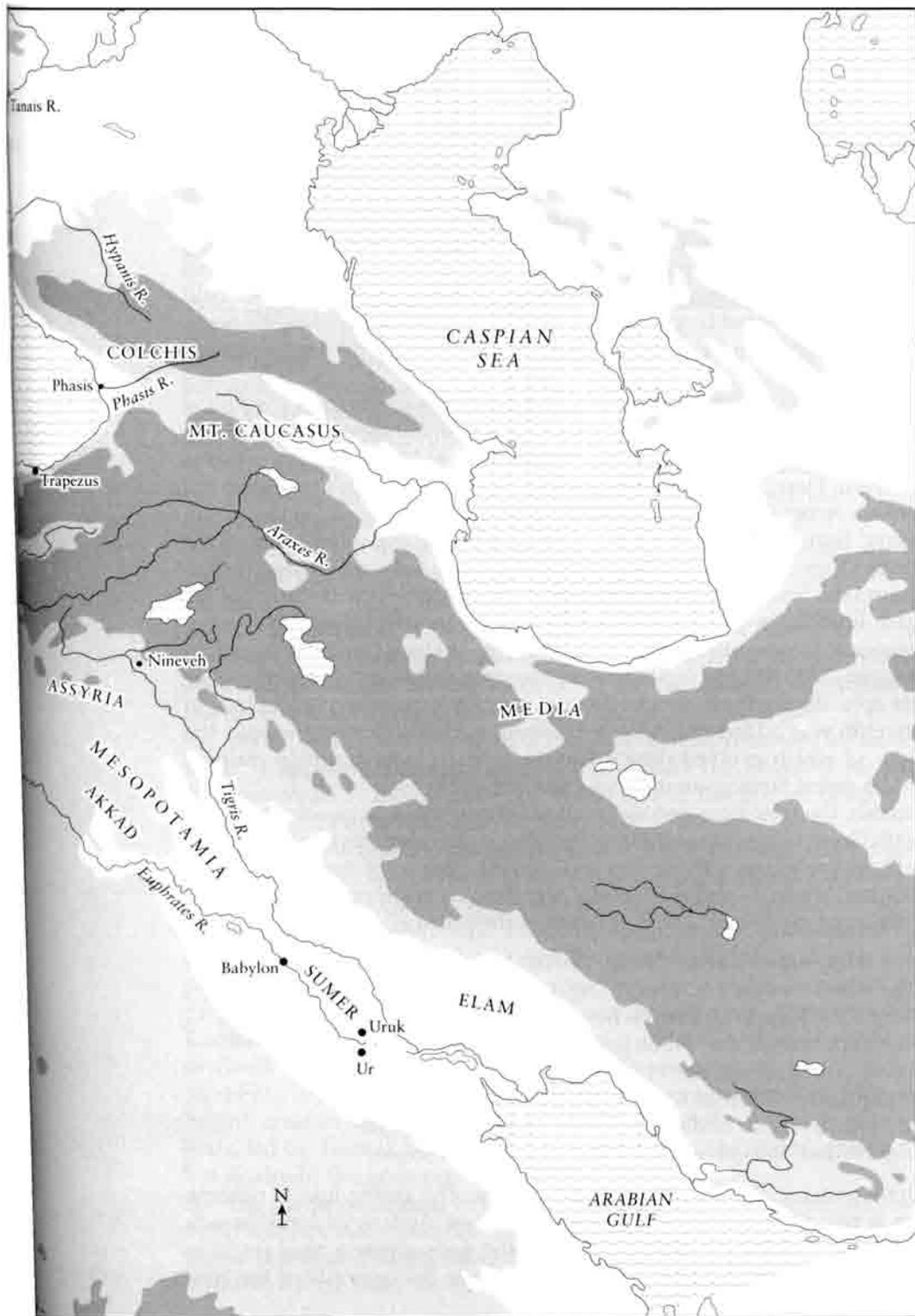
Like Hesiod, the Sumerian, Babylonian, and Akkadian poets do not narrate a myth of creation by an intelligent creator. Their concern, like Hesiod's, is with the bringing of order out of disorder, or, rather, out of a concept similar to the Greek *Chaos* ("Void"). Thus their myths of creation also involve myths of succession and, to some extent, myths of the Flood and the survival and re-creation of humankind. The best-known myth of creation is in the Babylonian *Epic of Creation*, usually identified by its opening words, *Enuma Elish* ("When on high . . ."), which was probably composed in the early years of the second millennium B.C. In this version, the gods come into existence from the union of Apsu and Tiamat—the fresh-water and salt-water oceans, respectively. From them descend Anu (the sky) and Ea or Enki (the earth-god), who is also the god of wisdom. From Ea, Marduk is born, after Ea has destroyed Apsu. Tiamat then prepares to attack the younger gods, who entrust their defense to Marduk and make him their king, after their leader, Enlil, has proved unequal to the challenge. Armed with bow and arrow, thunderbolt and storm-winds, Marduk attacks Tiamat, fills her with the winds, and splits her body. The following is part of the battle, which should be compared with Hesiod's account of the battle between Zeus and Typhoeus (see pp. 79–88):

Face to face they came, Tiamat and Marduk. . . .
 They engaged in combat, they closed for battle.
 The Lord spread his net and made it encircle her,
 To her face he dispatched the *imhullu*-wind. . . .
 Tiamat opened her mouth to swallow it,
 And he forced in the *imhullu*-wind so that she could not
 Close her lips.
 Fierce winds distend her belly. . . .
 He shot an arrow which pierced her belly,
 Split her down the middle and slit her heart,
 Vanquished her and extinguished her life.²⁵

After his victory, Marduk places half of Tiamat's body above the earth and there, in the sky, he creates Esharra, the home of the gods, while Tiamat's followers, led by Kingu, are bound. Marduk then organizes the gods and the world and, on the advice of Ea, orders the creation of humankind from the blood of Kingu, who is killed. The work of humankind is to serve the gods, and Marduk's temple of Esagila, with its *ziggurat*, is built in Babylon. The poem ends with the enumeration of the fifty names of Marduk.

About two hundred years later than *Enuma Elish* (ca. 1700 B.C.), the Babylonian epic of *Atrahasis* was written down. *Atrahasis* is the supremely wise man—his name means "extra-wise," corresponding to Ut-napishtim of the *Gilgamesh Epic*, the Sumerian hero Ziusudra, the Hebrew Noah, and the Greek Prometheus and Deucalion (the former being the pre-Olympian god of wisdom and craftsmanship and the latter the survivor of the flood). In the myth of Atra-





Map 4.1. Greece and the Near East.

hasis, the gods complain of the hard labor that they must perform for Enlil and threaten to rebel against him. Enlil orders the creation of humankind to perform the toil of canal-digging and other labors for the gods. Enlil orders the death of the intelligent god Geshtu-e, from whose flesh and blood, mixed with clay, humankind is created, seven males and seven females. After a long period of time Atrahasis, advised by Enki, survives the flood sent by Enlil, who has determined to destroy humankind because their noise disturbs the peace of the gods. Enlil is furious when he sees the boat in which Atrahasis has survived, but the poem ends with a reconciliation between Enlil and Enki, by which the human race is allowed to continue.

The best-known version of the myth of the Flood is narrated in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* by the heroic survivor, Ut-napishtim, whom Gilgamesh visits after a journey through the hitherto impassable "mountains of Mashu" and across the waters of death. Here, too, Enlil is furious at the survival of Ut-napishtim, but again there is a reconciliation. Ut-napishtim lives, immortal, far off "at the mouth of the rivers;" humankind, re-created, cannot escape the evils that occur to the living, nor can they escape death. Gilgamesh ultimately fails in his quest for immortality, and the final tablet (no. xii) of the poem describes the retention of his dead friend, Enkidu, in the world of the dead.²⁶ Gilgamesh himself was originally a historical figure, ruler of the Sumerian city of Uruk (modern Warka, in central Iraq) ca. 2700 B.C. His legends were incorporated into the Assyrian version of his epic, dating from about 1700 B.C., written on eleven clay tablets, to which a twelfth was added much later. Different versions exist of the epic, the composition of which evolved over a lengthy period. Later tradition claimed that a scholar-priest Sinleqqiunninni was the author.²⁷

Gilgamesh, the wise hero and slayer of monstrous beings, has obvious similarities with Greek Odysseus and Heracles (who is also identified with Ninurta, son of Enlil, and with the underworld god, Nergal, consort of Ereshkigal). Like the Babylonian Atrahasis and the Greek Odysseus, he is supremely intelligent. Here are the opening lines of the first tablet of the poem:

[Of him who] found out all things, I [shall te]ll the land,
 [Of him who] experienced everything, I [shall te]ach the whole.
 He searched [?] lands [?] everywhere.
 He who experienced the whole gained complete wisdom.
 He found out what was secret and uncovered what was hidden.
 He brought back a tale of times before the Flood.
 He had journeyed far and wide, weary and at last resigned.
 He engraved all toils on a memorial monument of stone.²⁸

A brief summary of the poem runs as follows: The strong and handsome Gilgamesh is two-thirds divine and one-third human. As king of Uruk he acts oppressively toward his people and therefore the gods create a rival for him, valiant Enkidu, a primeval hunter in the forest, quite the opposite of the civi-

lized Gilgamesh. After sexual intercourse with a harlot, Enkidu is depleted of his wild character and eventually challenges Gilgamesh in a wrestling match. Although Gilgamesh defeats Enkidu, they become devoted comrades and their loving friendship now becomes a major theme. They set out together on a quest to cut down the sacred trees in the Pine (or Cedar) Forest in the mountains of southwest Iran, after having killed its guardian Humbaba (or Huwawa), the Terrible. These labors accomplished, upon their return to Uruki, Gilgamesh is confronted by the goddess Ishtar, who desires to marry him. When he rejects her, she sends down the terrifying and destructive Bull of Heaven, which the two heroes kill. Because they have defiled the sacred Forest and killed the Bull of Heaven, the gods decide that one of them, Enkidu, must die. All the long while that Enkidu suffers painfully, Gilgamesh is by his side, and when Enkidu dies, he is overcome with grief. Gilgamesh, horrified by the reality of death and decay, decides to find the secret of immortality. His encounter with Ut-napishtim, the survivor of the Flood, has already been described.

In addition to those mentioned here, many parallels between the Sumerian and Greek heroes and their legends can be found, for example, in the contact of Odysseus with the Underworld and the land of Alcinous and the Phaeacians (similar to the realm of Ut-napishtim "at the mouth of the rivers"). Similarities between the story of the *Iliad* and that of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* are also readily apparent, prominent among them being the comradeship of Achilles and Patroclus and that of Gilgamesh and Enkidu.

On the other hand, the myth of the Flood is not prominent in classical Greek myth. It appears more fully (in Latin) in Ovid's narratives of the great flood (*Metamorphoses* 1. 260–421: see pp. 94–95) and of the Lydian flood in the story of Baucis and Philemon (*Metamorphoses* 8. 689–720: see p. 618).

Myths of succession and the separation of sky and earth appear also in Hittite narratives, of which the best known is the poem called *Kingship in Heaven*, in which Kumarbi (who corresponds to the Sumerian Enlil) bites off the genitals of the sky-god, Anu, and swallows them. Inside Kumarbi the Storm-god (Teshub or Tarkhun) develops from the genitals of Anu, and after his birth he plots with Anu to overthrow Kumarbi. The extant poem breaks off as Teshub prepares for battle, but it appears that he defeated Kumarbi. Thus Anu, Kumarbi/Enlil, and Teshub/Marduk are parallel to Uranus, Cronus, and Zeus in Greek myth. In the Hittite *Song of Ullikummiss*, Ea cuts off the feet of Ullikummiss, a giant made of diorite (a kind of very hard stone), 9000 leagues in height, created by Kumarbu as a threat to the gods. After his mutilation, the gods, led by Teshub, battle with Ullikummiss (the tablet breaks off at this point, but no doubt the gods prevailed).²⁹

The theme of descent to the Underworld is also prominent in Near Eastern myth and has many parallels in Greek myth. The most important myth on this theme is narrated in the short Akkadian poem, *The Descent of Ishtar to the Underworld*, dating from the end of the second millennium B.C. It was preceded by

a Sumerian version, about three times as long, in which Ishtar is called by her Sumerian name, Inanna.³⁰ Inanna/Ishtar is daughter of Anu (and therefore one of the earlier generation of gods) and sister of Ereshkigal, queen of the Underworld and wife of Nergal. Ishtar is a goddess of war but also the goddess of love and sexual creation, and thus has much in common with Aphrodite. While Ereshkigal corresponds to the Greek Persephone, Ishtar is like Persephone in that she returns from the Underworld, and like Eurydice (wife of Orpheus) in that she must return to the Underworld if certain conditions are not fulfilled on her journey back to the upper world. Her consort, Dumuzi (Tammuz), is similar to Adonis and Attis in Greek myth.

In both narratives Ishtar decides to visit the Underworld; knowing that she may be killed there, she leaves instructions with her vizier that will ensure her resurrection if she does not return within a certain time. She is stripped of her ornaments and clothing as she goes through the seven gates of the Underworld, and Ereshkigal orders her death. In the Sumerian version her corpse is hung from a peg. She is brought back to life through the advice of Enki (Sumerian version) or the agency of her vizier (Akkadian version). In the Akkadian version she receives back her clothing and ornaments, and the poem ends with mourning for the death of her consort, Dumuzi (Tammuz). In the Sumerian version, Ishtar is angry with Dumuzi for his refusal to dress in mourning for her absence, and in anger she hands him over to the demons who were to take her back to the Underworld if she failed to fulfill Ereshkigal's conditions. Only in 1963 was the Sumerian tablet published that describes the annual death and resurrection of Dumuzi, and with his return the renewal of crops on the earth.³¹

It must be stressed that many parallels between Near Eastern and Greek myths may be no more than that chance appearance of themes common to many mythologies, with no direct influence. Yet, in the instances of the succession myth, the Flood, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, and the myth of Ishtar and Dumuzi, it is most probable that there was some direct contact between Near Eastern and Greek storytellers, in which case we have strong evidence for Eastern sources in early Greek mythology. The Greeks owed many debts to the civilizations with whom they came into contact, not only in the Near East but also in Egypt. They used and transformed what they heard, saw, and read into works of art cast in their own image.³²

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NOTES

1. This very stone was exhibited at Delphi in ancient times; it was not large, and oil was poured over it every day. On festival days, unspun wool was placed upon it.
2. Ten years is the traditional length for a serious war, be it this one or the famous conflict of the Greeks against the Trojans.
3. Notus is the South Wind; Boreas, the North Wind; and Zephyr, the West Wind.
4. Later versions have it that Heracles was an ally of Zeus in the battle; the giants could be defeated only if the gods had a mortal as their ally. In addition Earth produced a magic plant that would make the giants invincible; Zeus by a clever stratagem plucked it for himself.
5. A fragment attributed to Hesiod (no. 268 Rzach; no. 382 Merkelbach and West) adds that Athena breathed life into the clay. At Panopea in Boeotia, stones were identified in historical times as solidified remains of the clay used by Prometheus.
6. Aidos is a sense of modesty and shame; Nemesis, righteous indignation against evil.
7. In his fourth eclogue, Vergil celebrates gloriously the return of a new golden age ushered in by the birth of a child. The identity of this child has long been in dispute, but the poem itself was labeled Messianic because of the sublime and solemn nature of its tone, reminiscent of the prophet Isaiah.
8. A similar but more sober and scientific statement of human development, made by some of the Greek philosophers and by Lucretius, the Roman poet of Epicureanism, provides a penetrating account of human evolution that in many of its details is astoundingly modern (*De Rerum Natura* 5. 783–1457).

9. Aeschylus has Themis as the mother of Prometheus, sometimes identified as Ge-Themis, to show that she is a goddess of earth, who possesses oracular power and is associated with justice. The name Prometheus means "forethinker," or "the one who plans ahead"; Epimetheus means "afterthinker," or "the one who plans too late." Prometheus is often called merely "the Titan," since he is the son of the Titan Iapetus.
10. An early name of Sicily.
11. The name suggests a link with the typical conception of the fertility mother-goddess.
12. He was worshiped by the potters in Athens alongside Hephaestus, with whom he has several attributes in common.
13. For a comparison of Eve with Pandora and female deities throughout the ages, see John A. Phillips, *Eve: The History of an Idea* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984).
14. Aeschylus even manages to characterize the brutish Kratos, the unreasonable and monstrous henchman of a tyrannical Zeus. Kratos is the willing and anxious supporter of a new regime rooted in force, the one thing he can understand; to him forceful power is the key to all: "Everything is hard except to rule the gods. For no one except Zeus is free."
15. Any interpretation of Aeschylus' tragedy is difficult since precise details in the outcome as conceived by Aeschylus are unknown. We have the titles and fragments of three additional plays on the Prometheus legend attributed to Aeschylus: *Prometheus the Fire-Bearer*, *Prometheus Unbound*, and *Prometheus the Fire-Kindler*. This last may be merely another title for *Prometheus the Fire-Bearer*, or possibly it was a satyr play belonging either to the Prometheus trilogy itself or to another trilogy on a different theme. We cannot even be sure of the position of the extant *Prometheus Bound* in the sequence.
16. Io is the daughter of Inachus, whose family appears in the legends of Argos; see pp. 516–517.
17. Versions other than that of Aeschylus have Zeus attempt to deceive Hera by transforming Io into a cow, which Hera asked to have for herself.
18. The Egyptians identified Epaphus with Apis, the sacred bull, and Io with their goddess Isis. See p. 516.
19. Chiron possibly dies for Prometheus and bestows his immortality upon Heracles.
20. This is Ovid's version of a tale about a werewolf that appears elsewhere in the Greek and Roman tradition. The name Lycaon was taken to be derived from the Greek word for wolf. The story may reflect primitive rites in honor of Lycaean Zeus performed on Mt. Lycaeus.
21. *The Flood Myth*, ed. Alan Dundes (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), provides a fascinating collection of writings by authors in a variety of disciplines who analyze the motif of the flood throughout the world. For parallels in Near Eastern mythology see the Additional Reading to this chapter.
22. That is, nymphs of the Corycian cave on Mt. Parnassus.
23. Hellen had three sons: Dorus, Aeolus, and Xuthus. Xuthus in turn had two sons: Ion and Achaeus. Thus eponyms were provided for the four major divisions of the Greeks on the basis of dialect and geography: Dorians, Aeolians, Ionians, and Achaeans. The names *Greeks* and *Greece* came through the Romans, who first met a group of Hellenes called the *Graioi*, participants in the colonization of Cumae just north of Naples.
24. W. Burkert, "Oriental and Greek Mythology: The Meeting of Parallels," in Jan Bremmer, ed., *Interpretations of Greek Mythology* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 10–40 (the

- quotation is from p. 10). Useful but brief remarks in Ken Dowden, *The Uses of Greek Mythology* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 57–60 and 181. Full discussion with bibliography by R. Mondt, "Greek Mythic Thought in the Light of the Near East," in L. Edmunds, ed., *Approaches to Greek Myth* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), pp. 142–198. C. Penglase, *Greek Myths and Mesopotamia* (London: Routledge, 1994), focuses on Hesiod and the Homeric Hymns and defines the criteria for influence (as opposed to random similarities) on pp. 5–8.
25. Translated by Stephanie Dalley, from *Myths from Mesopotamia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 253.
 26. Tablet xii was composed much later than the rest of the Gilgamesh epic and so was not part of the original poem. The death of Gilgamesh is not part of the Akkadian version of the epic, which is the source of the translation by Stephanie Dalley, but there exists a fragmentary Sumerian version. Gilgamesh's monstrous opponents were Humbaba (or Huwawa), guardian of the Pine Forest in the mountains of southwest Iran (tablet v), and the Bull of Heaven (tablet vi).
 27. Maureen Gallery Kovacs provides clear introductory background for the nonspecialist in her translation, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1989).
 28. Translated by Stephanie Dalley (see note 25), p. 50.
 29. The texts of myths of Kumarbi and Ullikummi are translated by A. Goetze in J. B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3d ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969, previous eds. 1950 and 1955), pp. 120–125. They are not included in Pritchard's selections in paperback, *The Ancient Near East*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958 and 1975).
 30. Both versions are in Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 52–57 (Sumerian version translated by S. N. Kramer) and pp. 106–109 (Akkadian version translated by E. A. Speiser). Stephanie Dalley, see note 25, translates the Akkadian version, pp. 154–162.
 31. See Dalley, from *Myths from Mesopotamia*, p. 154.
 32. The debts of Greeks to others have always been recognized and over the years have offered fruitful avenues of research. At times, however, there has been a compulsion to deny the Greeks the credit that is their due for the heritage they have left us. The book by Martin Bernal challenging traditional positions caused quite a stir when it first appeared: *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, Vol. 1, *The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785–1985* (London: Free Association Books; New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1987). It has been successfully challenged by many scholars. See in particular a collection of essays edited by Mary R. Lefkowitz and Guy MacLean Rogers, *Black Athena Revisited* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996). Mary Lefkowitz offers a refutation accessible to the non-specialist: *Not Out of Africa: How Afrocentrism Became an Excuse to Teach Myth as History* (New York: Basic Books [HarperCollins]), 1996.

THE TWELVE OLYMPIANS: ZEUS, HERA, AND THEIR CHILDREN

Thus Zeus is established as lord of gods and men. He is supreme, but he does share his powers with his brothers. Zeus himself assumes the sky as his special sphere; Poseidon, the sea; and Hades, the Underworld. Homer (*Iliad* 15. 187–192) says that they cast lots for their realms. Zeus takes his sister Hera as his wife; she reigns by his side as his queen and subordinate. His sisters Hestia and Demeter share in divine power and functions, as we shall see, and the other major gods and goddesses are also given significant prerogatives and authority as they are born.

And so a circle of major deities (fourteen in number) comes into being; their Greek and Roman names are as follows: Zeus (Jupiter), Hera (Juno), Poseidon (Neptune), Hades (Pluto), Hestia (Vesta), Hephaestus (Vulcan), Ares (Mars), Apollo, Artemis (Diana), Demeter (Ceres), Aphrodite (Venus), Athena (Minerva), Hermes (Mercury), and Dionysus (Bacchus).¹ This list was reduced to a canon of twelve Olympians by omitting Hades (whose specific realm is under the earth) and replacing Hestia with Dionysus, a great deity who comes relatively late to Olympus.

HESTIA, GODDESS OF THE HEARTH AND ITS FIRE

Although her mythology is meager, Hestia is important. She rejected the advances of both Poseidon and Apollo and vowed to remain a virgin; like Athena and Artemis, then, she is a goddess of chastity.² But she is primarily the goddess of the hearth and its sacred fire; her name, Hestia, is the Greek word for "hearth." Among primitive peoples fire was obtained with difficulty, kept alive, and revered for its basic importance in daily needs and religious ceremony. The hearth too was the center first of the family and then of the larger political units: the tribe, the city, and the state. Transmission of the sacred fire from one settlement to another represented a continuing bond of sentiment and heredity. Thus both the domestic and the communal hearth were designated as holy, and the goddess herself presided over them. Hestia often gained precedence at banquets and in sacrificial ritual; for as the first-born of Cronus and Rhea she was considered august, one of the older generation of the gods.

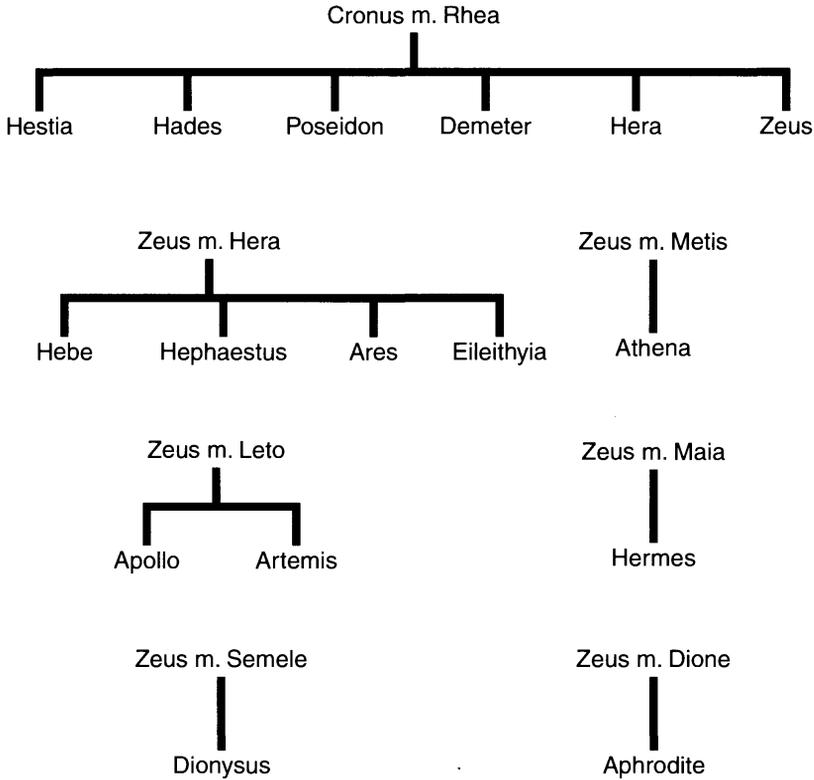


Figure 5.1. The Lineage of Major Deities

There are two *Homeric Hymns to Hestia*. Number 24 briefly calls on her as the manifestation of the protecting flame of the sacred hearth in a temple:

🏺 Hestia, you who tend the hallowed house of the far-shooter Apollo in holy Pytho, liquid oil always drips from your hair.³ Come to this house; enter in sympathetic support, along with Zeus, the wise counselor. Grant as well a pleasing grace to my song.

In number 29, Hestia is invoked as the protectress of the hearth in the home; the poet appeals to the god Hermes as well, since both deities protect the house and bring good fortune.

🏺 Hestia, you have as your due an everlasting place in the lofty homes of immortal gods and human beings who walk on earth—the highest of honors and a precious right. For without you, there are no banquets for mortals where one does not offer honey-sweet wine as a libation to Hestia, first and last.

And you, Hermes, the slayer of Argus, son of Zeus and Maia, messenger of the blessed gods, bearer of a golden staff and giver of good things, along with



Zeus, Ganymede, and Hestia. Red-figure cup by Oltos, ca. 520 B.C.; height $8\frac{3}{4}$ in., diameter $20\frac{1}{2}$ in. In the assembly of the Olympians Hestia sits opposite Zeus, holding the thunderbolt in his left hand and a *phiale* (ritual dish for libations) in his right hand, who is being served by Ganymede. She is crowned and holds a branch in her right hand and a flower in her left hand. Behind her, on the right, are Aphrodite and Ares and, on the left behind Zeus, Athena and Hermes. (*Tarquinia, Museo Nazionale.*)

revered and beloved Hestia, be kind and help me. Come and inhabit beautiful homes, in loving harmony. For since you both know the splendid achievements of mortals on earth, follow in attendance with intelligence and beauty.

Hail, daughter of Cronus, you and Hermes, bearer of a golden staff; yet I shall remember you both and another song too.

THE DIVERSE CHARACTER OF ZEUS

Zeus is an amorous god; he mates with countless goddesses and mortal women, and his offspring are legion. Most genealogies demanded the glory and authority of the supreme god himself as their ultimate progenitor. Along with this necessity emerged the character of a Zeus conceived and readily developed by what might be called a popular mythology. This Zeus belonged to a monogamous society in which the male was dominant; however moral the basic outlook, the standards for the man were different from those for the woman. Illicit affairs were possible and even, if not officially sanctioned, were at least condoned for men, but under no circumstances tolerated for women. Thus Zeus is the glorified image not only of the husband and father, but also of the lover. The gamut of Zeus' conquests will provide a recurrent theme.

As the picture evolves, Zeus' behavior may be depicted as amoral or immoral or merely a joke—the supreme god can stand above conventional standards. At other times he will act in harmony with them, and more than once he

must face the shrewish harangues of his wife, Hera, and pay at least indirectly through pain and suffering wrought by his promiscuity.

Yet this same Zeus (as we shall see later in his worship at Dodona and Olympia) becomes the one god, and his concerns envelop the whole sphere of morality for both gods and humankind. He is the wrathful god of justice and virtue, upholding all that is sacred and holy in the moral order of the universe. This Zeus we discuss at greater length in Chapter 6. In the literature, the portrayal of Zeus depends upon both the period and the intent and purpose of individual authors. The conception of deity is multifaceted, infinitely varied, and wondrously complex.

We are already familiar with Zeus the god of the sky, the cloud-gatherer of epic. The etymological root of his name means “bright” (as does that of Jupiter). His attributes are thunder and lightning, and he is often depicted about to hurl them. The king of gods and men is a regal figure represented as a man in his prime, usually bearded. He bears as well the aegis, a word meaning “goat skin” that originally designated merely the cloak of a shepherd. For Zeus it is a shield with wonderful and miraculous protective powers.⁴ The majestic eagle and mighty oak were sacred to Zeus.

Finally, it must be fully appreciated that the patriarchy of Zeus was by no means always absolute or supreme. Here are a few examples of his vulnerability. According to some, Zeus’ authority was not supreme but always subject to the dictates of fate or the feminine fates (see the final section), and the powerful goddess of love, Aphrodite, proclaims in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (5) (pp. 181–182) that she is the greatest deity of all, for she can bend not only humans but even the gods (including almighty Zeus) to her amorous will. Only three goddesses, Athena, Artemis, and Hestia, defy her subjection. Demeter, the greatest matriarch of antiquity with her dominant and universal Eleusinian mysteries (see Chapter 14), refused to submit to the patriarchy of both Zeus and Hades in her grief and outrage over the rape of her daughter Persephone and won. A startling revolution against the power of Zeus is alluded to in the *Iliad* (1. 399–401): When Hera, Poseidon, and Athena bound Zeus in chains, it was Thetis, the mother of Achilles, who rescues the supreme god. The most determined critic who constantly challenged the authority of Zeus was his sister and wife Hera.

ZEUS AND HERA

The union of Zeus and Hera represents yet another enactment of the sacred marriage between the sky-god and earth-goddess; this is made clear in the lines from Homer (*Iliad* 14. 346–351) that describe their lovemaking:

 The son of Cronus clasped his wife in his arms and under them the divine earth sprouted forth new grass, dewy clover, crocuses, and hyacinths, thick and soft, to protect them from the ground beneath. On this they lay together and drew



Hera. Roman copy of a Greek bronze of ca. 470–460 B.C.; marble, height 76 in. Known as the *Hestia Giustiniani*, this standing goddess is almost certainly Hera, whose royal sceptre (now missing) was held in her left hand. She is veiled (a symbol of her status as wife of Zeus) and wears the Doric peplos. (Rome, Museo Torlonia.)

around themselves a beautiful golden cloud from which the glistening drops fell away.

Hera has little mythology of her own, being important mainly as Zeus' consort and queen; yet she has great power. The *Homeric Hymn to Hera* (12) makes this power very clear:

 I sing about golden-throned Hera, whom Rhea bore, immortal queen, outstanding in beauty, sister and wife of loud-thundering Zeus; she is the illustrious one whom all the blessed ones throughout high Olympus hold in awe and honor, just as they do Zeus who delights in his lightning and thunder.

Hera consistently appears as the vehement wife and mother who will punish and avenge the romantic escapades of her husband; she consistently acts with matronly severity, the severe champion of morality and marriage.⁵ Iris, the fleet-footed and winged goddess of the rainbow (see p. 153), is also at times a messenger of the gods, sometimes the particular servant of Hera, with the offices of Hermes as messenger god then confined to Zeus. In art, Hera is depicted as regal and matronly, often with attributes of royalty, such as a crown and a scepter. Homer describes her as ox-eyed and white-armed, both epithets presumably denoting her beauty. If we mistranslate "ox-eyed" as "doe-eyed," perhaps the complimentary nature of that adjective becomes clear. The peacock is associated with Hera; this is explained by her role in the story of Io (told in Chapter 4). Argos was a special center for her worship, and a great temple was erected there in her honor. Hera was worshiped less as an earth-goddess than as a goddess of women, marriage, and childbirth, functions she shares with other goddesses.

THE SANCTUARY OF ZEUS AT OLYMPIA

Olympia is a sanctuary beside the river Alpheus, in the territory of the Peloponnesian city of Elis. By the time of the reorganization of the Olympic Games in 776,⁶ Zeus had become the principal god of the sanctuary, and his son Hercules was said to have founded the original Olympic Games, one of the principal athletic festivals in the ancient world.⁷ An earlier cult of the hero Pelops and his wife, Hippodamia (see pp. 405–407), continued, nevertheless, along with the worship of Zeus and Hera, whose temples were the principal buildings of the sanctuary at the peak of its greatness.

The temple of Hera was older, while the temple of Zeus was built in the fifth century with a monumental statue of Zeus placed inside.⁸ The statue and the sculptures on the temple itself together formed a program in which religion, mythology, and local pride were articulated on a scale paralleled only by the sculptures of the Parthenon at Athens.

On the west pediment was displayed the battle of the Greeks and the centaurs at the wedding of a son of Zeus, the Lapith king Pirithoüs, a myth that

also appears in the metopes of the Parthenon. The central figure in the pediment is another son of Zeus, Apollo, imposing order on the scene of violence and chaos (illustrated on p. 246).

The east pediment shows the scene before the fateful chariot race between Pelops and Hippodamia and her father Oenomaüs. Zeus himself is the central figure, guaranteeing the success of Pelops in the coming race and the winning of Hippodamia as his wife.

The Twelve Labors of Heracles were carved in the metopes of the Doric frieze (each about 1.6 meters in height), six above the entrance porch to the inner chamber (cella, or naos) at the east end of the temple, and six above the corresponding "false" porch on the west end. The climax of the Labors, above the east porch, was the local myth of the cleansing of the stables of Augeas, king of Elis (see pp. 525–526). In this labor (and in three others) Athena is shown helping the hero, and in the labors of the Nemean Lion and Cerberus, Hermes is the helper.

The most complex union of myth and religion was in the statue of Zeus, carved by the Athenian sculptor Pheidias and the most admired of all ancient statues. It was huge (about 42 feet in height), and its surfaces were made of precious materials, gold (for the clothing and ornaments), and ivory (for the flesh). It inspired awe in those who saw it. Although nothing remains of the statue today, we can reconstruct its appearance.⁹ Zeus was seated on his throne, carrying a figure of Nike (Victory) in his right hand, and in his left hand a scepter, on which perched his eagle. On the feet of the throne were depicted the myths of the Theban sphinx and the killing of the children of Niobe by Apollo and Artemis. Also part of the structure of the throne was a representation of Heracles fighting the Amazons, and Heracles appeared again in the paintings on a screen that enclosed the underpart of the throne, performing two of his labors (the Apples of the Hesperides and the Nemean Lion), as well as freeing Prometheus. In the carved reliefs on the base of the throne the Olympian gods accompanied the miraculous birth of Aphrodite from the sea. In front of the statue was a reflecting pool of olive oil.

Thus in the temple and its statue, at the heart of the greatest of Panhellenic sanctuaries, myths of human and divine struggle and victory, of destruction and creation, combined to honor Zeus as the supreme god of civilization.¹⁰

THE ORACLES AT OLYMPIA AND DODONA

Dodona (in northern Greece) as well as Olympia was an important center for the worship of Zeus, and both were frequented in antiquity for their oracular responses.

The traditional methods for eliciting a response from the god were by the observation and interpretation of omens, for example, the rustling of leaves, the sound of the wind in the branches of his sacred oaks, the call of doves, and the condition of burnt offerings. At Olympia inquiries were usually confined to the

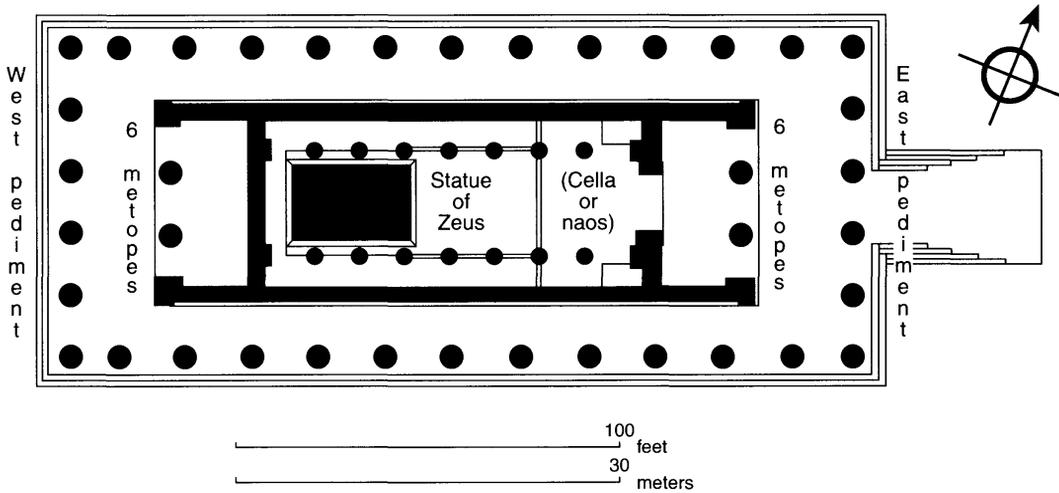


Figure 5.2. Plan of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia (After W. B. Dinsmoor)

chances of the competitors in the games. Eventually at Dodona, through the influence of the oracle of Apollo at Delphi, a priestess would mount a tripod and deliver her communications from the god.¹¹ Here leaden tablets have been found inscribed with all kinds of questions posed by the state and the individual. The people of Corcyra ask Zeus to what god or hero they should pray or sacrifice for their common good; others ask if it is safe to join a federation; a man inquires if it is good for him to marry; another, whether he will have children from his wife. There are questions about purchases, health, and family.

CHILDREN OF ZEUS AND HERA: EILEITHYIA, HEBE, HEPHAESTUS, AND ARES

Eileithyia, Goddess of Childbirth. Zeus and Hera have four children: Eileithyia, Hebe, Hephaestus, and Ares. Eileithyia is a goddess of childbirth, a role she shares with her mother Hera; at times mother and daughter merge in identity. Artemis (as we shall see in Chapter 10) is another important goddess of childbirth.

Hebe and Ganymede, Cupbearers to the Gods. Hebe is the goddess of youthful bloom (the literal meaning of her name). She is a servant of the gods as well.¹² Hebe is primarily known as the cupbearer for the deities on Olympus. When Heracles wins immortality, she becomes his bride. Some versions explain that she resigned from her position to marry. Late authors claim that she was discharged for clumsiness.

The Trojan prince Ganymede shares honors with Hebe as cupbearer of the gods; according to some he replaces her. The *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*

(5. 202–217), translated in its entirety in Chapter 9, tells how Zeus carried off Ganymede, the handsome son of Tros:

☞ Indeed Zeus in his wisdom seized and carried off fair-haired Ganymede because of his beauty, so that he might be in the company of the gods and pour wine for them in the house of Zeus, a wonder to behold, esteemed by all the immortals, as he draws the red nectar from a golden bowl. But a lasting sorrow gripped the heart of Tros, for he had no idea where the divine whirlwind had taken his dear son. Indeed he mourned for him unceasingly each and every day; and Zeus took pity on the father and gave him, as recompense for his son, brisk-trotting horses, the kind which carry the gods. These he gave him to have as a gift.

And at the command of Zeus, Hermes, the guide and slayer of Argus, told everything and how Ganymede would be immortal and never grow old, just



INTERPRETATIONS OF THE MYTH OF GANYMEDE

This story indeed illustrates succinctly and powerfully the wide variation of interpretation and reinterpretation that all myths are capable of inspiring—a principal reason for their immortality. The *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* tells a simple and beautiful story of how wise Zeus singled out handsome Ganymede to grace Olympus as cup-bearer and live there forever, immortal, like a god. Its ecstatic spirituality emerges with sublimity in the poem “Ganymede” by Goethe (especially in its musical settings by Schubert and Wolf). The incident is seen from the point of view of a devoted Ganymede. In a passionate yet spiritual aura, amidst the glowing sun, beloved spring, and burning love, Ganymede ecstatically cries to the descending clouds to carry him aloft: “In your lap, upwards, embracing, embraced. Upwards to your breast, loving father.” For a different artist, the homosexuality latent in the myth may offer amoral or nonmoral testimony to the fact of a physical relationship, and not a religious calling. Another may tell the story to prove a divine vindication of male relationships. Yet another may vehemently identify the myth as a horrifying Rape of Ganymede by Zeus—accusing God of this brutal sin, an idea inconceivable to the poet and philosopher Xenophanes (see p. 131). The tale may even become (as in the case of the Greek writer Lucian) a divinely amusing, urbane, satiric jest. So is this a myth about a religious experience, a summoning by God to heaven, a rape, or is it merely a joke? It depends on how the story is told and how it is interpreted; many are the possible variations. There is, of course, no single “correct” interpretation of a great myth. Myth is protean by nature, most gratifying because it forever changes through the personality and genius of each and every artist, in any medium at any time, to provide pleasure and enlightenment in our search to find in the work of art our own individual meaning and enrichment.

The myth of Zeus and Ganymede is similar to the story of how Poseidon fell in love with Pelops and brought him up to Olympus (see p. 405).



like the gods. When Tros heard this message from Zeus, he no longer continued his mourning but rejoiced within his heart and joyfully was borne by the horses that were as swift as a storm.

In some accounts an eagle, not a whirlwind, carries Ganymede away. This myth, for some, represents the spiritual calling of a young man by god; others attribute homosexual desire to a bisexual Zeus, thus having the supreme god mirror yet another human trait.¹³

Hephaestus, the Divine Artisan. Hephaestus, the next child of Zeus and Hera to be considered, is a god of creative fire and a divine smith. His divine workshop is often placed in heaven or on Olympus. All that this immortal craftsman produces excites wonder; his major role in mythology is to create things of extraordinary beauty and utility, often elaborately wrought. One of his masterpieces, the shield of Achilles, is described in exquisite detail by Homer (*Iliad* 18. 468–617). Hephaestus even has attendants fashioned of gold that look like living young women; these robots can move with intelligence and speak with knowledge. He is indeed the master artisan. Sometimes his forge is under the earth; and as he labors covered with soot and sweat, he may be attended by the three Cyclopes, whom we already know as the ones who create the thunder and lightning of Zeus.¹⁴

Hephaestus is also a god of fire in general, including destructive fire. When the Scamander (both a river and its god) is about to engulf the hero Achilles during an episode in the Trojan War (*Iliad* 21. 324–382), Hera calls upon Hephaestus to raise up his fire and direct it against the raging river, which soon is overcome by the flames.¹⁵

Hephaestus and the goddess Athena were often linked together as benefactors of wisdom in the arts and crafts and champions of progress and civilization. Their joint worship was particularly significant in Athens, and in the *Homeric Hymn to Hephaestus* (20) they are invoked together as archetypal, divine culture figures like Prometheus.

 Sing, clear-voiced Muse, about Hephaestus, renowned for his intelligence, who, with bright-eyed Athena, taught splendid arts to human beings on earth. Previously they used to live in mountain caves, like animals, but now, because of Hephaestus, renowned for his skill, they have learned his crafts and live year round with ease and comfort in their own houses.

Be kind, Hephaestus, and give me both excellence and prosperity.

The god Hephaestus was lame from birth. One version of his birth informs us that Hera claimed that Hephaestus was her son alone without Zeus; thus Hera has her own favorite child, born from herself, just as Zeus has his special daughter, Athena, who was born from his head. In this version too, Hera was ashamed of his deformity and cast him down from Olympus or heaven.¹⁶ Hephaestus refused to listen to any of the other gods, who urged that he return home, except for Dionysus in whom he had the greatest trust. Dionysus made

him drunk and brought him back to Olympus triumphantly. On vases this scene is variously depicted with a tipsy Hephaestus on foot or astride a donkey, led by Dionysus alone or with his retinue.

We are also told that he was hurled to earth (presumably on an another occasion?), this time by Zeus. Hephaestus landed on the island of Lemnos, was rescued, and eventually returned home. Lemnos in classical times was an important center of his worship. Other volcanic regions (e.g., Sicily and its environs) were also associated with this divine smith; these places bore testimony to the fire and smoke that at times would erupt from his forge.

At the close of Book 1 of the *Iliad*, Hephaestus himself recounts the episode of Zeus' anger against him. We excerpt this passage because it illustrates many



The Return of Hephaestus, detail from an Attic black-figure column-krater by Lydos, ca. 550 B.C.; circumference 74 in., height 23 in. The procession is painted round the vase, with Dionysus on one side and on the other (shown here) Hephaestus riding on a mule and accompanied by Sileni, satyrs, and dancing maenads. A snake, bunches of grapes, and wineskins emphasize the role of Dionysus in the myth of the drunken Hephaestus' return to Olympus. (*The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund, 1931 (31.11.ilobv.)*). All rights reserved, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art.*

things: the character of Hephaestus; his closeness to his mother Hera; the tone and atmosphere instigated by an episode in the life of the Olympian family; Zeus as the stern father in his house; his difficult relations with his wife; the uneasy emotions of the children while they witness the quarrel of their parents.

The sea-goddess Thetis has come to Zeus on Olympus to ask that he grant victory to the Trojans until the Achaean Greeks honor her son Achilles and give him recompense for the insult that he has suffered. As Thetis clasps the knees of Zeus and touches his chin in the traditional posture of a suppliant (see Color Plate 1), Zeus agrees to her wishes with these words (*Iliad* 1. 517–611):

 “A bad business indeed if you set me at variance with Hera and she reviles me with reproaches. She always abuses me, even as it is, in the presence of the immortal gods and says that I help the Trojans in battle. But you now must withdraw, lest Hera notice anything. These things you have asked for will be my concern until I accomplish them. Come now, I shall nod my assent to you so that you may be convinced. For this from me is the greatest pledge among the immortals; for no promise of mine is revocable or false or unfulfilled to which I give assent with the nod of my head.” He spoke and the son of Cronus with his dark brows nodded to her wishes; and the ambrosial locks flowed round the immortal head of the lord and he made great Olympus tremble.¹⁷

After the two had made their plans, they parted; then she leaped into the deep sea from shining Olympus and Zeus returned to his own house. All the gods rose together from their places in the presence of their father and no one dared to remain seated as he entered but all stood before him. Thereupon he sat down on his throne. But Hera did not fail to observe that silver-footed Thetis, daughter of the old man of the sea, had taken counsel with him. Immediately she addressed Zeus, the son of Cronus, with cutting remarks: “Which one of the gods this time has taken counsel with you, crafty rogue? Always it is dear to you to think secret thoughts and to make decisions apart from me and never yet have you dared say a word openly to me about what you are thinking.”

Then the father of men and gods answered her: “Hera, do not hope to know all that I say; it would be difficult for you even though you are my wife. But whatever is fitting that you should hear, then not anyone either of gods nor of mortals will know it before you. But do not pry or ask questions about each and every thing to which I wish to give thought apart from the gods.”

And then ox-eyed Hera in her majesty replied: “Most dread son of Cronus, what kind of answer is this you have given? I have not pried too much or asked questions before but completely on your own you plan whatever you wish. Yet now I am terribly afraid in my heart that silver-footed Thetis, daughter of the old man of the sea, has won you over; for early this morning she sat by your side and grasped your knees and I believe that you nodded your oath that you would honor Achilles and destroy many by the ships of the Achaeans.”

The cloud-gatherer Zeus spoke to her in answer: “You always believe something and I never escape you; nevertheless you will be able to accomplish nothing, but you will be farther removed from my heart; and this will be all the more chill an experience for you. If what you say is so, its fulfillment is what I desire. But sit

down in silence, and obey what I say; for now all the gods in Olympus will be of no avail when I come closer and lay my invincible hands upon you." Thus he spoke and ox-eyed lady Hera was afraid, and she sat down in silence wrenching her heart to obedience, and the gods of heaven were troubled in the house of Zeus.

But Hephaestus renowned for his art began to make a speech to them showing his concern for his dear mother, Hera of the white arms. "This will be a sorry business indeed and not to be endured any longer, if you two quarrel on account of mortals and bring wrangling among the gods. There will be no further pleasure in the excellent feast when baser instincts prevail. I advise my mother, even though she is prudent, to act kindly toward my dear father Zeus so that he will not be abusive again and disturb our banquet. Just suppose he, the Olympian hurler of lightning, wishes to blast us from our seats. For he is by far the strongest. But you touch him with gentle words; immediately then the Olympian will be kindly toward us."

Thus he spoke and springing up he placed a cup with two handles in the hand of his mother and spoke to her: "Bear up, mother dear, and endure, although you are hurt, so that I may not see you struck before my eyes, and then even though you are dear and I am distressed I shall not be able to help. For the Olympian is hard to oppose. Previously on another occasion when I was eager to defend you, he grabbed me by the feet and hurled me from the divine threshold. And I fell the whole day and landed on Lemnos when the sun was setting, and little life was left in me. There Sintian men took care of me at once after my fall."

Thus he spoke. And the goddess Hera of the white arms smiled and as she smiled she received the cup from his hand. He drew sweet nectar from a mixing bowl and poured it like wine for all the other gods from left to right. Then unquenchable laughter rose up among the blessed gods as they saw Hephaestus bustling about the house.

In this way then the whole day until the sun went down they feasted, nor was anyone's desire for his share of the banquet found wanting nor of the exquisite lyre that Apollo held nor of the Muses, who sang in harmony with beautiful voice. But when the bright light of the sun set they went to bed each to his own home which the renowned lame god Hephaestus had built by his skill and knowledge. Olympian Zeus, the hurler of lightning, went to his own bed where he always lay down until sweet sleep would come to him. There he went and took his rest and beside him was Hera of the golden throne.

Hephaestus, Aphrodite, and Ares. Hephaestus is a figure of amusement as he hobbles around acting as the cupbearer to the gods in the previous scene, on Olympus; but he is a deadly serious figure in his art and in his love. His wife is Aphrodite,¹⁸ and theirs is a strange and tempestuous marriage: the union of beauty and deformity, the intellectual and the sensual. Aphrodite is unfaithful to her husband and turns to the virile Ares, handsome and whole, brutal and strong. Homer, with deceptive simplicity, lays bare the psychological implications in a tale about the eternal triangle that remains forever fresh in its humanity and perceptions.

In Book 8 (266–366) of the *Odyssey*, the bard Demodocus sings of the love affair between Ares and Aphrodite and the suffering of Hephaestus (see Color Plate 12: Hephaestus [Vulcan] is startled to hear the news of his wife's infidelity):



He took up the lyre and began to sing beautifully of the love of Ares and Aphrodite with the fair crown: how first they lay together by stealth in the home of Hephaestus. He gave her many gifts and defiled the marriage bed of lord Hephaestus. But soon Helius, the Sun, came to him as a messenger, for he saw them in the embrace of love, and Hephaestus when he heard the painful tale went straight to his forge planning evil in his heart. He put his great anvil on its stand and hammered out chains that could not be broken or loosened so that they would hold fast on the spot.

When he had fashioned this cunning device in his rage against Ares, he went directly to his chamber where the bed was and spread the many shackles all around the bedposts and hung them suspended from the rafters, like a fine spider's web that no one could see, not even the blessed gods, for they were very cunningly made. When he had arranged the whole device all about the bed, he pretended to journey to the well-built citadel of Lemnos, which of all lands was by far the most dear to him.

But Ares of the golden reins was not blind in his watch and as he saw Hephaestus leave he went straight to the house of the craftsman renowned for his art, eager for love with Cytherea of the fair crown. She was sitting, having just come from her mighty father, the son of Cronus, when Ares came into the house; he took her hand and spoke out exclaiming: "My love, come let us go to bed and take our pleasure, for Hephaestus is no longer at home but he has gone now, probably to visit Lemnos and the Sintian inhabitants with their barbarous speech." Thus he spoke and to her the invitation seemed most gratifying; they both went and lay down on the bed. And the bonds fashioned by ingenious Hephaestus poured around them, and they were not able to raise or move a limb. Then to be sure they knew that there was no longer any escape.

The renowned lame god came from close by; he had turned back before he had reached the land of Lemnos, for Helius watched from his lookout and told him the story. Hephaestus made for his home, grieving in his heart, and he stood in the doorway and wild rage seized him; he cried out in a loud and terrible voice to all the gods: "Father Zeus and you other blessed gods who live forever, come here so that you may see something that is laughable and cruel: how Aphrodite the daughter of Zeus always holds me in contempt since I am lame and loves the butcher Ares because he is handsome and sound of limb, but I was born a cripple. I am not to blame for this nor is anyone else except both my parents who I wish had never begotten me. You will see how these two went into my bed where they lay down together in love. As I look at them I am overcome by anguish. I do not think that they will still want to lie here in this way for even a brief time, although they are so very much in love, and very quickly they will no longer wish to sleep side by side, for my cunning and my bonds will hold them fast until her father pays back all the gifts that I gave to him for this hussy because she was his daughter and beautiful, but she is wanton in her passion."

Thus he spoke and the gods assembled at his house with the floor of bronze. Poseidon the earthshaker came and Hermes the helpful runner, and lord Apollo the far-shooter. But the goddesses in their modesty stayed at home one and all. The blessed gods, dispensers of good things, stood at the door and unquenchable laughter rose up among them as they saw the skill of ingenious Hephaestus. And one would speak to another who was next to him as follows: "Bad

deeds do not prosper; the slow overtakes the swift, since now Hephaestus who is slow and lame has caught by his skill Ares, even though he is the swiftest of the gods who inhabit Olympus. Therefore he must pay the penalty for being caught in adultery." This was the sort of thing that they said to one another.

And lord Apollo, son of Zeus, spoke to Hermes: "Hermes, son of Zeus, runner and bestower of blessings, would you wish to lie in bed by the side of golden Aphrodite, even though pressed in by mighty shackles?" Then the swift runner Hermes answered: "I only wish it were so, lord Apollo, far-shooter. Let there be three times the number of shackles and you gods looking on and all the goddesses, I still would lie by the side of golden Aphrodite."

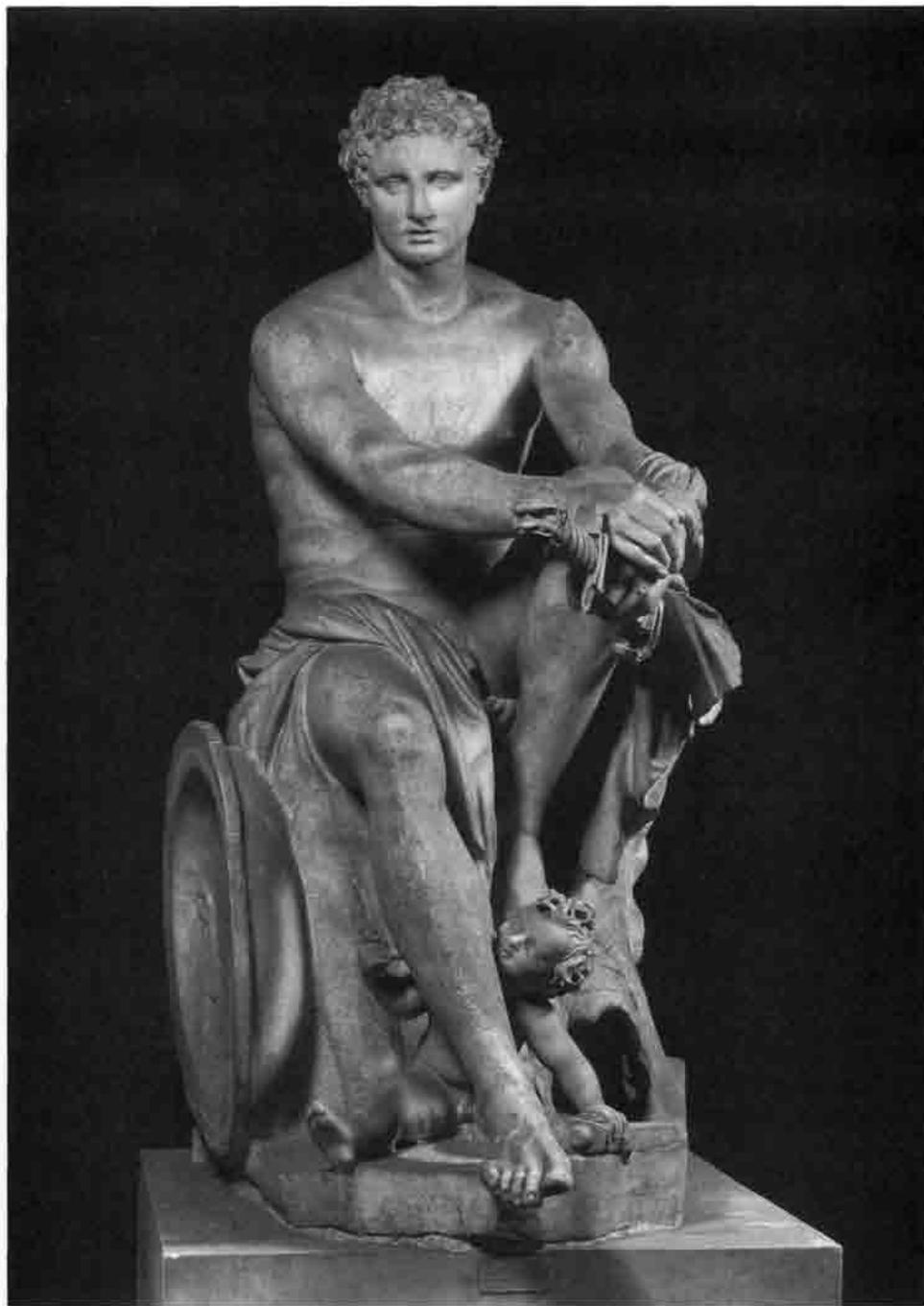
Thus he spoke and a laugh rose up among the immortal gods. But Poseidon did not laugh; he relentlessly begged Hephaestus, the renowned smith, to release Ares and addressed him with winged words: "Release him. I promise you that he will pay all that is fitting in the presence of the immortal gods, as you demand." Then the renowned lame god answered: "Do not demand this of me, Poseidon, earthshaker; pledges made on behalf of worthless characters are worthless to have and to keep. How could I hold you fast in the presence of the immortal gods, if Ares gets away and escapes both his debt and his chains?" Then Poseidon the earthshaker answered: "Hephaestus, if Ares avoids his debt and escapes and flees, I myself will pay up." Then the renowned lame god replied: "I cannot and I must not deny your request."

Thus speaking Hephaestus in his might released the chains. And when they both were freed from the strong bonds, they immediately darted away, the one went to Thrace and the other, laughter-loving Aphrodite, came to Paphos in Cyprus where are her sanctuary and altar fragrant with sacrifices. There the Graces bathed her and anointed her with divine oil, the kind that is used by the immortal gods, and they clothed her in lovely garments, a wonder to behold.

A funny story yet a painful one; glib in its sophisticated and ironic portrayal of the gods, but permeated with a deep and unshakable moral judgment and conviction. The Greeks particularly enjoyed the fact that the lame Hephaestus, by his intelligence and craft, outwits the nimble and powerful Ares.

Ares, God of War. Ares himself, the god of war, is the last child of Zeus and Hera to be considered. His origins probably belong to Thrace, an area with which he is often linked. Aphrodite is usually named as his cult partner; several children are attributed to them, the most important being Eros. Dawn (Eos) was one of his mistresses, and we have already mentioned (in Chapter 3) Aphrodite's jealousy.

Ares. Roman copy of a Greek original (possibly by Skopas) of ca. 340 B.C.; marble, height 61½ in. Known as the *Ludovisi Mars*, this copy (made perhaps in the late second century A.D.) shows Mars, unarmed but holding his sword with the scabbard-handle turned toward the viewer and with his left foot resting on his helmet. His shield is upright (the inside face turned outward). Is the god simply at rest, or has he been subdued by love, as the Cupid (added by the copyist) implies? (*Rome, Museo Nazionale delle Terme.*)



In character Ares is generally depicted as a kind of divine swashbuckler. He is not highly thought of, and at times he appears as little more than a butcher. The more profound moral and theological aspects of war were taken over by other deities, especially Zeus or Athena. Zeus' response to Ares after he has been wounded by Diomedes (Ares sometimes gets the worst of things, even in battle) is typical of the Greek attitude toward him (*Iliad* 5. 889–891, 895–898).

 Do not sit beside me and complain, you two-faced rogue. Of all the gods who dwell on Olympus you are the most hateful to me, for strife and wars and battles are always dear to you. . . . Still I shall not endure any longer that you be in pain, for you are of my blood and your mother bore you to me. But if you were born of some other of the gods, since you are so destructive you would have long since been thrown out of Olympus.

The Greeks felt strongly about the brutality, waste, and folly of war, all of which are personified and deified in the figure of Ares. Yet they inevitably developed an appreciation (if that is the right word) of the harsh realities that Ares could impose and the various aspects of warfare that he might represent. After all, throughout much of their history the Greeks (like us) were plagued by war; and in the pages of the great historian Thucydides we see most clearly of all that despicable war is the harshest of teachers. The Greeks *did* worship Ares, Athena, and Zeus as divine champions in righteous conflict.

The *Homeric Hymn to Ares* (8), a relatively late composition with its astrological reference to the planet Ares (Mars), invokes with more compassion a god of greater complexity who is to provide an intelligent and controlled courage.¹⁹

 Ares—superior in force, chariot-rider, golden-helmeted, shield-bearer, stalwart in battle, savior of cities, bronze-armored, strong-fisted, unwearingly relentless, mighty with the spear, defense of Olympus, father of the war-champion Nike [Victory], ally of Themis [Right], tyrant against the rebellious, champion for the righteous, sceptred king of manhood—as you whirl your fiery red sphere among the planets in their seven courses through the air, where your blazing steeds keep you forever above the third orbit,²⁰ hear me, helper of mortals, giver of vigorous youth; from above shed upon my life a martial ferocity, so that I may be able to drive off bitter cowardice from my person, and then again a radiant gentleness so that I may be able to bend to my will the treacherous impulse of my spirit to rush to the attack and check the keen fury of my passion which drives me to engage in the chilling din of battle.

You, blessed one, give me the strength to keep within the harmless constraints of peace and flee from the strife of enemies and violence of fateful death.

OTHER CHILDREN OF ZEUS: THE MUSES AND THE FATES

The Nine Muses, Daughters of Zeus and Memory (Mnemosyne). We shall conclude this chapter with two of Zeus' many affairs because of the universal significance of the offspring. He mates with the Titaness Mnemosyne ("Memory"), and she

gives birth to the Muses, the patronesses of literature and the arts; thus allegorically Memory with divine help produces inspiration. The opening section of Hesiod's *Theogony*, which is devoted primarily to the Muses, is translated in the Additional Reading at the end of Chapter 3. The home of the Muses is often located in Pieria in northern Thessaly near Mt. Olympus,²¹ or about the fountain Hippocrene on Mt. Helicon in Boeotia. The Muses (their name means "the reminders") may originally have been water spirits with the power of prophecy and then inspiration, imagined from the babbling of waters as they flow. They are supreme in their fields, and those who dare to challenge them meet with defeat and punishment. In this respect they resemble Apollo, with whom they are often associated. The number of the Muses is not consistent, but later authors usually identify nine of them, each with a specific function, although assignments will vary. Calliope presides over epic poetry; Clio, history (or lyre playing); Euterpe, lyric poetry (or tragedy and flute playing); Melpomene, tragedy (or lyre playing); Terpsichore, choral dancing (or flute playing); Erato, love poetry (or hymns to the gods and lyre playing); Polyhymnia, sacred music (or dancing); Urania, astronomy; Thalia, comedy.

In the *Homeric Hymn to the Muses and Apollo* (25), the great deity Apollo is invoked along with them because as god of music, poetry, and the arts he is often their associate.

 With the Muses, let me begin, and with Apollo and Zeus. For through the Muses and far-shooting Apollo, human beings on earth are poets and musicians; but through Zeus, they are kings. Blessed are the ones whom the Muses love; sweet is the sound that flows from their lips.

Hail, children of Zeus, and give honor to my song; yet I shall remember you and another song too.

The Three Fates, Daughters of Zeus and Themis. Zeus is sometimes said to be the father of the Fates (Greek, *Moirai*; *Parcae* for the Romans) as a result of his union with Themis. Night and Erebus are also said to be their parents. The Fates are originally birth spirits who often came to be depicted as three old women responsible for the destiny of every individual. Clotho ("Spinner") spins out the thread of life, which carries with it the fate of each human being from the moment of birth; Lachesis ("Apportioner") measures the thread; and Atropos ("Inflexible"), sometimes characterized as the smallest and most terrible, cuts it off and brings life to an end. On occasion they can be influenced to alter the fate decreed by their labors, but usually the course of the destiny that they spin is irrevocable.

Fate is often thought of in the singular (Greek, *Moirai*), in a conception that is much more abstract and more closely linked to a profound realization of the roles played by Luck or Fortune (Tyche) and Necessity (Ananke) in the scheme of human life. The relation of the gods to destiny is variously depicted and intriguing to analyze in the literature. According to some authors Zeus is supreme

and controls all, but others portray a universe in which even the great and powerful Zeus must bow to the inevitability of Fate's decrees. The depth of this feeling of the Greeks for the working of *Moirai* or the *Moirai* cannot be overemphasized. It provides a definite and unique tone and color to the bulk of their writing. One thinks immediately of Homer or Herodotus or the tragedians, but no major author was untouched by fascination with the interrelation of god, mortals, and fate and the tantalizing interplay of destiny and free will.²²

In the brief *Homeric Hymn to the Supreme Son of Cronus* (23), Zeus is invoked as the intimate confidant of Themis; for Zeus and Themis were the parents not only of the Fates but also of the Hours (*Horae*)²³ and (appropriately for this hymn) of Good Order (*Eunomia*), Justice (*Dike*), and Peace (*Eirene*).

 About Zeus, I will sing, the best and greatest of the gods, far-seeing ruler and accomplisher, who confides his words of wisdom to Themis, as she sits and leans close. Be kind, far-seeing son of Cronus, most glorious and most great.

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NOTES

1. The Roman gods are discussed on pp. 623–644.
2. See the lines about Hestia in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, translated in Chapter 9, p. 182. Sometimes Hestia does not seem to be conceived fully as an anthropomorphic deity.
3. Pytho is Delphi, the site of Apollo's great temple; oil was used as an ointment for hair and in religious rites it was poured over the heads of statues.
4. The warrior-goddess Athena will also carry the aegis, on which may be depicted the head of the Gorgon Medusa whom she helped Perseus slay. Athena's aegis may be her own or lent by Zeus to his favorite daughter.
5. Zeus and Hera find their archetypal counterparts in the Wotan and Fricka of Nordic mythology.
6. These games were celebrated every four years after 776; an important system of dating for the Greeks was by Olympiads.
7. Long before 776, the pre-Olympian deities Cronus and Gaia were worshiped at Olympia. For Heracles at Olympia, see p. 525.
8. The temple was completed in 456; the statue, ca. 430.
9. It was described in detail by the traveler Pausanias (5. 11) in the second century A.D.;

- the Roman Quintilian wrote, "its beauty added something even to the traditional religion."
10. See Bernard Ashmole, N. Yalouris, and Alison Franz, *Olympia: The Sculptures of the Temple of Zeus* (New York: Phaidon, 1967); John Boardman, *Greek Sculpture: The Classical Period* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985), Chapter 4, "Olympia: The Temple of Zeus," pp. 33–50, includes diagrams, reconstructions, and photographs to illustrate the very brief discussion; Martin Robinson, *A Shorter History of Greek Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981) (pp. 79–89 for the sculptures of the temple of Zeus at Olympia), is by far the best discussion, distilled from the author's *A History of Greek Art*, 2 vols. (1975), pp. 271–291.
 11. Olympia was not as famous for its oracles as was the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi, another famous Panhellenic festival (i.e., one to which "all Hellenes" came). Delphi was similar to Olympia and is described in Chapter 11 in some detail as representative of this facet of Hellenic worship and life (see pp. 230–234).
 12. In the *Iliad* (5. 905) Hebe bathes and clothes Ares after he has been healed of the wounds inflicted by the hero Diomedes.
 13. For the theme of homosexuality see Chapter 1, pp. 21–22.
 14. Homer (*Iliad* 18) presents a splendid picture of his house on Olympus when Thetis appeals to Hephaestus to forge new armor for her son Achilles. Vergil (*Aeneid* 8) locates Vulcan's workshop in a cave on the island of Vulcania near Sicily. There he fashions magnificent armor for Aeneas, the son of Venus.
 15. This scene is not unlike the finale of act three of Richard Wagner's *Die Walküre*, in which Wotan conjures up Loge to surround his Walkyrie daughter Brünnhilde with a ring of magic fire.
 16. For this version, see the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* in the Additional Reading to Chapter 11.
 17. Pheidias' majestic statue of the seated figure of Zeus in the temple at Olympia (described earlier) was supposedly inspired by these lines from Homer describing Zeus as he nods.
 18. Sometimes Hephaestus' mate is one of the Graces, either the youngest, Aglaea, or Grace herself (Charis), which actually may be but another designation for Aphrodite.
 19. This hymn probably belongs to Hellenistic times or even later; some, not very convincingly, associate it with the corpus of Orphic hymns. The richer connotations given to Ares' character and the emphasis upon strength in peace as well as war look to Mars, the Roman counterpart of Ares; see pp. 626–627.
 20. Ares is in the third planetary zone, if you count from the one that is farthest from Earth.
 21. The Muses are sometimes called the Pierides, but Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 5. 205–678) tells a story of nine daughters of Pierus of Pella in Macedonia who were also called Pierides. They challenged the Muses to a musical contest, lost, and were changed into magpies, birds that imitate sounds and chatter incessantly.
 22. The Romans developed this same tragic view of human existence. For them Fate is personified by the Parcae, or more abstractly conceived as Fatum (Fate).
 23. The Horae, Hours, become the Seasons, goddesses who are two, three, or four in number and closely connected with vegetation. They attend the greater deities and provide attractive decoration in literature and art. Zeus and Themis as sky-god and earth-goddess enact once again the ritual of the sacred marriage.

THE NATURE OF THE GODS

ANTHROPOMORPHISM

By now the nature of the anthropomorphic conception of deity that evolved among the Greeks and the Romans should be evident. The gods are generally depicted as human in form and character; but although they look and act like humans, very often their appearance and their actions are to some extent idealized. Their beauty is beyond that of ordinary mortals, their passions more grand and intense, their sentiments more praiseworthy and touching; and they can embody and impose the loftiest moral values in the universe. Yet these same gods can mirror the physical and spiritual weaknesses of human counterparts: they can be lame and deformed or vain, petty, and insincere; they can steal, lie, and cheat, sometimes with a finesse that is exquisitely divine.

The gods usually live in houses on Mt. Olympus or in heaven; a very important distinction, however, is to be made between those deities of the upper air and the upper world (the Olympians) and those of the realm below, appropriately named chthonian (i.e., of the earth). They eat and drink, but their food is ambrosia and their wine nectar. Ichor (a substance clearer than blood) flows in their veins. Just as they can feel the gamut of human emotion, so too they can suffer physical pain and torment. They are worshiped in shrines and temples and sanctuaries; they are honored with statues, placated by sacrifices, and invoked by prayers.

In general the gods are more versatile than mortals. They are able to move with amazing speed and dexterity, appear and disappear in a moment, and change their shape at will, assuming various forms—human, animal, and divine. Their powers also are far greater than those of mortals. Yet gods are seldom omnipotent, except possibly for Zeus himself, and even Zeus may be made subject to Fate or the Fates. Their knowledge, too, is superhuman, if on occasion limited. Omniscience is most often reserved as a special prerogative of Zeus and Apollo, who communicate their knowledge of the future to mortals. Most important of all, the gods are immortal; in the last analysis, their immortality is the one divine characteristic that most consistently distinguishes them from mortals.

Very often one or more animals are associated with a particular deity. For Zeus, it is the eagle; for Hera, the peacock; for Poseidon, the horse; for Athena, the owl; for Aphrodite, the dove, sparrow, or goose; for Ares, the boar. In ad-

dition, a deity who desires to do so can take the form of an animal. There is no concrete evidence, however, to show that the Greeks at an early period ever worshiped animals as sacred.

THE DIVINE HIERARCHY

Many of the preceding remarks apply for the most part only to the highest order of divinity in the Greek pantheon. Such wondrous and terrible creations as the Gorgons or Harpies, who populate the universe to the enrichment of mythology and saga, obviously represent a different category of the supernatural. Of a different order, too, are the divine spirits who animate nature. These beings are usually depicted as nymphs, beautiful young girls who love to dance and sing and, in some cases, are extremely amorous. Very often nymphs act as attendants for one or more of the major gods or goddesses. The Muses are a kind of nymph, and so are the Nereids and Oceanids, although some of them assume virtually the stature of deity. More typically, nymphs are rather like fairies, extremely long-lived but not necessarily immortal.¹

Demigods are another class of superhuman beings, or better, a superior kind of human being—that is, supermen and superwomen. They are the offspring of mixed parentage, the union of a god with a mortal, who may or may not be extraordinary.² Demigods are therefore limited in their powers, which are rather less than those of full-fledged gods; and they are mortals, often little more than figures made larger than life because of their tragic and epic environment.

Heroes sometimes are demigods, but the terminology is not easy to define precisely. Mortals like Oedipus and Amphiaräus are not, strictly speaking, demigods, although they are far from ordinary beings. They may be called heroes, and certainly they become so after death, honored with a cult largely because of the spiritual intensity of their lives and the miraculous nature of their deaths; they thus assume a divine status. Heracles, too, is a hero and a demigod, but he is an exception because he joins the company of the immortal gods on Olympus as a reward for his glorious attainments in this world. The difficulty in establishing absolute definitions is complicated because of the use of the designation "hero" in the vocabulary of literary criticism. Achilles is a demigod, that is, the son of a mortal Peleus and the nymph-goddess Thetis. His powers are extraordinary, but it is ultimately as a mortal, the dramatic and epic hero of the *Iliad*, that he is to be judged.

It is apparent that a hierarchy of divinities existed in the Greek pantheon. The Olympians, along with the major deities of the lower world, represent as it were a powerful aristocracy. Although individual gods and goddesses may be especially honored in particular places (e.g., Athena in Athens, Hera in Argos, Hephaestus in Lemnos, Apollo in Delos and Delphi), in general the major divinities were universally recognized throughout the Greek world. At the top is Zeus himself, the king, the father of both gods and mortals, the supreme lord.

ZEUS AND MONOTHEISM

We have already seen the popular anthropomorphic conception of Zeus as the father, husband, and lover; and we know too the primary sphere of his power: the sky and the upper air, with their thunder, lightning, and rain. Zeus also becomes the god who upholds the highest moral values in the order of the universe—values that he absorbs unto himself or that are divided among and shared by other deities. He is the god who protects the family, the clan, and the state, championing the universal moral and ethical responsibilities that these human associations entail. He protects suppliants, imposes ties of hospitality, upholds the sanctity of oaths; in a word, he is the defender of all that is right or just in the mores of advanced civilization.

Thus, within the polytheistic cast of Greek and Roman mythology and religion, a strong element of monotheism emerges from the very beginning; as it evolves, it may be linked closely to the standard depictions of an anthropomorphic Zeus or imagined in terms of more abstract philosophical and religious theories of a supreme power.

In Homer and Hesiod, Zeus is unquestionably the sovereign deity, and he is very much concerned with moral values. Yet his monotheism and patriarchy are severely tested by other divinities, especially goddesses. Hera's power is able to thwart Zeus' plans. Aphrodite can bend all the gods to her will, Zeus included, except for the three virgins, Hestia, Athena, and Artemis. Demeter, angry at the rape of her daughter Persephone, forces Zeus and the gods to come to her terms. And Zeus must yield to fate or the fates, although this need not always be the case.

At the same time, in the evolution of Zeus as the one supreme god, the almighty god of morality and justice, he could be referred to without a name and simply as god in an abstract, rather than specific, anthropomorphic conception. This greater sophistication in thought, which gave Zeus a more unquestionable, absolute, and spiritual authority, came about through the writings of religious poets and philosophers. Many selections from many authors could be quoted to bear testimony to the variety and complexity of Greek conceptions of the nature of the one god. A few examples must suffice.

Hesiod, who preaches a hard message of righteousness and warns of the terror of Zeus' punishment of the wicked, sounds very much like a severe prophet of the Old Testament. The opening section of his *Works and Days* includes the following lines (3–7):

 Through Zeus, who dwells in a most lofty home and thunders from on high and by his mighty will, mortals are both known and unknown, renowned and unrenowned; for easily he makes them strong and easily he brings them low; easily he makes the overweening humble and champions the obscure; easily he makes the crooked straight and strikes down the haughty.

Xenophanes, a poet and philosopher of the pre-Socratic period, was vehement in his attack on the conventional anthropomorphic depictions of the gods.

He argued against the folly of conceiving deities as human beings and insisted that there is one supreme nonanthropomorphic god:

 Homer and Hesiod have ascribed to the gods all that is shameful and reproachful among mortals: stealing, adultery, and deception. [frag. 11]

But mortals think that gods are born and have clothes and a voice and a body just like them. [frag. 14]

The Ethiopians say that their gods are flat-nosed and black and the Thracians that theirs are fair and ruddy. [frag. 16]

But if cattle and horses and lions had hands and could create with their hands and achieve works like those of human beings, horses would render their conceptions of the gods like horses, and cattle like cattle, and each would depict bodies for them just like their own. [frag. 15]

One god, greatest among gods and mortals, not at all like them, either in body or in mind. [frag. 23]

The chorus of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (160–161) calls upon god by the name of Zeus with words that illustrate beautifully the universality of this supreme deity: “Zeus, whoever he may be, I call on him by this name, if it is pleasing to him to be thus invoked.”

It is important to realize that monotheism and polytheism are not mutually exclusive and that human religious experience usually tends (as Xenophanes observes) to be anthropomorphic. It would be absurd to deny that Christianity in its very essence is monotheistic, but its monotheism too rests upon a hierarchical conception of the spiritual and physical universe, and its standard images are obviously cast in anthropomorphic molds: for example, there is one God in three divine persons, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; there are angels, saints, devils, and so on. This does not mean that the Christian philosopher and layperson view the basic tenets of their religion in exactly the same way; ultimately each vision of deity is personal, as abstract and sublime for one as it is human and compassionate for another. Among Christian sects alone there are significant variations in dogma and ritual; and of course, there are those who do not believe at all. The range from devout belief to agnosticism and atheism was as diverse and rich in the ancient world as it is in our world. The tendency in a brief survey such as this is to oversimplify and distort.

GREEK HUMANISM

The anthropomorphism of the Greeks is almost invariably linked to their role as the first great humanists. Humanism (the Greek variety or, for that matter, any other kind) can mean many things to many people. Standard interpretations usually evoke a few sublime (although hackneyed) quotations from Greek literature. The fifth-century sophist Protagoras is said to have proclaimed: “Man is the measure of all things”; presumably he is challenging absolute values by voicing new relativistic attitudes (i.e., mortals, not gods, are individual arbiters

of the human condition). A chorus in Sophocles' *Antigone* sings exultantly: "Wonders are many but none is more wonderful than man"; and Achilles' judgment of the afterlife in Homer's *Odyssey* (translated on p. 331) quoted out of context seems to affirm an unbridled optimism in the boundless hope and achievement possible in this life, as opposed to the dismal gloom and dull inertia of the hereafter. He cries out:

 I should prefer as a slave to serve another man, even if he had no property and little to live on, than to rule all those dead who have done with life.

With words such as these ringing in one's ears, it seems easy to postulate a Greek worship (even idolatry) of the human in a universe where mortals pay the gods the highest (but surely dubious) compliment of casting them in their own image.

Whatever truths this popular view may hold, it is far too one-dimensional and misleading to be genuinely meaningful and fair. In opposition to this myopic, uplifting faith in the potential of human endeavor to triumph against all divine odds, Greek literature and thought are shot through with a somber and awesome reverence for the supremacy of the gods and the inevitability of the Fates. A sense of predetermined destiny for each individual was analyzed in terms of the meaning and possibility of free will and independent action. There also developed a strong and realistic awareness of the miseries, uncertainties, and unpredictability of human life, ordained by the gods. If we are lucky, our lives will be more blessed by happiness than doomed to misery; still, the terrible vicissitudes of life lead to only one conclusion: It is better to be dead than alive. This tragic irony of man's dilemma as both an independent agent and a plaything of fate and the pain and suffering of human existence were pitted against the conviction that mortals may reach glorious and triumphant heights in the face of dreadful uncertainties and terrors. This idealistic optimism and this realistic pessimism, these two seemingly irreconcilable points of view, account for a unique humanism originated by the Greeks, with its emphasis upon the beauty and wonder of mortal achievement, despite the horrible disasters that a vindictive god or fate may dispense at any moment.

MYTH, RELIGION, AND PHILOSOPHY

Another word of caution is in order about generalizations concerning Greek religious attitudes. It has been claimed that the Greeks had no Bible or strict dogma and (incredible as it may seem) no real sense of sin, or that they were innocently free and tolerant in their acceptance of new gods—what difference does one more make to a polytheist? One should not merely repeat stories (many of them from Ovid) and make pronouncement upon the spiritual adequacy or inadequacy of the theological convictions they are supposed to represent. Mythology, philosophy, and religion are inextricably entwined, and one must try to look at

all the evidence. Homer offered to the Greeks a literary bible of humanism that could on occasion be quoted (as Shakespeare is for us) like scripture; the mystery religions provided a dogma and ritual of a more exacting nature. Certainly Hesiod pronounces his divine revelation with a vehement biblical authority.

Priests and priestesses devoted their lives to the service of the gods. The city-states upheld—by custom, tradition, and law—strict moral and ethical codes of behavior. If the stories of opposition to the new god Dionysus rest upon any stratum of historical truth, a foreign message of salvation was not always readily or easily accommodated, and one could be put to death (in Athens, of all places) on a charge of impiety. The Greeks thought profoundly about god, the immortality of the soul, and the meaning and consequences of vice and virtue. The Platonic myth of Er (translated in Chapter 15) is a terrifying vision of heaven and hell; as such it is a religious document. Along with much other evidence, it shows that Greek philosophical thought can hold its own with that of any of the so-called higher religions.

THE LEGENDARY HISTORY OF HERODOTUS

The historian Herodotus (fifth century B.C.) perhaps best represents Greek humanistic and religious attitudes in their clearest and most succinct form when he relates the story of Solon, Croesus, and Cyrus. Fortunately, episodes in this drama may be easily excerpted here, for they illustrate many things. Monotheism and polytheism are shown resting compatibly side by side. The jealous god of Solon is not unlike the wrathful deity of the Old Testament, a god who makes manifest to mortals that it is better to be dead than alive. The divine is able to communicate with mortals in a variety of ways; one can understand the simple and sincere belief in Apollo and Delphi possible in the sixth century B.C. There is a fascinating interplay between the inevitability of fate or destiny and the individuality of human character and free will.

Much that is Homeric has colored the Herodotean view, not least of all a compassion, tinged with a most profound sadness and pity, for the human condition. Homeric and dramatic, too, is the simple elucidation of the dangers of hubris and the irrevocable vengeance of Nemesis—the kernel, as it were, of a theme that dominates Greek tragedy. Herodotus, like most Greek writers, takes his philosophy from Homer. In the last book of the *Iliad* (see pp. 464–467), Priam, great king of Troy, comes alone as a humble suppliant to the Greek hero Achilles in order to beg for the body of his son Hector, whom Achilles has killed. In the course of their interview, Achilles, who has also suffered much, not least of all because of the death of his beloved Patroclus, divulges his conclusions about human existence:

 No human action is without chilling grief. For thus the gods have spun out for wretched mortals the fate of living in distress, while they live without care. Two jars sit on the doorsill of Zeus, filled with gifts that he bestows, one jar of evils, the other of blessing. When Zeus who delights in the thunder takes from both

and mixes the bad with the good, a human being at one time encounters evil, at another good. But the one to whom Zeus gives only troubles from the jar of sorrows, this one he makes an object of abuse, to be driven by cruel misery over the divine earth.

The once mighty Priam will soon lose everything and meet a horrifying end, and Achilles himself is destined to die young. His fatalistic words about the uncertainty of human life are mirrored in the sympathetic humanism of Herodotus and echoed again and again by the Greek dramatists, who delight in the interplay of god and fate in human life and the tragic depiction of the mighty fall of those who were once great.

Herodotus' conception of a monotheistic god and his message of knowledge through suffering are strikingly Aeschylean. Herodotean themes *are* the very themes of Greek tragic literature: fate, god, and guilty and misguided mortals, who by their own actions try to avoid their destiny, only to further its fulfillment.

The story of the death of Atys is most Sophoclean in its movement and philosophy, and Croesus, like Oedipus, fulfills his inevitable destinies in terms of his character; each step that he takes in his blind attempts to avoid his fate brings him closer to its embrace. Most significantly, Croesus, again like Oedipus, can learn through sin and suffering to triumph against adversity and win reconciliation with god. There is not a single Greek tragedy that does not echo either implicitly or, in most cases, explicitly, the admonition of Solon, "Never count a person happy, until dead," with its twofold connotation: the happiness of human life cannot be judged until the entire span of that life has been lived, and death is to be preferred to the vicissitudes of life.

Jack Miles, a former Jesuit, provides a Pulitzer Prize-winning study of the anthropomorphic God of the *Tanakh* (the Hebrew Old Testament).³ His literary portrait depicts God as a fictional character with many facets. To show that his contention is true, Miles retells the biblical story by presenting "the various personalities fused in the character of the Lord God" as separate characters. The result is a tale that reads very much like Greek and Roman mythology.

Croesus on the Pyre. Attic red-figure amphora by Myson, ca. 500 B.C.; height 23 in. Croesus sits enthroned, wreathed, and holding his sceptre. In his right hand he pours a libation from a *phiale*. An attendant, dressed (like Croesus) as a Greek and not as a Persian, lights the pyre. This is the earliest known version, in art or literature, of the story, and its narrative is similar to that of the poet Bacchylides, whose poem was written in 468 B.C., about thirty years before Herodotus' narrative. In this version, Croesus voluntarily erects the pyre to burn himself and his family rather than submit to loss of freedom. This is consistent with his elaborate dress and throne, with the ritual libation to Zeus and Apollo, and with the non-Persian attendant. Like Herodotus' Croesus he is saved by a rainstorm, but he is then rewarded for his piety toward Apollo by being transported, with his family, to the land of the Hyperboreans. This scene was painted about fifty years after the capture of Sardis in 546 B.C.—a remarkable example of the transformation of an historical person into a mythical figure. (*Paris, Louvre.*)



Yet there is no need to retell the story of the Old Testament polytheistically in order to reveal the essential similarity between the God of the Hebrews and the God of the Greeks. It is true that the *Tanakh* illustrates an absolute monotheism that appears more all-pervasive and relentless than that of the Greeks. Yet if we modify the major contention of Miles that for the Hebrews "all depends on a frighteningly unpredictable God" to read "all human happiness and misery depend on a frighteningly unpredictable God," we are describing exactly the god of Homer and Herodotus.

Solon and Croesus. Herodotus presents in the context of his *History of the Persian Wars* a brilliant crystallization of the tragic yet uplifting nature of Greek humanism, which can only be truly understood through the emotional and intellectual experience afforded by great art. He molds the legend of Croesus into a complete and powerful drama, conceived and beautifully executed within the disciplined structure of the short story. Herodotus is neither professional theologian nor philosopher, yet by his molding of traditional tales he sums up the spiritual essence of an age of faith and shows how history, mythology, and religion are for him inextricably one. The story of Solon's meeting with Croesus is found in Book 1 of Herodotus (30–46):



And so Solon set out to see the world and came to the court of Amasis in Egypt and to Croesus at Sardis. And when he arrived, Croesus received him as a guest in his palace. Three or four days later at the bidding of Croesus, servants took Solon on a tour of his treasuries, pointing out that all of them were large and wealthy. When he had seen and examined them all to suit his convenience, Croesus asked the following question: "My Athenian guest, many stories about you have reached us because of your wisdom and your travels, of how you in your love of knowledge have journeyed to see many lands. And so now the desire has come over me to ask if by this time you have seen anyone who is the happiest." He asked this expecting that he was the happiest of human beings, but Solon did not flatter him at all but following the truth said: "O king, Tellus the Athenian."

Croesus, amazed at this reply, asked sharply: "How do you judge Tellus to be the most happy?" And Solon said: "First of all he was from a city that was faring well and he had beautiful and good children and to all of them he saw children born and all survive, and secondly his life was prosperous, according to our standards, and the end of his life was most brilliant. When a battle was fought by the Athenians against their neighbors near Eleusis, he went to help and after routing the enemy died most gloriously, and the Athenians buried him at public expense there where he fell and honored him greatly." Thus Solon provoked Croesus as he listed the many good fortunes that befell Tellus, and he asked whom he had seen second to him, thinking certainly that he would at least win second place.

Solon said: "Cleobis and Biton. They were Argives by race and their strength of body was as follows: both similarly carried off prizes at the festivals and as well this story is told. The Argives celebrated a festival to Hera and it was ab-

solutely necessary that the mother of these boys be brought by chariot to the temple.⁴ But the oxen had not come back from the fields in time, and the youths, because it was growing late, yoked themselves to the chariot and conveyed their mother, and after a journey of five miles they arrived at the temple. When they had done this deed, witnessed by the whole congregation, the end of life that befell them was the very best. And thereby god showed clearly how it is better for a human being to be dead than alive.⁵ For the Argive men crowded around and congratulated the youths for their strength and the women praised their mother for having such fine sons. And the mother was overjoyed at both the deed and the praise and standing in front of the statue prayed to the goddess to give to her sons, Cleobis and Biton, who had honored her greatly, the best thing for a human being to obtain. After this prayer, when they had sacrificed and feasted, the two young men went into the temple itself to sleep and never more woke up, but the end of death held them fast. The Argives had statues made of them and set them up in Delphi since they had been the best of men."⁶

Thus Solon assigned the second prize of happiness to these two and Croesus interrupted in anger: "My Athenian guest, is our happiness so dismissed as nothing that you do not even put us on a par with ordinary men?" And he answered: "O Croesus, you ask me about human affairs, who know that all deity is jealous and fond of causing troubles. For in the length of time there is much to see that one does not wish and much to experience. For I set the limit on life at seventy years; these seventy years comprise 25,200 days, if an intercalary month is not inserted. But if one wishes to lengthen every other year by a month, so that the seasons will occur when they should, the months intercalated in the seventy years will number thirty-five and these additional months will add 1,050 days. All the days of the seventy years will total 26,250; and no one of them will bring exactly the same events as another.

"And so then, O Croesus, a human being is completely a thing of chance.⁷ To me you appear to be wealthy and king of many subjects; but I cannot answer the question that you ask me until I know that you have completed the span of your life well. For the one who has great wealth is not at all more fortunate than the one who has only enough for his daily needs, unless fate attend him and, having everything that is fair, he also end his life well. For many very wealthy men are unfortunate and many with only moderate means of livelihood have good luck. Indeed the one who is very wealthy but unfortunate surpasses the lucky man in two respects only, but the man of good luck surpasses the wealthy but unlucky man in many. The latter [wealthy but unlucky] is better able to fulfill his desires and to endure a great disaster that might befall him, but the other man [who is lucky] surpasses him in the following ways. Although he is not similarly able to cope with doom and desire, good fortune keeps these things from him, and he is unmaimed, free from disease, does not suffer evils, and has fine children and a fine appearance. If in addition to these things he still ends his life well, this is the one whom you seek who is worthy to be called happy. Before he dies do not yet call him happy, but only fortunate.

"Now it is impossible that anyone, since he is a man, gather unto himself all these blessings, just as no country is self-sufficient providing of itself all its own needs, but possesses one thing and lacks another. Whichever has the most,

this is the best. Thus too no one human person is self-sufficient, for he possesses one thing but lacks another. Whoever continues to have most and then ends his life blessedly, this one justly wins this name from me, O king. One must see how the end of everything turns out. For to be sure, god gives a glimpse of happiness to many and then casts them down headlong."

Solon did not find favor with Croesus by his words. He was sent away as one of no account, since Croesus was very much of the opinion that a man must be ignorant who sets aside present goods and bids one look to the end of everything.

After the departure of Solon, a great Nemesis from god took hold of Croesus, very likely because he considered himself to be the happiest of all men. Straightway a dream stood before him as he slept, which made clear to him the truth of the evils that were to come about in connection with his son. Croesus had two sons, one of whom was mute, the other by far the first in all respects among youths of his own age. His name was Atys. The dream indicated to Croesus that this Atys would die struck by the point of an iron weapon. When he woke up he thought about the dream and was afraid; he got his son a wife and, although the boy was accustomed to command the Lydian forces, he no longer sent him out on any such mission; and javelins and spears and all such weapons that men use in war he had removed from the men's quarters and piled up in the women's chambers, for fear that any that were hanging might fall on his son.

While they had on their hands arrangements for the marriage, there came to Sardis a man seized with misfortune, his hands polluted with blood, a Phrygian by race and of the royal family. This man came to the palace of Croesus, and according to the traditions of the country begged to obtain purification, and Croesus purified him. The ritual of cleansing is similar for the Lydians and the Hellenes.⁸ When Croesus had performed the customary rites, he asked from where he came and who he was in the following words: "My fellow, who are you and from where in Phrygia have you come to my hearth? What man or woman have you killed?" And he answered: "O king, I am the son of Gordias, the son of Midas, and I am called Adrastus. I killed my brother unintentionally and I come here driven out by my father and deprived of everything."

Croesus answered him with these words: "You happen to be from a family of friends, and you have come to friends where you will want for nothing while you remain with us. It will be most beneficial to you to bear this misfortune as lightly as possible." So Adrastus lived in the palace of Croesus.

At this very same time a great monster of a boar appeared in Mysian Olympus, and he would rush down from this mountain and destroy the lands of the Mysians; often the Mysians went out against him but did him no harm and rather suffered from him. Finally messengers of the Mysians came to Croesus and spoke as follows: "O king, the greatest monster of a boar has appeared in our country and destroys our lands. We are not able to capture him despite our great effort. Now then we beseech you to send your son to us and with him a picked company of young men and dogs so that we may drive him out of our land."

They made this plea, but Croesus remembering the dream spoke the following words: "Do not mention my son further; for I will not send him to you; he is newly married and this now is his concern. I shall, however, send along a select

group of Lydians and all my hunting equipment and hounds, and I shall order them as they go to be most zealous in helping you drive the beast from your land."

This was his answer, and the Mysians were satisfied with it when the son of Croesus, who had heard their request, broke in on them. Croesus still refused to send his son along with them and the young man spoke to him as follows: "O father, previously the finest and most noble pursuits were mine—to win renown in war and in the hunt. But now you have barred me from both, although you have not seen any lack of spirit or cowardice in me. Now how must I appear in the eyes of others as I go to and from the agora? What sort of man will I seem to my fellow citizens, what sort to my new bride? What kind of husband will she think she has married? So either let me go to the hunt or explain and convince me that it is better for me that things be done as you wish."

Croesus answered with these words: "My child, I do not do this because I have seen in you cowardice or any other ugly trait, but the vision of a dream stood over me in sleep and said that your life would be short; for you will die by means of the sharp point of an iron weapon. And so in answer to the vision I urged this marriage on you and do not send you away on the present enterprise, being on my guard if in any way I might be able to steal you from fate for my own lifetime. For you happen to be my one and only child; for the other boy is deaf and I do not count him as mine."⁹

The young man answered: "O father, I forgive you for taking precautions for me since you have seen such a vision. But you do not understand; the meaning of the dream has escaped you and it is right for me to explain. You say that the dream said that I would die by the point of an iron weapon. But what sort of hands does a boar have? And what sort of iron point that you fear? For if it said that I would die by a tusk or tooth or some other appropriate attribute, you should do what you are doing. But as it is, the instrument is a weapon's point; and so then let me go since the fight is not against men."

Croesus answered: "My child, you have won me over with your interpretation of the dream; and so since I have been won over by you I reverse my decision and let you go to the hunt."

After these words Croesus sent for the Phrygian Adrastus; when he arrived he spoke as follows to him: "Adrastus, I did not reproach you when you were struck down by an ugly misfortune, I cleansed you, received you in my palace, and offered you every luxury. Now then since you owe me good services in exchange for those that I have done for you, I ask that you be a guardian of my boy while he hastens out to the hunt, in case some malicious robbers turn up on the journey to do you harm. Furthermore you should go where you will become famous for your deeds, for it is your hereditary duty and you have the strength and prowess besides."

Adrastus answered: "Ordinarily I would not go out to this kind of contest, for it is not fitting that one under such a misfortune as mine associate with companions who are faring well, nor do I have the desire and I should hold myself back for many reasons. But now, since you urge me and I must gratify you (for I owe you a return for your good services), I am ready to do this; expect that your boy, whom you order me to guard, will come back home to you unharmed because of his guardian."

This was the nature of his answer to Croesus, and afterward they left equipped with a band of picked young men and dogs. When they came to the mountain Olympus they hunted the wild beast, and after they had found him they stood in a circle round about and hurled their weapons. Then the stranger, the guest and friend who had been cleansed of murder, who was called Adrastus, hurled his javelin at the boar, but missed him, and hit the son of Croesus, who, struck by the point of the weapon, fulfilled the prediction of the dream; someone ran to Croesus, as a messenger of what had happened, and when he came to Sardis he told him of the battle and the fate of his child.

Croesus was greatly distressed by the death of his son and was even more disturbed because the very one whom he himself had purified had killed him. Overcome by his misfortune, Croesus called terribly on Zeus the Purifier, invoking him to witness that he had suffered at the hands of the stranger and guest-friend; he called on him too as god of the hearth and as god of friendship, giving this same god these different names: god of the hearth because he did not realize that he received in his palace and nourished as a guest the murderer of his son, and god of friendship because he sent him along as a guardian and found him to be his greatest enemy.

Afterward the Lydians arrived with the corpse and the murderer followed behind. He stood before the dead body and stretching forth his hands surrendered himself to Croesus; he bade Croesus slaughter him over the corpse, telling of his former misfortune and how in addition to it he had destroyed the one who had cleansed him, and life for him was not worth living. Croesus heard and took pity on Adrastus although he was enmeshed in so great a personal evil, and he spoke to him: "I have complete justice from yourself, my guest and friend, since you condemn yourself to death. You are not the one responsible for this evil (except insofar as you did the deed unwillingly), but some one of the gods somewhere who warned me previously of the things that were going to be."

Croesus now buried his son as was fitting; and Adrastus, the son of Gordias, the son of Midas, this murderer of his own brother and murderer of the one who purified him, when the people had gone and quietness settled around the grave, conscious that he was the most oppressed by misfortune of mankind, slaughtered himself on the tomb.

Croesus' personal and domestic tragedy was compounded by his political downfall. Daily the power of Cyrus the Great and the Persians was growing; and as they extended their empire to the west, Croesus' own kingdom of Lydia eventually was absorbed. In this crisis, Croesus consulted various oracles and came to believe that the one of Apollo at Delphi alone could speak the truth. He sent magnificent offerings to Delphi and inquired of the oracle whether or not he should go to war with the Persians. The Delphic reply is perhaps the most famous oracle of all time, typically ironic in its simple ambiguity: if Croesus attacked the Persians he would destroy a mighty empire. Croesus, of course, thought he would destroy the empire of the Persians; instead he brought an end to his own. Through Croesus' suffering the wisdom of Solon was confirmed. Herodotus tells of the fall of Sardis (the capital of Lydia) and the fate of

Croesus, its king, and his other son," a fine boy except that he could not speak" (1. 85–88):



When the city was taken, one of the Persians made for Croesus to kill him, not knowing who he was; now Croesus saw the man coming but he did not care, since in the present misfortune it made no difference to him if he were struck down and died. But the boy, this one who was mute, when he saw the Persian attacking, through fear of the terrible evil that was to happen broke into speech and cried: "Soldier, do not kill Croesus." This was the first time that he had uttered a sound but afterward he could speak for the rest of his life.

The Persians then held Sardis and took Croesus himself captive after he had ruled for fourteen years and been besieged for fourteen days, and as the oracle predicted, he brought to an end his own mighty empire. The Persians took Croesus and led him to Cyrus, who had a great pyre erected and ordered Croesus bound in fetters to mount it and along with him twice seven children of the Lydians. Cyrus intended either to offer them as the first fruits of the booty to some one of the gods, perhaps in a desire to fulfill a vow, or having learned that Croesus was a god-fearing man placed him on the pyre wishing to see if any of the gods would save him from being burned alive. At any rate this is what Cyrus did, but to Croesus as he stood on the pyre came the realization (even though he was in such sore distress) that the words of Solon had been spoken under god's inspiration: "No one of the living is happy!"

As this occurred to him he sighed and groaned and broke the lengthy silence by calling out three times the name of Solon. When Cyrus heard this he bade interpreters ask Croesus who this was whom he invoked, and they came up and asked the question. For a time Croesus did not answer, but eventually through compulsion he said: "The man I should like at all costs to converse with every tyrant."

Since his words were unintelligible to them, they asked again and again what he meant; annoyed by their persistence, he told how Solon the Athenian first came to him, and after having beheld all his prosperity made light of it by the nature of his talk, and how everything turned out for him just as Solon had predicted, with words that had no more reference to Croesus himself than to all human beings and especially those who in their own estimation considered themselves to be happy. As Croesus talked, the fire was kindled and began to burn the outer edges of the pyre.

When Cyrus heard from his interpreters what Croesus had said, he changed his mind, reflecting that he too was a human being who was surrendering another human being while still alive to the fire; besides he feared retribution, and realizing how nothing in human affairs is certain and secure, he ordered the burning fire to be quenched as quickly as possible and Croesus and those with him taken down from the pyre. And they made the attempt but were unable to master the flames.

Then, according to the Lydian version of the story, when Croesus learned of Cyrus' change of heart as he saw all the men trying to put out the fire but no longer able to hold it in check, he shouted aloud calling on Apollo, if ever he had received from him any gift that was pleasing, to stand by him and save him

from the present evil. In tears he called on the god and suddenly out of the clear and calm atmosphere storm clouds rushed together, burst forth in violent torrents of rain, and quenched the fire.

Thus Cyrus knew that Croesus was beloved by god and a good man. He brought him down from the pyre and asked: "Croesus, what man persuaded you to march against my land and become my enemy instead of my friend?" And he answered: "O king, these things I have done are to your good fortune but my own misfortune. The god of the Hellenes is responsible since he incited me to war. For no one is so senseless as to prefer war instead of peace. In time of peace sons bury their fathers, but in war fathers bury their sons. But it was somehow the pleasure of the gods that this be so." These were his words, and Cyrus released him and sat by his side and held him in great respect, and both he and all those around him looked on him with wonder.

Thus Croesus became the wise and benevolent counselor of Cyrus. In the concluding pages of this minisaga (Herodotus 1. 90–91), Croesus sends to inquire of the priestess of Apollo why the oracle had misled him. "It is impossible even for god to escape destined fate," the priestess replies, and then tells of the ways in which Apollo indeed tried to ameliorate Croesus' fated misfortune.

 Apollo saved him from burning. And it was not right that Croesus find fault with the oracle that he received. For Apollo warned that if he marched against Persia he would destroy a great empire. He should, if he were going to act wisely with respect to this reply, have sent again to ask whether his own empire or that of Cyrus was meant. If he did not understand the reply and he did not press the question, he should see himself as the one to blame. . . . When he [Croesus] heard he agreed that it was his own fault and not that of the god.

The story of Croesus was also narrated in a poem by the lyric poet Bacchylides of Ceos, written in 468. In this version, Croesus himself ordered the pyre to be lit but Zeus extinguished the fire and Apollo took Croesus to live happily forever among the Hyperboreans as a reward for his piety.

HERODOTUS AS MYTH HISTORIAN

The Herodotean account gives us a glimpse into the fascinating world of legendary history. How can one possibly with complete confidence isolate the facts from the fiction in the epic context of Herodotus' literary art? The name of Croesus' son Atys means "the one under the influence of Ate" (a goddess of doom and destruction), and he has links, too, in cult and in story, with Attis and Adonis. Adrastus may be connected to the mythological concept of Nemesis or Adrasteia ("Necessity"), and the name Adrastus can be translated "the one who cannot escape," that is, "the one who is doomed." Incidents in the tale recall those of the legendary Calydonian boar hunt. Is there anyone today who has enough faith in miracles to believe that Apollo saved Croesus from a fiery death?

Yet there *are* parts of the myth that perhaps may be true. Despite chronological problems, Solon could have met Croesus, although not at the time Herodotus imagines;¹⁰ Croesus may have had a son who died young. But the mythographer and historian Herodotus could never be satisfied with this prosaic truth alone. His stories (wrought with exquisite art) must illustrate a different level of emotional and spiritual truth that illuminates character and elu-

OTHER LEGENDARY FOLKTALES IN HERODOTUS:
GYGES, ARION, AND POLYCRATES

There are many other important and entertaining mythical legends, with folktale motifs, in Herodotus' *History*; although the choice is difficult, we single out three other examples.

Candaules, king of Lydia, continually boasted that his wife was the most beautiful woman in the world. He wanted to convince his favorite bodyguard, Gyges, that this claim was no exaggeration and so he arranged that Gyges should see his wife naked, without her knowledge. She, however, became aware of the great insult (it is most shameful among the Lydians for even a man to be seen naked). In revenge, she plotted with Gyges, who was forced to kill Candaules and win the throne and the queen for himself (1. 10–13).¹¹

Arion, a lyre-player and poet, was credited with the introduction of the dithyramb, a choral song associated with the god Dionysus. His story is not unlike that of Dionysus and the pirates (p. 296); he was threatened by robbers in a boat and was rescued from death in the sea by a dolphin, on whose back he was conveyed safely to land (1. 23–24).

Finally, an episode in the life of Polycrates, tyrant of Samos, echoes dramatically the Herodotean philosophy found in the legend of Solon and Croesus. Polycrates, like Croesus, continued to attain vast wealth and great power. His friend, king Amasis of Egypt, expressed troubled concern to Polycrates that his unbridled successes might eventually lead to disaster, since divinity is jealous of prosperity untempered by misfortune. He advised the tyrant to cast far away his most valued and prized possession, so that it might never appear again among human beings. Polycrates chose a beloved work of art, a precious gold ring with an emerald. He himself in a boat threw it way out into the sea and went home to weep at his loss. Five or six days later, a fisherman came proudly to the palace and presented to the tyrant a magnificent fish that he had caught. As the fish was being prepared for dinner, the ring of Polycrates was found in its belly. When Amasis learned what had happened to Polycrates he realized that one cannot help another avoid what is fated and that Polycrates' life would not end well because he had found what he had tried to cast away forever. Indeed, Polycrates ultimately was murdered by a villainous Persian named Oroetes (3. 39–40ff).



cidates philosophy. The life of Tellus the Athenian, the happiest of men, reveals the character and the values of those Greeks who fought and won in great battles like that of Marathon, defending their country against the Persian invaders in the first quarter of the fifth century B.C.; god will punish their king Xerxes for his sinful hubris, just as he did Croesus, Xerxes' prototype. Herodotus explains through his manipulation of traditional tales (military numbers, strategy, and "facts" will come later) why the Greeks defeated the Persians. These are truths, too, but of another order, and they are the essence of mythic art.

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- See also the Select Bibliography at the end of Chapter 1 for related Comparative Studies.

NOTES

1. Nymphs are sometimes classified as follows: the spirits of waters, springs, lakes, and rivers are called Naiads; Potamiads are specifically the nymphs of rivers; tree-nymphs are generally called Dryads or Hamadryads, although their name means "spirits of oak trees" in particular; Meliae are the nymphs of ash trees.
2. The mortal parent may bask in the grand aura of the great mythological age of saga and boast of a genealogy that in the not too distant past included at least one divine ancestor.
3. Jack Miles, *God: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), especially pp. 397–408.
4. Her name was Cydippe and she was a priestess of Hera, hence the necessity for her presence at the festival. The temple would be the Argive Heraeum.
5. Herodotus here uses the masculine article with the Greek word for god (not goddess), *ho theos*. He seems to be thinking of one supreme god or more abstractly of a divine power. Significantly she does not refer to Hera specifically, although subsequently it is to the goddess Hera that the mother prays on behalf of her sons.
6. These statues have been excavated and do much to tantalize in the quest for precise distinctions between myth and history in Herodotus' account.
7. That is, human beings are entirely at the mercy of what befalls them.
8. The ritual entailed, at least partly, the slaying of a suckling pig and the pouring of the blood over the hands of the guilty murderer, who sat in silence at the hearth while Zeus was invoked as the Purifier.

9. These words of Croesus at first may strike the modern reader as extremely cruel, but he means only that he cannot consider the other boy, who is deaf and mute, as his son in the same way. We are told elsewhere that Croesus did everything for the unfortunate boy, but his hopes, both domestic and political, rested in Atys.
10. Solon held office in Athens as archon extraordinary in 594, and his travels took place at some time after that date; his death occurred in the years following 560. Croesus did not become king of Sardis until ca. 560, and he was defeated by Cyrus in 546.
11. For a modern retelling of the myth of Gyges and Candaules, see Frederic Raphael, *The Hidden I: A Myth Revisited*, with original drawings by Sarah Raphael (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990).

POSEIDON, SEA DEITIES, GROUP DIVINITIES, AND MONSTERS

Poseidon, best known as the great god of waters in general and of the sea in particular, was by no means the first or only such divinity. As we have seen, Pontus (the "Sea") was produced by Ge in the initial stages of creation; and two of the Titans, Oceanus and Tethys, bore thousands of children, the Oceanids. In addition Pontus mated with his mother, Ge, and begat (among other progeny, discussed later in this chapter) Nereus, the eldest of his children, who was gentle, wise, and true, an old man of the sea with the gift of prophecy. Nereus in turn united with Doris (an Oceanid) who bore him fifty daughters, the Nereids; three of these mermaids should be singled out: Thetis, Galatea, and Amphitrite.

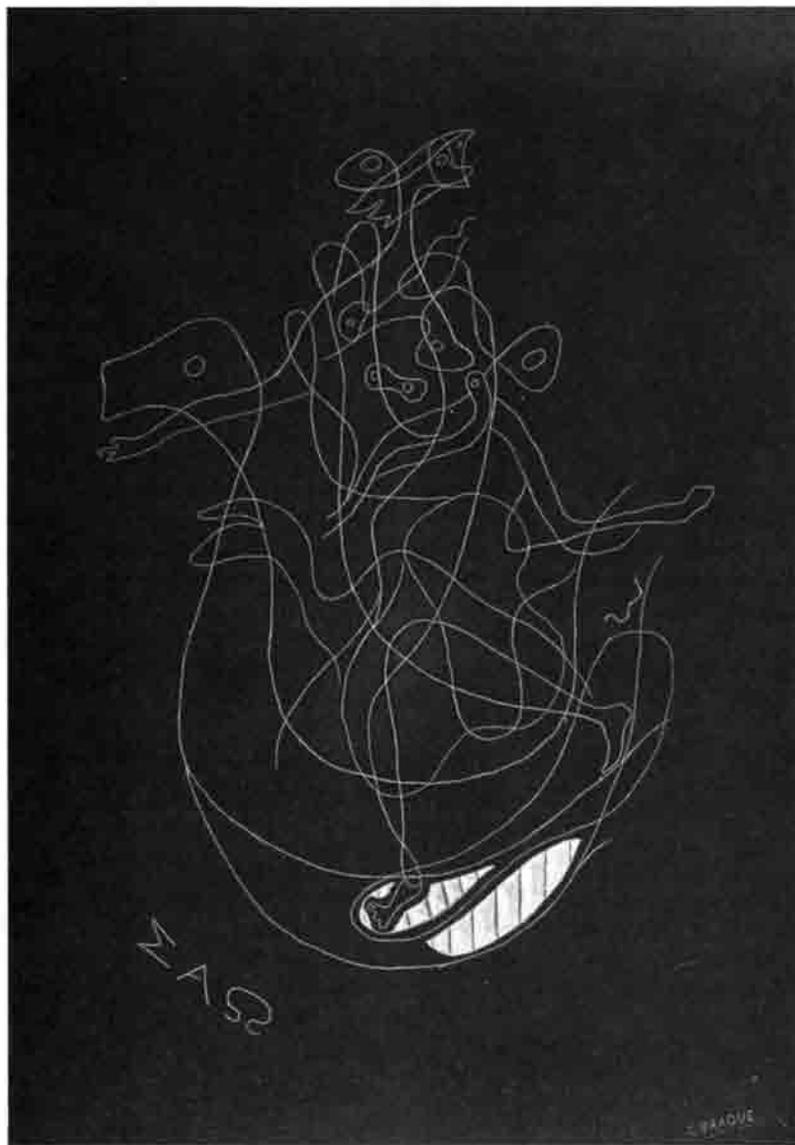
PELEUS AND THETIS

We have already mentioned that Thetis was destined to bear a son mightier than his father. Zeus learned this secret from Prometheus and avoided mating with Thetis; she married instead a mortal named Peleus, who was hard pressed to catch his bride. For Thetis possessed the power of changing shape and transformed herself into a variety of states (e.g., a bird, tree, tigress) in rapid succession, but eventually she was forced to succumb. Peleus and Thetis celebrated their marriage with great ceremony (although she later left him; see p. 605), and their son Achilles did indeed become mightier than his father.

ACIS, GALATEA, AND POLYPHEMUS

Galatea, another Nereid, was loved by the Cyclops Polyphemus, a son of Poseidon. Ovid's account (*Metamorphoses* 13. 750–897) presents a touching rendition of their story, playing upon the incongruity of the passion of the monstrous and boorish giant for the delicate nymph. Repelled by his attentions, she loved Acis, handsome son of Faunus and a sea-nymph, Symaethis, daughter of the river-god, Symaethus, in Sicily. Overcome by emotion, Polyphemus attempted to mend his savage ways; he combed his hair with a rake and cut his beard with a scythe.

Ovid's Galatea tells how the fierce Cyclops would sit on the cliff of a promontory jutting out to the sea, where he would lay down his staff (a huge pine-trunk



Nereid, by Georges Braque (1882–1963). Incised plaster, 1931–1932; 73 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 51 in. This is part of a series of mythological figures incised on large slabs of black-painted plaster. A Nereid (whose name, SAO, is added in Greek letters) rides upon a sea horse, while curving lines, reminiscent of ancient Greek and Etruscan techniques of engraving, represent other marine animals and the waves. (Foundation Marguerite et Aimée Maeght, 06570 St. Paul, France. © 1994 Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York/ADAGP, Paris.)

the size of a ship's mast) and take up his pipe of a hundred reeds. Hiding below in the arms of her beloved Acis, Galatea would listen to his song. First he would extravagantly describe her magnificent beauty, then bitterly lament her adamant rejection of him and continue with an offer of many rustic gifts. His tragicomic appeal concludes as follows (839–897):

 "Now Galatea, come, don't despise my gifts. Certainly I know what I look like; just recently I saw myself in the reflection of a limpid pool, and I was pleased with the figure that I saw. Look at what a size I am! Jupiter in the sky doesn't have a body bigger than mine—you are always telling me that someone or other named Jove reigns up there. An abundance of hair hangs over my rugged features and, like a grove of trees, overshadows my shoulders; and don't think my body ugly because it bristles with the thickest and coarsest of hair. A tree without leaves is ugly; ugly is a horse, if a bushy mane doesn't cover its tawny neck; feathers cover birds and their own wool is an adornment for sheep; for a man a beard and shaggy hair are only fitting. So there is one eye in the middle of my forehead. What of it? Doesn't the great Sun see all these things here on earth from the sky? Yet the Sun has only a single eye.

"Furthermore, my father Neptune rules over your waters and he is the one I give you as a father-in-law. Only have pity and listen to the prayers of my supplication! I succumb to you alone. I am scornful of Jove, of his sky and his devastating thunder; but I am afraid of you; your wrath is more deadly than his thunderbolt.

"I should better endure this contempt of yours, if you would run away from everybody; but why do you reject me and love Acis? Why do you prefer Acis to my embraces? Yet he may be allowed to please himself and you as well—but I don't want him to be pleasing to you! Just let me have the chance. He will know then that my strength is as huge as the size of my body. I'll tear out his living innards and I'll scatter his dismembered limbs over the land and the waves of your waters—in this way may he mingle in love with you! For I burn with a fiery passion that, upon being rejected, flames up the more fiercely and I seem to carry Mt. Aetna, with all its volcanic force, buried in my breast. And you, Galatea, remain unmoved."

After such complaints made all in vain, he rose up (for I saw it all) and was unable to stand still, but wandered the woods and his familiar pastures, like a bull full of fury when his cow has been taken away from him. Then the raging Cyclops saw me and Acis, who were startled by such an unexpected fright. He shouted, "I see you and I'll make this loving union of yours your last." That voice of his was as great as a furious Cyclops ought to have; Aetna trembled at his roar. But I was terrified and dove into the waters nearby. My Symaethian hero, Acis, had turned his back in flight and cried, "Bring help to me, Galatea, help, my parents, and take me, about to die, to your watery kingdom!"

The Cyclops, in hot pursuit, hurled a section torn out of the mountain. Although only a mere edge of that jagged mass struck Acis, it buried him completely; but it was through me that Acis appropriated to himself the watery



Poseidon (Neptune) and Amphitrite with Their Attendants. Relief from the "Altar of Domitianus Ahenobarbus," ca. 100 B.C.; marble, $30\frac{1}{2} \times 220$ in. The frieze, part of the base of a monument (not of an altar), shows Poseidon (Neptune) and Amphitrite drawn in their chariot by sea-serpents: before them Triton blows his conch-shell and another Triton plays a lyre. To the left a Nereid, riding upon a sea-horse, carries a torch, and a cupid flies off to the left. This relief should be compared with Poussin's painting of the same scene (see Color Plate 13). (Munich, *Staatliche Antikensammlung: Glyptothek.*)

power of his ancestry—the only solution allowed by the Fates. Red blood began to trickle from out the mass that had buried him, and in a short time the red of the blood began to disappear and it became the color of a stream made turbid by an early rain, and in a while the water cleared. Then the mass that had been thrown upon him split open and, through the cleft, a reed, green and slender, rose up and the hollow opening in the rock resounded with the leaping waves. Suddenly a wonderful thing happened—up to his waist in the midst of the waves there stood a youth, the sprouting horns on his brow wreathed with pliant reeds. Except that he was bigger and his whole face the bluish green of water, this was Acis indeed turned into a river-god.

POSEIDON AND AMPHITRITE

The third Nereid, Amphitrite, is important mainly as the wife of Poseidon; like her sister Thetis she proved a reluctant bride, but Poseidon finally was able to win her. As husband and wife they play roles very much like those enacted by Zeus and Hera; Poseidon has a weakness for women, and Amphitrite, with good cause, is angry and vengeful. They had a son, Triton, a merman, human above the waist, fish-shaped below. He is often depicted blowing a conch shell, a veritable trumpeter of the sea; he can change shape at will (see Color Plate 13).

PROTEUS

The sea divinity Proteus, probably another of the older generation of gods, is often named as the attendant of Poseidon or even as his son. Like Nereus, he is an old man of the sea who can foretell the future; he can also change shape. It is easy to see how the identities of Nereus, Proteus, and Triton could be merged. Confusion among sea divinities and duplication of their characteristics are everywhere apparent.¹



Neptune and Triton. By G-L. Bernini (1598–1680); marble, 1619, height 71½ in. Neptune (Poseidon) is shown striding forward angrily, supported by Triton blowing his conch. The scene is based on Ovid's description of the Flood (see Chapter 4: "Neptune struck the earth with his trident"). The statue stood above a pond in the gardens of the Roman villa of Cardinal Montalto, nephew of Pope Sixtus V. (London, Victoria and Albert Museum.)

THE APPEARANCE AND CHARACTER OF POSEIDON

Poseidon is similar in appearance to his brother Zeus, a majestic, bearded figure, but he is generally more severe and rough; besides, he carries the trident, a three-pronged fork resembling a fisherman's spear. By his very nature Poseidon is ferocious. He is called the supporter of the earth but the earthshaker as well, and as a god of earthquakes he exhibits his violence by the rending of the land and the surge of the sea. By a mere stroke of his trident he may destroy and kill. Ovid provides a typical description in his version of the Flood (see p. 95), providing a vivid characterization of Poseidon under his Roman name of Neptune. Poseidon's relentless anger against Odysseus for the blinding of Polyphemus provides a dominant theme in the *Odyssey*. The *Homeric Hymn to Poseidon* (22) attempts to appease his anger.

 About Poseidon, a great god, I begin to sing, the shaker of the earth and of the barren sea, ruler of the deep and also over Mt. Helicon and the broad town of Aegae.² A double honor, the gods have allotted to you, O Earthshaker—to be both a tamer of horses and a savior of ships. Hail, dark-haired Poseidon, who surround the earth and, O blessed god, be of kind heart and protect those who sail your waters.

The origins of Poseidon are much disputed. If his trident represents what was once a thunderbolt, then he was in early times a god of the sky. More attractive is the theory that he was once a male spirit of fertility, a god of earth who sent up springs. This fits well with his association with horses and bulls (he either creates them or makes them appear) and explains the character of some of his affairs. He mated with Demeter in the form of a stallion; he pursued her while she was searching for her daughter, and her ruse of changing into a mare to escape him was to no avail. Thus we have the union of the male and female powers of the fertility of the earth.³ It nevertheless should be remembered that standard epithets of the sea are "barren" and "unharvested" as opposed to the fecundity of the land. The suggestion that Poseidon's horses are the mythical depiction of the whitecaps of the waves is not convincing, at least in terms of origins.

The important story of the contest between Poseidon and Athena for control of Athens and its surrounding territory, Attica, is told in Chapter 8 in connection with the sculpture of the west pediment of the Parthenon.

SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS

Poseidon made advances to Scylla, the daughter of Phorcys and Hecate. Amphitrite became jealous and threw magic herbs into Scylla's bathing place. Thus Scylla was transformed into a terrifying monster, encircled with a ring of dogs' heads; Ovid's different version of Scylla's transformation (*Metamorphoses* 13. 917–968; 14. 1–71) is more well known: Glaucus, a mortal who had been changed into a sea-god, fell in love with Scylla; when he was rejected, he turned to the

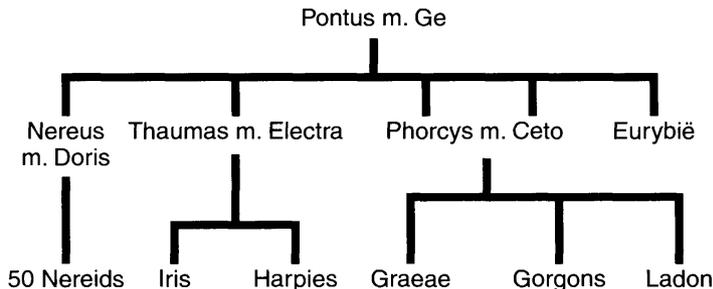


Figure 7.1. Descendants of the Sea

sorceress Circe for help. But Circe fell in love with him and, in her jealousy, poisoned the waters of Scylla's bathing place.

Scylla's home was a cave in the Straits of Messina between Sicily and Italy. With her was Charybdis, the daughter of Poseidon and Ge, a formidable and voracious ally whom Zeus had cast into the sea by his thunderbolt; three times a day she drew in mountains of water and spewed them out again. Scylla and Charybdis have been rationalized into natural terrors faced by mariners when they sailed through the straits. Certainly many of the tales about the gods of the waters are reminiscent of the yarns spun by fishermen, sailors, and the like, whose lives are involved with the sea and with travel.

THE PROGENY OF PONTUS AND GE

Pontus and Ge produced legions of descendants. Notice how elements of the fantastic and the grotesque appear again and again in the nature of the progeny associated with the sea and the deep.

In addition to Nereus, Pontus and Ge had two more sons, Thaumas and Phorcys, and two daughters, Ceto and Eurybië. Thaumas mated with Electra (an Oceanid) to produce Iris and the Harpies. Iris is the goddess of the rainbow (her name means "rainbow"). She is also a messenger of the gods, sometimes the particular servant of Hera, with Hermes' offices then confined to Zeus. She is fleet-footed and winged, as are her sisters, the Harpies, but the Harpies are much more violent in nature. In early sources, they are conceived of as strong winds (their name means "the snatchers"), but later they are depicted in literature and in art as birdlike creatures with the faces of women, often terrifying and a pestilence.⁴

Phorcys and his sister Ceto produce two groups of children, the Graeae and the Gorgons. The Graeae (Aged Ones) are three sisters, personifications of old age; their hair was gray from birth, but in their general aspect they appeared swanlike and beautiful. They had, however, only one eye and one tooth, which they were forced to share among themselves.

The Graeae knew the way to their sisters, the Gorgons, also three in num-

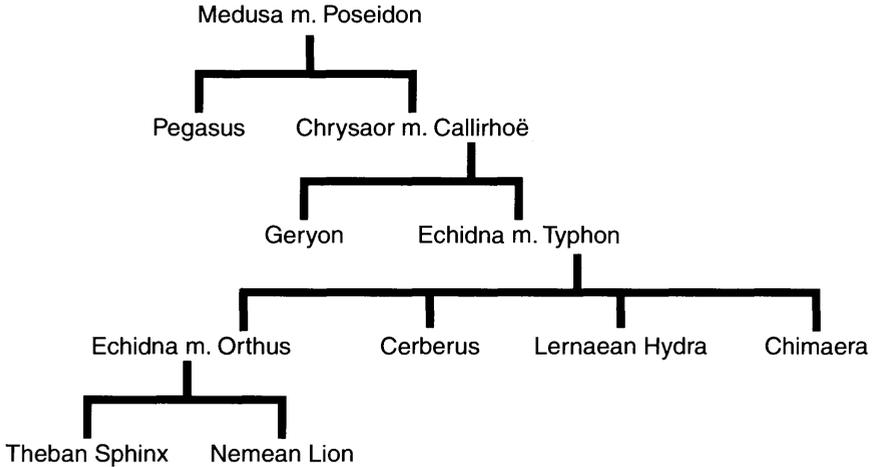


Figure 7.2. Descendants of Medusa

ber (Stheno, Euryale, and Medusa), whose hair writhed with serpents. They were of such terrifying aspect that those who looked upon them turned to stone. Gorgons are a favorite theme in Greek art, especially in the early period; they leer out most disconcertingly with a broad archaic smile, tongue protruding in the midst of a row of bristling teeth. Medusa is the most important Gorgon; Poseidon was her lover. She presents the greatest challenge to the hero Perseus (see pp. 509–511), and when he beheaded her, she was pregnant; from her corpse sprang a winged horse, Pegasus, and a son, Chrysaor (He of the Golden Sword).

Phorcys and Ceto also bore a dragon named Ladon; he helped the lovely Hesperides (Daughters of Evening), who guarded a wondrous tree on which grew golden fruit, far away in the west, and passed their time in beautiful singing. Heracles slew Ladon when he stole the apples of the Hesperides (see p. 528).

Chrysaor mated with an Oceanid, Callirhoë, and produced the monsters Geryon and Echidna (half nymph and half snake). Echidna united with Typhon and bore Orthus (the hound of Geryon), Cerberus (the hound of Hades), the Lernaean Hydra, and the Chimaera. Echidna and Orthus produced the Theban Sphinx and the Nemean Lion. These monsters will appear later in saga to be overcome by heroes; many of them are particularly associated with the exploits of Heracles (see Chapter 22).

INTERPRETATIVE SUMMARY

The stories about waters of all sorts—rivers, lakes, the ocean, and the seas—and the deities associated with them are numerous and revealing. They remind us of how important travel by sea was to the Greeks and Romans and how control of the seas, particularly the Mediterranean, was the key to power. The thal-

socracy (sea-power) of Minoan Crete makes this perfectly clear, as does the subsequent dominance of the Mycenaeans, the inheritors of Cretan control. Subsequently the naval empire of Periclean Athens confirms the vital importance of sea-power, and so does the mighty empire acquired by the Romans, for whom their Mediterranean "lake" was the central focus.

That there were two major periods in the initial creation of Greek mythology is made evident by the nature and extent of the travels of the seafarers, Theseus, Jason, Odysseus, and the survivors of the Trojan War in Minoan-Mycenaean times, with the conflation of geographical and historical events belonging to the historical age of colonization after 1100 B.C. From both periods evolved the turbulent and romantic tales about the various facets of waters and their deities and the sea monsters to be overcome by heroes.

We have shown Poseidon, the major god of the sea, to be characterized by ferocity and violence. He is "the earthshaker," a deity of storms and earthquakes. His powers are made evident by his association with bulls and horses. He is the father of the monstrous Cyclops, Polyphemus, and his inexorable anger is a major theme of Homer's *Odyssey*. Poseidon lost to the goddess Athena in a contest for control of Athens, as we shall see in the next chapter. Yet the Athenians, great seafarers themselves, continued to give him great honor, and linked him particularly to their ancient king Erechtheus and his beautiful temple on the Acropolis. Poseidon was also said to be the true father of Theseus, the great national hero of Athens, through the human figure of Aegeus, an Athenian king, who gives his name to the Aegean Sea.

Tales about waters are often yarns spun by sailors, full of abounding imagination, exciting adventure, and wondrous embellishment, embracing both the beautiful and the grotesque. Witness the fantastic variety in the character and appearance of the progeny of the sea. Poseidon is, like his domain, relentless and prone to stormy violence and anger. Yet gods such as Nereus and Proteus, profoundly wise, appear as ageless as the impenetrable sea itself. Still other deities mirror the unpredictable beauty and fascinating lure of the mysterious deep: the lovely mermaids, who can change shape and mood at will; the beguiling Sirens with their bewitching, lethal song; and monstrous Scylla and Charybdis, who bring terror, destruction, and death.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Tataki, B. *Sounion: The Temple of Poseidon*. University Park: Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, 1985. Good illustrations of the famous temple of Poseidon at Sunium, at the tip of Attica.

NOTES

1. There are two classic accounts of Proteus' nature and his powers: those of Homer (*Odyssey* 4. 363–570) and Vergil (*Georgics* 4. 386–528). In Homer, Menelaüs, on his way

home from Troy, was unduly detained off the coast of Egypt; he consulted Proteus, the old man of the sea, with the help of Proteus' daughter Eidothea. Menelaüs explains: "We rushed upon him with a shout and threw our arms about him; but the old man did not forget his devious arts. First off he became a thickly maned lion, and then a serpent, a leopard, and a great boar. And he became liquid water and a tree with lofty branches. But we held on to him firmly with steadfast spirits." Finally the devious Proteus grew weary and answered Menelaüs' questions about his return home.

2. Poseidon Heliconius was worshiped by Ionian Greeks, especially at Mycale in Asia Minor. It is uncertain whether the reference in the hymn to Helicon (from which Heliconius is derived) means Mt. Helicon (in Boeotia) or the town of Helice; Helice and Aegae were both on the Corinthian gulf.
3. The result is the birth both of a daughter and of the wonderful horse Arion, which belonged to the Theban Adrastus. Similarly Poseidon united with Ge to produce Antaeus, a giant encountered by Heracles.
4. The horrifying Harpies are not unlike the beautiful Sirens, who lure human beings to destruction and death by the enticement of their song.

ATHENA

THE BIRTH OF ATHENA

The *Homeric Hymn* (28) tells the story of Athena's birth.

 I begin to sing about Pallas Athena, renowned goddess, with bright eyes, quick mind, and inflexible heart, chaste and mighty virgin, protectress of the city, Tritogeneia. Wise Zeus himself gave birth to her from his holy head and she was arrayed in her armor of war, all-gleaming in gold, and every one of the immortals was gripped with awe as they watched. She quickly sprang forth from the immortal head in front of aegis-bearing Zeus, brandishing her sharp spear. And great Olympus shook terribly at the might of the bright-eyed goddess, and the earth round about gave a dread groan and the dark waves of the deep seethed. But suddenly the sea became calm, and the glorious son of Hyperion halted his swift-footed horses all the while that the maiden Pallas Athena took the divine armor from her immortal shoulders, and Zeus in his wisdom rejoiced.

So hail to you, child of aegis-bearing Zeus; yet I shall remember both you and another song too.

Hesiod (*Theogony* 886–898) tells how Zeus had swallowed his consort Metis (her name means “wisdom”) after he had made her pregnant with Athena; he was afraid that Metis would bear a son who would overthrow him.

 Zeus, king of the gods, first took as his wife Metis, who was very wise indeed among both gods and mortals. But when she was about to give birth to the bright-eyed goddess Athena, then Zeus treacherously deceived her with wheedling words and swallowed her down into his belly at the wise instigations of Gaea and starry Uranus. These two gave Zeus this advice so that no other of the eternal gods might rule supreme as king in his place. For Metis was destined to bear exceptional children: first, the keen-eyed maiden Athena, Tritogeneia, the equal of her father in might and good counsel, and then she was to give birth to a son of indomitable spirit who would become the king of both gods and mortals.

Variations in the story of Athena's birth have Hephaestus split Zeus' head open with an axe to facilitate the birth.¹ Some add to the dread awe of the occasion by having Athena cry out thunderously as she springs to life in full panoply. This myth (whatever its etiology in terms of the physical manifesta-



The Birth of Athena. Detail of an Athenian black-figure amphora, sixth century B.C.; height 15½ in. Athena emerges fully armed from the head of Zeus, who is seated on his throne holding the thunderbolt. At the left stand Hermes and Apollo (with his kithara), and to the right are Eileithyia, gesturing toward the newborn goddess whose birth she has assisted, and Ares. Beneath the throne is a sphinx. (Henry Lillie Pierce Fund. Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.)

tions of the thunderstorm) establishes the close bond between Zeus and his favorite daughter and allegorizes the three basic characteristics of the goddess Athena: her prowess, her wisdom, and the masculinity of her virgin nature sprung ultimately not from the female, but from the male.

THE SCULPTURE OF THE PARTHENON

The Parthenon was the great temple to Athena Parthenos (*parthenos*, meaning “virgin,” was a standard epithet of Athena) on the Acropolis at Athens. It was built between 447 and 438 B.C. and embodied the triumph of Greek (and specifically Athenian) courage and piety over the Persians, who had sacked the Acropolis in 480 and destroyed the Old Parthenon. Like the temple of Zeus at Olympia (described on pp. 113–115), the Parthenon was decorated with a complex program of sculpture in which mythology and religion glorified the city and its gods, above

all honoring Athena, whose great statue was housed in the temple. The whole program was directed by Pheidias, creator of the statue of Zeus at Olympia.

The east pediment of the Parthenon immortalized the dramatic moment of the birth of Athena, who stood in the center before the throne of Zeus, from whose head she had just sprung full grown and fully armed. Hephaestus, who had assisted in the birth, and Hera were probably present, while the announcement of the birth was brought to other divine figures waiting to observe the miracle. At the corners, to set the divine event in cosmic time, were the horses of Helios, rising from the sea, and of Selene, sinking into it.

As at Olympia, the west pediment was a scene of violent action, celebrating the victory of Athena in her contest with Poseidon for control of Athens and Attica. The central figures pull away from each other as they produce the gifts with which they vied, and to each side were figures of divinities and heroic kings of early Athens who attended the contest. Athena with her spear created an olive tree; Poseidon with his trident, a salt spring. Athena was proclaimed victor.² Poseidon continued to be worshiped (in conjunction with the Athenian hero Erechtheus) in the nearby sanctuary of the Erechtheum (described on pp. 550–551).³ There the marks of Poseidon's trident were enshrined and Athena's olive tree continued to grow.

There were two friezes on the Parthenon. The exterior Doric frieze consisted of ninety-two metopes (each 1.2 meters high), thirty-two on each of the long sides

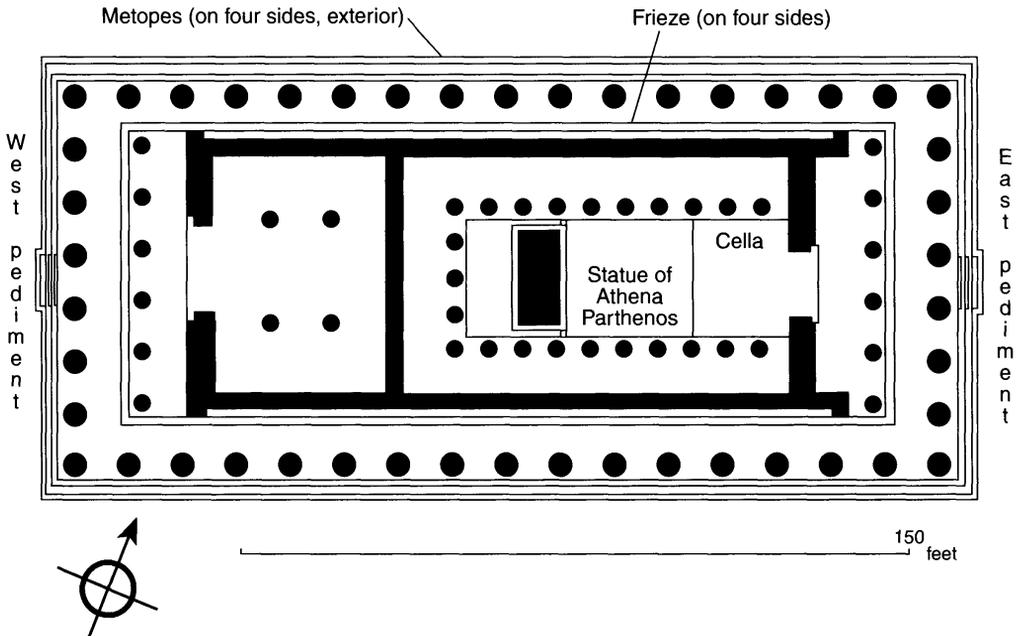


Figure 8.1. Plan of the Parthenon (After J. Travlos)

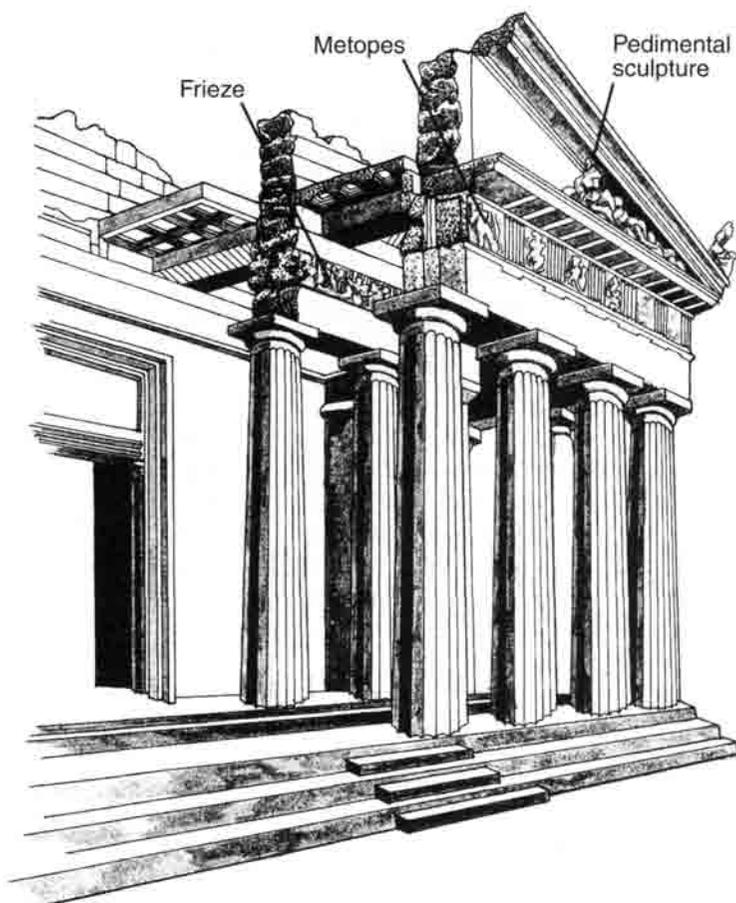


Figure 8.2. Sectional Drawing of the East End of the Parthenon Showing Relationship of Frieze, Metopes, and Pediment (After N. Yalouris)

and fourteen on the short ones. On the south were reliefs of the battle of the Lapiths and Centaurs, also the subject of the west pediment of the temple of Zeus at Olympia. On the north side the subject was probably the sack of Troy, while on the east it was the Gigantomachy (the battle of the Olympian gods against the giants), and on the west the battle of the Greeks and the Amazons. Thus the mythical themes of the metopes reinforced the idea of the triumph of Greek courage over the barbarians and of the Greek gods over their predecessors.

The second, Ionic, frieze ran continuously round the outer wall of the cella, or naos (the interior part of the temple that housed the statue of Athena and the treasury). It has been generally thought (at least since the eighteenth century) that this frieze shows the people of Athens moving in procession as they cele-

brate the festival of the Panathenaea in honor of their goddess. Athenian men and women are shown as marshals, attendants, horsemen, hoplites, and assistants in the worship of Athena, along with the animals for the ritual sacrifice.⁴ At the climax of the procession, on the east side (i.e., over the entrance to the part of the cella housing the statue) the ceremonial robe (*peplos*) was presented to the priestess of Athena,⁵ and nearby sat the Olympian immortals enthroned, taking part in the joyous celebration of civic piety.⁶

In the cella of the Parthenon stood a monumental statue, the Athena Parthenos. The original by Pheidias is completely lost, but reconstructions (like the one illustrated on p. 162) may be made with some accuracy.⁷ Like Pheidias' later masterpiece at Olympia, the surfaces of the statue were made of gold and ivory, and its decoration contained a program related to the architectural sculptures already described that witnessed to the honor and glory of the goddess and the city she protected. It was nearly twelve meters high and in front of it was a reflecting pool. The standing goddess held a figure of Nike (Victory) in her right hand, and her armor included a helmet decorated with sphinxes, the aegis with the head of Medusa, a shield, and a spear, beside which was a serpent (representing the chthonic divinity Erechtheus). The shield was decorated with the battle of the Amazons on the exterior, and the Gigantomachy on the interior; on the rims of her sandals were reliefs of the battle with Centaurs (all themes repeated from the metopes). The relief on the base of the statue showed the creation of Pandora. In the sculpture of the Parthenon, mythology and religion combine with local pride to glorify the gods and civilization of the Greeks and to celebrate the city and its citizens under the protection of Athena.⁸

A DIFFERENT INTERPRETATION OF THE PANATHENAIC FRIEZE

The traditional and convincing interpretation of the Ionic frieze of the Parthenon as depicting a scene from the Panathenaic festival in Athens has been challenged by Joan B. Connelly, who argues that the subject of the frieze is the sacrifice of the daughters of Erechtheus in order to bring victory to the Athenians over Eumolpus, king of Eleusis (this episode in Athenian saga and Euripides' play, *Erechtheus*, are discussed on pp. 550–551). In this case, the *peplos* is the sacrificial robe that the youngest daughter will wear, and her two sisters are the two figures carrying stools at the left. The "priestess of Athena" will then be the priest who will sacrifice the maidens—none other than Erechtheus himself—and the woman to his left will be Praxithea, their mother. In this light, the frieze celebrates the excellence of Athenian women who are prepared to die for their country and it glorifies civic self-sacrifice in defense of the city. Connelly's ingenious and controversial interpretation has not been generally accepted.⁹ The depiction is not of a grim sacrifice but a glorious pageant.



Athena Parthenos. Reconstruction by N. Leipen of the original by Pheidias, 447–438 B.C.; about one-tenth full size. The original cult-statue stood some thirty-eight feet tall, its gold and ivory gleaming in the half-light as the worshiper entered the cella with its double row of columns and reflecting pool. Pheidias focused on the majesty of the city's goddess, and the reliefs on her shield, sandals, and statue-base all are symbols of the victory of order over disorder in the human and divine spheres. The atmosphere of civic grandeur is far from the intimate emotion of the *Mourning Athena*, on p. 168. (Courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada.)

PALLAS ATHENA TRITOGENEIA

Athena's title, Tritogeneia, is obscure. It seems to refer to a region sometimes associated with her birth, the river or lake Triton, or Tritonis, in Boeotia or in Libya. Some scholars see in this link the possibility that Athena was, at least in her origins, at one time a goddess of waters or of the sea. We are told that soon after her

birth Athena was reared by Triton (presumably the god of this body of water, wherever it may be). Now Triton had a daughter named Pallas, and Athena and the girl used to practice the arts of war together. But on one occasion they quarreled and, as Pallas was about to strike Athena, Zeus intervened on behalf of his daughter by interposing the aegis. Pallas was startled, and Athena took advantage of her surprise and wounded and killed her. Athena was distraught when



Pallas Athena. By Gustav Klimt (1862–1918); oil on canvas, $29\frac{1}{2} \times 29\frac{1}{2}$ in. Klimt focuses on the latent energy of the warrior goddess, while giving a new interpretation to her traditional attributes of helmet, grey eyes, owl, Gorgon and aegis, spear, and Nike (who is painted as a naked woman with red hair). The gold highlights (Klimt was the son of a gold engraver) again reinterpret the gold and ivory of Pheidias' statue. (Vienna, *Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien*.)

she realized what she had done; in her grief she made a wooden image of the girl and decked it with the aegis. Cast down by Zeus, this statue, called the Palladium, fell into the territory of the Trojans, who built a temple to house it in honor. The Palladium in saga carries with it the destiny of the city of Troy. In honor of her friend, Athena took the name Pallas for herself. A more likely etiology is that the word *Pallas* means maiden and is but another designation of Athena's chastity, just as she is called *Parthenos*, "virgin," or (like Persephone) *Kore*, "girl."

ATHENA AND ARACHNE

The famous story of Arachne bears testimony to the importance of Athena as the patroness of women's household arts, especially spinning and weaving. In Ovid's account (*Metamorphoses* 6. 5–145) Athena has, of course, become the Roman Minerva. (See Color Plate 10.)

 Minerva turned her mind to Arachne's destruction, for she had heard that her fame as a worker in wool equaled her own. Arachne's birth and position brought her no distinction—it was her skill that did. Idmon of Colophon was her father, who dyed the thirsty wool with Ionian purple; her mother, who also was of low birth like her husband, had died. Yet their daughter, Arachne, for all that she was born in a lowly family living at lowly Hypaepa, pursued her quest for fame throughout the cities of Lydia by her work.

The nymphs of Tmolus often left their vineyards, the nymphs of Pactolus often left their waters—to see and wonder at Arachne's handiwork. Nor was their pleasure merely in seeing her finished work, but also in observing her at work, such delight was in her skill. Whether at the beginning she gathered the unworked wool into balls, or worked it with her fingers and drew out lengths of fleece like clouds, or with swift-moving thumb turned the smooth spindle, or whether she used her embroidering needle—you would know that Minerva had taught her. Yet she would not admit this; jealous of her great teacher, she said, "Let her compete with me; if she wins I deny her nothing."

Minerva disguised herself as an old woman, white-haired and supporting herself upon a stick, and spoke as follows: "Not everything that old age brings is to be avoided; experience comes with the passing years. Do not despise my advice! Let your ambition be to excel mortal women at weaving; give place to the goddess and pray for her forgiveness for your rash words! She will pardon you if you pray." Arachne glowered at her; leaving her half-finished work and with difficulty restraining herself from blows, she openly showed her anger by her expression, as she attacked disguised Minerva with these words: "You old fool, enfeebled by advanced old age. Too long a life has done you no good! Keep your advice for your sons' wives (if you have any) and your daughter. I can think for myself, and you need not think your advice does any good—you will not change my mind. Why does not the goddess herself come? Why does she refuse to compete with me?"

Then Minerva cried: "She has come!" and throwing off her disguise she showed herself as she was, the goddess Minerva. The nymphs and women of



Athena. Detail from an Attic red-figure amphora by the Andocides Painter, ca. 520 B.C.; height of vase 22½ in. Athena is armed with helmet, spear, and shield, and her aegis is tasseled with snakes, with a Gorgon's head at the center. On the vase she stands at the left watching Heracles and Apollo struggling for the Pythian tripod (see 534–535 and illustration on p. 535). (Staatliches Museum, Berlin, Photograph courtesy of Hirmer Verlag, München.)

Lydia worshiped her divine presence; Arachne alone felt no awe. Yet she blushed; a sudden flush stole over her face in spite of herself and as suddenly faded, like the red glow of the sky when Dawn first glows just before the heavens begin to whiten with the sun's rising. Obstinate she held to her course and rushed to destruction in her foolish desire for the prize. Jupiter's daughter resisted no more; she offered her no more advice; no more did she put off the competition.

Ovid goes on to describe the weaving contest. Each weaves a tapestry at her loom with surpassing skill, depicting scenes from mythology. Minerva displays her contest with Neptune for the lordship of Attica and adds four subordinate scenes of mortals who challenged gods and were turned by them into other shapes. The whole was framed by an olive-tree motif: “with her own tree she concluded her work.”

Heedless of the lessons of Minerva’s legends, Arachne depicted scenes of the gods’ less honorable amorous conquests—where Jupiter, Neptune, Apollo, Bacchus, and Saturn deceived goddesses and mortal women. As she completed her tapestry with a design of trailing ivy, Minerva’s anger burst forth. Ovid continues:

 Minerva could find no fault with the work, not even Envy herself could. Angered by Arachne’s success, the golden-haired goddess tore up the embroidered tapestry with its stories of the gods’ shameful deeds. With the boxwood shuttle she beat Arachne’s face repeatedly. In grief Arachne strangled herself, stopping the passage of life with a noose. Minerva pitied her as she was hanging and raised her up with these words: “Stubborn girl, live, yet hang! And—to make you anxious for the future—may the same punishment be decreed for all your descendants.”

With these words Minerva sprinkled her with the juice of a magic herb. As the fateful liquid touched her, Arachne’s hair dropped off; her nose and ears vanished, and her head was shrunken; her whole body was contracted. From her side thin fingers dangled for legs, and the rest became her belly. Yet still from this she lets the thread issue forth and, a spider now, practices her former weaving art.

This story illustrates the severe, moral earnestness of this warrior maiden that is often only too apparent. Yet, as Ovid tells it, Minerva’s punishment of Arachne’s hubris is also motivated by jealousy of her success.

THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF ATHENA

A study of women, cloth, and society in early times presents insights into how women’s textile arts function as analogy and metaphor in mythology and illuminates the importance of Athena as the goddess of the “central womanly skill of weaving.”¹⁰ Athena not only represented skill but also cunning, and so weaving became a metaphor for human resourcefulness, as illustrated by clever Penelope, a wily wife, just like her wily husband Odysseus. The concept of life as a thread created by women and controlled by the feminine fates presents a major related theme. Weaving, however necessary, was also revered as a most respected art that belonged to the *arete* (excellence) of a woman as opposed to the different *arete* of a man.

Athena is a goddess of many other specific arts, crafts, and skills (military, political, and domestic), as well as the deification of wisdom and good counsel

in a more generic and abstract conception. She is skilled in the taming and training of horses, interested in ships and chariots, and the inventor of the flute. This latter invention was supposed to have been inspired by the lamentations (accompanied by the hiss of serpents) uttered by the surviving Gorgons after the death of Medusa. But Athena quickly grew to dislike the new instrument because her beautiful features became distorted when she played, and so she threw it away in disgust. Marsyas, the satyr, picked up the instrument with dire consequences, as we shall see in Chapter 11. In Athens Athena was worshipped along with Hephaestus as patroness of all arts and crafts.

Athena is often represented in art with her attributes as a war goddess: helmet, spear, and shield (the aegis, on which the head of the Gorgon Medusa may be depicted). Sometimes she is attended by a winged figure (Nike, Victory) bearing a crown or garland of honor and success. Athena herself, as Athena Nike, represented victorious achievement in war, and a simple but elegant temple of Athena Nike stood on a bastion to the right of the entrance to the Acropolis. The brief *Homeric Hymn to Athena* (11) invokes her as a deity of war (like Ares).



I begin to sing about Pallas Athena, city-guardian, who with Ares is concerned about the deeds of war—the din of fighting and battles and the sacking of cities; she also protects the people as they leave and return. Hail, goddess, give us good luck and good fortune.

Pallas Athena is beautiful with a severe and aloof kind of loveliness that is masculine and striking. One of her standard epithets is *glaukopis*, which may mean gray- or green-eyed, but more probably refers to the bright or keen radiance of her glance rather than to the color of her eyes. Possibly, too, the adjective may be intended to mean owl-eyed, or of owl-like aspect or countenance; certainly Athena is at times closely identified with the owl (particularly on coins). The snake is also associated with her, sometimes appearing coiled at her feet or on her shield. This association (along with those of the owl and the olive tree) suggests that perhaps Athena originally was (like so many others) a fertility goddess, even though her character as a virgin dominates later tradition.

In fact her character is usually impeccable. Unlike another virgin goddess, Artemis, to whom men made advances (although at their dire peril), Athena remained sexually unapproachable. The attempt of Hephaestus on her honor (in the early saga of Athens, p. 548) confirms the purity and integrity of her convictions. It would be a misconception, however, to imagine Athena only as a cold and formidable virago who might easily elicit one's respect but hardly one's love. This Valkyrie-like maiden does have her touching moments, not only in her close and warm relationship with her father, Zeus, but also in her devout loyalty and steadfast protection of more than one hero (e.g., Telemachus and Odysseus, Heracles, Perseus, and Bellerophon).

Either alone or coupled with Apollo, Athena can be made the representative of a new order of divinity—the younger generation of the gods champi-



Mourning Athena. Marble relief from the Acropolis, ca. 460 B.C.; height 21 in. Athena is a young woman, with helmet and spear, but without aegis and shield. She gazes at a stele (an upright stone slab) on which may have been inscribed the names of Athenians killed in the previous year's fighting. The folds of her skirt follow her body and do not fall straight. The title and purpose of the work are unknown, but it shows how closely the goddess was concerned with the life and death of her citizens. (Acropolis Museum, Athens. Courtesy of Alinari/Art Resource, New York.)

oning progress and the advanced enlightenment of civilization. As the agent of Zeus, Athena brings the *Odyssey* to a close by answering the primitive demand for blood evoked by the relatives of the suitors and establishing the divine and universal validity of the justice meted out by Odysseus. In Aeschylus' *Oresteia* she is on the side of Apollo for the acquittal of Orestes through the due process of law in Athens before the court of the Areopagus (which the goddess is said to have created), appeasing and silencing, presumably forever, the old social order of family vendetta represented by the Furies.

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NOTES

1. Sometimes Prometheus or even Hermes are helpers.
2. Or Poseidon produced the first horse; Athena may plant an olive tree or, more dramatically, as on this pediment, bring one forth by the touch of her spear. The contest took place on the Acropolis with Athena judged the victor by the gods, or the Athenians, or their king Cecrops. The importance of the olive in Athenian life is symbolized by Athena's victory.
3. Angry at losing, Poseidon flooded the Thriasian plain but he was appeased. The Athenians were seafarers and Poseidon remained important to them.
4. Games and contests were also a part of the festivities; the prize awarded was an amphora filled with oil. On it was depicted Athena in her war gear with an inscription identifying the vase as Panathenaic.
5. The *peplos* was dedicated to the ancient wooden statue of Athena Polias (i.e., "guardian of the city") in the nearby sanctuary of Erechtheus. The old temple was destroyed by the Persians, and the new Erectheum was completed some thirty years after the Parthenon. For its religious significance, see Chapter 23, pp. 548–550.
6. Some parts of the friezes are still in situ, but the major fragments of the pediments

and the friezes are in the British Museum in London and known as the Elgin marbles.

7. There are a number of ancient, miniature replicas and a description by Pausanias (1. 24). Copyright permission cannot be obtained to reproduce the most recent full-scale reconstruction in the Parthenon at Nashville.
8. For the Parthenon and its sculpture, see John Travlos, *Pictorial Dictionary of Ancient Athens* (New York: Praeger, 1971), entry for "Parthenon"; John Boardman and D. Finn, *The Parthenon and Its Sculptures* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985); Ian Jenkins, *The Parthenon Frieze* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994); Martin Robinson and Alison Frantz, *The Parthenon Frieze* (New York: Phaidon), distinguished by Frantz's photography; Susan Woodford, *The Parthenon* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), brief and basic; John Boardman, *Greek Sculpture: The Classical Period* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1955), Chapter 10, "The Parthenon," pp. 96–145, includes diagrams, reconstructions, and photographs in his useful, short account; Martin Robinson, *A Shorter History of Greek Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 90–102, for the Parthenon, the best discussion, distilled from the author's *A History of Greek Art*, 2 vols. (1975), Chapter 5, pp. 292–322.
9. Joan B. Connelly, "Parthenon and Parthenoi: A Mythical Interpretation of the Parthenon Frieze," *American Journal of Archaeology* 100 (1996), pp. 53–58. Evelyn B. Harrison convincingly champions the traditional view that the Panathenaia is being depicted by a meticulous identification of figures and action and makes us very much aware of how the feeling and mood are in no sense tragic or even highly dramatic. See Evelyn B. Harrison, "The Web of History: A Conservative Reading of the Parthenon Frieze," in Jenifer Neils, ed., *Worshipping Athena: Panathenaia & Parthenon* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996) pp. 198–214; also included in the Neils volume is "Women in the Panathenaic and Other Festivals" by Mary R. Lefkowitz.
10. Elisabeth Wayland Barber, *Women's Work: The First 20,000 Years* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994), p. 242.

APHRODITE AND EROS

As we have seen, Hesiod describes the birth of Aphrodite after the castration of Uranus and derives her name from the Greek word for foam, *aphros*. Hesiod also links the goddess closely with Cythera (see Color Plate 14) and Cyprus; the latter was especially associated with her worship, particularly in its city of Paphos. Thus Aphrodite is called both Cytherea and Cypris. Another version of her birth gives her parents as Zeus and Dione. Dione is little more than a name to us, but a curious one, since it is the feminine form of the name Zeus (which in another form is Dios).

APHRODITE URANIA AND APHRODITE PANDEMOS

This double tradition of Aphrodite's birth suggests a basic duality in her character or the existence of two separate goddesses of love: Aphrodite Urania or Celestial Aphrodite, sprung from Uranus alone, ethereal and sublime; Aphrodite Pandemos (Aphrodite of All the People, or Common Aphrodite) sprung from Zeus and Dione is essentially physical in nature. Plato's *Symposium* elaborates upon this distinction and claims that Aphrodite Urania, the older of the two, is stronger, more intelligent, and spiritual, whereas Aphrodite Pandemos, born from both sexes, is more base, and devoted primarily to physical satisfaction.¹ It is imperative to understand that the Aphrodite who sprang from Uranus (despite her sexuality in Hesiod's account) becomes, for philosophy and religion, the celestial goddess of pure and spiritual love and the antithesis of Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus and Dione, the goddess of physical attraction and procreation. This distinction between sacred and profane love is one of the most profound archetypes in the history of civilization.

THE NATURE AND APPEARANCE OF APHRODITE

The *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (10), with its brief glimpse of Aphrodite, reminds us of her cult places, Cyprus and Cythera, and the city of Salamis in Cyprus.

 I shall sing about Cyprus-born Cytherea, who gives mortals sweet gifts; on her lovely face, smiles are always suffused with the bloom of love.

Hail, goddess, mistress of well-built Salamis and sea-girt Cyprus. Give me a desirable song. Yet I shall remember you and another song too.



The Birth of Aphrodite. Ca. 460 B.C.: marble, height (at corner) 33 in. In this three-sided relief (known as *The Ludovisi Throne*) Aphrodite is shown in the center panel rising from the sea and being clothed by two attendants, who stand on a pebbly beach. On the left panel (not shown) a naked musician plays the double flute, and on the right panel (not shown) a veiled woman burns incense. (Rome, Museo Nazionale delle Terme.)

In general Aphrodite is the goddess of beauty, love, and marriage. Her worship was universal in the ancient world, but its facets were varied. At Corinth, temple harlots were kept in Aphrodite's honor; at Athens, this same goddess was the staid and respectable deity of marriage and married love. The seductive allurements of this goddess were very great; she herself possessed a magic girdle with irresistible powers of enticement. In the *Iliad* (14. 197–221) Hera borrows it with great effect upon her husband, Zeus.

→
Aphrodite of Melos (Venus de Milo). Late second century B.C.: marble, height 80 in. This is the best known representation of Aphrodite in the Hellenistic age, after Praxiteles had popularized statues of the unclothed female body with his *Aphrodite of Cnidus* (mid-fourth century B.C.): before Praxiteles, Greek convention had limited nudity in statues, with few exceptions, to the male form. Praxiteles' statue survives only in copies dismissed as "lamentable objects" by Martin Robertson. Unlike them, the *Aphrodite of Melos* is unrestored and half draped. It has aroused passionate criticism, favorable and unfavorable. Its sculptor was probably a Greek from Phrygian Antioch, whose name ended in "... andros." (Paris, Louvre.)



The gamut of the conceptions of the goddess of love is reflected in sculpture as well as literature. Archaic idols, like those of other fertility goddesses, are grotesque in their exaggeration of her sexual attributes. In early Greek art she is rendered as a beautiful woman, usually clothed. By the fourth century she is portrayed nude (or nearly so), the idealization of womanhood in all her femininity; the sculptor Praxiteles was mainly responsible for establishing the type—sensuous in its soft curves and voluptuousness.² As so often in the ancient world, once a master had captured a universal conception, it was repeated endlessly with or without significant variations. Everyone knows the Venus from Melos or one of the many other extant copies, although Praxiteles' originals have not survived.

ATTENDANTS OF APHRODITE

The Graces (Charites) and the Hours or Seasons (Horae) are often associated with Aphrodite as decorative and appropriate attendants. The Graces, generally three in number, are personifications of aspects of loveliness. The Horae, daughters of Zeus and Themis, are sometimes difficult to distinguish from the Graces, but they eventually emerge with clearer identity as the Seasons; thus they usually are thought of as a group of two, three, or four. Horae means "hours" and therefore "time" and thus ultimately "seasons." The *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (6) focuses upon the decking out of the goddess by the Horae, whom we call in this context the Hours.

 I shall sing about beautiful and revered Aphrodite of the golden crown, who holds as her domain the battlements of all sea-girt Cyprus. The moist force of the West Wind Zephyrus as he blows brought her there amidst the soft foam on the waves of the resounding sea. The gold-bedecked Hours gladly received her and clothed her in divine garments. On her immortal head they placed a finely wrought crown of gold and in her pierced earlobes, flowers of copper and precious gold. About her soft neck and silvery breasts they adorned her with necklaces of gold, the kind that beautify the Hours themselves whenever they go to the lovely dancing choruses of the gods and to the home of their father. Then after they had bedecked her person with every adornment they led her to the immortals, who greeted her when they saw her and took her in their welcoming hands; and each god prayed that she would be his wedded wife and he would bring her home, as he marveled at the beauty of violet-crowned Cytherea.

Hail, sweet and winning goddess with your seductive glance; grant that I may win victory in the contest and make my song fitting. Yet I shall remember you and another song too.

THE PHALLIC PRIAPUS

The more elemental and physical aspects of Aphrodite's nature are seen in her son, Priapus.³ His father may be Hermes, Dionysus, Pan, Adonis, or even Zeus. Priapus is a fertility god, generally depicted as deformed and bearing a huge and erect phallus. He is found in gardens and at the doors of houses. He is part scarecrow, part bringer of luck, and part guardian against thieves; therefore he



The Godhead Fires. By Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898); oil in canvas, 1878, 39 × 30 in. This is the third of the four scenes painted by Burne-Jones to illustrate William Morris' poem "Pygmalion and the Image" in *The Earthly Paradise*. Venus, clothed in a diaphanous garment and holding a sprig of myrtle, appears with her doves and roses and by her touch brings Galatea to life, with the words, "Come down, and learn to love and be alive." (*Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery.*)

has something in common with Hermes. He also resembles Dionysus and Pan (two of his other reputed fathers), and is sometimes confused with them or their retinues. Whatever the origins of Priapus in terms of sincere and primitive reverence for the male powers of generation, stories about him usually came to be comic and obscene. In the jaded society of later antiquity, his worship meant little more than a cult of sophisticated pornography. (See Color Plate 6.)

PYGMALION

Although many stories illustrate the mighty power of Aphrodite, the story of Pygmalion has provided a potent theme in subsequent literature. Ovid tells how Aphrodite (Venus in his version) was enraged with the women of Cyprus be-

cause they dared to deny her divinity; in her wrath, the goddess caused them to be the first women to prostitute themselves, and as they lost all their sense of shame it was easy to turn them into stone. Ovid goes on to relate the story of Pygmalion and the result of his disgust for these women (*Metamorphoses* 10. 243–297).

 Pygmalion saw these women leading a life of sin and was repelled by the many vices that nature had implanted in the feminine mind. And so he lived alone without a wife for a long time, doing without a woman to share his bed. Meanwhile he fashioned happily a statue of ivory, white as snow, and gave it a beauty surpassing that of any woman born; and he fell in love with what he had made. It looked like a real maiden who you would believe was alive and willing to move, had not modesty prevented her. To such an extent art concealed art; Pygmalion wondered at the body he had fashioned and the flames of passion burned in his breast. He often ran his hands over his creation to test whether it was real flesh and blood or ivory. And he would not go so far as to admit that it was ivory. He gave it kisses and thought that they were returned; he spoke to it and held it and believed that his fingers sank into the limbs that he touched and was afraid that a bruise might appear as he pressed her close.

Sometimes he enticed her with blandishments, at other times he brought her gifts that please a girl: shells and smooth pebbles, little birds, flowers of a thousand colors, lilies, painted balls, and drops of amber, the tears wept by Phaëthon's sisters who had been changed into trees. He also clothed her limbs with garments, put rings on her fingers, draped long necklaces around her neck, dangled jewelry from her ears, hung adornments on her breast. All was becoming, but she looked no less beautiful naked. He placed her on his bed with covers dyed in Tyrian purple and laid her down, to rest her head on soft pillows of feathers as if she could feel them.

The most celebrated feast day of Venus in the whole of Cyprus arrived; heifers, their crooked horns adorned with gold, were slaughtered by the blow of the axe on their snowy necks, and incense smoked. When he had made his offering at the altar, Pygmalion stood and timidly prayed: "If you gods are able to grant everything, I desire for my wife. . . ." He did not dare to say "my ivory maiden." Golden Venus herself was present at her festival and understood what his prayers meant. As an omen of her kindly will a tongue of flame burned bright and flared up in the air.

When he returned home Pygmalion grasped the image of his girl and lay beside her on the bed and showered her with kisses. She seemed to be warm. He touched her with his lips again and felt her breasts with his hands. At his touch the ivory grew soft, and its rigidity gave way to the pressure of his fingers; it yielded just as Hymettan wax when melted in the sun is fashioned into many shapes by the working of the hands and made pliable. He is stunned but dubious of his joy and fearful he is wrong. In his love he touches this answer to his prayers. It was a body; the veins throbbed as he felt them with his thumb. Then in truth Pygmalion was full of prayers in which he gave thanks to Venus. At last he presses his lips on lips that are real and the maiden feels the kisses she is given and as she raises her eyes to meet his she sees both her lover and the sky.

The goddess is present at the marriage that she has made, and now when the crescent moon had become full nine times, Pygmalion's wife gave birth to Paphos, and from him the place got its name.

Galatea is the name given to Pygmalion's beloved in later versions of the tale.

APHRODITE AND ADONIS

In the most famous of her myths, Aphrodite is confused with the great Phoenician goddess Astarte; they have in common as their love a young and handsome youth named by the Greeks Adonis.⁴ Perhaps the best-known version of the story of Aphrodite and Adonis is told by Ovid. Paphos (the son of Pygmalion and Galatea) had a son, Cinyras. Myrrha, the daughter of Cinyras, fell desperately in love with her own father. Tormented by her sense of shame and guilt, the poor girl was on the point of suicide, but she was rescued just in time by her faithful nurse, who eventually wrenched the secret from her. Although the old woman was horrified by what she learned, she preferred to help satisfy the girl's passion rather than to see her die.

It was arranged that the daughter should go to the bed of her father without his knowing her identity, and their incestuous relations continued for some time until Cinyras in dismay found out with whom he had been sleeping. In terror, Myrrha fled from the wrath of her father. As he pursued her she prayed for deliverance and was changed into a myrrh tree, which continually drips with her tears. Myrrha had become pregnant by her father, and from the tree was born a beautiful son named Adonis, who grew up to be a most handsome youth and keen hunter. At the sight of him Aphrodite fell desperately in love. She warned Adonis against the dangers of the hunt, telling him to be especially wary of any wild beasts that would not turn and flee but stood firm (see Color Plate 7). Ovid's story continues as follows (*Metamorphoses* 10. 708–739):

 These were the warnings of Venus and she rode away through the air in her chariot yoked with swans. But Adonis' courageous nature stood in the way of her admonitions. By chance his dogs followed the clear tracks of a wild boar and frightened it from its hiding place. As it was ready to come out of the woods, the son of Cinyras hit a glancing blow on its side. With its crooked snout the savage beast immediately dislodged the blood-stained spear and made for the frightened youth as he fled for safety. The boar buried its tusk deep within his groin and brought him down on the yellow sand, dying.

As Venus was being borne through the air in her light chariot on the wings of swans (she had not yet reached Cyprus), she heard the groans of the dying boy from afar and turned the course of her white birds toward them. When she saw from the air above his lifeless body lying in his own blood, she rushed down, and rent her bosom and her hair and beat her breast with hands not meant to do such violence. She complained against the Fates, crying: "But still everything will not be subject to your decrees; a memorial of my grief for you, Adonis, will abide forever. The scene of your death will be re-created annually with

the ritual of my grief performed. But your blood will be transformed into a flower. O Persephone, you were allowed at one time to change the limbs of the maiden *Mentha* into the fragrant mint—will I be begrudged then the transformation of my hero, the son of *Cinyras*?"

With these words she sprinkled fragrant nectar on his blood which, at the touch of the drops, began to swell just like a gleaming bubble in the rain. In no longer than an hour's time a flower sprang from the blood, red as the thick skin of the fruit of the pomegranate that hides the seeds within. Yet the flower is of brief enjoyment for the winds (which give it its name, *anemone*) blow upon it; with difficulty it clings to life and falls under the blasts and buffeting.

Ovid's story predicts the rites associated with the worship of *Adonis* involving ceremonial wailing and the singing of dirges over the effigy of the dead



Venus Discovering the Dead Adonis, by a Neapolitan follower of José de Ribera (1591–1652). Oil on canvas, ca. 1650; 72½ × 94 in. Whereas Veronese shows Venus and Adonis before the tragedy, Ribera's follower represents Ovid's narrative of Venus descending from her dove-drawn chariot to mourn over her dead lover. The scene is full of dramatic emotion, focused by brilliant light on the gesture of Venus and the body of Adonis and amplified by the brooding figure of a shepherd on the right and the animals in the corners—Adonis' hound and the unyoked doves of Venus. (© The Cleveland Museum of Art, Mr. and Mrs. William H. Marlatt Fund, 65.19.)

youth. Obviously, we have here once again a rendition of a recurrent theme: the Great Mother and her lover, who dies as vegetation dies and comes back to life again. Another version of the myth makes this even clearer.

When Adonis was an infant, Aphrodite put him in a chest and gave it to Persephone to keep. Persephone looked inside; and once she saw the beauty of the boy, she refused to give him back. Zeus settled the quarrel that ensued by deciding that Adonis would stay with Persephone below one part of the year and with Aphrodite in the upper world for the other part. It is possible to detect similarities between Easter celebrations of the dead and risen Christ in various parts of the world and those in honor of the dead and risen Adonis. Christianity, too, absorbed and transformed the ancient conception of the sorrowing goddess with her lover dying in her arms to that of the sad Virgin holding in her lap her beloved Son.

CYBELE AND ATTIS

Parallels to the figures of Aphrodite and Adonis can readily be found in the Phrygian story of Cybele and Attis, yet another variation of the eternal myth of the Great Mother and her lover that infringed upon the Graeco-Roman world.⁵ Cybele was sprung from the earth, originally a bisexual deity but then reduced to a female. From the severed organ, an almond tree arose. Nana, the daughter of the god of the river Sangarios, picked a blossom from the tree and put it in her bosom; the blossom disappeared, and Nana found herself pregnant. When a son, Attis, was born, he was exposed and left to die, but a he-goat attended him. Attis grew up to be a handsome youth, and Cybele fell in love with him; however, he loved another, and Cybele in her jealousy drove him mad. In his madness, Attis castrated himself and died.⁶ Cybele repented and obtained Zeus' promise that the body of Attis would never decay.

In her worship, Cybele was followed by a retinue of devotees who worked themselves into a frenzy of devotion that could lead to self-mutilation.⁷ The orgiastic nature of her ritual is suggested by the frantic music that accompanied her: the beating of drums, the clashing of cymbals, and the blaring of horns. The myth explains why her priests (called Galli) were eunuchs. It is also easy to see how the din that attended Cybele could be confused with the ritual connected with another mother-goddess, Rhea, whose attendants long ago hid the cries of the infant Zeus from his father, Cronus, by the clash of their music.

Like Adonis, Attis is another resurrection-god, and their personalities become merged in the tradition. Like Adonis, Attis may die not through his self-inflicted wounds but by the tusk of a boar. Furthermore Attis, like Adonis, comes back to life with the rebirth of vegetation.

We have evidence of springtime ceremonies at which the public mourned and rejoiced for the death and rebirth of Attis. We can ascertain, too, the nature

of the secret and mystic rites that were also a part of his worship. Frazer provides a compelling reconstruction:

Our information as to the nature of these mysteries and the date of their celebration is unfortunately very scanty, but they seem to have included a sacramental meal and a baptism of blood. In the sacrament the novice became a partaker of the mysteries by eating out of a drum and drinking out of a cymbal, two instruments of music which figured prominently in the thrilling orchestra of Attis. The fast which accompanied the mourning for the dead god may perhaps have been designed to prepare the body of the communicant for the reception of the blessed sacrament by purging it of all that could defile by contact the sacred elements. In the baptism the devotee, crowned with gold and wreathed with fillets, descended into a pit, the mouth of which was covered with a wooden grating. A bull, adorned with garlands of flowers, its forehead glittering with gold leaf, was then driven on to the grating and there stabbed to death with a consecrated spear. Its hot reeking blood poured in torrents through the apertures, and was received with devout eagerness by the worshipper on every part of his person and garments, till he emerged from the pit, drenched, dripping, and scarlet from head to foot, to receive the homage, nay the adoration of his fellows as one who had been born again to eternal life and had washed away his sins in the blood of the bull. For some time afterwards the fiction of a new birth was kept up by dieting him on milk like a newborn babe. The regeneration of the worshipper took place at the same time as the regeneration of his god, namely, at the vernal equinox.⁸

We are obviously once again in the exotic realm of the mystery religions; this one, like the others, rests upon a common fundamental belief in immortality.

The myth of Aphrodite and Adonis, like that of Cybele and Attis, depicts the destruction of the subordinate male in the grip of the eternal and all-dominating female, through whom resurrection and new life may be attained.

APHRODITE AND ANCHISES

An important variation on the same theme is illustrated by the story of Aphrodite and Anchises. In this instance, the possibility of the utter debilitation of the male as he fertilizes the female is a key element; Anchises is in dread fear that he will be depleted and exhausted as a man because he has slept with the immortal goddess. As the story is told in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (5) we are given ample evidence of the mighty power of the goddess in the universe and a rich and symbolic picture of her devastating beauty. Here Aphrodite is a fertility goddess and mother as well as a divine and enticing woman, epitomizing the lure of sexual and romantic love.

The *Homeric Hymn* begins by telling us that there are only three hearts that the great goddess of love is unable to sway: those of Athena, Artemis, and Hestia. All others, both gods and goddesses, she can bend to her will. So great Zeus caused Aphrodite herself to fall in love with a man because he did not want her to continue her boasts that she in her power had joined the immortal gods and goddesses in love with mortals to beget mortal children but had experienced no such humiliating coupling herself. Although it is this major theme of the union



Venus and Anchises. Fresco from the Galleria of the Farnese Palace, Rome, 1597–1600 by Annibale Carracci (1560–1609); dimensions of the Galleria, $66 \times 21\frac{1}{2}$ ft. The Farnese Gallery was decorated with Carracci's frescoes of *The Loves of the Gods*, arranged, like Ovid's stories in the *Metamorphoses*, in a complex and logical order. This scene is on the northeast side of the vault, opposite the scene of Zeus making love to Hera. Balancing these two scenes (on the southeast and southwest sides of the vault) are two others of divine lovers, Omphale and Hercules and Diana and Endymion. The Latin inscription on the footstool, on which the smiling Cupid has placed his foot, means "Whence [came] the Roman race," alluding to the birth of Aeneas from the consummation that is about to take place. (Rome, Galleria Farnese.)

between Aphrodite and Anchises that needs emphasis in this context, the hymn is translated in its entirety, thus preserving its integral beauty and power.

☞ Muse, tell me about the deeds of Cyprian Aphrodite, the golden goddess who excites sweet desire in the gods and overcomes the races of mortal humans, the birds of the sky and all animals, as many as are nourished by the land and sea; all these are touched by beautifully crowned Cytherea.

Yet she is not able to seduce or ensnare the hearts of three goddesses. First there is the daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, bright-eyed Athena; for the deeds of golden Aphrodite give her no pleasure. She enjoys the work of Ares—fights, battles, and wars—and splendid achievements. She first taught craftsmen on the earth to make war-chariots and carriages fancy with bronze. She also teaches

beautiful arts to soft-skinned maidens in their homes by instilling the proper skill in each of them.

Next, laughter-loving Aphrodite is never able to subdue in love Artemis, the goddess of the noisy hunt, with shafts of gold; for she enjoys her bow and arrows and killing animals in the mountains, and also the lyre, dancing choruses, thrilling cries, shady groves, and the cities of just mortals.

Finally, the deeds of Aphrodite are not pleasing to the modest maiden Hestia, who was the first of Cronus' children and again the last, by the will of aegis-bearing Zeus.⁹ Poseidon and Apollo wooed this revered virgin, but she did not want them at all and firmly said no. She touched the head of her father, aegis-bearing Zeus, and swore that she would be a virgin all her days, this goddess of goddesses—and her oath has been fulfilled. Father Zeus has given her beautiful honor, instead of marriage. In the middle of the home she sits and receives the richest offering, in all the temples of the gods she holds her respected place, and among all mortals she is ordained as the most venerable of deities.

Yet Zeus put into the heart of Aphrodite herself sweet longing for Anchises, who at that time was tending cattle on the high ranges of Mt. Ida with its many streams. In beauty he was like the immortals; and so when laughter-loving Aphrodite saw him, she fell in love, and a terrible longing seized her being. She went to Paphos in Cyprus and entered her fragrant temple. For her precinct and fragrant altar are there. After she went in, she closed the shining doors; inside the Graces (Charites) bathed her and rubbed her with ambrosial oil, the kind used by the eternal gods, and she emerged perfumed in its heavenly sweetness.

When she was beautifully clothed in her lovely garments and adorned with gold, laughter-loving Aphrodite left fragrant Cyprus and hastened to Troy, pressing swiftly on her way, high among the clouds. And she came to Ida, the mother of beasts, with its many springs, and crossed the mountain straight for the hut of Anchises. Gray wolves, bright-eyed lions, bears, and swift panthers, ravenous after deer, followed her, fawning. When she saw them, she was delighted within her heart and filled their breasts with desire; and they all went together in pairs to their beds, deep in their shadowy lairs.

She came to the well-built shelter and found him in his hut, left alone by the others, the hero Anchises, who had in full measure the beauty of the gods. All the rest were out following the cattle in the grassy pastures, but he, left alone by the others, paced to and fro playing a thrilling melody on his lyre. The daughter of Zeus, Aphrodite, stood before him, assuming the form of a beautiful young virgin, so that Anchises might not be afraid when he caught sight of her with his eyes. After Anchises saw her, he pondered as he marveled at her beautiful form and shining garments. For she wore a robe that was more brilliant than the gleam of fire, and she was adorned with intricate jewelry and radiant flowers, and about her soft throat were exquisite necklaces beautifully ornate and of gold. The raiment about her tender breasts shone like the moon, a wonder to behold.

Desire gripped Anchises and he addressed her: "Hail to you, O lady, who have come to this dwelling, whoever of the blessed gods you are, Artemis or Leto or golden Aphrodite or well-born Themis or gleaming-eyed Athena; or perhaps you who have come here are one of the Graces, who are the companions of the gods and are called immortal, or one of the nymphs, who haunt the beau-

tiful woods or inhabit this beautiful mountain, the streams of rivers, and the grassy meadows. I shall build an altar for you on a high mound in a conspicuous spot and I shall offer you beautiful sacrifices in all seasons. Be kindly disposed toward me and grant that I be a preeminent hero among the Trojans; make my offspring flourish in the time to come and allow me myself to live well for a long time and see the light of the sun, happy among my people, and reach the threshold of old age."

Then Aphrodite, the daughter of Zeus, answered him: "Anchises, most renowned of earthborn men, I tell you that I am not any one of the gods. Why do you compare me to the immortals? No, I am a mortal and my mother who bore me was a mortal woman; my father, Otreus, who rules over all Phrygia with its fortresses, has a famous name; perhaps you have heard of him. But I know your language as well as I know our own, for a Trojan nurse reared me in my home in Phrygia; she took me from my mother when I was a very little child and brought me up. And so to be sure I readily understand your language. Now Hermes, the slayer of Argus, with his golden wand, snatched me away from the choral dance in honor of Artemis, the goddess of the golden arrows, who delights in the sounds of the hunt. We were a group of many nymphs and virgins such as suitors pursue, and in a vast throng we circled round about. From here the slayer of Argus with his golden wand snatched me away and whisked me over many places, some cultivated by mortals, others wild and unkempt, through which carnivorous beasts stalk from their shadowy lairs. I thought that I should never set foot again on the life-giving earth. But he told me that I should be called to the bed of Anchises as his lawful wife and that I should bear splendid children to you. And when he had explained and given his directions, then indeed he, the mighty slayer of Argus, went back again among the company of the gods.

"But I have come to you and the force of destiny is upon me. I implore you, by Zeus and by your goodly parents (for they could not be base and have such a son as you), take me, pure and untouched by love, as I am, and present me to your father and devoted mother and to your brothers who are born from the same blood. I shall not be an unseemly bride in their eyes but a fitting addition to your family. And send a messenger quickly to Phrygia, home of swift horses, to tell my father and worried mother. They will send you gold enough and woven raiment; accept their many splendid gifts as their dowry for me. Do these things and prepare the lovely marriage celebration which both mortal humans and immortal gods cherish."

As she spoke thus, the goddess struck Anchises with sweet desire and he cried out to her: "If, as you declare, you are mortal, and a mortal woman is your mother, and Otreus is your renowned father, and you have come here through the agency of Hermes and are to be called my wife all our days, then no one of the gods or mortals will restrain me from joining with you in love right here and now, not even if the archer god Apollo himself were to shoot his grief-laden shafts from his silver bow. After I have once gone up into your bed, O maiden, fair as a goddess, I should even be willing to go below into the house of Hades."

As he spoke he clasped her hand, and laughter-loving Aphrodite turned away and with her beautiful eyes downcast crept into his bed, with its fine cov-

erings, for it had already been made with soft blankets; on it lay the skins of bears and loud-roaring lions that Anchises had slain in the lofty mountains. And then when they went up to his well-wrought bed, Anchises first removed the gleaming ornaments, the intricate brooches and flowers and necklaces; and he loosened the belt about her waist and took off her shining garments and set them down on a silver-studded chair. Then by the will of the gods and of fate he, a mortal man, lay with an immortal goddess, without knowing the truth.

At the time when herdsmen turn their cattle and staunch sheep back to their shelter from the flowery pastures, Aphrodite poured upon Anchises a sleep that was sound and sweet, and she dressed herself in her lovely raiment. When the goddess of goddesses had clothed her body beautifully, she stood by the couch and her head reached up to the well-wrought beam of the roof, and from her cheeks shone the heavenly beauty that belongs to Cytherea of the beautiful crown. She roused Anchises from sleep and called out to him with the words: "Get up, son of Dardanus; why do you sleep so deeply? Tell me if I appear to you to be like the person whom you first perceived with your eyes."

Thus she spoke, and he immediately awoke and did as he was told. When he saw the neck and the beautiful eyes of Aphrodite, he was afraid and looked down turning his eyes away and he hid his handsome face in his cloak and begged her with winged words: "Now from the first moment that I have looked at you with my eyes, O goddess, I know you are divine; and you did not tell me the truth. But I implore you, by aegis-bearing Zeus, do not allow me to continue to dwell among mortals, still alive but enfeebled; have pity, for no man retains his full strength who sleeps with an immortal goddess."

Then Aphrodite, the daughter of Zeus, replied: "Anchises, most renowned of mortal men, be of good courage and do not be overly frightened in your heart. For you need have no fear that you will suffer evil from me or the other blessed ones; indeed you are beloved by the gods. And you will have a dear son who will rule among the Trojans; and his children will produce children in a continuous family succession. His name will be Aeneas, since I am gripped by a dread anguish¹⁰ because I went into the bed of a man, although among mortals those of your race are always most like the gods in beauty and in stature."

Aphrodite is upset because she can no longer taunt the gods with the boast that she has caused them to love mortals while she alone has never succumbed. She continues to try to justify her actions by glorifying the family of Anchises. She tells the story of Ganymede, who was beautiful and made immortal by Zeus, and relates the sad tale of handsome Tithonus, also of the Trojan royal family, who was beloved by Eos and granted immortality. Aphrodite's son Aeneas, of course, emerges eventually as the great hero of the Romans. Here is the conclusion of the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*.



"Indeed Zeus in his wisdom seized and carried off fair-haired Ganymede because of his beauty, so that he might be in the company of the gods and pour wine for them in the house of Zeus, a wonder to behold, esteemed by all the immortals, as he draws the red nectar from a golden bowl. But a lasting sorrow gripped the heart of Tros, for he had no idea where the divine whirlwind had

taken his dear son. Indeed he mourned for him unceasingly each and every day, and Zeus took pity on the father and gave him as recompense for his son brisk-trotting horses, the kind which carry the gods. These he gave him to have as a gift. And at the command of Zeus, Hermes, the guide and slayer of Argus, told everything and how Ganymede would be immortal and never grow old, just like the gods. When Tros heard this message from Zeus, he no longer continued his mourning but rejoiced within his heart and joyfully was borne by the horses that were as swift as a storm.

“So also golden-throned Eos carried off Tithonus, one of your race, and like the immortals. Eos went to Zeus, the dark-clouded son of Cronus, to ask that Tithonus be immortal and live forever. Zeus nodded his assent and accomplished her wish. Poor goddess, she did not think to ask that her beloved avoid ruinous old age and retain perpetual youth. Indeed as long as he kept his desirable youthful bloom, Tithonus took his pleasure with early-born Eos of the golden throne by the stream of Oceanus at the ends of the earth. But when the first gray hairs sprouted from his beautiful head and noble chin, Eos avoided his bed. But she kept him in her house and tended him, giving him food, ambrosia, and lovely garments. When hateful old age oppressed him completely and he could not move or raise his limbs, the following plan seemed best to her. She laid him in a room and closed the shining doors. From within his voice flows faintly and he no longer has the strength that he formerly had in his supple limbs.

“I should not choose that you, Anchises, be immortal and live day after day like him; but, if you could live on and on a beautiful man, as you are now, and if you could be called my husband, then grief would not cloud my anxious heart. Now, however, soon you will be enveloped by pitiless old age, which, depleting and destructive, stands beside all human beings and is depised by the gods.

“Besides, among the immortal gods there will be disgrace for me, continually and forever, because of you. Before this happened, they used to dread the jeers and schemes with which I used to mate all the immortal gods with mortal women at one time or another; for they were all subject to my will. But now no more will I be able to open my mouth about this power of mine among the gods, since driven quite out of my mind, wretched and blameless, I have been utterly insane—I have gone to bed with a mortal and I carry his child in my womb.

“When our baby first sees the light of the sun, deep-bosomed mountain nymphs who inhabit this great and holy mountain will bring him up. They are not the same as either mortals or immortals; they live a long time and eat ambrosial food and also with the immortals they join in beautiful choruses of dancers. The Sileni and the keen-eyed slayer of Argus make love to them in the depths of desireful caves. When they are born, pines and high-topped oaks are born along with them on the nourishing earth, beautiful and flourishing trees that stand towering on the high mountains; mortals call their groves sacred and do not cut them down with an axe. Yet when the fate of death stands at their side, these trees first begin to wither in the earth and then their enveloping bark shrivels and their branches fall off. Together with the trees the souls of their nymphs leave the light of the sun.

“These nymphs will have my son by their side to bring up. When he has first been touched by the enticing bloom of youth, the goddesses will bring the

boy here to show you. Yet so that I may go over with you all that I intend, I shall come back again with my son, about the fifth year. Certainly when you first behold with your eyes this flourishing child, you will rejoice at the sight, for he will be very much like a god; and you will bring him to windy Troy. If any mortal person asks who the mother was who carried him under her girdle, remember to say what I tell you. Say she is the daughter of one of the nymphs, beautiful as a flower, who inhabits this forest-covered mountain. If you speak out and boast like a fool that you were joined in love with lovely-crowned Cytherea, Zeus in his anger will strike you with a smoldering thunderbolt. Everything has been told to you; take it all to heart. Refrain from naming me and be intimidated by the anger of the gods." Having spoken thus, she soared upward to windy heaven.

Hail, goddess, guardian of well-built Cyprus; I began with you and now I shall go on to another hymn.

EROS

Eros, the male counterpart of Aphrodite, shares many of her characteristics. He too had a dual tradition for his birth. He may be the early cosmic deity in the creation myths of Hesiod and the Orphics or the son of Aphrodite, his father being Ares. At any rate he is often closely associated with the goddess as her attendant. Eros, like Aphrodite, may represent all facets of love and desire, but often he is the god of male homosexuality, particularly in the Greek classical period. He is depicted as a handsome young man, the embodiment and idealization of masculine beauty.

THE *SYMPOSIUM* OF PLATO

The *Symposium* of Plato provides a most profound analysis of the manifold nature and power of love, especially in terms of a conception of Eros. The dialogue tells of a select gathering at the house of Agathon, a dramatic poet, on the day after the customary celebration with the members of his cast in honor of his victory with his first tragedy. The topic at this most famous of dinner parties is that of love. Each guest in turn is asked to expound on the subject. The speeches of Aristophanes and Socrates, both of whom are present, are by far the most rewarding in their universal implications.¹¹

ARISTOPHANES' SPEECH IN THE *SYMPOSIUM*

Aristophanes' speech (*Symposium* 14–16 [189A–193E]) follows those of Pausanias and Eryximachus, two of the other guests.



Men seem to me to have failed completely to comprehend the power of Eros, for if they did comprehend it, they would have built to him the greatest altars and temples and offered the greatest sacrifices, whereas he is given none of these

honors, although he should have them most of all. For he is the most friendly to man of all the gods, his helper and physician in those ills, which if cured, would bring about the greatest happiness for the human race. Therefore I shall try to initiate you into the nature of his power, and you will be the teachers of others.

But first you must understand the nature of mortals and what experiences they have suffered. For our nature long ago was not the same as it is now, but different. In the beginning humankind had three sexes, not two, male and female, as now; but there was in addition, a third, which partook of both the others; now it has vanished and only its name survives. At that time there was a distinct sex, the androgynous both in appearance and in name, partaking of the characteristics of both the male and the female, but now it does not exist, except for the name, which is retained as a term of reproach.

Furthermore every human being was in shape a round entity, with back and sides forming a circle; he had four hands, an equal number of feet, one head, with two faces exactly alike but each looking in opposite directions, set upon a circular neck, four ears, two sets of genitals and everything else as one might imagine from this description. He walked upright just as we do now in whichever direction (backward or forward) he wished. When they were anxious to run, they made use of all their limbs (which were then eight in number) by turning cartwheels, just like acrobats, and quickly carried themselves along by this circular movement.

The sexes were three in number and of such a kind for these reasons; originally the male was sprung from the sun, the female from the earth, and the third, partaking of both male and female, from the moon, because the moon partakes of both the sun and the earth; and indeed because they were just like their parents, their shape was spherical and their movement circular. Their strength and might were terrifying; they had great ambitions, and they made an attack on the gods. What Homer relates about Ephialtes and Otus and their attempt to climb up to heaven and assail the gods is told also about these beings as well.

Zeus and the other gods took counsel about what they should do, and they were at a loss. They could not bring themselves to kill them (just as they had obliterated the race of the giants with blasts of thunder and lightning), for they would deprive themselves of the honors and sacrifices which they received from mortals, nor could they allow them to continue in their insolence. After painful deliberation Zeus declared that he had a plan. "I think that I have a way," he said, "whereby mortals may continue to exist but will cease from their insolence by being made weaker. For I shall cut each of them in two, and they will be at the same time both weaker and more useful to us because of their greater numbers, and they will walk upright on two legs. If they still seem to be insolent and do not wish to be quiet, I shall split them again and they will hop about on one leg."

With these words he cut human beings in two, just as one splits fruit which is to be preserved or divides an egg with a hair. As he bisected each one, he ordered Apollo to turn the face with the half of the neck attached around to the side that was cut, so that man, by being able to see the signs of his bisection, might be better behaved; and he ordered him to heal the marks of the cutting.

Apollo turned the face around and drew together the skin like a pouch with drawstrings on what is now called the belly and tied it in the middle making a single knot, which is called the navel. He smoothed out the many other wrinkles and molded the chest using a tool like that of cobblers when they smooth out the wrinkles in the leather on their last. But he left a few on their bellies around their navels as a reminder of their experience of long ago.

And so when their original nature had been split in two, each longed for his other half, and when they encountered it they threw their arms about one another and embraced in their desire to grow together again and they died through hunger and neglect of the other necessities of life because of their wish to do nothing separated from each other. Whenever one of a pair died, the other that was left searched out and embraced another mate, either the half of a whole female (which we now call woman) or of a male. Thus they perished, and Zeus in his pity devised another plan: he transferred their genitals to the front (for until now they had been on the outside, and they begot and bore their offspring not in conjunction with one another but by emission into the earth, like grasshoppers).

And so Zeus moved their genitals to the front and thereby had them reproduce by intercourse with one another, the male with the female. He did this for two reasons: if a man united with a woman they would propagate the race and it would survive, but if a male united with a male, they might find satisfaction and freedom to turn to their pursuits and devote themselves to the other concerns of life. From such early times, then, love for one another has been implanted in the human race, a love that unifies in his attempt to make one out of two and to heal and restore the basic nature of humankind.

Each of us therefore is but a broken tally, half a man, since we have been cut just like the side of a flatfish and made two instead of one. All who are a section halved from the beings of the common sex (which was at that time called androgynous) are lovers of women; many adulterers come from this source, including women who love men and are promiscuous. All women who are a section halved from the female do not pay any attention to men but rather turn to women; lesbians come from this source. All who are a section halved from the male pursue males; and all the while they are young, since they are slices, as it were, of the male, they love men and take delight in lying by their side and embracing them; these are the best of boys and youths because they are the most manly in nature. Some say that they are without shame, but they do not tell the truth. For they behave the way they do not through shamelessness but through courage, manliness, and masculinity as they cling to what is similar to them.

Here is a great proof of what I say. Only men of this sort proceed to politics when they grow up. Once they are men they love boys and do not turn their thoughts to marriage and procreation naturally but are forced to by law or convention; it is enough for them to spend their lives together unmarried. In short, then, a man like this is a lover of men as a boy and a lover of boys as a man, always clinging to what is akin to his nature. Therefore whenever anyone of this sort and every other kind of person encounters the other half that is actually his, then they are struck in an amazing way with affection, kinship, and love, virtually unwilling to be separated from each other for even a short time. These are the ones who spend their whole life together, although they would not be

able to tell what they wish to gain from each other. No one would imagine that it is on account of their sexual association that the one enjoys intensely being with the other; clearly the soul of each desires something else, which it cannot describe but only hint at obscurely.

Suppose Hephaestus, his tools in hand, were to stand over them as they lay together and ask: "O mortals, what is it that you wish to gain from one another?" Or when they were at a loss for an answer he were to ask again: "Is this what you desire, to be together always as much as possible so as never to be separated from each other night and day? If this is what you desire, I am willing to fuse and weld you together so that the two of you may become one and the same person and as long as you live, you may both live united in one being, and when you die, you may die together as one instead of two, united even in the realms of Hades. Just see if this would be enough to satisfy your longing." We know that there is not one person who, after hearing these words, would deny their truth and say that he wanted something else, but he would believe that he had heard exactly what he had desired for a long time—namely, to be melted in unison with his beloved, and the two of them become one. The reason is that our ancient nature was thus and we were whole. And so love is merely the name for the desire and pursuit of the whole.

Previously, as I have said, we were one, but now because of our wickedness we have been split by the god (just as the Arcadians have been split up by the Spartans).¹² There is too the fear that if we do not behave properly toward the gods we may again be bisected, just as dice that are divided as tallies, and go around like the figures cut in profile on steles, split right along their noses. For this reason all mortals must be urged to pay reverence to the gods so that we may avoid suffering further bisection and win what Eros has to give as our guide and leader. Let no one act in opposition to him—whoever does incurs the enmity of the gods. For if we are reconciled and friendly to the god of love, we shall find and win our very own beloved, an achievement few today attain.

Eryximachus is not to suppose in ridicule of my speech that I am referring only to Pausanias and Agathon, since they perhaps happen to be of the class of those who love males by nature. I am referring rather to all men and women when I say that the happiness of our race lies in the fulfillment of love; each must find the beloved that is his and be restored to his original nature. If this ancient state was best, of necessity the nearest to it in our present circumstances must be best—namely, to find a beloved who is of one and the same mind and nature. It is right to praise Eros as the god responsible; he helps us most in our present life by bringing us to what is kindred to us and offers us the greatest hopes for the future. If we pay reverence to the gods, he will restore us to our ancient nature and with his cure make us happy and blessed.

Aristophanes concludes by again imploring Eryximachus not to ridicule his speech; and indeed, in the last analysis, we cannot help but take it very seriously. The invention, the wit, and the absurdity are all typical of the comic playwright, but so is the insight that they so brilliantly elucidate. We do not know how much belongs to the genius of Plato, but it would be difficult to imagine anything more in character for Aristophanes. With or without the outspoken

glorification of love between males (inspired perhaps by the company present and certainly preliminary to Plato's own message in Socrates' subsequent speech), we have a vision of the basic need of one human being for another that is astonishingly like our own.

Who can ever forget Hephaestus as he stands before the two lovers and asks what they hope to gain from each other? After all, Aristophanes refers to all men and women when he says that happiness lies in the fulfillment of love and that each must find the appropriate beloved. The archetypal concept of love as a sensual and romantic striving for a blessed completeness or wholeness is basic and universal,¹³ and who can deny that the complex nature of this most fundamental physical and psychological drive is here laid bare, with a ruthless penetration that is disconcertingly familiar to us, however much the scientific quest for precise definition and vocabulary since the time of Freud has replaced the symbols of mythic art?

SOCRATES' SPEECH IN THE *SYMPOSIUM*

In Socrates' speech, which provides the dramatic and philosophical climax of the dialogue, we move from the conception of love that is elemental and essentially physical to a sublime elucidation of the highest spiritual attainments that Eros can inspire. Another myth is evoked, this time to establish the true nature of the divine being, in opposition to the misconceptions of the previous speakers. Socrates tells how he was instructed in the true nature of Eros by a woman of Mantinea called Diotima. She makes him realize that Eros is neither good and beautiful nor bad and ugly, but in nature lies somewhere between the two. Therefore he is not a god. Socrates continues his argument quoting from his conversation with Diotima (*Symposium* 23 [202D–204C]):

 "What then might love be," I said, "a mortal?" "Not in the least," she replied. "But what is he then?" "As I told you earlier, he is not mortal or immortal but something between." "What then, O Diotima?" "A great spirit, O Socrates; for every spirit is intermediate between god and human beings." "What power does he have?" I asked. "He interprets and conveys exchanges between gods and human beings, prayers and sacrifices from human beings to gods, and orders and gifts in return from gods to human beings; being intermediate he fills in for both and serves as the bond uniting the two worlds into a whole entity. Through him proceeds the whole art of divination and the skill of priests in sacrifice, ritual, spells, and every kind of sorcery and magic. God does not have dealings with mortals directly, but through Love all association and discourse between the two are carried on, both in the waking hours and in time of sleep. The one who is wise in such matters as these is a spiritual being, and he who is wise in other arts and crafts is his inferior. These spirits are many and of every kind and one of them is Eros."

"Who were his father and mother?" I asked. "Although it is a rather long story, I shall tell you," she replied. "When Aphrodite was born, the gods held

a feast and among them was Resourcefulness (Poros), the son of Cleverness (Metis), and while they were dining, Poverty (Penia) came and stood about the door to beg, since there was a party.¹⁴ Resourcefulness became intoxicated with nectar (for wine did not yet exist) and went into the garden of Zeus where, overcome by his condition, he fell asleep. Then Poverty, because of her own want and lack of resourcefulness, contrived to have a child by Resourcefulness, and she lay by his side and conceived Eros. And so Eros became the attendant and servant of Aphrodite, for he was begotten on her birthday and he is by nature a lover of beauty and Aphrodite is beautiful.

"Since Eros then is the son of Resourcefulness and Poverty, he is fated to have the following kind of character. First of all, he is continually poor, and far from being soft and beautiful as many believe, he is hard and squalid, without shoes, without a home, and without a bed; he always sleeps on the ground, in doorways, and on the street. Thus he has his mother's nature, with want as his constant companion. On the other hand, like his father, he lays his plots to catch the beautiful and the good; being vehement and energetic, he is a dread hunter, always weaving some scheme; full of resource, he has a passion for knowledge and is a lover of wisdom during all his life, a clever wizard, sorcerer, and sophist. He is not immortal nor is he mortal, but at one time he flourishes and lives whenever he is successful, and at another he dies all in the same day, but he will come back to life again because of his nature inherited from his father—what he acquires slips away from him again, and so Eros is never either poor or rich and he is in a state between wisdom and ignorance. This is the way he is. No one of the gods loves wisdom and longs to become wise, because he is wise; and so with any other who is wise—he does not love wisdom. On the other hand, the ignorant do not love wisdom or long to become wise. Ignorance is a difficult thing for this very reason, that the one who is neither beautiful nor good nor wise is completely satisfied with himself. The one who does not think he is lacking in anything certainly does not desire what he does not think he lacks."

"O Diotima," I asked, "who are those who love wisdom if not the wise or the ignorant?" "By now certainly it would be clear even to a child," she replied, "that they are those who are in a state between desire and wisdom, one of whom is Eros. To be sure wisdom is among the most beautiful of things and Eros is love of beauty; and so Eros must be a lover of wisdom, and being a lover of wisdom he lies between wisdom and ignorance. The nature of his birth is the reason for this. He springs from a wise and resourceful father and a mother who is not wise and without resources. This then, my dear Socrates, is the nature of this spirit. The conception you had of Eros is not surprising. You believed, to infer from what you said, that Love was the beloved (the one who is loved) and not the lover (the one who loves). For this reason, I think, Love appeared to you to be all beautiful. For that which is loved is that which actually is beautiful and delicate, perfect and most happy, but that which loves has another character, of the kind that I have described."

Diotima goes on to explain the function, purpose, and power of Eros in human life. Love and the lover desire what they do not possess, namely, the beautiful and the good, and the ultimate goal of their pursuit is happiness. Love finds

particular expression in the procreation of what is beautiful, both physically and spiritually; and all humans in their quest to bring forth beauty and knowledge are thereby touched by a divine harmony with the immortal. Procreation is the closest means by which the human race can attain to perpetuity and immortality; love, then, is a love of immortality as well as of the beautiful and the good.

Animals, as well as humans, seek to perpetuate themselves and thereby become immortal. But for humans there are various stages in the hierarchy of love. The lowest is that of the animal inspired by the desire for children of the body, but as one ascends, there is the realization of the possibility of producing children of the mind. Who would not prefer the poetic offspring of a Homer or a Hesiod and the more lasting glory and immortality that they have achieved? Just as on the rungs of a ladder we proceed from one step to another, so initiates into the mysteries of love move from the lower to the higher.

Love begins with the physical and sensual desire for the beautiful person or the beautiful thing. From the specific object one moves to the generic conception of beauty, which is wondrous and pure and universal. It is the love of this eternal beauty (and with it the goodness and wisdom it entails) that inspires the pursuit of philosophy in the philosopher.

Diotima sums up by describing the final stages of initiation and revelation, sustaining the vocabulary of the mysteries (28 [210A–C]):

☞ “It is necessary for the one proceeding in the right way toward his goal to begin, when he is young, with physical beauty; and first of all, if his guide directs him properly, to love one person, and in his company to beget beautiful ideas and then to observe that the beauty in one person is related to the beauty in another. If he must pursue physical beauty, he would be very foolish not to realize that the beauty in all persons is one and the same. When he has come to this conclusion, he will become the lover of all beautiful bodies and will relax the intensity of his love for one and think the less of it as something of little account. Next he will realize that beauty in the soul is more precious than that in the body, so that if he meets with a person who is beautiful in his soul, even if he has little of the physical bloom of beauty, this will be enough and he will love and cherish him and beget beautiful ideas that make the young better, so that he will in turn be forced to see the beauty in morals and laws and that the beauty in them all is related.”

This then is the Platonic Eros, a love that inspires the philosopher to self-denial in the cause of humanity and in the pursuit of true wisdom. Presumably this philosophic Eros can ultimately be aroused from any type of love, heterosexual as well as homosexual (both male and female); the crucial issue is that it be properly directed and become transformed from the erotic to the intellectual. According to Plato in his *Republic*, certain men as well as certain women can attain the highest goals of the true philosopher king. As we have just learned, this cannot be achieved without the sensual and sublime impetus of Eros. Whatever the physical roots, the spiritual import is universal, kindred to the passionate

SOCRATES AND EROS

Plato's message in the *Symposium* is in accord with his beliefs generally: sexual activity belongs at the lowest level in the ascent to a spiritual, nonsexual, philosophical Eros. In his *Republic*, the highest order of society, the philosopher kings (which include women), engage in sexual activity only at certain times solely for the purpose of procreation. This is impersonal and pragmatic sex. Platonic, true love (which sexual intercourse can endanger and contaminate) inspires their mutual pursuit of knowledge and service to the state. In the *Dialogues* there is ample testimony to the fact that Socrates was overwhelmed by the beauty of young men; he is stimulated and inspired but he presumably never succumbs sexually. At the culmination of the *Symposium* with the dramatic resolution of its mighty themes, Alcibiades (who has never really understood Socrates' philosophical message) tells of his futile attempts to seduce Socrates. His failure is inevitable. Socrates is Plato's exemplar of the way it should be, the philosopher conquering and sublimating lower instincts in the service of his (or her) higher intellect. In his last work, *Laws*, Plato actually condemns homosexual acts. This should not be surprising or judged to be a contradiction of his earlier views. On the contrary, his condemnation represents a logical and final development of his convictions about sex.¹⁵

love of God that pervades all serious religious devotion. Aristotle too thinks in Platonic terms when he describes his god as the unmoved mover, the final cause in the universe, who moves as a beloved moves the lover.

How far we have come from the traditional depiction of Eros as the handsome young athlete who attends Aphrodite! Even more remote is the image that later evolved of Eros as Cupid, a chubby mischievous little darling with wings and a bow and arrow. He still attends Aphrodite; and although the wounds he inflicts can inspire a passion that is serious and even deadly, too often he becomes little more than the cute and frivolous *deus ex machina* of romantic love.

CUPID AND PSYCHE

Finally, the story of Cupid and Psyche remains to be told. It is given its classic form by Apuleius, a Roman author of the second century A.D., in his novel *Metamorphoses*, or *The Golden Ass* (4. 28–6. 24). One's first impressions about a tale uniting Cupid (or Eros) with Psyche ("Soul") should inevitably be Platonic; but whatever philosophical profundities, Platonic or otherwise, have been detected in Apuleius' allegory, popular and universal motifs common to mythology in general and folktale, fairy tale, and romance in particular emerge with striking clarity: for example, the mysterious bridegroom, the taboo of identification, the hostile mother figure, the jealous sisters, the heroine's forgetfulness, the impo-

sition of impossible labors accomplished with divine assistance—among them descent into the very realm of Hades—and the triumph of romantic love. In this tale, which begins “Once upon a time” and ends “happily ever after,” Cupid appears as a handsome young god with wings. Here is a summary of Apuleius’ version.¹⁶

Once upon a time, a certain king and queen had three daughters, of whom Psyche, the youngest, was by far the most fair. In fact many believed that she was Venus reincarnated and paid her such adulation that the goddess became outraged. And so Venus ordered her son Cupid to make Psyche fall in love with the most base and vile of mankind; instead, Cupid himself fell in love with Psyche. Psyche’s inferior sisters had easily found husbands, but Psyche remained unmarried since she was admired by all with the awe that is inspired by divinity. Her father suspected that a god’s wrath was responsible. He consulted Apollo, who demanded that Psyche be decked out like a corpse and placed on a mountaintop to be wed by a terrifying serpent.

Therefore, Psyche, amid the rites of a funeral for a living bride, was left on a mountaintop to meet a fate that she finally accepted with resignation. Psyche fell into a deep sleep, and the gentle breezes of Zephyrus wafted her down to a beautiful valley. When she awoke, she entered a magnificent palace, where her every wish was taken care of. And when Psyche went to bed, an anonymous



Psyche Is Brought to Olympus by Mercury, by Raphael (1483–1520) and assistants. Fresco, 1518. This is the eastern half of the fresco painted on the vault of the loggia of the Villa Farnesina, which is sixty feet long. The other half shows the wedding banquet. Both scenes closely follow the narrative of Apuleius. Here Mercury introduces Psyche on the left, while the assembled gods attend as Jupiter, on the right, judges Cupid, to whose left stands Venus. Around Jupiter are (from the right) Minerva, Juno, Diana, and Neptune. The fresco was designed to give the illusion of a tapestry. (*Palazzo della Farnesina, Rome. Courtesy of Alinari/Art Resource, New York.*)

bridegroom visited her, only to depart quickly before sunrise. Thus Psyche spent her days—and her nights—in the palace.

Meanwhile, her sisters set out in search of her; but her mysterious husband continually warned her not to respond to them when they approached. Alone in her prison all day, Psyche besought her husband each night to allow her to see her sisters and give them gold and jewels. He finally consented on the condition that she must not, despite her sisters' urgings, try to learn his identity. When the sisters arrived and interrogated her, Psyche kept her secret—although she did say that her husband was a very handsome young man.

The sisters returned home with the riches that Psyche had given them, but in their hearts they nursed an all-consuming jealousy. The mysterious bridegroom warned Psyche of her sisters' treachery: their purpose was to persuade her to look upon his face; if she did so, she would never see him again. He also told her that she was pregnant, and if she kept their secret, their child would be divine; if she did not, it would be mortal. Nevertheless, he granted Psyche's appeal to see her sisters once again. In answer to their questions, Psyche revealed that she was pregnant. The sisters once again returned home laden with gifts, but more jealous than ever; they now suspected that Psyche's lover must be a god and her expected child divine.

The evil sisters visited Psyche a third time; this time they told her that her husband really was the monstrous serpent of the oracle and that she would be devoured when the time of her pregnancy was completed. Psyche was horrified and, believing that she was sleeping with the monster, forgot the warnings of her husband and took her sisters' advice. She was to hide a sharp knife and a burning lamp; when the monster was asleep, she was to slash it in the neck.

In anguish, Psyche made her preparations; in the night her husband made love to her and then fell asleep. As she raised the lamp, knife in hand, she saw the sweet, gentle, and beautiful Cupid. Overcome by the sight, her first impulse was to take her own life, but this she was unable to do. Spellbound by Cupid's beauty, she gazed at his lovely wings and fondled the bow and quiver that lay at the foot of their bed; she pricked her thumb on one of the arrows and drew blood. Overcome by desire, she kissed her husband passionately. Alas, the lamp dropped oil on the god's right shoulder. Cupid leaped out of bed and attempted to fly away at once; Psyche caught hold of his right leg and soared aloft with him, but her strength gave way and she fell to earth. Before flying away, Cupid admonished her from a nearby cypress: he had ignored Venus' command, he said, and had taken her as his love; he had warned her; his flight was penalty enough; and her sisters would pay for what they had done.

Psyche attempted to commit suicide by throwing herself in a nearby river; but the gentle stream brought her safely to its bank. She was advised by Pan to forget her grief and win back Cupid's love. In her wanderings, she came to the very city where one of her sisters lived. Psyche told her sister what had happened, but added that Cupid would marry the sister if she hastened to his side.

The sister called on Zephyrus to carry her from a mountaintop to Cupid's palace, but as she leaped into the air she fell and perished on the rocks below. Psyche then found her way to her other sister, who died in the same manner.

Psyche wandered in search of Cupid. He lay in his mother's bedroom, moaning because of his burn; Venus, learning of what had happened, rushed to her son's side, berated him for his behavior, and vowed revenge. In a rage, Venus left to pursue Psyche, but eventually abandoned her search. She approached Jupiter, who agreed to send Mercury to make a public proclamation for the capture of Psyche. When she was brought before Venus, the goddess denounced and abused her. In addition Venus imposed upon the poor girl a series of impossible tasks.

First, Psyche was ordered to sort out before nightfall a vast heap of mixed grains (wheat, barley, and the like). In this endeavor, an ant came to her rescue and summoned his army to isolate each different grain.

The next day Venus ordered Psyche to go to a riverbank where dangerous sheep with thick golden fleeces grazed and to bring back some of their wool. This time, a reed murmured instructions. She was to wait until the sheep had stopped their frenzied wandering under the blazing sun; and when they had lain down to rest, she was to shake from the trees under which they passed the woolly gold clinging richly to the branches. And so she accomplished the task. Still not satisfied, Venus ordered Psyche to go to the top of a high mountain, from which dark water flowed—water that ultimately fed the Underworld stream of Cocytus. Psyche was to bring back a jar filled with this chill water; among the terrors to be faced was a dragon. The eagle of Jupiter swooped down and filled the jar for Psyche.

Angrier now than ever, Venus imposed the ultimate task—descent into the realm of Hades. Psyche was ordered to take a box to Persephone and ask her to send back in it a fragment of her own beauty. In despair, Psyche decided to throw herself off a high tower. But the tower spoke to her and gave her specific directions to the Underworld and instructions about what she was and was not to do. Among the stipulations was that she provide herself with sops to mollify Cerberus and money to pay the ferryman Charon. Most important, the tower warned Psyche not to look into the box. Psyche did everything that she had been told, but she could not resist looking into the box. Inside the box was not beauty but the sleep of the dark night of the Underworld; by this deathlike sleep Psyche was enveloped.

By now cured of his burn, Cupid flew to Psyche's rescue. He put sleep back into the box and reminded Psyche that her curiosity once again had gotten the better of her. She was to go and complete her task. Cupid then appealed to Jupiter, who agreed to ratify his marriage with Psyche; since Psyche was made one of the immortals, Venus was appeased. Here is how Apuleius describes the glorious wedding feast on Olympus that marked the happy ending of the story of Cupid and Psyche (*Metamorphoses* 6. 23–24):

 Immediately a wedding feast appeared. The bridegroom took the highest place, embracing Psyche. So Jupiter with his own Juno took his place and then, in order, the other gods. Then Jupiter's cupbearer, the shepherd boy Ganymede, brought him a cup of nectar, the wine of the gods, and Bacchus gave nectar to the others. Vulcan cooked the feast; the Hours decorated everything with roses and other flowers. The Graces sprinkled the scent of balsam, and the Muses played and sang. Apollo sang to the cithara and Venus danced in all her beauty to the music; the tableau was so fitting for her that the Muses accompanied her with choral odes or played upon the tibia; a satyr and Pan played the pipes.

So, with all due ceremony, Psyche was married to Cupid and, in due time, a daughter was born to them, whom we call Pleasure (*Voluptas*).

SAPPHO'S APHRODITE

It is impossible to survey the mythological concepts of love without including the poetic vision of Sappho, the lyric poetess of love from the island of Lesbos. Only a little of her work has survived, but the critical acclaim for her artistry glows undiminished. We know practically nothing with certainty about her life and career. She was devoted to Aphrodite and to the young women with whom she was associated. But we cannot even confidently speak about a cult of the goddess, and her relations with her loved ones can legitimately be imagined only from the meager remains of her poetry. Her circle has been interpreted as everything from a finishing school for girls in the Victorian manner to a hotbed of sensuality. From Sappho comes the term *lesbian* and the association of Aphrodite with lesbian love.

In a fervent and moving poem she calls on Aphrodite for help to win back the love of a young woman with whom she has been involved. Sappho's invocation to Aphrodite has real meaning for us in this context because it illustrates beautifully the passionate intensity that infuses so much of Greek art within the disciplined control of artistic form. It reminds us too of the sincerity of the conception of the goddess that was possible in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. Too often our sensibilities are numbed by the later artificial and conventional stereotypes to which the gods are reduced, once all genuine belief is gone. There can be no question about the intense reality of Aphrodite in the following lines.

Exquisitely enthroned, immortal Aphrodite,
 weaver of charms, child of Zeus,
 I beg you, reverend lady,
 do not crush my heart
 with sickness and distress.
 But come to me here,
 if ever once before you heard
 my cry from afar and listened
 and, leaving your father's house,
 yoked your chariot of gold.

Beautiful birds drew you swiftly
 from heaven over the black earth
 through the air between
 with the rapid flutter of their downy wings.
 Swiftly they came and you,
 O blessed goddess,
 smiling in your immortal beauty asked
 what I wished to happen most
 in my frenzied heart.

“Who is it this time you desire
 Persuasion entice to your love?
 Who, O Sappho, has wronged you?
 For if she runs away now,
 soon she will follow;
 if she rejects your gifts,
 she will bring gifts herself;
 if she does not now,
 soon she will love,
 even though she does not wish it.”

Come to me now too,
 free me from my harsh anxieties;
 accomplish all that my heart longs for.
 You, your very self,
 stand with me in my conflict.

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NOTES

1. In the speech of Pausanias.
2. His mistress, the courtesan Phryne, was said to be his model, and some claim that Aphrodite herself asked: "Where did Praxiteles see me naked?"
3. Aphrodite's union with Hermes produced Hermaphroditus, whose story is told at the end of Chapter 12.
4. Many of Aphrodite's characteristics are Oriental in tone, and specific links can be found that are clearly Phrygian, Syrian, and Semitic in origin.
5. Cf. the Assyro-Babylonian myth of Ishtar and Tammuz.
6. Catullus (63) makes the anguish, love, and remorse of Attis the stuff of great poetry.
7. Her worship was introduced into Rome in 204. Lucretius (*De Rerum Natura* 2. 600–651) presents a hostile but vivid account of its orgiastic nature. For Lucretius the very nature of deity is that it exists forever tranquil and aloof, untouched by the human condition and immune to human prayers. See also pp. 643–644.
8. James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*. Abridged edition (New York: Macmillan, 1922), p. 408. One might want to read Theocritus, *Idyll* 15, for a picture of the worship of Adonis in a Hellenistic city.
9. Hestia, the first-born of Cronus, was the first to be swallowed and the last to be brought up.
10. The name Aeneas is here derived from the Greek *ainos*, which means "dread."
11. There has been much discussion about the *Symposium* as a reflection of Athenian views generally about homosexuality. One wonders how typical of the mores of Victorian England would have been the speeches (however profound) of a select group of friends at a dinner party given by Oscar Wilde, who actually does have several things in common with the personality and style of the dramatist Agathon, the host of the *Symposium*. (For more about homosexuality, see pp. 21–22).
12. This reference to the dispersion of the inhabitants of Mantinea (an Arcadian city) by the Spartans in 385 B.C. is an anachronism since the dramatic date of the speech is purportedly 416 B.C.
13. Literature, great and not so great, is permeated by this concept; particularly affecting in American literature is Carson McCullers' *Member of the Wedding*.
14. It is difficult to find one word that expresses adequately the abstract conceptions personified. The name Poros also suggests contrivance; Metis, wisdom or invention; and Penia, need.
15. For more on this subject, see the perceptive discussion by Byrne Fone, *Homophobia: A History* (New York: Metropolitan Books [Henry Holt], 2000), Chapter 1, "Inventing Eros." An aspect of the art of Plato in his complex portrait of Socrates is illuminated by Catherine Osborne, *Eros Unveiled* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); in her chapter "Eros the Socratic Spirit," she concludes (p. 100): "The resemblance between Diotima's picture of Eros and Plato's picture of Socrates is remarkable."
16. *Cupid and Psyche* may be compared thematically to *Beauty and the Beast*. See Graham Anderson, *Fairytales in the Ancient World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 61–77.

ARTEMIS

The *Homeric Hymn to Artemis* (27) draws the essential features of her character and appearance: beautiful, chaste, virgin of the hunt, armed with bow and arrows.



I sing about Artemis of the golden arrows, chaste virgin of the noisy hunt, who delights in her shafts and strikes down the stag, the very own sister of Apollo of the golden sword. She ranges over shady hills and windy heights, rejoicing in the chase as she draws her bow, made all of silver, and shoots her shafts of woe. The peaks of the lofty mountains tremble, the dark woods echo terribly to the shrieks of wild beasts, and both the earth and fish-filled sea are shaken. But she with dauntless heart looks everywhere to wreak destruction on the brood of animals. But when the huntress, who delights in her arrows, has had her fill of pleasure and cheered her heart, she unstrings her curved bow and makes her way to the great house of her dear brother, Phoebus Apollo, in the rich land of Delphi, where she supervises the lovely dances of the Muses and the Graces. After she has hung up her unstrung bow and arrows, she takes first place and, exquisitely attired, leads the dance. And they join in a heavenly choir to sing how Leto of the beautiful ankles bore two children who are by far the best of the immortals in sagacious thought and action.

Hail, children of Zeus and Leto of the lovely hair; yet I shall remember you and another song too.

The shorter *Homeric Hymn to Artemis* (9) dwells upon the closeness of Artemis and Apollo and their cult places in Asia Minor. The river Meles flows near Smyrna, where there was a temple of Artemis; and Claros was the site of a temple and oracle of Apollo.



Sing, O Muse about Artemis, the virgin who delights in arrows, sister of Apollo, the far-shooter, and nursed together with him. She waters her horses at the river Meles, thick with rushes, and swiftly drives her chariot, made all of gold, through Smyrna, to Claros, rich in vines; here Apollo of the silver bow sits and waits for the goddess who shoots from afar and delights in her arrows.

So hail to you, Artemis, with my song and at the same time to all the other goddesses as well; yet I begin to sing about you first of all and, after I have made my beginning from you, I shall turn to another hymn.



Artemis the Huntress. Roman copy in marble of a Greek bronze of the late fourth century B.C.; height 78 in. Artemis appears both as huntress, taking an arrow from her quiver, and as protectress of animals, as she grasps the leaping stag. Her short skirt, sandals, and loose clothing are appropriate for the activity of the hunt. (*Musée du Louvre, Paris. Courtesy of Alinari/Art Resource, New York.*)

THE BIRTH OF ARTEMIS AND APOLLO

The goddess Leto mated with Zeus and bore the twin deities Artemis and Apollo. The story of Apollo's birth on the island of Delos is recounted in Chapter 11 in the version given by the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*.¹ Traditionally, Artemis is born first and is able to help with the delivery of her brother, Apollo, thus performing one



Death of the Children of Niobe. Attic red-figure krater by the Niobid painter, ca. 460 B.C.; height 21 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. The stark cruelty of the gods is shown by the cool detachment of Artemis as she reaches for an arrow out of her quiver, and equally by the restrained energy of Apollo. The Niobids are painted in a rocky landscape (only formally sketched) and disposed on different levels, an unusual technique for vase-painters of the time, and possibly related to contemporary wall-painting: contrast the contemporary *Death of Actaeon*, on page 205. (Paris, Louvre.)

of her primary functions as a goddess of childbirth early in her career (a role she shares with Hera and Eileithyia, as we have seen). According to Ovid, after the birth of Artemis and Apollo, Leto was forced by the anger of Hera to wander carrying her two babies. She came to Lycia, where the Lycians refused to allow her to drink water from a marsh. In anger, she changed them into frogs, telling them that they could live their lives in the marsh whose water they had refused to give her.

On other occasions, too, Artemis is closely linked with Apollo, both appearing as vehement and haughty agents of destruction with their shafts of doom. Sudden death (particularly of the young) was often attributed to these two deities, Artemis striking down the girls, Apollo the boys.

NIobe AND HER CHILDREN

One of the most famous exploits of Artemis and Apollo concerns Niobe and her children, told at length by Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 6. 148–315).

The women of Thebes bestowed great honor upon Leto and her twin children, crowning their heads with laurel and offering up incense and prayers in obedience to an injunction by the goddess herself. Niobe, however, was enraged by the whole proceedings and rashly boasted that she was more deserving of tribute than Leto. After all she was rich, beautiful, and the queen of Thebes.² Besides, Leto had borne only two children, whereas Niobe was the mother of seven sons and seven daughters. Indeed Niobe was so confident in the abundance of her blessings that she felt she could afford to lose some of them without serious consequences.

Leto was enraged at such hubris and complained bitterly to Artemis and Apollo. Together the two deities swiftly glided down to the palace of Thebes to avenge the insulted honor of their mother. Apollo struck down all the sons of Niobe with his deadly and unerring arrows, and Artemis in turn killed all her daughters. Just as Artemis was about to shoot the last child, Niobe in desperation shielded the girl and pleaded that this one, her youngest, be spared. While she was uttering this prayer, she was turned to stone; and a whirlwind whisked her away to her homeland, Phrygia, where she was placed on a mountaintop. Tears continue to trickle down from her marble face as she wastes away.³

ACTAEON

Several stories illustrate the hallowed purity of the goddess Artemis. A famous one concerns Actaeon,⁴ an ardent hunter who lost his way and by accident (or was it fate?) had the misfortune to see Artemis (Diana in Ovid's version) naked (*Metamorphoses* 3. 138–255):

 Actaeon first tinged with grief the happiness of his grandfather, Cadmus. A stag's horns grew on his head, and his hounds feasted on their master's flesh. Yet, if you look closely, you will find that his guilt was misfortune, not a crime; what crime indeed lies in an innocent mistake?

There was a mountain on which had fallen the blood of beasts of many kinds. It was midday, when shadows are at their shortest and the Sun is midway in his course. Young Actaeon calmly called his fellow huntsmen as they tracked the game through the depths of the pathless forest: "My friends, our nets and spears are wet with the blood of our prey; we have had luck enough today! Dawn's saffron-wheeled chariot will bring another day tomorrow and then we will renew the chase. The Sun now stands midway 'twixt east and west and with his hot rays parches the earth. Stop now the hunt, and take in the knotted nets!" His men obeyed and halted from their labors.

A vale there was called Gargaphië, sacred to the huntress Diana; clothed with a dense growth of pine and pointed cypress, it had at its far end a woodland cave which no human hand had shaped. . . . on the right from a murmuring spring issued a stream of clearest water, and around the pool was a grassy bank. Here would the woodland goddess rest when weary from the hunt and bathe her virgin body in the clear water. That day she came there and to one of her nymphs handed her hunting spear, her quiver and bow, and the arrows that were left. Upon another's waiting arms she cast her cloak, and two more took off her sandals. . . . Other nymphs⁵ fetched water and poured it from ample urns. And while Diana thus was being bathed, as she had been many times before, Actaeon, Cadmus' grandson, his labors left unfinished, came to the grotto uncertain of his way and wandering through the unfamiliar wood; so fate carried him along. Into the dripping cave he went, and the nymphs, when they saw a man, beat their breasts and filled the forest with their screams.

Surrounding Diana they shielded her with their bodies, but the goddess was taller than they and her head o'ertopped them all. Just as the clouds are tinged with color when struck by the rays of the setting sun, or like the reddening Dawn, Diana's face flushed when she was spied naked. Surrounded by her nymphs she turned and looked back; wishing that her arrows were at hand, she used what weapons she could and flung water over the young man's face and hair with these words, foretelling his coming doom: "Now you may tell how you saw me naked—if you can tell!" And with this threat she made the horns of a long-lived stag⁶ rise on his head where the water had struck him; his neck grew long and his ears pointed, his hands turned to hooves, his arms to legs, and his body she clothed with a spotted deerskin. And she made him timid; Autonoë's valiant son ran away in fear and as he ran wondered at his speed. He saw his horned head reflected in a pool and tried to say "Alas"—but no words would come. He sobbed; that at least was a sound he uttered, and tears flowed down his new-changed face.

Only his mind remained unchanged. What should he do? Go home to the royal palace? Or hide in the woods? Shame prevented him from the one action, fear from the other. While he stood undecided his hounds saw him. Blackfoot and clever Tracker first raised the hue and cry with their baying, the latter a Cretan hound, the former of Spartan pedigree. Then the rest of the pack rushed up, swifter than the wind, whose names it would take too long to give.⁷ Eager for the prey, they hunt him over rocks and cliffs, by rough tracks and trackless ways, through terrain rocky and inaccessible. He fled, by ways where he had often been the pursuer; he fled, pursued by his own hounds! He longed to cry

out "Actaeon am I; obey your master!" He longed—but could utter no words; and the heavens echoed to the baying hounds. First Blackie gored his back; then Hunter followed, while Hill-hound gripped Actaeon's shoulder with his teeth. These three had been slower to join the chase but had outstripped the pack along mountain shortcuts; while they held back their master, the pack came up and all sank their teeth into his body. His whole body was torn by the hounds; he groaned, a sound which was not human nor yet such as a stag could make.

The hills he knew so well echoed with his screams; falling on his knees, like a man in prayer, he dumbly looked at them in entreaty, for he had no human arms to stretch out to them. But the huntsmen, ignorant of the truth, urge on



The Death of Actaeon. Athenian red-figure krater by the Pan Painter, ca. 460 B.C.; height 14½ in. Artemis shoots Actaeon, who falls in agony as his hounds tear him. Actaeon is shown in fully human form, and the small size of the hounds compels the viewer to focus on the human figure and his divine antagonist. The scene of the consequences of chastity violated is made the more poignant by the reverse of this vase (on page 298), which shows the lustful god Pan pursuing a shepherd. (Courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. James Fund and Special Contribution.)

the pack with their usual cries; they look round for Actaeon and loudly call his name as if he were not there. At the sound of his name he lifts his head; they think it a pity that he is not there, too slow to see the sight of the stag at bay. He could indeed wish he were not there! But he is; he could wish to be the spectator, not the victim, of his hounds' cruel jaws. Completely encircling him, with jaws biting deep, they tear in fact their master's flesh when he seems to be a stag. Only when his life has ebbed out through innumerable wounds, was it said that the vengeance was satisfied of the huntress Diana.

Opinions varied about the deed. Some thought the goddess had been more cruel than just; others approved, and said that her severity was worthy of her virgin chastity. Each view had good reasons to support it.

CALLISTO AND ARCAS

The same insistence on purity and chastity and the same vehemence against defilement of any sort appear again in the story of Callisto, one of the followers of Artemis (or Diana, as Ovid tells it; *Metamorphoses* 2. 409–507):

 As Jupiter journeyed back and forth to Arcadia, he saw the Arcadian girl Callisto, and the fires of love were kindled in his bones. She did not care to draw out the unworked wool or to change her hair's style. She would pin her dress with a brooch, keep her hair in place with a white ribbon; with a smooth spear in her hand or a bow, she marched in Diana's troops. No other girl who trod the Arcadian hills was dearer to the goddess—but no one's power can last for long!

High in the heaven rode the Sun beyond the middle of his course, when Callisto came to a wood that no one throughout the years had touched. Here she took off the quiver from her shoulder and unstrung the pliant bow; she lay upon the grassy ground, her head resting upon the painted quiver. Jupiter saw her, tired and unprotected. "My wife," said he, "will never discover this affair, and if she does—well, the prize is worth her anger." So he disguised himself to look like Diana and said: "Dear girl, my follower, upon which mountain did you hunt?" Callisto sprang up from the turf. "Hail, goddess," said she, "greater in my opinion than Jupiter—and let him hear my words!"

Jupiter smiled as he heard this, glad that Diana was preferred to himself; he kissed the girl, more warmly than a maiden should. He cut short Callisto's tale of the forest hunt with an embrace, and as he forced his advances showed her who he really was. Callisto fought against him with all a woman's strength—Juno's anger would have been lessened could she have seen her—but who is weaker than a girl, and who can overcome Jupiter? He won; to the heavens he flies and she hates the wood that knows her shame; as she fled from it, she almost forgot to take her quiver and arrows and the bow that she had hung up.

Diana saw her as she moved with her followers along the heights of Maenalus, flushed with pride at the beasts she had killed, and called her. Callisto hid, afraid at first that Jupiter in disguise was calling her. But as she saw the nymphs and goddess go on together she knew it was no trick, and joined the band. Poor Callisto! How hard it is not to show one's guilt in one's face! She could hardly lift her eyes from the ground; no longer did she stay close to Di-

ana's side nor be the first of all her followers. In silence she blushed and showed her shame; if Diana had not been a maiden, she could have known Callisto's guilt by a thousand signs. They say that the nymphs realized it.

The horned moon was waxing for the ninth time when Diana, weary from the chase and tired by the sun, her brother's flaming heat, reached a cool wood; here flowed a babbling stream, gliding over its smooth and sandy bed. She praised the place; she dipped her feet into the water and it pleased her. "No man is here to spy on us," she cried: "let us bathe naked in the stream!" Callisto blushed; the others took off their clothes; she alone held back. And as she delayed, they stripped her, and then her naked body and her guilt were plain to see. She stood confused, trying to hide her belly with her hands; but Diana cried: "Be off from here! Do not defile these sacred waters!" and expelled her from her band.

Long before, Juno had known the truth and put off revenge until the time was ripe. She saw no cause to wait now; Callisto's son, Arcas (his very name caused Juno pain), had been born, and when Juno's cruel gaze fell on him she cried: "So only this was left, you whore; for you to be pregnant and by this birth make known the wrong I suffer and my husband's shameful act! But I will have my revenge! I will take away the beauty that pleases you so much and gives my husband, you flirt, such pleasure."

And as she spoke she seized Callisto's hair and threw her to the ground. Callisto spread her arms in suppliant prayer; her arms began to bristle with black hair, her hands to be bent with fingers turning to curved claws; she used her hands as feet and the face that once delighted Jupiter grew ugly with grinning jaws. Her power of speech was lost, with no prayers or entreaties could she win pity, and a hoarse and frightening growl was her only utterance.

Yet Callisto's human mind remained even when she had become a bear; with never-ceasing moans she made known her suffering; lifting what once had been her hands to heaven she felt Jupiter's ingratitude, although she could not with words accuse him. Poor thing! How often was she afraid to sleep in the solitary forest before her former home; how often did she roam in the lands that once were hers! How often was she pursued over the rocky hills by the baying hounds; how often did the huntress run in fear from the hunters! Often she hid herself (forgetting what she was) and though a bear, shrank from the sight of bears; wolves scared her, although her father Lycaon had become one.

One day Arcas, now nearly fifteen years old and ignorant of his parentage, was out hunting; as he picked a likely covert and crisscrossed the forests of Mt. Erymanthus with knotted nets, he came upon his mother. She saw him and stood still, like one who sees a familiar face. He ran away, afraid of the beast who never took her gaze from him (for he knew not what she was); he was on the point of driving a spear through her body, eager as she was to come close to him. Then almighty Jupiter prevented him; he averted Arcas' crime against his mother and took them both on the wings of the wind to heaven and there made them neighboring stars.

Callisto became the Great Bear (Arctus, or Ursa Major); Arcas the Bear Warden (Arctophylax, or Arcturus, or Boötes) or the Little Bear (Ursa Minor). Ursa

Major was also known as Hamaxa (the Wain). The story of Callisto is typical of myths that provide etiology for individual stars or constellations. These stories (most of which belong to late antiquity) are told about various figures in mythology, and several of them cluster about Artemis herself.

ORION

One such story concerns Orion, a composite figure about whom many tales are related with multiple and intricate variations.⁸ He is traditionally a mighty and amorous hunter and often associated with the island of Chios and its king, Oenopion (the name means "wine-face"; Chios was famous for its wines). The many versions play upon the following themes. Orion woos the daughter of Oenopion, Merope; he becomes drunk and is blinded by the king, but he regains his sight through the rays of the sun-god, Helios. While he is clearing the island of wild beasts as a favor for Oenopion, he encounters Artemis and tries to rape her. In her anger, the goddess produces a scorpion out of the earth that stings Orion to death.⁹ Both can be seen in the heavens. Some say that Orion pursued the Pleiades (daughters of the Titan Atlas and Pleione, an Oceanid), and they were all transformed into constellations; with Orion was his dog, Sirius, who became the Dog Star.

ORIGINS OF ARTEMIS

The origins of Artemis are obscure. Although she is predominantly a virgin goddess, certain aspects of her character suggest that originally she may have had fertility connections.¹⁰ Artemis' interest in childbirth and in the young of both humans and animals seems to betray concerns that are not entirely virginal. At Ephesus in Asia Minor, a statue of Artemis depicts her in a robe of animal heads, which in its upper part exposes what appears to be (but may not be) a ring of multiple breasts. We should remember, too, that Artemis became a goddess of the moon in classical times. As in the case of other goddesses worshiped by women (e.g., Hera), this link with the moon may be associated with the lunar cycle and women's menstrual period. Thus the evident duality in Artemis' character and interests definitely links her with the archetypal concept of the virgin/mother.¹¹

ARTEMIS, SELENE, AND HECATE

As a moon-goddess, Artemis is sometimes closely identified with Selene and Hecate. Hecate is clearly a fertility deity with definite chthonian characteristics. She can make the earth produce in plenty, and her home is in the depths of the Underworld. She is a descendant of the Titans and in fact a cousin of Artemis.¹² Hecate is a goddess of roads in general and crossroads in particular, the latter being considered the center of ghostly activities, particularly in the dead of night.



Artemis of Ephesus. Alabaster and bronze, mid-second century A.D. The Ephesian Artemis continues the ancient tradition of the goddess as protectress of nature—seen in the rows of animal heads on her robe, sleeves, breastplate, and head-disk—and revives her original connection with fertility, shown by the multiple breastlike objects (whose identity is much debated). The turreted *polos* (crown) and the figure of Nike (Victory) on her breastplate are symbols of her role as protectress of the city of Ephesus. This Artemis is the “Diana of the Ephesians” at the center of the riot described in Acts 19:23–41. (Naples, Museo Nazionale.)

Thus the goddess developed a terrifying aspect; triple-faced statues depicted the three manifestations of her multiple character as a deity of the moon: Selene in heaven, Artemis on earth, and Hecate in the realm of Hades. Offerings of food (known as Hecate's suppers) were left to placate her, for she was terrible both in her powers and in her person—a veritable Fury, armed with a scourge and blazing torch and accompanied by terrifying hounds. Her skill in the arts of black magic made her the patron deity of sorceresses (like Medea) and witches. How different is the usual depiction of Artemis, young, vigorous, wholesome, and beautiful! In the costume of the huntress, she is ready for the chase, armed with her bow and arrow; an animal often appears by her side, and crescent moonlike horns rest upon her head; the torch she holds burns bright with the light of birth, life, and fertility. Whatever the roots of her fertility connections, the dominant conception of Artemis is that of the virgin huntress. She becomes, as it were, the goddess of nature itself, not always in terms of its teeming procreation, but instead often reflecting its cool, pristine, and virginal aspects. As a moon-goddess too (despite the overtones of fecundity), she can appear as a symbol, cold, white, and chaste.

ARTEMIS VERSUS APHRODITE: EURIPIDES' *HIPPOLYTUS*

In her role as a goddess of chastity, Artemis provides a ready foil for the voluptuous sensuality of Aphrodite. Artemis in this view becomes at one and the same time a negative force, representing the utter rejection of love and also a positive compulsion toward purity and asceticism. No one has rendered the psychological and physiological implications of this contrast in more human and meaningful terms than the poet Euripides in his tragedy *Hippolytus*.

As the play begins, Aphrodite is enraged; her power is great and universal, yet she is vehemently spurned by Hippolytus, who will have absolutely nothing to do with her. The young man must certainly pay for this hubris, and the goddess uses his stepmother, Phaedra, to make certain that he will. Phaedra is the second wife of Theseus, the father of Hippolytus (for the saga of Theseus, see Chapter 23). Aphrodite impels the unfortunate Phaedra to fall desperately in love with her stepson. Phaedra's nurse wrests the fatal secret of her guilty love from her sick and distraught mistress and makes the tragic mistake of taking it upon herself to inform the unsuspecting Hippolytus, who is horrified; the thought of physical love for any woman is for him traumatic enough; a sexual relationship with the wife of his father would be an abomination.

In her disgrace, Phaedra commits suicide; but first she leaves a note that falsely incriminates Hippolytus, whose death is brought about by the curse of his enraged father, Theseus, a heroic extrovert who has never really understood the piety of his son. Artemis appears to her beloved follower Hippolytus as he lies dying. She promises him, in return for a lifetime of devotion that has brought about his martyrdom, that she will get even by wreaking vengeance upon some

favorite of Aphrodite, and she will establish a cult in honor of Hippolytus as well—virgin maidens will pay tribute to him by dedicating their shorn tresses and lamenting his fate by their tears and their songs.¹³ Theseus realizes his error too late; he must suffer the consequences of his rash and hasty judgment against Hippolytus; but in the end father and son find understanding and reconciliation.

At the close of the play we are left with a fascinating chain of enigmas in the Euripidean manner, as the two opposing goddesses—both as real characters and psychological forces—manipulate the action. Is Hippolytus a saint or a foolish and obstinate prig? Has he destroyed himself through the dangerous, if not impossible, rejection of the physical? Are human beings at the mercy of ruthless and irrational compulsions inherent in their very nature, which they deify in terms of ruthless and vindictive women? Certainly the two goddesses play upon the basic character of the human protagonists. Aphrodite uses the essentially sensual Phaedra, and Artemis responds to the purity of Hippolytus' vision. Each of us is created in the image of a personal and controlling god, or each creates one's own special deity, according to his or her individual nature and character.

Obviously, then, a study of Euripides' *Hippolytus* becomes vital for an understanding of the nature of both Artemis and Aphrodite. For those who want to study Euripides' play in more detail, the Additional Reading at the end of this chapter offers crucial excerpts with commentary, including the entire final episode in which Artemis herself appears and reveals her essential characteristics. This is one of Euripides' best plays because of its masterful construction and its deceptively transparent simplicity, endlessly revealing intricate subtlety of thought and complexity of characterization. In the context of this and the previous chapter, Euripides' profound and critical scrutiny of the antithetical Artemis and Aphrodite and their worship should be primary.

The Misogyny of Hippolytus. In Euripides' play, after Hippolytus learns from the nurse of Phaedra's desire for him, he bursts out in a tirade against women as vile and evil (pp. 215–216), which has received a great deal of attention and interpretation, particularly today, because of its misogyny. Hippolytus' hatred of women is to be understood, but not necessarily condoned, in the context of his character and the play. This chaste man has suffered the most traumatic shock of his young life. Sex with any woman for him is impossible. The sudden realization of the lust of Phaedra, the wife of his beloved father, strikes him as an abomination. His feelings are in some ways similar to the misogyny of another holy man, John the Baptist, in his outbursts against Salome and her mother Herodias. Hippolytus at least is in love with one woman, Artemis. Not the least of his psychological problems is his own illegitimacy and the character of his mother, a vehement and chaste Amazon, who succumbed to his father Theseus.

Yet some see in Hippolytus' outcry against women the expression of views generally held in Greek society, particularly in fifth-century Athens, as though

somehow Hippolytus himself were a typical ancient Greek male. It is abundantly clear from the play that he is anything but that. Aphrodite herself punishes him for his aberration, and his father hates him for his religious fanaticism and cannot believe his virginal protestations; Theseus hastily convinces himself that Hippolytus raped Phaedra because he never could believe that his boy does not like women. Theseus is the archetype of the traditional, extrovert father who loves his wife and is disappointed by his son who has turned out to be an introvert, different from him in almost every way. If one were to pick an average Athenian (a dangerous, if not foolish, game to play), it would be Theseus.

Misandry, Artemis, and the Amazons. Misandry, hatred of men, rather than misogyny is a more immediate theme in connection with Artemis, where it manifests itself in the close religious bonds of her group, which excludes the male, as made evident in the stories of Actaeon and Callisto. In this connection the Amazons are relevant, important figures not only in the legends of Theseus, but also in those of Heracles and of the Trojan War; the Amazons developed a society not unlike that of Artemis the huntress, which excluded men. The Amazons, however, were devoted to the pursuits of battle and determined to become invincible warriors. Their *arete* ("excellence") was to be the same and in no way different from that of a male.

Lesbian Themes. Lesbianism is a latent motif in stories about the strong bond of affection among Artemis and her band of female followers. The atmosphere is virginal and the relationships pure, although the success of Jupiter with Callisto, when he takes the form of her beloved virgin goddess Diana, is fraught with Freudian overtones and makes one wonder. Athena, another virgin goddess, has close female companions. We learned in Chapter 8 about the tragic story of her relationship with Pallas; and she was also closely linked to the nymph Chariclo, who became the mother of Tiresias. Because of the avowed purity of these two virgin goddesses, it seems appropriate that Aphrodite (and not Artemis or Athena) preside over more sensual female relationships.

The society and mores of the warlike Amazons may also be subjected to lesbian interpretations, if one so desires.

ADDITIONAL READING

SELECTIONS FROM EURIPIDES' *HIPPOLYTUS*

The scene of Euripides' *Hippolytus* is in front of the palace in Troezen, a city linked to Athens and the hero Theseus. In a typically Euripidean prologue (cf. the opening of the *Bacchae* in Chapter 13), the mighty goddess Aphrodite proclaims the universality of her power and establishes the action of the play. She is outraged because the young and virginal hunter Hippolytus slights her and bestows all his love and attention upon Artemis, and she explains how she will exact vengeance (1–28):

 APHRODITE: I am called Cypris, a mighty and renowned goddess both in heaven and among mortals. Everyone who looks upon the light of the sun throughout the whole world (from the eastern boundary of the Black Sea to the western limit of the straits of Gibraltar) is at my mercy; I reward those who celebrate my power, but I destroy all who with arrogant pride oppose me. For gods, just like mortals, enjoy receiving honor. I will show you the truth of these words directly.

Hippolytus, the illegitimate son whom the Amazon woman bore to Theseus, this Hippolytus, brought up by the good Pittheus, is the only citizen of this place Troezen who declares that I am the worst of deities. He renounces sex and rejects marriage, and reveres Artemis, the sister of Apollo and daughter of Zeus, believing her the greatest of deities. Throughout the green woods, he rids the land of wild animals with his swift dogs, always intimate with the virgin goddess and experiencing a greater than mortal relationship. I am not envious. Why should I be? But for his sins against me I will take vengeance upon Hippolytus this very day. I have long since made great progress; I need exert little more effort. For once, when Hippolytus came from the house of Pittheus to Pandion's city of Athens to witness the sacraments of the holy mysteries, Phaedra looked upon him; and she the noble wife of his father was struck to the heart by a terrible desire, in accordance with my plans.

These last lines beautifully and succinctly epitomize the tragedy, with their swift series of powerful images. In one fatal moment, sensuous and mature Phaedra glimpses the beautiful, young, chaste, and religious Hippolytus and is overwhelmed by her lust (the Greek word used is *eros*), which is hopeless, impossible, and can only lead to catastrophe.

Aphrodite tells us that Theseus is absent from Troezen on a self-imposed exile and that Phaedra, tortured by her guilt, is determined to die without revealing her love for her stepson. She goes on to outline the course of the drama. Although Phaedra before leaving Athens for Troezen had built a shrine to Aphrodite on the Acropolis, she must die so that vengeance may be exacted against Hippolytus; Aphrodite is more concerned about punishing her enemy Hippolytus than she is about the suffering and death of the unfortunate Phaedra. As Hippolytus enters with a throng of servants singing the praises of Artemis, "most beautiful of the Olympian deities," Aphrodite withdraws with the dire pronouncement that the joyous youth does not realize that this is the last day of his life.

The prayer with which Euripides introduces us to Hippolytus defines the essential nature of the young man and of Artemis; he stands before a statue of the goddess offering her a diadem of flowers (73–87):

 HIPPOLYTUS: For you, my mistress, I bring this garland which I have fashioned of flowers plucked from a virgin meadow untouched by iron implements, where no shepherd has ever presumed to graze his flock—indeed a virgin field which bees frequent in spring. Purity waters it like a river stream for those who have as their lot the knowledge of virtue in everything, not through teaching but by their very nature. These are the ones for whom it is right to pluck these

flowers, but those who are evil are forbidden. My dear lady, accept from my holy hand this garland to crown your golden hair. I alone of mortals have this privilege: I am with you and converse with you, for I hear your voice, although I do not see your face. As I have begun life in your grace, may I so keep it to the end.

One of the servants warns Hippolytus of the consequences of his hubristic refusal to pay homage to a statue of Aphrodite. Hippolytus avows that since he is pure, he must keep his distance from a goddess who is worshiped in the night, and he bids her a haughty goodbye.

A chorus of women from Troezen expresses concern about Phaedra's mysterious illness and conjectures about its nature. When Phaedra, weak, pale, and wasted, makes her entrance, accompanied by her faithful Nurse, they realize the seriousness of her predicament. In the following scene, only with great difficulty can the Nurse wrest from her distraught mistress the guilty secret that she is in love with her stepson Hippolytus. An anguished Phaedra, whose ravings had been fraught with ambiguous and sexual innuendo, at last explains to the women of Troezen. She begins with some general thoughts (deeply pondered during her tortured, sleepless nights) about how lives of human beings have been destroyed. People are not ruined because they have no moral sense but because they fail to carry out what they know to be right due to inertia or weak submission to temptations and less honorable action. She goes on to explain how her conclusions apply directly to her own behavior and suffering (391–430):



PHAEDRA: I will tell you the course of my resolves. When *eros* struck me, I thought about how I might best endure the wound. And so I began in this way: to be silent and to hide my affliction. (For one's tongue is not at all trustworthy; it knows how to advise others in a quandary but gets for oneself a multitude of evils.) My second plan was to endure this madness steadfastly, mastering it by self-control.

But when I was unable to overcome Cypris by these means, it seemed best to me to die, the most effective of all resolutions—as no one will deny. The good and noble things that I do should be witnessed by all but not my bad and shameful actions. I knew that both my sick passion and its fulfillment were disreputable, and besides, I have learned well the lesson that being a woman and a wife I was open to disgrace. May she die in damnation, that woman, a pollution to us all, who first defiled her marriage bed with other men. This wickedness began in the houses of the nobility to become a defilement on all the female sex. For whenever shameful acts seem right to the aristocrats, most certainly they will seem good to the lower classes.

I also hate women who say that they are chaste but in secret dare to commit unholy acts. O Lady Cypris, mistress of the sea, how in the world can such women look into the faces of their husbands? How can they help but tremble in the dark, their accomplice, in fear that the walls of the house will utter a sound?

My friends, I must die for this simple reason: that I may never be found guilty of bringing shame upon my husband and the children whom I bore. In-

stead may they live and flourish in the renowned city of Athens, free men, open in speech and their good reputation unsullied by their mother. For man is enslaved, even if he is bold of heart, whenever he is conscious of the sins of a mother or a father.

They say that to win in life's contest, one needs only this: a good and just character. But the base among mortals are exposed, sooner or later, when Time holds a mirror before them, as before a young girl. Among such as these may I never be discovered.

Thus the noble Phaedra reveals her character and her motivation. The Nurse, upon first learning of Phaedra's love for Hippolytus, was shocked and horrified. Now, however, in response to her mistress, she offers assurances that Phaedra's experience is nothing unusual. She is the victim of the goddess of love, like many others. Not only mortals but even deities succumb to illicit passions. Phaedra must bear up. The pragmatic Nurse ends her sophistic arguments by claiming that she will find some cure. She is deliberately ambiguous about the precise nature of this cure in order to win Phaedra's confidence, hinting at some potion or magic that must be employed. She dismisses Phaedra's fear that she will reveal her love for Hippolytus—but this is exactly the cure that she has resolved upon, with the preliminary precaution of exacting from the young man an oath of silence.

Poor Phaedra learns that her Nurse (in a loving but misguided attempt to help) has indeed approached Hippolytus from his angry shouts that come from the palace. She overhears Hippolytus brutally denouncing the Nurse, calling her a procurer of evils, in betrayal of her master's marriage-bed. Phaedra believes that she is now ruined and confides to the Chorus that she is resolved to die. We do not have Euripides' stage directions. Some would have Phaedra exit at this point, but the drama is intensified and her subsequent actions are more comprehensible if she remains, compelled to witness the entire following scene. Hippolytus bursts forth from the palace followed by the Nurse (581–668):

 HIPPOLYTUS: O mother earth and vast reaches of the sun, What unspeakable words have I listened to!

NURSE: Be quiet, my boy, before someone hears you shouting.

HIPPOLYTUS: I have heard such dreadful things that it is impossible for me to be silent.

NURSE: Please, by your strong right hand.

HIPPOLYTUS: Keep your hands off me! Don't touch my cloak!

NURSE: I beseech you, by your knees. Don't ruin me.

HIPPOLYTUS: What do you mean? Didn't you claim that there was nothing wrong in what you said?

NURSE: What I said was by no means intended for all to hear.

HIPPOLYTUS: Good words spread among many become even better.

NURSE: My child, do not be untrue to your oath, in any way.

HIPPOLYTUS: My tongue swore but my mind is under no oath.

NURSE: My boy, what will you do? Ruin those near and dear to you?

HIPPOLYTUS: I spit upon them! No evil person is near and dear to me.

NURSE: Be forgiving. To err is human, my son.

HIPPOLYTUS: O Zeus, why did you bring them into the light of this world—women—an ingrained and deceitful evil for mankind? If you wanted to propagate the race, it is not from women that you should have ordained our birth. Instead, men should be able to buy children in your temples, each making a payment of bronze, iron, or gold, appropriate to his means, and live free in homes without females.

Hippolytus rages on to show how obvious it is that a woman is a great evil. A father settles on a dowry to be rid of his very own daughter because she is pernicious. A husband takes the woman into his house and enjoys adorning this worthless and ruinous creature with expensive jewelry and fine clothes, little by little squandering his estate, poor fool.

The husband with a wife who is a nonentity has it easiest. Although not without harm, she is kept from folly by her lack of intelligence. “A clever woman, I loathe. May I never have in my house a woman who is more clever than she should be,” Hippolytus exclaims, “for Cypris breeds more villainy in the clever ones.” Also, a woman should not have access to a servant but instead only wild and dumb animals, so they may not be able to speak to anyone or receive an answer in return. And these last admonitions bring Hippolytus back from his wild generalizations to his present trauma, which provoked them. He erroneously thinks that the Nurse has been sent by a wily and evil Phaedra on her abominable mission, and he goes on to denounce her.

☞ Thus it is that you, wicked creature, have come to make a deal with me to debauch the sacred bed of my father. I will pour running water into my ears to wash out the pollution of your words. How could I be a sinner, I who feel defiled by just listening to such a vile proposition. Woman, understand this clearly, my piety is your salvation. If I had not been caught off guard and bound by my oath to the gods, I would never keep myself from telling this filthy business to my father. For the time being, as long as Theseus is away from Troezen, I will absent myself from the palace and keep my mouth shut. But I will return when my father does and watch how you face him, both you and your mistress. Having this taste of your effrontery, I will be knowledgeable.

May you be damned. I will never have my fill of hatred for women, not even if anyone criticizes me for always declaring it. For they all, like you, are evil in one way or another. Either someone should teach them how to be temperate or allow me to trample them down forever.

The Greek word translated “to be temperate” is *sophronein*, which has the basic meaning of to show good sense, to exercise self-control and moderation in all things. It is particularly ironic, spoken here by the intemperate and inhumane Hippolytus. The word may in context connote specific restraint, for example, sexual self-control, that is, to be chaste.

The Nurse is overcome with remorse and guilt for the failure of her scheme but she cannot assuage the fury of Phaedra, whose only recourse now is to end

her own life. She confides her decision to the Chorus, whom she has sworn to secrecy (716–721 and 725–731).

 PHAEDRA: I have found a remedy for my misfortune so that I will bequeath to my sons a life of good reputation, and profit from what has now befallen me. For I will never bring shame upon my Cretan home, nor will I go and face Theseus with disgraceful actions for the sake of one life. . . .

On this day when I have freed myself from life, I will make Cypris happy, the one who destroys me, and I will be defeated by a bitter eros. But after my death, I will become an evil curse for that other person, so that he may understand that he should not exult haughtily over my misfortunes; by sharing in this malady with me, he will learn how to be temperate.

Phaedra reaffirms the convictions that she has revealed earlier. She cannot face the loss of her reputation or the risk of sullyng the reputation of Theseus and her sons, jeopardizing their future. Now she has added another motive for her actions, similar to that of Aphrodite: vengeance against the cruel and arrogant hubris of Hippolytus, which she herself has just witnessed, to exacerbate her humiliation and her suffering.

Phaedra echoes Hippolytus' tirade when she promises that he will learn (i.e., she will teach him) how to be temperate (*sophronein*). There is another reminder of Hippolytus and a chilling ambiguity in her earlier assertion: "nor will I go and face Theseus with disgraceful actions for the sake of one life." Does she mean her life or that of Hippolytus?

Phaedra goes into the palace to commit suicide. She hangs herself and just as she is freed from the noose and her corpse laid out, Theseus returns. Overcome with grief, he notices a tablet, bearing her seal, dangling from Phaedra's hand. He reads it in horror and cries out for all to hear: "Hippolytus has dared to violate my marriage bed by force, desecrating the holy eye of Zeus." He calls out to his father Poseidon, who has granted Theseus three curses, and asks that with one of them the god kill Hippolytus, who, he prays, may not live out this day. Theseus also pronounces banishment upon his son. Hearing the cries of Theseus, a bewildered Hippolytus appears. In the lengthy confrontation between father and son, the following excerpt elucidates the long-standing difficulties in their relationship and the crux of their conflict. To Hippolytus' protestations that he has done nothing wrong, Theseus exclaims (936–980):

 THESEUS: Oh, the human heart, to what lengths will it go? What limit will one set to boldness and audacity? . . . Behold this man, who was begotten by me; he has defiled my bed and stands clearly convicted of being the basest of human beings by the woman who is dead. Look at your father directly, face to face; don't be afraid that your gaze will contaminate me, I am already contaminated. Are you the man who consorts with the gods, as though you were superior to everyone else? Are you the pure virgin, unsullied by sin? I could never be convinced by these boasts of yours and wrongly believe that the gods are fooled by your hypocrisy. Now that you are caught, go ahead and brag, show

off with your vegetarian diet, take Orpheus as your lord, celebrate the mysteries, believing in their many and vacuous writings. I warn everyone to shun men such as these. For they prey upon you with their holy words, while they devise their evil plots.

She is dead. Do you imagine that this fact will save you? By this, most of all, O villain, you are convicted. For what kind of oath, what testimony could be more powerful than she to win your acquittal? Will you maintain that she hated you and that it is only natural for a bastard to be in conflict with those who are legitimate? If so, you argue that she made a bad and foolish bargain, if she destroyed what is most precious, her own life, out of hostility to you; but will you claim that folly is an attribute of women and not found in men? I know that young men are no more stable than women, whenever Cypris plays havoc in their young hearts; yet because they are male, they are not discredited. And so now—ah, but why do I wage this contest of words with you, when this corpse lies here, the clearest witness against you. Get out of this land, go, an exile, as quickly as possible; and stay away from god-built Athens and the borders of any territory ruled by my spear.

If I am beaten by you, after these terrible things you have made me suffer, Isthmian Sinis will not bear witness to his defeat at my hands but make it my idle boast, and the Scironian rocks by the sea will refute the fact that I am merciless against those who do evil.

Theseus' own boasting about his prowess refers to two of his labors, the killing of the robber Sinis at the Isthmus of Corinth and the brigand Sciron on the cliffs that bear his name. No one would believe his prowess against the wicked if he did not punish Hippolytus.

In his denunciation of Hippolytus, Theseus reveals the long-standing rift that has grown between them. However great his love for Phaedra and the shock of her suicide, how could Theseus so readily accept her accusation of rape if he had any understanding of the nature and character of his son? His suspicions about Hippolytus' avowals of purity, which to him smack of haughty superiority, and his ridicule of mystery religions indicate that Theseus, the hero, has little respect for the beliefs of a son who is so different in temperament. (We cannot help but recall that Phaedra was smitten with desire as she observed the pure Hippolytus participating in the Mysteries. A young and innocent man so unlike his father and her husband!)

Theseus imagines that Hippolytus will argue that Phaedra hated him and conflict between the two of them was inevitable: he was a bastard, she was a stepmother, and as the wife of Theseus bore him two legitimate sons, rivals to Hippolytus and heirs to the throne. How much has rejection sullied the relationship between Theseus and Hippolytus? In fact, Hippolytus' fanatical devotion to Artemis and his renunciation of Aphrodite reflect a resentment against his father expressed in his devotion to his real mother, who, as an Amazon, would normally have nothing to do with Aphrodite and heterosexual love, had she not been seduced by Theseus. Later Hippolytus exclaims (1082–1083): "O

my unhappy mother, O my bitter birth, may no one dear to me ever be born a bastard!" At this point in the play, Hippolytus answers his father's accusations as follows (983–1035):

 HIPPOLYTUS: Father, your strength and the intensity of your rage are terrifying. Yet, although your arguments seem just, if one examines the case you present closely, it is not just at all. I am not good at making a speech before many—I am better at talking to a few people of my own age. This is how things go—just as those who are inept among a group of the wise speak more persuasively before a crowd. Be this as it may, since misfortune has befallen me, I must not hold my tongue. First of all, I will begin by answering your first accusation by which you sought to destroy me without a word to say in response. You see the sky and this here earth. There is no one under the sun more righteous than I am, even if you say this is not so. First, I know how to pay reverence to the gods and to pick friends who try to do no wrong and whose sense of decency prevents them from demanding wrong or doing wrong to others. I do not belittle or betray these companions, father, but am the same to them, whether they are with me or not. I am innocent of the one charge, of which you now think you have convicted me. To this very moment, my body is chaste. I have never had sex but only heard about it, or seen depictions of it which I do not like to look at because I am a virgin, pure in heart and soul.

Suppose you are not convinced about my chastity. So be it. You must then show in what way I was corrupted. Was her body more beautiful than that of any other woman? Or did I hope to become an heir in your palace, by taking her to bed? If so, I was a fool, completely out of my mind. Will you argue that to be a king is a sweet temptation for a man in his right senses? Not in the least, because all those who love the power of a king have been corrupted. No, I would like to win first place in the Greek Games but in the city to be second and always to enjoy good fortune with the best people for friends; this allows for achievement, and the absence of danger affords more pleasure than kingship. You have all my arguments, except for one thing. If I had a truthful witness like myself to testify to what kind of man I am, and if I were pleading my case while Phaedra were still alive to see and hear me, you would know the guilty ones by a careful scrutiny of the evidence. As it is, now I swear to you by Zeus, god of oaths and by vast earth that I never touched your wife, never wanted to, nor ever even had the thought. May I die without a name or reputation, without a city or a home, wandering the earth as an exile, and after my death, may neither sea nor land accept my corpse, if I have done any wrong.

Why and through what fear she took her own life, I do not know, since it is not right for me to speak further. She acted virtuously, when she could not be virtuous. I am virtuous but I have not used my virtue well.

Hippolytus' last words present Theseus with a riddle. The message he conveys is that Phaedra, when she could not control her passion (be temperate, the verb *sophronein* is used again), she was not virtuous. When she committed suicide to ensure that she would not commit adultery, she absolved her guilt by

this virtuous act. Hippolytus, however, is virtuous and chaste, but his behavior has led to disaster. Hippolytus does not break his oath and reveal the truth but, from many of his words, a less hot-tempered and more sympathetic Theseus would have suspected that his son knows more than he has revealed. For example, Hippolytus picks friends and associates who in character and behavior are the antithesis of Phaedra.

In the heated exchange that follows, the father banishes his son from the land. Hippolytus leaves driving his four-horsed chariot. A messenger comes to report to Theseus the terrible fate of Hippolytus, brought about by the curse that Theseus had evoked through the god Poseidon. His dramatic speech vividly describes how amidst a terrifying surge of the sea, a huge wave brought forth a monstrous bull, bellowing savagely, which made directly for Hippolytus as he was driving his chariot along the sea coast. The four horses were seized by such a panic that even the experienced Hippolytus was not able to control them. In the horrible crash that ensued, Hippolytus was caught in the leather reins and brutally dragged along the rocks. Finally he was cut loose; and Theseus, upon learning that his son is still alive, orders that he be brought to face him once again. At this juncture, Artemis appears, a veritable *deus ex machina*, to set things aright, the counterpart to Aphrodite who had opened the play (1283–1466):

 ARTEMIS: I command you, royal son of Aegaeus, to listen; for I address you, I, Artemis, the daughter of Leto. Why, Theseus, poor wretch, do you take pleasure in these things? You have murdered your son, persuaded to commit this unholy act by the false accusations of your wife, with no clear evidence. Clear, however, is the ruin you have earned. In shame you should hide yourself in the depths of the earth or escape from this misery by exchanging your life for that of a bird above, since you do not deserve to share in the lives of good men.

Listen, Theseus, to the extent of your evils. Although I will accomplish nothing, yet I will cause you pain. I have come for this purpose, to disclose the righteous nature of your son so that he may die with a good name and the frenzied passion of your wife or, from another point of view, her nobility. For stung by the goads of the goddess most hateful to all of us whose joy is in chastity, she fell in love with your son.

She tried to overcome Cypris by reason but she was ruined unwittingly by the machinations of her Nurse, who revealed her malady to your son sworn to secrecy. He did not give in to her entreaties, as was right, and again, being virtuous, he did not break the bond of his oath, although you wronged him so. Phaedra, terrified that she would be exposed, wrote a false letter, and destroyed your son by her lies, but nevertheless she convinced you to believe them.

THESEUS: Woe is me!

ARTEMIS: Do my words sting you? Yet be quiet and listen to the rest so that you may lament all the more. Didn't you know that the three curses you got from your father were bound to be fulfilled? You are a most base man to use one of them against your own son, when you could have used it against any of

your enemies. The god of the sea, your father and kindly disposed towards you, fulfilled your curse; he had to, since he had promised. Yet both in his eyes and in mine you appear base, you who did not wait either for proof or the guidance of prophets; you did not put the accusation to the test nor allow a lengthy time for scrutiny but, more quickly than you should have, you hurled a curse against your son and killed him.

THESEUS: My lady, let me die!

ARTEMIS: You have done terrible things but nevertheless it is still possible, even for you, to find pardon for your actions. For it was Aphrodite who wished that these things should come about to satisfy her anger. There is a law for the gods as follows: no one of us wishes to thwart the will of another but we always stand aside.

For understand me clearly—If I were not in fear of Zeus' retaliation, I would never have sunk to such a depth of shame as to allow the death of the man dearest to me of all mortals. Ignorance, first of all, acquits you of evil; and besides, your wife by dying prevented your testing the truth of her accusations and so she made you believe her. As it is, these misfortunes have burst upon you most of all; but I too feel pain. The gods have no joy in the deaths of the good and reverent but those who are wicked we destroy, children, house and all.

(Hippolytus is brought in by servants.)

 CHORUS: Here comes the poor fellow, his young flesh mutilated, his fair hair befouled. Oh, the suffering of this house. What grief—not once but now a second time—has been brought down upon it by the gods!

HIPPOLYTUS: Ah, what pain. I, unfortunate, destroyed by the unjust curse of an unjust father. Alas, wretched, I am done for, woe is me. Pains shoot through my head, spasms dart around my brain. Stop, servants, let me rest my exhausted body. Oh, what pain! O hateful chariot, drawn by horses fed by my own hand. You have destroyed me, you have killed me. Ah what agony! Servants, by the gods, place your hands lightly on my lacerated flesh. Who stands at my right side? Lift me gently; take me along carefully, me the ill-fated one, cursed by my father's wrong-doing. Zeus, Zeus, do you see what is happening? Here I am, a holy and god-revering man, one who surpassed all others in virtue going to my inevitable death. My life is utterly destroyed, and I have performed my labors of piety on behalf of mortals, all for nothing. Ah, ah, the pain, the pain which now overwhelms me. Let go of me in my misery and may death come as my healer. Kill me, destroy me and my pain, doomed as I am. I long for the thrust of a two-edged sword to end my life and bring peaceful rest.

Oh, unfortunate curse of my father. Some bloodstained evil, inherited from my ancestors long ago, rises up and does not stay dormant but has come against me. Why, oh why, when I am guilty of no evil myself? Woe is me, alas! What am I to say? How will I turn my life of pain into painlessness? If only the inevitable fate of death would transport me, one doomed to suffer so, into the night of Hades' realm.

ARTEMIS: O poor, wretched fellow, how great is the yoke of your misfortune! The nobility of your nature has destroyed you.

HIPPOLYTUS: Ah, what a breath of divine fragrance! Even amidst my misfortunes, I feel your presence, and the pain in my body is lifted. The goddess Artemis is present in this place.

ARTEMIS: Gallant sufferer, yes, she is most dear to you of all the gods.

HIPPOLYTUS: Do you see me, my Lady, how wretched I am?

ARTEMIS: I see your misery but it is not right for my eyes to shed a tear.

HIPPOLYTUS: Your huntsman and your servant is no more.

ARTEMIS: No, indeed, but you die most dear to me.

HIPPOLYTUS: No longer the keeper of your horses or the attendant of your statues.

ARTEMIS: Because the evil-schemer Cypris planned it so.

HIPPOLYTUS: Alas, I understand what goddess has destroyed me.

ARTEMIS: She resented your slights to her honor and hated you for being chaste.

HIPPOLYTUS: This one goddess has destroyed the three of us, I realize now.

ARTEMIS: Your father and you, and his wife, the third.

HIPPOLYTUS: And so I bemoan the misfortunes of my father as well as my own.

ARTEMIS: He was deceived by the designs of a god.

HIPPOLYTUS: Oh, how unhappy you must be, father, because of your great misfortune!

THESEUS: I am done for, my son, and for me there remains no joy in life.

HIPPOLYTUS: I pity you more than I pity myself for mistaken wrongdoing.

THESEUS: If only I could die, my son, instead of you.

HIPPOLYTUS: How bitter the gifts of your father, Poseidon!

THESEUS: That curse should never have come to my lips.

HIPPOLYTUS: Why not? You would have killed me anyway, you were in such a state of anger.

THESEUS: Because the gods had taken away my good sense.

HIPPOLYTUS: Oh, if only mortals could send a curse upon the gods!

ARTEMIS: No need of a curse. Even though you are in the dark depths of the earth, the rage that has been leveled against your very being through the zealous will of the goddess Cypris will not go unavenged, so that your piety and goodness of heart may be rewarded. For I will punish a lover of hers, the one mortal who is especially the dearest, by this unfailing bow of mine. To you, poor sufferer, I will bestow the greatest of honors in the city of Troezen in recompense for these evil torments of yours. Unmarried girls, before their marriage, will cut off their hair in dedication to you, the one who will reap the rich harvest of their mourning and tears though the span of the ages. The songs of maidens inspired by the Muses will keep your memory alive forever and Phaedra's passion for you will not be left unsung and become forgotten.

You, son of revered Aegaeus, take your son in your arms and embrace him; for you destroyed him unwittingly, and it is to be expected for human beings to err, when the gods so ordain.

I advise you, Hippolytus, not to hate your father. You have been destroyed by the destiny that is yours.

Farewell. It is not right for me to look upon the dead or to defile my sight

with the last gasps of the dying; and I see that you are now near that terrible state.

HIPPOLYTUS: Go as I bid you farewell, blessed virgin; how easily you leave behind our long relationship. Yet I put an end to my conflict with my father, since you so desire. For, in the past, indeed, I was persuaded by your words. Ah, darkness is now closing over my eyes. Take hold of me, father, and lay out my body in death.

THESEUS: Alas, my son, what terrible thing are you doing to me, one so ill-fated?

HIPPOLYTUS: I am done for; indeed I see the gates of the Underworld.

THESEUS: And will you leave me with my hands defiled?

HIPPOLYTUS: No, not at all, since I acquit you of this murder.

THESEUS: What are you saying? Do you free me from blood-guilt?

HIPPOLYTUS: I invoke Artemis with her indomitable bow as my witness.

THESEUS: O dearest son, what nobility you show towards your father!

HIPPOLYTUS: Farewell to you father, I wish you much happiness.

THESEUS: Alas for me to lose a son of such piety and goodness!

HIPPOLYTUS: Pray that your true-born sons may be like me.

THESEUS: Do not forsake me now, my son, but hold on courageously.

HIPPOLYTUS: I can hold on to life no longer. It is over, father. Cover my face—quickly.

THESEUS: O renowned land of Erechtheus and Pallas, what a man you have lost. I, in my wretchedness, will remember all too well, Cypris, the evils you have wrought.

CHORUS: This unexpected sorrow has come for all the citizens to share. There will be a flood of many tears. For lamentable stories about those who are great can inspire a more intense grief.

Although Artemis declares her love for Hippolytus, she remains cool and aloof, as antiseptic in some respects as her fanatical follower. The rites she predicts in honor of Hippolytus were celebrated in Troezen, and the beloved of Cypris whom she will kill has been specifically identified as Adonis (who in some versions of his death is killed by Artemis' arrows).

Hippolytus' farewell to Artemis is a beautiful example of Euripides' succinct and profound irony. The sad ambiguity of Hippolytus' words may be highlighted by a different but not unfaithful translation with interpretation: "You, go without any pain, fortunate lady! [I am in pain, unfortunate, and dying.] How readily (or lightly) you abandon my deep devotion. I will become reconciled to my father since you want me too. I will obey you now, as I have done in the past [through the ingrained conviction of a religious habit, which not even my disappointment in your present behavior can dispel. My worship and obedience end like this]."

In their final reconciliation, the theme of Theseus' recognition of the true nobility of his bastard son, and Hippolytus' hope for Theseus that his true-born sons by Phaedra may turn out as worthy, underlines the psychological importance of this basic motif of legitimacy in the play.

There have been many subsequent dramatic versions of the legend. The treatment of the Roman Seneca (d. A.D. 65) in his *Phaedra* is well worth studying for its own dramatic merit and as a contrast to Euripides' extant version. There are many differences, both in plot and in characterization, and he explores the psychological tensions of the myth without the goddesses Aphrodite or Artemis appearing as actual figures in the play. Seneca has Phaedra herself (not her Nurse) confront Hippolytus with her lust as she attempts to seduce him. Euripides wrote two dramas about Hippolytus, and Seneca, in this scene, was probably inspired by the earlier of the two versions by the Greek playwright; this first *Hippolytus* of Euripides was not a success and no longer survives. The second version (named *Hippolytos Stephanephoros* to distinguish it from the first), which Euripides produced in 428, is the one that we know today.

Other later plays on the theme are Jean Racine's *Phèdre* (1677); Eugene O'Neill's *Desire under the Elms* (1924), also influenced by *Medea*; and Robinson Jeffers' *The Cretan Woman* (1954). The manipulation of the character of Hippolytus is illuminating. For example, Racine, by giving Hippolytus a girlfriend in his version, drastically changes the configuration of the Euripidean archetype. Jeffers is closer to Euripides by keeping Hippolytus' abhorrence of sex; but when he introduces a companion for Hippolytus who is "slender and rather effeminate," he suggests another shifting of the archetype of the holy man. At any rate, once Hippolytus' sexual orientation is made too explicit, the mystery of his psyche is diminished. Euripides gets everything right, a judgment made with due respect for the masterpieces that he has inspired. The twentieth-century novel *The Bull from the Sea*, by Mary Renault, is yet another rewarding reinterpretation of the myth.

The attempted seduction of a holy man and its dire consequences represent familiar motifs in literature (in the Bible, for example, see the stories of Joseph and Potiphar's wife and of John the Baptist and Salome).

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NOTES

1. Sometimes the place of birth is called Ortygia (the name means "quail island"), which cannot be identified with certainty. In some accounts, it is clearly not merely another name for Delos; in others, it is.
2. Niobe was the wife of Amphon, ruling by his side in the royal palace of Cadmus. As the daughter of Tantalus and the granddaughter of Atlas, her lineage was much more splendid than that of Leto, the daughter of an obscure Titan, Coeus.

3. A rock on Mt. Sipylus in Asia Minor was identified in antiquity as the figure of Niobe.
4. Actaeon was the son of Aristaeus and Autoonoe.
5. The nymphs' names, which are omitted in the translation, are Greek words suggestive of cool, crystal-clear water.
6. A stag was commonly believed to live nine times as long as a man.
7. Still Ovid goes on to give thirty-one more names, which are omitted in the translation.
8. Orion sometimes appears as the son of Earth; in other accounts his father is Poseidon.
9. Or Orion was run through by Artemis' arrows. Orion also attempted to rape Opis, a follower of Artemis, if indeed she is not the goddess herself.
10. Several of the nymphs associated with her (e.g., Callisto and Opis) were probably once goddesses in their own right and may actually represent various manifestations of Artemis' own complex nature. One of them, Britomartis, is closely linked to Crete, and perhaps was once a traditional mother-goddess.
11. Cf. Michael P. Carroll, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary: Psychological Origins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986). Carroll ignores the aspects of Artemis as a mother figure when he states (p. 8): "there is little or no basis in Graeco-Roman mythology for portraying either [Artemis or Athena] as a mother figure." He has, however, very perceptive analogies to make with the worship of Cybele (pp. 90–112).
12. Hecate's mother, Asterie, is Leto's sister; her father is Perses.
13. For more on the legend of Hippolytus and his cult-sites, see pp. 564–565 and p. 639.

APOLLO

THE BIRTH OF APOLLO

As has been told in the previous chapter, Zeus mated with Leto and she conceived the twin gods, Artemis and Apollo. The *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (3) concentrates in its first part (1–178: To Delian Apollo) on the story of how Delos became the site of Apollo's birth. The hymn begins with a scene of the gods in the home of Zeus (1–29):

 I shall not forget far-shooting Apollo but remember him before whom the gods tremble when he comes to the home of Zeus. They all spring up from their seats as he approaches and draws his shining bow, and Leto alone remains beside Zeus, who delights in thunder. But then she unstrings his bow and closes his quiver and, taking them from his mighty shoulders, hangs them on a column of his father's house from a golden peg. She leads him to a chair and sits him down, and his father welcomes his dear son by giving him nectar in a gold cup. Then the other deities sit down in their places and the lady Leto rejoices because she has borne a son who is a mighty archer. Rejoice, O blessed Leto, since you have borne splendid children, lord Apollo and Artemis, who take delight in arrows; Artemis you bore in Ortygia and Apollo in rocky Delos as you leaned against the great and massive Cynthian hill, right next to the palm tree near the stream of the Inopus.

How then shall I celebrate you in my song—you who are in all ways the worthy subject of many hymns? For everywhere, O Phoebus, music is sung in your honor, both on the mainland where heifers are bred and on the islands. All mountaintops give you pleasure and the lofty ridges of high hills, rivers flowing to the sea, beaches sloping to the water, and harbors of the deep. Shall I sing about how Leto gave you birth against Mt. Cynthus on the rocky island, on seagirt Delos? On either side a dark wave was driven towards the land by shrill winds. From your beginning here, you rule over all mortals [including those to whom Leto came when she was in labor].

Leto had roamed far and wide in her search for a refuge where she might give birth to Apollo. The hymn continues with a long and impressive list of cities and islands to emphasize the extent of her wanderings; she visited all those who lived in these places (30–139):¹

Crete and the land of Athens, the islands of Aegina and Euboea famous for its ships, and Aegae, Eiresiae, and Peparethus by the sea, Thracian Athos, the tall

peaks of Pelion, Thracian Samos, the shady hills of Ida, and Scyros, Phocaea, the sheer mountain of Autocane, well-built Imbros, hazy Lemnos, and holy Lesbos, seat of Macar, the son of Aeolus, and Chios, most shimmering of the islands that lie in the sea, craggy Mimas, the tall peaks of Corycus, gleaming Claros, the steep mountain of Aesagea, rainy Samos, the sheer heights of Mycale, Miletus and Cos, the city of Meropian mortals, and steep Cnidos, windy Carpathos, Naxos, Paros, and rocky Rhenea.

DELOS ACCEPTS LETO

Leto approached these many places in labor with the far-shooting god in the hope that some land might want to make a home for her son. But they all trembled and were very much afraid; and not one of them, even the more rich, dared to receive the god Phoebus, until lady Leto came to Delos² and asked with winged words: "Delos, if you would like to be the home of my son, Phoebus Apollo, and to establish for him a rich temple—do not refuse, for no one else will come near you, as you will find out, and I do not think that you will be rich in cattle and sheep or bear harvests or grow plants in abundance—if you would then have a temple of Apollo, the far-shooter, all people will congregate here and bring hecatombs, and the aroma of rich sacrifices will rise up incessantly and your inhabitants will be nourished by the hands of foreigners."

Thus she spoke; Delos rejoiced and said to her in answer: "Leto, most renowned daughter of great Coeus, I should receive your son, the lord who shoots from afar, with joy, for the terrible truth is that I have a bad reputation among human beings, and in this way I should become greatly esteemed. But I fear this prediction (and I shall not keep it from you): they say that Apollo will be someone of uncontrollable power, who will mightily lord it over both immortal gods and mortal humans on the fruitful earth. And so I am dreadfully afraid in the depths of my heart and soul that when he first looks upon the light of the sun he will be contemptuous of me (since I am an island that is rocky and barren) and overturn me with his feet and push me down into the depths of the sea where the surge of the great waves will rise mightily above me. And he will come to another land that pleases him, where he will build his temple amidst groves of trees. But sea monsters will find their dens in me, and black seals will make me their home without being disturbed, since I will be without human inhabitants. But if, O goddess, you would dare to swear to me a great oath that he will build here first of all a very beautiful temple to be an oracle for men; then after he has done this, let him proceed to extend his prestige and build his sanctuaries among all people; for to be sure his wide renown will be great."

Thus Delos spoke. And Leto swore the great oath of the gods: "Now let Gaea and wide Uranus above bear witness and the flowing waters of the Styx (this is the greatest and most dread oath that there is for the blessed gods), in truth a fragrant altar and sacred precinct of Apollo will be established here forever, and he will honor you above all."

LETO GIVES BIRTH TO APOLLO

When she had ended and sworn her oath, Delos rejoiced greatly in the birth of the lord who shoots from afar. But Leto for nine days and nine nights was racked by desperate pains in her labor. All the greatest of the goddesses were with her—

Dione, Rhea, righteous Themis, and sea-moaning Amphitrite—and others too, except for white-armed Hera; for she sat at home in the house of Zeus the cloud-gatherer. Eileithyia, the goddess of pangs of childbirth, was the only one who had not heard of Leto's distress, for she sat on the heights of Olympus beneath golden clouds through the wiles of white-armed Hera, who kept her there because she was jealous that Leto of the beautiful hair was about to bear a strong and noble son.

But the goddesses on the well-inhabited island sent Iris away to fetch Eileithyia, promising her a great necklace strung with golden threads, over thirteen feet long. They ordered her to call Eileithyia away from white-armed Hera so that Hera might not be able to dissuade the goddess of childbirth from going. When Iris, swift-footed as the wind, heard their instructions, she ran on her way and quickly traversed all the distance between. And when she came to sheer Olympus, home of the gods, immediately she called Eileithyia out of the house to the door and addressed her with winged words, telling her everything just as the goddesses who have their homes on Olympus had directed.

EILEITHYIA ASSISTS LETO

Thus she moved Eileithyia to the depths of the heart in her breast, and like timid doves they proceeded on their journey. As soon as Eileithyia, goddess of the pangs of childbirth, came to Delos, the pains of labor took hold of Leto, and she was anxious to give birth. And she threw her arms about the palm tree and sank on her knees in the soft meadow, and the earth beneath her smiled. The baby sprang forth to the light, and all the goddesses gave a cry. There, O mighty Phoebus, the goddesses washed you with lovely water, holily and purely, and wrapped you in white swaddling clothes, splendid and new, fastened round about with a golden cord. And his mother did not nurse Apollo of the gold sword, but Themis from her immortal hands gave him nectar and delicious ambrosia. And Leto rejoiced because she had borne a strong son who carries a bow.

But after you had tasted the divine food, O Phoebus, then no longer could golden cords hold you in your restlessness or bonds keep you confined, but they all were undone. And straightway Phoebus Apollo exclaimed to the immortal goddesses: "Let the lyre and curved bow be dear to my heart, and I shall prophesy to human beings the unerring will of Zeus." With these words Phoebus, the far-shooter with unshorn hair, strode on the ground that stretches far and wide; all the goddesses were amazed, and the whole of Delos blossomed, laden with gold like the top of a mountain with woodland flowers, as she beheld the son of Zeus and Leto, in her joy that the god had chosen her among all islands and mainland sites to be his home, and loved her most of all in his heart.

Apollo Belvedere. Roman marble copy, possibly of the second century A.D., of a fourth century B.C. Greek bronze; height 94½ in. Apollo strides ahead just as the *Homeric Hymn to Delian Apollo* describes. His left hand would have held his bow: the tree trunk was added by the copyist to support the weight of the marble on the right ankle and foot. This has been the most famous statue of Apollo since its discovery in Rome in or before 1509, and its stance has been copied in innumerable works of art. It takes its name from the courtyard in the Vatican Palace where it stands in its own niche. (*Vatican Museum, Cortile del Belvedere.*)



The conclusion of this first part of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* tells about the great festival to Apollo at Delos, the amazing chorus of maidens, the Deliades, who can sing in all dialects, and about the poet himself, the blind bard from the island of Chios (140–178):

 And you yourself, O lord Apollo, far-shooter of the silver bow, come at times to the steep Cynthian hill of Delos, and on other occasions you wander among other islands and other peoples; indeed many are your temples and wooded groves, and every vantage point, highest peak of lofty mountains and river flowing to the sea, is dear to you. But, O Phoebus, your heart is delighted most of all with Delos, where the long-robed Ionians gather with their children and their revered wives. In commemoration of you they will take pleasure in boxing and dancing and song when they celebrate your festival. And anyone who might encounter the Ionians while they are thus assembled together would say that they were immortal and ageless, for he would perceive grace in them all and be delighted in his heart as he beheld the men and the beautifully robed women, the swift ships, and the abundant possessions.

In addition to this, there would be the maidens who serve the far-shooting god, the Deliades, a great and wondrous sight, whose renown will never perish. They sing their hymn to Apollo first of all and then to Leto and Artemis, who delights in her arrows, and they remember the men and women of old and enchant the assembled throng with their songs. They know how to imitate the sounds and sing in the dialects of all human beings. So well does their beautiful song match the speech of each person that one would say he himself were singing.

But come now Apollo with Artemis, and be propitious. Farewell, all you Delian maidens. Remember me hereafter when someone of earthborn mortals, a stranger who has suffered, comes here and asks: “Maidens, what man do you think is the sweetest of the singers who frequent this place and in whom do you delight most of all?” Then all of you answer that I am the one: “A blind man who lives in rocky Chios; all his songs are the best forevermore.”³

I will bring your renown wherever I roam over the earth to the well-inhabited cities of humans; and they will believe since it is true. Yet I shall never cease to hymn the praises of Apollo, god of the silver bow, whom Leto of the beautiful hair bore.

APOLLO AND DELPHI

Some believe that this first part of the lengthy *Hymn to Apollo* was originally a separate composition, a hymn to Delian Apollo. The second part of the hymn, which is translated in the Additional Reading at the end of this chapter, would have been recited as a song to Pythian Apollo, the god of Delphi.⁴ Filled with a wealth of mythological information, it tells how Apollo descended from Mt. Olympus and made his way through northern and central Greece, finally discovering the proper spot for the foundation of his oracle among humankind at Crisa under snow-capped Parnassus. Apollo laid out his temple and then slew

a she-dragon by the fair-flowing stream nearby. The name of the site was henceforth called Pytho (and Apollo, the Pythian) because the rays of the sun made the monster rot. (The Greek verb *pytho* means "I rot.")⁵

A cogent historical reconstruction of the conflicting evidence⁶ suggests that originally the site was occupied by an oracle of the great mother-goddess of the Minoan-Mycenaean period, sometimes known as Ge-Themis. The slaying of the dragon (the traditional manifestation of a deity of earth), therefore, represents the subsequent conquest by Hellenic or Hellenized Apollo. For murdering the dragon, Zeus sent Apollo into exile in Thessaly for nine years (his punishment presumably mirrors the religious dictates of ancient society).⁷

The omphalos, an archaic stone shaped like an egg, which was kept in the temple during the classical period, seems to confirm an early habitation of the site.⁸ Legend has it that this omphalos (the word means "navel") signified that Delphi actually occupied the physical center of the earth (certainly it was in many ways the spiritual center of the ancient world). Zeus was said to have released two eagles who flew from opposite ends of the earth and met exactly at the site of Apollo's sanctuary—a spot marked out for all to see by the stone omphalos with two birds perched on either side.

The hymn to Pythian Apollo concludes with a curious and interesting story. After he had established his sanctuary at Crisa, Apollo was concerned about recruiting attendants to his service. He noticed a ship passing, manned by Cretans from Cnossus, on its way to sandy Pylos. Phoebus Apollo transformed himself into a dolphin and immediately sprang aboard. At first the men tried to throw the monster into the sea, but such was the havoc it created that they were awed to fearful submission. Speeded on by a divine wind, the ship would not obey the efforts of the crew to bring it to land. Finally, after a lengthy course, Apollo led them to Crisa, where he leaped ashore and revealed himself as a god amid a blaze of fiery brightness and splendor. He addressed the Cretan men, ordering them to perform sacrifices and pray to him as Apollo Delphinus. Then he led them to his sanctuary, accompanying them on the lyre as they chanted a paean in his honor. The hymn ends with the god's prediction of the prestige and wealth that is to come to his sanctuary as he instructs the Cretan band, who are placed in charge.

The story links the early cult of Apollo with Crete, explains the epithet Delphinus in terms of the Greek word for dolphin, and provides an etymology for Delphi as the name of the sanctuary. As god of sailors and of colonization (his oracle played a primary role as the religious impetus for the sending out of colonies), Apollo was worshiped under the title Delphinus. The hymn as a whole confirms the universality of the worship of Apollo and the importance of his outstanding cult centers, certainly at Delos but above all at Delphi.

The sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi is representative of the nature and character of other Panhellenic sites elsewhere.⁹ The sacred area was built on the lower slopes of Mt. Parnassus, about two thousand feet above the Corinthian Gulf. It

is an awe-inspiring spot to this day. For anyone walking along the Sacred Way up to the great temple of the god, it is not difficult to sense the feelings of reverence and exaltation that filled the heart and the soul of the ancient believer. The excavations have laid bare the foundations of the many and varied types of monuments along the winding path that were set up by individuals and city-states in honor and gratitude. Small temples (called treasuries) were a particularly imposing type of dedication, erected to house expensive and precious offerings. Among the major buildings of the sanctuary were a stadium, a theater, and of course the great temple of Apollo himself.

The Pythian Games, which were celebrated every four years, included (after 582 B.C.) both physical and intellectual competitions. Footraces, chariot races, and musical, literary, and dramatic presentations were among the events that combined to make the festival second only to that of Zeus at Olympia. The sanctuary and the celebrations reflect much that is characteristic of Greek life and thought. The numerous triumphant dedications of victory in war mirror the narrow particularism and vehement rivalry among individual city-states, while the fact of the festivals themselves, to which *all* Greeks might come to honor gods common to their race, reveals the strivings toward a wider and more humane vision. Certainly the sense of competition in both athletics and the arts was vital to the Greek spirit. The importance of both the physical and the aesthetic also suggests a fundamental duality made one and whole in the prowess and intellectuality of the god Apollo himself. The *Odes* of Pindar, written to celebrate the glorious victors in the athletic competitions, have proven to be among the most sublime lyrical outpourings of the human spirit. Physical excellence intensified a sense of physical beauty that inspired Greek artists to capture in sculpture and in painting the realism and idealism of the human form. The crystallization of the Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian orders of architecture in the construction of sublime architectural forms was also inspired by religious as well as civic devotion. The spiritual and human impetus to great feats of body and mind is among the most wondrous achievements of the Greek religious experience.

THE ORACLE AND THE PYTHIA AT DELPHI

The Panhellenic sanctuary of Delphi was above all an oracle.¹⁰ People from all over the Greek world (and even beyond) came to Apollo with questions of every sort, both personal and political. Herodotus' story of Solon and Croesus, translated in Chapter 6, bears testimony to the prestige of the god, already well established in the sixth century, and provides primary evidence for the nature and form of his responses as well.

The exact oracular procedures followed cannot be determined precisely because our sources are inadequate. The Pythia (prophetess of Apollo) uttered the responses of the god. Her seat of prophecy was the tripod, a bowl supported by three metal legs. A tripod was a utensil of everyday life; a fire could be lit be-

neath or inside the bowl, and it could be used for many obvious practical purposes. The tripod at Delphi was both a symbol and a source of divine prophetic power. Ancient pottery depicts Apollo himself seated on the bowl; his Pythian priestess who does likewise becomes his mouthpiece. In a frenzy of inspiration she utters her incoherent ravings. A priest or prophet nearby will transcribe them into intelligible prose or verse (usually dactylic hexameters) to be communicated to the inquirer.

The Pythia herself underwent certain initial ceremonies to ensure purification and inspiration, among them a ritual cleansing with the sacred water of the famous Castalian spring. Some of our sources maintain that the Pythia's inspiration came from the vaporous outpourings from a chasm or cave and depict the priestess seated on the tripod above some such cleft or opening.

Unfortunately, the west end of Apollo's temple (where she uttered her responses) is so badly preserved in the excavations that it cannot be reconstructed with certainty; therefore we cannot be sure where the Pythia may have been placed.

The inquirer who came to the temple with his question for the god had to go through certain prescribed ceremonies that were in the nature of a fee.¹¹ First he had to offer an expensive sacred cake on the altar outside the temple; and once he had entered, he was required to sacrifice a sheep or goat, a portion of which went to the Delphians. After these preliminaries, he could enter the holy of holies, the innermost shrine of the temple, where he took his seat. The chief priest or prophet addressed the questions to the Pythia (who may have been in an area separated from the inquirer) and interpreted her answers.¹²

In early times, according to tradition, the Pythia was a young virgin. On one occasion an inquirer fell in love with one and seduced her. From then on, only mature women (probably over fifty years old) could become priestesses; whatever the nature of their previous lives (they could have been married), purity was required once they had been appointed to serve the god for life. At times, one from among at least three women could be called upon to prophesy, and there were probably more in reserve.¹³

Inevitably, one must wonder about the religious sincerity of the priests and priestesses at Delphi. Was it all a fraud? There is no good reason to think so. Many people have believed in the possibility of god communicating with mortals in marvelous ways. And belief in a medium, a person with special mantic gifts, is by no means unique to the Greeks. The Pythia presumably was chosen because of her special nature and religious character—she was susceptible to supernatural callings. It is true that the oracle was often on the side of political expediency and that the ambiguity of the responses was notorious. Apollo's obscure epithet, *Loxias*, was thought to bear testimony to the difficult and devious nature of his replies. But only a glance at the life and career of Socrates shows the sincere and inner religious meaning that an intellectually devout person is able to wrest from the material trappings of established institutions in any so-

ciety. According to Plato's *Apology*, Socrates' friend Chaerephon went to Delphi to ask who was the wisest of men. The answer was "Socrates"; and when the philosopher learned this, he could not rest until he had determined the meaning of the response and proved the god right. If we are to take the *Apology* at all literally and historically (and why not?), this message from Apollo provided a turning point for Socrates in his missionary-like zeal to make men and women think of eternal moral and ethical values in terms of their immortal souls.

THE CUMAEAN SIBYL

The Pythia is the specific title given to the priestess of Apollo at Delphi. A more generic term for prophetess was *Sibyl*, and many Sibyls were found at various places in various periods in the ancient world. Originally the title was probably the proper name (Sibylla) of an early prophetess. At any rate, the Sibyls at Cumae were among the most famous mediums of antiquity.¹⁴ The description of the Cumaean Sibyl as she prophesies to Aeneas helps us understand the nature of the communication of a prophetess with her god, even though we must allow for poetic imagination.¹⁵ The innermost shrine of the temple is a cavern from which the responses issue (Vergil, *Aeneid* 6. 42–51):

 The vast end of the temple, built in Euboean stone, is cut out into a cavern; here are a hundred perforations in the rock, a hundred mouths from which the many utterances rush, the answers of the Sibyl. They had come to the threshold, when the virgin cried: "Now is the time to demand the oracles, the god, behold, the god!" She spoke these words in front of the doors and her countenance and color changed; her hair shook free, her bosom heaved, and her heart swelled in wild fury; she seemed of greater stature, and her cries were not mortal as she was inspired by the breath of the god drawing nearer.

Later follows the metaphor of a wild horse trying to throw its rider (77–82, 98–101):

 Not yet willing to endure Apollo, the prophetess raged within the cavern in her frenzy, trying to shake the mighty god from her breast; all the more he wore out her ravings, mastering her wild heart and fashioning her to his will by constraint. Now the hundred mouths of the cavern opened wide of their own accord and bore the responses of the prophetess to the breezes. . . . The Cumaean Sibyl chants her terrifying riddles and, from the innermost shrine of the cavern, truth resounded, enveloped in obscurity, as Apollo applied the reins to her raving and twisted the goad in her breast.

Earlier in the *Aeneid* (3. 445) the seer Helenus warned Aeneas that the Sibyl wrote her prophecies on leaves that were carefully arranged. But when the doors of the cavern were opened, these leaves were scattered by the wind so that those who had come for advice left without help and hated the dwelling of the Sibyl. Thus Aeneas asks (6. 74–76) that the Sibyl utter the prophecies herself and not

entrust them to the leaves. All this may be an oblique reference to some characteristic of the Sibylline books (collections of prophecies of the Sibyls often consulted by the Romans) and the way in which they were interpreted.¹⁶

Ovid has the Sibyl tell Aeneas the story of her fate (*Metamorphoses* 14. 132–153):

 Eternal life without end would have been given me if I had yielded my virginity to Phoebus Apollo who loved me. He hoped that I would and desired to bribe me with gifts, so he said: “Virgin maid of Cumae, choose what you desire; you will attain whatever it is.” I picked up a heap of sand, showed it to him and asked for the vain wish that I might have as many birthdays as the individual grains in my hand. I forgot to ask for continuous youth along with the years. He would have given me both, long life and eternal youth, if I had succumbed to his love. But I despised Phoebus’ gift and I remain unmarried. And now the happier time of youth is gone, and sick old age has come with its feeble steps; and I must endure it for a long time.

For now, as you see, I have lived through seven generations; there remain for me to witness three hundred harvests, three hundred vintages in order to equal in years the number of grains of sand.¹⁷ The time will be when length of days will have reduced me from my former stature and make me small, and my limbs consumed by age will be diminished to the tiniest weight. And I shall not seem like one who was pleasing to a god and loved by him. Even Phoebus himself perhaps either will not recognize me or will deny that he once desired me; I shall be changed to such an extent that I shall be visible to no one, but I shall be recognized by my voice; the Fates will leave me my voice.

In another version, the Sibyl became a tiny thing suspended in a bottle. Boys asked: “Sibyl, what do you want?” Her answer was: “I want to die.”¹⁸

APOLLO AND CASSANDRA

Priam’s daughter Cassandra, a pathetic figure in the Trojan saga, was another of Apollo’s loves and another prophetess. When she agreed to give herself to Apollo, as a reward the god bestowed upon her the power of prophecy. But Cassandra then changed her mind and rejected his advances. Apollo asked for one kiss and spat into her mouth. Although he did not revoke his gift, Cassandra was thereafter doomed to prophesy in vain, for no one would believe her.

APOLLO AND MARPESSA

Apollo also attempted to win Marpessa, daughter of Evenus, a son of Ares. She was also wooed by Idas, one of the Argonauts, who carried her off in his chariot against the will of her father. Evenus unsuccessfully pursued the pair, then in his anger and heartbreak committed suicide. Subsequently Apollo, who had also been a suitor for Marpessa’s hand, stole her away from Idas in similar fashion. Ultimately the two rivals met face to face in conflict over the girl. At this point Zeus intervened and ordered Marpessa to choose between her lovers. She

chose Idas because he was a mortal, for she was afraid that the undying and eternally handsome god Apollo would abandon her when she grew old.

APOLLO AND CYRENE

Nearly all of Apollo's numerous affairs are tragic; he is perhaps the most touchingly human and the most terrifyingly sublime of all the Greek gods. A notable exception is his success with Cyrene, an athletic nymph, with whom he fell in love as he watched her wrestling with a lion. He whisked her away to Libya in his golden chariot, to the very site of the city that would be given her name, and she bore him a son, Aristaeus.¹⁹

APOLLO AND DAPHNE

The story of Apollo's love for Daphne explains why the laurel (the Greek word *daphne* means "laurel") was sacred to him. Ovid's version is the best known (*Metamorphoses* 1. 452–567):

 Daphne, daughter of Peneus, was the first object of Apollo's love. It was not blind fate that brought this about, but Cupid's cruel anger. Apollo, flushed with pride at his victory over Python, had seen Cupid drawing his bow and taunted him: "What business of yours are brave men's arms, young fellow? The bow suits *my* shoulder; I can take unerring aim at wild animals or at my enemies. I it was who laid low proud Python, though he stretched over wide acres of ground, with uncounted arrows. You should be content with kindling the fires of love in some mortal with your torch; do not try to share my glory!"

To him Cupid replied: "Although your arrows pierce every target, Apollo, mine will pierce you. Just as all animals yield to you, so your glory is inferior to mine." And as he spoke he quickly flew to the peak of shady Parnassus and from his quiver drew two arrows. Different were their functions, for the one, whose point was dull and leaden, repelled love; the other—golden, bright, and sharp—aroused it. Cupid shot the leaden arrow at Peneus' daughter, while he pierced Apollo's inmost heart with the golden one.

Straightway Apollo loved, and Daphne ran even from the name of "lover." Companion of Diana, her joy was in the depths of the forests and the spoils of the chase; a headband kept her flowing hair in place. Many suitors courted her, while she cared not for love or marriage; a virgin she roamed the pathless woods. Her father often said, "My daughter, you owe me a son-in-law and grandchildren"; she, hating the marriage torch as if it were a disgrace, blushed and embraced her father saying, "Allow me, dearest father, always to be a virgin. Jupiter granted this to Diana." Peneus granted her prayer; but Daphne's beauty allowed her not to be as she desired and her loveliness ran counter to her wish.

Apollo loved her; he saw her and desired to marry her. He hoped to achieve his desire, misled by his own oracle. Even as the stubble burns after the harvest, or a hedge catches fire from a careless traveler's embers, so the god burned with

all-consuming fire and fueled his love with fruitless hope. He sees her hair lying unadorned upon her neck and says, "What if it were adorned?" He sees her flashing eyes like stars; he sees her lips—and merely to see is not enough. He praises her fingers, hands, arms, and shoulders half-bared; those parts which are covered he thinks more beautiful.

Swifter than the wind, Daphne runs from him and stays not to hear him call her back: "Stay, nymph! Stay, daughter of Peneus, I pray! I am not an enemy who pursues you. Stay, nymph! A lamb runs like this from the wolf, a hind from the lion, doves with fluttering wings from the eagle. Each kind runs from its enemy; love makes me pursue! Oh, take care you do not fall; let not the thorns scratch those legs that never should be marred and I be the cause of your hurt! Rough is the place where you run; run more slowly, I beg, and I will pursue more slowly. Yet consider who loves you; I am not a mountain peasant; I am not an uncouth shepherd who watches here his flocks and herds. Unheeding you know not whom you try to escape, and therefore do you run. I am lord of Delphi, of Claros, Tenedos, and royal Patara; Jupiter is my father! I show the future, the past, the present; through me came the harmony of lyre and song! Unerring are my arrows, yet one arrow is yet more unerring and has wounded my heart, before untouched. The healing art is mine; throughout the world am I called the Bringer of Help; the power of herbs is mine to command. Ah me! for no herb can remedy love; the art which heals all cannot heal its master!"

Even as he spoke, Daphne fled from him and ran on in fear; then too she seemed lovely—the wind laid bare her body, and her clothes fluttered as she ran and her hair streamed out behind. In flight she was yet more beautiful. Yet the young god could not bear to have his words of love go for nothing; driven on by love he followed at full speed. Even as a Gallic hound sees a hare in an empty field and pursues its prey as it runs for safety—the one seems just to be catching the quarry and expects each moment to have gripped it; with muzzle at full stretch it is hot on the other's tracks; the other hardly knows if it has been caught and avoids the snapping jaws—so the god chased the virgin: hope gave him speed; her speed came from fear. Yet the pursuer gains, helped by the wings of love; he gives her no respite; he presses hard upon her and his breath ruffles the hair upon her neck.

Now Daphne's strength was gone, drained by the effort of her flight, and pale she saw Peneus' waters. "Help me, Father," she cried, "if a river has power; change me and destroy my beauty which has proved too attractive!" Hardly had she finished her prayer when her limbs grew heavy and sluggish; thin bark enveloped her soft breasts; her hair grew into leaves, her arms into branches. Her feet, which until now had run so swiftly, held fast with clinging roots. Her face was the tree's top; only her beauty remains.

Even in this form Apollo loves her; placing his hand on the trunk he felt the heart beating beneath the new-formed bark. Embracing the branches, as if they were human limbs, he kisses the wood; yet the wood shrinks from his kisses. "Since you cannot be my wife," said he, "you shall be my tree. Always you shall wreath my hair, my lyre, my quiver. You shall accompany the Roman generals when the joyous triumph hymn is sung and the long procession climbs the Capitol . . . and as my young locks have never been shorn, so may you forever



Apollo and Daphne, attributed to Antonio del Pollaiuolo (1433–1498). Oil on panel; $11 \frac{5}{8} \times 7 \frac{7}{8}$ in. Apollo, in the guise of a young Florentine nobleman, has just caught up with Daphne. Her left leg is rooted in the ground and her arms have already become leafy branches, while she looks down at the god with a mysterious smile. The painter has caught the interaction of movement and fixity that permeates Ovid's narrative, while the tragedy is set in a jewel-like Tuscan landscape. (National Gallery, London. Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees.)

be honored with green leaves!" Apollo's speech was done: the new-made laurel nodded her assent and like a head bowed her topmost branches.

The interpretation of this most artistically inspiring tale of passion is discussed in Chapter 1 (pp. 19–20). Is it the most touching and poignant of love stories or the glorification of attempted rape?



Apollo and Daphne, by Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680). Marble, 1624; height 96 in. Like Pollaiuolo, Bernini has chosen the moment when swift movement is stopped. The sculptor brilliantly incorporates the psychological tensions of Ovid's narrative, frozen in the moment of metamorphosis. The contrast between Apollo, adapted from the famous *Apollo Belvedere*, and the agitated emotions of Daphne serves to heighten the tragedy. On the base (not shown) are inscribed Ovid's description of the metamorphosis (*Metamorphoses* 1. 519–521) and two Latin lines by the future Pope Urban VIII: "Every lover who pursues the joys of fleeing beauty fills his hands with leaves or plucks bitter berries." (*Galleria Borghese, Rome, Italy. Courtesy of Alinari/Art Resource, New York.*)

APOLLO AND HYACINTHUS

Apollo was also susceptible to the love of young men.²⁰ His devotion to Hyacinthus, a handsome Spartan youth from Amyclae, is well known from Ovid's account; the great god neglected his other duties in order to be in the company of his beloved (*Metamorphoses* 10. 174–219):

 The Titan sun was almost midway between the night that had passed and the one to come—equidistant from both—when Apollo and the boy took off their garments and glistening with olive oil began to compete with the broad discus. Phoebus made the first throw. He poised the discus and hurled it so far into the air that the clouds were scattered by its course and only after a long time, because of its own sheer weight, did it fall back again to solid earth. His throw exhibited great skill combined with great strength. Straightway Hyacinthus under the impulse of his enthusiasm, heedless of all but the game, made a dash to pick up the discus. But it bounced back, O Hyacinthus, as it hit the hard earth and struck you full in the face.²¹ The god turned as pale as the boy himself. He took up the limp body in his attempt to revive him, frantically staying the flow of blood from the sad wound and applying herbs to sustain the life that was ebbing away. His arts were to no avail; the wound was incurable. Just as when someone in a garden breaks off violets or brittle poppies or lilies that cling to their tawny stems, and suddenly these flowers droop and fade and cannot support the tops of their heavy heads which look down to the ground, so dropped the head of the dying boy and his neck, once strength was gone, gave way to the burden of its weight and sank on his shoulder.

Phoebus cried: “You slip away, cheated of your youthful prime. Your wound that I look upon accuses me. You are my grief and my guilt—my own hand is branded with your death! I am the one who is responsible. But what fault was mine? Can it be called a fault to have played a game with you, to have loved you? O that I could give you my life as you deserve or die along with you. But we are bound by fate's decree. Yet you will always be with me, your name will cling to my lips, forever remembering. You will be my theme as I pluck my lyre and sing my songs and you, a new flower, will bear markings in imitation of my grief; and there will come a time when the bravest of heroes will be linked to this same flower and his name will be read on its petals.”

While Apollo spoke these words from his unerring lips, lo and behold, the blood that had poured upon the ground and stained the grass ceased to be blood and a flower arose, of a purple more brilliant than Tyrian dye; it took the shape of a lily and differed only in color, for lilies are silvery white. Apollo, although responsible for so honoring Hyacinthus, was not yet satisfied. The god himself inscribed his laments upon the petals and the flower bears the markings of the mournful letters *AI AI*.²² Sparta was proud to claim Hyacinthus as her son and his glory endures to this day; every year a festival, the Hyacinthia, is celebrated in his honor with ceremonies ancient in their traditions.

APOLLO, CORONIS, AND ASCLEPIUS

Several stories emphasize Apollo's role as a god of medicine, which is taken over in large part by his son Asclepius. And this brings us to Apollo's affair with Coronis, the last we shall tell. Coronis (in Ovid's version) was a lovely maiden from Larissa in Thessaly whom Apollo loved; in fact she was pregnant with his child. Unfortunately the raven, Apollo's bird, saw Coronis lying with a young Thessalian and told all to the god (*Metamorphoses* 2. 600–634):

 When Apollo heard this charge against Coronis, the laurel wreath slipped from his head, his expression changed, and the color drained from his cheeks. As his heart burned with swollen rage, he took up his accustomed weapons and bent his bow to string it; with his unerring arrow he pierced the breast which he had so often embraced. She gave a groan as she was struck; and when she drew the shaft from her body, red blood welled up over her white limbs. She spoke: "You could have exacted this punishment and I have paid with my life, after I had borne your child; as it is, two of us die in one." With these words her life drained away with her blood; the chill of death crept over her lifeless corpse.

Too late, alas, the lover repented of his cruel punishment. He hated himself because he had listened to the charge against her and had been so inflamed. He hated his bow and his arrows and his hands that had so rashly shot them. He fondled her limp body and strove to thwart the Fates; but his efforts came too late, and he applied his arts of healing to no avail. When he saw that his attempts were in vain and the pyre was being built and saw her limbs about to be burned in the last flames, then truly (for it is forbidden that the cheeks of the gods be touched by tears) Apollo uttered groans that issued from the very depths of his heart, just as when a young cow sees the mallet poised above the right ear of her suckling calf to shatter the hollow temples with a crashing blow. He poured perfumes upon her unfeeling breast, clasped her in his embrace, and performed the proper rites so just and yet unjust. Phoebus could not bear that his own seed be reduced to the same ashes, but he snatched his son out of the flames from the womb of his mother and brought him to the cave of the centaur Chiron. The raven, who hoped for a reward for the truth of his utterances, Apollo forbade evermore to be counted among white birds. Meanwhile, the centaur was happy to have the divine infant as a foster child and delighted in such an honorable task.

Thus, like many another mythological figure, Asclepius was trained by the wise and gentle Chiron, and he learned his lessons well, particularly in the field of medicine. When he grew up, he refined this science and raised it by transforming it into a high and noble art (just as the Greeks themselves did in actual fact, particularly in the work of the great fifth-century physician, Hippocrates, with his medical school at Cos). Asclepius married and had several children, among them doctors such as Machaon (in the *Iliad*) and more shadowy figures such as Hygeia or Hygieia (Health).

The *Homeric Hymn to Asclepius* (16) is a short and direct appeal to the mythical physician:

 About the healer of sicknesses, Asclepius, son of Apollo, I begin to sing. In the Dotian plain of Argos, goddess-like Coronis, daughter of King Phlegyas, bore him, a great joy to mortals, a soother of evil pains.

So hail to you, lord; I pray to you with my song.

So skilled a physician was Asclepius (he was worshiped as both a hero and a god) that when Hippolytus died, Artemis appealed to him to restore her devoted follower to life. Asclepius agreed and succeeded in his attempt; but he thus incurred the wrath of Zeus, who hurled him into the lower world with a thunderbolt for such a disruption of nature.

APOLLO'S MUSICAL CONTEST WITH MARSYAS

Apollo's skill as a musician has already been attested. Two additional stories concentrate more exclusively upon the divine excellence of his art and the folly of inferiors who challenged it. The first concerns Marsyas, the satyr (as we have previously mentioned) who picked up the flute after it had been invented and then discarded by Athena. Although the goddess gave Marsyas a thrashing for taking up her instrument, he was not deterred by this and became so proficient



THE *ALCESTIS* OF EURIPIDES

Apollo was enraged by the death of his son Asclepius; he did not, of course, turn against Zeus, but he killed the Cyclopes who had forged the lethal thunderbolt. Because of his crime, he was sentenced (following once again the pattern of the human social order and its codes concerning blood-guilt) to live in exile for a year under the rule of Admetus, the beneficent king of Pherae in Thessaly. Apollo felt kindly toward his master, and when he found out that Admetus had only a short time to live, he went to the Moirai and induced them, with the help of wine, to allow the king a longer life. But they imposed the condition that someone must die in his place. Admetus, however, could find no one willing to give up his or her life on his behalf (not even his aged parents) except his devoted wife, Alcestis; and he accepted her sacrifice. She is, however, rescued from the tomb in the nick of time by the good services of Hercules, who happens to be a visitor in the home of Admetus and wrestles with Death himself (*Thanatos*) for the life of Alcestis.

In his fascinating and puzzling play *Alcestis* (it is difficult to find general agreement on the interpretation of this tragicomedy), Euripides presents a touching and ironic portrait of the devoted wife and an ambiguous depiction of her distraught husband.



that he dared to challenge Apollo himself to a contest. The condition imposed by the god was that the victor could do what he liked with the vanquished. Of course Apollo won, and he decided to flay Marsyas alive. Ovid describes the anguish of the satyr (*Metamorphoses* 6. 385–400):

 Marsyas cried out: “Why are you stripping me of my very self? Oh no, I am sorry; the flute is not worth this torture!” As he screamed, his skin was ripped off all his body and he was nothing but a gaping wound. Blood ran everywhere, his nerves were laid bare and exposed, and the pulse of his veins throbbed without any covering. One could make out clearly his pulsating entrails and the vital organs in his chest that lay revealed. The spirits of the countryside and the fauns who haunt the woods wept for him; and so did his brothers, the satyrs and nymphs and all who tended woolly sheep and horned cattle on those mountains—and Olympus, dear to him now, wept as well. The fertile earth grew wet as she received and drank up the tears that fell and became soaked to the veins in her depths. She formed of them a stream which she sent up into the open air. From this source a river, the clearest in all Phrygia, rushes down between its sloping banks into the sea. And it bears the name of Marsyas.

APOLLO’S MUSICAL CONTEST WITH PAN

Apollo was involved in another musical contest, this time with the god Pan, and King Midas of Phrygia acted as one of the judges (*Ovid Metamorphoses* 11. 146–193):

 Midas, in his loathing for riches,²³ found a retreat in the woods and the country and worshiped Pan, the god who always inhabits mountain caves. But his intelligence still remained limited, and his own foolish stupidity was going to harm him once again as it had before. There is a mountain, Tmolus, that rises high in its steep ascent with a lofty view to the sea; on one side it slopes down to Sardis, on another to the little town of Hypaepa. Here, while he was singing his songs to his gentle nymphs and playing a dainty tune on his pipes made of reeds and wax, Pan dared to belittle the music of Apollo compared to his own.

And so he engaged in an unequal contest, with Tmolus as judge. This elderly judge took his seat on his own mountain and freed his ears of trees; only the oak remained to wreath his dark hair, and acorns hung down around his hollow temples. He turned his gaze upon the god of flocks and said: “Now the judge is ready.” Pan began to blow on his rustic pipes; and Midas, who happened to be nearby as he played, was charmed by the tune. When Pan had finished, Tmolus, the sacred god of the mountain, turned around to face Phoebus, and his forests followed the swing of his gaze. The golden head of Apollo was crowned with laurel from Parnassus, and his robe, dyed in Tyrian purple, trailed along the ground. His lyre was inlaid with precious stones and Indian ivory; he held it in his left hand with the plectrum in his right. His very stance was the stance of an artist. Then he played the strings with knowing hand; Tmolus was captivated by their sweetness and ordered Pan to concede that his pipes were inferior to the lyre.

The judgment of the sacred mountain pleased everyone except Midas; he alone challenged the verdict and called it unjust. At this the god of Delos could not bear that such stupid ears retain their human shape. He made them longer, covered them with white shaggy hair, and made them flexible at their base so that they could be twitched. As for the rest of him, he remained human; in this one respect alone he was changed, condemned to be endowed with the ears of a lumbering ass.

Midas of course wanted to hide his vile shame, and he attempted to do so by covering his head with a purple turban. But his barber, who regularly trimmed his long hair, saw his secret. He wanted to tell about what he had seen, but he did not dare reveal Midas' disgrace. Yet it was impossible for him to keep quiet, and so he stole away and dug a hole in the ground. Into it, with the earth removed, he murmured in a low whisper that his master had ass's ears. Then he filled the hole up again, covering up the indictment he had uttered and silently stole away from the scene. But a thick cluster of trembling reeds began to grow on the spot; in a year's time, as soon as they were full grown, they betrayed the barber's secret. For, as they swayed in the gentle south wind, they echoed the words that he had buried and revealed the truth about his master's ears.

Thus if one listened carefully to the wind whistling in the reeds he could hear the murmur of a whisper: "King Midas has ass's ears."²⁴

THE NATURE OF APOLLO

The facets of Apollo's character are many and complex. His complex nature sums up the many contradictions in the tragic dilemma of human existence. He is gentle and vehement, compassionate and ruthless, guilty and guiltless, healer and destroyer. The extremes of his emotion are everywhere apparent. He acts swiftly and surely against Tityus, who dared to attempt the rape of Leto, and for this crime is punished (as we see later) in the realm of Hades. As he shot down Tityus with his arrows, he acted the same way against Niobe, this time in conjunction with his sister, Artemis (see p. 203). Can one ever forget Homer's terrifying picture of the god as he lays low the Greek forces at Troy with a plague in response to the appeal of his priest Chryses (*Iliad* 1. 43–52)?



Phoebus Apollo . . . came down from the peaks of Olympus, angered in his heart, wearing on his shoulders his bow and closed quiver. The arrows clashed on his shoulders as he moved in his rage, and he descended just like night. Then he sat down apart from the ships and shot one of his arrows; terrible was the clang made by his silver bow. First he attacked the mules and the swift hounds, but then he let go his piercing shafts against the men themselves and struck them down. The funeral pyres with their corpses burned thick and fast.

Yet this same god is the epitome of Greek classical restraint, championing the proverbial Greek maxims: "Know thyself" and "Nothing too much." He

knows by experience the dangers of excess. From a sea of blood and guilt, Apollo brings enlightenment, atonement, and purification wherever he may be, but especially in his sanctuary at Delphi.

The origins of Apollo are obscure. He may have been one of the gods brought into Greece by the northern invaders of 2000 B.C.; if not, he was probably very soon absorbed by them in the period 2000–1500. Some scholars imagine Apollo as originally the prototype of the Good Shepherd, with his many protective powers and skills, especially those of music and medicine.²⁵ As we have seen in Chapter 3, he becomes a sun-god and usurps the power of Hyperion and of Helius.

For many, Apollo appears to be the most characteristically Greek god in the whole pantheon—a gloriously conceived anthropomorphic figure, perhaps epitomized best of all in the splendid depiction of the west pediment of the great temple of Zeus at Olympia (illustrated on p. 246). Here Apollo stood with calm intelligent strength, his head turned to one side, his arm upraised against the raging turmoil of the battle between the Centaurs and Lapiths by which he is surrounded.

By stressing his disciplined control and intellectuality and ignoring his tumultuous extremes of passion, Apollo may be presented as the direct antithesis of the god Dionysus. In the persons of these two deities, the rational (Apollonian) and irrational (Dionysiac) forces in human psychology, philosophy, and religion are dramatically pitted against one another. Some scholars maintain that Apollo represents the true and essential nature of the Greek spirit, as reflected in the poetry of Homer, in contrast to the later, foreign intrusion of the mysticism of Dionysus. Whatever kernel of truth this view may hold, it must be realized that by the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. Dionysus had become an integral part of Greek civilization. By the classical period, he was as characteristically Greek as Apollo, and *both* deities actually reflect a basic duality inherent in the Greek conception of things. We have already detected in Chapter 3 this same dichotomy in the union of the mystical and mathematical that was mirrored in the amalgamation of two cultures (the Nordic and the Mediterranean) in the Minoan and Mycenaean periods.

Just as Apollo may be made a foil for the mystical Dionysus, so he may be used as a meaningful contrast to the figure of the spiritual Christ. Each in his person and his life represents, physically and spiritually, different concepts of meaning and purpose both in this world and in the next. Apollo and Christ do indeed afford a startling and revealing antithesis.

Here now is the brief *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (21):

 Phoebus, about you even the swan sings clearly as it wings its way and alights on the bank along the swirling river, Peneus; and about you the sweet-voiced minstrel with his lovely sounding lyre always sings both first and last.

So hail to you, lord; I propitiate you with my song.



Apollo. Marble detail from the west pediment of the temple of Zeus at Olympia, ca. 460 B.C.; height of complete fixture approx. 120 in. This is the head of the central figure in the pediment (see pp. 113–114). Son of Zeus, he imposes peace on the drunken brawl of the Lapiths and Centaurs at the wedding of Pirithoüs (also the subject of the metopes on the south side of the Parthenon). The ancient traveler Pausanias thought that the figure was Pirithoüs, but no modern scholars accept his interpretation. (*Olympia Museum, Greece. Courtesy of Alinari/Art Resource, New York.*)

ADDITIONAL READING

THE HOMERIC HYMN TO APOLLO (3. 179–546: TO PYTHIAN APOLLO)

☞ O lord, you hold Lycia and charming Maeonia and Miletus, desirable city on the sea; but you yourself rule mightily over Delos, washed by the waves.

The renowned son of Leto, dressed in divine and fragrant garments, goes to rocky Pytho, as he plays upon his hollow lyre; at the touch of his golden pick, the lyre makes a lovely sound. From there, as swift as thought, he soars from earth to Olympus, to the house of Zeus and the company of the other gods. Im-

mediately the immortals are obsessed with the lyre and song. The Muses, all together, harmonize with their charming voices and celebrate the endless gifts enjoyed by the gods and the sufferings inflicted by these immortals that human beings must bear, as they live foolish and helpless lives, unable to find a defense against old age and a cure for death.

Also the Graces with beautiful hair, and the cheerful Hours, and Harmonia, Hebe, and Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, dance together, holding hands at the wrist; and with them sings a goddess who is not slight or homely but awesome to behold and wondrously beautiful, Artemis, who delights in her arrows, sister to Apollo. Among them too, Ares and the keen-eyed slayer of Argus join in the merriment, and Apollo continues to play his beautiful music on the lyre, as he steps high and stately. The radiance from his glittering feet and glistening robe envelop him in splendor. Both golden-haired Leto and wise Zeus watch their dear son playing his music among the immortal gods and rejoice in their mighty hearts.

Shall I sing about you as a suitor in your love affairs? How you went to woo the daughter of Azan along with godlike Ischys, the son of Elatus famous for his horses, or with Phorbas, the son of Triops, or with Ereuthus or with Leucippus for the wife [to be] of Leucippus, you on foot and he from his chariot; indeed he was not a rival inferior to Triops.²⁶

APOLLO SEEKS A SITE FOR HIS ORACLE

Or shall I sing about how at first you went over all the earth, seeking a location for your oracle for the human race, O far-shooting Apollo?²⁷ First you came down from Olympus to Pieria and went past sandy Lectus and Enienae and through the territory of the Perrhaebi. Soon you came to Iolcus and entered Cenaeum in Euboea, famous for its ships, and you stood on the Lelantine plain; but it did not please your heart to build a temple amidst forest groves. From there you crossed the Euripus, far-shooting Apollo, and made your way along the holy green mountains, and quickly you went on from here to Mycalessus and grassy Teumessus and reached the forest-covered home of Thebe; for no one of mortals as yet lived in holy Thebes, nor were there yet at that time paths or roads running through the wheat-bearing plain of Thebes; but it was overgrown with trees.

From there you went further, O far-shooting Apollo, and came to Onchestus, with its splendid grove of Poseidon. Here, while the newly broken colt, worn out with drawing the beautiful chariot, slows down to get its wind, the noble driver springs out of his seat to the ground and makes his own way. Without guidance, the horses for a time knock about the empty chariot; and, if they smash it in the forest grove, the horses are taken care of but the chariot is put at a tilt and left there. For in this way from the very first the holy rite was enacted. They pray to the god, lord of the shrine, who then keeps the chariot as his allotted portion.²⁸ From there you went further, far-shooting Apollo, and then you came upon the beautifully flowing river, Cephissus, which pours its sweet-running water from Lillaea; you crossed it, and from many-towered Ocalea you arrived at grassy Haliartus. Then you went to Telphusa; here was a propitious place that you found pleasing for making a forest grove and a temple. You stood very near her and spoke these words: "Telphusa, here I intend to build a very beautiful temple, an oracle for mortals. Here all those who live in the rich Peloponnesus, in Europe, and on the sea-girt

islands will bring perfect hecatombs and consult the oracle. To them I shall deliver my answers and ordain infallible counsel in my wealthy temple."

Thus Phoebus Apollo spoke and laid out the foundations, wide and very long overall. But Telphusa, upon seeing his actions, became deeply incensed and spoke: "Phoebus, lord and far-worker, I shall give you this warning to think about. Since you intend to build a very beautiful temple here, to be an oracle for mortals, who will always bring perfect hecatombs, I will speak out and you take my words to heart. The clatter of swift horses and the sounds of mules being watered at my holy spring will always annoy you; here any person will prefer to look at the well-made chariots and the noisy swift-footed horses rather than at your great temple and the many treasures inside. But if you were to listen to me (you are better and stronger than I am and your might is the greatest), build in Crisa, beneath the slopes of Mt. Parnassus, where beautiful chariots will not clatter and no noise will be made by swift-footed horses around your well-built altar. So there hordes of renowned mortals will bring gifts to you as Ie Paeon,²⁹ and you will rejoice greatly in your heart to receive the beautiful sacrifices of the people living roundabout." Thus Telphusa spoke and convinced the far-shooter, so that renown in her land should go to Telphusa herself and not to Apollo.

APOLLO BUILDS HIS TEMPLE AT THE SITE OF DELPHI

From there you went further, far-shooting Apollo, and you reached the town of the hubristic people, the Phlegyae, who have no concern for Zeus and live on earth in a beautiful glen near the Cephisean lake. You darted away from here quickly and came to mountain ridges and arrived at Crisa beneath snowy Mt. Parnassus. Its foothills turn towards the west, and its rocky cliffs hang from above over the hollow glade that stretches below. Here the lord Phoebus Apollo decreed that he would make his lovely temple and he said: "Here I intend to build a very beautiful temple, an oracle for mortals. Here all those who live in the rich Peloponnesus, in Europe, and on the sea-girt islands will bring perfect hecatombs and consult the oracle. To them I shall deliver my answers and ordain infallible counsel in my wealthy temple."

Thus Phoebus Apollo spoke and laid out the foundations, wide and very long overall. On these foundations Trophonius and Agamedes, the sons of Erginus, both dear to the immortal gods, placed a threshold of stone; and countless numbers of men built up with finished blocks of stone the temple, to sing about forever. There was a beautifully flowing spring nearby, where the lord, son of Zeus, killed with his mighty bow a she-dragon, a huge, bloated, and fierce monster who had done many evils to mortals on earth, to mortals themselves and to their thin-shanked flocks; for she was a bloodthirsty scourge.

HERA GIVES BIRTH TO THE MONSTER TYPHAON

Once this she-dragon received, from golden-throned Hera to bring up, Typhaon, another terrible and cruel scourge for mortals;³⁰ this was when Hera became angry with father Zeus and gave birth to the monster because the son of Cronus bore renowned Athena from his head. Lady Hera was quickly enraged and she spoke among the immortals: "Hear from me, all you gods and all you goddesses, how Zeus, the cloud-gatherer, first begins to dishonor me, when he has made

me his dear and trusting wife. Apart from me, just now, he has given birth to keen-eyed Athena, who is outstanding among all the blessed immortals. But my son, Hephaestus, whom I myself bore, with his withered feet, was a weakling among the immortals—a shame to me and a disgrace on Olympus. I grabbed him myself with my own hands and threw him out and he fell into the wide sea. But silver-footed Thetis, daughter of Nereus, accepted him and with her sisters took care of him. (How I wish that she had done some other favor for the blessed gods!) Villain, crafty deceiver, what other scheme will you devise now? How do you dare, all alone, to give birth to keen-eyed Athena? Would I not have borne a child by you? To be sure I was the one called your very own among the immortals who hold the wide heaven. Watch out now that I don't devise some evil for you in the future. Indeed I will contrive how a son of mine will be born, who will be outstanding among the immortals, without any shame to our sacred marriage vow, either yours or mine. I shall not go near your bed, but separated from you I shall associate with the immortal gods."

Thus she spoke and went apart from the gods, angered in her heart. Then straightway ox-eyed lady Hera prayed and struck the ground with the flat of her hand and uttered this invocation: "Earth and wide Heaven, hear me now, and you, Titan gods dwelling beneath the earth in vast Tartarus, from whom both mortals and gods are descended—all of you listen to me and give me, without Zeus as father, a child in no way inferior to him in might. But let him be as much stronger than Zeus as all-seeing Zeus is stronger than Cronus." Thus she called out and lashed the ground with her mighty hand. The life-giving Earth was moved; and, when Hera saw this, she rejoiced in her heart. For she believed that her prayer would be answered.

From this time then, for a whole year, she never approached the bed of wise Zeus, nor did she ever, as before, sit on her intricate throne and by his side devise shrewd plans. But ox-eyed lady Hera remained in her temples, filled with her worshipers, and took delight in their offerings. Yet when the months and days were completed and the seasons had passed as the full year came round, she gave birth to a terrible scourge for mortals, cruel Typhaon, like neither a god nor a human being. Ox-eyed lady Hera at once took and gave him, an evil, to the evil she-dragon, who accepted him, Typhaon, who used to inflict many sufferings on the renowned tribes of human beings.

APOLLO VAUNTS OVER THE SHE-DRAGON HE HAS SLAIN

As for the she-dragon, whoever opposed her met the fatal day of death, until lord Apollo, the far-shooter, struck her with a mighty arrow. Racked by bitter pain, she lay gasping frantically for breath and writhing on the ground. An unspeakable and terrifying sound arose as she twisted and rolled in the forest; breathing out blood, she gave up her life, and Phoebus Apollo vaunted over her:

"Now rot here on the ground that nourishes mortals. You shall not live any longer to be the evil ruin of human beings who eat the fruit of the all-fostering earth and who will bring perfect hecatombs to his place." Thus he spoke, boasting; and darkness covered her eyes and the holy might of Helius caused her to rot there. Because of this, now the place is named Pytho, and they call its lord by the title, Pythian, since the mighty glare of the burning sun made the monster rot on the very spot.

Then Phoebus Apollo knew in his heart why the beautifully flowing spring, Telphusa, had tricked him. In anger he went to her and quickly he was there; standing very near her, he said: "Telphusa, you were not about to deceive my intelligence and keep this desirable place for you to put forth your beautifully flowing water. Here, to be sure, will be my glory, and not only yours." He spoke and lord Apollo, the far-worker, pushed on top of her a massive shower of rocks and hid her flowing stream; and he built an altar in the forest grove very near her beautifully flowing fountain. There all pray to Apollo under the name Telphusian because he shamed the stream of holy Telphusa.

APOLLO RECRUITS CRETANS TO SERVE AS HIS PRIESTS

Then Phoebus Apollo thought deeply about what people he would bring in as his priests who would serve him in rocky Pytho. While he was thinking this over, he noticed a swift ship on the wine-dark sea. On it were many fine men, Cretans from Minoan Cnossus, who perform sacrifices to their lord and make



Apollo Delphinus, Attic red-figure hydria by the Berlin painter, ca. 480 B.C.; height 202 in. (Detail above) Apollo rides over the sea in a winged tripod, as dolphins leap above the waves and fishes and an octopus swim below.

He wears the laurel wreath and plays the lyre, while his bow and quiver are slung on his back. The artist brilliantly combines three aspects of Apollo, as prophet (symbolized by the Delphic tripod and the dolphins, associated with Delphi), musician, and archer. (Rome, *Vaticano Museo Gregoriano*.)



known the pronouncements of Phoebus Apollo of the golden sword, whatever oracle he gives from his laurel beneath the slopes of Parnassus. These men were sailing in their black ship to sandy Pylos and the people in Pylos for trade and profit. But Phoebus Apollo intercepted them on the sea and leaped onto their swift ship in the shape of a dolphin and lay there, a huge and dread monster (see Color Plate 2). None of the men understood, nor did they recognize the dolphin as the god, and they wanted to throw it overboard. But he kept making the entire ship quake and its timbers quiver. They were afraid and sat in silence on the hollow black ship; and they did not slacken the ropes or the sail of their dark-prowed ship. But as they had fixed their course by the oxhide ropes, so they sailed on, and a fierce south wind drove the swift ship from behind.

First they sailed by Malia and the coast of Laconia and came to Taenarum, a sea-crowned town, and the land of Helios, who makes mortals glad, where the thick-fleeced sheep of lord Helios pasture always and inhabit a pleasurable country.³¹ They wanted to bring the ship ashore, disembark, and study the great marvel and watch with their own eyes whether the monster would remain on the deck of the hollow ship or leap back into the swell of the sea, full of fish. But the well-built ship did not obey their directions but made its way along the fertile Peloponnesus; lord Apollo, the far-worker, easily directed it with a breeze. The ship, continuing its course, came to Arena, lovely Argyphaea, and Thryon, the ford of the river Alpheus, and well-built Aepy and Pylos and the inhabitants of Pylos; and it went past Cruini and Chalcis and past Dyme and splendid Elis, where the Epei hold power. When it was sailing towards Pherae, jaunty in a wind from Zeus, beneath the clouds appeared the steep mountain of Ithaca and Dulichium and Same and wooded Zacynthus. But when it had passed the whole coast of the Peloponnesus, then to be sure, as they turned toward Crisa, there loomed before them the vast gulf whose length cuts off the rich Peloponnesus. A west wind, strong, clear, and vehement, came out of the sky by Zeus' decree and speeded the ship along so that it might complete its fast course over the briny water of the sea as quickly as possible. Then indeed they were sailing back towards the dawn and the sun. Lord Apollo, son of Zeus, was their guide, and they came to the conspicuous harbor of vine-clad Crisa, where the seafaring ship was grounded on the sands.

There lord Apollo, the far-worker, leaped out of the ship like a star at mid-day. His person was engulfed by a shooting fiery shower and his splendor reached to the heavens. He made his way, amidst precious tripods, to his innermost sanctuary. Then he caused a blaze to flare up and his arrows were bathed in a brilliance that encompassed the whole of Crisa. The wives and the lovely-dressed daughters of the Crisaeans cried out in amazement at the spectacular sight of Apollo; for the god instilled an awesome fear in each of them. Thereupon, swift as thought, he made a flying leap back onto the ship, in the form of a man in his prime, strong and vigorous, with his hair flowing about his broad shoulders. Uttering winged words, he spoke to them.

"Strangers, who are you? From where do you sail the watery paths? Is barter your goal, or do you roam recklessly, like pirates over the deep, who hazard their lives as they wander bringing evil to strangers? Why do you sit this way, despondent? Why don't you disembark and take your gear from your black ship

to land? This is the right thing for enterprising men to do whenever they come from the sea to shore in their black ship; they are worn out and weary and straightway overcome by the desire for luscious food."

Thus he spoke and put spirit in their breasts and the leader of the Cretans said in answer: "Stranger, indeed you do not look at all like mortals in your appearance and stature, but like the immortal gods. Good health and all hail, may the gods give you prosperity! Tell me this truly so that I may understand fully: What territory, what land is this? What people live here? For we were sailing the great seas, with other intentions, bound for Pylos from Crete, where we are proud to have been born; yet now we have arrived here with our ship, in a different way and by another course, not at all willingly, and anxious to return; but someone of the immortals has taken us here, against our wishes."

Then Apollo, the far-worker, spoke in answer: "Strangers, who used to live in wooded Cnossus before, now no longer will you return again to your lovely city, beautiful homes, and dear wives; but each of you here will keep my rich temple, honored by many mortals. I say proudly that I am Apollo, son of Zeus, and I took you to this place over the wide expanse of the sea. I intend you no harm, but you will keep my rich temple here, greatly esteemed and honored by all human beings; and you will know the counsels of the immortals, by whose will you always will be honored continually all your days. But come, as quickly as possible obey me in what I say. First let down the sails and loosen the ropes of ox-hide; then draw the swift ship up from the water onto dry land and remove your possessions and gear from the well-balanced ship; and build an altar on the shore of the sea; and, kindling a fire, make an offering of white barley. Then pray, standing around the altar. As I first leaped aboard your swift ship on the hazy sea in the form of a dolphin, so pray to me as Delphinus; furthermore, the altar itself will be Delphinus and overlooking³² forever. Next, take your meal by the swift black ship and make a libation to the blessed gods who hold Olympus. But when you have satisfied your desire for luscious food, come with me and sing the *Ie Paean* (Hail Healer) until the time when you arrive at the place where you will keep my rich temple."

So Apollo spoke, and they readily listened to him and obeyed. First they let down the sails and loosened the ropes of ox-hide; and, lowering the mast by the forestays, they brought it to rest on the mast-holder. They themselves disembarked on the seashore and drew the swift ship up from the water onto dry land. They built an altar on the shore of the sea; and, kindling a fire, they made an offering of white barley; and they prayed, as he ordered, standing around the altar. Then they took their meal by the swift black ship and made a libation to the blessed gods who hold Olympus. But when they had satisfied their desire for food and drink, they got up and went with their leader, lord Apollo the son of Zeus, who held his lyre in his hands and played a lovely tune, as he stepped high and stately. The Cretans followed, marching to his rhythm, and they sang the *Ie Paean*, like the Cretan paean singers and those in whose breasts the divine Muse has placed sweet song.

With weariless feet, they reached the mountain-ridge and quickly arrived at Parnassus itself and the desirable place where they were going to live, honored by human beings. Apollo, who had led them there, pointed out his sacred

sanctuary and rich temple. And the spirit was aroused in their dear breasts; and the leader of the Cretans questioned him with these words: "O lord, since you have brought us far from our loved ones and our fatherland—so was it somehow your wish—how then shall we live now? This we ask you to explain. This place is desirable neither as a vineyard nor as a pasture."

And Apollo, the son of Zeus, smiling upon them, said: "Foolish, wretched mortals, who prefer heartfelt care, hard work, and trouble; I shall give you a message of comfort, and take it in earnest. Even if each of you, holding a knife in his right hand, were to slaughter sheep continuously, still the supply would not be exhausted with all that the renowned tribes of human beings bring to me here. Guard my temple and receive the human hordes who gather here, and above all point out to them my directions and keep my ordinances in your hearts. But if anyone is foolish enough to pay no heed and disobey, if there will be any idle word or deed or hubris, which is usually the case among mortal humans, then other men will be masters over you and you will be forced to submit to their might all your days. Everything has been told to you; store it in your hearts."

So farewell, son of Zeus and Leto. Yet I shall remember you and another song too.

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NOTES

1. Many had cults of Apollo. Leto's wanderings are at times geographically erratic. Most of the places mentioned are familiar enough, but some names are problematical. Any attempt to trace Leto's wanderings precisely should begin with the notes in *The Homeric Hymns*, ed. T. W. Allen, W. R. Halliday, and E. E. Sikes, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963).
2. In later accounts, Hera employs various schemes to prevent Leto from finding a place to bear her children, and through fear of Hera the whole earth rejects Leto's pleas. Hera also is said to have decreed that Leto's children could not be born in any place where the sun shone, so Poseidon kept the island of Delos (which in this early time was afloat) covered by his waves from the sun's rays during the birth of the twins.
3. These lines were thought to refer to Homer, who, among the many traditions, becomes a blind bard from the island of Chios. It is extremely unlikely that the Homer associated with the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* wrote this hymn or any of the others. Bards are archetypically blind as opposed to the hale and hearty politicians and warriors; in terms of another fundamental motif, blind poets see the Muses' truth.

4. It is not difficult to imagine a fluid bardic tradition in which hymns could vary in length and be presented in diverse combinations.
5. In later accounts, the dragon or serpent is sometimes masculine with the name Python (as in Ovid's story of Apollo and Daphne, translated later in this chapter). It may also be described as the hostile opponent of Leto before the birth of her children. Some versions stress the great prowess of Apollo early in his life and career (as in the case of the wondrous childhood of Hermes and Heracles) to the extent of having him kill the dragon while still a child.
6. Aeschylus in the prologue to his *Eumenides* and Euripides in a chorus from his *Iphigenia in Tauris*. A scholarly survey of the problems, with a reconstruction of the origins and procedures of the oracle, is provided by H. W. Parke and D. E. W. Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1956).
7. A festival (called the Stepteria) was celebrated every ninth year at Delphi to commemorate these events in the early history of the sanctuary.
8. The omphalos found in the excavations and originally identified as the archaic sacred stone has subsequently been labeled a fraud.
9. The other major Panhellenic festivals were those at Olympia and Nemea, both in honor of Zeus, and the Isthmian Games at Corinth, dedicated to Poseidon.
10. For the oracular Apollo elsewhere, see H. W. Parke, *The Oracles of Apollo in Asia Minor* (London: Croom Helm, 1985); also Joseph Fontenrose, *Didyma: Apollo's Oracle, Cult, and Companions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), who is overly skeptical in his scholarly treatment of evidence.
11. One could inquire on one's own behalf or on the behalf of someone else. Inquiries often came from state representatives. Both the question and the answer were usually set down in writing. See Joseph Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle: Its Responses and Operations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).
12. Among the religious objects that decked the temple was the tomb of Dionysus. The god Dionysus was worshiped alongside Apollo in the sanctuary (perhaps as early as the sixth century). The prophetic madness of the Pythia has much in common with Dionysiac frenzy. Some believe such frenzy was induced by drugs of one sort or another. See Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 108. Contemporary geologists (Jelle de Boer, Wesleyan University, Middletown, Conn., among others) are exploring the possibility that the priestesses inhaled narcotic fumes (from such gases as methane and ethane) arising from faults, fissures, and chasms created in the highly volcanic region of Delphi.
13. The first Pythia, who is named Phemonoë (Prophetic Mind), is a poetic figure; we have from Herodotus the names of later ones (Aristonice and Perallus), historically much more real.
14. See H. W. Parke, *Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy in Classical Antiquity*, ed. Brian C. McGing. Croom Helm Classical Studies (New York: Routledge, 1988).
15. This Sibyl is Deïphobe, daughter of Glaucus, priestess of the temple of Phoebus Apollo and Diana.
16. Vergil's works themselves were consulted as oracles in later times as the *sortes Vergilianae*.
17. A total of one thousand years, counting the generations (*saecula*) as one hundred years each.

18. Petronius, *Satyricon* 48. 8. The Sibyl's story appears to be late in its reminiscences of Cassandra and Tithonus.
19. This is the Aristaeus who will become the husband of Autoonë and father of Actaeon; he too is the one who made advances to Eurydice. He is particularly linked with agricultural pursuits, especially beekeeping.
20. For the theme of homosexuality, see pp. 21–22.
21. Ovid puts the story in the mouth of Orpheus. Other accounts have Zephyrus (the West Wind) deliberately divert the course of the discus because of his jealous love for Hyacinthus.
22. These marks not only reproduce Apollo's moans of grief, they are also the initial letters of the name of the hero of the Trojan saga, the great Ajax (Greek *Aias*), son of Telamon, as Apollo indicates in his prophetic words. When Ajax committed suicide, the same flower, the hyacinth, sprang from his blood (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 13. 391–398).
23. This is the famous Midas of the golden touch (Ovid's version of his story, *Metamorphoses* 11. 85–145, is well known). His story is told in Chapter 13, pp. 294–295.
24. Elements of folktale appear dominant in this story, particularly in the traditional depiction of the garrulous barber. In some versions, Midas plays this same role in the contest between Apollo and Marsyas. Thus he favors the satyr against Apollo and suffers the same humiliation.
25. Apollo's epithet Lykios was believed by the Greeks to refer to him as a "wolf-god," whatever this may mean—that he was a hunter like a wolf? That he was the protector against the wolf? Perhaps Lykios is to be derived from Lycia, a district in south-western Asia Minor.
26. These lines about Apollo as a suitor are full of problems; the text seems to be corrupt. Ischys and Apollo vied for Coronis, and Leucippus and Apollo vied for Daphne (in a version given by Pausanias, 8. 20. 3). Nothing much can be made of the other rivals.
27. Apollo's itinerary offers some geographical problems, but in general he goes from Olympus through Larissa (the home of the Perrhaebi) to Iolchus and eventually crosses to the Lelantine plain (between Chalcis and Eretria) on the island of Euboea, and then back again to the mainland and Onchestus, Thebes, Lake Copais, and the Cephissus River—all in Boeotia. Next, continuing westward, Apollo comes to the spring Telphusa in the region of Mt. Helicon, and from there finally to Crisa, the site of his Delphi.
28. This is our only evidence for this ritual in honor of Poseidon at his famous precinct in Onchestus, and the numerous conjectures made by scholars about its meaning and purpose are not at all convincing.
29. Some etymologists do not agree with the ancients, who thought this name was derived from the cry *Ie* and *Paeon*, meaning "healer." Later in this hymn, it is the name of a song.
30. *Typhaon* is also the name of the monster killed by Zeus, i.e., Typhoeus or Typhaon or Typhon; see pp. 79–80.
31. The ship sails along the south coast of the Peloponnesus, then up the north coast until it turns into the Corinthian Gulf and makes for Crisa.
32. The Greek word translated as "overlooking" is *epopsios* and may refer to another epithet of Apollo (and Zeus) as "overseers" of everything; or the adjective may only mean that the altar is "conspicuous."

HERMES

THE BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF HERMES

The *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* (18) concentrates upon the story (repeated at the beginning of the much more lengthy and important hymn that follows) of how Zeus became the father of Hermes as the result of his union with Maia, one of the Pleiades, the daughters of Atlas and Pleione.

 I sing about Hermes, the Cyllenian slayer of Argus, lord of Mt. Cyllene and Arcadia rich in flocks, the messenger of the gods and bringer of luck, whom Maia, the daughter of Atlas, bore, after uniting in love with Zeus. She in her modesty shunned the company of the blessed gods and lived in a shadowy cave; here the son of Cronus used to make love to this nymph of the beautiful hair in the dark of night, without the knowledge of immortal gods and mortal humans, when sweet sleep held white-armed Hera fast.

So hail to you, son of Zeus and Maia. After beginning with you, I shall turn to another hymn. Hail, Hermes, guide and giver of grace and other good things.

The more famous *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* (4) tells the story of the god's birth and childhood with delightful charm and disarming candor; here is a most artful depiction of this mischievous divine child, who invents the lyre and steals Apollo's cattle:

 Sing, O Muse, of the son of Zeus and Maia, lord of Mt. Cyllene and Arcadia rich in flocks, the messenger of the gods and bringer of luck, whom Maia of the beautiful hair bore after uniting in love with Zeus. She in her modesty shunned the company of the blessed gods and lived within a shadowy cave; here the son of Cronus joined in love with this nymph of the beautiful hair in the dark of night, without the knowledge of immortal gods and mortal humans, while sweet sleep held white-armed Hera fast. But when the will of Zeus had been accomplished and her tenth month was fixed in the heavens, she brought forth to the light a child, and a remarkable thing was accomplished; for the child whom she bore was devious, winning in his cleverness, a robber, a driver of cattle, a guide of dreams, a spy in the night, a watcher at the door, who soon was about to manifest renowned deeds among the immortal gods.

Maia bore him on the fourth day of the month. He was born at dawn, by midday he was playing the lyre, and in the evening he stole the cattle of far-shooting Apollo. After he leaped forth from the immortal limbs of his mother,

he did not remain lying in his sacred cradle; but he sprang up and looked for the cattle of Apollo. When he crossed the threshold of the high-roofed cave, he found a tortoise and obtained boundless pleasure from it.

HERMES INVENTS THE LYRE

Indeed Hermes was the very first to make the tortoise a minstrel. He happened to meet it in the very entranceway, waddling along as it ate the luxurious grass in front of the dwelling. When Zeus' son, the bringer of luck, saw it, he laughed and said at once: "Already a very good omen for me; I shall not be scornful. Greetings; what a delight you appear to me, lovely in shape, graceful in movement and a good dinner companion. Where did you, a tortoise living in the mountains, get this speckled shell that you have on, a beautiful plaything? Come, I shall take you and bring you inside. You will be of some use to me and I shall do you no dishonor. You will be the very first to be an advantage to me, but a better one inside, since the out-of-doors is dangerous for you. To be sure, while you are alive you will continue to be a charm against evil witchcraft, but if you were dead, then you would make very beautiful music."¹

Thus he spoke and lifted the tortoise in both hands and went back into his dwelling carrying the lovely plaything. Then he cut up the mountain-dwelling tortoise and scooped out its life-marrow with a knife of gray iron. As swiftly as a thought darts through the mind of a man whose cares come thick and fast or as a twinkle flashes from the eye, thus glorious Hermes devised his plan and carried it out simultaneously. He cut to size stocks of reeds, extended them across the back and through the tortoise shell and fastened them securely. In his ingenuity, he stretched the hide of an ox all around and affixed two arms to which he attached a bridge and then he extended seven tuneful strings of sheep gut.

When he had finished, he took up the lovely plaything and tried it by striking successive notes. It resounded in startling fashion under his hand, and the god accompanied his playing with a beautiful song, improvising at random just as young men exchange banter on a festive occasion. He sang about Zeus, the son of Cronus, Maia with the beautiful sandals, and their talk in the intimacy of their love, and proclaimed aloud the renown of his birth. He honored too the handmaids of the nymph, her splendid home, and the tripods and the ample cauldrons it contained. He sang of these things, but his heart was set on other pursuits. He took the hollow lyre and set it down in his sacred cradle; for he craved for meat and leaped out of the fragrant hall to a place where he could watch, since he was devising in his heart sheer trickery such as men who are thieves plan in the dead of black night.

HERMES STEALS APOLLO'S CATTLE

Heliuss, the Sun, with his horses and chariot was descending to earth and the stream of Ocean, when Hermes came hurrying to the shady mountains of Pieria² where the immortal cattle of the blessed gods have their home, grazing on the lovely untouched meadows. The sharp-sighted son of Maia, the slayer of Argus, cut off from the herd fifty loud-bellowing cattle and drove them over sandy ground reversing their tracks as they wandered. For he did not forget his skill at trickery, and he made their hoofs go backward, the front ones last and the back ones first; he himself walked straight ahead. For quickly, by the sandy

seashore, he wove sandals of wicker, a wonderful achievement, beyond description and belief; he combined twigs of myrtle and tamarisk and fastened together bundles of the freshly sprouting wood which he bound, leaves and all, under his feet as light sandals. The glorious slayer of Argus made them so, as he left Pieria, improvising since he was hastening over a long journey.³

But an old man, who was working in a luxuriant vineyard, noticed him coming to the plain through Onchestus with its beds of grass. The renowned son of Maia spoke to him first: "Old man, digging about with stooped shoulders, you will indeed have much wine when all these vines bear fruit, if you listen to me and earnestly remember in your heart to be blind to what you have seen and deaf to what you have heard and to keep silent, since nothing of your own has been harmed in any way." He said only this much and pushed the sturdy head of cattle on together. Glorious Hermes drove them over many shady mountains, echoing hollows, and flowery plains.

The greater part of divine night, his dark helper, was over; and the break of day that calls men to work was soon coming on, and bright Selene, daughter of lord Pallas, the son of Megamedes,⁴ had climbed to a new watchpost, when the strong son of Zeus drove the broad-browed cattle of Phoebus Apollo to the river Alpheus. They were unwearied when they came to the lofty shelter and the watering places that faced the splendid meadow. Then, when he had fed the loud-bellowing cattle well on fodder, he drove them all together into the shelter, as they ate lotus and marsh plants covered with dew. He gathered together a quantity of wood and pursued, with diligent passion, the skill of producing fire. He took a good branch of laurel and trimmed it with his knife, and in the palm of his hand he grasped a piece of wood; and the hot breath of fire rose up.⁵ Indeed Hermes was the very first to invent fire sticks and fire. He took many dry sticks which he left as they were and heaped them up together in a pit in the ground. The flame shone forth, sending afar a great blaze of burning fire.

While the power of renowned Hephaestus was kindling the fire, Hermes dragged outside near the blaze two horned cattle, bellowing, for much strength went with him. He threw them both panting upon their backs onto the ground and bore down upon them. Rolling them over, he pierced through their life's marrow; he followed up this work with more, cutting the meat rich in fat and spearing the pieces with wooden spits, and roasted all together the flesh, choice parts from the back, and the bowels that enclosed the black blood. He laid these pieces on the ground and stretched the hides on a rugged rock, and thus still even now they are there continually long afterward, despite the interval of time. Next Hermes in the joy of his heart whisked the rich bundles away to a smooth flat rock and divided them into twelve portions that he allotted, adding a choice piece to each, making it wholly an honorable offering.

Then glorious Hermes longed for the sacred meat of the sacrifice, for the sweet aroma made him weak, even though he was an immortal. But his noble heart did not yield, although his desire was overwhelming to gulp the offering down his holy throat.⁶ But he quickly put the fat and all the meat away in the cave with its lofty roof, setting them up high as a testimony of his recent childhood theft, and he gathered up wood for the fire and destroyed all the hoofs

and the heads in the blaze. When the god had accomplished all that he had to do, he threw his sandals into the deep-eddying stream of the Alpheus; he put out the embers and hid the black ashes in the sand. Thus he spent the whole night as the beautiful light of Selene shone down on him. Swiftly then he went back to the divine peaks of Cyllene and encountered no one at all (neither blessed gods nor mortal humans) on his long journey, and dogs did not bark.

Hermes, the luck-bringer, son of Zeus, slipped sideways past the lock into his house, like the gust of a breeze in autumn, and went directly through the cave to his luxurious inner chamber, stepping gently on his feet, for he did not make a sound as one would walking upon the floor. Glorious Hermes quickly got into his cradle and wrapped the blankets about his shoulders like a helpless baby and lay toying with his fingers at the covers on his knees; at his left side he kept his beloved lyre close by his hand.

But the god did not escape the notice of his goddess mother, who spoke to him: "You devious rogue, in your cloak of shameless guile, where in the world have you come from in the nighttime? Now I am convinced that either Apollo, son of Leto, by his own hands will drag you with your sides bound fast right out the door or you will prowl about the valleys, a robber and a cheat. Be gone then! Your father begat you as a great trouble for mortals and immortal gods!"

Hermes answered her with clever words: "Mother, why do you throw this up at me, as to a helpless child who knows in his heart very little of evil, a fearful baby, frightened of his mother's chiding? But I shall set upon whatever work is best to provide for me and you together. We two shall not endure to stay here in this place alone, as you bid, apart from the immortals without gifts and prayers. Better all our days to live among the gods, rich and full in wealth and plenty, than to sit at home in the shadows of this cave! And I shall go after divine honor just as Apollo has. And if my father does not give it to me, to be sure I shall take my honor myself (and I can do it) which is to be the prince of thieves. And if the glorious son of Leto search me out, I think he will meet with another even greater loss. For I shall go to Pytho and break right into his great house and I shall seize from within plenty of very beautiful tripods and bowls and gold and gleaming iron and an abundance of clothing. You will be able to see it all, if you like." Thus they conversed with each other, the son of aegis-bearing Zeus and the lady Maia.

APOLLO CONFRONTS HERMES

As Eos, the early-born, sprang up from the deep-flowing waters of Ocean, bringing light to mortals, Apollo was on his way and came to Onchestus, a very lovely grove sacred to loud-roaring Poseidon, who surrounds the earth. There he found the old man, who on the path within was feeding the animal that guarded his vineyard. The glorious son of Leto spoke to him first: "Old man, who pulls the weeds and briars of grassy Onchestus, I have come here from Pieria looking for some cattle from my herd—all cows, all with curved horns. The bull, which was black, fed alone away from the others; keen-eyed dogs followed behind, four of them, of one mind like humans. They were left behind, both the dogs and the bull—a truly amazing feat. But just as the sun had set, the cows went out of the soft meadow away from the sweet pasture. Tell me this, old fellow, have you seen a man passing along the road with these cows?"

The old man spoke to him in answer: "My friend, it is hard to tell everything that one sees with one's eyes. For many wayfarers pass along the road; some travel intent on much evil, others on much good. To know each of them is difficult. But, good sir, the whole day long until the sun set I was digging about in my fruitful vineyard and I thought that I noticed a child, I do not know for sure; whoever the child was, he, an infant, tended the fine-horned cattle and he had a stick. He walked from side to side as he drove them backward and kept their heads facing him."

Thus the old man spoke; after Apollo had heard his tale, he went more quickly on his way. He noticed a bird with its wings extended, and from this sign he knew at once that the thief was a child born of Zeus, the son of Cronus. So lord Apollo, the son of Zeus, eagerly hastened to holy Pylos in search of his shambling cows, his broad shoulders enshrouded in a dark cloud. When the archer-god spied the tracks he cried out: "Why, indeed, here is a great marvel that I see with my eyes. These are definitely the tracks of straight-horned cows, but they are turned backward toward the asphodel meadow. And these here are not the prints of a man or a woman or gray wolves or bears or lions; nor are they, I expect, those of a shaggy-maned centaur or whoever makes such monstrous strides with its swift feet. On this side of the road the tracks are strange but on the other side they are even stranger."

With these words lord Apollo, the son of Zeus, hurried on and came to the forest-clad mountain of Cyllene and the deeply shaded cave in the rock where the immortal nymph bore the child of Zeus, the son of Cronus. A lovely odor pervaded the sacred mountain, and many sheep ranged about grazing on the grass. Then the archer-god, Apollo himself, hurried over the stone threshold down into the shadowy cave.

When the son of Zeus and Maia perceived that far-shooting Apollo was in a rage about his cattle, he sank down into his fragrant blankets. As ashes hide a bed of embers on logs of wood, so Hermes buried himself in his covers when he saw the archer-god. He huddled head and hands and feet tightly together as though just bathed and ready for sweet sleep, but he was really wide awake, and under his arm he held his lyre. The son of Zeus and Leto knew both the beautiful mountain nymph and her dear son, the little boy enveloped in craft and deceit, and he was not fooled. He looked in every corner of the great house. He took a shining key and opened three chambers full of nectar and lovely ambrosia, and in them too lay stored much silver and gold and many of the nymph's garments, rich in their hues of purple and silver, such as are found in the sacred dwellings of the blessed gods.

Then, when the son of Leto had searched every nook in the great house, he addressed glorious Hermes with these words: "You, O child, lying in the cradle, inform me about my cattle and be quick, or soon the two of us will be at variance and it will not be nice. For I shall take hold of you and hurl you down into the terrible and irrevocable darkness of murky Tartarus; neither your mother nor your father will release you to the light above, but you will wander under the earth, a leader among little people."

Hermes answered him craftily: "Son of Leto, what are these harsh words you have spoken? Have you come here looking for cattle of the field? I have not